



A Feminine Vision of an Achievable Better World: Anima Should Reign!

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My name is Tiffany Twain. I am the philosophical great granddaughter of the Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his *nom de plume*, Mark Twain. It has been 109 years since Mark Twain died on April 21, 1910, and the global challenges collectively facing humanity today are much larger in magnitude than the ones that affected the world during the great author's life. The incisive perspectives of Mark Twain are being reincarnated and reinvigorated in the Earth Manifesto to be brought to bear upon the global economic, social, environmental and political problems of modern times. For an in-depth understanding of Mark Twain's ideas, entertaining points of view, and relevant perspectives, see *A Quite Curious and Illuminating Biography of Mark Twain*.

A feminine vision of a practical and achievable greater good in the world is presented in this essay as a valuable way for us to intelligently address the daunting existential predicaments that we collectively face. One of the underlying ideas of all understandings in the Earth Manifesto is that, for humanity to survive and prosper, it will be necessary for us to create fairer societies that are more peaceable, more fiscally responsible, more environmentally sane, and more likely to be sustainable for many generations to come. To best accomplish this overarching goal, we need more accurate, open-minded and enlightened understandings about reality. And we must demand that the dysfunctional nature of our economic and political systems be seriously reformed.

"The status quo has many guardians, but the future is an orphan."

--- Timothy E. Wirth, United Nations Foundation and Better World Fund

It is growing increasingly important for us to balance the desperate needs and compelling desires of the nearly 8 billion people alive today with those of the estimated 14 billion people who will be born in the next 100 years. Our collective needs should also be balanced with the countless people who will follow them, if we are somehow able to manage to leave a planet that is habitable enough to support them. We cannot afford to continue to shackle ourselves to a status quo that is primarily oriented to protecting the interests of bankers, CEOs, shareholders, insiders and the wealthiest 1%. We would be well advised to stop encouraging profit making on wasteful uses of natural resources like fossil fuels. And we should find better ways to shift our economies to healthier and more sustainable activities, rather than continuing to stoke profligate consumerism, allow predatory banking, facilitate public corruption, engage in armed conflicts, promote speculation and gambling, and encourage addictions like eating unhealthy fast foods and using immoderate amounts of alcohol and drugs.

This manifesto contains wide-ranging and far-reaching ideas about how to improve our societies. These ideas are summarized in specific detailed plans for a better future in *Common Sense Revival* (Book One of the Earth Manifesto, and Part Four online). The implementation of sensible ideas like these would help ensure that human civilizations act in smarter and more sustainable ways, rather than continuing to undermine the prospects of people in future generations and to foist inimically deleterious impacts on them.

My intuition tells me that a more "feminine" approach of sensible collaboration and fair-minded compromise would be the most propitious way to address growing global problems. Enough yang! More yin!! Feminine approaches are a more desirable mode of action than encouraging the perpetuation of the macho *modus operandi* of ruthless competition, exacerbated conflicts, increasing inequalities, extreme political partisanship, gender discrimination,

abuses of power, repressive rule, uncompromising aggression, hubris-driven militarism, religious intolerance, and suicidal terrorist opposition.

Essential and vitally important perspectives are contained in this *Feminine Vision*. My hope is that millions of people will eventually stumble upon these ideas -- and give careful consideration to their implications.

Note that when leaders evoke hope and empathetic understanding in the people of a nation, the people tend to respond by supporting fairness-oriented progressive causes. When leaders conversely stoke fear and hostility, people react to this manipulative tactic by supporting extreme "conservative" ideologies and more authoritarian rule. This is one of many reasons the American people should have rejected Donald Trump's brash and unethical bid to be the leader of the free world, and instead chosen Hillary Clinton to be president of the United States. And this is a good reason to now renounce his corruption, lies and many abuses of power, and demand his resignation, along with that of Mike Pence for his collaboration in impeachable offenses.

As an impeachment inquiry unfolds in early October 2019, the House minority leader Kevin McCarthy sent a letter to Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House asking her to halt the investigation, calling the "integrity" of the process into question. Nancy gave an incisive response: "As you know, our Founders were specifically intent on ensuring that foreign entities did not undermine the integrity of our elections. I received your letter this morning shortly after the world witnessed President Trump on national television asking yet another foreign power to interfere in the upcoming 2020 elections (China). We hope you and other Republicans share our commitment to following the facts, upholding the Constitution, protecting our national security, and defending the integrity of our elections at such a serious moment in our nation's history." All patriotic Americans should be on the same page with this!

"To live in the world without becoming aware of the meaning of the world is like wandering about in a great library without touching the books."

--- *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*

"Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience; this is the ideal life."

--- Mark Twain

History Provides Us with Great Lessons, and We Should Heed Them!

Many of my philosophic understandings have been informed by two renowned historians, Will and Ariel Durant. Their slender book *The Lessons of History* is a marvelous distillation of big picture understandings they had learned throughout 40 years of working on a collaborative study of history. Will had discovered early in his life that he had "a persistent penchant for philosophy", and it thus came to pass in 1926 that he wrote the fine book *The Story of Philosophy*. This book served the noble purpose of popularizing philosophy for the general public.

Will conceived of philosophy as "total perspective." It should be clear that the Durants were not naïve. They began *The Lessons of History* with some *Hesitations* in Chapter 1, readily acknowledging:

"Our knowledge of any past events is always incomplete, and probably inaccurate, beclouded by ambivalent evidence and biased historians, and perhaps distorted by our own patriotic or religious partisanship. Most history is guessing, and the rest is prejudice. Even the historian who thinks to rise above partiality for his country, race, creed or class betrays his secret predilection in his choice of materials, and in the nuances of his adjectives. The historian always oversimplifies, and hastily selects a manageable minority of facts and faces out of a crowd of souls and events whose multitudinous complexity he can never quite embrace or comprehend. -
- Again, our conclusions from the past to the future are made more hazardous than ever by the acceleration of change. In 1909 Charles Peguy thought the world had changed less since Jesus Christ than in the last thirty years."

Will and Ariel Durant saw that evaluating history was a process of ferreting out true facts, which is an art of establishing a meaningful order from a chaos of competing perspectives. They also saw that historical perspective can provide philosophic understanding and enlightenment. "In history, as in science and politics, relativity rules, and all formulas should be suspect." History plays havoc with our generalizations, and breaks all our rules; so we

should learn to respect one another's delusions, they say. As their *Hesitations* come to an end, they observe: "only a fool would try to compress a hundred centuries into a hundred pages of hazardous conclusions. We proceed."

As an interesting sidelight, Will Durant had suggested that a movement be started against racial intolerance, and he outlined his ideas for a "Declaration of Interdependence". He helped establish the *Declaration of INTERdependence, Inc.*, and it was launched at a gala dinner in March 1945 that was attended by over 400 people. This Declaration was even read into the Congressional Record in October 1945.

Interconnected and interdependent, all of us proceed through the minutia of our daily lives, usually without alert awareness. But here we are, embarked on an interlude of larger considerations, and I hope everyone will be able to approach a better semblance of "total perspective" more clearly.

Why Anima Should Reign

Each and every person has both male and female aspects of their true inner selves. These natural aspects of our beings are complementary, and they have both light sides and dark sides. And it so happens that our cultures often either suppress feminine sensibilities or dismiss them as something impractical or irrelevant, or inferior, or shameful.

The masculine and feminine aspects of our subconscious are influenced by genetic predispositions and hormones, and even by the functional structure of our brains. During early stages of development, we all internalize the social roles of mothers and fathers, and sisters or brothers, and daughters or sons. These important gender aspects of our collective unconscious were described for the first time by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, who said that every male has within his unconscious mind a feminine inner personality, or *anima*, and that every female correspondingly has within her unconscious mind a male inner personality, or *animus*. Borrowing these terms, *anima* is used in this essay to represent the feminine psychological aspects of both the conscious and unconscious mind of all people, male and female; and *animus* is used to represent the masculine aspects of each of our minds, female and male.

The anima and the animus within each of us have both noble and ignoble aspects. Our masculine sides are noble in their loyalty, protectiveness, respectful chivalry and heroism, yet their darker side encompasses tendencies toward bullying, confrontation, ruthlessness in competition, cruelty and violence. Our feminine aspects can be noble in their wisdom, empathy, compassion, generous-heartedness, intuitiveness, sensitivity, caring, spirituality and loving kindness, while their shadow side can be displayed in manipulative cunning, bitchiness, masochistic impulses and annoying passive-aggressive qualities. These are gross generalizations, but that's the general idea.

Faced with the mounting challenges of modern times, and with the considerable messes that males have made with their domineering aggressiveness, propensities toward occasional spasms of violence, and lack of empathy, I feel strongly that it is time we "think outside the box" and act to dramatically empower women. Let's allow our repressed inner animas to gain sway! Our inner animuses too often resemble mindless ignoramuses, so should yield their obsessions with ruthless dominion and control. All together, we need to cultivate a better balance between the feminine and masculine in our psyches, and in our cultures.

Feminine ways of being in the world are generally more receptive, nurturing and collaborative than traditional male modes of acting. This is a legacy of the days when gatherers in hunter-gatherer clans relied on working together for the greater good of their social group. I believe that today we need a similarly better balance between feminine wisdom and exploitive masculine dominance in our patriarchal world.

The best leadership is one that emphasizes collaborative teamwork rather than authoritarian command and control. In this type of leadership, the value of working together toward common goals is given much greater emphasis, and win/win solutions to problems are sought. Dr. Alice Eagly, a scholar on gender and leadership, once stated that her studies show women are more likely than men to possess the leadership qualities associated with success. She noted that women are more inspirational and transformational leaders than men, and that they often listen better. She found that women tend to stimulate their employees to think outside the box, and that they care more about developing their followers. She also pointed out that female leaders are, in general, more ethical and statistically less criminal than male leaders.

Leaders are truly transformational when they increase awareness of what is right, good and important, and when they help elevate the needs of followers for achievement and self-actualization. Leaders are most honorably effective when they move people to go beyond their own self-interest for the good of their group, organization or society. Professor Bernard Bass, who has written books about transformational leadership, predicts that in the future female leaders will be more successful simply because they are better suited than men to act in ways that prove to be consistent with the best practices of effective modern management. Domineering males like Donald Trump must stop lying and cheating females out of positions of greater power and influence!

"It is time to gather the women and save the world."

--- *Urgent Message from Mother*, Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D.

When Hillary Clinton was chosen as the first female candidate for president of a major political party in U.S. history, it had been 96 years after women first gained the right to vote in 1920. It is high time that we elect a woman as our leader. Never had there been a more extreme contrast between two presidential candidates than in 2016, given Hillary's impressive record of public service and Mr. Trump's record of greedily selfish and dishonest, divisive, exploitive, litigious, manipulative and women-exploiting behaviors. It is tragic that Hillary was cheated out of power, and that many other progressive female candidates for the U.S. Senate and House were also deprived of the opportunity to serve by the Republican political machine and Supreme Court-approved money-corrupted campaign financing system. Two of the best of those female candidates were the money corruption opposing Professor Zephyr Teachout, a progressive populist who ran to be a Representative from New York, and the environmentalist Katie McGinty, who ran for a Senate seat in Pennsylvania that was held by a conservative Republican loyalist.

Incisive Introspections

Prince Hamlet struggles, in his "To be or not to be" soliloquy, with the existential question whether one should suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them." Let's come together and all contribute what each can to providing ethical, fair-minded and patriotic opposition to end the current extreme inequalities and injustices that afflict the populace in the land of the free.

Many religious leaders advise members of their flocks to be concerned for their afterlife. Not bad advice to give to folks with slim hopes for a fair break in the real conditions of their lives right now, especially under scheming hard-nosed self-serving leaders, and their enablers. But this can be a defeatist attitude of tolerant rationalization for rulers who fail to ameliorate conditions of poverty and injustice and victimization and misery and desperation in the here and now. This may be one reason that "conservatives" defend established religions, even when the religious doctrines are deeply dishonest and the religious authorities abuse the power of their influence, and when they discriminate against large groups of people and cause deep conflicts to fester, and deprive women of their natural rights.

Natural rights? Yes, for women have exercised "Original Choice" for many millennia, ever since they cottoned on to the biological fact that every pregnancy results from sexual intercourse with a particular male, and they began to be much more choosy in selecting a fit specimen, a reliably good provider, a respectful mate, and a man with a character at least somewhat likely to be dedicated to her and the upbringing of their offspring.

Having just seen the wonderful film *Linda Ronstadt - The Sound of My Voice*, I much appreciated her observation that the real question is not what we will do in "the afterlife", but what we will do in "the before-life" -- while we are still alive and able to make affirmative choices.

The history-making and ground-breaking speeches of Greta Thunberg, the young activist who has become the voice of her generation, have been collected into a book titled *No One Is Too Small to Make A Difference*, which brings Greta to readers in her own words. "Collecting her speeches that have made history across Europe, from the UN to mass street protests, this book is a rallying cry for why we must all wake up and fight to protect the living planet, no matter how powerless we feel. Our future depends upon it."

In the face of the most far-reaching existential global crisis in human history, it is insane to focus on our own solipsistic narrowly-viewed fates AFTER WE ARE DEAD, to the exclusion of a responsible, life-affirming and just

crusade for greater dignity and well-being and security and sustainability and liberty and justice for all. We can no longer continue to allow our leaders to forget the vast majority of people alive right now, OR all who will live in the future.

Our ultimate moral duty is to play more responsible roles in the ethical responsibility of leaving a fairer legacy to those who will follow us. Let's all join together in common cause, and take a unified stand against allowing tragic assaults against the global commons!

As John Lennon sang in his lyrics in the 1967 Beatles song *Strawberry Fields Forever*, "Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see." Misunderstanding arguably matters significantly to all of us collectively. Misunderstandings can lead to personal conflicts, social strife, wars and ecological devastation.

The Hubris of Man

In the Texas island city of Galveston, a hurricane approached the coast in August of the year 1900, and as Erik Larsen wrote in *Isaac's Storm: A Man, A Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History*, "the hubris of men led them to believe they could disregard even nature itself." The devastating hurricane taught the inhabitants of Galveston a catastrophic instance of the folly of the delusion that we can ignore the risks of natural disasters, and the American people should wisely remember this vital wisdom, and heed warnings of climate scientists about the increasing power of extreme weather events and the spiking likelihood of their occurrence due to the spreading effects of deforestation activities and excessive emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Every year I buy carbon offsets from the excellent organization Cool Effect to offset my personal calculated annual carbon omissions, through reductions achieved via a choice of smart win-win investments in cutting or absorbing carbon dioxide around the planet. Join me!

The programs offered by Cool Effect are a great plan to cover externalized costs by using carbon offset programs, but an individual voluntary system is inadequate to the scope of the challenge. Voluntary plans are a good first step, but wholly inadequate. The best plan would be to implement free market solutions that include full cost product pricing plans and powerfully effective incentives to do the right thing by cutting carbon emissions.

See the problem here. Since individual action is wholly insufficient to the scale and seriousness of the unfolding climate crisis, we need universal solutions that utilize powerfully motivating incentives and disincentives for everyone, and for every business, so that all will contribute to the necessary goal of significantly reducing our aggregate carbon footprint.

And these efforts to address the climate crisis should be structured in progressive ways, not regressive ways, so that rich people bear the heaviest burden of the cost. There is good justification for this, for sure enough, the wealthiest 10% of people in the world today are responsible for a full 50% of global emissions created by driving, flying, consuming and making "lifestyle choices". This represents all persons who have an individual net worth of more than about \$94,000, according to an estimate by Credit Suisse.

Grave inequalities, injustices and insecurities characterize our nations, and they are both class-based and inter-generational. This is one of many strong arguments for implementing carbon fees to cover the externalized costs currently being socialized, which are associated with extreme weather events being exacerbated by greenhouse gas emissions and destabilized climatic conditions in locales worldwide.

It is consequentially foolhardy for our leaders to stand in the way of sensible adaptations to changing climatic circumstances. We should demand that our leaders stop pandering so slavishly to the greediest and most selfish and most obtusely uncompassionate and inconsiderate amongst us.

Dick Cheney once glibly declared that "Conservation may be a sign of personal virtue, but it is not a sufficient basis for a sound, comprehensive energy policy." Dick Cheney regarded the main top priority to be to "drill, drill, drill", to drill everywhere, and to throw open public lands to the highest bidders and sell off mineral rights for a ridiculously small amount of royalties to be paid to the government. Like all Republicans, he also pushed for reductions in regulations on Big Businesses so they wouldn't get in the way of maximized profits for Big Oil, Big Coal, Fracked Natural Gas concerns, and multinational Oil Services corporations like Halliburton, where Dick Cheney

exerted managerial control for years, and no doubt benefited from generous quantities of stock options as reward for his facilitating treachery against the common good.

Trump Republicans today are living like there will be no tomorrow, hubristically demonstrating a heedlessness of any concern for conserving resources, reducing pollution, constraining the generation and dumping of toxic wastes into the environment, or responsibly acting to change public policies so as to reduce emissions of climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Worse, they have seized dominating power and are broadly abusing it, pushing policies that will undermine the prospects for the health, security and general welfare and well-being of all in future generations. They are acting like the French King Louis, who saw the writing on the wall and said, "Après moi, le déluge."

We surely would be better advised to sensibly collaborate together to strive to actualize the common good, instead of letting divide-to-conquer politicians encourage us all to fight each other so that they can actualize their insidious agenda under the attention-distracting cover of the internecine conflict and hot button strife.

Leaders to the Rescue?

A full-page ad in the New York Times on December 6, 2009 was signed by 100 business leaders and liberal luminaries, and it featured a big black circle in the center of the page with words in white that read: "Dear President Obama and the U.S. Congress, Tomorrow leaders from 192 countries will gather at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen to determine the fate of our planet." In this open letter, the signatories astutely declared: "If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet."

The open letter also stated, "... we urge you, our government, to strengthen and pass United States legislation, and lead the world by example." And it concluded, "Please allow us, the United States if America, to serve in modeling the change necessary to protect humanity and the planet."

Sensationally, Donald Trump was one of the 100 signatories to this letter. Lead the world by example! Model the change necessary!! Look at what has transpired since 2009. Republicans stymied almost every sensible climate action for years, at the behest of their fossil fuel industry financial supporters, and then Donald Trump used demagoguery to get chosen president by the Electoral College and immediately began demonstrating an unmitigated selfish greed and an egomaniacal thirst for power and a maniacal zeal for domineering control, and he has thrown open the doors to the henhouse to let in all the zealous foxes and hungry wolves and crony capitalists, and no one can trust him. It is as clear as day that we must watch what he does, NOT what he says. He is the worst at modeling good behavior of anyone I've ever known.

The underground Mole would say, "If anyone believes that Donald Trump is leading the world in a positive direction by his selfish, greedy, monomaniacally self-centered example, I've got a spiffy old bridge to sell you!" Throughout all the star-spangled nights, the citizenry is more and more subject to hearing, Tweet, treat, tweet ... FAKE NEWS! ABSOLUTE HOAX !! PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT !!! TREASON !!!!

The Open Letter called for aggressive climate action and the passage of climate legislation and investment in the clean energy economy, and leadership to inspire the rest of the world to join the fight against climate change. "We support your effort to ensure meaningful and effective measures to control climate change, an immediate challenge facing the United States and the world today."

With rich irony, the 2009 Open Letter concluded, below the list of 100 prominent signatories, with an African proverb, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

One might think religious leaders would agree with the implications of this wise aphorism. But Trump's devious pastor and religious advisor Robert Jeffress has declared that evangelicals are so angry at Democrats at the impeachment inquiry that "removing the president from office ... will cause a Civil War-like fracture in this nation." It is a Bizarro World to hear religious advisors invoke the prospects of another Civil War if the Party trying to uphold the U.S. Constitution dares to defy the Lord/Supreme Leader wannabe.

Trump has retweeted this assertion, using it as a threat to motivate people to continue supporting him. The

Gospel's message of love is clear, according to the folks at Faithful America: "When politicians abuse their power and harm their people, Christ's followers must side with the oppressed -- not with the tyrants." Jeffress has chosen to side with the Power-Abuser-in-Chief rather than the poor and the downtrodden, revealing a preference to affiliate with the rich and powerful rather than the multitudes and the poor, who Jesus Christ blessed.

Robert Jeffress and the religious right, tempted by political strength and seduced by the power of giving Christian religious devotees more liberty and imposing their anti-choice dogmas on women worldwide, "lost their way a long time ago. They now have the same sinful symbiotic relationship with Donald Trump that the religious leaders of Jesus' time sought with the brutal Roman rulers. Jesus challenged that political arrangement, and we must call it out again today."

Talking to the Animals

Mark Twain, in *What is Man?*, observed, "It is just like man's vanity and impertinence to call an animal dumb because it is dumb to his dull perceptions. Heaven is by favor; if it were by merit your dog would go in and you would stay out. ... The fact that man knows right from wrong proves his intellectual superiority to the other creatures; but the fact that he can do wrong proves his moral inferiority to any creature that cannot."

My somewhat impressionistic line of thinking has haphazardly led me to a memory of an episode in a year-long journey I made around the world when I was in my twenties. The tethers that anchored me to my own persona had sufficiently unraveled that I was forced to give deeper consideration to who I actually was, and what I was doing. I felt as though I was drifting like a truck driver hurtling down a mountain highway when it's safe to "Let 'er drift". Volubility seized me, and the liberating refrain sounded in my head, "Ain't life grand?"

While spending three weeks trekking around the vast Annapurna Massif in Nepal, I began to talk to the animals, even the yaks, the polliwogs and the ravens. I gave enthusiastic encouragement to donkeys burdened with heavy loads that had big clanking bells around their necks. I asked the dogs if they were so sleepy because they had spent all night long barking. I gave congratulations to the spiders for the beauty of the large webs they wove. I challenged the intellect of the quizzical snorting water buffalo and I quizzed the lizards on their philosophical perspectives. I taunted the bravado of the vociferous crowing roosters ("lay low, you cocks!"). And I made fun of ducks on a pond as they cautiously swam toward me, hoping for a handout and yet at the same time being very wary of potential treachery. Hope and fear, I thought parenthetically, appear to be as fundamental to ducks as to human beings.

Were I to be in a similar state of mind today, as words bubble to the fore on October 4, 2019, I'd be muttering to every animal within a mile. To the coyotes yelping mournfully on the hillside outside my window in the dead of night, I'd swear at the events of the past week, with treacherous Donald Trump revealing his hubris in the face of deserved impeachment proceedings for seeking personal political advantages with such egomaniacal madness that he risks national and global security, and violations of the Constitution, to try to get the country of Ukraine and China to provide him with scandalous dirt on one of his potential political opponents in the upcoming 2020 elections.

I would get up, stretch, and stand with my arms akimbo, envisioning myself adjacent to a glass menagerie of endangered species, and summons over a wise old elephant matriarch that has been saved from the merciless poachers and the careless big game trophy hunters, and ask, "How can we protect the young, and all those to be born in future generations?" And I would offer my deepest apologies to her and all animals of every kind for the mindless hubris of mankind -- and the far-reaching consequential folly -- in slaughtering them and destroying their home habitats, and for allowing leaders to grab deciding control who are monomaniacal in their motivations to get money and status and power while zealously sacrificing the biosphere, even though this hacking away at the branches and roots of the tree of life inevitably and irreversible means driving them all toward eternal extinction.

Chipper the Cow: "I'm a glass-is-three-quarters-full kind of cow, and am confident in the fact that everything is all about me, so I lead a happy and cheerful life. Yay for me!"

Mark Twain: "Man is a Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion -- several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight."

Seeing It Like It Really Is

The ONLY way corrupt populist authoritarians are able to continue to get away with inflicting their harms upon the populace, and their scandals and swindles and demagogic despotism, is by dominating and restricting the democratic process and deceiving the citizenry. The international organization Transparency International has revealed in its Corruption Perceptions Index 2018 that there is an on-going failure in most countries to adequately control corruption, due to a crisis in democratic governments and institutions. They write, "Our research makes a clear link between having a healthy democracy and successfully fighting public sector corruption. Corruption is much more likely to flourish where democratic foundations are weak and, as we have seen in many countries, where undemocratic and populist politicians can use it to their advantage."

This crisis in democracy is taking place in many countries around the world. The data shows that despite some progress, most countries are failing to make serious inroads against corruption. "Corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions and, in turn, weak institutions are less able to control corruption."

Candidate Trump promised he would fill his administration with only the best people. Instead he has chosen the most treacherous saboteurs of the founding purposes and missions of government agencies, like men to head the EPA who staunchly oppose environmental protections, men to head the Department of the Interior who want to sell off public lands and mineral rights to corporate profiteers and allow them expanded opportunities to externalize costs of pollution onto the commons, and billionaire Betsy DeVos, who wants to dismantle public education to favor private profit-making charter schools and institutions making money from record levels of high cost student loans. And public treasury officials who will go along with enabling public borrowing swindles that use the illicit proceeds to enrich the power-abusing wealthy, foisting the burden of rising interest expense costs of this lavish generosity onto every taxpayer in every future year, forever.

Trump Republicans give the American people valid new reasons to distrust the government, and they use this feeling of distrust to double down on all these treacherous scams and wrongdoing. With corruption of our constitutional system being such a serious threat to our country, it is stunning that almost every GOP politician is so self-serving and cowardly that they are mainly worried about being verbally attacked by Donald Trump or losing a primary election or being upbraided or being criticized by spin-propagating commentators on Fox News.

Blind submission to authority is not patriotism, for it is much more honestly patriotic to express dissent against tyranny and evil acts. Some of our Founders wisely agreed with the old maxim, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." There is also truth in the saying, "All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent."

Rachel Maddow has made honorable efforts to present smart and accurate understandings to the public on big issues, and the contrast of MSNBC programming to far right Fox News programming is astonishing. The sudden fall from grace of the arch-conservative master manipulator Roger Ailes, the long-tenured CEO of Fox News, in July 2016 was a positive development for America, for his dark influence on selling tens of millions of Americans an extremely propagandized version of propriety that denies the need for revolutionarily positive social change and political reform and precautionary climate action has had a terribly deleterious impact in the world. Check out the documentary film *Outfoxed* to better understand the background of this influence.

Roger Ailes had been fired for sexual harassment in a women-demeaning culture in his media empire workplace, but his sins far transcend his mistreatment of females, for his influence in contributing to creating an excessively far right America has seriously harmed our democracy and the general welfare of the nation, and helped erode decency in public service and contributed to making our politics hyper-partisan. Under his opinion-manipulating control, Fox News began to be an excessively influential mouthpiece for obstructing honorable precautionary climate action and supporting aggressive authoritarianism and building up the military and empowering corporations at the expense of the vast majority of the people. Roger Ailes was unwittingly a driving force in the hubristic rise of Donald Trump, so good riddance to him!

Larger Purposes and Breaking Through

The unique capability of human beings to visualize the future with perceptive foresight allows us to control our destinies better than any other creature ever in existence. This ability has collectively given us greater control than any other animals over the biotic destiny of our home planet, for better or for worse. One would think that foresight would result in better stewardship of resources and a greater commitment to the healthy diversity of life on Earth, but it appears this is often not the case due to shortsightedness, excessive greed and the selfishly opportunistic "tragedy of people in the commons" nature of our economic and political systems.

The time has come today for us to undertake courageous and transformative actions to actually begin solving the daunting challenges facing humanity. It is time for us to honestly, boldly and intelligently use our foresight to achieve what John Steinbeck called "breaking through" on a wide front of the most important problems that confront us. NOW is the time to transcend political intransigence and the stubborn opportunism of vested interest groups, and to promote fairer priorities, and to embrace better plans and practices. NOW is the time to adopt saner ideas for a sustainable future.

The time has come to reject the status quo of wasteful consumerism and increasing inequities and trickle down deceptions. We should stop letting big corporations externalize so many costs and environmental damages onto society. We should take bold steps to end our dangerous and polluting addiction to fossil fuels. We should cease indulging in intergenerational exploitation and Ponzi-like schemes that myopically "rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul." We should strive with greater resolve to prevent violent conflicts. And we should take courageous steps to make healthcare and sensible family planning measures and contraceptives available to all women who want them.

The search for meaning, for true self, is what mythologist Joseph Campbell referred to as the hero's journey. Campbell believed in the importance of a muse that leads the mythic hero toward his or her poetic destiny. In this mythic dimension, the hero makes a spiritual quest toward self-realization, and pushes the horizons of his or her vision to ever larger vistas. We each make our own hero's journey of coping and survival and whatever personal measure of accomplishment, creativity and self-expression that we can achieve. The time has come today for everyone to become a little bit more of a hero in his or her own lives and communities by striving to help make the world a better place.

Joseph Campbell had a similar belief to that of Carl Jung, who felt strongly that life has a higher spiritual purpose than mere material goals or status seeking. Jung believed that our main task in life is to discover and fulfill our deep innate potential, much as an acorn strives to sprout and eventually attain its potential of becoming a mature and majestic oak tree. Based on his close study of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and other religious traditions, Jung perceived that this journey of transformation is at the mystical heart of all religions. He called this process *individuation*.

This journey to find the authentic self is a dynamic spiritual experience that is essential to our well-being. The fullest realization of this personal development is similar to Abraham Maslow's highest state of self-actualization in his pyramid of human needs, involving a healthy integration of awareness, wisdom, creativity, intuitive sensitivity, inner integrity, and service to greater causes. To become better citizens, every person should begin to embrace healthier ecological perspectives in our search for purpose and meaning, and to act in saner and more holistic ways.

In the pages below, I delve into the fascinating aspects of relationships between males and females and the underlying masculine and feminine impulses of our beings. One topic that has risen like butter in churned milk toward the top of these ideas is an issue of the counterproductive nature of military conflicts and their relationship to the domination of politics by testosterone-driven males in nations and churches worldwide. Interesting insights related to this topic will be articulated further on.

A Brief Catechism

The Old Testament of the Bible contains some of the stickiest stories ever told, sandwiched right there in the midst of a numbing cavalcade of begets and begats. Just think of these stories. There was the six-day Creation of the Universe, with humankind at its center. There was the "original sin" of Adam and Eve, who disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden when they partook of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There was the jealous conflict between Abel and Cain, two of the sons of Adam and Eve, in which Cain, who

cultivated the land, killed his younger brother Abel, who was a shepherd. There was the story of Noah, a 500-year-old man who built an ark at God's direction to save a pair of every kind of animal from a worldwide Great Flood that God was planning to wreak upon mankind in a divine fit of disappointment and anger. And there was the sublapsarian salvation story about God sacrificing his son Jesus, which supposes there will be a heavenly reward for people who have faith -- and eternal damnation for everyone else, ostensibly because they are sinners for not believing in the right God, and for not repenting for this absolute ultimate error.

Stories come in all stripes, some better than others, but these Genesis stories are real doozies. The contrast between the biblical Creation story and the best scientific ideas of how the Universe formed and evolved is like the contrast between an abstrusely nonsensical but pithy poem and a weighty encyclopedia of knowledge. The biblical story may have emotional advantages of simplicity and evocative depth of metaphorical meaning, but for the greater good and future well-being of humanity, Holy Scriptures should be rejected when they foment dangerous conflicts and divide people and interfere with the best aspects of good national planning.

Think about the symbol of a fish, a hallmark of Christianity. Consisting of two intersecting arcs that trace the outline of a fish, this symbol was used by persecuted Christians in early times as a secret symbol of identification. But, quite curiously and ironically, this religious symbol actually originated in pagan myths that related to the awareness of female fertility and representations of female sexuality and the natural force of women. Think about this in the context of *Genesis*.

Eve was the first woman, and she lived in the paradisiacal Garden of Eden. One fine day, a serpent approached her. Serpents, in those ancient times, were honored symbols of the sacred feminine in mythology and art in many cultures, like that of ancient Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs. Eve made the mistake of becoming Pandora reincarnate when she committed the worst of all sins ever -- the "Original Sin" of disobeying the all powerful male God. As an incidental result, all the world's woes were released upon mankind, and Eve was blamed for having brought pain, sorrow, enmity, privation, death and even a sad shame of nakedness into being.

I still am not clear why "the LORD God" was so adamant about prohibiting humans from knowing the moral difference between good and evil, or why 'He' was against this dimension of expanded awareness in humanity. For most of my life, I have felt that these opening scenes of Bible stories were ones that demeaned and diminished women. After all, they indicated that women should be subservient to men. Hence I saw these stories as a damning indictment of dogmas set forth by orthodox patriarchal religions. God is widely regarded as being an archetypally supreme and powerful male, similar to Zeus, the father of gods and men in the Greek pantheon. Patriarchal religions are further deserving of criticisms made by sensible feminists who malign authorities in churches for siding with political and cultural establishments worldwide in relegating females to inferior positions.

Imagine my pleasant surprise, then, upon hearing a marvelous new and more positive interpretation of the Genesis story. My eyes have been opened by the enlightened insights of an intriguing professor in a Lifelong Learning course who talks about the vital need for myth in our societies. This professor poignantly articulated an alternate perspective of the meaning of the Garden of Eden story. He stated that the main thing that makes human beings different from every other species of life on Earth is our awareness of the past and the present and the future, and our capacity for foresight and self-reflective understanding of our own existence, and our mortality.

When Eve dared to understand good and evil by partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, she was epitomizing the audacity of humanity in seizing the day to viscerally understand the context of human existence and moral judgment and societal commandments that helped guide early peoples who lived in agrarian societies. Eve was acting as a leader in adaptive impulses, and she was providing valuable guidance to help our ancestors coexist together in their struggle for survival.

The motto of the Enlightenment Era was *Sapere aude*: "Dare to know". When the first woman Eve exemplified the human desire to gain more visionary understanding, she thus symbolized the bold evolutionary impulse to symbolically seize the fire of clear awareness and foresight. Revealingly, in an earlier Creation story in Greek mythology, the Titan god Prometheus was believed to have created mankind from clay and then given the gift of fire to humanity. This act helped enable human progress and civilization, so Prometheus was regarded as a champion of mankind. Eve, it follows, was a main activist who helped humanity grab the initiative in gaining valuable

knowledge, and therefore she should be honored for having helped humanity to grow and adapt and create fairer understandings and relationships.

We should give respect to Eve for this heroic role, rather than condemning her and all her female descendants to live lives of pain and sorrow and subservience. Maybe we could even "grandfather in" all females in this recognition and approbation, and actually let them have more opportunities and influence in our societies, and fairer pay, and the freedom to have the primary say in all their personal health care and reproductive decisions.

Since Creation myths and religious doctrines are largely responsible for having relegated women to inferior roles in society, then a new guiding myth could revolutionarily alter this aspect of the status quo. A new and more modern and more sensible myth would give women expanded rights to have equal privileges to those of men.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights ...".

On Freedom

One of the most profound aspects of the great American experiment in democratic governance and guaranteed individual freedoms is that these ideals resonate with the human heart and spirit, and they are motivated by deep human desires to be able to think and act without undue restriction or repression. Personal and political freedom are arguably the most important founding principles in America, and they are humanity's "magnetic true north." People love to be able to do what they want, to go where they want to go, and to buy what they need and desire. Even more deeply, they want to be free from financial insecurity and from worries about medical care when they need it, and from insecurities associated with the challenging and stressful struggle to make an adequate living. Obviously, those who inherit a lot of money, or who make and save a lot of it, have much greater financial freedom than others, and structural barriers make improved social justice challenging to achieve.

Freedom has curiously become a hotly contested idea. The concept has been corrupted by radical conservatives to mean things that are actually antithetical to the idea of simple freedom. In his book *Whose Freedom? -- The Battle over America's Most Important Idea*, the famous cognitive scientist and linguist George Lakoff explores the stark contrast between the ideas of freedom held by progressives and those held by conservatives. Using deep psychological framing, the concept of freedom can be transmuted through misinformation, spin, and repetitive assertions into narrow rationalizations that are socially irresponsible, slavishly doctrinaire, distinctly cold-hearted and aggressively manipulative. A love of freedom can thus be perverted into support for regressive changes in tax laws and stubborn opposition to adaptive action, progressive ideas, government protections and ecologically intelligent initiatives.

A clear and far-seeing progressive narrative is needed to combat this distortion of values. Ideas matter, for they can have dramatic consequences. Ideas can be transformed, for better or for worse, into policies and actions that seriously affect people's lives. Modern freedoms are unprecedented to the extent they include expanded opportunities for work and travel and high standards of living. These freedoms allow us to acquire better knowledge and more accurate understandings, and they extend our horizons and perspectives. But at the same time, wider choices create heightened insecurities and daunting new uncertainties and greater psychological challenges in dealing with rapid change and increasing complexity. Vested interest groups exploit a veritable multitude of conflicting worldviews in efforts to persuade people of their own version of "truths", and their contentions often differ from experienced evidence that resonates most closely with our personal experiences.

Make no mistake about it, more extensive knowledge is available to humankind today than ever before in human history. This knowledge is widely disseminated in schools, books, newspapers, magazines and films, and on the Internet. But critical thinking skills and fair-mindedness are required for us to be clearer in the way we interpret and understanding the world. It is time for us to use this awareness to make propitious changes in our societies, and to ensure a greater probability of well-being and societal health that will help our species to prosper and survive.

Radical conservatives speak of freedom as meaning paying less tax and striving for security by having a strong and aggressive military. They regard freedom as being allowed unrestricted rights to own guns, being able to pursue

self-interest with minimal restrictions, and being allowed to exploit natural resources and engage in real estate development with only a minimum of limitations imposed by the government. And conservatives also tend to believe freedom is best assured by having a retributive justice system that harshly punishes those who violate the law. This has unjustly contributed to the U.S. having the worst per capita incarceration rate of any country in the world. And statistics reveal that deep racial injustices pervade the status quo of this hyper-costly system. These are perverse facts of a system that cherishes freedom!

In contrast, progressive-minded people believe in different ways of ensuring freedom. They believe freedom would be best achieved by guaranteeing equal rights to women and men; by ensuring fairness of opportunity, legal justice, and good affordable public education for all; by enforcing rules that make competition fair and protect consumers from abusive monopoly practices; by focusing the economic system on healthy communities, general prosperity and the common good rather than expanded privileges for the wealthy; by taking effective steps to prevent our economic and political systems from being rigged in ways that increasingly concentrate wealth, power and influence in the hands of the few; by protecting workers from corporate abuses, workplace hazards and toxic wastes; by having a political system that demands honesty, openness, fair representation and cooperative problem-solving; and by establishing a much more progressive tax structure that promotes the common wealth and helps build a more secure infrastructure in which individual freedoms are maximized.

Progressives also believe that freedom would be augmented by maintaining an affordable social safety net for all people that assures adequate medical care and prevents dire poverty, especially in vulnerable childhood and old age; by having a fair legal system that protects people from injustice, discrimination and hate; by ensuring that "tragedy of the commons" outcomes are prevented through protections from degradation of parks, public lands, open spaces, national forests, wilderness areas, rivers, streams, oceans, fisheries, public beaches, aquifers and the atmosphere; and by requiring that the interests of future generations be protected from rash resource depletion and habitat destruction, as well as from preventable pollution, environmental harms, widespread species extinctions, economic disruptions, and excessive increases in public debt.

Progressive visions of freedom demand an effective separation of church and state so that every person is guaranteed religious freedom, and no one can impose their beliefs on anyone else who happens to believe in a different God -- or not to believe in a God at all. In the conservative view, there is only one true God, and social conservatives and religious fundamentalists want to be assured the right to try to convert others to a belief in their God by having children pray in public schools, or by posting the Ten Commandments in public places. They want the government to let "faith-based initiatives" determine how poverty and charity are handled. They want to deny women the ability to decide how to plan their families or to make reproductive choices in their lives.

I strongly believe that progressive attitudes are vitally important, and that reactionary conservatism is the wrong approach to a healthier society. There simply is not a jealous and vindictive God who will punish us and our descendants to the third and fourth generation for believing in any truths that are broader, more modern, more ecumenical, more honest and more ecologically sane than the ones adduced in various holy books.

One overarching issue concerning personal liberties is the freedom of women to choose their own destinies. The honorable "Notorious R.B.G.", Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, is a strong advocate for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights. She has a powerful and sensible message about reproductive rights: "The decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself. When Government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a fully adult human responsible for her own choices."

We should honorably reject discriminatory biases, racist bigotry, hatred, nationalistic aggression and religion-inspired conflicts, and begin to pour our energies into extensive and intelligent efforts to improve the quality of life for the majority of people alive today. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the overarching importance of protecting the prospects of people in future generations. In particular, I believe we need to reject the narrow orthodoxy of established worldviews that say we should accept a system of unfettered capitalism and allow giant corporations to rule roughshod over the people.



I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin', because I'm free ...



--- *Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head*, a song written by Hal David and Burt Bacharach

An Underground Declaration

My good friend the underground Mole, snug in his home, communicates his pithy, eccentric wisdom: "Roiled by the vicissitudes of fate and the machinations of the entitled folks, the little guys squirm with anxious cares and try to drown their sorrows with a bottle or a joint."

Still, astutely, he observes that there is a very simple cure that would reduce the need for people to seek these compensatory indulgences: **"Improve reality!"**

"Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made"

There is a really Bizarro World aspect to political partisanship these days, with conservatives taking stances against conservation, conservatives acting in ways broadly antithetical to precautionary principles, and zealous "pro-life" anti-choice conservatives staunchly opposing honorable and responsible actions to leave a livable planet to our descendants or to prevent the extinction of a million species of life on Earth. For whom does the bell toll, and who does the ringing tocsin really incriminate and indict?

There are a lot of great causes in the world, and sadly, conservatives want to slash funding for almost all of them. Gotta control spending to keep the \$1 trillion annual deficits from riskily spiraling further out of control, in order to pay for the huge tax breaks they have given to rich people as a quid pro quo for lavishly generous contributions that these conniving power-abusers make to our corrupted representatives. Remember that the Republican Tax Cut scam rammed through Congress in December 2017 was done without the support of a single Democrat, and it gave gargantuan tax breaks to people benefitting from the swindle who don't need the money.

How can they get away a minute longer with staunch denials that they are engaging in willful blindness by letting Big Money interests corrupt our national priorities and policies, and undermine democratic fair-mindedness.

Obstacles in the Path of Social Improvement

I often think about the three dominant types of social institutions in modern human civilizations: churches, corporations, and governments. It seems like all three of these categories of institutions are failing us today in times of increasingly desperate need. All of them are subject to a variety of influences that pervert and corrupt their purposes. Excessive power and ill-used money are the most distinct of these socially undesirable influences.

Money buys politicians and influence, just as it did in Mark Twain's day, when he observed that we have the best government that money can buy. Make no mistake about it, Mark Twain was being cynical; we did not have good government in his day, and we will not have good governance in modern times until we courageously limit the extent to which Big Money dictates our national, state and local policies. Money plays a dominant role in corrupting our political system and unduly influencing our representative's attention and priorities. Hopes for political solutions to the overarching problems we face in the world seem to be diminishing as a result of entrenched interest influence, extreme ideological partisanship, Tea Party fervor, uncompromising political intransigence and the ominous rise of temperamentally unfit D.J. Trump to become the harsh face of the Republican Party. This state of affairs makes it clear that we need far-reaching reforms to our dysfunctional political system and the institutional bribery that drives it.

An "ethical rot" has been affecting Washington D.C. in recent decades due to the enormous amount of money being spent on lobbying activities to get our representatives to give special interest groups what they want. This has contributed to a wide variety of federal government failings. Robert Kaiser writes provocatively about this in his book, *So Damn Much Money: The Triumph of Lobbying and the Corrosion of American Government*. We should find better ways to limit the influence of lobbyists and the role Big Money plays in financing election campaigns, and in influencing the people who represent us to champion narrowly focused and misguided goals.

The worst nightmares of conservatives tend to be "Big Government", while the worst nightmares of liberals tend to focus on the corruption of government by "Big Business". In *Cadillac Desert*, writer Marc Reisner assesses political

corruption and intrigue that has historically been involved in billion-dollar battles over water rights in the American West, and he sees that our leaders have managed to exploit the situation to rape our environment while simultaneously bilking taxpayers out of billions of dollars in order to practically give away cheap water rights to powerful agribusinesses. One reviewer provocatively expresses the opinion that water policy in the U.S. is "a form of financial vandalism of the future" that "has made us rich, but our descendants insecure." Liberals and conservatives need to come together to find common ground, which will most likely be found in policies that are in the best interests of all Americans, including those in future generations.

Twelve score years ago in 1776, revolutionary issues stirred the American colonies. The desire was very strong for independence from the British mercantile economic system and the despotic monarchy, and the colonists were deeply angry at taxation without fair representation. Today, curiously, we have achieved taxation *with* representation, but wouldn't you know it, the representation is really lousy!

Let us pause and reflect as the years slide slowly past, and let the big issues of today percolate in the interstices of our minds. Let the holistic right hemispheres of our brains have greater influence! With this *Stroke of Insight*, we see that much must be done!

A Clarion Call for Common Sense Action

A major transformation is required to bring humanity into a more sustainable harmony with nature and life on Earth, and the best way to achieve this is by intelligent design — using smart and properly designed incentives and disincentives to motivate people to do the right things: to conserve, to respect ecological limits, to actuate common good goals, to promote stronger protections of public health, to invest in the longer term greater good for a much bigger proportion of the populace, and to enthusiastically embrace shared values of connection, community, collaborative problem-solving, family planning and sustainability.

What we are wont to want — and what we truly NEED! — are good leaders. Honest leaders. Responsible leaders. Leaders concerned with the greater good, both right now and in coming years and decades and centuries. This new breed of leaders must be truly cognizant of what to do, in the most expansive and inclusive ways achievable, and how to be effective in doing it. We need a government that is responsive to the needs of the American people, that values transparency and honesty over greed and corruption, and that does not engage in extreme amounts of secrecy and stonewalling, or climate science denial, or wanton damages to ecosystems, or violations of intelligent precautionary principles, or selfish refusals to lead responsibly.

It is politically impossible to achieve this better leadership, says pernicious "Moscow Mitch" McConnell, who along with his cronies in government and business stand athwart the path of sane action, treacherously plotting against the common good in order to reward wealthy donors and the fossil fuel industry and the NRA, who are corrupting our system.

Voters should throw the self-described "Grim Reaper" Mitch McConnell out of office, for he is severely undermining truly righteous and responsible actions, and failing to protect our elections from interference by foreign operatives, and taking large sums of money from the NRA in return for preventing sensible steps to regulate gun sales and reduce mass shootings. And he unconscionably and abjectly fails to achieve a proper stewardship of creation.

Trump Republicans have seriously undermined our democracy by encouraging interference in our elections and our governing by Russians, the NRA gun lobby, Wall Street, giant corporations especially including the fossil fuel industry and other Big Polluters, Big Pharma, system-corrupting crony capitalists like the billionaires Charles and David Koch, white supremacists, extremely partisan conservatives, and the Federalist Society, which seeks to stack federal courts with corporate corruption-enabling right-wing judges who use culture war issues to tip the scales of justice toward lenience in allowing worker exploitation, fiscal swindles, the sale of public lands, the excessive depletion of natural resources, cost externalizing schemes and detrimental environmental harms.

After an impeachment investigation was officially announced on September 24, Trump began acting even more panicky, and he almost immediately met with the Wayne LaPierre, the head of the National Rifle Association, to discuss how the gun rights organization and powerful gun manufacturers' right-wing lobby could bankroll his legal

defense against impeachment. In return, LaPierre asked that Trump's White House "stop the games" over gun control, as an ironic reciprocal quid pro quo of selling out public safety as a type of protection racket for his bid to stay in power.

Trump is apparently quite willing to allow mass shooting casualties to continue unabated, without even consideration to background checks on all arms sales or national red-flag laws, or prohibitions of people from buying assault weapons if they are on the terrorist watch list or have been treated for being mentally ill. There is no higher Constitutional crime than a leader putting his own corrupt dealings and self-interest ahead of our shared national interest.

The NRA already has spent years conspiring to limit gun violence research, restrict gun violence data sharing and aggressively trying to block every piece of sensible gun violence prevention legislation proposed on any level, local state or federal." This is crazy.

This contributes to the current chaotic Trumpian status quo, in which our leaders are completely crazily devastating our home planet, and our societies are being deeply divided by operatives who incite strife, and daze and confuse the populace and pit them at loggerheads against each other over what plans are proper, fair, smart, most advantageous and more in accord with common sense.

Critically important causes require more funding and public support. We simply must begin to invest much more money in protections of the environment and prospects of a stable climate and the sustainability of life on Earth. And in safer infrastructure. And public education, and reducing the opprobrious and dangerous levels of debt owed by students and their parents. Etc.

But instead, our power-abusing leaders are rashly continuing to push a corrupt agenda with a top priority of cutting taxes in a regressive-structured way, which mostly benefits people who don't need the money in the least. Meanwhile, more than 60% of Americans do not have enough savings to cover a \$1,000 emergency. And the population of homeless people is bigger right now than it has ever been, and the population of people in prisons is the largest in the world; and this, in the wealthiest country in world history — and the most debt-burdened. The causative factors implicated are shameful.

A Perspicacious Perspectives Articulated on August 1, 2016

Another sensational voice has recently been heard. The marvelous author Tony Schwartz published a book that I highly admire, titled *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America*. In this thought-provoking book, Schwartz relates the very interesting details of his wide-ranging search for wisdom in America through the consideration of many modes of thought and exploration that have been pursued in the past century. Does happiness matter most? Personal connectedness in friendships and love? Physical and psychological health? Authenticity? Integrity? Spiritual enlightenment?

Sensationally, Tony Schwartz was able to spend more than a year writing this great book because he made a fair amount of money ghostwriting Donald Trump's 1987 memoir, *The Art of the Deal*. Now Schwartz now come out with an anguished lament in *The New Yorker* magazine about having been the credited co-author of Trump's exploits and accomplishments, saying they were so exaggerated that they bear little resemblance to reality. The book helped make Trump "an emblem of a successful tycoon", so Schwartz effectively spawned a dangerous man, like a modern day Dr. Frankenstein. The main concern Schwartz now expresses is not Trump's ideology -- for Trump seems to be lacking in having articulated any coherent ideology -- but of his "personality, which Schwartz considered pathologically impulsive and self-centered."

"I put lipstick on a pig," says Schwartz. "I feel a deep sense of remorse that I contributed to presenting Trump in a way that brought him wider attention and made him more appealing than he is." He went on, "I genuinely believe that if Trump wins and gets the nuclear codes there is an excellent possibility it will lead to the end of civilization."

Tony Schwartz is ironically the son of Felice Schwartz, the founder of a nonprofit organization that works to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and businesses. That seems pretty darn contrary to what Trump has left in his wake in the business world, considering his cheating people, multiple bankruptcies, tax fraud and the long litany of his other shenanigans.

Think about the small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan's extraordinary idea of measuring the well-being of a nation by championing policies that are most likely to lead to "Gross National Happiness" Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley once elaborated, with this observation: "The four pillars of Gross National Happiness are the promotion of equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development, the preservation and promotion of cultural values, the conservation of the natural environment, and the establishment of good governance."

The most glaring and contradictory contrast to this noble concept of "Gross National Happiness" is found in Donald Trump's greed for money and lust for power and ominous prescriptions for what resembles a twisted Grottesque National Dystopia. This dark vision of authoritarian rogue rule and reactionary law-and-order is proving to be a dire development for fair-mindedness and personal freedoms, for it is stoking inequities and ramping up strife and imposing repressive measures and increasing social injustices. It also involves destabilizing trade protectionism and tariff wars and betrayed trust and broadening conflicts. Go-it-alone isolationism and racism and sexism and xenophobia and anti-immigrant, anti-refugee national policies are a horrible modus operandi, and real bad for society.

Candidate Trump asserted in a Nevada primary victory speech that he would "get greedy for the United States ... to grab and grab and grab ... to bring in so much money and so much everything." His greed, it turns out, is for himself almost exclusively, and his grabbing is causing side effects that are inimical to well-being.

Trump is one of the most egregious examples of a dishonorable vulture capitalist who has ever lusted after political power in the USA. His aggressive use of lawsuits and his cheating of many people in Atlantic City and at Trump U are deeply disturbing. He has used high-priced lawyers and thousands of lawsuits to bully communities to get his narrowly self-interested way in real estate deals, and he has often refused to pay employees and contractors and suppliers. These offensives cost taxpayers large sums of money. To apply this business model and level of personal hostility to dealings by the U.S. government would almost certainly prove to be disastrous.

This perspicacious perspective from August 2016 concluded, "And alarm bells sound every time Trump expresses admiration for authoritarian tyrants like Vladimir Putin, Mohammed bin Salman, Benito Mussolini, and Kim Jong-il and his son Kim Jong-un. Don't be fooled into giving support to this deceiver and con man!"

Politicians who exploit the politics of division are often the same ones who champion policies that widen the gaps between the haves and the have nots. Trump has been exploiting people's fears and paranoia and insecurities and bigotry, emulating two of his mentors, the red-baiting demagogue Joseph McCarthy and the unscrupulously manipulative lawyer Roy Cohn. Like McCarthy and Cohn, he is a bald opportunist who has no scruples and who seeks power and fame and notoriety for self-aggrandizing purposes and the satisfaction of greed and lust for domineering influence.

Most American citizens, and a modestly higher proportion of non-citizen immigrants, are decent people, of reasonably good will. Trump Republicans have seized on the diabolically incisive truth that cultivating ill-will between various factions of the citizenry can be dramatically beneficial to their own greedy, power usurping personal interests, and they show an unbelievably unconscionably irresponsible zeal for abusing the illegitimate power they so gain. They just love controlling and exploiting others, and profiting from the costly policies they corruptly impose on them that are highly detrimental to the people and the greater good.

These conniving master manipulators also see that hate is generally a more powerful motivating influence than love, and the ways they take advantage of this insidious insight result in a fraying of social cohesion and immoral actions and morbidly harmful outcomes.

.Our Founders postulated that true legitimacy of democratic fair-mindedness is found in the consent of the governed. True consent is NOT obtained through manipulative deceit, fear-mongering propaganda, emotion-hijacking rhetoric, coercive intimidation or entitled power-abusing insecurity-exploiting hubris.

Think of the context of where the Republican Party stands today. Republicans have used a hard-times swindle ever since Ronald Reagan took office in 1981. They have strived to crush collective bargaining rights of workers and give a much bigger share of the money generated in the economy to the top 1%, and they propagate big lies about this tactic being best for the populace because it will trickle down to them. And they allow Big Money to corrupt

our national decision-making, so that the legislature and the courts can be stacked with "conservatives" who champion this harshly unfair rigging of the system. They simultaneously are the loudest champions of international trade deals that give big corporations more power to offshore jobs and exploit workers and wreak havoc on the environment, both at home and abroad, and they vociferously blame liberals for the sadly opprobrious outcomes. They also strive to amplify the private profiteering that can be achieved by foisting costs onto society that taxpayers must pay or that must be added to the national debt, causing heightened risks of another financial crisis. And they strive to impose austerity onto students and families by cutting funding for public schools and environmental protections and healthcare for the "losers" in this mega-scam

Woe to the peoples of the world! Both Bernie Sanders and D.J. Trump tapped into the anger, frustration and desperation that people in the devastated working class feel because of these extremely unjust, anti-egalitarian and socially unsustainable gambits.

Trump has stoked anti-establishment sentiments in the USA by charging that our international trade agreements are extremely bad deals. And sure enough, when we let giant multinational corporate entities write many of the provisions in these trade agreements, they inevitably slip in rigged provisions designed to generate private profits at the expense of the vast majority of the people. The most consequentially problematic provisions in trade agreements are ones that artificially inflate profits (with real Big Bucks!), and force society as a whole to pay for this excessive generosity. Trade agreements like NAFTA have served to send millions of manufacturing jobs abroad while mercilessly exploiting low-wage workers in cheap labor countries like China and Mexico. NAFTA also served to bankrupt more than a million farm laborers in Mexico, forcing many of them to emigrate as undocumented immigrants to the United States.

Whenever you listen to Donald Trump speak about trade, "always keep in front of your mind that he is peddling a con," wrote one observer. Though he slams trade agreements made by "the politicians," he promises to negotiate "great deals" but never explains what will be in those deals. He claims they will benefit "our workers," but doesn't mention his earlier statement that "wages are too high. We're not going to be able to compete against the world."

In a speech in Pittsburgh, he criticized "powerful corporations" and "the people who rigged the system for their benefit" who "will do anything -- and say anything -- to keep things exactly as they are". Then a few minutes later, he complained the system wasn't rigged enough: "We tax and regulate and restrict our companies to death." He has previously declared he would begin trade negotiations by unilaterally slashing corporate income taxes -- a move that would mostly benefit the already rich. And that is what Trump Republicans did in December 2017, without a single vote of support from representatives of more than 50% of the citizenry.

As an outcome of international trade agreements, workers are too often unfairly exploited, and social safety net costs are driven up, and the national debt increases unnecessarily, and we foolishly allow the rashly wasteful depletion of natural resources and the shortsighted skyrocketing of environmental damage costs. To allow profits to be privatized and costs to be socialized is anathema to intelligently prioritized national planning.

Trump has rashly exploited the anger and deep insecurities and widening inequalities that trade agreements have contributed to bringing into being. But his simplistic and sketchy proposals to fix the problems would not honestly address the underlying issues, or would make them tragically worse.

A century ago, Republicans advocated and defended tariffs on imported goods, and Democrats enacted a controversial tariff reform package that included a breakthrough: a constitutional amendment to establish the income tax. Today, the ideological lines on trade are still pronounced. Trump likes to offshore manufacturing of some of his own products abroad to save money on production costs, but he advocates new tariffs to protect domestic industries that would likely cause trade wars. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and other progressive populists do not favor trade protectionism like Trump does and Republican President William McKinley did in the early 1900s. Today's progressive populists don't want to build economic walls, because they see the many civilizing advantages of fair trade between partners, and they are not narrow-minded nationalists. As Bernie Sanders explained during the campaign, "fair trade means to say that it is fair. It is roughly equivalent to the wages and environmental standards in the United States." In other words, he wants to lift up the standards in other countries, not drag ours down.

"Progressive populists want fair trade rules that lift up labor, health, human rights and environmental standards across the globe, so we can build an economy that works for everyone, everywhere. What progressive populists oppose are skewed trade rules that allow corporations to profit off weak standards at the expense of the middle class and the poor."

Donald Trump is not a Bernie Sanders populist. He doesn't really care about raising standards at home or abroad. He never even speaks the words "labor," "health," "human rights" or "environment" when he talks about trade deals. He champions tariffs to protect domestic profits, and this has nothing to do with progressive visions of higher wages and better standards, because he has made it clear that he really favors lower wages and lesser standards.

"Trump's brand of protectionism doesn't move America and the world forward. It turns the clock back to the Gilded Age. Don't buy the con."

--- Bill Scher

The Turkish government ordered the closing of more than 100 media outlets in July 2016 in the aftermath of a military coup attempt. This included newspapers, publishing companies and television channels, and is a part of a sweeping crackdown following the failed coup. I speculated during the 2016 election run-up that "this could easily be a prelude to what the exceedingly thin-skinned, power hungry, bombastic, law-and-order proclaiming, litigious, Constitution-disrespecting phony strong man Trump might do in the USA if he manages to fool the American people into giving him the power of the presidency."

Well, the American people were bamboozled just enough, by a margin of a total of less than 78,000 votes in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, that Trump was able to grab power, usurp it, and brazenly abuse it in a pathological breadth of maliciously wrongheaded ways. He has wielded power harshly and harmfully and dangerously for 2 years and 8 months, until finally on Sept. 24, 2019, the Speaker of the House initiated official impeachment investigations over the latest shady dealings, these in Ukraine.

"Your word is your bond", stated the third Mrs. Trump at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, directly plagiarizing a speech made by Michelle Obama at the Democratic National Convention in 2008. She also claimed that her husband was a kind and inclusive man, not a divisive one, declaring "Donald intends to represent all the people, not just some of the people. That includes Christians and Jews and Muslims. It includes Hispanics and African Americans and Asians, and the poor and the middle class."

WHAAAT? Whoever wrote that script for her seems to have been desperately trying to sell a contradictory version of her bombastic husband that is completely unrecognizable, after a rude primary election season that featured hate-mongering, racist and sexist statements, and the most outrageously divisive rhetoric in memory. Melania's partially plagiarized speech makes her seem to be trying to be a bigger deceiver than the Trickster Trump himself! "Stand by your man," I guess ...

Her characterization flagrantly contradicts Trump's rhetoric in numerous assertions he has made about rival Republicans, Mexicans, Muslims and women. Does she really believe he is inclusive? Has Trump been lying about his extremely divisive and destabilizing plan to deport millions of illegal immigrants living in the U.S., and to implement a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States", and to radically stoke inequality by giving huge tax cuts to rich people like himself, and to punish women who get an abortion? Or was Melania Trump trying to broadly deceive the American people?

When Mrs. Trump III cast her husband at the Republican National Convention as a champion of diverse racial and religious backgrounds, she set up an inconsistent picture of her alpha male husband as a loving man, in stark contrast to the image he has earned as a divisive bigot and a cheating, lying, vulture capitalist exploiter. How can this new portrayal be squared with Trump's statement some years ago: "... laziness is a trait in blacks. It really is; I believe that. It's not anything they can control."

In extraordinary contrast to the sociopathic character of Donald Trump, Barack Obama has been a classy model of

dignity and intelligence and integrity and grace under pressure. Obama chooses his words carefully to reassure and calm, while Trump quickly blames and inflames. The Obama administration has been remarkably scandal free, despite vociferous criticism and opposition from extreme political adversaries. Obama is an exemplary husband and father and human being.

Huck observed, "I seen how it's possible to take things and twist them into whatever shape you want, and *see them another way entirely that don't have no resemblance to the truth.*"

Trump has been one of the most notorious abusers of power, using underhanded business tactics, and unethically cheating suppliers and contractors, and exploiting students at Trump U, and ripping off the public, and employing a phalanx of shrewd lawyers to make money for himself at the expense of many individuals and communities. Trump has for many years aggressively fought to protect the secrecy of his businesses and family, and hide his tax returns, and today he has gone to similarly great lengths to protect the secrecy of his campaign and administration's inner workings.

It seems clear that Trump represents a billionaire's cutthroat crony capitalism, along with risky banking deregulation, extremely regressive and anti-egalitarian tax plans, opposition to climate action, and a much more aggressive stance on a blowback-inducing Orwellian endless "war on terror."

Trump also seems like a habitual liar. The fact-checking organization PolitiFact declared their 2015 Lie of the Year to be the "various statements" made by Trump. PolitiFact found that 75% of Trump's statements that they reviewed were rated "Mostly False," "False" or "Pants on Fire. Additionally, Trump is "a believer in the big-lie theory," according to one of his lawyers. He believes that, "If you say something again and again, people will believe you." This conviction is reminiscent of George W. Bush's Machiavellian observation, "See, in my line of work you got to keep repeating things over and over and over again for the truth to sink in, to kind of catapult the propaganda." Fast forward a few years, and Trump's Lie-o-Meter now contains more than 12,000 false or misleading claims, according to the Washington Post's Fact Checker.

We need more honest leaders, not ones who try to divide people for personal gain by exploiting their prejudices and fears and antagonisms. Our leaders have a serious responsibility to find common ground for the greater good of all, rather than to sow division and whip up hatred. Trump's checkered career was not as a politician, and true to his retrograde character, he appears to have no idea what ethical public service should be about.

The halcyon days of petty frauds and charlatans during Huck Finn's times seem to be an age of veritable innocence compared to the mega frauds of modern reactionary master manipulators who strive to deceive the populace into supporting them so that they can perpetuate the über crime of borrowing trillions of dollars from people in the future, dangerously increasing the already gargantuan national debt, to finance low tax rates on the highest levels of incomes so that the rich can become richer.

After his pathetically greedy and exploitive and litigious business career, Trump has set his sights on political power and has used the most despicable methods to get media attention by exploiting racist suspicions of Barack Obama not being an American and then vanquishing his 16 Republican primary opponents through outrageous accusations, schoolboy insults and character assassinations, and by taking advantage of millions of American people's anger, insecurities, misunderstanding, conspiracy theories, gullibility and ignorance.

"Enough is enough. This country and our government belong to all of us, not just a handful of billionaires."

--- Senator Bernie Sanders

The choice we make at this juncture will make a huge difference in the fate of humanity. I believe it is our overarching obligation to choose to build bridges not walls, to seek fair trade not trade wars, to unite rather than to agitate and rancorously divide, to avoid excessive litigiousness, to honorably protect freedoms of the press and expression, and to honestly strive to provide true conditions for liberty and justice for all.

We are faced with a turbulent future, and Hillary Clinton would have proven to be a much better choice than Trump to lead us, especially since she and the Democratic Party were prodded in 2016 toward a fairer platform by Bernie Sanders. Trump is a diabolically shrewd billionaire huckster who urges us to give him authoritarian power to set things rigidly straight, with crooked timbers, but his proposals reek of racketeering for the rich, and they

ominously offer agitated rancor, excessively litigious divisiveness, fraudulent misguidance, dishonest bait-and-switch misdirection, and vindictive leadership by a mercurial and pathologically narcissistic self-interest promoting trickster.

A Call for a Bill of Rights for Future Generations

Thomas Paine recognized back in 1776 that growth in the number of people living together in modern societies made it necessary to design a system of representation that would modify simple democracy into a form of governance capable of fairly confederating all the various interests that compete for advantages, privileges, wealth and security. He wrote in *Common Sense* that we would be wise to seek better ways of accomplishing this, and in particular, that we should avoid disenfranchising people who are too young to vote. He saw that this was necessary to ensure we do not betray the potential well-being of all people in future generations. To achieve this goal, we should responsibly create a Bill of Rights for Future Generations, as advocated by the Cousteau Society -- and as specifically articulated in the Earth Manifesto.

Many things are desirable from the standpoint of society as a whole, like good and affordable public schools, a strong national defense, adequate protections of citizens by police and firefighters, a fair system of laws and justice and courts and prisons, well-run government agencies that are effective in protecting citizens from abuses, effective disaster relief programs, well-maintained roads and water systems and power grids and other physical infrastructure, protected public lands, and an affordable social safety net for senior citizens and poor people and the young. Since these things are vital for a healthy modern society, it makes sense to have them financed by the populace as a whole.

But we collectively seem to want "to eat our cake and have it too"; we want these social goods, but we do not want to pay for them in full. So in recent decades we have engaged in the fiscally irresponsible expediency of record levels of deficit spending, and historically low tax rates for the top 1%, and we have thereby indulged in foisting huge costs onto taxpayers in the future by borrowing large sums of money.

Ironically, "conservatives" have been the ones most responsible for ramping up the national debt. During Ronald Reagan's eight years as President, the national debt increased more than 200%. During the four years of George H. Bush's tenure, the debt increased 56%; during George W. Bush's administration, the debt increased 77%. In contrast, during the eight years of the presidency of Bill Clinton, the federal deficit increased just 40%. It is curious that, despite deceptive rhetoric by Republicans in opposition to big government, federal spending under the last five Republican Presidents since the 1960s increased by twice as much as it did under Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, and spending increases during the 8-year tenure of Barack Obama were even more surprisingly low.

It is only the deceptions and discipline of the right-wing messaging machine that convinces most Americans that Democrats rather than Republicans are the most profligate with the public's money!

Deficit spending is a highly undisciplined course of action that is feasible only because all Americans under the age of 18, and all those yet to be born, have no voice in our political system. This is a reprehensibly egregious form of taxation without representation. Here is another reason that a Bill of Rights for Future Generations is so distinctly needed -- to prevent such rashly undisciplined fiscal irresponsibility. Deficit spending is a fiscal indignity that mortgages the future, adding on to many other serious affronts to our heirs in the form of our profligate waste of resources, the dumping of toxins, pollutants and greenhouse gases into the commons, the myopic damaging of ecosystems, and the indiscriminate assaults, both intentional and inadvertent, on the biological diversity of life on Earth.

A Marvelous Epiphany

Jennifer Siebel Newsom produced a brilliant advocacy documentary film titled *Miss Representation* in 2011. In a just world, there would be much more powerful ripple effects of the waves emanating from this film, because it is concerned with the distorting influence of the way females are misrepresented in various mediums of Big Media. There are many male frogs around the pond who feel they have an inviolate interest in keeping women in inferior economic and political roles in our societies. This isn't merely an issue of sexual double standards or a lack of respect for females in our male-dominated cultures; it is really an issue of significantly lower wages for women

than men, on average, and of widespread gender discrimination in the workplace and in religious institutions -- and of wholly inadequate representation of women in politics.

Pregnant with implications, Jennifer Lynn Siebel's message bears repeating and inclusion in this *Feminine Vision*. The following seven paragraphs are accordingly borrowed from the Earth Manifesto essay *Huckleberry Finn, the Forty-Niners Gold Rush, and a Resurrection of Mark Twain's Perspectives*:

This compelling film is filled with interesting information and insights into the powerful influence that mass media outlets like television, magazines, movies and the Internet exercise in creating sexualized, titillating, trivializing and demeaning attitudes toward women. This is a skewed representation of females in our male-dominated culture that distorts important perspectives and diminishes feminine ways of seeing the world. As a result, females are often judged far more by their bodies, hair, appearance, clothes and shoes, rather than by their brains, effectiveness, accomplishments, talent or other valuable virtues. Such narrow-minded attitudes affect humanity in far-reaching ways that really should be more clearly understood.

The mass media plays a large role in contributing to a negative status quo of curiously biased and perversely degrading portrayals of women. In significant part, this status quo is a result of the domination of the media by a handful of giant media conglomerates controlled by men in positions of ownership and on their Boards of Directors and in top management. It turns out that inadequate representation of women in positions of control in media companies has a big adverse influence on women in society at large. This leads to less-important roles for women, and a general underrepresentation of females in boardrooms, management and politics.

The representation of women in American politics bizarrely ranks 90th in the world in the number of women in Congress or national legislative equivalents. Ninetieth is NOT an adequate showing for us to present to the world in this important gauge of social fairness. Out of a total of some 200 countries around the globe, this is a pathetic statistic, revealing one reason why women are treated so unfairly in pay and status and privilege in America. This fact is also a sad contributing factor to making our national decision-making unfair, poorly prioritized, and extremely partisan.

Biases in the media have the effect of hindering progress toward vitally important goals like allowing women more power and more equal opportunities. Fairer representation for women is needed to improve our decision-making by taking into account the valuable perspectives and best interests of the 51% of Americans who are female. ...

The sexualization of women is accompanied by an idolizing of youth, sexiness, thin bodies, long legs, and alluring cleavage. These ways of representing women tend to diminish how women are able to compete and find fulfillment in many roles in society. It is no wonder that females as a consequence have deep insecurities about their appearances, and why they spend so much money on things like clothes, jewelry, handbags, shoes and makeup -- and facelifts, and breast implants, and other types of plastic surgery that have become a rapid growth industry.

The media also helps create deeply ingrained stereotypes of males in our societies. These are characterizations that help define the respective roles played by the genders. These associations are extremely complex, so it is difficult to generalize about them accurately, or even to clearly grasp the big picture. But it is provocatively compelling to see how deeply social roles are affected by images in the media. Jennifer Siebel Newsom's new film *The Mask You Live In* explores American masculinity, and promises to reveal interesting aspects of male roles.

The relative absence of fair representation of a group in the media is known by the daunting term "symbolic annihilation." Gaye Tuchman, a sociology professor, divides this concept of symbolic annihilation into three aspects: omission, trivialization, and condemnation. The use of narrow stereotypes in the portrayal of women is a subsidiary means of symbolically annihilating them. Consult with any woman, or for that matter any gay man, lesbian, black person, Latino or other devalued minority, and they will likely describe some of the negative effects that omissions, trivialization and condemnation have personally had on them.

I heartily commend and congratulate the beautiful and honorable Jennifer Siebel Newsom for her courage, dedication and caring so much about these issues, and for her efforts to change these aspects of the status quo! Oprah Winfrey acquired the broadcast rights for *Miss Representation*, so I have been hopeful that it will gain a much higher profile sometime in the near future. Jennifer followed up *Miss Representation* with two other excellent documentary films, *The Mask You Live In*, and *The Great American Lie*. Check them out!

Note that a book titled *A Sound Bite Society: Television and the American Mind* by Jeffrey Scheuer sheds light on the insidious extent to which conservative ideologies have been strengthened by simplistic and emotional communications on television (especially on Fox News) and talk radio. Published in 1999, the rise of Trump in 2016 makes these words on the book's cover seem eminently perceptive: "*The Sound Bit Society* asks if television has served democracy. Scheuer's answer? A definite no. Scheuer believes our political culture has been demeaned -- leaders replaced with clowns, ideology with eye candy, and debate with pairs of pontificating parrots. *The Sound Bit Society* is crucial to anyone -- on either side of the spectrum -- in understanding and changing the circus that our political landscape has become."

Introspection into Relations between "Guys and Dolls"

"When you see a guy reach for stars in the sky
 You can bet that he's doing it for some doll." ...
 "When a lazy slob takes a goody steady job,
 And he smells of Vitalis and Barbasol.
 Call it dumb, call it clever
 Ah, but you can get odds forever
 That the guy's only doing it for some doll."

--- Lyrics sung by the character Nicely-Nicely Johnson in the musical *Guys and Dolls*

"Guys" and "dolls" exhibit some quite curious characteristics. Each of us, being immersed in the deep interpersonal and cultural well of human interactions, tends to see the remarkable 'dance of selves in relationship' as just "the same old story, the fight for love and glory." But one might wonder how all these behavioral propensities actually came to be. The exploration of this question leads to an investigation into why the physiology of our brains and bodies have developed as they have, and the role played in our motives by biological drives effected through our hormones and the neurochemicals in our brains. How have transcendent thoughts and obsessions of our minds come to be?

Dr. Leonard Shlain provocatively explored these topics in his fascinating book, *Sex, Time, and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*. He ambitiously proposed to present "a scenario for how the kaleidoscopic, maddening, exciting, enchanting, and baffling man-woman dance, more commonly known as 'a relationship', evolved."

In the very beginning of our becoming a distinct species, human females were faced with an ultimate existential challenge: the "obstetrical dilemma". Babies were being born with ever-bigger heads as human brain size increased over the millennia, and this created growing and gravely mortal dangers for mothers in childbirth due to increasingly tight birth canals.

An evolutionary savior was needed for our survival, and the natural processes of adaptive selection stumbled upon it in a trade-off compromise: women gave birth to what are essentially more and more premature and helpless babies. This resulted in children that were dependent for an unusually prolonged period of time on their parents for nourishment, safety and development. It became necessary for biological, social and cultural traits to evolve to ensure the survival of mothers and children. What developed was a new kind of bonding between males and females in which hunters and gatherers alike accepted highly specialized roles and a mutual inter-dependence on each other to make sure their offspring survived to be able to pass on their genes.

People who study the extraordinary intricacies of evolutionary biology find that every species has its own unique adaptations, along with others that are shared with related species. These adaptations help animals cope with various environmental conditions. Closely related species, for instance, have distinct differences like the famous finches of the various Galapagos Islands, whose contrasting beaks were selectively adapted to different food

sources on different islands, as described by Charles Darwin after the second voyage of the HMS Beagle in the 1830s. A far, far more interesting instance is at hand, however: humans! We differ from our mammalian ancestors in a number of striking ways, as elucidated by Dr. Leonard Shlain in *Sex, Time and Power*.

Dr. Shlain cultivated a lively interest in matters related to our species and other life forms, and in the changes that have evolved in various species, in general. In *Sex, Time and Power*, Shlain delved into the curious inter-relationships between *Homo sapiens* and *Gyna sapiens*, the males and females of our species. He focused on the biological adaptations that distinguish us from all other mammalian primates, and the unusual physiological, sexual and behavioral characteristics of human beings. He made an insightful introspection into the implications of our walking upright, having big brains and opposable thumbs, and the difficulties of birth due to the growth in size of the heads of human babies. He gave consideration to how it came about that we have vocal structures that enable us to speak and communicate with an amazing variety of words and meaningful vocalizations. He looked into all the odd contrasts of characteristics of human females compared to females of our closest evolutionary relatives: chimpanzees, bonobos and other primates. These unique human characteristics include sexy breasts, concealed fertility, risky monthly bleeding, helpless babies, long dependency in childhood, and the relatively unusual interest of males in sex all of the time rather than just periods when females are "in heat."

Dr. Shlain speculated that long ago human females began to recognize the connection between sexual intercourse and ovulation, often timed to correspond with the full moon every 28 days, and their mysteriously becoming pregnant. This fact was by no means an obvious thing in pre-scientific days. When they did cotton onto this realization, females became more reluctant to engage in sexual intercourse without consideration of the potential commitment of a prospective mate to the support of a family and the children a man might help conceive. Lenny evocatively called this type of evolutionary development "Original Choice". A great concept!

Females began to be significantly more discerning about finding a good provider and an upstanding character, in addition to a male who has good health and a strong physique. This attitude made verbal communication more important, and it significantly altered the relations between the genders. It also led to a curious kind of literal "meat for sex" barter, and a subtle negotiation in which sexual intercourse was offered in exchange for security. These ancient motives seem to underlie many of the modern behavioral interactions between men and women. The reasons for this are compelling.

To understand why these developments took place, it is necessary to realize that iron is a crucially important element in the vital processes of oxygen delivery to the brain and other cells in the body. Iron sufficiency is most easily assured by eating meat, so it was important in hunter-gatherer groups for female caregivers to be able to procure meat from males who did most of the hunting. Getting a male to lovingly commit to her helped provide for their family.

Iron is critical for metabolism and proper cellular functioning. It turns out that iron is the main component of hemoglobin in red blood cells. Hemoglobin is an iron-rich protein that is uniquely suited to pick up oxygen in the lungs and then release it to cells after the heart has pumped the blood throughout the body. The loss of iron by females during their monthly menses, together with long-term requirements of women to care for their children, made it increasingly important for females to subvert the natural impulse of males to spread their seed far and wide. Females began demonstrating a strong desire to get a male to bond with her and commit to share the support and nurturance of their family.

Once our male ancestors figured out their role in getting a female pregnant, they stewed about the odd power of the wily feminine gender over them, and they became intensely jealous. They began to prize virginity and fidelity in their prospective mates, and to demand exclusivity in sexual relations to assure them of their paternity. This was a complementary kind of Original Choice, and since they were the physically stronger gender and were somewhat obsessed with power and control, they cooked up moral systems that revolved around male gods that worked in mysterious ways, and they made sure the male gods relegated females to subservient roles.

Leonard Shlain's sociobiological conceptions of human gender relations are a sophisticated update on the intriguing ideas of zoologist Dr. Desmond Morris, as promulgated in his 1967 book, *The Naked Ape*. Morris startled the world by speculating that human females had developed sexually alluring breasts to get males to approach them face to

face, rather than to perfunctorily mount them from behind. This required them to communicate, woo, negotiate and cajole to succeed in being chosen as a mate.

In this kind of Original Choice, women first began to barter for more commitment than females of most other species of life in the vital interactions of feeding, mating, and rearing young. Allure, permission, negotiation and obligation are surely all balled up together ... Ah, love, what art thou?

John Gray is a psychologist who is exceptionally sensitive to his inner anima. He is famous for his book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. He makes a groundbreaking exploration of relationships and communication between men and women in this and other books he has written. John Gray's book titled *Women on Fire, Men on Ice* looks into modern scientific understandings of the roles that hormones play in human moods, feelings and relationships. He points out that hormones like oxytocin and testosterone deeply affect people's behaviors, and that they have different effects in men than in women. In males, the hormone testosterone is associated with sexual aggression and arousal and lust, but in females it has a tendency to create more stress within.

Oxytocin has been called "the cuddle hormone". It is associated with impulses in females toward care giving, tenderness, attachment and reproduction. But in males, oxytocin seems to create symptoms of increased anxiety. John Gray claims that understanding the influences of hormones in relationships can help us improve love relationships and better manage worry and stresses. He gives readers some ideas about hormonal imbalances and how good nutrition and "superfoods" can help replenish vital hormones. I personally believe that it would be healthful for us to better understand the genetic and hormonal influences of human behaviors in wider societal and ecological contexts.

Brain scientists have learned a great deal in recent years about how genetic and hormonal influences affect our perceptions. Studies of twins separated from each other at birth, for instance, have shed light on the primacy of genes in forming our characters, and even our habits and perceptions. In understanding human nature, we should not overlook the powerful affects that hormones have on the brain in utero, as well as in childhood, adolescence, menopause and old age. Provocative perspectives on hormonal influences in human behaviors are contained in Dr. Louann Brizendine's two books, *The Female Brain* and *The Male Brain*.

Those who study human behavior have also found interesting influences in people's unique individual experiences and social conditioning. Understanding the motives behind people's behaviors can help us see how we would be best advised to redesign our economic systems and social security initiatives and environmental regulations in ways that effectively incentivize people to focus our national priorities more clearly on healthier communities and goals consistent with the greater good, and on activities that are sustainable in the long-term.

Economic and Environmental Justice Now

One of the most important national goals should be to create greater social justice in our societies. Environmental justice is one of the most significant aspects of social justice. There is an extensive extent to which economic good fortune insulates fortunate people from environmental hazards like food poisoning, toxic wastes, pesticides, air pollution, dangerous neighborhoods and inadequate supplies or poor quality of fresh drinking water. Poor people are frequently subject to greater risks than others of ill health, poor nutrition, neighborhood degradation, workplace hazards, transportation challenges, natural disasters, environmental harms, and stresses related to economic insecurity.

Because of the integral aspects of "location, location, location" in home and real estate priorities, and due to the associated consequences of NIMBY zoning ("Not in My Back Yard"), the more money a person has, the safer they tend to be from environmental risks of accidental injury or death due to crime, gun violence, addiction to hard drugs, medical errors, or emergency room inadequacies. Should we not pledge allegiance to a nation that truly offers liberty and justice, more equally, for all?

The main instruments of economic justice are progressive taxation, well-designed regulations, fair-minded rules of law, and social justice initiatives. Unfortunately, economic security and equality of opportunity have been deteriorating in the past 35 years. This is primarily due to the weakening of public instruments for promoting opportunity and redressing inequality, and because the influence of labor unions in the private sector has been

significantly undermined. Collective bargaining helped build a vibrant middle class between World War II and the beginning of the retrogressive Reagan Revolution, and it is among the potentially most effective grassroots means for achieving a fairer balance of economic justice for working people.

Economic injustices persist and have gotten worse partially because of the lop-sided power of financial and economic elites. An energized grassroots social movement is needed to pressure Congress to respect the pocketbook needs of regular citizens. Otherwise, moneyed interest groups exaggeratedly affect our national decision-making. A boldly persuasive narrative is needed to drive progressive and socially-advantageous change, and to displace wealthy conservatives and powerful CEOs and Wall Street insiders from their dominating positions that allow them to gather most of the benefits of business profits for themselves at the expense of the majority.

"Rarely has there been a contrast between two back-to-back presidents who are more different than George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Hardly ever has there been a severe economic crisis that more thoroughly discredited a failed economic order (in this case, the prevailing conservative ideologies of deregulation, bubble economics, hyped-up risk-taking, leveraged speculation and corrupt crony capitalism). But remarkably, when it came to financial policy and extreme deference to Wall Street at the expense of the American people on Main Street, seldom has there been more *policy continuity* between the outgoing administration and its successor, as represented by Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and the Chairman of the National Economic Council, Larry Summers."

--- Robert Kuttner (paraphrased), *A Presidency in Peril, The Inside Story of Obama's Promise, Wall Street's Power, and the Struggle to Control Our Economic Future*

Never has there been a contrast between two back-to-back presidents who are more different than Barack Obama and Donald Trump. The revelations in *See Clearly - Sanity During Insane Times, Book Twelve of the Earth Manifesto* spell out this revolting contrast in extensive detail.

In the hard-fought struggle between capital and labor throughout the Industrial Era, capital has had the upper hand, more or less. In the past several decades, a resurgence of the ideology of ruthless laissez-faire capitalism has led to crushing defeats for collective bargaining in almost every sector of the economy, with one exception: the public sector.

This contrast is extreme. In government entities, public employee unions have gained power rather than lost it, and the top echelons of unionized public employees have sometimes abused their power. This has given conservatives some valid grounds for criticisms of public employee unions. Unfunded health and retirement obligations for public servants have grown so large that sensible reforms are required. The fact that there is not an overweening dog-eat-dog strife for bottom-line profits in the government allows it to be much more egalitarian and generous to employees, so the goals of the government have to a certain degree become contrary to getting maximum productivity from workers, or to controlling costs. We should take measured steps to correct this state of affairs. Fairer and more sensible ways of doing business are needed in both the private and public sectors!

The Changing Roles of Men and Women in Our Societies

To find win/win solutions to problems, it would be helpful to establish a new collaborative dynamic and a political culture that is more willing to cooperate -- and less inclined to aggressively conflict. A new wave of female empowerment may be the best means to accomplish this.

The first notable wave of feminism in the U.S. took place in the 19th and early 20th centuries when women waged a long struggle to secure property rights and the right to vote. As the twentieth century progressed, many changes took place in the respective roles of men and women. When millions of men were fighting in World War II, women were encouraged to get jobs to help win the war. The media encouraged and empowered women by using magazine ads, films, posters and songs that heralded strong women. The cultural icon "Rosie the Riveter", for example, was made famous by popular promotional posters and a catchy song in 1942.

After the war ended and millions of men returned home from the terrible conflict, society needed to incorporate them back into the work force. So the media shifted the propaganda dramatically and encouraged women to get married, stay at home, have babies, do domestic chores, support their families, and be sexy to please their

husbands. For further insights on the effect this had on changing societal roles, see the outstanding DVD Commentary titled "Birth of an Independent Woman" in the 'extra features' on Season Two discs of the drama TV series *Mad Men* (available on Netflix). This Commentary provides a compelling perspective on the somewhat rigid roles of men and women in the 1950s, and by juxtaposition, their evolving respective roles today.

A famous Kinsey Report on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, published in 1953, had an incendiary impact on society by exposing the fact that it was not just males who have strong sexual drives, but females as well. Conformity and role rigidity and repressed sexuality were dealt further blows in the 1960s when Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published. The invention and widespread use of oral contraceptives -- the Pill -- allowed women greater control in their sex lives, and in their own personal decisions about when to get pregnant, and with whom. These developments led to a wave of feminist movements that targeted gender inequalities, double standards and biases in our laws and cultures.

This "feminization" trend has continued, and it characterizes cultural changes in many societies around the globe today. Some religious authorities say this trend is a threat to marriage and the family, but these authorities and their fundamentalist religious devotees are in actuality opposed mainly to infringements on the power wielded by male authorities in patriarchal churches. For instance, at preservingthebible.org, religious spin-meisters write about getting a proper perspective "as to how invasive and overwhelming this feminizing Jezebel spirit really is. This evil force is perhaps the most malignant and hostile enemy the church has ever faced." Well, excuse me! As a 2009 Bumper Sticker point out: "Hate is not a family value!"

It is my conviction that the best legacy for a more propitious future for our descendants would be found in ensuring a greater emphasis on our noble aspects and collaborative instincts, and in finding more effective ways to discourage the violent, vindictive, and punitive approaches that typify our male-dominated societies, as reflected in the ridiculous words above about the "evil force" of a feminizing spirit.

Catholicism, as another example, seems to be woefully misaligned with modern society in seven primary areas. The opposition of the Catholic Church to reform harms our hopes for achieving a mindful, far-sighted and sustainable existence. These seven areas are: (1) the Vatican's opposition to birth control and the rights of women to control their own destinies; (2) the lowly status of women in the church; (3) the Vatican's frequent political affiliation with extreme social conservatism; (4) the Vatican's opposition to divorce and remarriage; (5) the Vatican's official position that condemns homosexuality, which is odd considering that a significant percentage of priests are closet gays; (6) the Church's ineffectiveness in responding adequately to sex abuse scandals and its pedophilia crisis, and its on-going opposition to allowing priests to marry; and (7) the Vatican's failure to emphasize good stewardship and protections of the environment enough when it curries favor with capitalist elites.

Cosmic Facts

Ancient peoples were much more attuned to the natural world than we are today. They were aware, for instance (if they lived anywhere north of the equator), that every star in the night sky always appears to revolve around the North Star each night. It turns out, of course, that there is a very good explanation for this phenomenon. The North Star happens to be located in a position in the sky that is nearly directly aligned with the Earth's north-south axis, so as the Earth spins around this rotational axis once every 24 hours, the North Star appears to be stationary, and all the other stars appear to revolve around it, even as they maintain a fixed positional relationship with each other. Scientists call the North Star "Polaris", and inform us that it is 2,500 times more luminous than the Sun. Since Polaris is 430 light years from the Earth, it seems to be only a relatively bright star, but it conveniently appears to be the brightest star in the region of the sky where it is located.

Astronomers and astrologers in ancient times saw patterns in the stars of the night sky and regarded them as constellations, which they named after imaginary projections of a Zodiac of mythological deities and creatures. My own favorite constellation is Cassiopeia. In Greek Mythology, Cassiopeia was a beautiful and vain queen of Ethiopia. Poseidon, the ruling god of the sea, was said to have placed Cassiopeia in the heavens as a punishment for her having boasted that she and her mortal daughter Andromeda were more beautiful than the purportedly lovely divine sea nymphs, the Nereids. Another of those mythological outrages! The story of Cassiopeia is also a parable that warns us that vanity and hubristic narcissism can enmesh one in big troubles!

Cassiopeia consists of a group of five bright stars that appear to form a skewed W-shape in the night sky that is visible from everywhere in the northern hemisphere. It is a constellation that can be seen on a dark and starry night standing out from a wide swath of dense background luminosity that extends across the heavens. This swath of distant lights is the central spiral disk of the Milky Way, our home galaxy. Surprisingly, humankind had no idea that the Universe was vastly more extensive than the Milky Way galaxy until the 1920s, when the famed astronomer Edwin Hubble, a Missouri native, proved conclusively that the Milky Way is actually only one galaxy of hundreds of billions of them in the Universe.

The lower three stars in Cassiopeia form a triangle that can be used to point across the sky to locate the North Star. The Big Dipper is the other main constellation of stars that is traditionally used to locate the North Star. Conveniently, when the Big Dipper is descending toward the horizon to disappear for the night, Cassiopeia is rising in the northeast and can come to the rescue of navigators and others who seek directional guidance.

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."

--- Rachel Carson

The issue of improved guidance is vital to humanity. We collectively could use much better guidance than we have gotten from our political and religious leaders during the past century. Bad guidance seems to rule the day almost everywhere. This is due to the fact that nations worldwide tend to be frequently driven by masculine forces that are hyper-competitive, materialistic, exploitive, disrespectful, domineering, greedily money prepossessed, nature-defiling, destructive, oppressive, patriarchal, misogynistic and militaristic. It is time that we allow feminine forces to be empowered that give much greater respect to cooperative problem-solving and collaborative efforts that will be successful in more fairly addressing the escalating global problems we face.

The propitiousness of guidance physically found in the night skies points to this broader need for better and more ecologically sane guidance for each of us individually -- and for all of us collectively -- in the face of daunting existential challenges. We are like lost lambs, a flock of insecure, needy and sometimes deluded animals that are being exploited by ruthlessly powerful overlords and corporations to satisfy their greed and lust for greater wealth and privileges. Our shy bleating voices are ignored, and shrewd players manipulate us for their own narrow benefit in our capitalist economic system and money-corrupted politics.

Reigning versus Ruling, a Saga Pitting the Proverbial Carrot Against the Stick

Plato was one of the earliest philosophers in written history. More than 2,400 years ago he wrote a number of philosophical speculations, including his famous book *The Republic*, in which he investigated the nature of justice and expressed the opinion that rule by a benevolent "philosopher king" would be the best way to govern a nation. Plato had seen the shortcomings of domineering control by elite oligarchs in his native Greece, and of alternating episodes of mob-like democratic rule, so he disdained both those types of governance. He was, no doubt, correct in surmising that wise, benevolent philosophers could provide the best guidance for good governance, at least theoretically. Unfortunately, history has shown that such types of leaders are very hard to find, and they rarely achieve positions of power. More often, ambitious men lust after power who champion policies that undermine the fairest priorities.

In the French language, the words for "the queen" are "la reine". Adopting a meaning of reigning as being a benevolent form of rule by a sovereign person dedicated to feminine anima wisdom, I assert that reigning would be much better than ruling to achieve social justice and peaceful coexistence.

Reigning is better than ruling ruthlessly because it champions a reasonable modicum of fairness. In all guns-versus-butter arguments, reigning gives higher value to domestic priorities than it gives to military interventions. Reigning is more honorable than dominion-oriented ruling because reigning gives higher value to effective incentives and disincentives rather than uses of force and harsh punishments and divisive intrigue.

Ruling generally requires repressive governance to enforce its defense of inegalitarian increases in disparities of power, privileges and prerogatives between the powerful few and the vast majority of others. Greed, hubris,

nationalistic fervor, and Machiavellian manipulation of people's fears and insecurities keep us in costly arms races and endless wars. There are several main reasons for this, including the misguided goals of distracting people's attention from domestic woes and the facilitating of profiteering on the huge military budget, and the emphasis on selfish priorities of a ruling elite that serves to perpetuate this sadly wrong-headed scheme.

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

--- Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 1953

I feel strongly that we should create an effective Pro-Peace movement, and subject the military-industrial complex to tighter spending controls and less wasteful extravagance. Let me make one thing perfectly clear: it was distinctly unfortunate that authorities shrewdly undermined the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s by eliminating mandatory conscription into the armed services. The fateful and dreaded military draft was fairer than the current system because it required all men to serve their country, not only ones who had no better opportunities. The creation of "all-volunteer" armed forces has made it much easier for the U.S. to get involved in wars because the main people who risk their lives in combat are the economic underclass of men and women that has little voice or political power. Rich people's kids find better -- and safer -- things to do.

The excessive power of the military-industrial complex is reinforced by not having a military draft. Congress and corporate-controlled media organizations have collaborated in this negative development. People's personal liberties and our democratic processes have been weakened by this strengthening of the military-industrial complex, as war hero Dwight D. Eisenhower pointed out in a provocative warning to the nation after the end of his presidency in 1961. We should vigorously strive, Eisenhower proclaimed, to ensure that "security and liberty may prosper together."

The anti-war movement during the Vietnam War gained much of its power on college campuses and in cities because of an intense interest in self-preservation that affected young men of that era. We crow about freedom, but tend to turn a blind eye to the terribly disproportionate disparity between classes of people in the amount of freedom they have to choose NOT to fight in wars. Morally and ethically, all-volunteer military forces are an odd thing in the land of the free and the home of the brave, and in a nation dedicated to the proposition that all people are created equal.

Why We Should Strive to Achieve Peaceful Coexistence Rather than Warring Dominance

"The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug."

--- Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*

War can be a psychological and economic addiction that facilitates the use of force and violence as a way to address problems. But we should strive to cultivate the institutional discipline to engage in war only as a defensive last resort. Powerful forces in our society unfortunately tend to involve us in costly wars for a variety of motives, causing unjustified aggression that may be deeply unethical.

President Harry Truman called war profiteering a form of treason. Ah, the good old days of "the buck stops here" straight-forward honesty! That was long before the complex of the Pentagon, the arms and war services industries, big corporate media, Congress and the Executive Branch turned war profiteering into a central economic and political organizing principle of the U.S.

When the Cold War ended, the military-industrial complex and its shadow contingent of facilitators needed a new enemy to sustain its power. Since communism had been effectively emasculated as an oppositional force around which to organize fear and mistrust and hate, a new enemy was needed to distract the public from domestic inequities -- and to ensure the growth of power and profits in armaments and war services industries. This new enemy was 'conveniently' found in terrorism and Islamic extremism, but it is a great danger for Islam and Christian sects to involve themselves in an internecine worldwide competition for power and influence that stokes extremism.

"Throughout my fifty years of activism, both inside and outside the system, one hard lesson has become clear to me from experience: *Domestic progress has been continually derailed by dubious wars.*"

--- Tom Hayden, *The Long Sixties: From 1960 to Barack Obama*

Many Islamic peoples have had their lands occupied by foreigners for decades, and severe economic sanctions have been used against them time and again. These are guaranteed sources of friction and oppositional counter-support that ironically create an on-going and endless instigation of conflict.

The 9/11 attacks gave the cowboy-mentality president George W. Bush ("you're either with us or against us") a plausible pretext to sell the American people on invasions of Afghanistan and then Iraq. In doing so, the U.S. inadvertently stumbled into a hornet's nest of ethnic conflicts that destabilized the region and will make international strife worse for decades. It will also make terrorist blowback more dangerous and significantly more likely for generations. Historians point out that the Islamic world has already felt a deep sense of humiliation and shame and anger at being dominated and exploited by Western nations in the past century.

History indicates that our hubris-filled meddling in the affairs of nations in the Middle East has been extensive, from actions in World War I and World War II to the 1953 overthrow of the Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran in a coup d'etat supported by the CIA. That intrigue against Iran brought the tyrannical Shah to power. Mossadegh had been democratically elected, so that overthrow of Iran's government put the hypocrisy of subsequent rationalizations about bringing democracy to the Middle East in a clearer and more suspect perspective. This type of meddling has evolved into harsh economic sanctions and aggressive military occupations of nations in the Middle East since 9/11. Undesirable policy *Drift* has affected our national purpose, and sure enough, we were unable to heed the urgings of peace advocates: "No Blood for Oil."

We would be wise to develop more enlightened foreign policies. Check out *Reflections on War -- and Peace!* in this manifesto for incisive insights into the historic motives and consequences of warfare, aggression, militarism and empire building. A safer and saner world could be achieved, in my opinion, not by demonizing others and dividing people, but by seeking common purpose and better ways to work together for the greater good. Using divisive rhetoric and tactics, and stoking sectarian strife, and making religious enemies are pathetically counterproductive ways to try to achieve this!

There is obviously great potential risk in demonizing the Islamic religion, with its more than 1.6 billion adherents worldwide. Such efforts strengthen what they oppose. So, instead of being able to unite people in effectively addressing growing global problems, conflicts over religious differences force us to waste enormous amounts of time, energy and money. Terrorism is accurately seen as a tactic of the weak and the poor, while aggressive warfare is a terror-inducing tactic of the rich that is cunningly utilized to reinforce the power and prerogatives of the wealthy.

The pen, upon occasion, can figuratively have much more influence than the sword. My personal hope is that my use of this potential power of written expression will be effective in influencing international impulses and making them less misguided, less wasteful, less underhanded, and less unjust. This would help mitigate barbaric blowback terrorism that is engendered by arrogant aggression.

Religion and war often seem to go hand in hand. Religion is like a drug, a feel-good drug of belonging and shared community and hope for a better world in "the afterlife." But this is a drug that is subtly laced with opiates that appeal to the masses because they idolize obedience and serve to numb our awareness of fairer perspectives. Religion can be seen as a seductive and addictive drug that sometimes seeks to stave off existential fears and insecurities by offering compensatory hopes of a better life-after-death as a reward for docilely accepting the injustices and harsh inequities in this life. The fact that religious leaders often support politicians who work to increase social inequalities should give us pause, and should dispose us to doubt that religious establishments are primarily influenced by ethical and moral considerations.

It is deeply ironic that one of the main reasons we cast our hopes so desperately to the heavens is that, here on Earth, greedy schemers and powerful and ruthless guardians of the status quo adamantly refuse to allow our

economy and society to be transformed into fairer systems in which peoples' real needs would be more propitiously satisfied.

One compelling perspective reveals that, after our own individual deaths, all human afterlife will reside in our progeny, so here is another exceedingly good reason that we should strive while we are alive to leave a better and more just legacy to our heirs.

Religious establishments often manipulate people's emotions and exploit their guilt, shame and fears for their own narrowly focused institutional purposes. In this gambit, they resemble political party establishments. One of the goals of religious leaders who offer people hope of an afterlife in Heaven is to ensure that the faithful continue to contribute money and work hard and rationalize their drudgery by keeping their minds on a hypothetical next life, rather than on things like demanding broadly shared prosperity and greater fairness in our societies today. And both political and religious establishments tend to staunchly oppose change, which eventually risks leading to heightened conflicts and an increased impetus for violent insurrection. George Orwell described a similar distraction, "Sugarcandy Mountain", in a biting satire, *Animal Farm*.

Established religions tend to espouse implausible fabrications partially in order to help them maintain the status quo of their power and influence. They thus often collaborate with Machiavellian interests and political authorities to prevent people from demanding more just policies in the here-and-now, or from rejecting authority and war, or from demanding real significant progressive political and social change. Let's really give peace a chance, and more solid footing!

I believe we should stop overlooking the deep cultural differences that exist between the U.S. and the Islamic Middle East. In the U.S., the influence of Western religions' concept of "original sin" infuses our culture with a historical tradition of individual and collective guilt. Islamic cultures have less of this guilt-trip mentality, and instead are highly sensitive to shame at what others regard as weaknesses and humiliations. Guilt-cultures and shame-cultures have distinctly different moral values and social mores. Nonetheless, whatever the rationalizations and motives behind patriarchal "honor killings" and discriminatory women-oppressing provisions that underlie Islamic Shariah laws, these are harsh instruments of control. Shame on those who perpetuate them! The empowerment of women is one of the fairest goals a society could embrace. Evolve, guys!

Life Out of Balance

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to make truly transformative changes to address extreme injustices, or to deal with an existential crisis, or to remedy systemic failures, we should be honest and courageous, and really come to grips with the actual nature of problems in their broadest context. We should seek to understand true causes of problems, not just their symptoms. We should strive to comprehend the most probable consequences of various courses of action, and to thereby choose the best alternatives.

Among all the marvelous diversity of millions of species of life in existence today, *Homo sapiens* is the single species that has been extraordinarily successful because of our cultural evolution and ability to use forethought, insight and educational communication in learning. We have utilized fire, energy, tools, clothing, shelter, agriculture, animal husbandry, and technological innovations to help us survive and prosper. It is instructive to realize that this cultural evolution has been the result of a dynamic balance between preserved knowledge and tradition, on the one hand, and nimble flexibility, open-mindedness, innovative spirit and willingness to try new things, on the other.

Today, strife between change-averse conservatives and progressive-minded people is intensifying. Entrenched interests are using doctrinal arguments and the power of corporate influence in the media to oppose remedial changes -- even changes that would be fairer for all, or more ecologically intelligent, or most likely to lead to sustainable survival advantages for our species as a whole.

Knowledge and understanding are called for, not misunderstanding and denial. Resilience, flexibility and open-mindedness are needed, not blind obedience, stubborn intransigence, fanatical dogmatism, or mindless reaction. The challenges facing humanity are far-reaching and unprecedented in their global scope. We are failing to sensibly manage our economies in ways that prevent overarching systemic risks. Injustices and inequalities are

becoming extreme. Intergenerational inequities of debt and externalized costs are unsustainable. Non-renewable resources are being rapidly depleted and many other resources are being excessively exploited. The environment is being damaged in many impactful ways and global climate disruptions are becoming more critical as we heedlessly continue to spew billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. And we are driving untold numbers of species of life toward extinction by these activities and other means of habitat destruction.

These developments are undermining the healthy ecological balance upon which the survival and flourishing of our civilizations depend. One reason for this may be that holistic visions conceived in our unconscious right brains are being sadly suppressed.

"Persons who love nature find a common basis for understanding people of other countries, since the love of nature is universal among men of all nations."

--- Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations from 1953 to 1961

In our sound-bite-driven politics, the American people often fail to understand the complexity in our society. Folks in the retrogressive Tea Party, for instance, criticize taxes and government spending and budget deficits, but they do not offer fair-minded proposals for where to cut government spending. They seem to cling to narrow ideological dogmas for how to manage the economy, and to best reduce unemployment. Their mantra is to cut taxes, but we have been doing this for years, and it has not led to more positive outcomes that are consistent with the common good.

The large tax cuts enacted by George W. Bush, compounded by those pushed by Donald Trump, have resulted in huge benefits for the wealthiest 1% of Americans, but trillions of dollars in additional debt. Simultaneously the number of people living below the poverty level has exceeded 40 million for the past two decades, and in 2010 it represented the highest number ever recorded by the Census Bureau since this statistic was first tracked beginning more than 50 years ago. The anti-egalitarian policies that have led to this outcome are outrageously misguided. The structural underpinnings of poverty should be dealt with more intelligently. As Albert Einstein is attributed to have stated, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again -- and expecting different results."

Having had a cocktail and being in a generous and heartily egalitarian mood at a fun dinner party a half dozen years ago, it came as a surprise to me to stumble into a conversation with a smirky self-styled "conservative" woman who spouted venom at progressive ideas and Democratic politicians. She extolled her admiration of Ayn Rand and Sarah Palin, and summarily professed beliefs that were diametrically opposed to almost everything my experience tells me is true. When I mentioned my strong feeling that a greater modicum of social justice and less inequality in our societies would make all Americans more secure, her attitude said, "I spit on social justice". It was as if she regarded fair-mindedness as some sort of communist wrongheadedness that was somehow ignominiously socialistic and repulsively fascistic at the same time.

We live in a bizarre world indeed. Much of what passes for political discourse in America today resembles closed-minded dishonesty and misplaced self-righteousness. Instead of engaging in civil discourse, people express frustration and anger, and they goad others, or personally attack them, or argue off the point, and there seems to be an excess of emotional irrationality. No wonder we fail to find common ground, when so many people seek to demonize others and to deny the validity and importance of social and ecological truths.

Donald Trump has manipulated people through deceitful rhetoric and attempts to create Orwellian inversions of reality, even causing the meaning of words themselves to be perverted. As Rachel Maddow made crystal clear in her savvy October 7, 2019 segment "We Are Looking at Corruption", Trump Republicans have used the phrase Fake News to mean the opposite of what it originally meant, which was in reference to made-up stories on social media websites that were false but were nonetheless propagated on the Internet, often by operatives micro targeting persons who were highly vulnerable because they were seeking confirmation bias of their suspicions. These pieces of Fake News were often types of conspiracy theories, which proliferated into cyber-targeted people's beliefs.

Donald Trump has perverted the phrase "fake news" into a very different meaning, denoting any news stories or facts that are critical of him, no matter how valid. The cunning trickster Trump is now similarly perverting the word "corruption" to be something he is fighting against, when in fact many of his actions represent corruption

incarnate. One of his recent schemes has been to try to twist Joe Biden's fight against corruption in Ukraine during his tenure as Vice President into accusations that it was Joe Biden whose efforts were corrupt.

Trump has long taken advantage of the persuasive powers of conspiracy theories. His political rise was abetted by the racist lie of birtherism — the false claim that Obama was not born in the United States. But ever since the Russia probe by special counsel Robert Mueller -- and especially now in the dense midst of the throes of an impeachment investigation, "Trump seems to have moved into a split-screen reality" — one in which he is the victim and the hero who has the "absolute right" to do whatever he wants, including extorting other countries to gain personal political advantages, and claiming immunity from indictment or even further investigations -- and the absolute right to pardon himself for any crimes he commits.

Trump capriciously betrayed our Kurdish allies in Syria in early October 2019, tweeting that he would withdraw American military support from the Kurds in Syria. This is treachery against a good ally that has helped the world crush ISIS in Syria and Iraq, liberating tens of thousands of square miles and millions of people from merciless terrorist ISIS fighters. What is he thinking in siding with Turkey (and Russia) to let them attack and slaughter these Kurds? It is as though he doesn't know that the Kurds currently hold something like 11,000 ISIS fighters in detention facilities, and if they are turned loose, these fanatics could reconstitute the terrible threat they had imposed on people in the region. With Donald Trump aiding and abetting ISIS terrorists, and allowing a genocide by Turkey to begin against the Kurds, this decision will prove to be among the worst things he has done, out of many.

The increasingly demented Dear Leader defended this chaos-inducing decision to abandon our Kurdish allies, declared himself in a tweet to possess a "great and unmatched wisdom". "We call BS!" This was another of a rash excess of instances of him rejecting expert advice, like he did the last time he made a unilateral declaration that he would remove all troops from Syria in December 2018, causing his Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis to resign in shock and protest. Far from demonstrating unmatched wisdom, the diabolical Demagogue-in-Chief is confirming that he is coming more and more dangerous, and unhinged and unfit for office.

Consider the nexus of three ideas.

(1) John Steinbeck gave voice to downtrodden folks like migrant farm workers who faced harsh conditions in a society without a social safety net, and to refugees who were forced to flee the Dust Bowl in the Midwest during the hard times of the Great Depression. He saw clearly that dissatisfactions and political unrest grow most riotously in the fertile soil of economic despair and social upheaval. It was in such soil that the fascist demagogue Adolph Hitler rose to power by exploiting the German people's feelings of humiliation and desperate struggle due to the hard times that followed World War I and the harsh reparations imposed by the victors of that deadly war.

(2) Neoconservatives in the Project for a New American Century think tank advocated an extremely powerful military and big increases in military spending, and they bemoaned the obstacles to achieving this goal, "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event -- like a new Pearl Harbor." This, chillingly, was written just a year or two before 9/11, and the launch of an endless war.

(3) Milton Friedman cultivated a *Shock Doctrine* belief that "only a crisis -- actual or perceived -- produces real change", so that when such a crisis occurs, it is expedient for "conservatives" to keep extreme policy proposals alive and available "until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable."

I strongly believe that Milton Friedman was wrong in his gospel-like economic fundamentalism, because it has contributed to despotism, bubble economic policies, deregulated exploitation, anti-egalitarianism and fraudulent activities. I equally strongly believe that he was right that the opportunity for real change can be stimulated by dangerous opportunities that are inherent in a crisis, and the entire Earth Manifesto is dedicated to the idea that some day, hopefully soon, a growing consensus will develop that is centered on far-sighted propositions like those contained throughout this manifesto. "Like the fact, for instance, that better cooperative problem solving is needed in civilized societies to achieve goals that are consistent with the common good. Let's accomplish this, instead of allowing corruption in our political system and excessively ruthless free-for-all competition. Economic

and ecological ruin, after all, will be the tragedy-of-the-commons outcome of an insistence that competing interests should have unlimited freedom of action to exploit the global commons."

The writer Nikos Kazantzakis imagined Jesus as a real man giving his first sermon on a hill above a lake in Galilee. "Forgive me, my brothers, but I shall speak in parables", he said. "The sower went out to sow his field, and as he sowed, one seed fell on the road and the birds came and ate it. Another fell on stones, found no soil in which to be nourished, and withered away. Another fell on thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. Finally, another fell on good soil; it took root, sprouted an ear, brought forth grain and fed mankind. He among you who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Listen, my fellow Americans, one of our Founding Fathers warned us that eternal vigilance is required to assure our liberty and to guarantee that our system of democratic representative governance will long endure. NOW is the moment for a powerful resurgence of that eternal vigilance to protect our great nation from the deceitful and treacherous demagogue Donald Trump. The world needs visionary leadership, not rulers who will seek selfish advantages for themselves and their billionaire supporters, or who prescribe "sound-bite solutions in a world defined by complexity." NOW is the time for us to come together to reject the despotic abuses of power by morality-deficient Trump Republicans.

Before the 2016 election, Vice Presidential Candidate Tim Kaine evocatively suggested, "I know Hillary is ready to fight for all of us. I use the word "ready" for a specific reason: When I lived in Honduras, I learned that the best compliment you could give someone was to say they were "listo" -- ready. Because what "listo" means in Spanish is prepared, battle-tested, rock-solid, up for anything, never backing down. And Hillary Clinton is "lista." Trump was not ready, but has seized the opportunity to engage in much malfeasance.

Ideas to Live By

In Greek mythology, the god Apollo was a son of Zeus, the Olympian ruler of the universe. Apollo was said to embody spiritual clarity and moral discipline in ancient Greece. Two wise maxims were carved in stone in the forecourt of the Temple dedicated to Apollo on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus at Delphi: "Know Thyself" and "Nothing in Excess". This is sage advice! A trip to Delphi was, for centuries, a spiritual experience that was regarded as offering good hope for enlightening revelation. Say, maybe we could use more of such revelation today!

Jesus taught Golden Rule sensibilities, and expressed concern for the downtrodden. Such concerns are the essential basis for the modern concept of human rights. The Golden Rule, marvelously also known as the "ethic of reciprocity", is a fair-minded perspective that epitomizes the notion that we should treat others the way we ourselves would like to be treated. Live and let live!

"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism. If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed."

--- Albert Einstein

A voice speaks to me from within, urging the idea that the religions of today must evolve into positive faiths in the future that advance truer moral visions of the collective good, not just for believers and a narrowly self-serving "in group", but for all of humanity. These moral visions should include the health of natural ecosystems upon which our well-being depends. These new religions should be oriented toward unity, ecumenism, spiritual honesty, expansiveness, fairness and peaceful coexistence. They should transcend parochialism, divisiveness, myopia, archaic misconceptions, patriarchal domination, reactionary traditionalism, discrimination, bigotry, religious fundamentalism, absolutism, and "hate masquerading as love". And this new direction for religions needs to start soon. See *Revelations of a Modern Prophet* for further insights.

Admiring a Great Gal and Her Perspectives

Tiffany Shlain is a filmmaker and founder of the annual Webby Awards, which recognize and honor the world's best websites on the Internet. Her film that I find most thought-provoking is titled *Connected: A Declaration of*

Interdependence. This film is excellent, and contains strong parallels to the ideas in *Comprehensive Global Perspective: An Illuminating Worldview in the Earth Manifesto*.

In a Commencement Speech that Tiffany Shlain gave at UC Berkeley in May 2010, she provided graduating students with a number of wise observations and ideas. She recommended that they "invoke a little moxie" in the face of difficulties, and she advised that they remember to take themselves more lightly and to occasionally laugh at their foibles or contradictions. The gist of her message dovetails with the basic thrust of many of the ideas in this manifesto. Creative and energetic young people are needed to boldly step forward to help make the world a better place. There is much that urgently needs to be accomplished!

Tiffany Shlain is a philosophical soul mate and champion of those who embrace bold activism. She says that to accomplish great things, a salubrious combination is needed of farsighted vision, bold commitments, persistence, and a good sense of humor. She honors Goethe's famous quote, "Whatever you think or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic to it."

One of the most successful businesswomen of the 19th century was Barbe-Nicole Cliquot Ponsardin. Known as the widow, or *veuve*, Cliquot, she wrote to her great-granddaughter in the last years of her long life: "The world is in perpetual motion, and we must invent the things of tomorrow. One must go before others, be determined and exacting, and let your intelligence direct your life. Act with audacity."

The gauntlet has been thrown. "Let's roll", as they say! Note, parenthetically, that Tiffany Shlain's father was the insightful polymath Dr. Leonard Shlain, whose compelling ideas are central to a clearer conception of who we are as human beings, and how we got to be this way. Shlain's important ideas about the biological, social and ecological implications of our existence and behaviors are further explored below.

Think some more about the nature of our societies and the roles of women in them. Mark Twain wrote 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."

Maybe Samuel Clemens really did transcend some of the most salient prejudices of his times, and surely his legacy lives on in my great granddaughter's perspectives, and as a testament to fairer ideas whose time is in the process of becoming.

Mythological and Religious Perspectives

Ancient Greeks and Romans believed in what we regard today as mythological goddesses and gods. A study of the imagined character of these deities reveals that they represent distinct patterns of human nature. These patterns are essentially what Carl Jung called archetypes of human attributes in our collective unconscious. Human beings have projected these attributes onto "divine beings". These archetypes are aspects of our human natures that are operative in our unconscious minds, almost as if they are integral aspects of our brains. These archetypes are augmented and modified by cultural stereotypes, and together these archetypes and stereotypes help define our being and our selves. We may conform to these defining influences, or alternatively choose to individualistically conflict with them, but either way they powerfully influence our behaviors.

Psychologist Jean Shinoda Bolen has provided a fascinating and practical blueprint for studies of this topic by analyzing the archetypes represented by Greek mythical deities in her two books *Goddesses in Everywoman* and *Gods in Everyman*. She points out, for instance, that powerful Zeus epitomized the domineering philanderer male, and his wife Hera, the goddess of women and marriage, was the epitome of the long-suffering jealous and vindictive wife.

Myths are symbolically important because there is a ring of deep truth in them about shared human experience. The qualities of mythic deities represent a variety of instinctual forces in our psyches. As Jean Shinoda Bolen points out, "Myths evoke feeling and imagination, and touch on themes that are part of the human collective inheritance."

It is curious that when the idea of monotheism caught on in Western religions, a crucial part of its genesis was the biblical story of a male God who created mankind without any female participation. This myth was a blatant rejection of previous belief systems that honored Mother Earth and the divine feminine. Monotheistic religions were basically founded on ideas that devalued previous feminine concepts of spiritual understanding. It is not surprising that this diminution of the divine feminine occurred more-or-less at the same time that harsh written laws were first propounded, like the Code of Hammurabi in ancient Mesopotamia. This demonstrates a strong correlation between the triumph of male gods and an increasingly obtuse disregard for the rights and prerogatives of women. And there is a disturbing correlation with these developments and the loss of concern today for the well-being of Earth's ecosystems.

The Old Testament slaughter of conquered Canaanites by Israelites was one of the first instances in history of an entire people being killed because of deep prejudices stoked by religious zeal. Tellingly, according to the polymath Dr. Leonard Shlain, this conflict was one in which those who worshipped God through the medium of written words vanquished those who worshipped their gods through images. This may be why the Ten Commandments start with dire warnings about the worship of 'idols'. Hey, maybe it wasn't Pharaoh's heart that was hardened by God in the Bible before the Exodus; maybe this story was a metaphor for rationalizing domineering male authority and the insistence of mankind's left-brain thinking on the absolutism of its dominating prerogatives!

Thinking about Rainbows

Our minds are like the Internet, consisting of billions of specialized cells that are networked together via miniscule electrical charges. In our brains, these cells are called neurons and they have tiny synapses across which neurotransmitter impulses and chemicals and hormones convey messages from various parts of the body. Our conscious thoughts are only "the tip of the iceberg" of all that goes on in our brains. Scientists assert that 97% of all our thoughts are subconscious.

The vast array of contents on the Internet actually provides a good Big Picture map of the total contents of our conscious and unconscious minds. The Internet reflects a wide-ranging set of thoughts and feelings that is as diverse as philosophy, science, literature, art, music, vivid imagery, blogged and tweeted opinions, biased perspectives, social networking communications, sexual compulsions, and far more.

Think about the ways our understandings are naturally limited. Visible light, for instance, is only a narrow part of the full spectrum of all frequencies of electromagnetic radiation. This spectrum extends from short wavelengths like microwaves and ultraviolet radiation to long wavelengths like infrared, X-rays and gamma rays. A rainbow is visible light refracted into its various component colors in the optical part of the electromagnetic spectrum. If they were visible to us, infrared rays would appear just beyond the red end of the rainbow, and ultraviolet rays would appear just beyond the violet end. It is natural that our perceptions are limited by the limitations of the senses with which we see the world. It is also natural that self-referential subjectivity affects us so profoundly. Recognizing this relativity, we should be more open-minded to differing ways of seeing things.

Our biases and the inadequate breadth of our perceptions distort the way we see the world. This affects the way we interpret the events we experience. Recognizing this fact, we should be more willing to be open to new ways of understanding things, and to accepting other ideas, and to accepting people who see things differently than us. Live and let live! And we really ought to be more open to ecologically truer perspectives of our roles and impacts in the world.

Pondering the Inscrutable Web Inside Our Brains

It seems practically impossible for human beings to live fully in the present moment, and to avoid carrying onerous baggage from the past or harboring profound insecurities about the future. Yet our brains work in marvelous ways, and we are capable of quite different modes of seeing and feeling and acting than is our normal habit.

Ponder the amazing story of a brain scientist named Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D., who had a blood vessel burst in the left side of her brain when she was just 37 years old. The resulting hemorrhagic stroke almost completely disabled the functioning of her brain's left hemisphere. Blood, which brings vital oxygen to the brain through blood vessels and capillaries, turns out to be a powerful oxygenated toxin to brain cells if they come in direct contact.

Jill Bolte Taylor's stroke caused her mind to rapidly deteriorate to the point that she could not think logically or dial the telephone to summons help, or walk, talk, read, write or sense time.

Besides a lot of pain associated with her stroke, Jill Bolte Taylor noticed a radical change in her perceptions of the world. As her analytical left brain ceased its dominating functions, she began to feel an oceanic sense of deep inner peace and well-being, and even a sense of euphoria. The natural temperamental character of her more harmonious, appreciative, uncritical, and holistic-perceiving right brain emerged. This awareness has a universal connected "oneness" sense of existence, and in its euphoric state, it seemed to have an almost What-Me-Worry attitude.

It seems likely that people who have had near-death experiences may merely have seen the expansive vision of their right brain for the first time. This seems much more probable to me than that they have glimpsed a real world of "life after death". Have you ever felt that you were looking down on yourself from a vantage point above your body, or outside of it? Right brain, caught in the act!

In astonishing contrast to Jill Bolte Taylor's sensational insights, a popular new book has been written by Dr. Eben Alexander, who had suffered a sudden rare brain infection that caused a full *grand mal* seizure and sent him into a comatose state for seven days. During his coma, he had similar perceptual near-death experiences to Ms. Taylor's, but he interpreted them in a much different way. In *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, Dr. Alexander had visions that he felt proved definitively that there is a God and that angels exist, and that there is a Heaven and an afterlife, and that he had seen that LOVE is a scientific principle. This is "curious and curiouser"!

I regard Dr. Alexander's story as an extraordinary misinterpretation of right brain perceptions, and hence a transcendent example of illusory "confirmation bias". I have to say that this line of thought made me remember the French philosopher Rene Descartes, who basically ponderously declared: "I think, therefore I am. (I think)."

Dr. Taylor's observations about her right brain's perspectives and way of looking at life and the world are marvelous, surprising and potentially very valuable. Watch her TED talk online for a clearer idea of her insightful perceptions. It is sad that we tend to suppress the more feminine-valued half of our brain, because the right brain may well hold an influential key to clear-seeing, expansive awareness, personal equanimity, spiritual transcendence, and even social fairness, peaceful coexistence and ecological sanity.

"Enlightenment may be a process of *unlearning*
even more than a process of learning."

-- Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D., *My Stroke of Insight*

A Further Digression Exploring this Startling and Inspiring Stroke of Insight

"Too often, while our body is right here, right now, our mind is somewhere else."

--- Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D., *My Stroke of Insight*

We interpret "reality" through the lens of mental constructs in our minds, and through the filter of the subjectivity of our own experiences. We all have our own individual worldviews, and they are invariably influenced by the genes of our physical and temperamental inheritances, as well as by the experiential influences of our family, parental upbringing, peer group, community, faith tradition, archetypal myths, and societal moral values.

"Our perception of the external world, and our relationship to it, is a product of our neurological circuitry. For all these years of my life, I really had been a figment of my own imagination."

--- Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor

Perhaps the recognition that we are figments of our own imaginations will help us take ourselves less seriously, and simultaneously let us see big picture perspectives that will allow us to be more effective in accomplishing greater good goals.

It is marvelous to realize that our perceptions of the world, and our relationships to it, are a product of how our brains function. From birth until death, each of us perceives the world through our five senses, and our brains receive nearly continuous reports about sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch. We process these inputs through hundreds of billions of cells in the interstices of the "enchanted loom" of our brains.

It is revealing that our amazing brains have these two distinct hemispheres, a left one and a right one, and that each side functions in a significantly different way. The two separate hemispheres of our brains have different modes of perceiving the world. The left brain is associated with masculine ways of being; it makes associations in words and is language-oriented, analytical, methodical, categorizing, linear-thinking, calculating, organizing, evaluating, judgmental, story telling, gossipy, time conscious, busy and constantly chattering. The right brain is associated with feminine ways of being; it is image-oriented, intuitive, holistic, here now, naturally connected, empathetic, peaceful, joyous and "heart-aware". These two hemispheres of our brains seem to be seamlessly integrated into our conscious mind, physically connected with each other through a conduit that consists of a flat bundle of neural fibers known as the corpus callosum, or the colossal commissure. "Colossal, I'm sure!"

We are all somewhat lost in our own worlds, our minds continuously chattering to us and telling us stories about how the world really is. All of us think *in words* to a surprising extent, and tend to see our world through the use of language constructs and "ideologies". If we could choose to envision the world in more immediate and holistic ways, we surely would be better off. I suppose that this is one reason why people meditate, pray, do yoga, engage in repetitive exercise, study philosophy, hike in natural surroundings, use recreational drugs, or appreciate spiritual philosophies like Buddhism.

When people meditate, they often use a repetitive sound pattern called a mantra (which literally means "place to rest the mind"), and they pay attention to their breathing or engage in sustained movement like walks in nature. These undertakings make it easier to cultivate a sense of mindfulness in being, and a generosity of spirit, and better perspective on life. They can help us be grateful for our time alive, and for our health and whatever good fortune we may have. Jill Bolte Taylor declared that her intense experience made her "enthusiastically committed to the well-being of the cells that constitute my life." A good idea! She recommends we choose not to be in a hurry; after all, "Your left mind may be rushing, thinking, deliberating and analyzing, but your right mind is very m-e-l-l-o-w."

The fact that the chatterbox left hemisphere of our brains is generally busy thinking, telling stories, rehearsing, gossiping, fantasizing, judging, worrying and obsessing over slights is supremely ironic because the contrasting neuro-circuitry of the right hemisphere of our brains is apparently more like a "tranquil sea of euphoria". It is filled to overflowing with an oceanic sense of deep inner peace, equanimity, heart consciousness and a sense of being right here, right now, like a bright light at the end of a tunnel. Each of us has a right brain that is unfortunately sublimated to the obsessive left brain. I love the idea that Jill Bolte Taylor tells us that anyone can learn to choose to tune in more closely to this calmer, happier and more appreciative part of our brains.

Oprah Winfrey, cognizant of the value to each person of his or her own mental health, once said:

"Dr. Taylor sent me a sign that I have hanging in my makeup room. It says, 'Please take responsibility for the energy you bring into this space.' Thank you, Dr. Taylor, for that simple but powerful lesson. All life is energy and we are transmitting it at every moment. We are all beaming little signals like radio frequencies, and the world is responding in kind."

Let these words take on a simple context of positive energy and enthusiasms that will help us improve the quality of our lives and achieve great and necessary goals!

A Stroke of Insight is also available as a CD audiotape. I find this topic valuable because it provides provocative understandings on how the language-oriented left hemisphere of our brains can control our perceptions and distort our values.

My left-brain controller observes: "Let's sharpen our pencils -- but not dull our wits."

A Consideration

After reading parts of the Earth Manifesto, a friend said that my writings are clearly a love being expressed. A surely feminine part of me is expressed in these words, with compassion and caring and sensitivity. But my overriding ecological sense of human sanity stems from rather different primary motives. I have a compelling curiosity and idealism and enthusiasm for life, along with a passionate sense of justice and a hearty appreciation for the natural world, and for the importance of seeing long-term greater good goals actualized. My creative drive

to express deeply felt convictions is accompanied by an objective rationality and an aspiration to a reasonable degree of Buddha-like detachment.

Love, to me, is a bit like "God". It is an emotional projection of spiritual cravings of our deepest inner selves. Both love and God are ineffable, mysterious, inexplicable, ethereal, elusive, deeply personal, and potentially marvelous and sublime -- and often tragically disappointing. Many people are intrigued by mythic stories and poetic conceptions in which feelings of love and the worship of deities play a large role. Obsessions with love and God have deep psychological underpinnings that are reflected in established religions and other spiritual pursuits, and are revealed in personality assessments and character typologies like those of the Enneagram.

Our beliefs in love and God are defining facets of our deep needs for connection, belonging, affirming relationships and even salvation. As such, they are complex expressions of profound aspects of our inner selves. Let them be!

Far-Out Insights

We have hundreds of different types of cells in our bodies: bone cells, muscle cells, nerve cells, gland cells and the like. Our cells not only have an amazing variety of functions, but also a surprisingly wide range of sizes. In *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Bill Bryson noted that the most striking contrast in cellular size is at the moment of conception, "when a single beating sperm confronts an egg eighty-five thousand times bigger than it (which rather puts the notion of male conquest into perspective.)" Ha! Come hither to make a valiant conquest, you squiggly little striving excessively confident one!

Evolutionary explanations can generally be found for almost every inherited characteristic. New adaptations can be traced to the pressures and influences of natural selection that tend to favor particular outcomes and developments. Leonard Shlain notes that four unique human traits appear in any given *Homo sapiens* population in a proportion of about one-twelfth of all people. These four traits are left-handedness, color-blindness, baldness, and homosexuality. Shlain developed a thesis that he calls the "Theory of Eights" (one twelfth is about 8%); in this theory, he provides a provocative explanation for how "these four traits taken together represent a constellation of genetic adaptations that enhanced the success of the original human male hunting band." Check out Chapter 16 and 17 of *Sex, Time, and Power* for a good understanding of how these traits may have contributed to our evolutionary success during the time our hominid ancestors were evolving larger brains and more complex hunting and mating behaviors.

Any organism that does not reproduce is, in a sense, an evolutionary dead end. I myself, Tiffany Twain, have not yet reproduced, and it is pretty likely that I never will. My personal unique genes will apparently not be a part of the evolutionary stream of humanity in the future. Note, however, that new ways have become possible to pass things on to future generations through the development of increasingly sophisticated cultures. These new modes of transmission are all but independent of the genetic legacy of our DNA. The fact of the matter is that the transfer of information through non-genetic channels has become more important than ever for our human biological success and survival. Today these educational and cultural legacies are more important than anything programmed in DNA to ensure our successful adaptation to rapid changes in social and ecological conditions.

Biological evolution is a process that is simply too slow to save us from the rapidly gathering threats that are being caused by our species' extraordinary reproductive success and the impacts of our growing numbers. Since there are now more than 7.4 billion human beings on Earth, the day is rapidly approaching that the carrying capacity of the Earth's ecosystems will prove inadequate to supply our collective needs and desires. The recognition of this fact should be crucial in motivating us to choose saner and safer ways forward, rather than merely following our animal instincts to reproduce with abandon and exploit resources with wasteful profligacy.

Cultural evolution is probably the most propitious way for us to ensure better hopes for our species' survival and prosperity. Perhaps my legacy in this Earth Manifesto will make a positive impact on our collective success. In contrast, the act of reproducing adds ever more people to the planet and exacerbates the challenges facing us. This is, in any case, a splendid rationalization for my not having had any children! And take it from me, it is possible to have a wonderful and adventurous life, filled with enjoyment, pleasure, variety and purpose, without having had children -- and without having incurred the heavy costs and time obligations attendant to child rearing!

Every person is born and eventually dies, but there is an enduring strain of humanity that survives. This genetic and cultural continuity evolves along with our species. An aspect of this essence that is crucially important for the survival of our species is our collective conscience. This is the part of us that feels a sense of responsibility for others, and for those in future generations. Each of us tends to be selfish in our motives, but I believe that we all have a deeper aspect of our beings that resonates with the greater good. Just as each individual has a profound impulse to help his or her own families and relatives as a part of our instinctive biological imperative of striving to ensure that our own genes are passed on, we may also all have a deeper impulse to do the right thing to help ensure that our own species survives.

Today, the recognition is growing that humanity's survival is dependent on the health of entire ecosystems, and on the protection of the diversity and well-being of other species. This is an unfolding realization that is finding powerful expression in the "blessed unrest" of many movements like deep ecology, environmental activism, climate action and open space initiatives, and the willingness to protect wildlife, endangered species, wilderness areas and national parks.

More Perspectives of Dr. Leonard Shlain

I challenge readers to check out Dr. Leonard Shlain's surprising theories about the prehistoric overthrow of feminine deities in favor of the worship of male gods, as compellingly articulated in his provocative book, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*. Shlain writes that a revolutionary societal change took place soon after the invention of alphabets, and that this change was accompanied by changes in belief systems like the overthrow of the primordial mother goddess Tiamat by the male god Marduk in the ancient Babylonian pantheon. Dr. Shlain contended that the innovative creation of alphabets and writing caused wide-ranging shifts in our ways of perceiving and interpreting the world.

Dr. Shlain postulated that a shift in consciousness took place when the word-oriented left hemisphere of the brain became dominant over the image-oriented right hemisphere. He says this was essentially a physical "rewiring" of the brain that contributed not only to the subjugation of the feminine divine in mankind's belief systems, but to the real repression of females in early civilizations. One of the first codes of law to be written in an alphabetic language was Hammurabi's Code, and it was not only harsh ("an eye for an eye"), but also distinctly repressive of women and their rights.

The advent of alphabets in early civilizations facilitated literacy for the masses, and it encouraged abstract thinking. A correlated shift in conscious awareness allowed people to more easily categorize knowledge, and it facilitated a more systematic investigation of the workings of nature. The advent of written expression was thus like a radical advance in weaponry during a long war, and one that causes an abrupt change in the tides of fortune. The development of alphabets and written records has been a great blessing that has provided humanity with much good, but importantly, it has also been a curse that has involved grave injustices.

It is time for a fairer balance to be established between the roles of men and women in our modern patriarchal societies. It would behoove us to have a simpler but truer and more comprehensive understanding of issues. At the same time, we should try to maintain a spacious mindfulness in our lives. We live in a deeply complex world in which appearances and reality are relative, and simplistic explanations have profound exceptions. To be resilient and to cope well, we need to strive to remain open-minded and flexible.

"I used to be somebody, but now I'm somebody else."

--- Song from the film *Crazy Heart*

Dr. Leonard Shlain was a pioneer in the development of techniques for minimally-invasive procedures known as laparoscopic surgery. Impressively, he was also a remarkably insightful author and observer of the human condition. He pointed out that, for sophisticated neurolinguistic reasons, all forms of writing produce subtle changes in mental cognition. The effect of these changes is to redirect human thinking. Since the advent of the written word increased the left brain's dominance over the right, this had the effect of strengthening left-brain masculine values and at the same time emasculating right-brain feminine values. As a consequence, human societies became more male dominated by males, and they became more ruthlessly competitive and increasingly repressive of

females. They also may have become more oriented toward wars instead of peaceful coexistence, and less aware of natural connections and the vital good involved in our interconnected interdependence.

It is my strong feeling that we should now once again find a way to give greater respect to feminine values, and to cooperate together to achieve more enlightened and holistic ways of apprehending and honoring other people and the natural world. We need a smarter, more practical and more sensitive self-understanding and a better balance that will enable us to embrace more empathetic, statesman-like ways of relating with other people. This is particularly critical on the international stage, where global issues are playing out writ large, with profound significance and disturbing implications.

Male-dominated societies can be made more humane by infusing them with a sense of shared community, fairly-shared prosperity, and other feminine sensibilities. Today the need is stronger than ever for us "to build bridges rather than walls". Feminine sensibilities are much more apt to strive to heal, reconcile, and forgive others than macho male attitudes. Men tend to be more logical, and women more intuitive. We should surely value our intuitions as well as our logic. Women value relationships over the goal of domination or violently conquering others, and they place a high value on the creation of community. Since they often listen better than men, they are generally somewhat more willing to pay attention to other points of view.

Women everywhere should be empowered by ensuring that they have fair access to a good public education. They should be guaranteed equal civil rights and property rights so that they will have more economic power. Assistance with financing and microfinancing for poor women, like the funding provided by Muhammad Yunus' Grameen Bank, has been shown to have salubrious effects on societies at a remarkably low cost. We should therefore invest more money in such things, and less in bailing out mega-banks with trillions of dollars when their speculative gambles go awry.

Leonard Shlain provided great hope that image-rich mediums like television and film could spark a powerful cultural revolution, just in time, by once again shifting our brain's hemispheric balance. Watch Yann Arthus-Bertrand's great aerial images in the provocative film *Home* (google it!), and let me know if you notice any salubrious effects! It is, in any case, an extraordinary film. We sure could use a positive revolution that would advance a more collaborative, nature-honoring, feminine-principle-embracing, and healthier balance in our societies -- one that is oriented toward the greater well-being of people alive today AND the security and prosperity of those in the future.

I like psychologist Jean Shinoda Bolen's job description for what may be required to ensure that we will succeed in helping save ourselves and keep the Earth habitable: 'HELP WANTED: Everywoman. Home keepers for Earth. Must keep premises safe for all. Must have a concern for children's needs and development, and an ability to manage resources, resolve conflicts, work collaboratively, ask questions, listen, learn from the experience of others, be empathetic, and act with compassion for the benefit of all, including generations to come.'

Introducing Another Great Gal and Her Perspectives

Adversities sometimes inspire us to see and feel a greater sense of empathy and compassion for others. Hardships sometimes serve to make us acutely aware of the challenges others face in their own setbacks. Think, for instance, about a woman named Carla Zilbersmith.

In May 2010, a 47-year-old woman named Carla Zilbersmith died after a three-year struggle with the slowly debilitating disease ALS, which is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Zilbersmith was spunky and courageous, and she handled her terrible adversity with admirable aplomb. One of her occupations was as a stand-up comedian, so she decided to leave the world laughing and wrote her own humorous obituary, which included the line, "Friend to an amazing group of caring, creative and competent friends, and lover to several very lucky and largely undeserving men." I'm sure! LOL!

Her obituary continued: "Although ALS is a fatal and incurable illness, Carla never gave up hope that one day her death would be surrounded by a cloud of controversy and speculation. Her final words, spoken through a clenched jaw were 'oil can.' The memorial is tentatively planned for the afternoon of Saturday, June 5. It is guaranteed to be the funniest funeral that you have ever attended, or your flowers back. Costumes encouraged but optional."

Carla Zilbersmith was deeply chagrined at having gotten this terminal Lou Gehrig's disease. Shortly after receiving the diagnosis, she joked to an audience: "It sucks, because I hate baseball. I'd really rather have been diagnosed with a basketball disease. Maybe with Wilt Chamberlain disease. That's the one where you have sex 20,000 times and then you die." Very witty, Carla -- and brave!!

ALS is one of humankind's most dreaded ailments. It is a neurodegenerative disorder that gradually paralyzes the body while it leaves the mind intact. Victims usually live from two to five years after being diagnosed. There is not yet any cure or effective treatment. When faced with the inevitable and "imagining my deathbed," Carla had resolved "to live the rest of my life with joy."

People who have such an upbeat attitude are admirable. Yay for you!, Ms. Zilbersmith. May your memory live on as a dramatic example to us all. And may your memory highlight the value of a clear sense of mindfulness in life, and of a positive attitude no matter what the obstacles. May your memory lead us to the words of Sylvia Boorstein: "We don't get a choice about what hand we are dealt in life. The only choice we have is our attitude about the cards we hold and the finesse with which we play our hand."

Sylvia Boorstein is a Jewish grandmother who is also a Buddhist, and these words come from her book *It's Easier Than You Think: The Buddhist Way to Happiness*. Boorstein also observes that everyone inevitably faces struggles and adversities, and that it behooves us all to try "to manage gracefully". I believe that, in addition to managing gracefully and trying to maintain a quintessentially chipper attitude, to whatever extent possible, everyone should strive to make a positive difference in the world in some way. This would be a beneficial legacy to our descendants. By doing this, we would "pay forward" a more salubrious destiny to our heirs.

Speaking of Evolution

We find ourselves here, now, aware, on a planet that is majestically revolving around its axis once every 24 hours while it makes annual orbits around a star that is the center of a solar system spiraling around a vast conglomeration of stars known as the Milky Way Galaxy. This galaxy is just one of hundreds of billions of galaxies in the Universe. These clumps of burning matter are scattered across vast expanses of empty space, and all of it is hurtling across the heavens. It appears that all these galaxies are hurtling away from some colossal explosion that apparently took place at the beginning of time. Sort of like a really Big Bang.

Everything in the Universe is in continuous motion, from the atomic and microscopic level to the macrocosmic. Everything, in other words, is changing all the time. The geophysical evolution of the Earth, as evidenced by erosion, landslides, floods, glacial activity, earth tremors, volcanic eruptions and a million other detectable daily changes, is merely a miniscule subset of this much longer intricate evolution of the Universe. Life on Earth can be seen to have adapted over time to the changing conditions on the planet. All species of life either succeed in adapting, or become extinct. Over 99% of all forms of life ever in existence are extinct due to the endless challenges of the almost eternal struggle to survive through eternally changing seasons, the fray of competition and the long span of ecosystem transformations. Every species alive has almost miraculously survived a long succession of catastrophic extinction events throughout this unfathomably long span of geologic time.

Surveys have revealed that about 40% of Americans do not believe that life has evolved. This is quite the surprise because, as Richard Dawkins has written, "Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the Earth goes round the Sun."

Many of those who doubt that life has evolved on Earth hold this view because they cling to religious dogmas that say humans have existed in their present form ever since a Supreme Being named God created the world in relatively recent times. This is a denial of overwhelming evidence of biological change. It also essentially denies the fact that geophysical change takes place continuously, and that biological adaptation to changing ecological and climatic conditions over the eons is the only sensible way to explain the existence of so many life forms that are almost perfectly adapted to current conditions in the habitats and ranges in which they live. A recent "null hypothesis confirmation" of the theory of evolution has been discovered by a UCLA professor and paleobiologist named William Schopf, who found a marked lack of biotic evolutionary change in forms of bacteria found in an unchanging environment of deep seafloor sediments over billions of years. (When there is no change in a physical

biological environment, the theory of evolution would posit that there would be no speciation and no evolution of the form, function, or metabolic requirements of its biotic components, and sure enough, that is what scientists are finding in one of the most unchanging habitats on Earth.)

The denial of extensive evidence of cumulative evolutionary change (and the sensational discovery of places where none has taken place over a period of more than a billion years) is so bizarre that one must resort to studies of psychology to explain such pigheadedness. Mark Twain satirically ridiculed incredible foolishness like this and man's anthropocentric worldviews in *Letters from the Earth*.

Denial and self-delusion are truly startling in light of the growing urgency for us to better understand the world and our role in it. For our race to have better prospects of surviving and prospering, we would be well-advised to cultivate better understandings, and not to deny them. We are all free to cling to whatever beliefs we like, and perhaps in many ways it does not matter if we are right or wrong about beliefs concerning evolution or Creationism. There are, however, matters in which erroneous beliefs can be either personally or socially disastrous. In such instances, it is vitally important to understand reality more accurately. When stubbornly dogmatic beliefs have negative consequences for people's welfare or the well-being of others, or for the future of our species, it is important to accurately comprehend the way things really are. In such instances, narrow convictions of absolute certainties in myths, superstitions, doctrinaire propaganda, and cultivated confusion can be dangerous.

A Larger Perspective on Human Evolution

Human evolution during the relatively brief span of recorded time has been primarily social rather than biological, according to Will and Ariel Durant in *The Lessons of History*. "It has proceeded not by heritable variations in the species, but mostly by economic, political, intellectual and moral innovation transmitted to individuals and generations by imitation, custom or education. "Originative individuals", the Durants observe, inspire an innovating minority of persons, and these cultural creative types provide leadership that imitative majorities follow. This is the way of history. This is why history smiles favorably on occasional "great" persons and heroes and geniuses, who are all a product of events and developments, as well as being their agent and voice. Every such person, as the Durants point out in their chapter *Character and History*, "is an effect of numberless causes, and causes of endless effects."

The Durants make a convincing case that "every vice was likely once a virtue, i.e., a quality making for the survival of the individual, the family, or the group." Hence greedy appetite, pugnacity, brutality and promiscuous sexual readiness were all once advantages in the struggle for survival. So, "Mankind's sins may be the relics of his rise, rather than the stigmata of his fall."

When human cultures evolved from the hunting and gathering stage to the agricultural and animal husbandry stage, previous virtues became vices. "Industriousness became more vital than bravery, regularity and thrift more profitable than violence, peace more victorious than war. Children became economic assets, and birth control was made immoral." And moralizing conservatives, averse to change, shout out their staunch antediluvian opposition to the unmooring of moral values during transitions to new sets of circumstances and exigencies.

In the Beginning

The roots of humanity's nature and behaviors lie deep in our prehistoric hunting-and-gathering past, long before the economic and cultural upheavals associated with the Agricultural Revolution and the more recent rapid technological innovations in industrial activities. To best understand the full scope of these ideas, let's imagine back in prehistory when our species' existence first diverged from our predecessors. The origins of *Homo sapiens* can be traced roughly to an era between 150,000 and 200,000 years ago when our remote ancestors began appearing in the fossil record as a species distinct from earlier *Homo erectus* and *Homo neanderthalensis* and other ancestral hominids. After surviving and proliferating for many millennia, our species faced a near-extinction event about 75,000 years ago. It is instructive to think about this episode, which is discussed after an aside, below.

Every so often in geologic history, a planet-wide catastrophe takes place that is caused by some sort of geophysical event like the fiery impact of a meteorite or the violent eruption of a supervolcano. Such an event throws so much

debris into the atmosphere that a 'global winter' ensues for months or years on end. Particulate matter and acidic pollution ejected into the atmosphere can block sunlight and disrupt the photosynthetic process upon which all forms of life in the food chain depend. When life-enabling sunshine is blocked, widespread population crashes can occur for almost every species of plant and animal alive at the time.

The most famous such geophysical event took place about 65 million years ago when all of the many species of dinosaurs went extinct along with more than half of other species of life on Earth. Some scientists believe that this massive extinction event was caused by a long series of volcanic eruptions in the Deccan Traps area of present day India. There, almost 200,000 square miles of land are still covered more than 6,000 feet deep with igneous flood basalt. Most scientists, however, now agree with physicist Luis Walter Alvarez, who came up with a different theory in 1980 that was startling at the time, but has since gained widespread acceptance. This explanation holds that the Cretaceous Extinction that took place 65 million years ago was caused by a large asteroid that hurtled through the atmosphere and slammed into planet Earth.

The Chicxulub ("Chick-shoe-lube") Crater, a 15-mile deep crater that is about 350 miles in circumference, has subsequently been identified as the place that this asteroid, roughly six miles in diameter, struck so long ago. This crater is found on the Yucatan Peninsula, overlapping into the southern part of the Gulf of Mexico. There is a good possibility of a correlation of this impact on one side of the Earth's crust with the Deccan Traps eruptions at the antipodes on the opposite side of the planet.

The proverbial 'smoking gun' confirmation of this theory of an asteroid impact is provided by a thin layer of iridium that is found in sedimentary rocks all around the world that were being formed during that distant era. Iridium is a rare element on Earth, but it is an element that happens to be abundant in extraterrestrial asteroids. A fall-out of iridium that followed a colossal meteorite impact is the most probable explanation for this unusual layer. A YouTube video about sandstones along the Brazos River in Texas, about 750 miles from this impact site, provides a surprising confirmation of this theory. Geologists have found iridium in unusual concentrations in rocks that were formed worldwide at this "KT boundary" between the Cretaceous Period and the Tertiary Period, which basically marks the boundary between the end of the Mesozoic Era (the "Age of Reptiles") and the beginning of the Cenozoic Era (the "Age of Mammals"), some 65 million years ago.

Indulge the imagination in prospective details, like those I found in one of my *Germinating* files:

"The immediate outcome of an impact as big as the Chicxulub would be hours of worldwide heat from the fiery impact that would be comparable to exposing forests and all land and ocean surfaces to heat in a domestic oven set on broil. There would also be intense acid rains and a blockage of the Sun's rays for weeks or months on end, resulting in the inability of land plants and algal plankton in the ocean to photosynthesize food. This would be followed by a "nuclear winter" of freezing air temperatures as the heat of the Sun would be blocked from reaching Earth surface, and this condition might persist for months or years. Thereafter, a "microwave summer" effect would transpire, caused by the greenhouse gas effects of enormous amounts of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by the meteorite impact and subsequent volcanic activity, and these hot temperatures could last around the planet for a thousand years."

"Other evidence indicates that this greenhouse effect could have persisted for a million years due to huge earthquake forces that came together from all directions in a colossal hammer blow to the Earth's crust at the antipodes on the opposite side of the planet from the impact. These forces would have pulverized the Earth's crust and caused hot magma to escape in practically unheralded volcanic eruptions that would continue for hundreds of thousands of years, creating a formation like the Deccan Traps in India. These multiple layers of flood basalt are so extensive that they contain a volume of solidified magma that exceeds 100,000 cubic miles of extruded lava."

"No wonder more than three-quarters of all species of life on Earth were wiped out during the terrible Cretaceous extinction 65 million years ago! Revealingly, species of life distantly ancestral to *Homo sapiens* managed to cling to existence through these dire times, as did the distant ancestors of every other form of life on Earth today. Existing today necessarily means that no ancestral species ever was completely wiped out." We can trace ancestors far back along the branches of the tree of life to single-celled organisms, as can every

other species of life.

The cause of the Permian Extinction, the most severe extinction event in Earth's history, is less well understood. I find this quote in another one of my *Germinating* files:

"The Deccan Traps were a municipal fireworks display compared with a huge Siberian basalt formation called the Siberian Traps, the product of eruptions lasting 600,000 years. These occurred about 250 million years ago, coincident with the Permian extinction -- the worst mass extinction in the fossil record."

--- Gregg Easterbrook, *We're All Gonna Die*

The reason that these ancient extinction events are of particular interest is that biological diversity today is experiencing another major extinction episode, and this one is being caused by human activities. When we understand the causes of this rapid extinction, this awareness could and should serve as a catalyst for us to take sensible steps to mitigate the severity of this development. The problem is made significantly worse by the fact that not only is humanity threatening and endangering many species of life in terrestrial areas, but also doing so severely in marine habitats, which are warming and acidifying.

Our activities, in aggregate, are affecting the most ecologically crucial marine habitats -- estuaries, wetlands and coral reefs -- in especially harmful ways. One third of the world's mangrove forests and almost half the world's coral reefs have been lost due to direct habitat destruction. Many of the remaining critical marine habitats are indirectly degraded by fertilizer runoff and other forms of pollution and freshwater diversions, and "ocean acidification" (declining ocean alkalinity) that is being caused by increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

As human population pressures grow, essential ecosystem services are detrimentally affected, and this is proving disastrous to the vitality and sustainable potentials of habitats everywhere around the planet. Let's take bold action now, and focus our efforts on instituting really effective incentives and disincentives to alter our collective behaviors!

I am well aware that Niccolo Machiavelli, one of the shrewdest observers of politics in history, makes it vividly clear how intransigent the problem of changing an established system may be: "It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions, and merely lukewarm defenders of those who would gain by the new ones."

This discouraging word about roadblocks to propitious change is offset by the positive implications of the Rule of Two Impossibles: When something is declared politically impossible, and yet the alternative option is proved to be impossible to an equal or greater degree, the first impossibility becomes curiously much more feasible. I believe that courses of action that lead to future ruin should be regarded as a greater impossible, rendering the stubborn stances of "conservatives" and defenders of the status quo as suddenly less impossible to change.

The Genetic Bottleneck of the Toba Tuff

The most notable instance of a 'volcanic winter' in more recent times was caused by a geologic event known as the Toba Tuff cataclysm. Scientists find extensive evidence of this volcanic eruption that took place 75,000 years ago on the island of Sumatra in present-day Indonesia. This eruption caused the most severe biotic disaster on Earth in the last 25 million years. The Toba Supervolcano spewed so much volcanic ash, gases and sulfuric acid into the atmosphere that it caused a volcanic winter that stressed life to an extreme degree. The human race was carried right to the brink of extinction. The population of human beings was probably reduced to a few thousand on the entire planet, and all the survivors lived near the equator on the continent of Africa. Every person alive today is descended from this small population base.

This explains the extraordinary lack of genetic diversity found between all members of our species. There is less than one-tenth of one percent difference between the gene structure of any one human and any other, despite the obvious variations in skin pigmentation, eye color, body shapes, facial features, and hair types that characterize people around the world. As Leonard Shlain points out in *Sex, Time, and Power*, "The genes of chimpanzee

communities inhabiting ranges only a few thousand yards apart have more genetic diversity than those of humans separated by oceans."

In 1977, I just happened to visit Ground Zero of this Toba ecological cataclysm. I flew from the Indonesian island of Java to the southern tip of Sumatra, the 6th biggest island in the world. Then I took a rough bus ride north for 24 hours to the inland body of water known as Lake Toba. This lovely lake is the largest lake in a volcanic caldera in the world. It is 100 kilometers long and 30 kilometers wide. In the middle of Lake Toba, the extraordinarily beautiful Samosir Island was idyllic back in the 1970s. Ferry boats that took locals and a few foreign travelers out to the island at the time were so dilapidated that the crew would bail out the 200-passenger vessels during the entire trip across the lake. This journey was an adventure!

The lovely waters of Lake Toba fill the ancient volcanic caldera remnant of a "Toba Supervolcano". In this regard, it is similar to Crater Lake in the Cascade Range in southern Oregon. The caldera of Crater Lake was also formed by a climactic eruption of a volcano, one known as Mt. Mazama. This towering volcano had been formed by a long succession of eruptions over a period of some 400,000 years, and this climactic eruption took place relatively recently, almost yesterday in geologic time, about 7,700 years ago. It spewed out some 12 cubic miles of magma, in maybe one week's time, and then the mountain top collapsed into the emptied magma chamber, leaving a remnant mountain rim 33 miles around with a deep hole in the middle. When the crater eventually partially filled with fresh water, the lake became the deepest lake in North America.

For perspective, the most violent volcanic eruption in modern history was that of Krakatoa in August 1883. In this great eruption, about 6 cubic miles of material is estimated to have been ejected. Many people remember the impressive explosion of Mt. St. Helens in the southern part of the state of Washington in 1980; it ejected only about 1 cubic mile of material.

Geologists say that the Toba caldera is the remnant of a series of Toba Tuff explosions, and that the last eruption 75,000 years ago ejected an estimated 670 cubic miles of pumice and ash. One can imagine the effects that this had on the patterns of the world's weather in the years following that eruption. The Krakatoa explosion in 1883, after all, had sent less than 1% of the volume of debris into the atmosphere that the Toba eruption did, and yet it had very significant adverse effects on the agricultural food production worldwide in 1883 and the years that immediately followed. Of course, everything is relative. The lava flows in the Siberian Traps are estimated to exceed one million cubic miles of molten rock!

We live in *A Sound Bite Society*, so the publication of more than 1.5 million words in twelve 212-page books in this manifesto may sound like the most colossally quixotic instance of literary madness imaginable. Nonetheless, every day evolving ideas spring forth unbidden to modify and augment these ideas and understandings, as if from a mysterious but certainly not entirely inexplicable water source like the Rogue River springing forth from Boundary Springs, not far from beautiful Crater Lake in the Cascade Mountains of southern Oregon.

I had actually hoped to hike to this source of lovely spring water on a visit a few years ago to extraordinarily beautiful Crater Lake, but a wildfire had raged through the tinder-dry forest in August 2015 and temporarily closed the trail. In my imagination, I am wandering there now with a book of Greek mythology, planning to read about Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, who was born fully grown and armed from the head of Zeus, ruler of the universe. Athena was also known as the goddess of courage, inspiration and civilization, and was known for her calm temperament. She notably only fought for just reasons, and was thus the patron goddess of heroic endeavors.

Concerning Catastrophes and Cooperation

A provocative article written by Emily Spence about the Toba Tuff eruption and related topics can be found by googling Emily Spence Toba Tuff. Ms. Spence makes a fascinating observation in this article, titled "Concerning Catastrophes and Cooperation". All the human survivors of the Toba explosion lived within 200 miles of the Rift Valley in modern-day Kenya, so she speculates that obsidian tools, which are found in abundance in the Rift Valley, were instrumental in allowing the early humans living in the region to be successful in hunting the reduced populations of animals found there. These tools allowed them to survive the extreme hardships posed by the global ecological calamity. Ms. Spence theorizes that tribes probably died off if they chose to violently conflict over

resources, but those who survived were the ones who cooperatively hunted and traded and coexisted peacefully. "As a result," she writes, "our ancestors, all of them for everyone on Earth, likely came from these small bands of people, and we all inherited a genetic foundation imbued with a propensity towards accommodation and sharing and cooperation!"

I like Ms. Spence's attitude. Today, we are divided and distracted from seeing vital bigger picture perspectives, due to obtuse ideological intransigence, political partisanship and obstruction, religious differences, animosity, greed, and the denial of scientific understandings. Larger perspectives reveal that our human activities are causing many detrimental impacts that are harmful to the ecological commons of our home planet. These actions, in aggregate, are endangering the Earth's capacity to provide for future generations of many species of life, including our own. The most serious of these impacts are changes in temperatures and rainfall patterns in almost every locale and habitat around the planet.

These developments make it clear that we should be more serious about finding ways to give higher priority to our collective well-being and the things that are most important in life. We should seek ways to reduce the power and stubborn opposition of those who defend the status quo and fight only for short-term goals. Proposals are elaborated below that would help us achieve greater respect for the natural world and a needed radical reorientation and restructuring of our activities and priorities.

Note that Richard Dawkins provided a counterpoint to Emily Spence's ideas in his book *The Selfish Gene*. He contended that the nature of our biological inheritance may provide little help in building societies wherein individuals cooperate unselfishly toward achieving common good goals. He may be right that, in the context of DNA and genetic influences, things like universal love and the welfare of the species as a whole are concepts that are inconsistent with processes that drive natural selection. But new understandings of the survival value of in-group cooperation in early human clans make it clear that cooperation has been crucially important throughout our species' evolution. Today, it is becoming ever more vital for our cultures to work together to adapt, and to make sure Earth's resources are not overexploited. We simply cannot allow the ecosystems of our home planet to be damaged beyond habitability as our civilizations grow, for catastrophic collapse will result from ecological overshoot.

Seen from another angle, historians Will and Ariel Durant expressed the following provocative idea: "Co-operation is real, and increases with social development, but mostly because it is a tool and form of competition; we cooperate in our group -- our family, community, club, church, party, "race", or nation -- in order to strengthen our group in its competition with other groups."

Hunting and Gathering and Associated Behavioral Propensities

Emily Spence's observations that all human beings alive today are descended from ancestors who lived in a single area in sub-Saharan Africa are confirmed by extensive genetic studies that have been done around the world in recent years. It is valuable to note that, throughout the entire span of time from our earliest origins until the past 10,000 years, our ancestors survived by hunting animals and gathering plants, fruits, nuts, and herbs for food and medicine.

Since human males generally tended to be hunters in early human clans and females were gatherers, the eons-long biological and cultural evolution of humanity has encouraged different traits in men and women. Men had to be more aggressive in the hunt, so they tended to be more ruthless in competition and more ready to be physically aggressive and violent. Women tended to collaborate and cooperate together to raise children, gather foodstuffs, prepare meals and do other chores required for domestic survival. So they naturally accorded greater value to relationships, and they forged connections better and solved problems in ways that were more oriented around community and good communication and peaceful coexistence. Studies of the brains of females and males show that the influence of the main human sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone, play significant roles in creating these gender differences by helping shape neuronal circuits and behavior patterns during embryonic stages of development and early childhood and puberty.

Each of us naturally has an intensely solipsistic and self-absorbed worldview. We think we are so sophisticated, and we scarcely admit that we are actually animals. But despite our introspections and conceits and spiritual pursuits, our drives are rooted in basic biological imperatives like getting enough to eat, finding a secure place to live, and seeking success in courting, mating and reproducing.

The respective roles of males and females began to change significantly 10,000 years ago when the transition began from hunter-gatherer clans to agricultural societies. Nomadic peoples settled down during this Agricultural Revolution. Then another great transformation began when the Industrial Revolution started about 250 years ago with the use of steam engines, and people began to move in large and growing numbers from farms to cities to work in factories. The twentieth century saw economic forces that propelled most women into the payday work force, and it witnessed sociological changes stimulated by the widespread availability of birth control measures. These developments all dramatically altered the relations between females and males.

Today, we are faced with the fact that our human impacts on Earth's ecosystems will likely lead to far-reaching and potentially devastating consequences. It seems obvious that it would be propitious for us to choose to make new transformative efforts to empower the cooperative and collaborative aspects of our natures, and to weaken the aggressive, exploitive and conflict-oriented mentality that dominates the world political scene. The best way to accomplish this might be to give women more power, because they embody the empathetic and nurturing constellation of feminine values. A better balance of power between men and women would serve to diminish the domineering influence of strict-father attitudes, and to weaken the undesirably retrogressive traditionalist elements of human societies that serve to perpetuate sexism, racism and the like.

I believe women are the key to sparking a new respectful worldview that will be in better harmony with nature. Female politicians like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann were prominent exceptions to this general idea a decade ago, but it is because they are so affected by religious fundamentalism and sycophantic conservatism that they cater to entrenched interest groups and deny scientific knowledge and oppose vitally important ecological understandings. Some women can obviously be as uncompromising, myopic, ideologically extreme, reckless, irrational, idiotic, and manipulative as the worst of men. But regardless of whether any specific woman offers better ideas for a more sane future, a far better balance is needed, in aggregate, between the collaborative constellation of Nurturing Parent sensibilities and the contrasting constellation of worldviews that characterize Strict Father values, as identified by linguist George Lakoff. The values generally associated with feminine worldviews are needed to balance out the rash, domineering, and ruthlessly competitive values that are generally associated with masculine worldviews.

It seems clear that, in light of our growing knowledge, we should take more courageous steps to educate and empower girls and women in our societies, and to provide them with fairer opportunities. By doing this, we would likely improve cooperation on the world stage and make our societies fairer, more collaborative and more conducive to healthy living and peaceful coexistence. This would be a salubrious form of social intelligence!

It would also be potently desirable to create a cease-fire in the war between the sexes. To do so, it would be valuable to understand the sociobiological exigencies that have led to misogyny and the repression of women and patriarchal domination. Dr. Leonard Shlain pointed out that the struggle between the sexes is comprehensible because a part of every male is resentful toward females for preventing him from following the "evolutionary imperative adhered to by 99.9 percent of male creatures -- to spread his seed far, wide, and often." Females, on the other hand, are frequently angered by the male gender's failure to live up to their hopeful expectations, so they harbor deep resentments toward the male sex. "This mutual rancor abets the war between the sexes and renews itself in every generation," wrote Shlain.

John Gray, the bestselling relationship author in history, offers his own brand of advice on how to improve relationships and create lifelong passion and lead healthier lives. Can we do it? All together now; one, two, three, four, can I have a little more!

The time has come today for collaboration and consensus-seeking to move our nation forward. The principal vision in these words is that feminine sensibilities, intuitions, practicality and collaborative spirit may be the key to improving our prospects for needed progressive adaptation. Let's work to enable this transformation!

Whether or not this strongly-held conviction is completely valid -- that a greater respect for women's perspectives would help us successfully address the overarching issues we face -- we cannot afford to delay in boldly and fairly addressing the risks, dysfunctionality and inequities presented by today's far-flung challenges. NOW is the time to act!

A Lunar Aside

The Moon has been provocatively personified in feminine symbolism and monthly cycles throughout human history, just as the Sun has been regarded as an Apollonian symbol of masculine forces. This symbolism calls up important evolutionary memories. The *Care2* social network website contains this illumination about the Moon (edited):

The moon is the primary night light of the skies, illuminating the land brightly on the nights of the full moon and receding again to the mystery of complete darkness at the new moon. This ancient enigma of constant regular appearance and growth and subsequent disappearance is a visible symbol of life and death and then rebirth with the appearance of the waxing and waning phases of the Moon. Ancient peoples measured time by the regular cycle of the Moon rather than the cycle of the Sun, and even the solstices and equinoxes were originally celebrated on the closest full or new moon.

The Moon is like a mirror that reflects the light of the sun, so it represents the shadow side of the sun's light and can be seen as reflecting the mystery and fear within our souls. The changing face of the Moon is particularly associated with women because its regular twenty-eight day cycle so closely matches the cycle of menstruation. The Moon's visible cycles can also be seen as mirroring the life of woman in her various stages as a girl, mother and older woman, symbolically paralleling the lunar phases of new, full and old. The mirror of the moon can symbolically be seen as illuminating both the darkness of the night, our shadow part, and the blue sky of daytime, our conscious selves.

The *Care2* website, incidentally, was founded to help connect activists from around the world. It has a stated mission of helping people make the world a better place by connecting them with individuals, organizations and businesses that are making responsible impacts in the world. I salute this splendid idea of working to make the world a better place!

I find it fascinating to imagine the genesis of the Moon. First, let's set the stage. The Sun and our solar system formed from nebulas of dust and gas clouds that were hurtling through space, similar to the genesis of every other star system in the Universe. As these materials came together, they gained more mass and stronger gravitational force, and nuclear reactions forged them into dense, hot stars. As the Sun was forming, other gases and heavier elements in orbit around the new Sun coalesced into disks of materials that began colliding and fusing into protoplanets and planetoid masses that would eventually make up all the planets in orbit around the Sun today, along with their satellite moons.

The best scientific theory for how the Moon was formed is the Giant Impact Hypothesis. This is a thought provoking and imagination evoking theory that a Mars-sized protoplanet slammed into the Earth during its "Late Heavy Bombardment stage". This colossal collision early in the geologic history of the Earth blasted a part of the mantle material from both bodies and sent it outward at a speed great enough to achieve escape velocity from the Earth's gravity, and thus into orbit. The Moon's orbit is slightly elliptical, with the average distance from the Earth to the Moon being about 236,000 miles.

A close viewing of the Moon through a telescope provokes the imagination. More than 300,000 visible impact craters can be seen that have a diameter in excess of one kilometer. Since there is no water and little atmosphere and no plate tectonic movements on the Moon, forces of erosion like those on Earth do not operate there, and the cratered surface offers mute testimony to the many impacts of meteorites over the long course of lunar history.

The biggest and deepest crater on the Moon is "an abyss that could engulf the United States from the East Coast through Texas". This crater was created after the Moon had formed, when a large meteorite crashed into it and gouged out a crater almost 1,500 miles across and more than five miles deep. Scientists have named this crater the South Pole-Aitken Basin. The tremendous heat of the impact melted part of the floor of the crater, turning it into a sea of molten rock.

"Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody."

--- Mark Twain

You have to love the majestic rotation of the Earth that equally gives everyone on the planet days and nights of constantly changing duration. This is a marvelous instance of natural egalitarianism. Yay for Mother Nature! The Moon, in distinct contrast, long ago stopped any similar spin, frozen as if it's in suspended animation by the friction associated with the strong pull of Earth's gravitational field. One side of the moon is always lighted by the Sun; the other side is always in perpetual darkness. When the orbit of the Moon takes it directly between us and the Sun, we see only the dark side, and call it a new moon. When the Moon's orbit takes it directly away from the Sun, 14 days later, we see only the light side, and call it a full moon. The Moon waxes from new to full and back to new every 28 days.

Eclipses of the Sun and the Moon take place only because the orbit of the Moon takes it directly between the Earth and the Sun, and directly away from the Sun on the far side of its orbit. An eclipse of the Moon can be seen from anywhere on Earth where the Moon is visible, and it always takes place when the Moon is full, because the Earth's shadow is being cast out in space directly away from the Sun. An eclipse of the Sun, however, is visible only from a narrow moving corridor on Earth about 30 miles wide, because this is the size of the Moon's shadow at its distance from us. This occurs only when the Moon is "new" and we see only its dark side because the Moon is directly between the Earth and the Sun when such an eclipse takes place.

Daily high tides are higher and low tides are lower around two specific times of each month: the new moon and the full moon. A curious mind will be able to imagine the causative factors behind this fact. During a new moon, when the Moon's orbit has taken it on its path directly between the Earth and the Sun, the gravity of the Sun and the Moon are both pulling Earth's oceans in the same direction, creating higher high tides and lower low tides. During a full moon, the Moon's orbit has taken it directly away from the Sun and the gravity of the two bodies is tugging in exactly opposite directions. The tides ebb and flow from high to low and back to high and then to low, completing this cycle regularly every 24 hours as the pull of the Moon's gravity exerts its attractive influence on the rotating Earth.

Passion and Compassion

While Mark Twain brazenly made fun of biblical absurdities in his posthumously published book, *Letters from the Earth*, I can't remember if he ever wrote about the Immaculate Conception. I had to look up this concept on Wikipedia to understand what occurred way back when, according to the official story. The Immaculate Conception is a Roman Catholic doctrine that says Mary, mother of Jesus, was conceived in her mother's womb free from all "stain of original sin", so she had divine grace. No sexual intercourse had reputedly been involved!

These religious doctrines are absurd to accept as literal. Why does the Holy Book assert that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born from a mother through Immaculate Conception? To understand this doctrine, remember that the act of disobedience by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was regarded as such a terrible provocation of God's wrath that it unleashed 'His' severe condemnation of the human race ever-after to live lives of suffering followed by death. Sex soon thereafter came to be considered as a sin, somehow dirty, libidinous, and way too alluring and potentially pleasurable, and prone to make one promiscuous. As a result, "virgin births" were a convenient way to posit complete virtue for heroine figures in a religion's dogmas. And, Presto! Mother Mary was born in a miraculous Immaculate Conception.

This doctrine was actually a new dogmatic truth that was concocted and canonized in 1854; it was "solemnly defined as a dogma by Pope Pius IX". I can just imagine! And there they were, just after the '49ers Gold Rush got going in a far distant part of the world, creating a curiously implausible new doctrine in a holy book with a solemn air of newfound absolute certainty!

Dogmas that claim an Immaculate Conception were borrowed from pagan myths. Zeus, for instance, made many mortal women pregnant without the involvement of any mortal man. I reasonably reckon that virgin births are just about as likely today as they were with Zeus in Athens in 500 BCE!

Most conceptions of God simplistically picture 'Him' as an ethereal old man. This is an absurdly anthropocentric projection of our human self-centeredness upon the Universe. It seems crazy to me to anchor all the tenets of a religious establishment upon such a dubious presumption. The Almighty God portrayed in the Bible is not much more sophisticated than Greek mythological deities, and it is pretty doggone preposterous to honestly believe that God made us in 'His' own image, rather than the actual and more obvious fact that we have made God in our own image. Whatever!

These stories like virgin births are whoppers! Babies are born nine months after a woman's egg is fertilized by a man's sperm, so anyone who claims that a woman gets pregnant without a sperm being involved is making it up! You can count on it. The belief in a virgin birth is a throwback to antiquated times of superstition when people did not understand the nature of reproductive biology. Today we know better, and yet many people cling to atavistic dogmas as if they are really true. Promulgators of doctrines should take care to make their miracles a little more plausible!

The creators of the Garden of Eden story set forth a dogma of "original sin" in order to induce guilt and conformity. The Bible may even have been designed to reconcile humankind to tilling the soil and accepting suffering in life. Doctrines that egregiously conflate sex and sin were cooked up to stimulate guilt, a prominent aspect of Christianity. One purpose of such stories is to manipulate people to get them to obey moral codes -- often as strictly defined by stodgy, conservative and puritanical male authorities in undemocratic power-obsessed churches.

Sex is portrayed as sinful by religious authorities despite the simple fact that sex is a vital biological function and a potentially beautiful form of human connection and communication. It is biologically absurd for religious authorities to use sex and guilt to get people to think the sexual act is dirty.

The doctrine of the miraculous Immaculate Conception is what Mark Twain called a "stretcher". The assertion that Mary's mother got pregnant through divine intervention is no more plausible than myths that Zeus impregnated many mortal females in the course of his divine philandering. At least the ancient Greeks weren't so audacious, prissy, implausible or preposterous as to formulate the idea that Zeus left the mothers in a virgin state after the deed!

Greek gods and goddesses were much truer reflections of human nature than God or Allah are, in modern times. Zeus was a philandering alpha male driven by macho sex urges to spread his seed far and wide, and his wife Hera represented traditional matriarchal roles. God is more of a caricature today than an honest personification. He has no wife, and instead of being driven by powerful sexual urges, He was content to get a mortal female pregnant without having sexual intercourse with her in some inexplicable sort of mythic virgin intervention. Fascinatingly, God did this with an abstruse sublapsarian master plan that his divine son Jesus would later be sacrificed as a loving savior for mankind who would forgive the natural and inevitable sins of any person gullible enough to fall hook, line and sinker for this story. God apparently craved the adulation of His glory so much, and He was so mercurial, that He condemned humankind forevermore for the original sin of disobedience by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and He further condemned non-believers and all their children for three or four generations to eternal burning in Hell for any sign of rational skepticism of this story, or heresy.

Superstitious explanations of things are a peculiar form of "abracadabra". These explanations may satisfy eager believers, but they do not any longer suffice in the face of modern knowledge and understandings of the physical universe in which we live. Some things are inexplicable, and some seem downright magical, it is true, but explanations that directly conflict with cause and effect are suspiciously improbable.

I mention these controversial ideas because established religions have big responsibilities when they choose to side with regressive forces and authoritarian political establishments. When outcomes are opposed to fair-minded policies or sensible environmental protections or the prevention of tragedy-of-the-commons calamities, they are contrary to the greater good. To the extent that religious establishments collaborate with corporate shenanigans or inadequate regulations in laissez-faire capitalist systems, conservative religious folks must yield to moderates and reformers, in all faiths! With regard to repressive theocracies, don't get me started!

Come around, promoters of the fundamentalist Jesus-promoting Christian association, the Family -- and their ilk -- who choose to affiliate with the rich and powerful instead of showing concern for the poor and the downtrodden, and who readily forgive the transgressions of the politicians they curry favor with, and thus help trample the dispossessed and the underprivileged and the unfairly under-represented.

The Issue of Health Insurance for All Americans

My maternal instincts, such as they are, urge me not to let these meandering words come to a conclusion without mentioning the state of health care in the United States. What now, in the fog of obfuscating rationalizations, are we to honestly think of rampant profiteering on health insurance policies? These policies affect life and death decisions about medical treatments, drug prescriptions, and people's well-being. Profiteering ploys that exclude "preexisting conditions" and deny treatment and insurance coverage are a form of exploitation and betrayal. This form of profiteering takes advantage of tens of millions of the most vulnerable people in the U.S. The fact that these gambits are insidiously directed to exploit the most powerless of Americans is outrageous. Oh, blackguards! Oh, vile justifiers of an inhumane exploitive status quo! Oh, systemic stupidity!!

How can we effect change when the dominant voices that control our economic system are those that are often diametrically opposed to the common good? One of the most powerful instincts of parents is to protect their offspring, and the sensibilities of mothers in particular are oriented toward a protective nurturing of their children. Yet when these sensibilities conflict with motivations that involve status seeking, intense competition, aggression and instinctive male drives to exploit and dominate others, compassion generally loses out.

It is feminine sensibilities that are the ones most closely affiliated with fairer and safer courses of action and a more sustainable future, so they are the ones we should foster.

An Aside to People Who Like to Eat: Recipes, Free of Charge!

Since this is a feminine vision of a better world, it cries out for some good recipes. Check out the sensational *Twelve Delicious Recipes for Good Health and Gourmet Appreciation*. Do not overlook the Ginger-Infused Health Beverage, because it is a hyper-healthy drink that is a great replacement for coffee in the morning. This concoction is good for you because ginger provides alkaline balance to the body's acidic systems, and cayenne, cinnamon and turmeric have been used for millennia for their extensive health benefits.

I like to imagine that my recipes for the betterment of our world contain equally good directions and guidance. The Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis wrote a personal version of Homer's *Odyssey*, and he kept rewriting it repeatedly "to broaden its scope, until it came to include all he had ever seen and heard and thought." Pondering this, I remember that Thomas Paine enlarged the scope of his understandings by wisely focusing on big picture ideas, not specific individuals. He did this to establish his relative objectivity in his analysis of the "absurdity" of despotic British rule in the American colonies. And he justified the vehemence of his arguments -- and lent his work significant gravity -- by referring to the "cause of America" as "the cause of all mankind."

Please pretend that these writings contain equally noble attempts at a big picture scope, and forgive the passionate diatribes aimed at any specific individuals who may have stumbled into a poor opinion here of your humble servant scribe.

I thank readers for the forbearance of your attention. Please help advance these ideas by providing me with your input to help enlarge these ideas and make them more inclusive. More heart-centered understandings, in particular, are welcomed to strengthen the emotional force of these ideas. I am open-minded to hearing what one of my somewhat conservative friends endearingly called "a reasonably articulated counterpoint to your liberal pabulum." Ha! (Thank you, El Gaviero.)

Some More Reflections on Will and Ariel Durant

Will and Ariel Durant have inspired many reflections in this manifesto. I love the fact that, according to Wikipedia, "The Durants shared a love story as remarkable as their scholarship." Will and Ariel provide readers some interesting details of their lives in *A Dual Autobiography*. Will Durant had fallen in love with a 14-year-old pupil at the Modern School, Chaya (Ida) Kaufman, whom he later nicknamed "Ariel". They were married one year

later. She was so young, according to one review, that she roller-skated on her way to City Hall for their marriage. That's a delightful image!

"Together they shared not only a burning love for each other but a hunger for ideas. Their *Dual Autobiography* follows their intellectual journey, beginning with their interest in anarchism and going on thru a long, shared lifetime that brought them honors, fame and acquaintance with almost every major literary and intellectual personality in Europe and the USA. Their book is frank and moving, at once a star-studded history of the decades through which they lived and worked, and it provides us with an intimate tribute to an enduring love."

After their long and esteemed intellectual collaboration, Ariel died in 1981, even though she was 12 years younger than Will, who was 96 years old. Amazingly, Will died less than two weeks after Ariel.

A brief survey of the contents of the 11 volumes of *The Story of Civilization* gives you an idea of the impressive scope of this undertaking. From *Our Oriental Heritage* and *The Life of Greece and Caesar* and *Christ* through *The Age of Voltaire* and *Rousseau and Revolution* and *The Age of Napoleon*, they studied a long span of history, and brought their penetrating and sometimes poetic vision to their interpretation of people and events.

Will and Ariel had intended to carry their work up through the 20th century, but they simply ran out of time. They had expected the 10th volume, *Rousseau and Revolution*, to be their last, but they lived long enough to publish the 11th volume, *The Age of Napoleon* in 1975. They also left behind notes for a twelfth volume, *The Age of Darwin*, and an outline for a thirteenth, *The Age of Einstein*, which would have taken *The Story of Civilization* through to 1945. Those two volumes would no doubt have been extraordinary additions to their collected works! Maybe some enterprising scholar will study all the volumes the Durants wrote and finish the job with excellent additions to bring their story of civilization to modern times.

When I think about those Biblical times of old when there were giants in the earth and God would parcel out the responsibility for saving a few specimens of mankind (and two of every other kind of animal), to a 500-year old man when He was hatching His plan to unleash His fury on His biotic creation, I think how sad it is that God didn't decide to give Will and Ariel another decade or two of vital energy to complete these books and add to their great contributions to human understanding.

At the end of the day, Will and Ariel's life works gave humankind many rich reflections, and their stories about Darwin and Einstein would have provided more of their inimitable illumination on the lives of these two modern intellectual giants. The story of the lives of Will and Ariel itself is a great one, for it is not only a marvelous love story for each other, but also a love for history and philosophy. Since philosophy itself is literally a love of wisdom, these ideas come full circle.

A love story is a perfect one to cap these reflections, for love is an essence of the divine in the human spirit. Will and Ariel's loves give us hope that we too can find the touchstones of repentance and reconciliation and achieve a measure of salvation in a philosophic acceptance of others; and even if it is not a loving one, then at least a respectful Golden Rule kind of acceptance for other ways of living and believing and seeing the world.

Mark Twain had been one of the most widely traveled people on the planet in his day, having spent years living in Europe and circumnavigating the globe on his lengthy lecture tours, and these travels broadened his perspective considerably. No one has, or can have, a "total perspective", as Will Durant aspired toward achieving, but there are definitely good ways of broadening one's worldviews. It is my theory that the bigger a perspective we can cultivate, the better off we will be as the decades unfold in our personal and collective history.

The philosopher Baruch Spinoza provocatively observed, "I have striven not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, not to hate them, but to understand them." A good plan!

Blog Author Jeff Wills provides an interesting point of view in a piece about *Total Perspective*:

"Science is impressive. Modernity is in large part about the rise of modern natural science. There is so much we understand now and can accurately predict about natural phenomena because of the advances of modern natural science. Our lives have been improved beyond the imagination of those living within just the past 60 years. Science is an enormously powerful tool for reading the book of nature. We need to be careful and circumspect

when challenging the results of scientific research. Believe me when I say that most of the time it's a mistake (dangerous and irresponsible at times) to discount the validity of scientific explanations. If we're not careful, we fall into delusionism.

And yet to believe that science is the only domain of real knowledge is simply mistaken. Let's start with the statement that all real knowledge is, indeed, physics (science). Well, there is no scientific, falsifiable way to prove the validity of this statement. It is, ironically, a philosophical precept. You can't run an experiment that proves the statement "that all knowledge is physics." You have to, well, take it as *true* ... philosophically.

Second, there is the big problem with ultimate or original causes. To explain: We can discover, detect, and explain physical laws and how they operate in the universe, but as we keep pulling back the layers and layers of the causal onion, we realize we can't explain the meta-laws (the ultimate laws) of the universe. In simpler terms, our current science can't tell us *why* there is a universe (galaxies, etc) in the first place. "Why," as the philosophical challenge goes, "is there something instead of nothing?"

And then there is the problem of judgment and values. Science can provide us with facts and important data, but science can't resolve questions of value. For example, science does not help us decide whether we will or will not allow stem-cell research. This argument is sometimes confused as a science versus religion debate. But it's really not. This is a philosophical debate, not a scientific one. Science provides context, but it can't give us the knowledge we seek -- about what's the right thing to do. This is a decision of ethics, of philosophy.

And then, I believe, there's the knowledge of human intentionality. Basically we all have the same range of emotions in greater or lesser degree. We feel love, hate, lust, rage and fear and so on. But how do we truly learn about these emotions? Certainly emotional intelligence is real knowledge. Science can tell us about the chemical makeup of these emotions and suggest how to handle, understand or cope with them. But how do we really gain emotional insight? Science just can't give us this knowledge. We learn about these things through art, literature, religion, philosophy, history, experience and so on. You learn them, in the broadest sense, through the humanities. As Will Durant muses: "To observe processes and construct means is science. To criticize and coordinate ends is philosophy."

Lastly, there are the other Big Questions about life itself, and about the miracle of human consciousness, both of which are still mysteries beyond the reach of science. Science can give us a lot, but it can't provide us with meaning or purpose or even "why" science itself is so important and worth our time and effort. These are all philosophical questions.

Let me conclude by letting Will Durant provide a summary of the relationship between philosophy and science:

"But is philosophy stagnant? Science seems always to advance, while philosophy seems always to lose ground. Yet this is only because philosophy accepts the hard and hazardous task of dealing with problems not yet open to the methods of science -- problems like good and evil, beauty and ugliness, order and freedom, life and death. As soon as a field of inquiry yields knowledge susceptible of exact formulation, it is called science."

"Every science begins as philosophy and ends as art: It arises in hypothesis and flows into achievement. Philosophy is a hypothetical interpretation of the unknown (as in metaphysics), or of the inexactly known (as in ethics or political philosophy). It is the front trench in the siege of truth. Science is the captured territory, and behind it are those secure regions in which knowledge and art build our imperfect and marvelous world. Philosophy seems to stand still, perplexed, but only because she leaves the fruits of victory to her daughters the sciences, and herself passes on, divinely discontent, to the uncertain and unexplored."

"Shall we be more technical? Science is analytical description; philosophy is synthetic interpretation. Science wishes to resolve the whole into parts, the organism into organs, the obscure into the known. It does not inquire into the values and ideal possibilities of things or into their total and final significance. It is content to show their present actuality and operation. It narrows its gaze resolutely to the nature and process of things as they are."

"The scientist is as impartial as Nature in Turgenev's poem: He is as interested in the leg of a flea as in the creative throes of a genius. But the philosopher is not content to describe the fact. He wishes to ascertain its relation to experience in general and thereby to get at its meaning and its worth. He combines things in

interpretive synthesis. He tries to put together, better than before, that great universe-watch which the inquisitive scientist has analytically taken apart."

"Science tells us how to heal and how to kill. It reduces the death rate in retail and then kills us wholesale in war. But only wisdom -- desire coordinated in the light of all experience -- can tell us when to heal and when to kill. To observe processes and to construct means is science. To criticize and coordinate ends is philosophy. And because in these days our means and instruments have multiplied beyond our interpretation and synthesis of ideals and ends, our life is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." For a fact is nothing except in relation to desire. It is not complete except in relation to a purpose and a whole. Science without philosophy, facts without perspective and valuation, cannot save us from despair."

An Interim Conclusion Is Reached

A provocative independent film made its rounds of the film festival circuit in 2009. Titled *Sergio*, and based on Samantha Power's book *Chasing the Flame: One Man's Fight to Save the World*, it is about Sergio Vieira de Mello, a highly respected and praised human being who worked selflessly for the greater good. Sergio was a charismatic Brazilian who listened well and was empathetic, and he spent his life trying to bring people together for positive purposes. Sergio exhibited an honorable integrity in helping refugees when he worked for the United Nations, and he helped East Timor, the former Portuguese colony in the Indonesian archipelago, to make a transition to independence after many centuries of Portuguese rule. Tragically, Sergio was killed in a bomb blast in Baghdad where he had been leading a mission to help the Iraqi people in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It is likely that al Qaeda extremists targeted him because of his efforts to help East Timor, since Islamic fundamentalists felt that East Timor should have become a part of Muslim Indonesia rather than having been allowed to become independent. The qualities Sergio demonstrated are needed more than ever in the modern world, and we should seek a fair way to mitigate the fervor of suicide-bombers, and to emasculate the war-mongering forces that undermine freedom and peaceful coexistence in reaction.

The primary hypothesis in the Earth Manifesto is that we need to strive to achieve greater good goals by making transcendent efforts to honor our reason, sensible intelligence and farsightedness, and at the same time we need to honestly respect our intuitions, collaborative instincts, and more feminine right-brained impulses. We should find ways to unite people by embracing Big Picture perspectives and the lessons of history. We should incorporate insights of people like knowledgeable ecologists and biologists, brilliant neuropsychologists, far-seeing philosophers, and honest spiritual leaders. We should accept enlightened ways of looking at the world from those who think and feel deeply. Such enlightening approaches could help us advance a salubrious new worldview in which individuals, communities, societies and civilizations can flourish without destroying the entire biotic fabric of existence on our providential Mother Earth.

Margaret Mead provided encouraging words to those who believe the world can, and should, be changed for the better: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Let's join these people! The time has come for us today to support wiser and more farsighted ways of seeing and understanding the world. Let us heed progressive calls to action and work together to make our world a safer and more sustainable place. Let the anima within us reign!

Women of the World, Unite! (Men, Join Us!)

Thanks for your consideration of these ideas. I hold my hands at chest level, palms together, fingers pointing up, and I figuratively look you in the eye, bow slightly, and say Namaste! ("I salute you with reverence!")

Truly yours,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Hannibal, Missouri

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