

## Family Planning Foolishness

Every child that is born deserves to be wanted, in an ideal world --- and to have parents responsible enough to support him or her through vulnerable years. We should design our societies and institutions to ensure that we more nearly accomplish this goal.

The Congress of the United States has approved \$34 million in support for the United Nations Population Fund for three consecutive years, yet President Bush has pandered to the right wing each year by blocked this funding, thwarting the will of the majority in our representative democracy. The United Nations estimates that \$34 million per year could prevent 2 million unwanted pregnancies, nearly 800,000 induced abortions, 4,700 maternal deaths, and more than 77,000 infant and child deaths.

**Thus we see that extreme social conservatives effectively value their fundamentalist dogmatic beliefs over the lives and the well-being of very real women and children.**

The number of human beings on Earth is relentlessly increasing, with a net increase of over 70 million each year. This contributes very significantly to the dramatic adverse impacts of human activities on air quality, fresh water resources, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. We would be wise to address these problems, and to take steps to mitigate the damaging effects of population growth on the security and health of our species and our planet.

The True Sin is seen to be in clinging obstinately to anti-family planning doctrines, to the detriment of the quality of people's lives. Family planning programs, domestically and internationally, must be wholeheartedly supported, and funding must be increased. Teenage girls and women worldwide need access to sex education, reproductive health care services, and voluntary family planning methods such as contraception. The Global Gag Rule and the antagonism to family planning services and contraceptives by the Stern Father crowd is unfair and ill-advised public policy.

The Feminist Majority Foundation gave the Bush Administration a "C" grade for its rhetoric, and an "F" grade for the reality of its actions on women's issues. One reason is that the government is letting anti-choice groups dictate policies opposing emergency contraception, often called the "morning after pill", even though studies cited by the Planned Parenthood Federation estimate that it could prevent 1.7 million unintended pregnancies and 800,000 abortions each year. Emergency contraception reduces the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sex, and helps prevent the need for abortions. It is not itself a form of abortion.

Also, the United States so far refuses to ratify the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which has been ratified by 174 other countries.

And further, neo-conservative policymakers cynically threaten funding for Title X of the Public Service Act. Title X makes grants to public and private non-profit organizations to provide family planning and basic reproductive health care information to low-income women.

## Coincident Conundrums

“Look, one day I had gone to a little village. An old grandfather of ninety was busy planting an almond tree. ‘What, granddad!’ I exclaimed, ‘Planting an almond tree?’ And he, bent as he was, turned round and said: ‘My son, I carry on as if I should never die.’ I replied: ‘And I carry on as if I was going to die any minute.’ Which of us was right, boss?” “I kept silent. Two equally steep and bold paths may lead to the same peak. To act as if death did not exist, or to act thinking every minute of death, is perhaps the same thing.”

--- Zorba the Greek, Nikos Kazantzakis

Live Large --- but do so in a spiritual sense, not in a material one. Eat, drink, and be merry --- but moderately. We are all on the road to death, but there is really no adequate reason to be in the passing lane!

Reformed alcoholics are often characterized by extremely strong views about the drinking habits of others. Likewise, born-again Christians seem to often manifest the same extremely strong symptoms of mean-spirited intolerance. Live and Let Live!

“The great majority of us do not live by any dogmatic philosophy --- even when we claim that we do. At most there are occasions when we act more or less in accordance with some philosophy of which we approve. Much more than we let philosophies guide our lives, we allow obsessions to drive them; and there is no doubt which has been the great driving obsession of the last one hundred and fifty years. It is money.” “Our obsession with money, the most obvious and omnipresent source of inequality and therefore unhappiness, colors all our beings and ways of seeing life. Having, not being, governs our time.”

--- The Aristos, John Fowles

“In the inner world, doing is becoming; if we repeat a behavior motivated by an attitude or a principle enough times, eventually we become what we do.”

Gods in Everyman, Jean Shinoda Bolen

“**Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.**”

--- Goethe

“There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them.”

--- William Jennings Bryan, 1896

Likewise, there are two ideas of economics. One is to strive to maximize consumption and wealth creation, and the resulting prosperity will allow us to undertake the mitigation of the harmfulness of our activities. The Ecological idea, however, is that the entire food chain relies on the fundamental health and balance of natural systems, so we must place primary emphasis on nurturing, protecting and restoring the soundness of Nature’s foundations and the undiminished health of the biodiversity of life on Earth.

Clear

Simple

Certain

✓ Something's happening here, what it is ain't exactly clear ... ✓

--- Lyrics from Buffalo Springfield, 1966

There are no absolute rights or wrongs. If a meteorite slams into Planet Earth tomorrow, wiping out 70% of all species of life, this would be neither good nor bad to the Universe. It would, of course, be extremely unfortunate to the individuals and species adversely affected --- but someday it could be seen as seminally positive to the survivor's descendents who had successfully adapted to fill the newly available niches and altered conditions. In fact, our human existence was facilitated by just such an occurrence, the Cretaceous Extinction, which occurred about 65 million years ago. Mammals evolved in the void left by this termination of the Age of Reptiles, eventually leading to our own direct ancestors and the evolution of Homo sapiens.

**Right and wrong, and good and bad, are relative. And, relative to ourselves, we can best judge right and wrong in human affairs by the criteria of maximum good to the greatest number of people over the longest period of time. The optimum health and best quality of existence must also be taken into account, not just materialistic measures or short-term prosperity.**

Conservative Traditionalists are always claiming the moral high ground. In contrast, the Progressive Movement must articulate its Big Picture perspective, emphasizing the overriding importance of fairness, equality of opportunity, social justice, quality public education, sustainable economic activities, public and environmental health, honesty, integrity, caring compassion, and activism in the service of positive change. We must clarify what is morally right and optimum for the good of the people and of posterity.

It is extremely difficult to assess or predict the long-term influence that mankind's consumption, depletion, and pollution activities will eventually have on life on Earth. Yet time marches inexorably past, change is continuous, and today's decisions will profoundly affect the world of tomorrow. We make choices, consciously or subconsciously, actively or passively, and both individually and collectively. It behooves us to cultivate our awareness, and to grow to a higher level in Abraham Maslov's Hierarchy of Needs, striving for greater self-actualization, empathy and caring. As a society, we must:

- (1) Try to cultivate our best understandings;
- (2) Focus confidently on what needs to be done to achieve optimum well-being, focusing on making a fair balance of competing interests;
- (3) Make our wisest and most beneficial choices for society as a whole; and,
- (4) Pursue our vision consistently, with resolute commitment, and flexibly over the long term.

**Ideas evolve. New understandings always spring from current understandings, and often from contradictions that have become apparent in them. New understandings almost invariably meet with initial strong resistance from those believing in established or orthodox views. Yet our criteria for progressing towards better understandings must be a larger perspective, not narrow, conservative, parochial, shortsighted points of view.**

# Subtle Intrinsicity

Planet Earth is VAST, being essentially infinite in composition, scope, aspect and variety. Its infinite materiality is made more marvelous by the incomprehensible eons and ages of its existence throughout four and a half billion years of eternity.

**We humans are awed, when aware, by the profound mystery, the wonderful beauty, and the terrible impartiality of existence; by the enigmatic order of the Universe as manifested in its unchanging physical laws; by the inherent and apparently indifferent nature of circumstances; by our own certain mortality; and by our own significance, and insignificance, within the context of it all.**

**Individually, and as a society, we all have a multifaceted picture of "the way things are." This is our "worldview" --- our interpretation of what the world is like, and of who we are. Yet our thoughts and perceptions are naturally limited. Human understanding is highly influenced by upbringing, subjectivity, conditioning, and manipulation, in addition to being inherently myopic in our frame of reference in space and time.**

There are always greater dimensions of reality and a greater potential depth of understanding. As Robert MacNamara, the Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War indicates in the 2004 documentary film The Fog of War, "Belief, and Seeing, can be mistaken". There are many ways to look at complex issues, and many lessons that can be learned from history and a study of human nature. There are always alternate ways of interpreting our perceptions, and it behooves our societies to be more open-minded, and to make the best of changes that occur.

Close observation and reflection can lead to better clarity and insight, broadening our perspective and letting us glimpse higher orbits and deeper connections, meanings, and truths than our normal preoccupied though-consciousness allows. Clarity of perception requires an almost ascetic vigilance of attention. This is very difficult to achieve and sustain. Urgencies and exigencies dominate our thoughts, as we struggle to satisfy the demands of circumstances and relationships, to cope with our insecurities, and to realize our longings, dreams, drives and ambitions.

All of life on Earth throughout billions of years of evolution has been shaped by natural selection, heeding the unchanging laws of nature. Human beings have become the first species of life that has been able to transcend natural selection by growing food, domesticating animals, creating shelter, developing tools, using energy, and conquering diseases. With these developments, and future biotic management abilities such as genetic engineering, come increased human responsibilities to plan more intelligently, taking long-term consequences into account.

**It is the essential assertion of this Earth Manifesto that inevitably ~~~ and the sooner the better ~~~ we must come to understand that growing human impacts on Earth are detrimental to ourselves and to future generations; and that there is a greater good that we must strive for, and can attain: one illuminated by a truer appreciation of the positive qualities of life, and ultimately by the biological context of the flourishing and survival of our species.**

## Earth Manifesto Edification

Wealth may result from positive virtues, as a reward for hard work, for being ingenious and creative, for being thrifty, or as a consequence of some other admirable form of behavior. Wealth may also result from fortuitous circumstances, good luck, a propitious inheritance, political favoritism, predatory conduct towards others, or the exploitation of people, systems, or resources. Whatever the source of wealth, having money is greatly envied in our society. It gives power and the appearance of success. Having money should be a source of satisfied bigheartedness, rather than a source of jealous pride, or a justification for lording it over others, or being selfishly vindictive, or uncompromisingly uncompassionate.

Why is it that greater wealth is often associated with more controlling, and aggressively selfish and Conservative worldviews? The alert reader will anticipate the author's perspective. The Wealthy are highly motivated to defend their privileges, and to quash those who oppose them. And the wealthy and the controlling elite seem to be strongly opposed to Progressive ideas.

Various pundits decry a dangerous malaise of our society, one that is alternatively blamed on Liberal policies, or Conservative ones; on rich people, or on the poor; on television or the media or movies; on the litigiousness of all the lawyers; or on Big Government. Mindless addictions are propagating, to such things as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, television, sensationalism, bigotry, and fundamentalist beliefs. There are signs of a collective insanity. We seem increasingly separated from nature in a psychological sense, consuming unsustainably, being careless of waste, heedless of the growing harmful effects of habitat destruction, and inconsiderate of the vital importance of biodiversity and ecological integrity. We are pursuing policies to ruthlessly exterminate enemies, striving to out-compete, dominate, and control others, no matter how much our societies deteriorate as a consequence.

A revolution in our ideas and institutions is needed to better the world --- perhaps it is more accurate to say a counterrevolution, to the current clever, aggressive, shortsighted, selfish, greedy, manipulative, misleading, misogynistic, anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic, anti-environmental, secretive, doctrinaire, fiscally and socially irresponsible, unjust and inequitable policies of the powerful controlling elite Establishment in the United States.

(How do you really feel, Tiffany? --- ... Whatever! ...)

**The limits and risks of humanities current courses of activity are becoming increasingly apparent. The purpose of this assessment is meant not to be idle cynical criticism, but rather to spark insight into the growing urgency for the human race to move boldly, progressively, and open-mindedly towards visionary social, economic, environmental, and political action.**

The Earth Manifesto has been created to stimulate consideration of larger ideas, as a counterpoint to the subtle conditioning, the distinct myopia, and the biased propaganda that we are subjected to by our reigning human-centered myths, the news media, seductive advertising, doctrinal political spin, and our too often disingenuous leaders.

**Optimism is a positive avenue towards a better future, but optimism must be coupled with a willingness to change things for the better, not just to drive our culture backwards, sternly enforce the Status Quo, and advance the interests of the few!**

## Astonishing Perspective



Every human being is composed of many thousands of trillions of cells. Each cell has a nucleus, and inside of each nucleus are chromosomes --- 46 of them in virtually every human cell. Chromosomes constitute the complete set of “instructions” to make and maintain each individual. Chromosomes, in turn, are made up of the chemical molecule deoxyribonucleic acid --- DNA --- that contains the entire genetic code in each cell of every form of life. DNA is not itself alive; and, incomprehensibly, it is one of the most stable of all molecules in the living world, which is why DNA can be recovered from creatures that have died long, long ago.

The replication of DNA occurs in the nucleus of every living cell with great accuracy --- but not absolute accuracy. It is the occasional error in replication, a one-in-a-million “mistake”, that can lead to slight modifications, which are the source of random changes in genetic characteristics, for better or for worse. These changes, over time, selected for or selected against, lead to adaptations in species that favor survival. **Curiously, there is a fine balance between the extraordinary stability in the replication of DNA and occasional variation, which allows life to be able to adapt to changing conditions over time.**

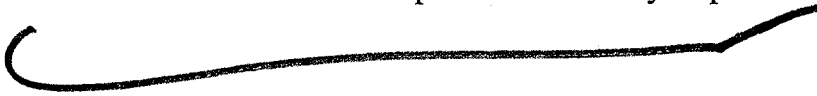
**Likewise, in an astonishing and valuable parallel, human societies need stability, yet their survival is dependent on change, innovation and progress to allow them to adapt. Genetic evolution occurs very slowly, so humanity must now rely on cultural and social evolution to ensure that our species can adapt to rapid changes in our societies, and to those changes we are causing in Earth’s climate and ecosystems.**

Our human need to understand and explain is very strong. Our superstitions, our curiosities, our fears, and our imaginations are powerful. We have invented all manners of mythologies and Gods. Now, in light of our most modern insights and understandings, we are called upon to act decisively in our best interests from a long-term, comprehensive perspective.

On a continuum ranging from conservatively sticking with the Status Quo to radically embracing reform, it would be best not to err on the side of the former!

**Human beings have a strong drive to find MEANING and PURPOSE in life. And what better larger purpose could we adopt than striving to help ensure that our home planet remains habitable for ourselves, our fellow beings, and future generations, that the beautiful qualities of existence are not destroyed in our daily pursuits, and that we do not poison and damage the very foundations of nature upon which all life is ultimately wholly dependent?**

In the last 65 million years of the Cenozoic Era, islands have come and gone, mountain ranges have been created and eroded away, and many species of life have flourished and later become extinct. Now, in a relative geological instant, human activities are bringing this long era of life to an end. Understanding this Really Big Picture can help galvanize humanity into action to save itself. Sure, there are daily urgencies and insistent needs, but we must somehow dovetail our individual purposes and our political and economic exigencies with a grander scheme of our species self-preservation --- together with more serious efforts to protect the vitally important biodiversity of life on Planet Earth.



## Working for a Living

Labor Movements sprang up after the start of the Industrial Age to secure certain rights and protections for workers. The need for this was significant, due to monopoly practices, corruption, long working hours, dangerous working conditions, discrimination, sexual harassment, and the growing unregulated conglomerate power of Corporations.

The Labor Movement initially encountered great opposition, just as all other progressive changes have, including the Woman Suffrage Movement (which finally secured the vote for women in the 1920's), and the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation Movements of the 1960's. The overwhelming rightness and fairness of these causes eventually yielded a harvest of greater rights.

Likewise, the Environmental Movement only really began in earnest in the 1960's, when Rachael Carson's A Silent Spring and other understandings began to make it obvious that increasingly negative impacts on the environment were becoming too great to ignore or allow. Reaction to the Environmental Movement set in the 1980's, and is today reaching a self-serving crescendo, as Corporate opposition to even socially cost-effective regulations increases, and the influence by economic forces of exploitation are being given ever-greater access to the halls of political power.

The average American today is working "like a mad dog", putting in far more hours of work per year than the average worker in Europe. This may be great for productivity statistics, but it is increasing the stress on workers, and is probably not healthy for workers or society, and it is not sustainable in a positive context for people's lives. Also, workers are earning less and less money each year relative to corporate executives, as executive compensation increases by leaps and bounds.

Additionally, there are 45 million Americans who have no health insurance. Emergency rooms and public hospitals are overwhelmed, and insurance premiums are skyrocketing, partially because hospitals and doctors have to charge their insured patients more in order to offset the losses they suffer from caring for all the uninsured Americans.

The infrastructure of the U.S., including its hospitals, electrical grids, and other public systems is in desperate need of maintenance and modernization. We have great projects that must be undertaken, and there are many possible competing allocations for federal budget expenditures. Certainly, there are better ways to spend taxpayer dollars and borrowings than the ways we currently spend them. But the Establishment favors spending more than half of all discretionary funds in the federal budget on the Military. At a time that we are spending over \$400 billion annually on the military, and running a deficit of more than \$500 billion, the federal government is giving the enormous tax breaks to the rich, and striving to guarantee that their descendents keep their fortunes in perpetuity.

**Neoconservatives have achieved this ruinous state of affairs by pushing their anti-progressive agenda with egregious aggressiveness. America's wealthiest one percent of people are the biggest beneficiaries, at the expense of the other 99%, and of the world at large, of the environment, and of future generations. WHOA! What a regressive, anti-democratic, and anti-egalitarian accomplishment! Quite impressive!! --- We must reject the bids of ruling Conservatives to be reelected in November 2004!!!**

## Challenging Inertia

**“Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity opinions which differ from the prejudices of their social environment. Most people are even incapable of forming such opinion.”**

--- Albert Einstein

Inertia governs the thinking and politics of most societies. Like dazed automatons, we plod along, following habits and patterns, unaware, misguided, and negligent, “like wild horses over the hill.” We resist change, even when we feel trapped by negative circumstances, and even when the disadvantageousness of our inflexibility grows increasingly apparent.

**The modern world sees a growth in the human senses of futility, isolation, ephemerality, emptiness, boredom, insecurity, and insignificance. We conform, striving to belong, or to achieve the status of societal success --- or, alternatively, we conflict, striving for uniqueness and individuality, in order to prove to ourselves, and to others, that we are somebody, that we are important.**

Sigmund Freud divided the human psyche into three parts, the id (subconscious forces), the ego (the province of conscious desires), and the super-ego (the conscience-oriented self, which incorporates moral standards of the community into individual behavior).

John Fowles asserts that each human psyche contains a fourth element that he calls the nemo, a drive to avoid feelings of being nobody. He contends that all our acts are partly devised to fill or mask the emptiness we feel at the core. “We are almost all dwarfs, and we have the complexes and psychological traits characteristic of dwarfs: feelings of inferiority, with compensatory cunning and malice.”

The nemo is an evolutionary force, and instead of fearing it and letting it make our feelings of isolation and helplessness worse --- and instead of allowing it to reduce our sense of connectedness and civic responsibility --- we should use this force to motivate us towards achieving our higher potentials and improving our society. Fowles adds that “Belief in an afterlife is partly an ostrich attempt to cheat the nemo.”

Human potentials are arguably far greater than people realize, or actualize, as evidenced by transcendent experiences, and by exceptional moments and capacities “in the flow”. If we can begin to redirect our energies away from harmful and unhealthy outlets, and into a new sense of purpose, we can achieve better balance, harmony, spiritual communion, freedom, self-discipline, inspiration, celebration, and positive meaningful involvements.

**We are living in a period of rapid social change; we should embrace it, developing creative and progressive attitudes, betting wisely, and playing our cards with fairness, finesse and grace.**

**Of many thousands of mortals, one, perhaps, strives for truth.”**

**The Bhagavad-Gita**



## The Relativity of Rightness in an Uncertain World

**“Good” and “Evil” are relative terms.**

We are gullible and accepting of easy manipulation to believe that America is good and other countries are bad; that we are right and others are wrong; that our intentions are pure while others are corrupt; and that “good” and “bad” do not coexist in each and every one of us. Travel around the country and abroad, too, and you will find that there are wonderful, benevolent, generous, warm-hearted people everywhere --- as well as extraordinary selfish, insensitive, desperate, malevolent or violent scoundrels --- and every degree of types in between.

The more powerful a country becomes, and the more convinced it is of its righteousness, the more easily it can abuse its power and delude the people into support of criminal and unpardonable actions; take Hitler’s Germany, for instance.

Punitive reparations were imposed on Germany after it lost World War I. This created hardship and feelings of humiliation, which made the German people more receptive to Adolph Hitler’s movement to assert an Aryan ethnocentric superiority. This led to a retrospectively evil dictatorship by the belligerently nationalistic extreme right. The idea of Fascism had gained ascendancy in 1930’s Depression-torn Germany; it was welcomed in Germany and Italy, in part, because of a desire for Order in those severely challenging economic times. The resulting conflict, World War II, was responsible for the killing of tens of millions of people --- one of the most colossal tragedies for people’s lives in human history.

**The warfare of 1939 to 1945 was the result of aggression, propaganda, doctrinal convictions of righteousness, clamor for discipline and order, drives for superiority, militaristic policies, fanned fears of dangers from abroad, great insecurity, intense competition for resources, a welcoming of powerful authority and clandestine government, police and espionage activities, and a compulsion for domination.**

**... Wait a minute! The United States today is displaying all of these characteristics, thanks to the impressive move to the political right since the year 2000 Presidential election.**

Wisdom dictates that moderating militarism and nationalistic fervor now is the safest course for humanity.

**A dramatic change in our national leadership must be made in November 2004. Do not reelect Conservative incumbents!!!**

**Great injustice is the true sin, and it can be clearly seen, if one looks closely and honestly, that the United States dramatically perpetrates injustice in many ways, on the one hand, as well as valiantly opposing it in word, and occasionally in humanitarian deed and support for human rights, on the other hand.**

“One must cultivate one’s garden.”

--- Voltaire

## Believe It or Not!

“Mythology, n. --- The body of a primitive people’s beliefs concerning its origin, early history, heroes, deities and so forth, as distinguished from the true accounts which it invents later.”

The Devil’s Dictionary, Ambrose Bierce

“Beliefs ground us, sustain us, give us purpose and support, motivate us and give meaning to our lives. But beliefs are also limitations which can render us closed minded, intolerant, and not open to the richness of possibility and discovery.”

How to Believe in Nothing and Set Yourself Free, Michael Misita

“God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

The Bible, Genesis 1, 28

Our Western civilization and economy has been strongly shaped by the Biblical “**dominion**” theory of Genesis, which has been one of the cornerstones of self-justification in dominating and irresponsibly destroying animal and plant life and habitats in the natural world. We must inevitably evolve towards a dramatically more benign and respectful “**stewardship**” understanding, taking more responsibility for protecting the foundations of our existence. Vested Interests, ideological extremists, and religious fundamentalists must not be allowed to hijack progress towards greater security, and more sensible and sustainable activities.

The accelerating pace of change in human affairs brings greater challenges and risks, necessitating innovative, open-minded problem-solving, and greater awareness, clarity, and insight --- not denial, not reactionary resistance, not dogmatic opposition, and not deceptive and misguided doctrine in support of the Status Quo!

Righteousness, so glorious to True Believers, has been responsible throughout recorded history for the most terrible harm, oppression, murder, genocide, misogyny, and reactionary brutality known to mankind. The Inquisition, the Crusades, witch-hunts, pogroms, Islamic terrorism, and a thousand other persecutions and punishments for “heretics” and “infidels” are sad, dim chapters in human history.

Awareness is in paying attention, observing, listening and understanding, not in reacting with preconceived notions and conditioned responses. Beliefs are illusions, not the truth. They are habits, and addictions, which limit us. We must connect with the powerful forces of destruction and creativity coexisting in the human soul, and integrate them in new ways. This can only be accomplished when we are not blinded by belief. Self-observation and awareness and clarity can lead to self-transformation and the transcendence of habit patterns, facilitating positive change, and leading us to the wisdom of our interconnectedness with the community of life.

Michael Misita (paraphrased)

“I believe! I believe! I believe because not to believe is to become as lead, to lie prone and rigid, forever inert, to waste away ...”

--- Henry Miller

“A man’s gotta believe in something, and I believe I’ll have another drink!”

--- W.C. Fields