



Money, Sex, Power & Faith
Questioning the Building Blocks of Civil-ization

How our culture was developed by weaving together
debt, patriarchy, violence and religion,
and how we evolve from here.

STEVE
McALLISTER



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MONEY, SEX, POWER & FAITH

Questioning the Building Blocks of Civil-ization

by
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PREFACE

*"Money has never made man happy, nor will it,
there is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.
The more of it one has, the more one wants."
- Benjamin Franklin*

In deciding to live without money for a year, I realized I was not the only one who had issues with the monetary system. Shortly after I made my decision, I started seeing how the Occupy movement was starting on Wall Street, giving me a boost of encouragement that I was not the only one seeking a better way. As the movement spread, so did my motivation for finding an alternate route to abundance by spending an entire year without using money.

In all honesty, I didn't really make it.

Although I managed to carve out an incredibly abundant life outside of the direct current of capitalism, I did have one person give me a few gift cards for helping him with some labor on one of his properties, and during the last couple of weeks, I got a stipend to bring my art installation, *The Labyrinth of the Unbroken Path*, to the ArtSlam Festival in Bradenton, so I used it to get some equipment and incidentals. Plus, throughout the year and since, skeptics have been quick to point out that money was still used as an ancillary provision in order to pay for the electricity, food, and water I consumed and the infrastructure that I scurried around in, so any boasting I may do about living for a year without money is just a bunch of bluster.

Yet, although it may not have been a perfectly

executed experiment, I've never claimed to be perfect. As a matter of fact, the religion I grew up in is largely based on the notion that I am incredibly fallible, as well as all of the other humans I share this planet with. But though I may never reach perfection, I do strive for excellence. While perfection would have been a full year of financial abstinence, without patting myself on the back too hard, I still have to say that eleven months without the direct use of money is still pretty excellent.

A good majority of my food was provided by working with Transition Sarasota's Gleaning Project, where I would donate a few hours on Monday mornings to harvest the extra lettuce, kale, and other vegetables at a local organic farm so that it could be donated to the All Faiths Food Bank, which distributed it throughout the community to other financially challenged people who needed access to fresh food. After the harvest, the other volunteers and I would get to stuff a shopping bag full of fresh produce as thanks for our service, providing me with the healthiest diet of my life. Beyond that, I just got involved in my community, and people fed me. I didn't even attempt dumpster diving until the twelfth month, and that was pretty much just for fun.

For housing, I helped a number of people on remodeling jobs, exchanging labor services for a place to stay. There were a few nights when friends would let me sleep on their couches, and I spent a good amount of time caring for dogs and cats when their parents went out of town. And just for the heck of it, I spent a few relatively sleepless nights outdoors just to get the full "homeless" experience.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that the society in which I live is largely fueled by money. For the time being, there may be no escaping that. I'm only one man and do not have any grand delusions about changing the world overnight. I couldn't even make it a whole year without using the stuff myself.

However, my experiment also caused me to look at the history of money, which largely consists of what we know of as human history, at least what we call "civilization". The

evolution of money was also intertwined with the evolution of the patriarchal hierarchies we've become so used to and the story of how God put the whole thing in motion. For the last 10,000 years, our ideas on money, sex, power, and faith have been the building blocks of our culture.

Although the civilization we've developed is far from perfect, if we can gain a better understanding of how we've reached this point, perhaps we have the chance to make it more excellent.

INTRODUCTION

THE CONVERGENCE OF CULTURE

*"We seldom realize, for example
that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own.
For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent,
but which were given to us by our society."
- Alan W. Watts*

Let me tell you a story. It's not the story of a single hero, nor a single journey, but more the story of our stories. It is the story of how our culture came to be, and how we can tell a new story in order to write the world we desire into existence.

It's an interesting notion that the word "culture" means both the collection of arts and ideas that accumulate to drive a society, as well as the cultivation of bacteria. Many of the cultural concepts we hold as sacrosanct are really nothing more than ideas, yet they have blossomed in such a way that we are generally disinclined to even question them. Yet just as a biological culture is cultivated in artificial conditions to produce specific results, so is societal culture refined by those who propagate the ideas, and if we are to be a conscious species, it is our responsibility to revisit those ideas and refine them as necessary.

As Yuval Noah Harari puts it in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, "Ever more scholars see cultures as a kind of mental infection or parasite, with humans as its unwitting host. Organic parasites, such as viruses, live inside

the body of their hosts. They multiply and spread from one host to the other, feeding off their hosts, weakening them, and sometimes even killing them. As long as the hosts live long enough to pass along the parasite, it cares little about the condition of its host. In just this fashion, cultural ideas live inside the minds of humans. They multiply and spread from one host to another, occasionally weakening the hosts and sometimes even killing them. A cultural idea – such as belief in a Christian heaven above the clouds or a Communist paradise here on earth – can compel a human to dedicate his or her life to spreading that idea, even at the price of death. The human dies, but the idea spreads.”²

Richard Dawkins shared a similar notion in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* when he coined the word “meme” as one of these cultural ideas that gets passed on. “When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain,” Dawkins wrote, “turning it into a vehicle for the meme’s propagation in just the way a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell.”³

The sharing of ideas isn’t always a bad thing, of course, as memes have been very helpful in organizing humanity and helping us to progress. However, there certainly are memes working to our detriment, and there are also those who use them against us.

Throughout the cultivation of this culture, our reality has been subject to the myths we hold and share, whether they be stories of our heroes or the acceptance of mainstream methodologies. “The rise and fall of civilizations in the long, broad course of history can be seen to have been largely a function of the integrity and cogency of their supporting canons of myth,” says Joseph Campbell, “for not authority but aspiration is the motivator, builder, and transformer of civilization.”⁴

Ultimately, our culture is what we make of it. It is comprised of our arts, our music, our beliefs, and the way we operate in concert with the rest of the world. Although many of these things are given to us, our culture is defined by what we decide to embrace, and the art, music, beliefs, and activities we produce ourselves.

Over the course of the last 10,000 years we know as human history, we have cultivated our culture through the development and proliferation of money, the delineation of gender and revocation of individual sexual rights, the concentration of political power and production of physical power, and the harnessing of faith through religious doctrine and ideology. As the ideas about these aspects of our civilization have been passed along, we have developed the world we know, and at the tail end of the Information Revolution, we are given the fortuitous opportunity to revisit these ideas, and change them accordingly in order to develop the world we truly want.

May we find the courage to cultivate our culture consciously, and aspire to be more than a species separated from Nature, one another, and the Divine.

ONE FOR THE MONEY

"Money alone sets all the world in motion."

- Publilius Syrus

Money, in pretty much any way you might describe it, has only been in use for roughly the last 10,000 years or so. Considering the planet is several million years old and humans have supposedly been living here for about the last 200,000 without cataclysmic incident, it seems like the whole money thing, from its shortness of existence in the whole scope of things to the way it has seemingly driven the human species to the brink of its own extinction, is simultaneously the most creative and destructive drop in the bucket the world has ever seen.

Considering that money may just be the tool that created this civilization, we should understand it better, for it very likely could also be the weapon that destroys it.

For starters, we should consider that one of the big drivers of our culture's economic incongruity is our unhealthy obsession with always putting money first. It is no great surprise we do so due to the fact we've been incorrectly trained to do it every time we've been called to write a monetary amount. It may very well be that our seemingly simple practice of putting the dollar sign before the amount has contributed to throwing us off kilter.

For example, when we write out "ninety-nine dollars", the common practice is to write it as "\$99" even though that expression actually reads as "dollars ninety-nine." Wouldn't it be more practical to signify this monetary

value as "99\$" so as to avoid this ingrained dyslexia? After all, "ninety-nine percent" is written as "99%", and "ninety-nine cents" is written as "99¢".

Why do we favor the dollar sign so much that we continually put it before the number, causing a jog in our brain each time we read it by having to mentally correct the misplaced symbol? Perhaps this simple incongruity is a factor in our economic disparity, causing us to unconsciously regard the dollar as more important than it actually is. Were we to put the dollar sign in its rightful place, after it's numerical value, would we be able to discern the importance of other things more readily?

Although humanity has come to embrace it as a necessity, the monetary system has essentially become a game. It is neither a good game nor a bad game, but it does have further reaching consequences than most games because the majority of players don't realize it's a game. The origins of the game have been woven throughout various cultures and generations as the game has been upgraded with complexities and higher stakes since it began, each generation finding more ways to incorporate the game into more and more facets of their lives.

Like chess, football, freeze tag, or tiddlywinks, the game is filled with highs and lows, moments of glory and moments of defeat. There are particular rules of play in order to establish boundaries within which the game makes sense, and there are those who will sometimes stretch those boundaries to their own advantage, thereby making the game much less fun for the other players.

While success in this game can often facilitate happiness, the game itself is not mandatory for establishing happiness. Because the monetary game is based upon a competitive model with a loser for every winner, unfortunately, the game can also do as much to deter happiness as it can to facilitate it. Due to the extreme competitiveness and severity of some of the players, sometimes, even for the grandest winners, the game is just no fun at all.

As with the more recent development of virtual

computer games, the monetary game can be quite addictive, and players often get so consumed with the playing of the game that they neglect other areas of their lives that are far more important and far more conducive to happiness. The game is so insidiously enticing that many players will only participate in the other areas of their lives if they can play the game there as well. The game is the least fun when people are forced to play due to the compulsive tendencies of the game's greatest fanatics.

Nevertheless, as has often been the case throughout its evolution, the rules of the game are always subject to change. Thanks to certain shifts in consciousness throughout the populace, and due to the glaring fallibility of the most recent incarnation of the game, many are realizing the game's limitations and downright inconsequential nature when seen in the light of the more valuable and eternal facets of life. Because of the game-changing nature of an awakening populace, many are seeking not only to change the rules of the game to reflect the greater qualities of collaboration over the limiting antagonism of competition, but they are also seeking to transcend the game altogether and return the course of civilization toward a more harmonious path with Nature.

For those who wish to continue playing the game, yet wish to do so in a way that will cultivate a greater economics of happiness for all involved, the greatest challenge will come in overcoming those who have mastered the current incarnation of the game by writing the rules for it. Should this game be played in a manner whereby its results no longer detract from the well-being of those who do not wish to make the game their highest priority in life, the game may very well continue to serve a purpose in facilitating happiness for those who find joy in it. Yet if the game continues to create more losers than winners, unjustly subjecting moderate and amateur players to undue suffering and torment, there is the high probability that the game will reach a catastrophic conclusion.

This monetary game, which has largely usurped our understanding of economics, does have the capacity for

collaborative contentment. Yet just as with the equanimity that comes with success in life, the outcome will largely depend on how we want to play the game.

TWO TO TANGO

"Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power."

- Oscar Wilde

There are some who say there is a battle between the sexes, and judging from the way our civilization has developed, it does appear that men have had the upper hand for quite a long time. Nevertheless, although they have been largely considered somewhat of a second class citizen throughout our known human history, women are nowhere near finished fighting. Yet the battle in our society isn't merely between the sexes, but largely about sex in general.

Although Sigmund Freud has often been considered to be obsessed with sex, as the father of human psychology, it was his contention that "The behavior of a human being in sexual matters is often a prototype for the whole of his other modes of reaction in life."⁵ Because we seem to be preternaturally imbalanced in regards to sexuality, our relationship to sex has had some incontrovertible effects on the way society has been established. If we truly seek to develop a more balanced and sustainable system in which humans can coexist, we're going to have to look at our relationship with sex and the limitations which have caused us so much consternation over these last several thousand years.

As Dan Brown wrote in his novel *The Da Vinci Code*, "The ancients envisioned their world in two halves - masculine and feminine. Their gods and goddesses worked to keep a balance of power. Yin and Yang. When male and female were balanced, there was harmony in the world.

When they were unbalanced there was chaos.”⁶

Unfortunately, for the entirety of our known civilization, we have been incredibly imbalanced. For millennia, men have dominated over women, in many cultures not even granting them the right to speak in public, and to this day, there are places in the world where women are still forbidden to even learn to read. It’s astonishing to consider, of the roughly 5,000 years of recorded human history, women have only had a voice in the public discourse for about 2% of it.

While there have been queens, empresses, and ladies of exception, by and large, women have been relegated to keeping quiet and making babies while men have made decisions and money. As Riane Eisler writes in *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, “Many cultural stories worldwide present the domination system as the only human alternative. Fairy tales romanticize the rule of kings and queens over ‘common people.’ Classics such as Homer’s *Illiad* and Shakespeare’s kings trilogy romanticize ‘heroic violence.’ Many religious stories present man’s control, even ownership, of women as normal and moral.”⁷

Due to this imbalance, we have missed out on a lot of input that could have decreased much of the human suffering our masculine myopia has caused over the years. Fortunately, slowly but surely, we as a people are starting to wake up to the virtues the sacred feminine has to offer, and perhaps by offering more respect than has been shown to the fairer sex throughout our history, we will be able to find a more comfortable relationship with sex at large.

Sex, although it was largely branded as taboo early on in the Judeo/Christian/Islamic tradition, has become one of the most popular, yet misunderstood, subjects in our culture. Our inability to come to healthy terms with this aspect of our being has resulted in a plethora of symptoms indicative of our unhealthy relationship with sex and sexuality. Throughout the world, we are still finding ways to deal with the blow-back from its condemnation as we struggle to find solutions to these problems of prostitution, abortion, genital manipulation, sex-trafficking, rape,

sexually transmitted diseases, pornography, inequality, and other effects of our misunderstanding.

Fortunately, humanity is still a work in progress, and our culture has every opportunity to reach for greater understanding. Should we be able to end this battle between these two parts of our being, perhaps we can gain a greater sense of power over our lives again, and find the balance we seek.

WHO'S GOT THE POWER?

*"Nearly all men can stand adversity,
but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."*

- Abraham Lincoln

As we embraced a patriarchal hierarchy, the development of money has been used as a method of having power over others since the onset of its use. Similarly, even as we began to settle into our separated, sedentary plots of land, we began to exert our power over the earth and those who shared it with us. From there, we have extended our power to manipulate the world through machines, mechanizations, mastery, and might.

Individually, we draw on power to operate our computers, cars, homes, and tools, and, more personally, to control our own emotions, expand our own educations, craft our own bodies through diet and exercise, and cultivate our own spiritual development. Politically, we extend power through industry, governments, media, and religion. And to continue the display of the power we have to create just as our Creator has done, we draw on the power of the planet and its reserves of life and death, regularly feeding off of misery and burning ancient sunlight for the energy it affords.

We are capable of assuming our power as co-creators, and we can have faith in the Power which freely and effortlessly fills our lungs with breath so we may maneuver these borrowed earth suits through this conjunction of space and time. If we allow our true power to guide us toward purposeful service in the midst of creation around us, there is likely no limit to the power we might yield.

CAN WE LET FAITH FLOW?

*"We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us,
though they contain error,
will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light,
the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed only by myth-making,
only by becoming 'sub-creator' and inventing stories, can Man aspire
to the state of perfection that he knew before the Fall.
Our myths may be misguided, but they steer however shakily towards the
true harbor, while materialistic 'progress' leads only to a yawning abyss
and the Iron Crown of the power of evil."*

- J. R. R. Tolkien

Since before we began to measure time or space, we have embraced our compulsion to connect with the Divine, that energy that fuels the Universe and our continued existence therein. As we have taken to filling our time with affecting the space, we have come to an understanding of the Divine through stories, myths, dogmas, and methodologies. Yet beyond the constructs we have used to develop our religions as extensions of our egos back toward the Source of our being from which they separated us, there is a glimmer of blindness revealing the possibility that we could always be wrong, and in that glimmer is where our true faith lies.

There is a difference between faith and faith-based. As our culture has developed, we have regularly confused the two, and we often still do.

When we often use the word "faith", we use it to describe a brand of religion, a particular incorporation in the business of pointing to divinity. We say, "he is of the

Christian faith,” or “she is of the Hindu faith,” as if faith is synonymous with religion. Yet while religion is indeed based on the notion of faith, its necessity for structures, beliefs, and securities, and its tendency to so frequently point in the absolute opposite direction of the divinity it proclaims to serve, it regularly falls short of being a true conduit of faith.

This is not to say our religions have been useless. They have been catalysts for the journey which has brought us to Now, where we stand more fully aware of our ability to craft our own personal relationships with the Divine as we experience It, without the need to rely on the good opinion or permission of others.

Currently, Christianity predominates religious belief with roughly 2.2 billion followers. Islam is the second biggest religion with about 1.6 million, and Judaism is roughly the 12th largest with only about 14 million followers. While there are a number of other religions worldwide, the influence of the Judeo/Christian/Islamic heritage is what has guided the majority of western civilization.

Throughout this book, I will frequently draw on the example of Christianity, since it was the first religion I experienced as a child and has been a huge contributor to the development of the culture in which I happen to live. Although it is my intention to point out some of the trappings of its dogmas, doctrines, and mythologies, at the heart of the bleeding, red letters of Christ, there is a kernel of connection to true faith through the activity of love, as is ultimately the essence of each and every religion I have studied since.

Throughout my life, I have met people from a variety of religions, with those who choose to have none sometimes being the most religious of all. Within that mix, those who truly practice what I consider true faith are generally those who have transcended the need to be right and simply want to do right.

Although this book does refer to historical facts that question a number of dogmatic traditions, my hope is that it will actually inspire a stronger faith, one that embraces a divinity beyond our beliefs.

PART ONE

IN THE TIME BEFORE MONEY

*"When tillage begins, other arts follow.
The farmers therefore are the founders of human civilization."
- Daniel Webster*

Before 9,000 BC, from what we gather, there was no use of money. People were largely nomadic and egalitarian in their lifestyles. Because humans lived more closely with Nature, other than fossilized bones, there is very little trace that we have lived for as long as we have. As hunters and gatherers, and even as we moved toward an agrarian lifestyle, it seems we very much adhered to the "leave no trace" mentality.

As Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jethá wrote in *Sex At Dawn*, "We know that the foraging societies in which human beings evolved were small-scale, highly egalitarian groups who shared almost everything. There is a remarkable consistency to how immediate return foragers live – wherever they are. The !Kung San of Botswana have a great deal in common with Aboriginal people living in outback Australia and tribes in remote pockets of the Amazon rainforest. Anthropologists have demonstrated time and again that immediate-return hunter-gatherer societies are nearly universal in their fierce egalitarianism. Sharing is not just encouraged; it's mandatory. Hoarding or hiding food, for example, is considered deeply shameful, almost unforgivable behavior in these societies.

"Foragers divide and distribute meat equitably," Jethá and Ryan continue, "breastfeed one another's babies,

have little or no privacy from one another, and depend upon each other for survival. As much as our social world revolves around notions of private property and individual responsibility, theirs spins in the opposite direction, toward group welfare, group identity, profound interrelation, and mutual dependence.”⁸

Because early humans were nomadic, personal belongings were kept to a minimum, and a sharing economy inspired tribes to watch out for one another. It is also believed, before settling into the ideas of property ownership that agriculture inspired, humans were much more open in their sexuality, with each member of the tribe having a variety of sexual partners. Due to the interdependent structure of these early tribes, the polyamory practiced didn't do much to inspire the paternal inclination, which would arise as humankind started to taste the power of dominion. Before this time, the actual fatherhood of a child was unimportant, as each child was everyone's child.

Since the written word didn't come into play until about 3100 BC, the roughly 197,000 years before this time are affectionately referred to as "prehistory". Although we began painting on cave walls at about 38,000 BC, without the written word, there was no record of government, state, religion, or property, some of the key ingredients it takes to create a thriving culture.

Yet we have found evidence of tools and music throughout this period. As humans shifted from nomadic lifestyles to sedentary agrarianism, we first started to manipulate the food bearing plants around us, and set up a more cohesive tribal system. Thriving for millennia under the sharing economy, the recovered art of this era before the written word tells the story of a species highly in awe of the feminine virtues and with no record of war.

Beyond the cave paintings, the earliest known pieces of art are of various female forms. With much emphasis on the breasts and belly, it is widely accepted throughout this Paleolithic era, and into the Neolithic which followed, the female's ability to create life from the womb merited much greater respect from the human species, resulting in a more

maternalistic worldview than what has since developed through the inherent paternalism of the Judeo/Christian/Islamic traditions.

"The Goddess-centered art we have been examining," writes Riane Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, "with its striking absence of images of male domination or warfare, seems to have reflected a social order in which women, first as heads of clans and priestesses and later on in other important roles, played a central part, and in which both men and women worked together in equal partnership for the common good."⁹

However, this is not to say Mother Nature completely ruled the day. As Ken Wilber pointed out in *A Brief History of Everything*, "Matriarchal strictly means mother-ruled or mother-dominant, and there have never been any strictly matriarchal societies. Rather, these societies were more 'equalitarian,' with roughly equal status between men and women; and many such societies did indeed trace ancestry through the mother, and in other ways have a 'matrifocal' arrangement... about one-third of these societies had female-only deities, particularly the Great Mother in her various guises, and conversely, virtually every known Great Mother society is horticultural. Almost any place you see the Great Mother religion, you know there is a horticultural background. This began roughly around 10,000 BCE, in both the East and West."¹⁰⁷

As God has been considered the all-creating Father all these many years, Nature has often been regarded as our trouble-making Mother. And while the hope for this book is to help us move beyond the dichotomy of sexism, for the duration of it, I'll be referring to Nature as a She, just to balance things out a bit and help the ball to get rolling in that general direction. Basically, it seems as we adhered to Mother Nature, we lived in relative harmony with her, but since the Goddess became God, we've implemented quite a few new destructive tools and toys.

THE DAWN OF SEPARATION

*"A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe,
a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself,
his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest,
a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.
This delusion is a kind of prison for us,
restricting us to our personal desires
and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.
Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison
by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures
and the whole of nature in its beauty."
- Albert Einstein*

Between the years of 9000-6000 BC, humans started domesticating animals. As animals became property, so did the land upon which they were kept and the tradable grain grown there. Although humankind seems to have existed on the planet for some 190,000 years in concert with Nature and one another, it was during this time there began a movement toward dominion over Nature. The distinctive understanding of "this is mine, and that is yours" culminated in what author Daniel Quinn calls the "Great Forgetting," where we merely got so caught up in developing what would come to be known as "civilization" we could no longer remember there was a time it didn't exist, a time in which we lived very different lives.

As the distinctions grew, money seems to have served as the symbol of our separation. "Bulla" tokens recovered in the Near East appear to be the first record keeping tool, used from 8000-1500 BC. Although more rudimentary tools were utilized before this time, as humans started assuming ownership of things other than themselves, separating the land into plots and people into tribes, money became one of the first "separation technologies".

As Charles Eisenstein states in *The Ascent of Humanity*, "At the crux of the human-nature distinction is technology, the product of the human hand. While other animals do make and use tools, no other species has our capacity to remake or destroy the physical environment, to control Nature's processes or transcend Nature's limitations. In the mental and spiritual realm, the counterpart of technology is culture, which modifies physical nature. In thus mastering Nature with technology, and mastering human nature with culture, we distinguish ourselves from the rest of life, establishing a separate human realm. Believing this to be a good thing, we think of this separation as an ascent in which we have risen above our animal origins. That is why we naturally refer to the millennia-long accumulation of culture and technology as 'progress'.

"It is separation, then," Eisenstein continues, "in the form of technology and culture, that defines us as human. As well, it is separation that has generated the converging crises of today's world. People of a religious persuasion might attribute the fundamental crisis to a separation from God; people of an ecological persuasion, to a separation from Nature. People engaged in social activism might focus on the dissolution of community (which is a separation from each other). We might also investigate the psychological dimension, of separation from lost parts of ourselves. For good or ill, it is separation that has made us what we are."¹¹

Just as each religion has its own idea of separation, they also have their own idea of connection. Hindus call it "enlightenment". To Christians, it is called "salvation". Buddhists call it "enlightenment", "nirvana", and "the end of suffering". With faith beyond belief, it's the same hole, but a

different donut.

Many great teachers have come before us throughout our history and preached these messages, some well known like Buddha, Jesus, and Lao Tzu, and some not as widely recognized. Sometimes the messages have been embraced, oftentimes the messages have been misinterpreted, and many times the messages have been shunned or ignored.

Those who have brought the message have run the gamut from being revered and respected to being reviled and murdered. All too often, the message that they brought has been twisted to only strengthen the dysfunction, thereby making religion just as great a conduit for division and strife as for unity and peace.

THE ADVENT OF THE EGO

*"If your ego starts out, 'I am important, I am big, I am special',
you're in for some disappointments when you look around at
what we've discovered about the universe.
No, you're not big. No, you're not. You're small in time and in space.
And you have this frail vessel called the human body
that's limited on Earth."
- Neil deGrasse Tyson*

It could very well be this separation was merely the result of the emergence of individual personality, or as some have called it, the "ego". Freud possibly coined the term, but the notion has been expanded upon since, both by other psychologists and spiritual texts.

While Freud saw the ego as merely an aspect of the personality, many spiritual paths see it as one of the obstacles to our happiness. "The ego literally lives by comparisons," says *A Course in Miracles*. "Equality is beyond its grasp, and charity becomes impossible. The ego never gives out of abundance, because it was made as a substitute for it."¹²

Eckhart Tolle defines the ego in his book *A New Earth* as "identification with form, which primarily means thought forms."¹³ He states this is the same definition as evil, though he adds evil has a relative, but not absolute reality. If it is true that God is the absolute reality, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, I Am that I Am, then it stands to reason that evil is not an absolute reality, and anything we identify with in form that draws us away from

the one, true reality, separates us from It.

It may very well be that moving from a nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary lifestyle acclimated humans to consistent surroundings, and the familiarity with their new year-round environment developed some attachments. “This” land became “my” land, and eventually “that” woman became “my” woman. Given this new sense of ownership, and the protective jealousy that accompanied it, it is a bit more understandable why the ensuing narrative began to treat sex with shame as a way to end the rather promiscuous sex that occurred when things were shared.

As humans began attaching themselves to things outside of themselves, believing they actually owned the land which would outlive them, the animals who shared their environments, and the other people they could force to do their will, humankind had a break with reality, a disorder which we have cultivated ever since. This disorder, which we refer to as the ego, has a pretty mean selfish streak, and as this new sense of sedentary independence began to take hold of the formerly rolling stones of humanity, what became “mine” in this new reality was “good”, and what was not was deemed “evil”, and so it should either become mine for its own salvation, or be destroyed. Obviously, some people are more egomaniacal than others, and we have more recently come to diagnose those with glaringly large egos as being narcissistic, sociopathic, bipolar, borderline, or a number of other personality disorders, yet it is arguably the same disorder from which our popular culture has emerged.

BOOTED FROM EDEN TO START AGRICULTURE

"When it is understood that one loses joy and happiness in the attempt to possess them, the essence of natural farming will be realized.

*The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops,
but the cultivation and perfection of human beings."*

- Masanobu Fukuoka, The One-Straw Revolution

As the Judeo/Christian story goes, the preceding existence is a myth. According to Archbishop James Ussher, who served the Church of Ireland from 1625-1656, genealogical records from the names and dates in the Bible prove that God created the Earth on Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC. Over the next several years, as the story goes, Adam and Eve managed to get kicked out of the gated community of Paradise, learned how to farm, and trained up their offspring to work the soil by the sweat of their brow while eating whatever they could grow or kill, and somehow finding a way to populate the Earth.

By the time they were adults, Adam and Eve's two sons, Cain and Abel, had already mastered the practice of agriculture, with Cain focusing on horticulture and Abel focusing on livestock. Apparently, God preferred the taste of Abel's mutton over Cain's veggies, and in the first case of jealous rage, Cain killed his brother, the butcher. As Cain goes forth to populate the Earth by himself, he must have shared the idea of agriculture with the other people who somehow actually existed, and the idea of agriculture

eventually took hold around the world.

Although the particulars of the biblical account leave many scratching their heads with more questions than answers, looking beyond the literal, it is still the account of how agriculture was integrated into our lifestyles and separated us from the less complicated life of unity we once enjoyed. If you stretch the Creation story out so the second chapter of Genesis actually takes 200,000 years, and change the roles a bit (since Eve very well could have gotten here first), it does somewhat resemble what anthropologists now think actually happened... except for the talking serpent part.

In actuality, there is reason to believe women started the agricultural revolution. As Riane Eisler writes in *The Chalice and the Blade*, "It is also more than likely that women invented that most fundamental of all material technologies, without which civilization could not have evolved: the domestication of plants and animals. In fact, even though this is hardly ever mentioned in the books and classes where we learn history of 'ancient man', most scholars today agree that this is probably how it was. They note that in contemporary gatherer-hunter societies, women, not men, are typically in charge of processing food. It would thus have been more likely that it was women who first dropped seeds on the ground of their encampments, and also began to tame young animals by feeding and caring for them as they did for their own young. Anthropologists also point to the fact that in the primarily horticultural economies of 'developing' tribes and nations, contrary to Western assumptions, the cultivation of the soil is to this day primarily in the hands of women."¹⁴

Agriculture may just be what the "fruit of the knowledge of good and evil" was meant to represent, but as it was eventually written into the Judeo/Christian rulebook as the natural manifestation of the way things should be, recent scholars like Jared Diamond suggest agriculture may have been "the worst mistake that humanity has ever made." Citing the number of additional hours that must be worked to cultivate food rather than the few it took to hunt and forage for it, combined with the number of diseases that

arose from living in such close proximity to the animals during domestication, and the immunodeficiencies and defects which arose from adapting to a sedentary lifestyle, Diamond argues that agriculture didn't create the lifestyle improvement we have come to call progress, but actually stripped humanity of a much more abundant and leisurely livelihood.

However, it is not necessarily agriculture in itself that created the problem. After all, in its simplest definition, agriculture is merely cultivating the food you like to eat. Chances are good that humans had realized a healthy symbiosis with Nature and did what they could to help the plants they enjoyed to prosper so they could enjoy the benefits. Where our path went awry is in instituting what Daniel Quinn coined "totalitarian agriculture".

In introducing totalitarian agriculture, *homo sapiens*, spurred on by new religious traditions that put them at the center of the Universe, started embracing the idea that the world and everything in it was here primarily for the enjoyment of *homo sapiens*. This being the case, we took agriculture to a new level, not only helping the plants we enjoyed to prosper, but also to make it unavailable to other species, destroying those that would share in our bounty, and using our newly realized ideas on property to devote swaths of land to make food exclusively for humans.

"We also figured out that we could replace inedible forests with edible crops," wrote Thom Hartmann in *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*. "Instead of having a plot of land produce only enough food to feed ten people, that same land could now be worked to feed a hundred. The beginning of agriculture is referred to as the Agricultural Revolution, and it began to gather momentum about 10,000 years ago. Because we had discovered and begun to use these two methods (herding and agriculture) to more efficiently convert the sun's energy into human food, our food supply grew. Following the basic laws of Nature, because there was more food, there could be more humans, and the human population started growing faster."¹²²

Of course, as we began the battle with Nature and

forced Her to be subjected to the hierarchy we were creating, with us at the top, we also started creating hierarchies amongst ourselves. Just as *homo sapiens* was considered the species to rightfully sit at the top of the world's food pyramid, some among the species realized a developing hierarchy within the top tier itself. Those who were crafty enough to convince others that the land which produced the bounty belonged to them were able to harness the energy of other people just as the species was doing with the rest of the natural world.

As Jean-Jacques Rousseau put it in *Discourse on Inequality*, "The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said 'This is mine,' and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society."

IN DEBT WE TRUST

*"Debt . . . that peculiar nexus where money, narrative or story,
and religious belief intersect, often with explosive force."*

- Margaret Atwood, Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth

As nomads, life provided as we moved, and when there was no food in an area, we moved on to one in which there was food. When we became sedentary, we had to adapt our abundance operations and work to develop food instead of moving to find food. By developing the consistent tasks agriculture demanded in order to grow our own food instead of sustaining ourselves by the patterns of Nature, we created roles to be repeated and an indebtedness to repeat the role.

As we developed this new lifestyle, before we advanced to the development of actual money, we internalized the idea of primordial debt.

Although we've never really asked for them, we are given thousands of free breaths each and every day that we don't even have to work for. They empower our bodies, with which we can move around and affect change on an extraordinary planet, and for this, we are indebted to our Creator. As life grew more complex through our new-fangled operations during our transition from nomads to farmers (and more so upon our eventual integration of industry and information), we found ourselves indebted to a variety of other things and people as well. As we started growing sedentary, and attaching ourselves to property as extensions of ourselves, we began to assume indebtedness to those who claimed the property, tilled the land, and provided that which we could no longer provide ourselves.

Many religions embraced the ritual of sacrificing animals to appease the gods and the debts humans owe them for their existence and their shortcomings. The entire Jesus narrative is based on the idea that our “sin” has created a price that needs to be paid, a debt we are unable to pay, but that has been paid for by the sacrificial Lamb of God.

The Bible is replete with mentions of money, debt, payments, and sacrifice, as are the Koran, the Vedas, and many other books of accepted scripture holding sway in how we develop society. According to most of our religious beliefs, the general consensus seems to be that life is debt.

These beliefs began as oral tradition, stories around the campfire, and as they continued to be told and embellished upon, legends were born, fears were established, and patterns were developed. The stories we started became, for some, the impetus for our decisions, and as the stories expanded from the God to whom we owed life to the gods to whom we owed livelihood, our labor was manipulated to fulfill a function in the developing civilization.

Just as we realized our ability to domesticate animals and have them do our bidding for us, some of us realized how we could domesticate other humans as well. For those who assumed control and ownership of the land, either through force or through wit, they were able to provide food and shelter, things abundantly supplied as nomads who knew how to look for things, but were more scarce when tribes became immobile. As landowners provided these things for those whose egos had not claimed ownership of land, those with no land became indebted to those who claimed it as their own.

Because those without land had nothing with which to pay this debt after living simply and nomadic for so long, their servitude became payment, and further divisions were established among humankind. As those with property, plans, and power started deciding how the resources of land and labor would be used, they assumed a higher, more noble role than those who were content to move rocks and plant seeds. And so the initial roles of masters and slaves were

born.

As time would move on, the masters became kings and established states, and the slaves became subjects, who would later become citizens. Yet the hierarchy of servitude was established as many were forced to work for a living to pay off their debt to the society which was being established around them, and some would make their living by directing that debt to create more affluence. Ambrose Bierce put it well when he said, "Debt is an ingenious substitute for the chain and whip of the slave driver."¹⁶

IN THE BEGINNING
WAS THE WORD,
AND THE WORD WAS MONEY

"As humanity perfects itself, man becomes degraded.

When everything is reduced

to the mere counter-balancing of economic interests,

what room will there be for virtue?

When Nature has been so subjugated

that she has lost all her original forms,

where will that leave the plastic arts?

And so on.

In the meantime, things are going to get very murky."

- Gustave Flaubert

Considering both the written word and recorded trade exchanges came into use around 3300-3100 BC, it may very well be that writing was developed primarily for the letters "IOU". Although Jesus would come to take issue with it a few millennia later, banking originated largely in Mesopotamian temples and palaces, with the new technology of the written word being used to keep ledgers on the grains, cattle, and metals stored there over the next few centuries. It was also during this time, roughly 3000 BC, that the shekel came into play, allowing for an established amount of barley to be traded for an established amount of metal.

All these years later, many are starting to understand

the folly of initially basing the monetary system on food. The argument has long been that we need to keep growing the food supply in order to feed all of the hungry people in the world. Yet as the commoditization of food has grown, and its value as a producer of money has outshined its value as a contributor to life, the end game of totalitarian agriculture has found America throwing away 40% of the food it grows because it's not market-worthy while 14% of Americans are still "food insecure", according to the USDA.

As an example of how differently our new system of indebted agriculture was from the egalitarianism of nomadic hunters, in *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, David Graeber writes, "The refusal to calculate credits and debits can be found throughout the anthropological literature on egalitarian hunting societies." On his conversation with a modern nomadic hunter, Graeber continues, "Rather than seeing himself as human because he could make economic calculations, the hunter insisted being truly human meant refusing to make such calculations, refusing to measure or remember who had given what to whom, for the precise reason that doing so would inevitably create a world where we began 'comparing power with power, measuring, calculating' and reducing each other to slaves or dogs through debt."¹⁷

Many primitive cultures still practice this tradition of not keeping track of things. Many people in civilized cultures often feel as if they are at their best when they have occasion to practice economics at the gift level. Whenever someone is able to use their skills or excess to help somebody out of a jam, and decline payment, people often feel more valuable than if they had been paid for it.

Yet, we can only practice that type of economics when we feel secure enough to do so, and with the demands of our current system, it gets very challenging to feel that secure. As humans developed our distinctions and divisions, we created new illusions of complexity to manage our new methods of accounting.

With the status of property ownership now fully in play, there was, among this new language of trade, the first

establishment of statehood, and government was developed to account for our new relationship with the rest of the world. Since this new technology now lent credence to what were heretofore merely imaginary lines in the sand, there was suddenly the need to defend our demarcations and all of the stuff we had begun to mine, harvest, and store. Along with all of this new busy-ness and the formations of nations around these new technologies, since humans had created things we could fight for, the first recorded war occurred in this Mesopotamian region between the Sumerians and Elamites in 2700 BC.

Now fully funded, the civil state became what Aristotle would describe as, “the highest form of community and aims at the highest good.” Consisting of villages and households with slaves, “it exists to satisfy man's daily needs... Men form states to secure a bare subsistence; but the ultimate object of the state is the good life... It is founded on natural impulse, that toward political assistance.”¹²⁴

Throughout the next several centuries, the Patriarchal Age firmly took hold, and from 1800-1200 BC, the incorporation of money and property, including the expanding ownership of other people, and wars for further conquest started to become humanity's standard operating procedure. What would become biblical accounts started around 1900 BC, and the first mention of money in the book of Genesis was in reference to circumcising a purchased slave. In Babylon, what is now known as Iraq, the Code of Hammurabi was written around 1700 BC, setting up formal codes for the use of money, including interest on debt, fines for misuse, and, of course, the treatment of slaves.

WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

"To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman.

*If by strength is meant brute strength, then,
indeed, is woman less brute than man.*

*If by strength is meant moral power,
then woman is immeasurably man's superior.*

*Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing,
has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage?
Without her, man could not be. If nonviolence is the law of our being,
the future is with woman.*

Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?"

- Mahatma Gandhi

The Code of Hammurabi also spoke to one of the only economic activities women were allowed to engage in, and it had nothing to do with working the fields or rounding up cattle. It's often said prostitution is the world's oldest profession, but it's more accurate to say it was the first profession open to females. Between the time humans practiced a more egalitarian lifestyle with a more open sexuality, to the time ownership of property expanded to include other people, there were probably a great many other paying jobs people were doing besides helping each other get off, but few of them were open to women.

As humankind began to drop the practice of emigration, they had to adapt to the limitations of their new

sedentary lifestyle, and people were surely busy at work growing and collecting food, capturing trainable animals, and performing all of the tasks that provided for the general welfare, yet in this new game of organization and accounting, only men got to play. Perhaps it was the phallic shape of the pen that inspired men to hold it as their exclusive power of creativity. Since they had no womb in which to create life, perhaps men hoped to establish a power of their own by developing a new system they could control, and thereby gain one-upmanship on the fairer of their species.

While the monetary ideology was inspired by these tasks, and the grains and cattle they developed were more influential than orgasms, just as the sedentary lifestyle started to manipulate the communal bonds people once shared as egalitarian nomads, so did it manipulate the formerly natural relations between man and woman. Before it was legitimized through religious ritual and government dictate, the first “wives” men claimed as their exclusive lovers may not have been romantic soulmates, but property.

“Remember the Tenth Commandment,” wrote Jethá and Ryan in *Sex at Dawn*, “‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that [is] thy neighbor’s.’ Clearly, the biggest loser (aside from slaves, perhaps) in the agricultural revolution was the human female, who went from occupying a central respected role in foraging societies to becoming another possession for a man to earn and defend, along with his house, slaves, and livestock.”

As humans adopted the concepts of ownership, most likely due to the male’s generally superior physical strength, the men were the ones battling things out over territory, and eventually expanded their ownership of the land to the people on it. Consumed with their newfound power, men seemed to get fairly accustomed to developing their boundaries of ownership, and soon started laying claim to the women of the region. Although there aren’t many writings from this era, the ones we have, each speak to the

ownership of slaves, particularly to the ownership of female slaves, so while it's traditional to say that prostitution was the first profession, it is more likely that pimping was.

Although many today claim the Bible states marriage is supposed to be between one man and one woman, a good number of the men had a great number of wives, and a backup platoon of concubines. Generally, this type of polygyny was reserved for kings and the wealthy, and it seems the more land a man had, the more women he claimed as his own.

“Where monogamy was prescribed,” says Lawrence Fuchs in *Beyond Patriarchy: Jewish Fathers and Families*, “only 16% of 853 cultures surveyed by Helen Fisher – it was normal for high status, powerful men to have multiple sexual partners. Marriage, whether monogamous or polygynous, enabled a man to pass on status and property to his heirs, as Roman nobles did, even the kept female slaves. In medieval Christian Countries, monogamous marriage, assuring patriarchal fathering for heirs, and polygynous mating, assuring sexual outlets for their fathers, coexisted comfortably.”¹⁵³

“Even in rare societies that were officially monogamous, such as Homeric Greece,” says Martin van Creveld in *Equality: The Impossible Quest*, “chiefs regularly built up large harems consisting of female slaves. Polygyny meant inequality in the sense that, whereas some had as many women as they wanted and to spare, others had to go without.”¹²⁵

In order to track their lineage and build their empire, men took wives, sometimes many. It is likely that the death sentence for adultery was designed to enforce the economic accounting system of power more than to administrate the wrath of God. As the ideas of church, state, and money focused the patriarchal world view, their power was regularly achieved by force, both violently and sexually.

“Long before Josephus wrote about monogamy as the norm for Jews,” Fuchs continues, “male ancestors of the Jews behaved, as already seen, in sexually predatory ways, using sex both as an instrument and as a benefit of power.

We learn from the Bible that they offered wives to powerful men as a form of hospitality and as an expression of deference, and that fathers gave daughters to powerful strangers. Daughters and wives were virtually owned by male patriarchs, and males engaged in warrior competitions to determine the most powerful of them.”

According to Dr. Michal Price in his *Psychology Today* article “Why We Think Monogamy is Normal,” “The ancient Greco-Roman and medieval European leaders who embraced anti-polygyny laws were heavily invested in the business of war, and their own social status, and indeed survival, often depended on their ability to maintain large, well-funded armies. And the imposition of monogamy produced bigger, better armies, because monogamous groups can grow larger than polygynous ones... Socially imposed monogamy, therefore, emerged in the West as a reciprocal arrangement in which elite males allowed lower-ranking males to marry, in exchange for their military service and tax contributions.”¹⁵⁵

For the women who weren’t married off to those who were settling into their territories and claiming their property, some became prostitutes. Of course, prostitution then wasn’t entirely like prostitution today. There were those who were broke, and stood at the side of the road, waiting for shepherds or goat-herders to come along, offering up sex in exchange for livestock, but there were those who held more honorable positions as well.

Greek historian Herodotus spoke of shrines called “houses of heaven” where they practiced sacred prostitution, as did the Aztecs. While Israel would denounce the custom of venerating sexuality outside of their new custom of marriage, that didn’t stop prostitution from happening. Even Muslims eventually integrated a fixed-term marriage called *nikah mut’ah*, a nice little win/win situation where a man and women could have sex with the approval of Allah, the woman could get paid, and they could part ways to get on with their lives.

Of course, prostitution wasn’t limited to women. Actually, some of the more prodigious “houses of heaven”

specialized in the sacrament of sodomy, and in the highest echelons of power, the most sought after lovers were often young boys and other men. Perhaps it was man's infatuation with his own phallus, but despite the cultural call to action on populating the earth through progeny, homosexuality has been a constant proclivity throughout the known civilization.

In most of the other countries developing at the time, homosexuality was quite popular. However, the Judaic tradition outlawed it, as well as a number of other sexual encounters for which they thought people should be put to death. Yet as we've seen with the sexually inappropriate proclivities of so many priests, even the most ardent laws have not kept sexual activity at bay, but merely transmogrified it through suppression.

In many ways, prostitution in those days didn't differ much from prostitution now. Granted, they didn't have the global trade we have now, but young girls were still abducted and sold into a lifetime of sexual puppetry. For many women, for those who weren't claimed as wives and who had no other access to money or the means to get it, there didn't seem to be any other choice.

Unfortunately, after several centuries, it doesn't seem like we've made much progress in providing for human needs in a way that would keep women from having to choose such a lifestyle. With the political government of the State and the religious government of the Church giving more importance and credibility to mankind's newfound obsession with keeping score than to the actual well-being of humans, they were stuck then as we're stuck now, with those who claim to protect us shrugging their shoulders at our suffering under the hopeless reality of "just the way things are".

Indeed, oppression was an obtrusive symptom of the Great Forgetting, bringing the plagues of slavery, prostitution, poverty, and warfare into our heretofore peaceful co-existence. Even in the simple relegation of women to a lower class in society, where their voices were not meant to be heard, and their opinions were to be non-existent, we have oppressed the human spirit and hobbled

our species by giving dominance to only half of it.

No one is exactly sure what happened for the 193,000 years we weren't writing stuff down, but by the time men did finally start to transcribe their account of things, women weren't really portrayed in the best of lights. In the Bible, for instance, few women are featured, and those who are are mostly cast as prostitutes (albeit with hearts of gold) like Tamar, Rahab, and Mary Magdalene, or bad apples like Eve, Delilah, and Salome (assumed to be Herod's daughter). If biblical women aren't tempting, trouble-making, or just filling in as fringe characters to support "his" story, women are characterized as the models of obedience and loyalty the men wanted them to be.

Even in the biblical genealogies, the women who grew each of the leaders in their bellies for nine months aren't even given a shout out. Instead, a long string of men begat one another as they began to celebrate their new understanding of paternity through systems of one-sided monogamy and polygyny.

I'm not trying to be too egregious toward men, as I am one of them, and I can assure you we're not all complete dicks. Nevertheless, I'm open minded enough to recognize that women have gotten a really bad rap in my culture because, if I'm being completely honest, sometimes we are predominately dicks. But I'm really glad to see we're moving forward.

LET ME HEAR THAT JINGLE JANGLE

"A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore."

-Yogi Berra

In addition to cattle, slaves, and grain, money as a means of trade has had a number of incarnations, such as teeth, gemstones, foods, weapons, seashells, grains, salt, animal skins, bones, and feathers, but none of them changed the world quite like cold, hard coins. Although this new methodology of money, banking, and divisions among humans was sprouting up in Mesopotamia to launch the Judeo/Christian/Islamic infusion into the rising civilization, around 1200 BC, money began to be used in China as well.

There are records of cowrie shells being used as money throughout the world, but the Chinese were the first to implement the idea. Even the original Chinese character for "money" was a cowrie shell. But this wasn't the only monetary innovation to come out of China.

When China started using coins, initially it seems that they used small metal carvings shaped like tools to assist in trading productive measures, but those forms soon developed into round coins with holes in the middle so they could be strung together. Although China was the first to implement the use of tradable coins, Lydia, what is now Turkey, was the first to do it in style.

Three hundred years after the Chinese began trading coins made out of bronze, copper, and other base metals,

Mesopotamia had to take it up just another notch and start making coins out of gold. There are varying opinions on how much this initial coin, actually an amalgam of gold and silver called *electrum*, was worth, and how much purchasing power it offered the people of Lydia. Some historians believe it could have purchased eleven sheep or ten goats. Some think they were only worth about one sheep. Some think one trite would be worth a few bottles of wine, and some think it would have provided subsistence for the entire month.

This stater, known as the Lydian Lion, was named for its etchings of a lion head on either side. The mythology behind this trite is based on a bath that King Midas took in the Pactolus River. Because Lydia was built on the banks of this river, they were blessed with all that Midas turned to gold as he washed himself in the waters. Of course, there is also the theory that the entire coin phenomenon was started as a scam.

In 1958, Sture Bolin theorized that the Lydian Lion coin project was the world's first numismatic deception. As he put it, it was "an imposture, a large-scale swindle,"¹⁹ whereby King Alyattes and his cohorts debased the value of the coins by adding additional silver and copper to the gold in order to keep the gold for themselves. If this is true, which the majority of scholars agree that it is, it certainly makes it more understandable as to why money so often seems to corrupt. Essentially, it's been doing that from the beginning.

While many believe that the first gold coins were too valuable for everyday trading, the integration of this new technology, even as a storehouse for the perceived value of the king's bullion, must have kick-started something. As traders started using these coins, the practice was taken back to Greece, and the little metal disks took fire. But it may not have been the coins themselves that inspired the new economic movement, but rather the new activity of shopping.

The allure of shopping is not all that dissimilar from the allure of gold. Gold has many practical uses. It's been used in dentistry for centuries, medically for millennia, and now conducts electricity and information through smart

phones, tablets, and both desktop and laptop computers all over the world. Yet gold's most endearing quality is simply that it is shiny.

Similarly, shopping, while it does have its utilitarian attributes, allows us the opportunity for us to add something new, different, purposeful, and ultimately, shiny, into our lives. Like our uses for gold, with its values in usefulness and beauty, shopping is a uniquely human endeavor that helps us cultivate the art of living. Ultimately, shopping is ego activity, and should we decide to move consciously forward as a species, we would be wise to consider what we are truly shopping for, and how our participation in this activity affects all of the other people and species that are disinclined to participate in our endless accumulation of stuff.

Whether or not the initial Lydian Lions were used for trade in the markets, by about 550 BC, Greece started minting their own coins, and Lydia upped their game again by minting coins of both solid silver and solid gold, creating the first use of monetary denominations through bimetallic coinage. Although these coins, and the wealth they represented, became quite useful as a social lubricant and conduit of trade, they have also served as a means for the arbitrary estimation of value and continued separation from both the natural world and natural laws, entrancing us with shininess as we have lost sight of the truly valuable. As we rethink our definition of economy moving into the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible, it may be helpful to look at the roots of our obsession with money and come to a better understanding of how we can use the problem as a means to better solutions.

AND GOD SAID, “LET THERE BE MONEY”

“Religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich.”
- Napoleon Bonaparte

Throughout the entire Macedonian region, as the terms of banking as a way of life were becoming more integrated into the developing nation-states, what would become the Judeo/Christian/Islamic heritage was also spreading throughout the region, as the legends of Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Isaac, and Ishmael made their way from mouths to ears. For the next few hundred years, the growth of money was intertwined with the growth of these religions so closely that money is said to be mentioned in the Bible more times than heaven.

“The writers of the Bible anticipated the problems we would have with money and possessions; there are more than 2,000 references,” says Peter Grandich, co-founder of Trinity Financial Sports & Entertainment Management Co., and author of *Confessions of a Wall Street Whiz Kid*.²⁰

Obviously, a good portion of those references are warnings about the dangers of money, but quite a few of them, as abundance gospel preachers like Joel Osteen say, are guidelines for a better financial flow. Nevertheless, most likely due to the initial fallibilities that were seen in the new game of money, the Bible even included a reset button to help restore the inequalities created by the delusions of finance and property, as well as the environmental devastation caused by totalitarian agriculture. Although this

dictate was smack dab in the middle of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible often believed to be written by Moses, the year of Jubilee has been largely ignored by the vast majority of both Jews and Christians.

In Leviticus 25, only five chapters after the list of sexual death sentences, it is written that every fifty years, everyone should return to their own property, all debts should be forgiven, and all slaves should be freed. Basically, this overlooked biblical tradition was supposed to serve as a sort of reset to the game of human civilization so that we wouldn't get too caught up in our own nonsense. Unfortunately, in the last thousand years since the Bible has been bound, and the centuries of oral tradition that came before, in ignoring this divinely mandated forgiveness, we have missed out on quite a few Jubilees.

There are those who believe that mini-Jubilees were common in the early days of our record-keeping, and that the biblical account was merely paying credence to what was actually happening in the world around the writer, although it never actually manifested the experience through the Church. Due to the fact that debt would often reach unmanageable proportions within seven years and preposterous proportions within fifty, the forgiveness of debt was the only possible solution for most. It wasn't necessarily due to the benevolence of God, but more due to the entire concept of debt as unsustainable, and its incapacity to ever be resolved. When usury, or interest, was added as a component, debt would always become unwieldy in that the amount of accumulated debts would always be greater than the amount of money created to pay them, a notion that the Church held for centuries as it sensibly prohibited the practice.

One of the reasons that modern religious folk may not give too much attention to the 25th chapter of Leviticus, and the guidelines for forgiving debt and freeing slaves every fifty years therein, is due to the fact that halfway through the chapter, after everyone has happily returned to the land of their birth to be with families free of debt, the chapter turns to instructions of rounding the slaves back up. I wonder if

the year of Jubilee would more likely be practiced if it didn't condone the ownership of another human being at all.

The Pentateuch, also called the Torah, including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, was largely crafted between the years 538–332 BC, a time when slavery was well accepted and males had become the dominant sex of the species as the boys began to play with their new toy, money. Like today, those with money started to gain influence, and around 500 BC, Rome replaced its monarchy with an aristocratic republic, and Athens ushered in what is often considered the world's first democracy, albeit a "privileged men only" version of it.

The use of coins, banking, and other monetary ingenuities continued to spread throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa over the next few centuries. So ingrained was the idea of money, Aristotle, known as the father of political science, said that every object has two uses - the use for which it was designed and the value for which it can be traded. With the ensuing use of money, things weren't just things anymore. They were things that could buy other things, and it changed our entire way of doing things.

Also around this time in Nepal, Siddhartha Gautama came into the picture, and the teachings of the affluent prince who gave up his throne to seek enlightenment started to spread. Sheltered by a childhood of vast wealth, legend has it that when a twenty-nine-year-old Siddhartha was finally faced with the old age, death, and decay that occurred outside the walls of his palace, he left his arranged marriage and the trappings of material possessions to look for a way beyond the suffering of ordinary life. His time of self-inflicted asceticism, including denying himself even the sustenance of food to the point of near death, balanced with his young life of opulence, led Siddhartha to the Middle Way, which has guided his followers down the path of moderation as the development of the monetary civilization has created both the paths of poverty and opulence on either side.

Like the Jubilee provisions of Judaism, or the words of Jesus that would come to follow, the words of Buddha were not necessarily embraced by the entirety of the culture,

nor even the entirety of the religion which would emerge around his teachings. Yet in each instance, as it is for every spiritual luminary that has warned of the dangers of money on the journey to happiness, the teachings have still saved many from peril.

Buddhism is thought to have been brought to China from India during the Han Dynasty between the years 200 BC - 200 AD, roughly the same time Jesus is reported to have been trying to straighten out the the mess in Mesopotamia. It also aligned quite nicely with China's latest rage, money made from one foot square pieces of white deerskin leather, the prototype for paper money. As people were starting to up their game of finance, Buddha came along talking about the Middle Way of moderation, just about the time they needed a reality check while creating their new reality of money.

Similarly, shortly before Jesus broke onto the scene, Caesar Augustus founded the Roman Empire, based largely on making cheaper money and instituting tax reforms that would change our entire relationship with the planet and one another. In addition to the pure solid and gold coins with his image on them, Augustus added brass and copper coins into the mix so that all of the people of the land would be able to support the empire by paying sales taxes, flat-rate poll taxes, and the basis of the property tax, the land tax. Just as China was braced for the leather dollar and the often delirious and deleterious effects that money can have on people by the introduction of Buddhism, an argument might be made that Christ's monumental appearance, and it's subsequent splitting of what we know as time, may have been some sort of cosmic answer to the ramifications of the Roman Empire's new economic innovations as well.

At the time, the Roman Empire considered this Jesus figure to be more pesky than prophetic, reportedly crucifying him for claiming he was a king before adopting the religion loosely based on his teachings three centuries later. As the story goes, this Jesus fellow was sort of a stick in their craw. Although temples had been used for generations to store and trade, and though the coinage certainly would have seeped

into the negotiations long before Jesus started going to either market or temple, according to all four of the gospels, one time, when Jesus went to the temple and saw them trading the new fangled Roman coins, he kinda went a little crazy. Maybe as a poor carpenter's son, he didn't get to town much, and this fairly common occurrence freaked him out. Perhaps the lack of a recorded adolescence or young adulthood for Jesus may be attributed to his living those years as an ascetic who wasn't socially acclimated and didn't get the trends.

Vehemently stating, and probably correctly so, that the temple would be better used for prayer, Jesus chased everybody out of the place and took to flipping over tables and stools. Then, one gospel says he taught, one says he healed the sick, one says he caused an even bigger scene by not letting anybody through, and one says he just talked smack. Whatever he did, he really put a crimp in business for more than just the Romans. Religion had already become a thriving industry, and the Sanhedrin, the greatest beneficiaries of every alm collected, weren't having it.

Jesus made it pretty easy for them to trump up the charges about him saying he was God, since he probably was sent to be this protrusion of virtues in this new age of vice. He basically reminded people that they didn't have to be such jerks all the time. Extolling messages of love, forgiveness, peace, and service beyond money or slavery, his closest confidants, both in his life and the resurrection they would report, were female. Considering the ruffians he hung around with and the tender way he is reported to have, I think it's safe to say that Jesus was in touch with his feminine side.

These days, those who most adamantly cling to the monetary civilization, and the belief systems it has cultivated, or at least those who have given up hope that anything better could possibly exist, tend to view the compassionate message Christ had to offer to a world in delusion, and largely dismiss it as hippie, socialist propaganda, even if they claim to be Christians. Yet amid all of the interplay of the legends and stories about the man who

seems to have split time in half, with the sermons and songs they've inspired, through the battles and beliefs they developed, as they have been twisted and edited since being adopted by the Roman Empire, there is still a very prevalent message of love that permeates the Jesus narrative.

Unfortunately, that message of love was laden with measured drops of fear and control when Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 AD. He then raided the pagan temples of their gold, hoarding it for himself while the poor were forced to deal with the inflation he created. Rome, as fast as it was growing, had no concerns about overwhelming debt, and saw no need to institute welfare programs like the year of Jubilee. The payment of debts and taxes was a citizen's obligation. Through the Roman Empire, debt was ingrained as a moral imperative, establishing this unwieldy, unsustainable practice as a hardwired foundation to our blossoming civilization, laying the foundation for future generations to continue the maddening compulsion for future growth in order to pay the madmen of the past.

A few years later, Constantine finally broke out the gold, and made a coin called the Solidus that was used pretty consistently until the Visigoths raided Rome and the Roman Empire started to crumble. Yet before its eventual fall, the Roman Empire, in its quest to consolidate power and use it most effectively, also developed another nifty invention: the corporation.

THE CORPORATE CREED

*"Corporation: An ingenious device for obtaining profit
without individual responsibility."*

- Ambrose Bierce

The first corporations weren't like the corporations we know today. Initially created for only temporary purposes, such as the building of roads and aqueducts, the *publicani*, public contractors, lured individuals to invest in infrastructure for the public good while also making a profit. The word "corporation" itself is derived from the Latin *corpus*, meaning body, in this case a body of people.

The first organizations to incorporate were governments, from the empire itself, *populus Romanus*, to cities throughout the region, political groups, trade guilds, and religious organizations. The oldest surviving corporation, the Benedictine Order of the Catholic Church, was established in 529 AD. Not built to last, but merely to fulfill a purpose, early Roman corporations were a far cry from the gods of capitalism they have become in more recent years.

Some early corporations grew to employ thousands of people, but the practice of corporations wouldn't truly take hold until the Middle Ages. They would be refined further by the Age of Enlightenment and the Renaissance. And they were chiseled into their current incarnation with the Industrial and Information Revolutions.

As the organization of corporations developed, the Roman Catholic Church had some organizing of its own to

do. Before the Church existed, early Christians did not fare well in Rome, but the persecution seemed to merely strengthen their resolve to believe. Although they were seemingly ecstatic about their new way of seeing the world, they refused to take part in the Roman festivals, they rejected the dizzying array of Roman gods, they were highly critical of other people's traditions, and basically, they came across as huge buzz kills, as many of them still do today.

Unlike modern America, the majority of Roman leaders were not professed Christians, and the persecution early Christians felt was entirely different than what some Christians complain about today. Where modern American Christians sometimes feel persecuted when they can't put a nativity scene on the courthouse steps, when Emperor Decius ordered the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire in 250 AD, the persecutions they faced were more along the lines of having their property seized, children abducted into slavery, and being fed to lions. Chances are good that they wouldn't make too much of a stink about the nativity scene.

Nevertheless, when Gallienus became emperor ten years later, he issued an edict calling for Romans to show more tolerance to Christians, and some estimates state that by the year 300 AD, 10% of the Roman population was Christian. However, one of the problems with empires is their lack of consistency as leaders come and go, so when Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius were prevailing over the empire, they made up for the lost forty years of Gallienus' even hand, and they went right on back to rescinding Christians' rights and making their lives a very close facsimile of the hell they were trying to avoid in the afterlife. Although this Great Persecution was incredibly harsh, it was short-lived as Constantine I took the throne a few years later and took a shine to the new religion. Legend has it, he claimed Jesus came to him in a vision and told him to, "Conquer in my name."

Although Christianity wouldn't become the truly official religion of the Roman Empire until 380, under the rule of Theodosius, Constantine did quite a bit of the

footwork in organizing the religion in such a way as to be more palatable to everyone involved. For instance, in 336, he merged the Roman festival of Saturnalia, celebrating the birthday of the god Saturn, the birthday of the pagan sun god Mithra, the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, and the Winter Solstice with the Jesus story to celebrate the first Christmas, inspiring Pope Julius I to declare December 25 as Jesus' official birthday just a few years later. No one really knew when Jesus was actually born, but it offered up a nice diplomatic solution for everyone to celebrate together at the time.

But establishing a more organized Christianity wasn't just about the holidays. As Christianity grew throughout the persecutions and into its wide acceptance, a variety of sects emerged, and each of them had their own ideas on which writings were actually scripture, what the accepted scriptures meant, and exactly what they were supposed to believe to get the most out of this new religion. Since one of the biggest arguments was regarding Jesus' divinity, which was a pretty big deal to Constantine, he called together a council of 1800 leaders from the various sects in order to develop some homogenized harmony.

Only 300 or so were able to make it to this first Council of Nicea, and had there been a larger turnout, chances are that the process would have taken even longer. After several months of the first session and a few follow up sessions over the next few decades, the group of bishops were finally able to put together a short list of beliefs that would become mandatory for anyone calling themselves a Christian. Anyone who didn't profess to believe in the Nicene Creed was exiled.

A big issue for the first council was coming to terms with what was regarded as the Holy Trinity. Although most of the works they considered scripture were nebulous about the idea, it had been written about by a number of first century Christian writers like Tertullian and Origen, and touched on again in the second century by Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. But once they reached a point of consensus in 325, the Christian religion finally had a

foundation they could build on.

However, once they had established the various points on the three aspects of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there was still the issue of which of the many books that were in circulation would be actually considered holy scripture. There are not any records of this issue being discussed in the Council of Nicea, and unfortunately, not much of anywhere else either. Beyond the accepted Jewish scriptures, most of which would eventually become known as the Old Testament, early Christians weren't exactly particular about which books should be heralded as the perfect, infallible declarations of God and which ones were just really good reads.

PACKING THE CANON TO FIRE

*"It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me,
it is the parts that I do understand."*

- Mark Twain

There was a movement in the early Christian church led by Marcion of Sinope to release adherence to the Jewish scriptures and develop a purer Christianity without the wrathful influence of Jehovah. After all, under Christianity's new covenant with God, books like Leviticus probably seemed as irrelevant then as they seem today. However, Marcion was ultimately dismissed as a heretic, and Judaism continued to be incorporated into Christianity. Most of the churches had found quite a few writings they agreed on, and in 367 AD, Athanasius of Alexandria released the *39th Festival Letter* in which he recommended the sixty-six books that would eventually be agreed upon by the Pope to become the biblical canon about two centuries later.

It is interesting to note that the word "canon" was taken from the Greek *kanon*, meaning "measuring rod", again referencing how economics and accounting played a role in the development of a masculine religion, and how much men love to measure things.

Regarding the selected scriptures, Athanasius wrote, "These are fountains of salvation that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take out from these. For concerning these, the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, and said, 'Ye do

err, not knowing the Scriptures' and He reproved the Jews, saying, 'Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of Me.'²¹

Unfortunately, there were quite a few books that were left out, and once the papacy agreed with Athanasius about which books would be favored, although some were still revered enough to be considered apocryphal, a great many of them were considered heretical. However, some of the books continued to be used through 1546, when the Protestant Reformation forced the Roman Catholic Church to put together the Council of Trent and better organize their members and donors.

Many of these books now seem to be viewed as little more than fan fiction, nevertheless, they offer interesting glimpses into the huge gaps that exist in the Bible. For instance, *The Life of Adam and Eve* and *The Book of Jubilees* expand on the relationship between the planet's first couple and Eve's continued issues with the serpent. They also explain how Cain went on to populate the planet by marrying his sister, the ninth child of humanity's introductory duo. Answering the question about what Jesus was like as a child, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* accounts for Jesus at the ages of five and eight. The book tells of him beginning to experiment with his new powers by presumably pushing one of his friends off of a roof and raising him from the dead, then striking someone blind for criticizing his stepfather's craftsmanship.

In the first century of Christianity, as with the first few centuries of Judaism, most of these stories were passed on by oral tradition. Although the fundamentalist belief developed by the Church states that no human errors occurred throughout this process, and every word of the Bible is the entirety of God's truth, there are many who question how much of the narrative was fabricated by the active imaginations of storytellers wanting to add in a new spin on the tales before they made their way into ink. In the early days, before Athanasius declared which books he thought were actually written by God, early Christians had a nice run of being able to choose for themselves, more or less,

which accounts of Christ they preferred. Athanasius, nicknamed the “Black Dwarf” by his critics, yet highly revered throughout the Church as a great writer, selected his twenty-seven books of the New Testament, and decided only four of them would be actual accounts of the life of Christ. The majority of them, like Athanasius’ writings themselves, were a bit more concerned with theologizing, like the thirteen letters of Paul, who never actually met Jesus face to face, and the eight letters of the other apostles.

In whittling down the choices of books Christians could now read, the Church disavowed the gospel accounts of Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Philip, Peter, the Egyptians, and a great little question and answer session between the twelve disciples and Jesus called *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*. These and many more books were hidden away, most likely for fear that they would be destroyed, and they were not read again until the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet because Christianity is the one religion with eternal consequences that leave little margin for error, most believers were content to dismiss these other ancillary accounts and limit God’s chosen narrative to the collection of writings we now know as “The Bible”.

CRUSADING FOR COINAGE

*"If you want to make a little money, write a book
If you want to make a lot of money, create a religion."
- L. Ron Hubbard*

By the time the Roman Empire fell, the Roman Catholic Church had already grown to the point where it was no longer reliant upon the government to support it. However, it wasn't quite able to fully defend itself, and as Muslims started moving into the territory around Jerusalem, in 1095, Pope Urban decided to call in Christians throughout Europe to come chase their estranged cousins out. Although the seven or so Crusades that happened throughout the next couple of centuries created a lot of misery for everyone involved as various popes called for bloodshed, they did prove that war was an effective way to generate money, and it was largely thanks to the Crusades that banking was back in business.

Henry II used the Crusades to levy quite a few taxes, assigning the Templars and Hospitallers to collect payments throughout the Holy Land for the "protection" they offered, an early model of the services the mob would come to use later on. When Richard I took the throne in 1189, he privatized the assets of the monarchy to pay for his own Crusade, and managed to get taken prisoner on his way through Europe, discovering yet another way that war can improve the economy: ransoms. The Crusades went on until about 1270, just before Marco Polo showed up in China and discovered how well paper money had taken hold. He wrote

a chapter in his book called “How the Great Kaan Causeth the Bark of Trees, Made into Something Like Paper, to Pass for Money All Over his County”.

The book was eventually titled with more brevity as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, apparently ghostwritten by his cellmate when he was imprisoned on his way back from China. Word of this paper money started to spread upon his release, along with the concept of burning coal for fuel, an idea which would later be greatly instituted throughout Europe to usher in the Industrial Revolution. But until that technology took hold, the English monarchy introduced the tally stick, a simple stick that was used to measure how many taxes people had to pay to the crown.

In 1348, the Black Death broke out, starting a slew of plagues that reduced the population around Europe and collapsed the economy. As Europe rose out of this recession, Florence, Italy made it legal to charge interest, laying aside the Christian prohibition on usury, and banking got another push toward legitimacy.

About a hundred years later, some really interesting and contradictory movements started to happen in different parts of the globe. In 1440, Gutenberg invented the printing press, and although Europe wouldn't start using it to print paper money until after Sweden successfully experimented with it in about 1600, the world of mass printed books revolutionized the economy and brought humanity into the age of modernity. Oddly enough, after about 500 years of experimentation and just a few years after the printing press was invented, China gave up the use of paper money in 1455.

It is amazing that a society can have something ingrained into their culture for so long, and then just stop using it. But if China could give up paper money after 500 years, perhaps that should give us a little more hope as we deal with the nonsensical economic realities we're currently clinging to. And as long as we're thinking outside the box, we should take just a moment to consider that the Incas developed one of the most formidable empires in South America, and they didn't use money at all.

THE INQUISITION GETS MEDIEVAL ON YOUR A\$\$

*"Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!...
Amongst our weaponry are such diverse elements as:
fear, surprise, ruthless efficiency, an almost fanatical devotion to the Pope,
and nice red uniforms."
- Monty Python*

Europe used money a lot, and from the fall of the Roman Empire until the Renaissance, they didn't use it very well. And for those who really used it poorly, there were consequences. Although debtor's prisons had been implemented throughout the Roman Empire and Ancient Greece, it was England that seemed to perfect them, or at least make them more notorious.

The idea was that once a person had racked up a large enough debt and was unable to pay, he would be locked up until he could pay it off, and he would be charged room and board. Sometimes, families of the debtors would be able to scrape up enough money to pay off the debts and get him out. Sometimes, wives and children of indebted fathers couldn't keep up the family business and fell into poverty. And sometimes, the wives and children just got thrown in prison with the husbands as one big, miserable family.

Like the society of the time, with its common castes of royalty, nobility, and peasants, debtor's prisons had different classes as well. If you ran in wealthy circles and had merely overextended yourself, chances are good that you'd

still get some pretty decent digs while you managed to work off your debts. If you were a peasant, chances are good that you'd just get shoved into a cage with a bunch of other folks and end up dying from disease before you could complete your sentence.

Debtor's prisons continued to be used for a few centuries and the idea even took hold in the New World. The United States Congress eventually deemed it unlawful in 1833, and England finally passed the Debtor's Act in 1869, inspiring most civilized countries to give up the practice. Countries like Greece, who didn't abolish them until 2008 and China, who didn't abolish them until 2010, were a little behind the curve. However, considering that modern governments, even those in the good old US of A, have recently started to implement many more fines and fees to cover the exorbitant costs of our judicial systems, the practice of jailing people for not being able to pay fines is not unheard of, and has actually been on the rise.

Yet as bad as it may have been to be jailed as a debtor in Medieval Europe, it was not nearly as bad as being jailed as a heretic. Perhaps it was due to early Christians being persecuted for so long, but for a people of faith, the Roman Catholic Church was extremely insecure, and if you happened to be one of the unfortunate souls who didn't completely jive with their prescribed belief system on how to attain the love, peace, and joy of their Savior, they took it kind of personally. While the Medieval Inquisition was instituted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1184 as a way to flush out the heretics and ensure that everybody agreed with them, it wasn't until Pope Innocent IV signed off on torture as a means of finding out what people really believed in 1252 that the dogma was really hammered home.

Of course, this new institution of horrific violence wasn't without its limits. The pope's nickname was Innocent, after all. The inquisitors were given free rein on how to inflict the most amount of pain for the longest amount of time, but they were not allowed to draw blood or actually maim the person being tortured. This resulted in a number of inventive, new torture devices like the Rack, the

Thumbscrews, the Wheel, and the Fork (I'll leave it to your imagination as to what these things did, but suffice it to say that they reached their goal of excruciating). For those eventually convicted of being heretics, to go along with the "humane" bloodless theme, they were mercifully burned at the stake.

"Institutionalized torture in Christendom was not just an unthinking habit," says Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, "it had a moral rationale. If you really believe that failing to accept Jesus as one's savior is a ticket to fiery damnation, then torturing a person until he acknowledges this truth is doing him the biggest favor of his life: better a few hours now than an eternity later."¹⁴⁹

A few more Inquisitions would rise up over the next few centuries as church leaders and the nobility struggled to ensure that everyone was on board with the orthodoxy they had decided everyone should accept. And though the Portuguese and Roman Inquisitions were pretty rough on those who had to live through them, they didn't hold a candle to the Spanish Inquisition initiated by Ferdinand and Isabella. A few decades later, they sent Christopher Columbus off to search for new trade routes in order to expand their empire and further their legacy.

PART TWO

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

*"Power is in tearing human minds to pieces
and putting them together again
in new shapes of your own choosing."
- George Orwell, 1984*

As most of Europe had been tortured, threatened, throttled, or otherwise convinced to accept faith in the Church, Christianity was all the rage. While it may sound unfair to say that a majority of Christians accepted their religion under duress, while it hasn't always been by sword or sadism, it is the only religion that promises eternal damnation if you don't follow it, and that is a rather good selling point. However, while many would see America as an escape from the tyranny of a religion and an empire based on an angry God, many just wanted the freedom to personalize the angry God narrative.

Freedom of religion offered many the chance to sculpt their own versions of their faith-based belief systems, and it allowed others to remove the restraints of dogma completely, fashioning new religions for the gods of money, power, and science. America gave plenty of opportunity for people to leave the nest of an overpopulated Europe and either fall on their faces or thrive in the New World. Through a myriad of mistakes and triumphs since, we have built an empire that rivals Rome.

Yet beyond her story, America, if that is her real name, still holds grand possibilities for escaping the grasp of

tyranny if our faith can transcend the angry goddess she has become. Looking at the bigger picture, these two continents have previously developed other ways of living besides the money-obsessed, wasteful, punitive system of inequality we've come to cherish.

From 1438 to 1533, before Columbus blazed the trail leading to what would become South America, the Incas established 14,000 miles of roads to connect the housing, public buildings, and palaces they built throughout what is now Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Columbia. Although their neighbors, the Aztecs and Mayans, used beans, fabric, and other products for trading, the Incas developed a system of state-sponsored egalitarianism known as the "Mit'a". To keep things simple, and accomplish what needed to be accomplished, Incan males would provide labor for about two thirds of the year starting at the age of fifteen. For their service, the government provided the basics of life, including food, clothing, shelter, tools, healthcare, and whatever else they might need.

While the Incas were living the easy life, across the seas, others were looking to expand their territories, and explorers set out from Europe in search of new worlds. Around 1492, the Incas' neighbors to the north would be the first to meet one of these explorers as Christopher Columbus set out on his misguided expedition, financed by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. He is quoted as saying, "For the execution of the voyage to the Indies, I did not make use of intelligence, mathematics or maps." Although he is often given credit for discovering America, in four voyages, Columbus only made it as far as Jamaica, the Bahamas, Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, where he gathered the natives as slaves and set up work camps to dig for gold.

According to Howard Zinn's account of Columbus' expedition in *A People's History of the United States*, Columbus remarked on the sharing economy practiced by the tribes before he proceeded to enslave them, take their gold, and apparently kill a good number of them. In his journal, Columbus regarded the natives as "so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not

witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone."²²

Columbus would also go on to remark about how, although the slaves were "naked as the day they were born," they showed "no more embarrassment than animals." Zinn goes on to cite Bartolome de las Casas, a young priest who transcribed Columbus' journals, as he became extremely critical of the Spaniards' brutality, in his several volumes on the history of the West Indies. His description of the native people and the esteem in which they held their women, lends a lot of credence to the theory that primitive humans were polyamorous and sexually egalitarian.

"Marriage laws are non-existent," las Casas stated, "men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy or anger. They multiply in great abundance; pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly; up the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirths, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or at his hands."

At the time that the Spaniards started sending explorers to what Columbus mistakenly referred to as the West Indies, the Spanish empire was comprised mostly of peasants who worked for the nobility. According to Zinn, 2% of the population owned 95% of the land, which makes it more understandable as to how the New World they started has now reached a point where 1% of the population owns 70% of the wealth. Because gold had become such a versatile commodity, and since they already owned most of the land in the region, the Spaniards sought to expand on their wealth through the accumulation of more gold.

The natives, Las Casas says, "put no value on gold and other precious things. They lack all manner of commerce, neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively

on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions and by the same token covet the possessions of their friends and expect the same degree of liberality."

Las Casas also reported of occasional battles between native tribes, but their forces were no match for the Spaniards. Given the title "Admiral of the Sea" by Isabella, who reportedly never thought he'd return, Columbus was also given the title of "Viceroy and Governor" over the New World after his first trip, and it would seem that the power went to his head. Although he has been heralded as a hero in textbooks and a national holiday was established to honor his name in 1937, more recent studies have shown Columbus to have had as maniacal a thirst for genocide as Hitler, with over a million natives dying by Spanish sword, brutal working conditions, or other measures of cruelty.

Shortly before signing off on Columbus' first voyage, Ferdinand and Isabella had already instituted the Spanish Inquisition, forcing all resident Jews and Moors to convert to the Roman Catholic religion or leave. Incorporating a variety of cruel tactics from prison and torture to execution, it seems that the Spanish nobility may have set up a template for Columbus, and the rest of the Spanish explorers who would follow in his tracks, on how to treat people who disagreed with them, or those who stood in the way of their economic advances. Thus, natives were viewed as little more than disposable slave labor sitting on a fortune in untouched gold, and often they were only regarded for the price they could fetch as a commodity in the slave market.

Because this new expansion was being headed up by Spain under the guise of the Roman Catholic Church, only Castilians and Catholics were allowed to go to the New World, inspiring a number of non-Castilians to change their names, incorporating a more Latino flair. For instance, Italian banker Alberico Vespuccio changed his name to Amerigo Vespucci to get in on the fun. Vespucci had previously taken over his father's banking business and become the business manager for the Medici family, turning in great profits for the most powerful family in Florence.

Visiting Spain on business with money to spare, Vespucci realized the economic potential of the New World that Columbus had discovered, and wanted in. Not much of a sailor at the time, he partnered up with a captain who had gone on Columbus' second voyage, Alonso de Ojeda, and they set out to seek their own fortune and glory.

Leaving Spain in 1499 for what Columbus had thought were merely islands really far off the coast of Asia, Vespucci sailed on by Columbus' little operation and ran into what would later be called South America, as if to say, "Yo, Chris! You missed something." They managed to find a little bit of gold and some gemstones on their first expedition as Vespucci learned how to sail, and they swung by the Bahamas on their return to Spain to snatch up 200 or so slaves. Vespucci took one more trip to explore the area now known as Brazil, but like Columbus, Vespucci never set foot on North American soil.

Nevertheless, Amerigo was a notoriously good self-promoter, with some of his writings receiving a lot of acclaim. Due to his notoriety, when German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller created the first map of the New World in 1507, a year after Columbus died, he named the entire area "America", based on the feminine form of the Latin *Americus*. Consistent with the accounts of Columbus and Las Casas, Vespucci remarked on the polyamory among the primitive tribes he encountered in a letter to someone he only referred to as "your Magnificence."

"They do not practice matrimony among them," Vespucci wrote, "each man taking as many women as he likes, and when he is tired of a woman he repudiates her without either injury to himself or shame to the woman, for in this matter the woman has the same liberty as the man. They are not very jealous, but lascivious beyond measure, the women much more so than the men. I do not further refer to their contrivances for satisfying their inordinate desires, so that I may not offend against modesty."

Yet he would later go into more detail in a letter to his old friend Lorenzo Pietro di Medici.

"As regards the people," Vespucci writes, "we have

found such a multitude in those countries that no one could enumerate them, as we read in the Apocalypse. They are people gentle and tractable, and all of both sexes go naked, not covering any part of their bodies, just as they came from their mothers' wombs, and so they go until their deaths." He goes on to describe the way that the men decorate themselves with borings and gems before continuing to describe the matriarchal supremacy. "Another custom among them is sufficiently shameful, and beyond all human credibility. Their women, being very libidinous, make the penis of their husbands swell to such a size as to appear deformed; and this is accomplished by a certain artifice, being the bite of some poisonous animal, and by reason of this many lose their virile organ and remain eunuchs... The women, as I have said, go naked, and are very libidinous, yet their bodies are comely; but they are as wild as can be imagined."

Although Vespucci remarked on the egalitarian nature of their tribes, he also described them as largely cannibalistic. "They have no cloth, either of wool, flax, or cotton," Vespucci continues, "because they have no need of it; nor have they any private property, everything being in common. They live amongst themselves without a king or ruler, each man being his own master, and having as many wives as they please. The children cohabit with the mothers, the brothers with the sisters, the male cousins with the female, and each one with the first he meets. They have no temples and no laws, nor are they idolaters. What more can I say! They live according to nature, and are more inclined to be Epicurean than Stoic. They have no commerce among each other, and they wage war without art or order. The old men make the youths do what they please, and incite them to fights, in which they mutually kill with great cruelty. They slaughter those who are captured, and the victors eat the vanquished; for human flesh is an ordinary article of food among them."

Despite their culinary choices, whereby Vespucci said that the natives regularly hung up human meat as Europeans would at a butchery, he stated that the natives

lived to be 150 years old, were rarely sick, and were quite capable of using herbs to cure the occasional disease. Despite their popularity, and the fact that he had two continents named after him, many historians have come to believe that at least some of Vespucci's letters were fakes, and that he may have fabricated many of his accounts. Nevertheless, Vespucci's celebrity status, and the notoriety around the profits to be had in gold and slaves continued to spur on more expeditions to the New World.

In 1519, Hernando Cortés began a two-year reign of terror throughout Mexico, killing many Aztec people in his search for gold. In 1532, his cousin Francisco Pizarro followed his lead to bring an end to the 300 year old Incan empire with only 168 soldiers. In both cases, the conquistadors were mistaken as gods by the natives and welcomed with open arms before they proceeded to mercilessly butcher as many people as possible.

Pizarro went so far as to abduct Atahualpa, the 13th and last emperor of the Incas, and held him for a ransom of gold before executing him by strangulation. That's what Pizarro considered a mercy killing after forcing the emperor to accept Christianity in lieu of being murdered in a more painful way.

As Jarod Diamond pointed out in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Cortes and Pizarro took advantage of every one of Europe's destructive technologies in order to conquer the natives and get their gold.²³ Although many were killed because they were unable to defend themselves against the armored conquistadors as they attacked on horseback with guns and swords, a majority of the Incan and Aztec populations were killed by diseases such as smallpox that the Spaniards introduced to the New World. The disease-laden blankets the Spaniards offered for warmth became the most savage weapon they could have used.

Of course, not all Spaniards were so savage. Ponce de Leon, who may actually be the first European to set foot on North American soil (unless you count Leif Erikson's settlement in Canada 500 years earlier) was noted for his non-violence. Yet, though he was mythically considered to be

in search of the fountain of youth, the impetus behind his exploration of Florida was the same old fortune and glory that each of the other explorers were interested in. Fortune was power, and it came in the form of gold, land, and slaves.

PROTEST AND REFORM

*"The Reformer is always right about what's wrong.
However, he's often wrong about what is right."
- G.K. Chesterton*

At the time, no one was more into fortune and glory than the Roman Catholic Church. One of the guiding principles of the papacy was that God must be worshiped through the accumulation of ornate and shiny things, so every cathedral built seemed to be in a contest to outdo the last in terms of extravagance and grandeur. Pope Leo X's latest pet project, the most enormous building possible in which he could be buried near the likely remains of St. Peter, needed to be funded, so the Pope started thinking a little outside the box on ways to economize his papal powers.

The idea was to sell "indulgences". This would basically allow people to purchase forgiveness for their sins, or at least some sort of remediation from them. The Pope's mistake was sending fundraisers to Germany, because once a friar named Martin Luther got wind of it, he caused a bit of a ruckus. When Luther noticed the attendance dropping in his parishioners, he grew more vocal about how he felt about the papacy selling what only God supposedly had to give.

Of course, indulgences weren't Luther's only problems with the Roman Catholic Church. The overall authority of the Pope, the devotion to Mary, celibacy for clergy, and the reliance upon saints and priests in order for people to commune with God were also issues that he would address when he nailed his *Ninety-five Theses* to the door of

the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In addition, considering the advent of the printing press, Luther wanted more people to have access to the scriptures, which the Church wanted to keep close to their chest.

Although Luther's initial intentions were to create reforms in the Church to make it more user friendly, he was ostracized from Catholicism and somewhat forced into the leadership of Protestantism, creating a schism in the Christian Church. Using the technology of the printing press, Luther's writings were shared much more than the Roman Catholic Church's, who resolved to hold on to their power by keeping parishioners ignorant, and the Protestant movement grew. Luther also printed a German version of the Bible, making the Christian scriptures even more accessible to the average layperson.

Contrary to the Roman Catholic Church's history of developing the most ornate centers of worship, Luther guided the Protestant movement toward more humble gathering places, devoid of the gold and other materialistic trappings he saw in the papacy. Protestant churches would eventually come to re-embrace the grandeur of decorative places of worship, as is evidenced today by the plethora of churches with stained glass and multi-million dollar megachurches with state-of-the-art media systems, but a large part of the initial movement was merely to keep it simple and connect with God where you could.

There was a time when we liked things to be simple.

WE WANT WAMPUM

"No complaint... is more common than that of a scarcity of money."

- Adam Smith

When the settlers in the New World weren't slaughtering natives to assume control of the land and increase economic expansion, they were learning other new ways of expanding their economy. Wampum was one such lesson.

"Modern economists would call wampum a primitive money," says Jason Goodwin in *Greenback: The Almighty Dollar and the Invention of America*, "perhaps they mean it wasn't managed by economists. The colonists also saw it as primitive money, and that meant they could make it work better. They set a wampum exchange rate into shillings and pence, according to the furs it bought, and adopted what they took to be Indian reckoning, by which one black bead was worth six white. From an Indian perspective wampum wasn't primitive money at all: it wasn't exactly money, and it took some skill to produce. Wampum had considerable value in native society, but not for what it could buy or sell. Woven into patterned belts, wampum bore witness to a variety of exchanges. Dutch and English colonists instinctively focused on the number of shells in a belt, but the Indians gave consideration to the patterns, the feel and presence of the belts themselves, as they were given and received in ceremonies to mark treaties, signify valor, or to display the rewards of high status. The patterns formed a kind of mnemonic, suggestive of old agreements and encounters. On

the proper occasions the stories on the tribes' belts were told by the elders. Powerful men took them to the grave. The loss of a wampum belt was a wound to the identity of the tribe."¹⁰⁸

Each bead had its own worth, and over the course of the next few centuries, the clever Europeans devised a number of ways to monetize the beads and trade with them. Although New England ceased using wampum as legal tender in 1661, Stuyvesant still used them to finance the construction of the New York citadel, and a number of states, like North Carolina and Massachusetts, had their turn at using wampum as legal tender.

Wampum fluctuated in both its popularity and legality, but in 1760, the first wampum factory was opened in New Jersey. Prized both as a currency and as ornamental decor, the production of wampum kept the factory open for 100 years, but the increase in production caused inflation, drastically detracting from wampum's value.

Yet whatever means of money the early settlers tried to implement, the King of England wasn't too happy about it.

When settlers left England for the New World in 1620, they were compelled by the desire for religious freedom. Since the King had started the Church of England and scooped up the monastic properties for himself as a way to stop having to pay the Pope, the religion of the Church of England, as it was for the Roman Catholic Church from which it spawned, was obsessed with money. Money was about control, and the King wasn't about to lose control over his constituents abroad, so he forbade them from making their own money, limiting their purchase power to using English bills to buy only English goods.

Nevertheless, the adventuresome lot that had crossed the sea came up with a few ingenuities that would still let them play the money game. Most of them simply bartered, exchanging pelts, food, ammunition, and pretty much anything else they could find. However, Massachusetts was a bit more clever in their approach.

Since British Law dictated that only the King could mint coins, the New Englanders took advantage of King

Charles's beheading and started minting silver coins with the date 1652, a year when there was no King and England had become a republic. Nevertheless, by 1682, England had a new king who put a kibosh on the operation and shut the mint down.

Of course, that didn't stop Massachusetts. In 1690, they started printing paper money, calling them "bills of credit". It wasn't the first time that paper was used as a currency in the New World. Back in 1619, Virginia had realized how well tobacco grew, and due to the popularity of the pleasure-inducing plant, they started using it as a tradeable commodity, incorporating promissory notes to assist in the dealings.

But the notes weren't used nearly as much as the tobacco itself. As folks back in England started to get a taste for the stuff, demand grew, and tobacco became the staple crop upon which multiple laws were based in the development of the New World's governing bodies. Although "big tobacco" is often derided today, tobacco was largely the foundation for America's economic system with England importing roughly 20,000,000 pounds of the stuff annually by the end of the 17th century.

Like wampum, tobacco didn't start out as a commodity. Native Americans revered the plant for its medicinal qualities, using it to help with earaches, toothaches, enemas, and as a treatment for colds. In addition, when smoked in large quantities, the plant had hallucinogenic effects, making its use sacred among the natives, who used it as an entheogen and a portal for greater spiritual connection.

Nevertheless, like wampum, the early settlers saw tobacco's commercial appeal, and expanded upon its use, taking it from sacred plant to staple crop. For the next two hundred years, as tobacco grew in popularity throughout Europe, the settlers used the plant to pay taxes, buy slaves, and purchase just about anything that wasn't nailed down. Although there was a moral contingent that stood against tobacco, and it was at one time illegal to smoke in public in Massachusetts, people throughout the New World were

taking up the habit of using tobacco for money faster than they took to smoking it, and smoking it they were.

A TANGENT ON TOBACCO - A LEGACY OF AMERICAN ECONOMICS

*"No matter what Aristotle and the Philosophers say,
nothing is equal to tobacco; it's the passion of the well-bred,
and he who lives without tobacco lives a life not worth living."*

- Moliere

In addition to the slaves and gold, Columbus also brought something else back to Europe that may have had a greater economic effect than either of the other two commodities. Legend has it that when he first arrived on the beach, the natives gave him food and tobacco leaves as a gift. The Spaniards ate the food, but eventually threw the tobacco overboard, not knowing the purpose of the strange smelling leaves. Yet what he considered disposable, the natives considered quite useful, both as a medicine and an entheogen.

Amerigo Vespucci wrote about witnessing the practice of chewing tobacco, which natives did to alleviate toothaches because of the numbing sensation it provided. Yet there was also the numbing sensation of the mind, and the stimulative properties that accompanied its use. Due to its many uses, the natives considered tobacco to be one of the four Sacred Medicines, the others being sweetgrass, cedar, and sage.

Nicotine increases the frequency of the brain's beta waves to gamma waves, thereby mimicking an ecstasy state, much like other drugs with which America is currently at war. Due to its psychoactive qualities, native Americans

would use tobacco in rituals, including it as one of the key ingredients in their peace pipes as they would negotiate treaties and oaths, bond with one another, and send their prayers to the spirit world as they were absorbed through the smoke.

On Columbus' second expedition, he was accompanied by a monk named Ramon Pane, who wrote about the natives using tobacco as a snuff and smoking it through a pipe in his report "De Insularium Ribitus," and he is credited with introducing tobacco to Europe. Yet although Pane got credit for it, he wasn't the first Spaniard to engage with it. On the first expedition, Columbus had sent Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres out as scouts, and as they came upon tribes, Jerez reportedly became the first European smoker, although it was probably not the first case of peer pressure gone wrong. When Torres brought the plant back to Spain and smoked in public, the plumage of smoke from his nostrils as he puffed on his daily cigar really freaked everybody out, and when you're smack dab in the middle of the Spanish Inquisition, that's really not a wise thing to do.

Accounts vary on whether Jerez was jailed for three years or seven for his "sinful" behavior, but it's a sobering thought to consider how little things have changed in the realm of imprisoning people based on morality. Nevertheless, by the time Jerez was released, tobacco was legal and all the rage. From the Spanish colonies to all across Europe, use of tobacco spread like wildfire.

It reached France in 1556, but when Jean Nicot de Villemain, France's ambassador to Portugal, sent some to Catherine de Medici as a treatment for her migraines ten years later, it was all over. Nicotine had taken hold of Europe, and from smoking to snuffing, civilization had found a new favorite pastime. Dozens of publications were released extolling the health benefits of tobacco, including Nicolas Monardes' report on the thirty-six health problems that tobacco could cure in 1571 and Anthony Chute's 1595 treatise "Tobacco" where he claimed that doctors were suppressing information about tobacco in the fear that it would put them out of business (an argument that many

purport about cannabis and other natural remedies to this day). Yet, despite all of the hoopla, some were also noticing some of the adverse effects of tobacco as well.

As tobacco was becoming increasingly popular in the Spanish colonies, writer Gonzalo Fernandez de Oveido y Valdez, who was chronicling the colonization, remarked on the way that it caused the men to act as if they were drunk, and Bartolome de las Casas wrote about how hard it was for the men to stop using it, and how dependent they found themselves becoming. Even Francis Bacon, although he wrote of how tobacco comforted his spirit, also wrote of how difficult it was to stop smoking. Literature began to arise warning of the dangers of tobacco, like *A Warning for Tobacconists*, which compared the lungs of tobacco users to those of chimney sweeps, but tobacco had already found its market, and the creature comfort had taken hold.

Tobacco was most likely introduced to England by John Hawkins, who is considered the pioneer of the English slave trade, after an expedition to Florida in 1565. When Sir Walter Raleigh introduced it to Queen Elizabeth, she realized its potential and taxed it accordingly, though her successor wasn't too happy about it.

King James I was notoriously adverse to the notion of tobacco, writing *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* in 1604, where he referred to smoking as "a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black, stinking fume thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless." In order to curb its use, King James imposed a 4,000% tax increase on tobacco. Unfortunately, although people did stop buying it at such ridiculous prices, the treasury took a big hit, and James was forced to drop the tax, recognizing a quick boom in the economy. It was this boom that would make the English colonization of the New World a reality.

In 1607, England only had one colony in the New World. Seeing how much money Spain was making off of their monopoly on the tobacco coming from the colonies, John Rolfe set out for Jamestown with some seeds that he

thought might just help England give Spain a run for their money. After getting shipwrecked in Bermuda due to a hurricane, Rolfe finally made it to Jamestown in 1610 to find only sixty survivors, with nearly 90% of the population having died in what was called the “Starving Time” of winter. The Jamestown colonists had endured outbreaks of malaria, hostility with the local natives, and a harsh winter that erupted in a lack of food, bringing several to the point of cannibalism, digging up and eating the dead.

When Rolfe arrived with his 142 men on the ships they'd built from the wreckage of the hurricane they had endured, they realized that they were only bringing extra mouths to feed to a community that couldn't even feed themselves. They gathered up the survivors and started to head home when they were intercepted by another supply ship, giving Jamestown one last go. Rolfe got to work on planting a sweeter strain of tobacco than the harsher flavored stuff that had been coming out of the region, pretty sure that, due to its flavor and increased nicotine buzz, it would find a market.

It is estimated that London had over 7,000 tobacco shops by 1614, when Rolfe sent his first shipment of tobacco back to England. Rolfe was correct in his assumptions, and Jamestown had found its salvation in tobacco. Although King James despised its use, he saw the demand, realized the ability to make money, and offered up a royal monopoly on tobacco to the highest bidder.

It should also be noted that it was during this time that the legend of Pocahontas arose. There are a variety of accounts as to how Powhatan's daughter came to marry John Rolfe, including a love triangle including John Smith, her real name being Matoaka, her kidnapping and conversion to Christianity, her changing her name to Rebecca, and becoming a spokesperson for investment in Jamestown after moving to England with her new consort. But since the story has grown so muddled with folklore and faerie tales, let's just stick to the fact that tobacco was big business for England's first colony, one that would invigorate the entire region.

Tobacco sprouted up throughout Virginia, and became so influential that when the Virginia Colony's General Assembly first met to establish a sort of self-governed representative legislation, the first law to pass was regarding the economics of the tobacco trade. Often called "country money", tobacco was established as currency throughout Virginia, a role it would continue to play for the next 200 years. It was even used as payment for the wives that were shipped to the New World, with settlers paying 120 pounds of tobacco to have a mail order bride shipped over.

By 1639, tobacco was the chief export of the American colonies, and Jamestown was shipping out 3,000,000 tons a year. Unfortunately, they soon discovered that monoculture wore out the soil every few years and they had to continue expanding their grow operations. Soon, the entire area was known as the "Tobacco Coast".

Nevertheless, not everyone was so enthusiastic about this new plant and the rage that it caused. In 1603, it was banned in Japan. In 1612, its growth and use were banned in China, followed by Russia the following year. In Mongolia, the Emperor decreed that using tobacco was deserving of the death penalty, and by 1624, the Pope decreed that snuff users should be excommunicated from the Church since the sneezing that it caused was so similar to an orgasm.

Even in the New World, tobacco had its adversaries. In 1639, smoking was banned in New Amsterdam. In 1647, public smoking was banned in Connecticut, and private smoking was limited to once a day. Yet, regardless of whatever sanctions were put upon it or how severe the penalty for being caught using it, from decapitation to excommunication, those who used "the enchanted herb" once seemed to be unable to help wanting more of it, and tobacco quickly became the most vibrant economic engine in the New World, the penultimate cash crop.

In 1847, Phillip Morris started selling hand-rolled cigarettes in England, and purchasing from the girls who rolled them became quite popular. However in 1880, a twenty-one-year-old Virginian named James Bonsack invented a cigarette rolling machine that could operate at

thirteen times the speed of a cigarette girl, spitting out 120,000 cigarettes in ten hours. Although demand was high, it wasn't *that* high, and most of the larger cigarette manufacturers passed on the machine. But a guy named James Buchanan "Buck" Duke had just inherited his dad's tobacco company with his brother, saw some potential in the machine, and acquired the license for it.

Over the next few years, Duke invested largely in advertising, creating a market for the surplus of cigarettes he was producing. Although cigars, pipes, and chewing tobacco were more popular, because of Duke's innovations in marketing, like advertising them in magazines, giving them away at events, and pointing out how much more convenient and sanitary they were than other forms of tobacco, cigarette use quadrupled. By 1890, Duke had 40% of the market and created the American Tobacco Company, urging his primary competitors to join with him, instantly absorbing 90% of the American tobacco market and establishing one of the first true American monopolies. When the monopoly was finally dismantled by the Supreme Court in 1911, five companies emerged, just like the legendary hydra.

By the early 1900's, four out of five American men smoked at least one cigar a day and 3.5 billion cigarettes were sold every year, helping tobacco to create 58 million dollars in federal tax revenue by 1910. Around this time, Phillip Morris set up shop in New York to give the American Tobacco Company some unhealthy competition, releasing a number of new brands, including a cigarette targeted toward women, originally named Marlborough. Over the next several years, the war between tobacconists was a war of brands, as each company followed Duke's lead, making their advertising campaigns just as important as the product itself.

Despite the competition in the market, tobacco's most fierce competitor has been the almost constant anti-tobacco contingent. Although it was largely rallied against for moral reasons moreso than health reasons (especially given the phallic nature of cigarettes, cigars, and pipes), the health nuts have consistently raged on, regardless of how much they are ignored. When German scientists first made

the link between lung cancer and cigarettes in 1939, even the Nazis were incapable of silencing the siren call of nicotine.

After becoming a two-pack-a-day-smoker in his twenties, Adolf Hitler was not too big a fan of the paper tobacco tubes, calling them “the wrath of the Red Man against the White Man, vengeance for having been given hard liquor.” Just as he pushed a vendetta on the Jewish people, which some of his ancestors were, it seems that Hitler’s self-loathing for becoming a tobacco addict compelled him to ban smoking in the Nazi offices, trains, and bunkers. Hitler also launched the first public anti-tobacco campaign, educating Germans on the health risks, and blaming the entire predicament on Blacks, Hispanics, Gypsies, and Jews. Yet despite the movement, including the restrictions on advertising, people still wanted their smokes, and tobacco use continued to rise throughout the Third Reich and beyond.

No marketing campaign was quite as effective at getting people to smoke as Marlboro. Trying to make smoking more acceptable for women, especially in America, the “-ugh” was dropped from the spelling, and the additional filter was marked by a red band to help hide lipstick marks throughout the Roaring Twenties. However, in the 1950’s when a number of reports began linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer, Marlboro took a decidedly different turn.

Not wanting to give up the ability to make money just because people were scared of a little lung cancer, Phillip Morris decided to appeal to the men who were feeling wary about continuing to smoke in light of these potential hazards. Because filtered cigarettes had been associated with women in order to get them smoking in the first place, Marlboro was rebranded as a man’s cigarette, with a marketing campaign that featured the re-designed, filtered cigarette between the lips of a rugged cowboy who would soon come to be known as the Marlboro Man. Within a year, Marlboro became the fourth most popular brand of cigarette, and it would go on to become arguably the most popular brand in the world.

Although Phillip Morris seemed to have effectively

dodged the bullet, the rest of the tobacco industry was facing mounting allegations as their products were linked to lung cancer and smokers began to file lawsuits. In 1953, the American Tobacco Company called together the CEOs of the other leading tobacco manufacturers, and they set up the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC). It seems that the organization primarily served as a public relations company that paid ethically-challenged professionals to proclaim that unless every single case of lung cancer in the history of human civilization could be incontrovertibly linked to tobacco smoke as a definite cause, then there was no proof whatsoever that tobacco actually caused lung cancer. The aversion techniques worked for over thirty years until 1998, when each of the fifty states sued the four largest tobacco companies for giving cancer to their citizens. The ensuing Master Settlement Agreement finally brought TIRC, by then called the Council for Tobacco Research, to an end.

When TIRC began, almost half of the American population smoked. In spite of, or due to, tobacco's connection to lung cancer, by the 1970s, cigarettes were the most heavily advertised product in America. And although only 17.8% of the population smokes now,²⁴ and although cigarettes are banned from advertising on television or radio, the tobacco industry still spends almost 10 billion dollars a year, or 1 million dollars an hour, in advertising in order to create 35 billion dollars in annual profits for the country's top six tobacco companies.²⁵

Since its introduction to the "civilized" world over 500 years ago, it is estimated that tobacco use has been the direct cause of one billion deaths worldwide. Yet due to its salient ability to truly harness a market, and perhaps because it truly was the foundation of the American economy and the genesis for its birth, the tobacco industry is continually coddled by the federal government and promoted as one of the most highly profitable products in the world. Indeed, when the state is making billions of dollars in taxes every year, it is understandable that the entity spends less than half a billion dollars on smoking prevention or cessation programs.

The story of tobacco is a microcosm of the human infatuation with money. They are both stories of addiction to a substance that provides a surge of power, and though it may ultimately impart negative consequences, its ability to provide a creature comfort in the here and now often triumphs over the possible ramifications that may or may not manifest in the future. Beyond all reason and common sense, for those who are addicted to tobacco, there is no sacrifice too great for the ability to drink the smoke, and for those who are addicted to money, nothing is more important than playing and winning the game.

BRING ON UTOPIA

*"Human beings will be happier - not when they cure cancer or get to Mars
or eliminate racial prejudice or flush Lake Erie
but when they find ways to inhabit primitive communities again.
That's my utopia."
- Kurt Vonnegut*

As Europeans were making their way to the New World, planting tobacco and planting the seeds for the world we know now, seeds of thought were also being planted in Europe. In opposition to the King of England's separation from the Roman Catholic Church, Thomas More, inspired by the stories of the New World travelers, wrote a book in Latin about a fictional island discovered there where people were developing an alternative society called *Utopia*. Although many of the ideas offered up in the book, which actually had a much longer Latin title, were out of alignment with More's traditional Catholic beliefs, such as divorce, married priests, and such, those ideas were largely overshadowed by the differences from the mainstream economic ideologies of the time.

First printed in 1516, *Utopia* described a world in which there was no private property and everything was shared, a far cry from the fervor of materialism that had been building throughout the Renaissance. Sharing the agricultural duties, rotating homes once a decade, no locks on the door, and six hour work days were just a few of the ideas that started to paint a really rosy future for a world yet

to come. More's basic gist was that a communal life based on reason was the only way to improve upon the selfishness, greed, and corruption that made the European aristocracy so inefficient.

More became the head Chancellor of Parliament and one of Henry VIII most trusted advisers. However, things between them became rather stilted when More couldn't support the King's desire for an annulment from his first wife to marry another, and the King had him "mercifully" beheaded. *Utopia* wasn't published in More's home country until five years after his death, but its popularity forever changed the human vernacular and inspired a slough of fiction based on a utopian view of the future where everything works out all right, and dystopian versions where things go all kinds of wrong.

As it was read throughout Europe and into the New World, *Utopia* offered a reflection of the future where humankind was egalitarian and free of war. In addition to inspiring an entire genre of fiction based on the future outcome of civilization, *Utopia* was also largely cited as an inspiration for the movements of communism and socialism that would sprout up a few centuries after its publication. However, it may have been King Henry himself who set the stage for the government's role in the redistribution of wealth and the socialist state.

REFORMED INTO OBSOLESCENCE

*"I think if the church did what they were supposed to do
we wouldn't have anyone sleeping on the streets."*

~ Michael W. Smith

After killing the head chancellor of Parliament for not signing off on the annulment of his marriage so he could marry another, King Henry appointed himself as divine and decided upon the first set of guidelines for the Church of England as it separated from the Roman Catholic Church. Despite his thirst for blood, Henry was trying to establish a religion not that far removed from the Roman Catholic Church, but one that would funnel money into his accounts instead of Rome's. To reach this end, much of the doctrine was quite similar to Catholicism. Still drawing largely from the beliefs established by the papacy, other than the "divine right of kings", the Ten Articles Henry wrote for his version of Christianity included the binding authority of the Bible and creeds, the necessity of baptism, the sacrament of penance, the belief that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are literally Christ's body and blood, the trifecta of faith-charity-obedience, permissible branding and the use of images, honoring the saints and Mary, the invocation of saints, the observance of rites and rituals, and the doctrine of purgatory.

Penalties for not believing in the articles had a variety of punishments, ranging from fines and imprisonment to death. In the ensuing years, the King would lighten up a bit in the severity, but he was a real stickler for

transubstantiation, and pushed the idea that bread and wine were really flesh and blood. Of course, considering how frequently the man liked to execute people, it makes sense that his religion would reflect it through inadvertent cannibalism.

In *The Institution of the Christian Man*, Henry expanded on the Ten Articles through the Apostles' Creed, the Seven Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and more exposition on the boundaries of God and why He needed to punish people. He also commissioned a translation from the German editions of the Bible instead of the original texts, which probably allowed for some smoothing around the edges of particulars. Although the King produced his own Bible, he didn't want anyone but men and women of nobility to read it, reasoning that common folk would just misinterpret it anyway.

As the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was challenged by the inception of the Church of England and the Protestant Reformation, in 1545, the Pope finally called together the Council of Trent, a group that would meet twenty-five times over the next couple of decades to finally solidify what Catholics should actually believe and how they should do things. Unfortunately, although they were incredibly thorough in brainstorming ways in which they could facilitate dominion over other people's private parts and beat them into submission, either literally or by threat of eternal damnation, Henry and his new Church never took the time to address the actual tenets of Jesus' commission to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and care for the sick and imprisoned.

Although the Roman Catholic Church had been managing to keep the poor managed, they didn't necessarily implement many strategies for sustainably carrying out the practices of providing shelter, food, and company either. The Roman Catholic Church at large was more concerned with ornate architecture and gold-trimmed everything, but they did at least offer a bit of help. However, when they stopped doing it, their absence was certainly noticed.

When the King of England dissolved the Roman

Catholic monasteries and established the Church of England, he also unwittingly dissolved the means to care for the poor. Regardless of how lavishly the Roman Catholic clergy had decorated their lives, they had still provided care for those who could not adequately maneuver the game of money, and without them, England saw a rise in the destitute and downtrodden. With the Church no longer fulfilling this function by the time she took the throne, Queen Elizabeth eventually implemented the Poor Law in 1601 to enable the government to take up the slack.

Based upon the Judeo/Christian belief system of the time, poverty was seen as a moral fault, and since the Church - Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans (the new Church of England) alike - were no longer in the business of helping the poor, the duty fell upon government. This ideology spread to the New World, and it became part of the underpinnings of how our society and its government would deal with the poor and poverty-stricken as morally reprehensible.

BLOODSHED AND WITCHCRAFT - A LEGACY OF FAITH

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

- Exodus 22:18, King James Version

Unfortunately, Elizabeth's predecessor was not nearly as compassionate. As the eldest daughter of Henry VIII, Mary had adopted her father's taste for blood. Yet she had a greater affinity for the Catholic faith than her father, and a disdain for the Protestantism embraced by his successor, her half-brother Edward, whose ungranted dying wish was to see Mary removed from the royal lineage. The throne was instead bequeathed to his fifteen-year-old cousin Jane, who ruled for nine days before being imprisoned in the Tower of London, and executed the next year by her successor, Bloody Mary.

Mary is considered to be the first queen regnant, meaning that she was the first queen to rule by lineage instead of marriage. She patched things up with the Pope, and although she had promised that she would not force her subjects to follow her religion, the Pope's enactment of the Heresy Act set her on the course to execute 283 Protestants for following their own religion instead of hers. The Heresy Act was a collusion of various acts passed by former monarchs and since repealed by Henry VIII.

The Heresy Act cited the reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, and Henry V, concerning the suppression of heresy and the punishment of heretics. Many of the Protestants thought it best to avoid being burned at the stake or beheaded and went into exile. For those who were actually seeking "a closer walk with Thee" beyond the burgeoning complications of the

Holy See, or the persecution inflicted by the Queen, the Protestants still held to the acceptance of the scriptures, but they wanted their own interpretation. As the Catholic Bible had been translated from the Latin, the Reformers wanted to go back to the original text, and over the course of two years in Geneva, they produced the first Bible translated into English from the original Hebrew and Greek.

But there was also a caveat. The Geneva Bible included commentary that further guided the Protestant faith, refuting many of the Catholic doctrines and setting a new course toward a more puritanical version of Christianity. The Geneva version of the Bible became so popular that Scotland passed a law requiring every family to have one.

Although Elizabeth managed to diplomatically restore the Church of England to honor both Catholicism and Protestantism, when her cousin James, King of Scotland took the reign upon her death, he just had to shake things up a little bit more. Not a big fan of the annotations and opinions of the Geneva Bible, one of his first orders of business was to establish a unified translation of the canonical books of the Bible to better accentuate the newly established Anglican faith. Basically, he wanted his own Bible.

Despite being a rather revered king, James had a rough start as a child. His father was murdered, and his mother fled after marrying one of the primary suspects. With no siblings, parents, or grandparents, James was raised by guardians and suffered through a case of rickets in his youth that almost left him unable to walk.

It is suspected that James started experimenting with homosexuality when he was thirteen years old. Although he eventually married Anne of Denmark for political reasons and fathered eight of her children, he didn't attend his own wedding, and was known to entertain male courtesans throughout his life. Due to the fact that male/male sexual relationships were condemned by his religion, it may have been James' self-loathing that guided him on his witch hunts.

Witch hunts had grown increasingly popular in Denmark and Norway, and after harsh storms forced him to go retrieve his new bride as she was waylaid on her way to Scotland, the superstitious James convinced himself that evil was afoot and that witches were trying to keep him and his new bride apart. James oversaw the first witch trials in Scotland, convicting and executing over a hundred citizens suspected of witchcraft.

He went on to write *Daemonologie*, a booklet condemning the practice of witchcraft, and had it immediately republished when he ascended as the King of England in 1603, before he ordered the translation of his own Bible. *Daemonologie* was written as a dialogue between a skeptic named Philomathes and a guy named Epistemon, who goes to great lengths to describe all of the terrible things that witches do and why they should be put to death. In the second “argument” he presents as a rationale for witch hunts, he states that only the “elect” have a restored relationship with God after man’s fall from grace, and the rest get great pleasure out of irreverence for the God from Whom they’ve been separated.

Started in 1604, the King James Version of the Bible was touted as another direct translation from the Hebrew Old Testament, as well as the Greek New Testament and Apocrypha, by six committees of forty-seven scholars of various backgrounds over the next seven years. However, many believe it was actually largely translated directly from the Great Bible, which itself, had been translated from German. And although many were heading to the New World to get out from under the complexity and invasiveness of the Church, this newly printed edition of the “Good Book” still took hold as a guiding light for those making the journey. The Geneva Bible was largely the book of choice for those traveling to the New World, and it is thought that the first King James Version didn’t reach American soil until 1620. Without the roughly 300,000 words of annotation, the King James Version was a might bit slimmer than the Geneva Bible and soon came to overtake it in popularity.

Considering James’ influence on the society in which

we live, as the man who published the most widely read version of the all time best-selling book, and empowered the foundation of the America we know with Jamestown, it seems as if the internal conflicts that he faced have reverberated throughout the generations of people affected by his leadership. This is not an attack on his character, but a pragmatic look at the lonely little boy, whose mother's perceived involvement in his father's death left him without any family to speak of, which may have led to an unhealthy perspective on women, and some really serious daddy issues. While these issues may have guided him to have romantic feelings toward men and resentful relationships toward women, his childhood was spent battling disease and poring over scripture before assuming the Scottish throne at the tender age of seventeen.

As the first man to call himself "King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland" and to design the combination of the crosses of Saint George and Saint Andrew to develop the Union Jack, which still serves as the flag of the United Kingdom, James' political legacy was pivotal to the development of the world we know. Yet the often unspoken legacy of persecuting and executing those who believed differently, ranging from witches to Protestants, his obsession with superstition, the internal conflict between carnal desires and religious dogma, and his investment in tobacco despite his hatred for it, seem to have also set standards for many of the problems we face today.

Perhaps if we look honestly at the roots from which we have grown, we can forgive the sins of the past and move forward into a future of greater understanding. Throughout the back and forth game of religious adherence that seemed to change from noble to noble, and the severe punishments which came from not following the latest religious trends, many were seeing a trip to the New World as the only viable escape from the tyranny which accompanied guidance offered by the Church. Yet for those who were chased into that exile, the psychological damage was already done, and the spirit of judgment inflicted upon them would serve as a shadowy foundation in the New World they were developing.

THEY'RE COMING TO AMERICA

*"Remember, remember always, that all of us,
and you and I especially,
are descended from immigrants and revolutionists."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt*

As King James argued for his divine right as king, ignoring Parliament and continuing his persecution of witches, Baptists, Puritans, and Quakers, many were seeking a way out from under the tyranny. In addition, an overcrowded England was encouraging people to establish colonies in the New World, a venture that offered all new opportunities for those willing to invest their lives in the growing economic adventure of wealth creation. Already, early explorers were developing inordinate amounts of wealth from growing sugar on the Caribbean islands, and as tobacco started to sprout in Jamestown and the surrounding areas, the move to the New World was made all the more tempting.

On September 16, 1620, 102 people set sail on the *Mayflower*. The journey was partly funded by a group called the London Adventurers, with an agreement that the entrepreneurs would receive a share of the profits from the venture. The Virginia Company provided funding for the thirty or so Separatists seeking religious freedom. The plan was to settle just north of Jamestown as a part of the Virginia Charter, but they were thrown off course and first landed on what is now Cape Cod. When they ultimately decided to start building on the shores of Plymouth Harbor,

they reasoned that the Virginia Charter didn't cover Massachusetts and decided to write what is often considered the first American constitution. The Plymouth Charter offered the colonists the opportunity to practice self rule, the first experiment with democracy in the New World.

The idea that England's wealthy class could financially benefit by paying people to emigrate to the New World, and set up businesses on the land they assumed control over, led toward the investment in one of the world's first major advertising campaigns, the advertising of America. As the poor who could find little work on the overpopulated island were promised new lives and opportunities to become wealthy, three and a half million people emigrated from England to the New World over the next two centuries. Some of the immigrants were entrepreneurs, and some were indentured servants who would be required to pay off their passage through manual labor, a practice that would become unfortunately intertwined with the growing slave trade. Although many found success through the benevolence of their investors, many were treated inhumanely and fled from their debt-holders.

The rate of runaway servants became so common that when the *Boston News Letter* became the first regularly published American newspaper in 1704, they offered the opportunity for advertising for "all Persons who have any Houses, Lands, Tenements, Farmes, Vessels, Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, & cc. To be sold or Lett, or Servants Run away." The disrespectful relegation of humans beings as nothing more than capital was evident in ads like Samuel Linton's in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1784:

The twenty-fifth of this September,
I would have you well remember,
My 'prentice boy he ran away,
Was sixteen years of age last May;
His name James Clift, his visage light,
And likes to ramble in the night,
Above five feet six inches high,

And very apt to swear and lie,
The smaller pox has left its trace,
And may be seen upon his face.
Next, I'll describe the clothes he wore,
And others that away he bore.
The coat was brown, his jacket blue,
The hat he wore was almost new.²⁷

This sense of entitlement that the wealthy held over the poor was nothing new to the New World, nor was it necessarily anything remarkable, as people had been assuming power over others for millennia. Yet the stance of elitism, from the beginning, was ingrained into the developing culture through a myriad of influences. From the slave traders that first arrived upon these shores and the landowners with indentured servants to the Pilgrims' religious idea of predestination (that they were all among the elite chosen by God), there was an inordinate amount of ego-boosting going on during the setting of America's foundation. It may very well be why pride is seemingly held as one of the highest virtues in America today.

Unfortunately, blending this entitlement with the most extraordinary emigration movement in the history of our species served to develop a new way of community development which ultimately built on the sense of separation. Before humans started monetizing land, and even as we did and came to live on the Commons together, villages were developed with families in mind so that people always lived around people that they knew and loved intrinsically. First in the new world of monetized civilization, and even more so in the New World of America, people were no longer living among family, but among strangers.

Real estate had long been sold to those who wished for the elitism of nobility. For a while, the State respected the land known as the Commons, where people could still live together in harmony. Eventually, that land was taken over by those who considered themselves noble, and humanity fully adopted the ideology that if you're going to live somewhere on this planet, you've got to pay somebody for it.

Due to our proclivity to give such high regard to this thing called “real estate”, we adopted what Laurence Brandt calls “the little king myth”. The ownership of property came to fruition based upon this “divine right of kings” even before Henry started to argue for it, developing land into a commodity owned by the nobility, those who assumed priority over the rest of humanity. As we have perpetuated it, although it has offered many of us the security we long for since we started to hold accounts against each other, it has also been very instrumental in our own enslavement.

As Boldt states in his book *Zen and the Art of Making a Living*, “The great fallacy of the little king myth is its suggestion that the individual ego is a thing apart - apart from nature, from the spirit of life, from his fellows, and even from his own psyche. To conceive of ourselves as separate is to create an artificial boundary between 'me' (the ego) and 'them' (everything and everyone else). Our separate kingdoms become our prisons. We can't lock 'them' out without locking ourselves in. Individual alienation and social and environmental conflict must result from this separative consciousness.”²⁸

Even the regular king myth has its fallibilities. As James' son, Charles I, attempted to use his divine right of kingship to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament, many of the people of England stood against the noble's perceived right, resulting in The English Civil War. Started in 1642, the war resulted in the execution of King Charles I for high treason, and although his nineteen year old son, Charles II, was ready to take the throne, Parliament declared England to be a Commonwealth, dispatching the monarchy for the next eleven years.

Charles II would eventually become king, after living in exile for the decade, but the damage had already been done. Although the “little king myth” had already been carried to the New World as settlers sought to establish their miniature kingdoms, the idea of the republic, a rule beyond mere monarchy had also been planted as a seed. And as the English monarchy set out to reestablish its rule, the unrivaled authority of the king would fall short again.

In the meantime, the monarchy had some stuff to take care of. One of the most important matters was that of the military. France had recently defeated them at the Battle of Beachy Head in the Nine Years War, and it was agreed that England needed a better navy. To pay for it, England created a privately owned bank, allowing them to procure the funds that would make them the strongest military might for the next two centuries.

Unfortunately for them, it wasn't mighty enough.

As settlers were establishing a livelihood in the New World among the new strangers that had become their neighbors, they wanted more ways to trade. However, despite numerous requests, including a personal visit to London by Benjamin Franklin, Parliament forbade the colonies from printing paper currency to assist in building a stronger economy. The thinking was that England would lose control of the revenue and not see the profits they had hoped for, but by holding so tightly, they eventually lost hold altogether.

By 1775, the colonists had had enough of England's imposed limitations and taxes, and the new republic was born.

THE REVOLUTION OF INDUSTRY

*"We are being made aware that the organization of society
on the principle of private profit, as well as public destruction,
is leading both to the deformation of humanity
by unregulated industrialism,
and to the exhaustion of natural resources,
and that a good deal of our material progress is a progress for which
succeeding generations may have to pay dearly."
- T.S. Eliot*

Although England's naval powers weren't enough to defeat the spirit of independence that was surging through the hearts of the colonists, it was enough to get a leg up over the rest of Europe. Now strong enough to defeat France, England was able to trade more freely and had great access to raw materials. With these new materials came new innovations.

In the early 1700s, much of the English population worked from home. Many worked in agriculture, tilling the soil and tending the crops on feudal lands in order to produce enough food for the entirety of the community. Many others worked as craftsmen and artisans, producing textiles, tools, and other products right from the comfort of their own homes. Toward the middle of the century, as entrepreneurs increased their capital by acquiring raw materials, they began to invest in means of faster production, kickstarting what would come to be called the

Industrial Revolution.

For those who were growing food in England, the changes started as the landowners called for more diverse growing capabilities and more fences. Often, this forced workers to be uprooted from their homes to make room for more crops or move to the growing urban centers. For those who continued to work the fields, although they already faced chronic hunger and malnutrition at a time when the average lifespan was less than forty years, their energies were diverted into growing cash crops.

For those who were operating cottage industries, investors saw that the practice of delivering raw materials and picking up finished pieces was largely inefficient and didn't produce enough quality products. As inventors produced machines to replace the work of people, many of the cottage workers went to work operating the machines in the factories. As nobles started expanding their agricultural lands onto the Commons, those who were displaced found refuge in the growing cities to work in the factories.

Whether or not the Industrial Revolution was a blessing or a curse is a matter of perspective, and the best fruits wouldn't be seen for another century. Industrialization did produce a new middle class, developing a number of jobs for lawyers, accountants, and other pencil pushers, and it did provide jobs for the poor. Unfortunately, the jobs that were provided for the poor didn't do much to keep them from being poor. In the developing cities, shanty towns were rampant as factory workers often shared dirt floor lean-tos, and families slept on beds of straw as they eked out a living by working long days every day.

Because the growth in agriculture had led to a population boom, with the population doubling in each of the next two consecutive centuries, child labor was used heavily as the factories worked hard to make up the investments that created them. Some accounts state that as much as two thirds of the labor force in the water-powered cotton mills were children. Factory owners could pay children less than adults and could work them very long hours.

It was common practice in both the coal mines and the textile factories to treat workers, especially children, abusively. In addition to the hazards of the working machines, to which a number of children lost limbs and lives, and the dangers of the chemicals that their still-growing bodies channeled into abscesses and other anomalies, children working in factories were regularly beaten as their productivity was compromised by fatigue. Some of those in the upper and middle classes who caught wind of these practices spoke out against them. The factory owners would defend themselves by highlighting the benevolent services they offered by allowing children to work for food so that their families wouldn't starve.

It wasn't until the 1830's that the Factory Acts permitted children over the age of nine to work no more than twelve hours a day, six days a week. Considering that children as young as four were working fourteen hour days, it was a marked improvement. Nevertheless, although the upper class saw immediate benefits from industrialization, and the middle class saw eventual benefits, for the poor, the movement forced people out of their homes, away from their families, and into situations that mandated that they work incredibly long hours merely to survive.

However, not all of the craftspeople acquiesced to go work in the factories. The Luddites, as they came to be called, loved to perform their crafts of building, weaving, printing, and many other artisanal trades that were threatened by the mass production and unskilled labor that industrialism had birthed. Banding together to ensure their survival, what started as protest became property damage as the Luddites destroyed factory equipment, erupting into an all out battle before industrial sabotage became a capital crime.

Although the uprising was eventually squelched, it may very well be that the awareness of the Luddite movement started the notion of unionization, sparking a realization for the middle class artisans that could still afford to remain entrepreneurial. Throughout each technological advance since, there have been those who have been wary of

the growth in technology as mechanization takes us further and further from actual participation in life. While that independent spirit of humanity is sure to remain and balance out our tendency to get overwhelmed by technological excitement and systemic development, it has yet to slow the speeding train of industrialization.

The early stages of industrialism weren't easy, as capitalism was already showing signs of weakness. The leaders of the South Sea Company had a monopoly on trade and wanted more stock in the government, which would assumedly give them much more political leverage, so they started letting those who owned government bonds trade them for stock in the South Sea Company for a really reasonable rate. Unfortunately, it was a bit too reasonable to be reasonable, and the scheme resulted in the world's first stock market crash.

A bit unhinged by the crash, as well as the near simultaneous crash in France, but also wanting to support the now "too-big-to-fail" South Sea Company, Parliament passed the Bubble Act in 1720, instituting a 105 year moratorium on the development of any more corporations. Whether or not the use of corporations in the early days of the Industrial Revolution would have made things run more smoothly or astoundingly more complicated can only be speculated upon. Nevertheless, after such an abject failure to deliver the abundance it promised, Parliament was probably right to be a little spooked by the frailty and fallibility of the corporate entity. Some would argue that it slowed progress, but considering how adept America would become at industrialization, it is safe to say that we've made up for lost time.

America got its first horse-powered cotton mill in 1787, which was a major boon for the fledgling country. But if England was adverse to fully empower the colonists while they were still under British control, they were loathe to help them so soon after their revolution and Declaration of Independence. So when Samuel Slater took all that he had learned from years of being an apprentice in the British textile industry, immigrated to America, and started the first

water-powered cotton mill in the country, England was not too happy about it. Although Slater would come to be known as the “Father of the American Factory System”, defying the laws against the immigration of skilled tradesmen and industry secrets, across the pond in England, he was known as a traitor.

Again, pragmatically considering that the roots of American industry were based in such a claim of compromised integrity, we should find no surprise in the fact that the larger corporations which have grown from the movement are so quick to take what they have gleaned and run off to other countries to expand their riches. Nevertheless, it took quite a few years for corporations to take hold in America as the colonists overcame the economic limitations of mercantilism beset upon them by England. At the dawn of American independence, there were only seven chartered corporations, and the first major industrial corporation, the Boston Manufacturing Company, wouldn’t emerge for another thirty-seven years.

However, when Americans eventually started realizing the potential of corporations, they would master the craft of creating them, and eventually, give them the same rights as humans.

THE WEALTH OF A NATION

*"Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men
will do the most wickedest of things
for the greatest good of everyone."
- John Maynard Keynes*

Just as the New World colonists were celebrating their revolution after not being allowed to print their own money, a Scotsman named Adam Smith released a book extolling the virtues of paper money, industrialization, and all of the other wonderful things that capitalism had to offer. Originally titled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, the wordy title, which was quite adequate for a book with over 900 pages, was quickly shortened to just *The Wealth of Nations*. The book sparked an overwhelming embrace of capitalism, adding fuel to the fire of industrialism.

Smith viewed capital as "that part of a man's stock which he expects to afford him revenue,"²⁹ and the movement he inspired viewed capital as more than merely land and goods, but labor as well. Downplaying corporate power, Smith felt private entrepreneurship was much more effective at growing an economy due to man's ingrained self-interest. Although he mentioned it only three times in his two books, his theory of an "invisible hand" which guides society toward progress as individuals seek their personal ambitions served to shift the faith of the people from the freedom proffered by religious doctrine to the doctrine of the free market.

"Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate

exchange of one bone for another with another dog,” Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*. “Nobody ever saw one animal by its gestures and natural cries signify to another, this is mine, that yours; I am willing to give this for that... But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of.”

As the Church had already begun to splinter from Roman Catholicism into Calvinism, Anglicanism, Puritanism, and a boatload of other “isms,” Smith, while citing God a number of times, offered a philosophy which regarded humanity with much more regard than the concepts of “natural sin” born in early Christianity or the “utter depravity” of humans described by the Calvinist faction. Smith believed the goodness of man could win the day through the practice of capitalism and a free market, citing the commercial virtues of prudence, justice, frugality, and industry, which worked in concert with the noble virtues of generosity, gratitude, compassion, and love, to expand the overall well-being of society. Ultimately, through *The Wealth of Nations* and his previous book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith was quite optimistic about man’s ability to control himself.

“The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition, when suffered to exert itself with freedom and security, is so powerful a principle, that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred impertinent obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often encumbers its operations.”

Yet just as the foundations of our independence were

built upon the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Smith championed a movement of people having the freedom to tend to their affairs and build their own foundation on their own hard work, talent, and dedication.

As such, he was an ardent critic of monopolies and large corporations, stating, "The directors of such [joint-stock] companies, however, being the managers rather of other people's money than of their own, it cannot well be expected, that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private copartnery frequently watch over their own... Negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail, more or less, in the management of the affairs of such a company."

Smith was a champion for those who had sought a new life free from the tyranny of kingdoms and who wanted the ability to manifest their own destinies with their own two hands. Although he wrote the book in England, *The Wealth of Nations* spoke straight to the hearts of those in the New World who were following the mandate to populate the earth. "A man must always live by his work, and his wages must at least be sufficient to maintain him. They must even upon most occasions be somewhat more; otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen could not last beyond the first generation... The most decisive mark of the prosperity of any country is the increase of the number of its inhabitants."

Yet with Smith's grand vision and its invisible guiding hand, he also saw the inherent flaws in the free market and was able to offer little true guidance on how to rectify them. "Wherever there is great property, there is great inequality," Smith wrote. "For one very rich man there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few supposes the indigence of the many. The affluence of the rich excites the indignation of the poor, who are often both driven by want, and prompted by envy, to invade his possessions."

Some have debated whether or not self-interest and public-interest are congruous, resulting in what German scholars have come to call "Das Adam Smith Problem".

Given the way in which wealth has since been largely consolidated into the hands of a very small, self-interested percentage of the population, it does seem that Smith's theory may have some flaws. Or perhaps 900 pages were still not quite enough to fully explain the situation. Nevertheless, although Smith has been given the title of "father of modern economics", the version of capitalism practiced in 2018 is a far cry from what its father had envisioned for his offspring, largely because some of the most powerful tenets, and his greatest warnings, have since been ignored.

"As soon as the land of any country has all become private property," wrote Smith, "the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce. The wood of the forest, the grass of the field, and all the natural fruits of the earth, which, when land was in common, cost the labourer only the trouble of gathering them, come, even to him, to have an additional price fixed upon them. He must then pay for the license to gather them, and must give up to the landlord a portion of what his labour either collects or produces."

American colonists had already endured a lot through the taxation of the British government and the chartered corporations that had imposed such harsh limitations over the years. Yet with the egalitarianism that had been promoted through the solidarity of working together to defeat a common enemy, Smith's words resonated throughout early America. At the time, the top 1% of the population held about 9% of the nation's wealth, while the top 1% in England held over 17% of the wealth, making early America one of the most egalitarian places on the planet. As such, it was ripe for a new construct beyond the limitations of mere mercantilism and an economy based on scarcity.

Smith's view of capitalism sought to encourage this type of egalitarianism through the practice of competition without government interference. He believed in the inherent goodness of people to master their virtues and overcome the temptation of greed and selfishness by considering the common good. Holding private property in

great esteem, Smith's assertion was that everyone, both rich and poor, could use their private property as capital to create a better life for themselves. As wary of corporate power as the American colonists were, Smith felt that one of government's primary roles was to prevent monopolies from distorting the market by the accumulation of wealth and limiting free trade. Yet he was also aware of its ingrained inability to do so.

"Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property," he wrote, "is in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all."

For the largely agrarian society of farmers and craftsmen, income equality was of the utmost importance. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, something went horribly wrong.

A STEAMING BOWL OF CAPITALISM

*"[A] great embarrassing fact...
haunts all attempts to represent the market
as the highest form of human freedom:
that historically, impersonal, commercial markets originate in theft."
- David Graeber, Debt: The First 5,000 Years*

Capitalism seemed to be working quite well back in the old country... but not quite as good as it could have. While teaching at the University of Glasgow, Adam Smith befriended the university's mechanic named James Watt, who, while repairing a Newcomen steam engine, thought that it could be improved. Although Watt embraced Smith's version of capitalism, he ignored the part about monopolies being a bad thing and eventually hindered any more improvements to the steam engine for another quarter century.

When he made the initial improvement, Watt wasn't in a very good place. His wife had died in childbirth, and he was carrying considerable debt when he met Matthew Boulton in 1775. After inheriting his father's toy company, Boulton reveled in entrepreneurship, and helped Watt to refine his engine, patenting each and every improvement he made. Perhaps it was based on the hardships that he had endured, but Watt protected his engine and clung to the rights to it, readily taking to court anyone who would implement his improvements in the further development of the steam engine.

As fruitful as it may have been for Boulton and Watt, for the other entrepreneurs waiting to engage the new technologies, this first blossom of capitalism in action wasn't quite as fruitful as Adam Smith had foretold.

Unfortunately, Watt's desire for control was not necessarily the virtuous spirit of competitive ingenuity described by Smith. Instead, his heavy hand and the monopoly it created slowed progress and hindered ingenuity, for himself and the rest of the innovators wanting to get involved in the revolution. At a time when Watt could have implemented the crank and flywheel patented by James Pickard, it would seem that his patent-grubbing karma forced Watt to start his own from scratch, and basically waste time manipulating the improvement by calling his less efficient version a "sun and planet" gear instead of just collaborating with Pickard on a better engine for all involved.

Smith's ideas on competition seemed to carry a lot of merit, yet to make the laws of capitalism work smoothly, even competition must be practiced in a collaborative fashion, working toward the virtues of the greater good. While it is true that Watt is given mythic credit for his role in the Industrial Revolution, and his rags to riches story that accompanied it, we can only wonder how differently this time of progress would have progressed had his virtue of self-interest not been so pronounced. Although Watt's engine used three times less coal than the Newcomen engine, due to his tight control of his patents, fuel efficiency hardly changed for the steam engine until Watt's patents expired in 1800, when other innovators were able to improve upon the designs, and fuel efficiency increased fivefold over the next few decades.

For the time during the Boulton Watt monopoly, the pair weren't even manufacturing steam engines of their own, and didn't start until after their patents expired. Innovating on the tenets of capitalism, they instead charged licensing fees for the technology, hiring independent contractors to perform the labor, and building up quite a bit of a nest egg in the process.

Even the seemingly non-selfish activities of Boulton and Watt were grounded in selfishness. By establishing the Soho Friendly Society and making membership mandatory for the men and young boys that worked for them, they took one sixth of the workers' compensation, introducing an insurance program that would cover the workers' expenses in case of illness or injury. This model would serve as the foundation for insurance programs to come, ensuring that none of their employees fell into the pockets of poverty that were erupting throughout England "except a few irreclaimable drunkards"³¹ that still sought assistance from the Church as they blew off their own steam.

However, those in the Church, throughout its various factions, were also growing to embrace the tenets of capitalism, seemingly more than the tenets of Christ. As industry increased, and creating a livelihood grew more complex, it was largely believed that the most beneficent practice was to let people work their way out of poverty, viewing economic hardship as a moral failing, and the allowance of such suffering as a thinning of the herd for the greater good. Yet, just as it is today, rising above economic limitations was not as easy a task as those with no economic limitations may have thought.

CHURCH AND STATE DECIDE TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE

*"I'm completely in favor of the separation of Church and State.
My idea is that these two institutions screw us up enough on their own,
so both of them together is certain death."*

- George Carlin

Back in the United States, the colonists were also embracing the merits of hard work. With a more balanced economic equality and a less stringent role for the Church, things seemed to be moving along rather nicely. Though there is still speculation as to the exact religious convictions of America's founding fathers, it is strongly established that many of them offered little reverence to religious matters and had adopted less demanding offshoots of the Christian traditions in which they were raised. Many of them fought vehemently for the separation of church and state.

James Madison was publicly silent about his religious convictions, but it is believed he was a Deist, which guided him toward an acknowledgment of a Supreme Being less concerned with the trappings of dogma. As he contributed greatly to the Constitution, and the accompanying *Federalist Papers* which would help it to be ratified, he, and many of the other contributors, did not want to create another intrusive government like the monarchy from which they had fought so hard to escape. Imposing adherence to organized religion, as it continued to unravel in the wake of the Enlightenment period, did not seem like a

prudent course of action to achieve their goal of an enlightened society. Madison said, "Every new and successful example of a perfect separation between ecclesiastical and civil matters is of importance."³²

Yet there were also some who adamantly believed that Christianity was the cornerstone of civility, and that even though it was not versed in the government's new scriptures, there was still a prevalent Christian theme. As John Adams said, "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."³³ His son, John Quincy Adams went further to say, "The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity."³⁴

Although our second and sixth presidents held dearly to their religious tradition, our first president was not such a fundamentalist. One of the reasons that George Washington was selected for the role was his pragmatism and even-headedness. In drafting the Treaty of Tripoli, to assuage the concerns of the Muslim state, he wrote, "The government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."³⁵

Raised as an Anglican as many of the founding fathers were, Thomas Jefferson encouraged religious freedom as he did in a letter to his nephew, stating, "Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear." Conservative in sharing his religious beliefs publicly, Jefferson didn't subscribe to many of the beliefs in the Nicene Creed that had guided the Christian religion for so long. As with the other Deists, like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Ethan Allen, and James Monroe, Jefferson didn't believe in the more mythical aspects of Christianity, such as the virgin birth, Jesus' divinity, resurrection, and the miracles he performed, or even that the Bible was divinely inspired.

In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson wrote, "The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the

Supreme Being in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter... But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding.”³⁶ Jefferson still had a great reverence for the message of Jesus, and went so far as to publish his own version of the gospels, editing out the “artificial scaffolding” of miracles and mythology, and giving greater acknowledgment to the teachings that spoke directly to human reason, calling it *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*.

Due to the extensiveness of the role that religion had played in limiting personal sovereignty, the founding fathers were under great compulsion to ensure that such a thing would not happen again, so much so that when the Constitutional Convention gathered to draft the most important legislative measures of their time, first and foremost was the separation of Church and State. The very first rule of the very First Amendment stated that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Impeccable to this detail, as the Constitution was written, there was no reference to God or any Christian influence beyond the mention of the Creator, a form of vague recognition that ran throughout the writings of the founding fathers as a nod to the concept of a “Supreme Being,” “The Almighty”, or “Supreme Architect”, as Washington called It.

However, that didn’t stop the states from establishing their own relationships with religion. As states developed their own constitutions, some doubled down on religious freedom, and some added in more exclusive provisions.

“The legislators of Connecticut begin with the penal laws, and, strange to say, they borrow their provisions from the text of the Holy Writ,” wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. “‘Whosoever shall worship any other God than the Lord,’ says the preamble of the Code, ‘shall surely be put to death.’ This is followed by ten or twelve enactments of the same kind, copied verbatim from

the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy - blasphemy, sorcery, adultery, and rape were punished with death; an outrage offered by a son to his parents was to be expiated by the same penalty. The legislation of a rude and half-civilized people was thus applied to an enlightened and moral community. The consequence was that the punishment of death was never more frequently prescribed by statute, and never more rarely enforced.”¹²⁸

New Jersey's constitution stated that “no person shall ever... be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping Almighty God in a manner agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience,” and New Hampshire's 1784 constitution expanded on the notion, stating “Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and reason; and no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession, sentiments, or persuasion; provided he doth not disturb the public peace or disturb others in their religious worship.”

Maryland was a bit more selective in who should receive religious freedom, ensuring that “All persons, professing the Christian religion, are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty.” Georgia went even further by dictating that representatives be of the Protestant religion while Delaware required anyone holding public office to profess their faith in “God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for evermore” and to “acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”

When North Carolina wrote their constitution in 1776, they declared the state's religious bias by writing, “No person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion, or the divine authority of the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this State.”

South Carolina's constitution held that “All persons and religious societies who acknowledge that there is one God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is publicly to be worshiped, shall be freely tolerated” and that “the Christian Protestant Religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be, the established religion of this State.” Even today, the South Carolina constitution forbids any office holder from denying the existence of a Supreme Being.

While the argument can be made that the United States of America was not established as a Christian nation, it was a nation comprised of many Christian states. Yet although many of the policy makers adhered to incorporating religious sentiment into the law of the land, only about 10-20% of Americans were devoutly religious around 1776,¹⁴⁷ a statistic that would certainly change over the next few centuries as people were given the freedom to form new denominations and worship styles.

WAKE UP, AMERICA!

THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'RE GOING TO HELL

*"Jesus himself did not try to convert the two thieves on the cross;
he waited until one of them turned to him."*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As much credibility as it held in circles of power, Christianity had been on the decline for the previous few centuries. After the Scientific Revolution of the 1600s, which launched Copernicus' theories about a sun-centered universe, Galileo's ideas on inertia and motion, Newton's realization of gravity, and other concepts considered heretical by the Church, human minds were opening. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, thought leaders were releasing their attachments to superstitions and religious dogma in order to embrace reason, knowledge, and scientific practice, ushering in the period known as the Enlightenment.

This Age of Reason was integral to both the American and French revolutions, and philosophers like Immanuel Kant inspired people to "Dare to think!" while Denis Diderot challenged that "All things must be examined, debated, investigated without exception and without regard for anyone's feelings." Disdain for emotional religious fervor was also promoted by American writers like Thomas Paine, who said that "Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is no more derogatory to the Almighty, more

unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory to itself than this thing called Christianity,” also claiming that “It is from the Bible that man has learned cruelty, rapine, and murder; for the belief of a cruel God makes a cruel man.”

However, while many started putting more emphasis on man’s ability to use reason and rationale instead of relying on the structure of traditional authority, the diversion from adherence to the Church’s dictates were protested through a grassroots movement of preaching a somewhat modified and sensationalized version of Christianity.

When early Protestants came to America, they enjoyed full religious freedom without being tortured, decapitated, or burned at the stake. Yet while some decided to emancipate themselves from the creeds, doctrines, and dogmas, others embraced them more firmly and only became more fanatical. As the Founding Fathers were focused on releasing government from the grasp of religious influence in order to better embrace the religion of capitalism, religious fundamentalists were responding by adapting their message to the changing New World.

Fueled largely by the exuberant sermons of Jonathan Edwards, like “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”, “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners”, “The Eternity of Hell Torments”, “Wrath to the Uttermost”, and “The Peace Which Christ Gives His True Followers”, this revival of religious fervor introduced a style of worship quite removed from the catechisms and ritual that the Anglicans, Puritans, and Quakers were used to. Edwards was joined by a batch of preachers that called themselves “New Lights”, and spread throughout New England delivering emotional, exciting, hellfire-and-brimstone kind of preaching that had people coming out in droves. For many, it was great theater, yet many others were scared into a strict devotion to the Bible and attempts at sin-free living. When British actor George Whitefield started touring throughout the thirteen colonies, the “Great Awakening” took America by storm, introducing the big tent revival, a practice circuses wouldn’t start using

for another century.

It's estimated that 10% of New England was converted to this new brand of Christianity, with 30,000 souls "saved" by Whitefield's sermons alone. As a result, 150 new denominations were established over the course of the next twenty years, and it gave a huge boost to new congregations like the Presbyterians and the Baptists, who increased their number of churches from nine to over 400 by the end of the century. Starting in the 1730s, the first Great Awakening had the added benefit of priming Americans for their break with England by allowing them the freedom to disagree with religious authority and just go start their own church, helping to prepare them for the coming revolution.

ALMOST DEMOCRACY

*"We are usually told that democracy originated in ancient Athens—
like science, or philosophy, it was a Greek invention.
It's never entirely clear what this is supposed to mean.
Are we supposed to believe that before the Athenians,
it never really occurred to anyone, anywhere,
to gather all the members of their community
in order to make joint decisions
in a way that gave everyone equal say?"*

*- David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology**

After the exhausting experience of declaring their independence, American leadership postponed the ratification of an operating procedure. The Articles of Confederation, which provided governmental guidelines, was deliberated upon for five years before being put into effect in 1781. They were ultimately deemed ineffective in organizing the economy due to the absence of a strong central government, each of the states wanting its own independence and sovereignty.

George Washington criticized the weak government that the Articles of Confederation offered, having watched his soldiers go hungry and without supplies due to its inefficiency. In addition, as a businessman and landowner, without a central government to organize the digging of canals and waterways he needed for trade routes, he was supportive of the move toward a rewrite. During the summer

of 1787, Washington, Madison, and fifty-five other state delegates met initially to draft some amendments to the Articles of Confederation, but ended up scrapping the whole thing and coming up with the Constitution instead.

However, not everyone wanted a big federal government. As one critic wrote in the *Boston Gazette* on November 26, 1787, “I had rather be a free citizen of the small republic of Massachusetts, than an oppressed subject of the great American empire.”¹²⁶ Another critic, posting in the *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer* on January 16, 1788, found it “astonishing that so flimsy and deceptive a doctrine should make converts among the enlightened freemen of America, who have so long enjoyed the blessings of liberty.”¹²⁷

The Articles of Confederation had limited a strong central government in order to more greatly empower the states to govern themselves, however, the Constitution left out descriptions of the individual states as “sovereign” and “independent” as the Articles had. Instead, the federal government became the law of the land to which all states would be subservient, even the former critics. As much as the majority feared the overwhelming rule of a federal government, those creating the federal government feared the overwhelming rule of the majority.

Although Adam Smith’s ideas were embraced as a great theory, and though the American Founding Fathers desired to empower the individual citizens of the new country to rise up in their virtues of industry and ambition, they were a little wary of giving the common man too much power. In discussing the development of a democracy for the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison wrote that democracies “have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths... A republic,” he declared, “by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking.”

The general consensus at the time was that common folk wouldn't have the time, education, or common sense to vote on every little thing, and the citizenry would best be served by a republic instead of an actual democracy. The glory years of Rome were organized by a republic, before it became an empire and fell, and England had fared pretty well as a republic during its short time without a monarch. Madison went on to describe the role of the republic as an entity to "refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the same purpose."

Besides, only the 6% of the population who were white, male property owners were eligible to vote in the first presidential election anyway.

"The picture of American society has," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, "if I may so speak, a surface covering of democracy, beneath which the old aristocratic colors sometimes peep out."¹²⁸

Although America has since loudly and proudly declared itself to be a democracy for its citizens' ability to vote on their representatives every two to four years, the word "democracy" is never mentioned in neither the Declaration of Independence nor the United States Constitution.

"If we take the term in the strict sense," reasons Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, "there never has been a real democracy, and there never will be. It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed."¹²³

The Constitution was drafted to reflect the principles of a republic and develop the three branches of government in seven articles, laying out the basics of the government, its exclusive right to coin money, and an openness to be

amended as the country evolved.

These days, we upgrade apps on our smartphones several times a month as the bugs are worked out of the programs and improvements come to light through ingenuity and greater understanding. Yet the technology we created as the foundation of our freedoms and the lives we create, the Constitution of the United States, although it was written so that it could be amended, has only been upgraded twenty-seven times in 227 years. It has hardly been considered for upgrade since the last one in 1992, when Congress finally thought it prudent to force themselves to always wait a year before giving themselves another raise. They waited just over 202 years to ratify that one, as it was proposed along with the original Bill of Rights. The previous amendment was in 1967, when, after having eight presidents die in office, Congress finally decided to develop a protocol for being left without the leadership of the most powerful person in the world.

It's not that Americans aren't trying to amend the Constitution. Since its inception, there have been roughly 12,000 proposals for amendments, but now that civil rights seem to have been covered, and we're finally prepared in case another president dies in office, we don't seem that hard pressed to change much else. However, it is rather remarkable that the most powerful country in the world has the shortest Constitution in use.

CONGRESS THROWS A PARTY

*"I don't like either political party.
One should not belong to them - one should be an individual,
standing in the middle.
Anyone that belongs to a party stops thinking."
- Ray Bradbury*

When Congress started meeting in 1789, each member received a daily stipend of 6\$ until 1795, when Senators started getting 1\$ a day more. In 1855, they put themselves on salary at an annual rate of 3,000\$ a year, and have had about forty pay adjustments since, building to their current base pay (at the time of this writing) of 174,000\$ a year.

In the early days, being a member of Congress was a sacrifice. Meeting in three sessions over the first two years, these public servants had to travel long distances, being away from their families and means of livelihood for long lengths of time. One third of them resigned within the first few years. These days, however, with the base salary of a member of Congress being over six times the median salary of a US citizen (28,851\$),³⁹ and the multiple streams of auxiliary revenue the office helps create, the job has gotten a bit less sacrificial.

Still, serving as a member of Congress was quite an honor, and the new politicians did a great deal of grandstanding and speech-making as they carved out their legacies, causing James Madison to remark, "Scarcely a day

passes without some striking evidence of the delays and perplexities springing merely from the want of precedents.” Yet considering the precedents they were setting in the fledgling republic, the considerable amount of time devoted to committees and debates would eventually pay off.

In the first session of Congress, they passed acts on administering state and federal oaths of office, tariffs on goods, foreign affairs, the Department of War, the Department of the Treasury, and the court system. In the second session, they made provisions for the first Census, citizenship, patents, criminal procedure, copyrights, the seat of the US government in Washington DC, and regulation for commerce with the natives. In the third session, lasting only three months compared to the six-month long first session and eight-month long second session, they established the First Bank of the United States, granting it a twenty-one year monopoly on printing money. They also devised the Whiskey Act, an attempt to tax alcohol which resulted in a rebellion among the farmers who were producing their own corn squeezin’s and was repealed when Thomas Jefferson became president ten years later.

Throughout the proceedings, Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, who were both part of Washington’s cabinet as Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury, respectively, often found themselves in vehement disagreement. Hamilton wanted to find money and investors to help pay off the debts from the war, and Jefferson was looking out for the common men. Although the first Congress had their share of debates, they were very nervous about partisanship, and the schism between these two men caused quite a bit of consternation as many of the Founding Fathers did not want to break Congress into parties.

Years before the Constitution was even written, John Adams said, “There is nothing I dread so much as a division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and converting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution.”⁴⁰

Washington, in his farewell address, followed up the

sentiment that he feared the possibilities of political parties, "to become potent engines by which... unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government."⁴¹

Unfortunately, although Adams, Madison, Hamilton, and the rest of the key players were initially against parties, by the time Washington left office, two parties had already formed. Adams and Hamilton led the Federalists, and Jefferson and Madison led the Democrat-Republicans. As years went on, these two parties would morph into the Democrats and Republicans that we know today, but throughout their evolution, they have had a few different variations and incarnations. Unfortunately, although the Founding Fathers initially rallied against it, and though dozens of other parties would come into existence, the US Congress would never move past the two party system that Washington feared would "enfeeble public administration" through "the alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities... itself a frightful despotism."

Despite the fact that the Constitution spoke nary a word about political parties, the Democratic Party was officially established in 1828 and the Republican Party was established in 1854. Although they have managed to come together and accomplish some bipartisan endeavors, in the latter half of the twentieth century, the squabbles became much more heated and the polarization much more extreme.

SLAVERY REVISITED

*"I've heard 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' read,
and I tell you Mrs. Stowe's pen hasn't begun to paint what slavery is
as I have seen it at the far South.*

*I've seen de real thing,
and I don't want to see it on no stage or in no theater."*

- Harriet Tubman

Of course, for a long time, there were a great many people in these United States that didn't have representation at all, and were barely considered human. Shortly after America got moving, across the pond, the concept of slavery was already starting to shift. The anti-slavery movement began in England within a decade of Americans emancipating themselves from the rule of the crown, and by 1807, England had abolished the slave trade, albeit not necessarily slavery itself.

Likewise, the next year, the new colonies abolished the importation of new slaves, but it would be almost sixty years until the practice would come to an end entirely. As America was developing its new system of capitalism, slaves were still seen as some of the best capital to have, and slaveowners weren't exceedingly willing to let it go just yet. However, based on the ideals upon which we were founded and the freedoms we sought for ourselves, the end of slavery was compulsory for our continued evolution and integrity.

As David Graeber wrote in *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, "Thomas Jefferson, that owner of many slaves, chose

to begin the Declaration of Independence by directly contradicting the moral basis of slavery, writing ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights...’ thus undercutting simultaneously any argument that Africans were racially inferior, and also that they or their ancestors could ever have been justly and legally deprived of their freedom. In doing so, however, he did not propose some radically new conception of rights and liberties. Neither have subsequent political philosophers. For the most part, we’ve just kept the old ones, but with the word ‘not’ inserted here and there. Most of our most precious rights and freedoms are a series of exceptions to an overall moral and legal framework that suggests we shouldn’t really have them in the first place.”⁴⁴

Indeed, times were different than when Aristotle, known as the father of science, stated that slavery was natural, referring to a slave as “a piece of property which is animate.”¹²⁴

“Aristotle was right,” argues Jean Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, “but he took the effect for the cause. Nothing can be more certain than that every man born in slavery is born for slavery. Slaves lose everything in their chains, even the desire of escaping from them: they love their servitude, as the comrades of Ulysses loved their brutish condition. If then there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against Nature. Force made the first slaves, and their cowardice perpetuated the condition.”

Unlike the Agrarian and Agricultural Revolutions, the Industrial Revolution did not have slavery as a working component of its operations. However, by the time mechanization began to take hold, the monetary system had reached a point of fruition where people could be compelled to work without having to be physically forced.

As the idea of independence spread through these new operating systems, the person who was once beholden to his master for food and shelter could now work to provide his own means of provision. Although slavery as it had been

used for the preceding millennia forced labor at the end of a whip or under the auspices of debt could not be as easily applied in this burgeoning landscape of freedom, those to whom the debts were owed had found a new way to compel the common folk to do their bidding. While the blossoming method of this new-found capitalism was freeing people from the shackles of slavery in lieu of a somewhat kinder and gentler form of coercion, the machination of money and its incessant need for continual growth created a new kind of slavery that expanded beyond the lowest of social castes and minority races and spread throughout the full realm of civilized humanity.

Although slavery in America officially ended with the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, two years after Lincoln proclaimed their emancipation, a new form of slavery was instituted as both men and women were now freed from being owned by another master, but set out to claim ownership of a new one.

PART THREE

AMERICA MAKES MONEY

*"This planet has - or rather had - a problem, which was this:
most of the people living on it were unhappy for pretty much of the time.
Many solutions were suggested for this problem,
but most of these were largely concerned
with the movement of small green pieces of paper,
which was odd because on the whole
it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy."
- Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**

Although America is often noted for the high ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that Thomas Jefferson poetically worked into the Declaration of Independence, it may very well be that its greatest contribution to the world was money, or at least the more tangible use of it. Since its creation, the US dollar has come to be the *de facto* currency throughout the world as the United States has become the largest economy on the planet. From the growth of tobacco and its use as a currency in the wake of being denied the right to print their own coins or paper currencies, America has arguably made economic development and the proliferation of money its highest goal and most successful industry.

"When people think about money, it is generally to wish they had more of it," explains Jason Goodwin in *Greenback: The Almighty Dollar and the Invention of*

America. “Americans made this their starting point, and experimented with money as no other nation ever had the chance to: wampum, paper currency, private banknotes, gold and silver, government money, bank money. On the way, the people learned to strike a deal, fix a price, watch their interests. They learned how to conjure money not out of the thin air exactly, but out of the natural riches of the land and the ingenuity of their own minds, and fell to arguing how much, relatively speaking, it was worth. Settling that dispute, over the years, defined them as a nation. To get where we are today has meant ironing out a lot of differences, or ironing them, at least, deceptively flat.”¹⁰⁸

The importance of money in America is apparent by the fact that the US Mint was the first building authorized by the new US Government. After Congress established the dollar as the unit of account for the country, in the hopes of phasing out other foreign currencies over the next three years, the first coins to be circulated were 11,178 copper pennies in 1793. Once the Mint opened the next year, it got busy creating ten different denominations of coin, ranging from a half cent to 10\$.

The government had also printed 240 million dollars’ worth of paper money to assist with the war in 1777, a bill called the Continental. But people were wary of paper money and had more faith in the coins made of silver, copper, and gold.

“People were coming face-to-face with paper money for the first time in Western history,” Goodwin explains, “and they weren’t all ready to make the conceptual leap. You could bite on the best Spanish silver. Even wampum had had some weight, and a heap of money was a heap. Paper was worthless – ‘say what you like,’ an old Pennsylvanian grumbled, ‘but paper is paper and money is money.’”

Plus, technically, the Constitution hadn’t granted the federal government the right to print paper money, only coins. By the end of the war, the Continental was virtually worthless. Nevertheless, the First United States Bank was granted the power to mint coins through its run until 1811, as was the Second United States Bank through 1836. But when

Andrew Jackson vetoed its continued charter, the “Free Banking Era” saw state-chartered banks issuing their own paper bank notes with no federal oversight whatsoever. The result was an estimated 8,000 different paper notes of all shapes and sizes making their way into circulation by 1860, creating a huge boon for counterfeiters, with an estimated one third of the “money” in circulation being counterfeit.

The federal government tried to get a handle on the matter by suspending the practice of redeeming paper money for coins and by issuing a few other paper currencies themselves, the Demand Note and the Legal Tender Note, largely as a way to fund the Civil War. On the day he was assassinated, April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln authorized the creation of the Secret Service to combat the surge of counterfeiting. The organization wouldn’t offer full-time presidential protection until after William McKinley was killed in 1901. After Congress passed the National Banking Act in 1863, finally establishing a national banking system and a uniform national currency, the US printed over 400 million dollars in fresh, new currency by the end of the decade.

The new national currency, often called Greenbacks, wasn't really money per se, but a form of fiat currency that holders could use as legal tender, but which would, like its predecessors, eventually completely lose its value. As Adam Smith had warned, “The problem with fiat money is that it rewards the minority that can handle money, but fools the generation that has worked and saved money.”²⁹

Over the next few decades, the government would release a few different types of promissory notes that would serve as legal tender, including silver certificates and gold certificates, redeemable for their respective metal inspiration. Ultimately, as has been the case with money since its inception, the government was just making things up as it went along. Unfortunately, they were finding that it wasn’t providing as much security as people hoped.

When Congress first convened in 1791, there were only four banks in existence in the United States. In the next ten years, another twenty-five opened, and by 1921, after the

“Free Banking Era”, they had exploded to 30,000.

“Money had become one of their tools,” wrote Goodwin, “a wonderful telescope that reduced the most baffling and impenetrable landscape to a familiar scale and brought colonists a sense of control over what was otherwise a tangled thicket, full of surprises. Beaver in the woods had prices on their heads; a deerskin went for around one dollar, still called a buck; forests were convertible into lumber by the cubic feet; land could be fenced, sold, and mortgaged; a whole emerging system ensured that the mysteries of America could be brought pretty rapidly to book, transferred, alienated, bought, and sold. The ‘hideous and desolate wilderness’ of the first settlers could be turned into a recognizably civilized landscape. In time, every particle of the continent might be prised from its setting and value, like a diamond.”

Yet between battles of ideology and the uncertainty of the as yet unexplored parameters of this new game of capitalism, organizing the New World still brought its own challenges. After the Civil War, though the federal government was doing all it could to create some sort of stability in the banking system, there were still a number of banking scares, like the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1901, and another 50% plummet in 1907.

The 1907 panic was subsided largely due to the seemingly heroic gesture of banker J.P. Morgan, who pledged his own money to bail out the bank and encouraged other bankers to do the same. However, a few years later, a congressional subcommittee called the Pujo Committee looked into the panics to find that a number of Wall Street bankers had been taking huge liberties with the trusts they had been given, with J.P. Morgan responsible for manipulating over 22 billion dollars alone. Although a handful of men had consolidated a vast amount of the nation’s wealth into their own hands, causing an economic recession and hardship for millions around the country, proving unequivocal flaws in Adam Smith’s theories of the virtues of man’s self-interest, the US government decided to add a few more precautionary measures to their system of

capitalism.

In 1913, Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act, establishing the Federal Reserve Bank as the central bank of the United States, complete with twelve districts, each with its own reserve bank. While the Federal Reserve was initially commissioned with a twenty year charter, in 1927, the contract was re-negotiated so that the Federal Reserve Bank would manage the currency of the United States in perpetuity until Congress finds some reason for it not to. The problem is that the Federal Reserve Bank, according to the Constitution, has never really printed money, and the Federal Reserve Note, although currently accepted the world over as legal tender, is only a fiat currency which will one day be as worthless as the Continental and the Greenback.

Although the Constitution explicitly states that the government can only make money from coins, and the Coinage Act of 1792 stated those coins should be based on the dollar, which was based on 371 grains of pure silver or 416 grains of standard silver, what we consider money has come quite a ways since then. In 1900, William McKinley moved the dollar from silver to gold, a standard which held until 1933 when the Great Depression had created some incredibly ill effects on the economy. Franklin Roosevelt offered up just over 20\$ per ounce for all persons who had been hoarding gold, taking in 770 million dollars worth of gold coins and gold certificates in just over a month before re-establishing the price of gold at 35\$ an ounce. This allowed the Federal Reserve Bank to inflate the money supply and shore up for Roosevelt's New Deal.

In 1944, delegates from the forty-four nations that had allied to form the United Nations after World War II gathered in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire to establish a monetary exchange rate, with gold as the primary exchange, largely represented by the US dollar. The agreement put the US in a great place, what the French Minister of Finance called "America's exorbitant privilege", to be able to print a 100\$ bill for a few cents when other countries would actually have to pony up 100\$ worth of gold. However, when West Germany finally decided to break bonds with the Bretton

Woods agreement, and a number of other nations started coming for their gold, Richard Nixon devalued the dollar and removed it from the gold standard again in 1971. Initially, it was supposed to be a temporary measure lasting for only ninety days, but the decision held, and the US dollar has been a true fiat currency ever since.

Basically, a fiat currency is legal tender without intrinsic value. It's only worth is found in the sweet spot where what the government says meets what the citizenry agrees to. Although they've been used effectively throughout the history of money, the average lifespan for a fiat currency is speculated to be about twenty-seven years, meaning that the US dollar is indeed living on borrowed time. Granted, the British Pound has been kicking since 1694, but considering the instability generated over the last decade or so, it would seem that the only thing keeping the dollar alive is faith.

In *Biography of the Dollar*, Craig Karmin quotes financial historian and publisher of *Grant's Interest Rate Observer*, James Grant, as saying, "The dollar is the greatest monetary achievement in the history of the world. It is a paper claim of no inherent value that is accepted on its face in every corner of the earth. There is nothing behind it but the idea of America."¹⁰⁹

"Even by the standards of a military and economic superpower," Karmin wrote, "the dollar's supremacy has been remarkable. While the US Economy accounts for about thirty percent of global gross domestic product and American companies compose nearly fifty percent of the world stock market capitalization, the dollar's dominance is greater still. It figures in nearly ninety percent of all trades in the more than \$3.2-trillion-a-day foreign exchange market. Nearly two-thirds of the world's central bank reserves are held in dollars."

To bolster this faith, in 1864, Congress had authorized the phrase "In God We Trust" to be used on the two cent coin after being petitioned by Reverend M. R. Watkinson to include some reference to God on our money in order to "relieve us from the ignominy of heathenism." Eventually, in 1955, as America cowered in fear over the "red

scare” and the inherent atheism of the communist movement, Congress saw fit to ensure that God was indeed a capitalist, agreeing to print “In God We Trust” on all US currency. Two years earlier, they had added “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance, and two years later, Dwight Eisenhower declared “In God We Trust” as our national motto.

Nevertheless, as much trust as we might proclaim in God, we also have a tendency to hedge our bets.

FROM CITIZEN TO CONSUMER

"America must be the teacher of democracy, not the advertiser of the consumer society. It is unrealistic for the rest of the world to reach the American living standard."
- Mikhail Gorbachev

In the midst of America's Great Depression, merchants and manufacturers were looking for ways to restore the economy. To get people working and factories operating, those who still had purchasing power needed to keep buying things, even things they may not have needed. In order to keep industrialism working properly, two things needed to happen.

First, people needed to replace things that they already owned. Through what real estate broker Bernard London called "planned obsolescence" in 1932, products started to be created so that they would eventually fail and need to be replaced. Second, the American people, and eventually the rest of the world, would need to shift their behaviors from being the thrifty citizens that were needed near the end of World War I to the voracious consumers that industrialism needed to support it.

As Peter Joseph states in his book *The New Human Rights Movement*, "While the Protestant, puritanical ethic of American culture has been argued as favorable to capitalist development, a view famously promoted by sociologist Max Weber, the same ethic meant that flagrant, conspicuous consumption was not a virtue. As such, commercial leaders in government knew something had to be done to change

people's values. The Great Depression brought into global question not only the US economy, but the very integrity of capitalism itself."

Like the "invisible hand" that is supposed to guide our economy, Adam Smith spoke briefly on the nature of consumption in *The Wealth of Nations*, but his idea of it being "the sole end and purpose of all production" took hold in America as well as the rest of the world. French political economist Charles Gide told his students in 1898, "The 19th century has been the century of producers. Let us hope that the 20th century will be that of consumers. May their kingdom come!" While the word "consumer" was hardly used for most of the nineteenth century, it started to take hold at the beginning of the twentieth, and by 1957, just after the American Dream had reached its peak, it completely overtook the word "citizen" as a way to describe a person living in America. Now, "consumer" is used to describe people about three times as much as "citizen".

One of the things that contributed to this transmogrification from citizen to consumer was the development of disposable products. One of the first disposable products came in answer to a health risk. Faced with the germs that were spread through communal cups and drinking fountains, in 1907, Lawrence Luellen invented a paper cup that he called Health Kup, giving people the opportunity to avoid other people's germs and prevent the spread of communicable diseases. The name was changed to Dixie Cup in 1919, and a hundred years later, six million trees are turned into paper cups every year for American consumption alone.

Another example of the rise in disposable products and their planned obsolescence was the light bulb. After General Electric patented their tungsten filaments in 1906, the company was striving to create the longest lasting light bulb possible with some of them lasting as long as 100,000 hours. Yet because this wasn't offering them repeat business, several light bulb manufacturers, including General Electric, Philips, Tungsram, and others, formed the Phoebus Cartel in 1924, agreeing to limit the life of a light bulb to 1,000 hours

in order to sell more products and increase revenue throughout the industry.

With the practice of "death dating" products to ensure that they would only last for a limited time, over the next few decades, our methods of consumption would grow to a dizzying degree. Cloth towels and napkins were replaced with disposable paper ones. Cloth diapers were replaced with plastic. Handkerchiefs were replaced with paper tissues. In 1950, the plastic trash bag was invented to assist us in our need to throw out the old to make room for the new.

In an article printed in the August 1, 1955 issue of *Life* magazine titled "Throwaway Living", the term "throw-away society" was first used to describe our new way of living. In 1960, the styrofoam cup was introduced, and four years later, 7-11 became the first convenience store to offer fresh coffee to go, giving consumers the ability to keep moving so they could keep up with the rapid pace of working, producing, and consuming now required of them. As people waited in lines at the gas pump, disposable plastic soda bottles were introduced in 1975, their convenience and possibilities growing so popular that now 500 billion plastic beverage bottles are made every year, with only about 7% of them being recycled. Americans also throw away roughly 500 million plastic straws every day, each of them used only one time.

Another factor in the move from citizen to consumer was the contribution of the assembly line that Henry Ford introduced to build the first plethora of Model Ts in 1910.

The first Model T was priced at 950\$ and cost the average Ford worker 380 days of wages to pay for. Yet, as the decade progressed, and the assembly line became more efficient, Ford cut the time for making a Model T from over twelve hours in 1912 to under two hours in 1914. By 1921, a Model T only cost 397\$, and with Ford's new 5\$ per day rate, the average Ford worker could afford his very own car in eighty days. By 1925, a Ford-built automobile only cost 290\$, and although there were only 6.7 million cars in America in 1919, by 1929, there were 27 million of them,

almost one for every US household.

A big part of this surge in sales came through advertising. Before the 1920s, advertising was largely relegated to lots of print and not focused on any particular brands. Yet as industry leaders realized the need to have their customers keep buying, advertising agencies consulted with psychologists on ways to get more bang for their buck. By integrating practices like brand identification, slogans, and professional endorsements, US companies increased their spending on advertising to 3 billion dollars a year by 1929, five times what they spent in 1914.

As industrial designer Brooks Stevens described it, "Unlike the European approach of the past where they tried to make the very best product and make it last forever, the approach in America is one of making the American consumer unhappy with the product he has enjoyed the use of... and making him want to obtain the newest product with the newest possible look."

By appealing to people's vanity and insecurities, advertising became less about informing the citizenry of products that would make their lives better and more about making them feel inadequate if they didn't stay in fashion with the latest trends. For many products, it was simply a matter of making minor modifications and advertising them as "new and improved". For others, like the automobile, it was about adding new features every year to make last year's model something to be despised.

"The big job is to hasten obsolescence," said General Motors design chief Harley Earl in 1955. "In 1934, the average car ownership span was five years; now it is two years. When it is one year, we will have a perfect score."

As Stuart Ewen put it in his book *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, "excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value. It became imperative to invest the laborer with a financial power and a psychic desire to consume."

With the Red Scare of communism, in which private ownership was not allowed, heeding the call of consumerism and supporting the market system came to be viewed as the

highest form of patriotism. Spending money on conspicuous consumption was no longer considered an indulgence, but a civic duty in order to keep the money flowing.

Yet the hunger that has been riled in us is having more devastating effects than just wasted time and energy. "We call ourselves consumers," Paul Hawken states in *The Ecology of Commerce*, "but the problem is that we do not consume. Each person in America produces twice his weight per day in household, hazardous, and industrial waste, and an additional half-ton per week when gaseous wastes such as carbon dioxide are included. An ecological model of commerce would imply that all waste have value to other modes of production so that everything is either reclaimed, reused, or recycled."¹¹³

These days, Americans generate 70% more solid waste than they did in 1960. "Americans make more trash than anyone else on the planet," writes Edward Humes in his book *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair With Trash*, "throwing away about 7.1 pounds per person per day, 365 days a year. Across a lifetime that rate means, on average, we are each on track to generate 102 tons of trash. Each of our bodies may occupy only one cemetery plot when we're done with this world, but a single person's 102-ton trash legacy will require the equivalent of 1,100 graves. Much of that refuse will outlast any grave marker, pharaoh's pyramid, or modern skyscraper. One of the few relics of our civilization guaranteed to be recognizable twenty thousand years from now is the potato chip bag."

Not only are we filling our landfills with the 95% of plastics that are produced as single-use items, but due to the increased volume of planned obsolescence and our newfound obsession with technology, we also throw away television sets, computers, smartphones, and millions of tons of e-waste every year. Although it is only estimated to make up roughly 2% of our landfills, e-waste and the precious metals that are thrown away with them, comprise about 70% of the toxic materials in our landfills.

"Ecologically, this means capitalism is structurally oblivious to humanity's existence on a finite planet," says

Peter Joseph. "The system was to produce, not to conserve. In fact, if you think about it, you will discover an interesting paradox to market logic: the fact that capitalism is a scarcity based economic system that actually seeks infinite consumption."

There were times when Americans simply fixed things when they broke. In the 1940s there were roughly 60,000 shoe repair shops, yet though there are many more shoes these days, there are about one-tenth the number of repair shops. And one would be hard pressed to find a place to have a television fixed. In order to continue this trend and keep selling products, it was recently discovered that Apple programmed the iPhone 6 to cease functioning and turn into a relatively useless "brick" when owners tried to have them fixed.

Yet, while it was once seen as our civic duty to throw things away and purchase new things in order to help the economy grow, there is a growing movement of people in America who see better ways of serving the community. There are many who would rather start fixing things again instead of seeing them thrown away.

"According to a number of recent commentators," says Frank Trentmann in his book *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, "we are already living in the twilight years of the empire of things. They announce the coming of 'dematerialization' and 'post-consumerism', marked by a growing interest in experiences, emotions, and services, a revival of repairing, and the spread of leasing initiatives and sharing networks enabled by the Internet. By 2015, almost a thousand repair cafés had sprung up in the richest corners of consumer societies in Western Europe and North America."

While there are some who wish to embrace a more healthy form of materialism, one in which material is actually valued instead of wantonly disregarded, it may be quite an uphill struggle to overcome the power of the market economy and the convenience of consumerism.

HEMP, HEMP, HOORAY

*"The amount of money and of legal energy
being given to prosecute hundreds of thousands of Americans
who are caught with a few ounces of marijuana in their jeans
simply makes no sense*

- the kindest way to put it.

*A sterner way to put it is that it is an outrage,
an imposition on basic civil liberties
and on the reasonable expenditure of social energy."*

- William F. Buckley Jr.

In addition to tobacco, another crop that was a large part of America's development was hemp, or *cannabis*. Since the plant has several thousand uses, there is good reason to believe it was used quite a lot throughout the last few millennia. Yet its use has been largely shut down over the last century as other industries that deal with resources of a much more finite supply assumed predominance in the industrial market by orchestrating the grandest display of corporate sabotage through propaganda the world had yet seen.

Throughout the colonies, hemp was another staple cash crop that was grown right alongside tobacco. In most every society where it was used, it was heralded for its hearty fibers, healthy oils, nutritious seeds, healing properties, and of course, its medicinal and narcotic applications. Although Thomas Jefferson is cited as saying, "Some of my finest

hours have been spent sitting on my back veranda, smoking hemp and observing as far as my eye can see,” it has not been verified, and there is no real evidence that cannabis was smoked for pleasure in the United States until the early 1900s, when it was introduced by Mexican immigrants.

However, cannabis was added to the *US Pharmacopia* in 1850, and though few of the uses included heating the oils to activate the properties of THC that elicit its euphoric essence, hemp still got some use. It was used most often for rigging lines on ships, and for quite awhile, we grew a lot of it in America. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson have records of growing it in their gardening diaries, and quite a few of the states made it mandatory for farmers to grow.

Yet, for many of its other uses, it was too difficult and expensive to process, so it wasn't as successful as its initial competitors of cotton, timber, oil, and tobacco. Nevertheless, as technologies improved, and more efficient means of processing were developed, it occurred to some of the masters of the other industries, intent on developing their monopolies on American resources, that hemp could become quite a formidable competitor.

It's an unfortunate fact of history that in the 1930s, as William Randolph Hearst was striving to turn his acres of timber into profit, and other leaders in non-renewable or limited resources, such as oil, cotton, and pharmaceuticals, were striving to pimp out their industries, seeing the potential for hemp to make their industries less profitable, or possibly obsolete, these industry leaders lobbied to make hemp illegal. Their method included three steps.

The first was to scare the public into believing that the hallucinogenic properties of *cannabis sativa indica*, known as marijuana by most, brought violence, insanity, and even death to those who used it. This scare also built on demonizing the plant due to its use by Mexican immigrants and African-American jazz musicians. Their sales pitch worked as they conjured images of crazy black men making off with Caucasian daughters, allowing them to move to their next step – convincing people that *cannabis sativa sativa*,

the industrial hemp which has no hallucinogenic properties, actually *had* hallucinogenic properties. Once the connection was made, the third step was easy.

In 1937, the US government passed the Marijuana Stamp Tax Act, claiming that the only people who could grow any type of cannabis needed to have government-issued Marijuana Stamps. Unfortunately, the government refused to issue any of the stamps, leaving our need for fuel in the hands of the fossil fuel industry, our need for textiles in the hands of the cotton industry, our need for paper in the hands of the timber industry, and our need to heal ourselves in the hands of the pharmaceutical industry. Since ostracizing cannabis from our society, these powers have continued to portray the plant as some sort of demonic entity rather than a gift of Nature and the God many believe created it, forcing Americans to be dependent on these other industries.

Due to this campaign of misinformation, we have relegated ourselves to cutting down millions of acres of forest, an act which has contributed greatly to climate change and rampant environmental degradation. We've forced our oceans and gulfs to suffer through a series of oil spills, and produced a variety of carbon emissions as petrochemical use has infiltrated our atmosphere with toxins, again contributing to climate change. And we have topped it off by polluting our waterways and diminishing our health with the use of harmful chemicals by growing inferior crops to provide our textile needs.

In 1970, Nixon passed the Controlled Substances Act, classifying a variety of pharmaceuticals and other drugs into schedules based on their potency. Although the "National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse" deemed that marijuana was much less harmful than other narcotics, and even discussed allowing citizens to possess small amounts, the man who would soon become the first president to be removed from office for flagrant dishonesty classified marijuana as one of the most dangerous drugs in existence. After all, the predominant users of marijuana were still Mexicans and African-Americans, with the added

population of Hippies, so political will for relaxing the terms of use wasn't really high... and neither were most Americans. Alcohol was America's drug of choice, especially after having had it taken away from us during those thirteen long years of Prohibition. At the time, few felt inclined to rock the boat for marijuana while they were perfectly comfortable floating in the bottle.

Yet the remarkable thing about capitalism is that it works regardless of whether or not the laws do. Just as the prohibition of alcohol allowed a grand opportunity for organized crime to thrive, as a black market commodity, marijuana has been an incredible cash crop, and cartels have been able to create a multi-billion dollar industry out of it, tax-free. Fortunately, people are starting to realize that it is wiser to bring that industry within the realms of legality instead of empowering the violence and irresponsibility of the black market. Since it has been legalized in a number of US states, its return to the free market has produced billions of dollars in only a few years, and is expected to contribute 35 billion dollars in revenue by the year 2020.¹¹¹

As a promising sign of things to come, in 2014, President Obama passed a limited hemp bill, and as of this writing, thirty-five states have legalized industrial hemp, which is a grand step in the right direction, with the potential to be a huge boon for agriculture and a number of more sustainable industries. Hemp is a far more versatile crop than any corn or soybean on the market, and it could completely revolutionize our agricultural, textile, and fuel industries. And although the federal government still agrees with Nixon that marijuana has no medical use, thirty-one states have made marijuana available for a variety of medical purposes.

Nine states have even started to legalize or decriminalize recreational marijuana as more people begin to agree with Terence McKenna's statement that "If the words 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' don't include the right to experiment with your own consciousness, then the Declaration of Independence isn't worth the hemp it was written on."

The stigma around marijuana that the non-renewable-resource industries manufactured is still held by almost as many Americans as those who use cannabis. Yet, regardless of any fabricated fears that still remain in the American psyche, more and more people are awakening to the reality that cannabis in any form has never posed as great a risk to the human condition as oil, coal, tobacco, cotton, caffeine, beef, pharmaceuticals, or timber.

Should states and citizens continue to overcome the fears manufactured about cannabis, the plant may offer a number of solutions for the challenges we face. "As we use our last reserves of petroleum and pollute our world drilling for oil in areas where an 'accident' can quickly become an enormous ecological disaster," Alan Archuleta wrote in *The Gospel of Hemp: How Hemp Can Save Our World*, "as our air becomes more and more polluted and unhealthy; as food, housing, energy, transportation, and clothing become less and less affordable; what can save the Earth and civilization? Hemp can!"

Archuleta speculates "Each acre of hemp can produce 1,000 gallons of methanol, which by a known catalytic process can be converted to 500 gallons of high-octane, lead-free gasoline. Hempseeds are 30 percent oil, and make a high-quality bio-diesel."

Hemp is now also being used to detoxify and regenerate radioactive soil, and has been one of the most useful treatments to the earth surrounding Chernobyl. I happen to think it would be a great crop to grow to restore the nutrients depleted by industrial agriculture, hilltop coal mining, and all the phosphate mining that destroys so much of my home state of Florida. I imagine it might also grow really well in abandoned oil fields and land that has been fracked.

Let's hope we embrace the freedom to find out.

THERE'S OIL IN THEM THERE BILLS!

*"The oil industry wants more highways,
not more streetcars and bicycles; more pipelines, not more solar panels."
- Richard Heinberg, *Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels**

Of course, the cannabis conspiracy wasn't the first time the oil industry was involved in such shenanigans, nor would it be the last. "Oil was first widely used around 1850 in Romania," Thom Hartmann writes in *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*. "The real boom began, however, in 1859, when oil was discovered in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in the United States. At that time, the world's population numbered just over one billion people, and the human race was fed both by the current sunlight falling on croplands and their animals' feed crops, and by a substantial amount of ancient sunlight that they dug up by burning coal taken from the Earth in Europe, Asia, and North America."¹²²

When oil companies got their starts, they were largely in the business of kerosene, which was mostly good for lighting and heating. However, the volatility of kerosene had its risks, and as houses were burning down around the country, John D. Rockefeller developed a way to refine oil in a more standardized way. Rockefeller's innovation revolutionized kerosene, and enabled Standard Oil to monopolize the market, making thirty-three year old John D. Rockefeller one of the most powerful people in the world. Although the Supreme Court would cite the Sherman

Antitrust Act of 1890 as the reason for dismantling Standard Oil in 1911, Rockefeller was still a stockholder in each of the thirty-three new companies, and the richest man in America.

“When Standard Oil was broken up in 1911,” writes Gar Alperovitz in *What Then Must We Do?: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution*, “the immediate effect was to replace a national monopoly with a number of regional monopolies controlled by many of the same Wall Street interests. Ultimately, the regional monopolies regrouped: In 1999 Exxon (formerly Standard Oil Company of New Jersey) and Mobil (formerly Standard Oil Company of New York) reconvened in one of the largest mergers in US history.”¹⁵⁷

Rockefeller's noted ruthlessness was extremely indicative of the early masters of capitalism, and his methods, often viewed as unethical, were mirrored in Cornelius Vanderbilt's intimidation tactics as he came to rule over the railroad industry. Although these methods put many others out of business through their “winner take all” monopolism, it still aligned with the value of self interest at the heart of capitalism, and their industries continued to prosper. On January 10, 1901, when the Hamil Brothers struck oil in what was considered to be barren Texas land, the United States skyrocketed to the top of the oil industry, and capitalism would never be the same.

Since oil could also be used to make synthetic fabrics like rayon, and would soon come to make nylon and polyester as well, Americans didn't have as great a need for wool or cotton, and eventually converted the land to pastures for beef and fields to grow their food.

“The massive leap in our food supply that began just after the Civil War caused our planet's population to go from just over one billion humans around the time of the discovery of oil to two billion in 1930,” Hartmann continues. “By then, we were beginning to use farm machinery extensively, and the use of oil as a means to increase agricultural production – from running tractors to converting oil into fertilizers to manufacturing pesticides – caused our food production to explode. While it had taken us

200,000 years to produce our first billion people, and 130 years to produce our second billion, the third took just 30 years.”

Over the course of the last century, petroleum has become America's go-to industry, as we have come to rely on it for everything from fuels and tools to foods and fabrics. As is evidenced by our accepted practice of creating “disposable” diapers out of a material that will not decompose for half a millennium, we have become addicted to it beyond common sense. Although the majority of the scientific community speaks to its effect on climate change and the fact that we are running out of oil, we've shown little initiative to replace it with anything better.

As a matter of fact, the American infrastructure was largely designed with oil in mind, along with the industries of cement, rubber, automobiles, insurance, trucking, chemicals, and construction industries that comprised the “Road Gang”. This crew of capitalists bought up and dismantled America's public transit system in order to get people buying cars before ushering in the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956. Unfortunately, the plot device of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, where the villain buys up the Cloverleaf trolley in order to build a freeway, was based on true events.

“During the greatest period of American highway construction,” writes Jeff Speck in *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step At A Time*, “General Motors was the largest private company in the world, and the secretary of defense was Charles Erwin Wilson, the former GM chief who had famously shared his belief that ‘what was good for the country was good for General Motors and vice versa.’”⁴⁶

Unfortunately, more consideration was given to how to increase profits than to increase quality of life, and ever since, Americans have come to resolutely embrace relying on having their own car so that every day, millions of Americans find themselves completely alone in traffic, addicted to the fossil fuel it takes for them to participate in society.

“The oil industry is much more dependent on

government handouts than is generally realized,” states Lester Brown in *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy*. “In 2013, governments worldwide subsidized the fossil fuel industry with over \$600 billion, giving this aging industry over five times the \$120 billion that went to renewables. About half of the fossil fuel subsidies went to boost oil consumption. In effect, taxpayers’ money is being used to subsidize climate change.”¹⁴⁸

One of the main problems with companies that make their money off of mining and drilling for natural resources is the assumption that they actually own the resources. Building on the noble idea of real estate that had been growing for years, as these companies acquired the land, they assumed the rights to whatever lies beneath as well. Leaning on the sanctity of this methodology, oil companies have spent the greater part of the last century sucking a shared resource from the ground and selling it back to us to build an empire in which the top five oil companies, all in the Fortune 500’s top ten list, reportedly reaped profits of 375 million dollars a day in 2011, according to *Think Progress*.⁴⁵ As much as one might want to embrace the merits of capitalism and honor the opportunities it may grant to entrepreneurs with gumption, when we have companies raking in 261,000\$ a minute, and not helping replenish the land they decimate, Adam Smith himself would probably rethink his theories on the benefits of self interest.

Yet, there are initiatives in the works to help us overcome this addiction. After low cost electric cars were killed in the Nineties due to their inability to contribute to the economy of endless consumption, the 34,000\$ 1996 General Motors EV1 still planted the seeds for the 109,000\$ 2008 Tesla Roadster, appeasing the gods of capitalism to grant a resurrection of the electric car. Of course, because the majority of the country still generates electricity through coal or nuclear power, respectively great perpetrators of pollution we cannot escape and waste that we cannot dispose of, it seems to be more of a limping diagonal move than a huge step forward.

However, Lester Brown promises that things are

looking up. "The worldwide transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy is under way. As fossil fuel resources shrink, as air pollution worsens, and as concerns about climate instability cast a shadow over the future of coal, oil, and natural gas, a new world energy economy is emerging. The old economy, fueled largely by coal and oil, is being replaced with one powered by solar and wind energy. We can now see this new economy starting to take shape. We saw it in 2016, when Denmark generated thirty-four percent of its electricity from the wind. In January 2014, wind supplied a whopping sixty-two percent of that country's electricity. Portugal and Spain each got over twenty percent of their power from wind in 2013, and Ireland produced seventeen percent. Indeed, on some days, wind power supplies half of Ireland's electricity. In Spain, wind is challenging nuclear power to become the country's leading source of electricity. And for several days in August 2014, electricity generated from wind in the United Kingdom eclipsed that from coal."¹⁴⁸

While initiatives toward the alternative energies offered by solar, wind, geothermal, tidal, hydrogen, and bio-fuel are being initiated throughout the world, they have not yet appeased the gods of American capitalism. While they are gaining ground in the hundreds of utility-scale solar power plants in development throughout the Southwest, Iowa and South Dakota are generating at least twenty-six percent of their electricity from wind farms, and Texas is now getting nearly ten percent of its electricity from wind power, the US still seems to be gaining very slow ground in the move toward sustainability beyond profit. As visionary as we like to think we are, the crux of our vision has been in the development of finance for the freedom that it simulates which, as we have been wading through the residue of such toxic productions as oil, tobacco, and money, has left us in quite a dissociative state.

Besides, the countries that are guiding these movements toward more efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally congruous advances tend to favor socialist methodologies, and America has shouted too loudly of those

evils to fully reconsider that notion. While Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign brought “democratic socialism” into the American lexicon, the competitive sensibilities inherent in winner-take-all capitalism provides a daunting challenge for those overly grounded in a sense of independence.

COMMUNISM CONSIDERED

*"Under capitalism, man exploits man.
Under communism, it's just the opposite."
- John Kenneth Galbraith*

When communism began to gain in popularity, those in the home of the brave got scared. Emboldened by their endeavors of capitalism, its criticism by Karl Marx in his 1867 book *Das Kapital*, that capitalist competition "ends in the ruin of many small capitalists, whose capitals partly pass into the hands of their conquerors"⁴⁷ was not a welcome perspective. Things were moving along at a really nice clip, and there weren't many who were willing to consider the idea that their system of wealth development would eventually concentrate the majority of the wealth into the hands of a few. And if they did, they were most likely hoping they would be one of the few, just as proponents of capitalism do today.

Nevertheless, to many of those who weren't rolling around in the wealth, but upon whose labor it was built, the ideas of communism didn't seem like such a bad thing. As factories developed, and people were forced to work excruciatingly long hours under often deplorable conditions, the concepts of protecting the rights of workers were a welcome reprieve to those who were working to increase the wealth of the community. Although Marx and Friedrich Engel, who co-wrote *The Communist Manifesto* together, had long since passed on, their writings gained popularity among the working class of America, and the Communist

Party started to grow in the United States.

Marx and Engels felt that industrialization through capitalism had a polarizing effect on society and that those who owned the means of production were taking unfair advantage of those who performed the labor. Their most ardent criticisms of capitalism were that the method of competition relies on having losers, results in monopolies of wealth and power, and lacks centralized planning, which creates inflation and depression, gives the wealthy inordinate control over the state, and produces economic disparity through the proliferation of economic classes of rich and poor.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,” they wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*. “Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”¹¹²

While America was still in the throes of delight over their version of democracy, Marx and Engels were also critical of representative government. “The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them.”

Their words appealed to the common people, and found a ripe audience in those who were already growing disillusioned with the American Dream. Yet with the fear of “abolition of private property” as the Communist end game, most Americans were still wary of having their dream taken away, as well as their property.

“You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property,” wrote Marx and Engel, “but in your existing society private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do

away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.”

The ideas that communism brought to light weren't necessarily anything new. Plato had discussed the concept of shared property in *The Republic*, Thomas More had shared his version of communal wealth in *Utopia*, many of the early Christian factions espoused the ideals, and other writers had addressed many other versions of more harmonious living situations than the incessant propagation of conquest and competition. However, as capitalism took hold as the *modus operandi* of the New World, this resurgence of thought came to America as a way to balance out the fervor of competition at all costs. For those who were already feeling the effects of these conditions, and those who sympathized with them, communism was a fresh and welcome perspective.

While the Communist Party did much to help establish labor unions and fight racial segregation in America, ultimately, it didn't establish a strong enough foothold to last. Part of the problem was that in the countries in which it did take hold, it was instituted in direct opposition to many of its own ideals. Instead of rising to power through the empowerment of workers, it was forced upon the citizenry through military might and further subjugation to the state.

Although Marx had said that “I do not like money, money is the reason we fight,” as his belief system was adopted by nations as a counterpoint to capitalism, communism itself became yet another reason to fight. Integrated by dictators like Joseph Stalin of Italy and Vladimir Lenin of Russia, communism morphed from a vision of communal bliss to a method of subjugation beyond even the inequality being established through capitalism. Due to the militaristic advancement of this means of cooperative living, those in America who saw the personal gain that capitalism offered highlighted this hypocrisy, and fanned the flames of “The Red Scare”.

After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, when communism became the prominent party in Russia, the first

Red Scare spread through America as a way to subdue the reformation of workers' rights. Although the Communist Party quickly grew to a membership of over 50,000 people, and had some influence in establishing better conditions for workers, the acceptance of communism was adequately squelched. When Russia's power increased in the 1950s, the second Red Scare was even more resolute in crushing the possible revolution.

As Senator Joseph McCarthy led the battle against communism in the United States, buoyed by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, the fear of this methodology was perpetuated throughout the media by portraying it as the antithesis to all things that Americans held dear. Now touted as godless heathenism, these same notions that had been embraced by early religious groups were tied to the growing military and nuclear threat of Russia and its warped version of communism, exacerbating yet more violence and inequality.

Building on Marx's view of religion as the "opiate of the masses" and his statement that "The first requisite for the happiness of the people is the abolition of religion," McCarthy and the movement he inspired instead used religion as a stimulant and resolutely divided the world into two halves. Ushering in the concept of a "cold war," McCarthy stated that "This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps—a time of a great armament race,"⁴⁸ and continued to paint communism as a "religion of immorality" that would "more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system."

In 1955, when 70% of Americans claimed to be Protestant and 22% claimed to be Catholic, McCarthy's task of repudiating communism was made much easier when Congress seized the notion of God as a capitalist doctrine and added "In God We Trust" to our money. Routing out suspected communists in the government and educational sectors while invoking a blacklist of suspected communists who were unable to work in the entertainment industry, McCarthy called his campaign "a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity," fusing the ideologies

of religion, democracy, and capitalism, thereby making capitalism sacrosanct and the only feasible means for the further development of civilization.

Although McCarthy established only two sides to political possibilities, and capitalism undoubtedly won out over its communist counterpart, Marx had seen capitalism as a necessary precursor to communism, as mankind worked through its issues and evolved into a more civilized community. However, McCarthy's fabricated dichotomy wasn't the only realm in which Marx saw room to grow. The battle of the sexes was another issue that was raising its head in this century as women were realizing that, although Marx did not get his way in the economic and political struggle, he was right when he pointed out that "Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex (the ugly ones included)." ⁴⁹

WOMEN WORK ON EQUALITY

*"A gender-equal society would be one where the word 'gender' does not exist:
where everyone can be themselves."*

- Gloria Steinem

Throughout most of what we consider human history, women were seen as the inferior half of the species. Beyond a few notable women being handed the keys to the kingdom due to their lineage, the majority of women were not included in discussions of politics, religion, or commerce. Based largely on the religious texts that had been written by men and featured an absolutely male deity, the woman's role was largely seen as a helpmate to man, who supposedly had been created in the image of God, and from whom women had been created as some sort of insignificant and largely irrelevant facsimile, aside from their ability to actually create life.

But in America, the fervor of freedom was spreading. As slaves had gained their freedom to become part of the new capitalist workforce, women became more and more disinclined to be subjugated to the role of the lesser citizen. American women followed the route of those in other nations, such as New Zealand, Australia, and Finland, in order to gain their right to vote. Still preceding many other industrialized nations, American women gained their right to participate in their democratic republic with the passing of the 19th Amendment in 1920, but the battle to get there had been a long one.

Many women had fought against the 14th

Amendment granting citizenship to slaves (providing that they were men) in 1868 and the 15th Amendment which gave people of other races besides Caucasians the right to vote (also providing that they were men) in 1870. For although America had granted rights to a portion of the population that had heretofore hardly even been considered as fully human, women were still relegated to the role of inferior subjects.

Yet just as racism continued beyond the 15th Amendment, sexism continued beyond the 19th. And while women would continue to fight for equality, and went so far as to draft the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 in order to prohibit discrimination based on gender, it was never ratified, and to this day, women still make significantly less than their masculine counterparts.

Nevertheless, women went to work, proving their viability to capitalism by joining men in the factories, and when men went off to fight World War II, women stayed home and made bombs for them to fight with. However, that wasn't the entire extent of women's contribution. As it turned out, as capitalism continued to expand its opportunities to turn people's labor into wealth, there were all sorts of things that women were good at which had previously been ascribed only to men.

As women found their place in the workforce, there began a movement which extolled their ability to be just as productive and significant as men. But although this rise of feminism sought to inculcate women's abilities to be self-sufficient and on an even par with men, instead of shining a light on the feminine virtues, it largely served to proffer the masculinization of women. With capitalism's reliance on mathematics as a means of harnessing and redistributing power, women were invited to be just as competitive and calculating as men, thereby diminishing what often makes women so wonderful in comparison to their masculine equivalents.

Although historically, women had been relegated to the less financially viable roles of raising children and establishing order in the household, their natural

inclinations toward compassion and caring were not as highly valued in the competition for which capitalism called. Nevertheless, as the demands of capitalism grew, women joined the workforce to sell off their time in order to increase the wealth with which they could help their households to prosper. Unfortunately, with the myopic view that earning money was of primary importance in this new regime of economic viability, their roles as homemakers were indubitably disrupted.

Ironically, just as the notion of the “nuclear family” was being purported as the optimal living arrangement, with father, mother, and children serving as the core of civilization, women were starting to dissolve their roles as the nucleus of this system by dividing their time between home and work. While the “god-fearing” system of capitalism continued to pay lip service to the ideals of “family values”, it was simultaneously wrenching women, both by choice and by necessity, from their roles as the family’s core component to just another mechanism of monetized labor. While many may argue that the breakdown of the American family is largely due to an influx of immorality, it can be equally argued that it is due to simple lack of family presence caused by our infatuation with industrialism.

Yet that is not to say that industrialization didn't have its positive effects on overcoming sexual inequality. “Industrialization, for all of its horrors and all of its nightmarish secondary effects,” wrote Ken Wilber in *A Brief History of Everything*, “was first and foremost a technological means to secure subsistence not from human muscle working on nature, but from machine power working on nature. As long as agrarian societies demanded physical human labor for subsistence (plowing), those societies inevitably and unavoidably placed a premium on male physical strength and mobility. No known agrarian society has anything even vaguely resembling women's rights.”

“It is not that all of a sudden, women became smart and strong and determined after a million years of oppression, dupedom, and sheepdom,” Wilber continues. “It

is that the social structures had evolved, for the first time in history, to a point that physical strength did not overwhelmingly determine power in culture. Biology was no longer destiny when it came to gender roles. Within a mere few centuries – a blink in evolutionary time – women had acted with lightning speed to secure legal rights to own property, to vote, and to 'be their own persons,' that is, to have a property in their own selves."¹⁰⁷

However, although all Americans had been freed from the tyranny of slavery, they were now enslaved by the time clock. And as their need for more creature comforts and the ability to claim more capital became more rapacious, men and women alike were drawn to the allure of industry and the monetary wealth that it promised. Yet since men had established the ability to create through the invention of the corporation, they had seemingly surpassed the woman's ability to generate new life by creating something that would produce much more wealth than a mere human offspring. A corporation was a mechanism that would eventually have the rights of a human, and the ability to own property and create as well. As the allure of capitalism continued to grow, men and women alike would seize the power of this refurbished construct to move beyond mere labor and into the realms of competitive commerce.

THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

*"The owners of this country know the truth...
it's called the American dream because you have to be asleep to believe it!"
- George Carlin*

In 1931, historian James Truslow Adams popularized the phrase "American Dream". In *Epic of America*, he writes, "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."⁵⁰

That dream seems to have come to its fullest fruition in the mid-20th century, and has been getting hazier ever since. According to the study "Economics and Happiness : Framing the Analysis" by Luigino Bruni and Pier Luigi Porta, America seems to have hit its peak happiness levels in 1956. Unfortunately, as happy as we think all of our technologies, industriousness, and ostentatiousness make us, and even though our average income has skyrocketed, Americans only reached a peak of about forty on the "very happy" scale.⁵¹ It

may seem hard to believe with each of us having our own cars, domiciles, TVs, and personal gizmos with which we whittle away our time and attention, but there is much room for us to be happier.

They were good times in 1956. Thanks to a higher rate of economic equality, almost everyone had spending power, making social mobility possible. And thanks to the GI Bill, some 7.8 million veterans had been able to come home from war and learn to do something else with their lives, helping them to deal with the horrors they had experienced through education and productivity. With suburbia on the brink of popularity, the American Dream was seemingly available for everyone, with just a little hard work and optimism. Crime was down, and as quarter acre kingdoms sprouted up across the land, the middle class had some nobility to reach for as they claimed their own segments of real estate.

Adams went on to expand upon The American Dream, stating that it “has not been a dream of merely material plenty,” but that it “has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.”

Unfortunately, though America extolled the virtues of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it was still built on older civilizations. Though the classes weren't as pronounced as they had been in other times and places, they were still there, and the seams of repression were still showing. While America seemed to have it as good as it could possibly get, many Americans grew dissatisfied with the good life that had been manufactured to keep industry thriving and the economy growing, and within the decade, our happiness began to decline.

As the youth of the Sixties watched their mothers join their fathers in the workplace, they began to become disillusioned with the premise of the forty-hour workweek, suburban landscapes, and the support of the military

industrial complex of which Eisenhower had warned. They grew wary of the “rat race” and the sense of community which had been lost amid the racism, sexism, greed, and classism the prevailing government and religion had wrought. As they sought the peace and love of which Jesus had spoke, they explored Eastern religions and taboo hallucinogens for the eternal life beyond the dogmas and structures of the dominant culture, heading off to find themselves and leaving familial traditions behind.

As the Hippies and Yippies made off to break free from the societal norms of patriarchy and industrialism, the rest of society was also experiencing shifts in the ideas of monogamy and sexuality. The sexual revolution broke the bonds of the nuclear family and expanded sexuality beyond the confines of marriage, ushering in movements of more openness in homosexuality, spouse-swapping, pornography, and feminism. With pharmacology now offering women the opportunity to control their own reproduction through birth control pills, women found much greater freedom to control their own sexual destinies, a heretofore unknown premise in the predominant culture of patriarchy.

“Each and every time an unmarried woman had intercourse,” as Nancy L. Cohen writes in *Delirium: How the Sexual Counterrevolution is Polarizing America*, “she risked pregnancy, and with it a limited number of unsavory life-changing options: an illegal abortion of doubtful safety, a shotgun wedding, forced adoption, or single motherhood of a child whose birth certificate would be stamped for posterity with the word ‘illegitimate’. With rare exceptions, all known human cultures have policed the sexual behavior of girls and women, and America, circa 1959, was no different. Before women obtained the power to control their fertility, they had compelling reasons to comply with whatever arbitrary double standard their society imposed. The Pill permanently changed women’s age-old pragmatic calculus. With a little pharmaceutical ingenuity, the double standard relaxed its clawing grip on female humanity.”⁵²

“Before the revolution,” Cohen goes on, “the whims of men determined the reputation, if not the fate, of women;

female desire was contained within the closet of marriage; and men retained their traditional sexual privileges and discreetly enjoyed their sexual liberties. After the revolution, women, if they so chose, could dispense with men, or with marriage altogether, without giving up sex or children or a lifetime loving relationship. Of course, most women continued to love men, marry men, and have children with men. The point, however, was that for the first time in human history, women had a choice.”

However, while women were embracing new roles of participation in the workplace, in the voting booth, and in the bedroom, the male-dominated publishing industry started to convey women in a much less revolutionary light, as pin up girls and eye candy.

“The sexual revolutionaries of the 1960s,” Naomi Wolf states in *Vagina: A New Biography*, “including advocates for ‘adult’ material such as Hugh Hefner and Al Goldstein, represented porn to us as a great social radicalizer. But a nation of masturbating people who are looking at screens rather than at one another - who are consuming sex like any other product and who are rewiring their brains to find less and less abandon and joy in one another’s arms, and to bond more and more with pixels - is a subjugated, not a liberated, population.”⁵³

As pornography has blossomed into a multi-billion dollar a year industry since *Playboy* first hit the newsstands in 1953, rivaling the bottled water industry in 2012,⁵⁴ the new rite of passage for young men learning about female sexuality through air-brushed poses and emotionally detached fantasies has created an indelible rift in our understanding and appreciation for sacred sexuality. “For the first time in history,” Naomi Wolf wrote in *The Beauty Myth*, “children are growing up whose earliest sexual imprinting derives not from a living human being, or fantasies of their own; since the 1960s pornographic upsurge, the sexuality of children has begun to be shaped in response to cues that are no longer human... Today’s children and young men and women have sexual identities that spiral around paper and celluloid phantoms: from

Playboy to music videos to the blank females torsos in women's magazines, features obscured and eyes extinguished, they are being imprinted with a sexuality that is mass-produced, deliberately dehumanizing and inhuman."⁵⁵

The embracing of pornography by men who were trying to understand the feminine amid this change of protocol, fanned the flames of disenfranchisement and exacerbated the separation for which suburbanism had laid the groundwork. While the sexual revolution helped pave new roads for women, homosexuals, and others who were seeking more freedom of sexual expression and more equality between the sexes, it also helped incite the breakdown of the familial unit, which had come to be the cornerstone of American life.

"Like the waning of Christianity," writes Mary Eberstadt in *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization*, "the waning of the traditional family means that all of us in the modern West lead lives our ancestors could not have imagined. We are less fettered than they in innumerable ways; we are perhaps the freest people in the history of all humanity. At the same time, we are also more deprived of the consolations of tight bonds of family and faith known to most of the men and women coming before us—and this fact, it will be argued, has had wider repercussions than have yet been understood."⁵⁶

After the high point of happiness and the purported fulfillment of the American Dream, the backlash of its climax was the decline of enthusiasm for all that it apparently offered. The breakdown of the nuclear family unit also contributed to the dissolution of the Judeo/Christian tradition that had spawned it. Although a band of Hippies did manage to splinter off into the movement of the "Jesus People" in the early 1970s when only 5% of adults reported no religious affiliation, according to the General Social Survey of the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, by 1990, it was 8% and by 2014, that number grew to 21%.⁵⁷

Without these last remaining vestiges of

interdependence in a culture which had given way to consumerism, the continued decline set the stage for the complete actualization of the purported selfishness which would make capitalism fully thrive.

THE ME GENERATION

*"In an individual, selfishness uglifies the soul;
for the human species, selfishness is extinction."*

- David Mitchell, Cloud Atlas

"By the 1960s the common man was also getting quite interested in this business of 'realizing his potential as a human being,'" wrote Tom Wolfe in 1976 for *New York Magazine*. "But once again he crossed everybody up! Once more he took his money and ran—determined to do-it-himself!"⁵⁸

As the Hippies and Yippies grew in number throughout the 1960s, reaching for a higher sense of community and creativity, and a more peaceful existence than industrialism had to offer, they came to take on the military industrial complex and its war in Vietnam, from which veterans returned to picket signs instead of educations, as at the height of America's happiness. Trying to fight those who had devoted themselves to fighting, the Hippie movement was crushed, and disillusionment continued as the fragmented got jobs in the auspices of industrialism. Their faith diminished in the aftermath of not beating the system, they joined it again, and re-assumed the program as the tide of capitalism promised to raise all boats to float on the currency of money.

Dubbing this movement "The Me Generation", Wolfe went on to describe the changes being sought in people's lives and livelihoods. "The old alchemical dream was changing base metals into gold. The new alchemical dream

is: changing one's personality—remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very self... and observing, studying, and doting on it. (Me!) This had always been an aristocratic luxury, confined throughout most of history to the life of the courts, since only the very wealthiest classes had the free time and the surplus income to dwell upon this sweetest and vainest of pastimes. It smacked so much of vanity, in fact, that the noble folk involved in it always took care to call it quite something else."

With a generation no longer assimilating the traditions of community, family, and religion as previous generations had, the American population adapted their devotion to honor the two things that could replace what they had lost, money and drugs. In a civilization built upon money as its foundation, finance was the obvious replacement for God, due to its omnipresence throughout virtually every aspect of culture and its ability to exceed God in forgiving moral indiscretions and universal ethics. Throughout the 1980s, as Gordon Gekko established in *Wall Street*, the prevailing ethic proclaimed that "Greed is Good." Without the structure of community, family, and religion, and the reservations of inhibition which accompany them, Americans were free to revel in the release of at least a few levels of authority and embrace the hedonism and selfishness money had to offer.

"The capitalist-consumerist ethic is revolutionary in another respect," says Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens*. "Most previous ethical systems presented people with a pretty tough deal. They were promised paradise, but only if they cultivated compassion and tolerance, overcame craving and anger, and restrained their selfish interests. This was too tough for most. The history of ethics is a sad tale of wonderful ideals that nobody can live up to. Most Christians did not imitate Christ, most Buddhists failed to follow Buddha, and most Confucians would have caused Confucius a temper tantrum.

"In contrast," Harari continues, "most people today successfully live up to the capitalist-consumerist ideal. The new ethic promises paradise on condition that the rich

remain greedy and spend their time making more money, and that the masses give free rein to their cravings and passions - and buy more and more. This is the first religion in history whose followers actually do what they are asked to do.”²

In the culture of consumerism, whether we are consuming money, drugs, foods, products, or natural resources, we are still consumed by the desire to replace what we have lost in our lack of religious faith, hope of community, and love of family. Yet the benefits of this culture are just enough to keep us lulled into satisfaction through immediate gratification and the unbridled pursuit of pleasure. Unfortunately, as our disillusionment has continued to increase, we are now faced with a population steeped in addictions as an after effect of embracing so much of what is outside of us in order to fill the chasm within.

Although the journey of the Hippies and Yippies didn't ultimately raise their vibrations to the alignment with Divinity they sought, the drugs that had helped boost them high enough still had their pleasurable benefits. Despite the “War on Drugs” that Nixon started, over the next few decades, drugs became the go-to method for altering our realities in order to exist amid the reality that had been manufactured around us. Yet as Nixon and Nancy Reagan led the charge against the recreational drugs of marijuana, cocaine, and their accompanying illegal cartels, the pharmaceutical industry capitalized on the apparent demand for numbness, and supplied legal drugs to help people deal with the breakdown of the culture they had known.

However, not all favored the chemical route to euphoria. Although the generation was defined by the individual, even when self-fulfillment didn't involve the addition of supplementary chemical sedation, much of what has been celebrated over the last few decades has involved the glorification of things outside the individual, the unyielding collection of stuff, and an unhealthy obsession with materialism.

Lost in a sea of failed myths and limiting beliefs, we embraced an off-kilter economic system and general distrust

for those who share our world with us. Instead of leaning on family, faith, and community, we put our trust in corporations to provide for us as they had during our previous period of prosperity.

CORPORATIONS GET A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

"I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial by strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

- Thomas Jefferson

After corporations saw a resurgence in the Middle Ages, their use was refined in the 18th century. In developing its use in England in 1793, Stewart Kyd wrote in *A Treatise on the Law of Corporations* that a corporation was "a collection of many individuals united into one body, under a special denomination, having perpetual succession under an artificial form, and vested, by policy of the law, with the capacity of acting, in several respects, as an individual, particularly of taking and granting property, of contracting obligations, and of suing and being sued, of enjoying privileges and immunities in common, and of exercising a variety of political rights, more or less extensive, according to the design of its institution, or the powers conferred upon it, either at the time of its creation, or at any subsequent period of its existence."⁶⁰

As corporations were adapted to life in the United States, individual states were initially able to impose their own conditions on them, limiting their abilities and making them more manageable. Some corporations were granted charters for only a limited time, as they were initially intended during the Roman Empire. Some were not able to

own property or stock in other corporations, and some were forbidden from participating in political activity.

Yet as the use of corporations became more ingrained into the culture, many of these limitations fell by the wayside as corporations helped establish a more vibrant economy and buoyed the fervor of capitalism. In 1818, the United States Supreme Court first granted a corporation the same rights as a natural person to enforce a contract in the case of *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*. Decades later, in the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, the Supreme Court reiterated the notion that corporations had legal standing and were protected as people under the Bill of Rights.

But it wasn't until *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that the Supreme Court would loudly and proudly declare the personhood of corporations and the rights that these faceless entities had as citizens. Despite the limitations that had been placed on corporations, and the role they could play in the political arena through the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments, and the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the non-profit organization *Citizens United* wanted the ability to launch an anti-Hillary Clinton campaign. Their efforts to promote partisanship through propaganda ensured that the rights of personhood were not only extended to non-profit corporations, be they benevolent or benign, but they were also granted to for-profit corporations. It was this decision that summarily opened the floodgates for corporate monies to openly infiltrate the democratic process and push the United States government from aristocracy to oligarchy.

Paul Hawken describes a corporation as “a social machine with interchangeable parts and processes that can be measured, predicted, manipulated. They can be bought and sold, broken up and reassembled. Because managers manage corporations, it is difficult to see that corporations also run themselves. They have a powerful inertia toward given goals, and if one manager cannot accomplish those goals, he or she is very likely to be replaced until one is found who can. A corporation, like other technologies – nuclear

power plants, airplanes, and vacuum cleaners – has an inherent, internal logic that transcends what you and I may think it is. It has a life of its own, especially since ownership can be diffused, broken into pieces, sold and inherited, and is essentially fungible. A corporation, although created and peopled by human beings, does not depend on any of them in order to exist. Founders die, so do their families; directors and managers come and go; workers have become essentially interchangeable components, particularly where the work involves repetitive, industrial tasks. In short, corporations are not quasi-sacred institutions like the PTA. We should think of them as a useful technology that we can employ to accomplish productive, economic tasks, nothing more, nothing less.”

In 1776, there were 2.5 million people and 7 corporations in America. In 2015, there were 321.4 million people and 9 million corporations. Although it sometimes seems dire as our system is getting mired in corporate control, it should also be noted that the US also now has roughly 23 million sole proprietorships, a number that has been steadily on the rise since 1980, when there were just over 5 million sole proprietorships and more C corporations than exist today. Granted, there are probably fewer C corps because they have all been merging into monopolies, yet the steady rise in entrepreneurship reveals a population still in touch with its healthy roots of independence and ingenuity in a truly free market.

The original purpose for a corporation, as it is with many man-made machines, was to serve a purpose for the betterment of human society and be dissolved when the need was met. It was not the intention of the creators of the corporation for us to become so dependent upon these tools of thought that we would reach the point where we are living to serve them. The purpose of these imagined entities was merely to coordinate the activities of humans to achieve a common goal and be rewarded in the process.

Yet many of us have begun to imagine them as some sort of eternal beings upon which our very survival depends, and some of us have made the reward more important than

the true goal of service to humanity. And to the detriment of our entire existence, many of those corporations do nothing more than turn resources into money with no true value. It is time that we give some more thought to what corporations truly are, what functions they are truly capable of serving, how long they should be empowered to fulfill said functions, and what assortment of endeavors conscious entrepreneurs can involve themselves with which to create the most effective changes in their communities and most diverse channels of residual financial flow as rewards for their realization of abundance.

“There is a profound contradiction between the transformative values that America was founded on and the power wielded by corporations,” continues Paul Hawken in *The Ecology of Commerce*. “America was created by men and women trying to escape the oppression of governments and organizations in which individuals had no voice, no influence, and no participation. The social unrest that became the American Revolution was preceded by what the authors of the Declaration of Independence called ‘a long train of abuses.’ Because of the colonies’ distance from England and the relatively new freedoms experienced in what was then a frontier country, colonists could sharply delineate the structural relationship between the crown and the citizenry. Today, the unbalanced and unequal relationship between authority and the governed is being played out within the city-states that we call the modern corporation, and unlike times past, the distinctions between our private lives and corporate rights have become blurred and confused.”¹¹³

Since they were entitled to the rights of humans, corporations were also entitled to welfare. Although capitalism as a theory reveres the competitive component of its off-kilter Darwinism, and though it is usually quite cold-hearted to those who fail because they can’t keep pace, when larger companies that employ a lot of people fall on hard times, even the most ardent capitalist can find benevolence, provided their charity case makes money. It is important to recognize that corporations, like money, can be very helpful

for organizing, collaborating, and achieving great things for both the general public's well-being and the immediate benefit of the participants. However, when they fail at their own game, the repercussions, as we saw from the recession of 2008, can be extraordinary. Unfortunately, it happens all too often.

PLAYING WITH BUBBLES

*"Any intelligent fool can invent further complications,
but it takes a genius to retain, or recapture, simplicity."*

- Ernst F. Schumacher

Of course, in the grand scheme of things, the most recent recession isn't some sort of isolated anomaly. According to Wikipedia, there have been forty-seven economic recessions since America instituted capitalism as the driving economic force, and fourteen since the Great Depression. Although defenders of finance claim that the capitalist system brings security and stability, with an average of more than one recession per decade for the last century, that sort of security doesn't seem as stable as adherents want to think it is.

"There is a multitude of real assets in the world which constitutes our capital wealth," the father of modern macroeconomics John Maynard Keynes pointed out in one of his essays, "buildings, stocks of commodities, goods in the course of manufacture and of transport, and so forth. The nominal owners of these assets, however, have not infrequently borrowed money in order to become possessed of them. To a corresponding extent the actual owners of wealth have claims, not on real assets, but on money."¹³⁶

Due to the shortsightedness of the financial economy and the delusion that a man-made creation like money will follow some sort of natural law, we have found ourselves putting way too many of our eggs into a very flimsy basket. When economist Hyman Minsky pointed out the instability

of our financial system a few decades ago, he was largely laughed at and ignored. However, after the crash of 2008, economists began to revisit his work.

In 1974, Minsky wrote that "a fundamental characteristic of our economy is that the financial system swings between robustness and fragility and these swings are an integral part of the process that generates business cycles."¹³⁵ In order to use money to create profit through this boom and bust scenario we keep playing out, we rely on the "Greatest Fool" theory to enact what Minsky stated were the five stages to the credit cycle: displacement, boom, euphoria, profit taking, and panic.

Displacement generally occurs when some fools who already have money find some way to make more, displacing their energy from a place of balanced equilibrium to yearning and excitement. When they get other fools excited and involved in their scheme, a boom is created, the price of whatever they're selling goes up, and more fools keep buying it. As money moves from account to account and more fools get involved, the illusion of abundance creates a euphoria in which participating fools look for fools greater than themselves to pay exorbitant prices for something they didn't even know they wanted. When the more advanced players of the game realize they've taken advantage of as many fools as they can, they cash out and take their profits, which pops the bubble everyone's been inflating, resulting in a panic when everyone else realizes they've just been fooled.

Although economists, and people in general, are becoming more aware of the inevitability of bubbles like this occurring in the financial market, none have really come up with any good ways to get around them. Indeed, while it may seem foolish for people to pay inflated prices for something beyond its intrinsic value, considering that the US dollar has no intrinsic value itself, it would seem that putting so much emphasis on its value as to wager the entirety of the economy on it is equally, if not even more foolish.

By making money of prime importance in our economy, we actually make our true economy less stable. As Paul Hawken reminded, "The ultimate purpose of business is

not, or should not be, simply to make money. Nor is it merely a system of making and selling things. The promise of business is to increase the general well-being of humankind through service, a creative invention, and ethical philosophy. Making money is, on its own terms, totally meaningless, an insufficient pursuit for the complex and decaying world we live in. We have reached an unsettling and portentous turning point in industrial civilization.”¹¹³

“Capitalism began as a theory about how the economy functions,” explains Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens*. “It was both descriptive and prescriptive – it offered an account of how money worked and promoted the idea that reinvesting profits in production leads to fast economic growth. But capitalism gradually became far more than just an economic doctrine. It now encompasses an ethic – a set of teachings about how people should behave, educate their children and even think. Its principal tenet is that economic growth is the supreme good, or at least a proxy for the supreme good, because justice, freedom, and even happiness, all depend on economic growth.”²

What we did not understand when we started keeping ledgers, minting coins, printing dollars, or even developing stock, was that every time we create a unit of money, we have to make it out of something. Although it seems that every derivative, speculation, hedge fund, or unit of interest that creates each of these bubbles is made of nothing more than empty promises, to make a dollar requires the churning of the earth, the labor of humans, the development of waste, and much more activity than is probably necessary. Should this activity lead to a higher quality of life for the entirety of the planet, great, but when it's only serving a small and selfish fraction of the population, leaving the rest merely tired, worn, and emptied, it seems much more costly to the rest of the planet and future generations.

Like money itself, the tools for turning finance into capital, instead of actual, tangible reality, are largely the products of human imagination. These days, players in the financial market are given all sorts of interesting imaginary

toys through which they can speculate about what could possibly be, derived from mortgage backed securities, credit default swaps, collateralized debt obligations, and CDO tranches, both squared and cubed. All of these fancy terms are thrown around in a flurry of excitement, and a lot of money moves from account to account, but very little of it actually affects the lives of everyday people, other than the natural resources, personal property, and human labor that must be sacrificed in order to enable these fools to continue blowing bubbles. Likewise, other than the players of the game who get their accounts to grow, few are really being served.

As Minsky said, “The capital development of a capitalist economy is accompanied by exchanges of present money for future money.”¹³⁴ Unfortunately, we are sacrificing quality of life for the future of Earth by following the “very type of short-term, risky thinking that nearly toppled the global economy in 2008... widening the gap between rich and poor, hampering economic progress, and threatening the future of the American Dream itself,” Foroohar reminds us in *Makers and Takers*.

Our preoccupation with money and the shortsightedness of the materialism it represents is indeed indicative of the immaturity of our society. For Americans especially, compared to other industrialized nations, we are mere teenagers in our development.

“We live in an adolescent society,” asserts Daniel Prokop in *Leaving Neverland: Why Little Boys Shouldn't Run Big Corporations*, “Neverland, where never growing up seems more the norm than the exception. Little boys wearing expensive suits and adult bodies should not be allowed to run big corporations. They shouldn't be allowed to run governments, armies, religions, small businesses, and charities either, and just quietly, they make pretty shabby husbands and fathers too. Mankind has become Pankind and whilst 'lost boys' abound, there is also an alarming increase in the number of 'lost girls.’”

Ultimately, if we are giving the greater amount of our energies, intentions, talents, skills, and resources for the

sake of merely making money instead of providing avenues toward food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education, and opportunity for all, we must question if we are dealing with simple folly, or if we have delved into outright insanity. In describing *The Sane Society*, Eric Fromm offered a pointed reminder about the dangers of an insane society. "The fact that millions of people share the same vices does not make these vices virtues, the fact that they share so many errors does not make the errors to be truths, and the fact that millions of people share the same form of mental pathology does not make these people sane."

After all, we are now a society that imagines that corporations, with no hearts, minds, bodies, or spirits, are actually people and deserving of the same rights as human beings. In our myopic pursuit of value's proxy, we have sacrificed a great amount of true wealth, and must truly reconcile ourselves with whether or not it has been worth it. More importantly, we should ask ourselves if we should continue with our quest for the elusive lucre.

"The potency of industrial systems is overwhelming," explains Paul Hawken in *The Ecology of Commerce*. "No culture in the world has been able to resist the allure, convenience, ease, and wonder of materialism. Industrial corporations have overturned thousands of years of beliefs and practices, sometimes overnight, replacing cultural traditions that linked human welfare to deities and great natural laws with a managerial system that showed how mankind could intervene with, overturn, and even replace natural law with engineering, mechanics, technology, and systems. The growing power of corporations has not been accompanied by any comprehensive philosophy, any ethical construct, other than the accumulation of wealth as an end in itself. Very few principles guide the commercial conduct of corporations other than those randomly adduced or self-proclaimed. Everyone – managers, employees, customers – is left in limbo."

Repeatedly, when the bubbles have burst every decade or so, we feel the repercussions of chasing these delusions, drowning ourselves in the ineptitude of our folly.

We invest so much of our lives, our hopes, and our resources into this system of finance and the freedom it promises, yet we continually find ourselves disillusioned, and few of us stop to ask why. Is making money really the point of our being here and creating this thing we call civilization? Especially when, like in 2017, 82% of the profit developed in the United States went to 1% of the population, the rest of us should be asking, "Is all this really necessary?"

Every time we see a growth in monetary profits, a rise in GDP, or any other way to make more money, we're indoctrinated to think that all is great in the world, and for the world. However, if every minor financial bubble humans inflate bursts, isn't it reasonable to assume that one day the entire structure will burst as well? Could it be that the reason hedge funds, derivatives, and speculations so often evolve into Ponzi schemes is because the foundation of the system is a Ponzi scheme in itself?

THE FINESSE OF FINANCE

"Nature shrinks as capital grows.

The growth of the market cannot solve the very crisis it creates."

- Vandana Shiva, Soil Not Oil.

Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis

When financial giant Bear Stearns started to hemorrhage because the subprime mortgage scheme started to fall apart in 2008, the staggering giant caused a ripple of instability throughout the financial sector, which had long overtaken tobacco as the United States' key industry. Seven hundred and nine of the most successful financial institutions in the country had to be bailed out after proving themselves not to be as good at their own game as they thought. Unfortunately, the financial industry is essentially based on imaginary scenarios and unsustainable practices that have the potential to deplete the world's resources in order to put numbers in a ledger. Yet with the way they have come to seemingly dominate our economic system, we seem beholden to their existence.

"Although the essential nature of commerce has not altered since the very first exchange of coin for corn," Hawken points out in *The Ecology of Commerce*, "the power and impact of corporate capitalism have increased so dramatically as to dwarf all previous forms of international power. No empire – Greek, Roman, Byzantine, British, or any other – has had the reach of the modern global corporation, which glides easily across borders, cultures, and governments in search of markets, sales, assets, and profits. This institutional concentration of human energy and creativity is unparalleled in history."¹¹³

Due to the fact that finance has become the crux of our economy, our economic stability has been teetering for years as value has moved from human labor to speculative finance.

“Finance holds a disproportionate amount of power in sheer economic terms,” writes Rana Foroohar in *Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business*. “It represents about seven percent of our economy but takes around twenty-five percent of all corporate profits, while creating only four percent of all jobs.”¹²⁹

Indeed, America has been resolute in enriching the value of the dollar. As the supreme leader in the global financial market, we have a lot riding on the financial system we've created. With the debt we've developed and the arrogant way we've coerced the rest of the world into competitive consumerism, our doubling down on the dollar as the source of our well-being and the true god we serve, we have a lot at stake and seem fully intent to stand until our gamble fully busts.

“While there are other countries that have a larger banking sector as a percentage of their overall economy,” Foroohar explains, “no country beats the United States in the size of its financial system as a whole (meaning, if you tally up the value of all financial assets). In the first half of 2015, the United States boasted \$81.7 trillion worth of financial assets – more than the combined total of the next three countries (China, Japan, and the United Kingdom). We are at the forefront of financialization; our financiers and politicians like to brag that America has the world's broadest and deepest capital markets. But contrary to the conventional wisdom of the last several decades, that isn't a good thing. All this finance has not made us more prosperous. Instead, it has deepened inequality and ushered in more financial crises, which destroy massive amounts of economic value each time they happen. Far from being a help to our economy, finance has become a hindrance. More finance isn't increasing our economic growth – it is slowing it.”

Many will point to the whopping size of our GDP as

some sort of sign as to how well we're doing. However, considering that the majority of the profits gained through these games of finance are being absorbed by a very small percentage of the population, that magic number is becoming less and less impressive. In the meantime, Americans who don't live in gated communities are experiencing stagnant wages and higher costs of living, and many are not even getting their basic needs met.

“For a long time in American society,” says Paul Hawken in *The Ecology of Commerce*, “a large number of people thought they were advancing under the guidance and direction of commerce. As long as we could identify the improvements in the quality of our existence with the continuing growth and influence of big business, criticism of and dissatisfaction with the system were generally discounted or ignored. But during the past twenty years our standard of living has not increased, real wages have not risen, and, for the very first time since the Industrial Revolution, our work week is getting longer, not shorter – a literally epochal development, barely remarked upon in the press.”

Considering that the majority of the financial industry is based on speculation, it could be said that should America continue in its trend of promoting finance as their key industry, its biggest export will ultimately be bullshit. “Finance, after all, is not a consumer product or service, valued in itself, like a car or a restaurant meal or clothing,” wrote Adair Turner in *Between Debt and the Devil: Money, Credit, and Fixing Global Finance*. “No one gets up in the morning and says ‘I feel like enjoying some financial services today.’ Finance is a necessary function to enable the production of the goods and services we actually enjoy.”¹³¹

We have to ask ourselves if it is really all that necessary a function. Considering that its activity requires a vast amount of human energy and natural resources to create goods and services that we might enjoy, but are ultimately harmful to our planet, ourselves, and our future, is it wise to continue worshipping the gods of finance as a our providers?

In *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* by Paul Hawken and L. Hunter Lovins, capitalism, as currently practiced, is defined as “a financially profitable, nonsustainable aberration in human development. What might be called 'industrial capitalism' does not fully conform to its own accounting principles. It liquidates its capital and calls it income. It neglects to assign any value to the largest stocks of capital it employs – the natural resources and living systems, as well as the social and cultural systems that are the basis of human capital.”¹³²

The American economy, comprised of less than five percent of the world population, has been largely built on a game of speculative numbers representing an idealized currency with no material backing. This teetering giant has also become the consumer of “one-third of the world's paper, a quarter of the world's oil, twenty-three percent of the coal, twenty-seven percent of the aluminum, and nineteen percent of the copper.”¹³⁰ We would be wise to rethink our position in the world and where we are setting our priorities.

Given that the money we've been using to drive all of this energy into a few people's bank accounts with a fiat currency makes it all the more disparaging. The harsh reality is that we have all been duped. The harsher reality is that we have been complicit in the duping.

“From 'activist investors' to investment banks, from management consultants to asset managers, from high-frequency traders to insurance companies, today, financiers dictate terms to American business rather than the other way around,” says Foroohar in *Makers and Takers*. “Wealth creation within the financial markets has become an end in itself, rather than a means to the end of shared economic prosperity. The tail is wagging the dog.”

Granted, most of us wanted this thing to work out. The only reason anyone has ever signed on for the American experiment is because they wanted a better life for themselves and their progeny. When the masterminds of finance sold us this idea, it sounded really good. Unfortunately, the supposed masterminds were dealing with imaginary numbers instead of actual life, most recently

resulting in the crash of 2008 and the ensuing Great Recession. If there's any truth to films like *Boiler Room* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, it may very well be that they were coked up or otherwise medicated when they came up with their plans.

"The economic harm caused by this crisis has been enormous," continues Turner. "Millions of people lost homes because of unaffordable debts; millions also suffered unemployment. The percentage of the US population that is employed fell to a 35-year low, and despite limited recovery after 2013, is still far below pre-crisis level."

Yet the burden of this shortsightedness has not merely fallen on Mom and Pop just trying to make things work on Main Street, but possibly for generations to come. "Across the advanced economies overall bailout and support costs will be at most 3% of GDP," Turner continues. "The full economic cost of the crash and post-crisis recession is far bigger. On average in advanced economies public debt increased by 34% of GDP between 2007-2014. But even more importantly, national incomes and living standards in many countries are 10% or more below where they could have been and are likely to remain there, not for a year, but for year after year in perpetuity."

"The financial crisis of 2008," reminds Foroohar in *Makers and Takers*, "was followed by the longest and weakest economic recovery of the post-World War II era. While the top tier of society is now thriving, most everyone else is still struggling. We need a dramatically different balance of power between finance and the real economy – between the takers and the makers – to ensure better and more sustainable growth."

The sad fact is that with as much excitement as we've created about the possibilities of capitalism while putting all of our eggs in the basket of finance, we haven't been thoroughly realistic with our prospects. Hawken and Lovins go on to explain in *Natural Capitalism*, "The past two hundred years of massive growth in prosperity and manufactured capital have been accompanied by a prodigious body of economic theory analyzing it, all based on

the fallacy that natural and human capital have little value as compared to final output. In the standard industrial model, the creation of value is portrayed as a linear sequence of extraction, production, and distribution: Raw materials are introduced. (Enter Nature, stage left.) Labor uses technologies to transform these resources into products, which are sold to create profits. The wastes from production processes, and soon the products themselves, are somehow disposed of somewhere else. (Exit waste, stage right.) The 'somewhere' in this scenario are not the concern of classical economics: Enough money can buy enough resources, so the theory goes, and enough 'elsewheres' to dispose of them afterward."

Yet after the financial market has turned all of the planet's resources into valueless numbers in a computer, and all of our "elsewheres" have been turned into wastelands, will we then be able to enjoy the freedom we've sold ourselves for? Is it possible to come to a point of balance before we sacrifice all that we hold dear in order to further inflate the already bursting accounts of the masters of the financial game? Or are the dystopian prophecies correct in their portrayal of man overcome by machine, our fate sealed as slaves to our own creation?

There is a plethora of apocalyptic science fiction that has grown from our fascination with global capitalism, from Big Brother to Cyberdine, and there is good cause for that. As Tim Jackson writes in *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*, "Every society clings to a myth by which it lives. Ours is the myth of economic growth."⁶¹

Unfortunately, our myth isn't sustainable, as Yuval Noah Harari points out in *Sapiens*, "Capitalism's belief in perpetual economic growth flies in the face of almost everything we know about the universe,"² and the outcomes of this scenario offer quite a few unpleasant possibilities.

In *This Spaceship Earth*, David Houle and Tim Rumage point out that "The concept of unlimited growth might have been a survival idea first, and then an economic concept, but it now threatens our survival. The depth to

which our economic ideas from the past pervade our thoughts today puts us at peril.”¹¹⁴

The problem is as Edward Abbey stated it: “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

Humans have become quite addicted to the idea of measuring out life's worth in monetary amounts for every facet of our being, even to the point of sacrificing the well-being of our neighbors and ourselves for the benefit of a “legal fiction”. It's pretty safe to say that American economics is a bit off kilter. We are, fortunately, coming to a stage in the game where a great enough number of people are starting to imagine a version of reality in which we are able to turn the tide and save our species. But for that to happen, we must overcome our delusions.

“If capitalism has one pervasive untruth,” Hawken tells us in *The Ecology of Commerce*, “it is the delusion that business is an open, linear system; that through resource extraction and technology, growth is always possible, given sufficient capital and will. In other words, there are no inherent limits to further expansion, and those who wish to impose them have a political agenda. This cornucopian paradigm asserts that the limits before us are irrelevant, that finiteness is a Malthusian misconception, and that economic growth can be extended indefinitely into the future.”¹¹³

In *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Piketty agrees. “When the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of output and income, as it did in the nineteenth century and seems quite likely to do again in the twenty-first, capitalism automatically generates arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities that radically undermine the meritocratic values on which democratic societies are based.”⁷⁶

If Americans still choose to be the leaders of the free world, we had better understand the true costs of our freedom. As it stands, we are spending far too much energy and burning through far too many resources just to feed our legal fictions and unscrupulous finance machine. Ignoring the warnings before us could lead to the dystopian future we've imagined, or it could lead to something far worse.

THE ECONOMY OF WAR

"Dad, how do soldiers killing each other solve the world's problems?"

- Bill Watterson, Calvin and Hobbes

Shortly after the peak of the American Dream in 1956, Dwight Eisenhower looked over what America had become under his watch, and in 1961, he offered one final warning to the American people as he stepped down from his role as president. "In the councils of government," he cautioned, "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."

Unfortunately, the sprawl of suburbia and the genesis of television weren't very conducive to either alertness or knowledge. As the last several generations of Americans began secluding themselves into their own homes to gather around the warm glow of the idiot box, we have since successively separated ourselves by outfitting every room of the house with its own television set. This has effectively cordoned off mother, father, daughter, and son, supplying them each with their own personalized stream of advertisements and misinformation. While in 1983, 90% of

mainstream media was owned by fifty companies, by 2012 the sources of American information had been monopolized into only six companies,⁶⁶ each of them devoted to making money, and promoting the military-industrial complex as one of the biggest money makers around.

"It still amazes me how complicit the media are in propagandizing for war," wrote Ron Paul in *Swords into Plowshares: A Life in Wartime and a Future of Peace and Prosperity*. "This is true whether it's a Republican or Democratic-leaning entity. Both sides spout the lies delivered by government officials to encourage public support for wars. Whether the president is a Republican or a Democrat, the media will be supportive. It just may be that the owners of the large media entities are closely connected to the military-industrial complex."⁶⁷

Considering that military expenditures comprise over 15% of the total US annual budget and over 50% of discretionary spending,⁶⁸ there may not be many companies that aren't somehow connected to the war machine. Those who are most closely connected create revenue that can only be dreamed of by most in the private sector. According to Halliburton, a company that prides itself on providing "products and services to the global energy industry" since 1919, and has been awarded many government contracts for which they have been largely given blank checks in a variety of American military endeavors, their revenue in 2014 was almost 33 billion dollars.⁶⁹ Of course, Halliburton is merely the most well known.

According to a report by Dana Priest and William M. Arkin for the *Washington Post* in 2010, in the wake of 9/11, "Some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies work on programs related to counterterrorism, homeland security and intelligence in about 10,000 locations across the United States."⁷⁰ If nothing else, the military-industrial complex does create jobs, but are these the jobs we really want to spend our lives doing?

In *The War State: The Cold War Origins Of The Military-Industrial Complex And The Power Elite, 1945-1963*, Michael Swanson articulates Ike's concern. "As Dwight

Eisenhower warned, though, the growth of the war state distorts the private economy of the United States and if it causes living standards to fall too much, it will also result in a loss of freedom. Private enterprise and individual initiative will then be snuffed out by the growth in size of centralized power. In that situation, the masses will get welfare crumbs from the government while a few private corporations connected to the federal government will make profits solely from those connections and not from the normal supply-and-demand dictates of the free market."⁷¹

Indeed, as Eisenhower had previously warned in 1953, "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 are not clothed." According to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, the 610 billion dollars that the US spends on its military is more than the next seven countries combined.⁷² Considering that total federal spending for Food & Agriculture is only about 140 billion dollars,⁶⁸ it's quite evident that America is much more concerned with the business of war than of life.

Unfortunately, human suffering creates the opportunity for economic growth through the movement of money. Due to this, America has developed a number of industries designed to leverage our rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness - making money by taking them away. "In addition to Eisenhower identifying the military-industrial complex," Ron Paul continued, "we now have the police-industrial complex, the medical-industrial complex, the surveillance-industrial complex, and the media-industrial complex."

Nevertheless, although our infatuation with war certainly seems bleak, the numbers show that we as a species are losing interest in it, or at least finding ways to not be as affected by it. Some even believe war is in decline. Steven Pinker, author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* asserts that in World War II, 300 of every 100,000 people were lost to war each year, during the Korean War, that number dropped to the twenties, and in

Vietnam, it dropped into the teens. In the 21st century, Pinker claims that only one out of 100,000 people die from war each year.¹⁴⁹

While it may seem that more people die in movies about war than that, there is a sense of cautious optimism driving many to believe that humankind can change their ways and become a more peaceful species. However, with the plethora of “industrial-complexes” seeking to make money off of human suffering, perhaps, as we move forward as a civilization and turn the tide of our culture, we can release the complex and embrace the simple.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

"Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."

- Isaac Asimov

While war is certainly big business, and the plethora of 24-hour news stations earn quite a bit of advertising revenue from stories of violence, the truth is that violence, both at war and on the homefront, is on a downward trend. Over the last few decades, the majority of developed nations have reported a significant decline in homicide and violent crimes. According to FBI publications, in the United States, the rate of violent crime fell 48% from 1993 to 2016. A Bureau of Justice report claims that in that same time span, the rate fell by 74%. And according to a survey by the Pew Research Center, the last peak of gun related homicides was in 1993, and firearm homicides were 49% lower in 2010 while assaults, robberies, and sex crimes were down by 75%.

Yet, the Pew Research Center also reports that in spite of the fact that people are killing each other less, 56% of Americans believe that gun crime is higher now than it was twenty years ago, and only 12% think it is actually lower. Of course, although gun deaths have gone down, it is still estimated that Americans are twenty-five times more likely to be killed by a gun than other high income nations.

According to a study in *The American Journal of Medicine*, although the United States has half the population of the twenty-two other high income nations combined, it accounted for 82% of all gun-related deaths, including 90% of women killed by guns, 91% of gunshot victims under the age of fourteen, and 92% of people killed by guns between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. Of course, this could be

due to the number of guns that America owns.

Although the United States represents only 5% of the human population, it is estimated that they own 35-50% of the guns. Yet that does not mean that more Americans are buying guns. As a matter of fact, gun ownership in America has decreased from a high of 54% in 1977 to 32% in 2014. However, the number of guns per owner has increased significantly.

The Congressional Research Service reports that the number of guns per capita doubled between 1968 and 2009, and there are currently about 101 guns for every 100 US citizens. However, half of them are owned by only 3% of the population, according to a study by Harvard and Northeastern University, which found that an estimated 7.7 million Americans own between eight and 140 guns each.

Gun enthusiasts would be quick to point out that the rise in guns per capita correlates directly with the decline in gun-related deaths, however, America is still the leader in gun-related deaths among developed nations. While half of the world's gun homicides occur in only twenty countries, all of them in Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa, each with far fewer guns per capita than the United States, according to a study by the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in 2016, the US had the 31st highest rate of gun violence in the world, with 3.86 gun-related deaths per 100,000 people. While that is much lower than El Salvador, which has the most with 40.29 gun-related deaths per 100,000 with only 5.8 guns per 100 people, or Venezuela, which has 34.77 gun-related deaths per 100,000 people with only 10.7 guns per 100 people, the rate of gun deaths in the US was eight times the rate in Canada and twenty-seven times the rate of Denmark.

Of course, Canada only has about thirty-three guns per 100 people, and Denmark only has twelve guns per 100 people. Nevertheless, given its socioeconomic status, the IHME estimates that the US should only be seeing .79 deaths per 100,000. Generally, richer countries are less violent, yet America seems intent on breaking the mold.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, there have been 1,396,733 American deaths attributed to war since its founding in 1946, and 1,516,863 gun-related deaths on US soil since 1968. The International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences reports that the United States also has eleven times the number of mass shootings as other nations. As mass shootings increase in the United States, many try to raise the issue of gun control, yet gun owners' repeated response is that it is too soon after the tragedy to discuss it.

Generally, when the 32% of the population who do own guns are pressed about the possibility of enacting more common sense gun laws, they are quick to point out that the Second Amendment gives them the "right to bear arms," and as many as they want. However, the Second Amendment has twenty-seven words, and although those four are important, the first four, "a well regulated militia", are possibly even more important, yet they are rarely, if ever, discussed. Those asking for regulations, like raising the age to buy guns to twenty-one, banning the sale of fully and semi-automatic weapons and equipment, and mandatory background checks, still never ask how people are regulating their militia? It certainly has proven to be a challenging thing to regulate a militia well when we're not allowed to enact any regulations.

One of the greatest challenges for America is that gun control regulations, like so many other things, are always decided upon by representatives of the republic instead of democratically by the people, and unfortunately, the republic is operated by monetary interests. In the 2016 election cycle, gun rights organizations accounted for almost 55 million dollars in outside spending, with 5.9 million dollars going directly to Republican candidates and 106,000\$ going to Democratic candidates. Yet although an estimated 82% of Americans say they want more common sense gun regulations, outside spending from gun control groups was only 3 million dollars in the same cycle.

Thomas Jefferson once said, "The strongest reason for people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in

government,” however that's not why most Americans claim to own guns. A 2013 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 48% say they have a gun for protection, compared to 26% who said they owned a gun for protection in 1999, when crime rates were higher. Only 32% say they have a gun for hunting and recreation, compared to 49% who were sport shooters in 1999. Although the world is indeed getting less violent, the American people do not seem to think so.

Yet while having a gun for self-defense is perfectly understandable, they are rarely used for such a purpose. The *Journal of Trauma, Injury, Infection and Critical Care* reports that for every one time that a gun is used in self-defense, four are involved in unintentional shootings, seven are used in assaults or homicides, and eleven are used for suicides. The FBI reports that in 2016, 73% of all murders in the United States involved a gun, the highest on record, and more than 60% of the people who die from guns in America are victims of suicide.

The World Health Organization reports that although rates of gun violence may have declined over the last few decades, suicide rates have increased 60% worldwide over the last forty-five years. Suicide now accounts for more than half of all violent deaths in the world, accounting for more than wars and homicides combined. While 78% of suicides are reported in lower income countries, those in developed countries are certainly not immune to it.

Suicide is the tenth most common cause of death in the country, and the second-most cause of death for Americans between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four. While the United States has 3.86 gun-related deaths per 100,000 people, it has 19.5 suicides, according to the World Health Organization. That doesn't make the US that much different than the rest of the world, however it is higher than the average rate of 10.7 per 100,000.

For although living seems to be good in America, we still have a tendency to punish ourselves. And even though the crime rates have been steadily decreasing, it has not stopped us from punishing one another.

AN IMPRISONED POPULATION

*"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails.
A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens,
but its lowest ones."
- Nelson Mandela*

In the *New York Times* Best Seller *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, economist Thomas Piketty places the United States among the most inegalitarian countries in the world. Not only do the top 10% make 35% of the money, but the bottom 50% only get a quarter of it. While 115,000 households claim to have a net worth of over 20 million dollars, each night, over 500,000 people in America are homeless, and almost 2.3 million are incarcerated.

"Nothing demonstrates the fragmentation of community in the United States more vividly than the rise in gated residential communities for the affluent and the simultaneous record numbers of people in prison," say William Gates Sr. and Chuck Collins in their book *Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes*. "Some 9 million households now voluntarily live in gated residential communities and another 2 million people are involuntarily incarcerated. More people than ever are living behind gates and walls with entrances patrolled by armed guards. This polarization disturbs the equilibrium of a democratic society. It is in no one's interest for the United States to become more like some of our South American neighbors, such as Brazil, with such extreme levels of inequality. What kind of nation do we

want to become?”¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, one of our greatest boasts is that the “land of the free” has the largest prison population in the world, and in per-capita incarceration rates, we are second only to Seychelles, which has the smallest population of any independent African state. The incarceration rate in the US is five to ten times higher than the rates in Western Europe and nations that purport to be democracies, with nearly one out of every hundred adults in prison or jail. With the mandatory sentencing that came with the War on Drugs against non-violent offenders, the American prison population has quadrupled over the last four decades, largely filling prisons with young minority males who are poorly educated and from lower income families.

While wealthy citizens are able to pay fines whenever threatened with incarceration, many Americans are now held in jails and prisons merely because they are unable to pay for fines, fees, debts, or proper defense. Additionally, many prisons serve as repositories for drug addicts and the mentally ill since Ronald Reagan cut funding for federal community mental health centers in the 1980s to support his “trickle down” economic initiative. Yet, the prison industry itself has become a multi-billion dollar a year system in which private companies are now signing contracts featuring inmate quotas to ensure that law enforcement officers arrest enough people to keep prisons full.

Not only do states pay for prisoners to stay in the more than 130 prisons throughout the country, the prisons can also pay prisoners pennies per hour while forcing them to work as cheap labor for large, for-profit corporations in order to reap the greatest profits. To pull off this scheme of capitalizing on the suffering of the nation's poor, the *Washington Post* reports that GEO and Corrections Corporation of America (currently rebranded as CoreCivic), the two largest for-profit prison companies in the United States, “have funneled more than \$10 million to candidates since 1989 and have spent nearly \$25 million on lobbying efforts,” resulting in a combined annual revenue of 3.3 billion dollars.¹⁵⁸

Of course, penalizing the poor is nothing new in America. “The civil and criminal procedure of the Americans has only two means of action, committal or bail,” observed Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835. “It is evident that such a legislation is hostile to the poor and favorable only to the rich. The poor man has not always security to produce, even in a civil case; and if he is obliged to wait for justice in prison, he is speedily reduced to distress. A wealthy person, on the contrary, always escapes imprisonment in civil cases; nay, more, if he has committed a crime, he may readily elude punishment by breaking his bail. Thus all the penalties of the law are, for him, reduced to fines. Nothing can be more aristocratic than this system of legislation. Yet in America it is the poor who make the law, and they usually reserve the greatest advantages of society to themselves. The explanation of the phenomenon is to be found in England; the laws of which I speak are English, and the Americans have retained them, although repugnant to the general tenor of their legislation and the mass of their ideas.”¹²⁸

Perhaps they are the vestiges of self-loathing that still remain from the foundation of our “Catholic shame” and the idea that poor sinners are undeserving of blessings. Although we love to pat ourselves on the back regarding our freedoms and liberties, we continue to pay people more and more money to make more laws so that we may have more reasons to be punished for someone else’s profit. Perhaps our indulgence in imprisonment is merely indicative of the state of our society. As Rousseau wrote in *The Social Contract*, “In a well governed state, there are few punishments, not because there are many pardons, but because criminals are rare; it is when a state is in decay that the multitude of crimes is a guarantee of impunity.”

Perhaps Americans allow ourselves to suffer these atrocities because, on some level, we know that what our country has become is a burden upon the rest of the planet. Further, as much as we may want to judge those top 400 income-earners for their reluctance to share with the rest of us, we feel even worse about the fact that so many of us want to be just like them. However, whether we are conscious of it

or not, it is that mentality of taking more than we need in the name of self-interest which grieves us so.

“Fact one: Currently humanity uses 30 percent more of our planet’s natural resources than we can replace,” state Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler in *Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think*. “Fact two: If everyone on this planet wanted to live with the lifestyle of the average European, we would need three planets’ worth of resources to pull it off. Fact three: If everyone on this planet wished to live like an average North American, then we’d need five planets to pull it off.”

Moving forward, as we build upon what we have learned over the course of these last 10,000 years, may we build a new economy, based not on punishment, selfishness, divisiveness, and waste, but on equality, collaboration, acceptance, and understanding.

#METOO

*"There must be more equality established in society,
or morality will never gain ground,
and this virtuous equality will not rest firmly even when founded on a rock,
if one half of mankind be chained to its bottom by fate,
for they will be continually undermining it through ignorance or pride"*
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Although Americans' high rates of gun deaths, suicide, and imprisonment may point to a nation of self-hatred, in other aspects of our culture, we are directly addressing how much we do still love ourselves and will no longer tolerate abuse. The term "sexual harassment" was first used in a 1973 report by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology called "Saturn's Rings" about a variety of gender issues. It rose to prominence in 1975 when a former employee of Cornell University by the name of Carmita Wood, who resigned after being groped by her supervisor, was denied unemployment benefits on the grounds that she quit for "personal reasons".

As Carmita worked with activists from the university, they gave women everywhere the opportunity to start telling their stories of sexual harassment. For most of America's history, women merely endured sexual advances and mistreatment, and if they couldn't, they simply quit their jobs. Yet as more women joined the workforce throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the stories of assaults, masturbatory displays, threats, and requests for sexual favors only increased. A 1976 survey in *Redbook* magazine called "How

Do You Handle Sex on the Job?”, 92% of women in the workforce said sexual harassment at work was a problem, a majority of them calling it "a serious one." *Time* magazine reported that “as many as 18 million American females were harassed sexually while at work in 1979 and 1980.”

A January 2018 online survey conducted by non-profit group Stop Street Harassment found that not only do 81% of women claim to have been sexually harassed in their lifetimes, but 43% of men do as well.

Sexual harassment gained an even greater limelight in 1991 when Anita Hill testified against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas about his inappropriate workplace comments regarding the size of his penis and his favorite porn star. Yet although shining a light on the sexual depravity of men in government did much to encourage other women to speak out about their experiences with sexual harassment, it wasn't until Hollywood's infamous "producer's couch" was called out that the torch really started to burn. After actress Ashley Judd shared her story about the sexual advances she had endured from producer Harvey Weinstein with *The New York Times*, actress Alyssa Milano called for solidarity among women by launching the #metoo movement.

On October 15, 2017, Milano tweeted "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet," based on a phrase coined by civil rights activist Tarana Burke in 2006. The aftermath of support shows that as a society, we want to move beyond the degradation we have experienced. Millions have since used #metoo in their social media updates. The movement has grown to include men who have come to regret times they have made women feel harassed, sharing their own tweets of responsibility like #ihave and #ididthat, and others have expressed their willingness to change and raise awareness by sharing #iwill. Where once women were afraid to speak out about sexual harassment, now men are reconsidering their behaviors.

Of course, sexual misconduct is nothing new in America.

In addition to being the first Secretary of the

Treasury, Alexander Hamilton also initiated one of the first recorded American sex scandals after having a year-long affair with a married woman and paying her husband over 1,300\$ in blackmail money to keep quiet about it. Since then, stories of our public officials have been replete with tales of extramarital affairs, sex with slaves, homosexual relationships, mistresses, brothels, divorces and remarriages, strippers, prostitutes, illegitimate children, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, statutory rape, sodomy, oral sex, second families, sex with staffers, explicit emails, groping, tickling, fondling, lewd conduct, forcible kissing, assault, and rape. Sexual misconduct seems to be so much a part of our national fabric that over 200 years since our first scandal, the current president's lawyer paid an adult film star 100 times the blackmail Hamilton did in order to keep her quiet about her alleged sexual escapades with the soon-to-be-commander-in-chief.

While women are finding the strength to speak about what has happened to them throughout the history of a culture reigned over by patriarchy, it would appear that the rising awareness is already starting to change the tide. Although sexual harassment has become more openly discussed over the last several years, data from the US Equal Opportunity Employment Commission reveals that there were 12,695 reported cases in 2010 and only 12,428 in 2017. Given the attention it has been given by both mainstream and social media, like violence, one would expect the numbers to be higher. Yet it seems that "enough" is more than just a slogan being shouted by the newly brazen, but an understanding that is ultimately permeating our society.

According to a 2013 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2003, there were 32.2 reported rapes for every 100,000 people in America, a rate beat only by Bermuda (56.6), Suriname (38.2), Swaziland (72.1), and Australia (91.9). However, by 2010, while the other highest rated countries were not reported on, the rate of reported rapes in the United States dropped to 27.3 per 100,000 people, and a report from the Bureau of Justice states that sexual violence against females in the US

experienced a 60% decline from 1995 to 2010.

This is not to say that violence against women or the harassment of women is not still a problem in the world. UNICEF estimates that over 200 million females in thirty different countries have endured genital mutilation, and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center still estimates that one in five American women will be raped in their lives, as well as one in seventy-one men. Our struggles with both sex and power are not nearly over, but we seem to be making steps in the right direction.

THE RAINBOW CONNECTION

*"Marriage should be between a spouse and a spouse,
not a gender and a gender."
- Hendrik Hertzberg*

Americans, and the world at large, are also becoming more aware and accepting about the range of human sexuality and gender. Homosexuality has been quite popular throughout human history, yet with those of the Judeo/Christian/Islamic heritage seeking to grow their numbers and populate the earth, it has long been established a crime against nature, possibly due to the fact that it doesn't result in progeny. However, as the world faces questions of overpopulation and a surge in extremism, people seem to be releasing dogmatic beliefs and embracing the ability to let others make their own choices about their own sexuality.

Our culture has long honored the dualistic view of the world, easily extrapolating everything into categories of good and evil, right and wrong, left and right, black and white, conservative and liberal, and male and female. Yet this tight grip on an alleged reality has been slipping out of our hands as we have been opening up to the gray areas and rainbows that extend between the extremes we've entertained. Not only have we opened up to the rights of homosexuals to love who they want to love and live how they want to live, but also for those who wish to transcend gender altogether.

Until 1962, sodomy was a felony in every US state, with a variety of punishments, like fifteen years in a

Michigan prison or death in Idaho. Illinois took the lead by becoming the first to decriminalize it, and by the end of the decade, other states started to join.

In 1973, Texans, having recognized the joys of sodomy within the confines of heterosexual relationships, changed their anti-sodomy statute so that only those who engaged in anal or oral sex with someone of the same gender would be charged with a misdemeanor. Yet, thirty years later, in 2003, the United States Supreme Court ruled that anti-sodomy laws were unconstitutional, invalidating them in the fourteen states that still had them on the books: Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Virginia.

However, just because sodomy was no longer criminalized did not mean that the United States was quite ready to fully embrace homosexuality. In 1998, Alaska and Hawaii became the first states to pass constitutional amendments either banning same-sex marriage or vowing to only recognize male and female unions. By 2012, thirty states had passed similar restrictions on relational liberty. Yet in 2000, Vermont became the first state to adopt a civil unions bill, giving same-sex couples the same rights as opposite-sex couples, including marriage.

By 2015, thirty-seven states had adopted laws to legalize same-sex marriages, either by court decision, popular vote, or state legislature, some of them reversing constitutional amendments they had passed only a few years before. The quickest turnaround was in North Carolina, where a law was passed in 2012 that the only domestic legal union that would be recognized was that of a man and a woman, but was ruled unconstitutional by a US District Court judge in 2014. On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled that all fifty states must perform and recognize same-sex marriages, with all of the accompanying rights and responsibilities of opposite-sex marriages.

Yet the shift from the old Judeo/Christian/Islamic views of marriage as a pro-creating union between a man and a woman to the simple decree that two people would

love one another was not without its share of conflicts. As homosexuality became accepted within the culture and more homosexuals came out of the closet, there was rising tension in those who held to the belief that it was evil and took matters into their own hands to punish those who defied their chosen lifestyle. The term "hate crime", which originally referred to crimes motivated by a hatred of someone based on their race, religion, or ethnicity, came to refer to crimes against homosexuals, transgender people, and the rest of the LGBTQ community as well.

Although transgender people are now more readily seen in popular culture through television shows and movies, the last few years have also seen a new surge of violence against them from those who claim stringent beliefs about what men and women should be. Human rights advocates state that every week, one or two people are shot, stabbed, burned, or otherwise killed for being transgender.

Transgender people can be noted throughout history and in a variety of traditions, but the term "transgender" was not coined until the late 1960s in a handful of publications. Most US states now have laws allowing people to change their assigned gender on their birth certificates with a note from their doctor, but not all of them require surgery. Many still don't understand the concept, and it may still be a few years before the ignorance and fear subsides throughout our culture. Yet just as with the movements for civil rights based on race and gender that have come before, and are still in the works, with awareness comes understanding.

"When people struggling against an injustice have no hope that anything will ever change, they use their strength to survive," wrote Susan Stryker in her book *Transgender History*, "when they think that their actions matter, that same strength becomes a force for positive change."

Some say that change is truly the only constant in life, and others say that the more things change the more they stay the same.

MONEY RETURNS TO THE VIRTUAL WORLD

*"Can anybody remember
when the times were not hard
and money not scarce?"
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

When we started using money as a means of manipulating control, the practice started in ledgers. The notations that were made symbolized a herd of cattle or a bushel of grain, but the money in itself, the actual means of exchange, was merely a virtual abstraction, just numbers on a page. Over the last century, we have come to associate the dollar as the symbol of money, with some of us conjuring images of coins as well.

However, more and more, we seem to be reverting back to using money in the virtual realm, in electronic ledgers. In 1860, Western Union revolutionized the process by instituting the electric fund transfer through the telegram. The game was changed once again in 1946, when a banker named John Biggins released the "Charg-it" card.

Although Biggins' contribution would come to evolve into the modern credit card, in another case of life imitating art, the credit card was actually conceived in 1887 by Edward Bellamy in his novel *Looking Backward*.⁶² As many who imagine a utopian future, there is generally an imagined means for citizens to have their needs met, allowing them to go provide for their wants. While our culture tends to favor the wants of a few while the needs of many go unmet,

Bellamy had a vision of a “credit card” that was used eleven times in his novel for spending the dividends that each character received from the government.

Biggins' vision was not quite as bold. Building on the idea that was already in practice by companies like Western Union, American Airlines, and a number of oil companies and department stores of issuing cards for frequent customers, Biggins' merely worked with some of the local businesses to allow his customers the ability to use his card in their stores.

A few years later, in 1950, the Diner's Card was released as a cardboard card that could be used as an alternative to cash, primarily to pay for travel, food, and entertainment. In *Paying with Plastic: The Digital Revolution in Buying and Borrowing* David S. Evans writes, “At the time, individual stores issued charge cards -- something like credit cards that would allow you to pay on installments. But if you were shopping, let's say, in New York, you would have to carry around many different cards. So this created a card that people could use at many different merchants.”⁶³

Diner's Club was an instant hit with more than 20,000 cardholders after just the first year. By the end of the decade, American Express, which was initially a competitor for the US Postal Service and had previously released both the traveler's check and the money order, got into the charge card game as well, launching the first plastic card, although they wouldn't release an actual credit card until 1987. In 1966, the BankAmericard (which would eventually become Visa) and MasterCard were both released.

According to the 2014 Census Bureau, 167 million Americans have at least one credit card, and these four credit card networks currently account for 546 million credit cards.⁶⁴ However, they are actually waning in popularity. Because a lot of people are wanting to move beyond a debt-based existence, many are paying off their credit cards and opting not to use them again. Many others are simply finding more efficient ways to pay for things.

In the early nineties, Dr. David Chaum, a

cryptologist who had excelled at anonymous communication, developed the eCash software, opening the world up to electronic payments through the World Wide Web. According to the Federal Reserve, by 1995, 90% of the total value of all American transactions were made through electronic payment,⁶⁵ four years before the release of PayPal. In 2009, Bitcoin was introduced, ushering in the blockchain as a digital record-keeping system, with the hopes of moving beyond using the dollar as the foundation for every transaction.

Many have warned of Bitcoins and the other cryptocurrencies which have since been spawned, and fortunes have already been made and lost as people have used their regarded value to buy and sell. Many others have concerns over the amount of energy it takes to record these transactions, with estimates that by the year 2020, it will take as much energy to power the Bitcoin market as it currently does to power the entire United States. Yet Bitcoins may simply be as fuel efficient to cryptocurrencies as the Model T was to automobiles.

While some question the actual value behind the hundreds of cryptocurrencies that have been created, and view them as little more than fiat currencies, the development of the blockchain is already being used to keep records of production and distribution in a number of industries. Developers are now seeking ways in which the blockchain can be incorporated into our daily transactions to help us do a better job of tracking who did what and who has what.

In recent years, the advent of smartphones has offered even more ways to spend and receive money, like the iPay system, which now allows people to pay with only a swipe of their phone. And the new Amazon Go store tracks purchases through cameras and sensors, charging items to a registered credit card to avoid buyers having to check out.

Ultimately, beyond all of the fancy means through which we have celebrated money - beyond shekels, coins, paper money, and plastic - this game of money is still merely a system of record keeping. Unfortunately, it doesn't keep

adequate records for life beyond the limitations of the monetary construct.

If we are to consider that the entirety of the planet Earth is simply here for the use of humans, it may seem feasible for us to use money to account for how much each of us uses, but even in that narrative, the monetary system is still ill-equipped to account for all that the planet has to offer. Nor does it adequately account for the needs of true people and the true resources they have to offer. Nevertheless, given the power at each person's disposal to now more effectively share information and instantaneously conduct transactions, we do have the means to more greatly collaborate on the projects that are of greater importance to us, and fix what our boyish games of competition have broken.

Yet we will still have to contend with how those games of competition have resulted in the majority of the wealth being concentrated into the accounts of a few.

OLLIE OLLIE OLIGARCHY

*"I made my money the old-fashioned way,
I was very nice to a wealthy relative right before he died"*
- Malcolm Forbes

In 2014, Professor Martin Gilens of Princeton University and Professor Benjamin Page of Northwestern University released a paper titled "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens" which refers to the United States as a "civil oligarchy", quoting the book *Oligarchy* by Professor Jeffrey Winters, also of Northwestern University. The report begins with the announcement of what many of us have known for awhile, "Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence."¹ Using a unique data set that includes measures of the key variables for 1,779 policy issues, the study looked at four theoretical traditions in the study of American politics to find the United States usually practicing Economic-Elite Domination and Biased Pluralism, but not so much Majoritarian Electoral Democracy or Majoritarian Pluralism.

"Americans do enjoy many features central to democratic governance," say Gilens and Page at the end of their report, "such as regular elections, freedom of speech and association, and a widespread (if still contested) franchise. But we believe that if policymaking is dominated

by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans, then America's claims to being a democratic society are seriously threatened."

The First United States Congress consisted of twenty-six Senators (and eventually three alternates) and sixty-four members of the House of Representatives. At the time, these ninety men represented roughly 3 million people, although they were only .002% of the population. In 2015, the 535 members of Congress made up .00017% of the population of 319 million US citizens. Considering that more than half of that percentage is comprised of millionaires, it would seem the 5% of actual Americans who can claim to be millionaires, according to Credit Suisse Research's recent study, are getting a bit more representation than the rest of us.⁴³

At first glance, it may seem that what we've been calling a democracy has actually been what Rousseau calls an aristocracy - restricting "the government to a small number; so that there are more private citizens than magistrates."¹²³ Yet while he also warned that "democracy degenerates into *ochlocracy* (mob rule) and aristocracy into *oligarchy*," it seems that what we have now is much different than anything our forefathers may have expected.

Most Americans are quite proud of the idea that we are a democracy, however, upon closer scrutiny, it doesn't take long to realize that the democratic process we get to engage in every two years is little more than a pacifier to calm the crowds while the wealthy elite make the important decisions. Americans have so come to embrace oligarchy that in 2016, they appointed the first billionaire as president.

"In the end, ordinary Americans still get to vote," explains Jeffrey Winters in his article "Oligarchy and Democracy in America." "But their choices are vetted via a wealth primary (with \$30,000 a plate dinners) that starts long before ordinary citizens hear about candidates or issues. The Supreme Court has facilitated the conversion of money power into political influence by removing limits on the flow of funds into campaigns and equating the use of money to free speech. This gives a handful of Americans up

to 40,000 times the 'money voice' of their fellow citizens.”¹³⁷

The *Citizens United* decision by the Supreme Court did much to enable the wealthy to gain control of the American government through their corporations, but over the course of the last few decades, under the guise of “trickle down economics”, the greater part of the wealth in America has been siphoned up. In the 1980s alone, the top 1% of the population increased its wealth 150 times faster than the bottom 99%.¹¹³

“If we consider the total growth of the US economy in the thirty years prior to the crisis,” says Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, “that is, from 1977 to 2007, we find that the richest 10 percent appropriated three-quarters of the growth. The richest 1% alone absorbed nearly 60% of the total increase of US national income in this period. Hence for the bottom 90%, the rate of income growth was less than 0.5% per year. If we move even higher up the salary and bonus scale to look at the top 0.1% or 0.01%, we find even greater increases, with hikes in purchasing power greater than 50% in ten years.”⁷⁶

It isn't merely that the financial elite have more power than other Americans, but that they have more power than anyone in history. As Winters illustrates, “Surprisingly, the US data on stratification makes us look worse than ancient Rome. The 500 wealthiest Roman senators were roughly 10,000 times as rich as the average person in the empire, who happened to be a landless farmer or a slave. Each of the 500 wealthiest Americans is about 20,000 times as rich as the average person in the bottom 90%. If we focus only on financial resources, the average American in the top 500 has 40,000 times the wealth power of the median citizen. This means that the richest Americans have between two and four times the relative money power of their oligarchic counterparts in the Roman empire.”

Although the financial elite have amassed more wealth than they could possibly know what to do with, few of them seem predisposed to use their advantage to help the rest of their community, but seem intent on squirreling away as much as they can without contributing to the bigger

picture. Winters explains how oligarchs “hire armies of tax lawyers, accountants, lobbyists, and wealth management specialists to create complex 'tax products' and shelters, and to relocate fortunes to secrecy havens scattered around the globe. This offshore financial dark matter is estimated to be between \$5 trillion and \$25 trillion, and it is mostly untaxed. The portion of these hidden riches belonging to Americans costs the US treasury \$80 billion annually in lost taxes.”

That almost seems like a drop in the bucket compared to the 269 billion dollar deficit we'll create over the next 10 years should Congress, who voted 240-179 to repeal the estate tax in 2015,¹³⁸ be successful in further protecting fortunes received through hereditary privilege. The estate tax was established in 1916 to break up “those fortunes swollen beyond all healthy limits,” as Theodore Roosevelt put it. One hundred years later, America has decided to buck the healthy limits.

Before we invented money, when greed first started to raise its ugly head, our egalitarian society would shun those affected and banish them from the village. Whenever one of them would start to hoard instead of sharing with others as they had done for so long, the greedy were seen as mentally ill and untrustworthy. The evolution of this virus of selfishness and our relationship to it has now culminated in it being the most revered of virtues and the driver of our entire economic system.

Not all of the financial elite are so self-serving. When word got around that Congress was looking to repeal the estate tax, William H. Gates Sr., co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Oscar Mayer heir Chuck Collins stepped up to argue in favor of the estate tax. “Once a household accumulates wealth above a certain threshold, say \$15 million,” they stated in their book *Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes*, “it has moved beyond the point of meeting its needs and aspirations of itself and its heirs. Such households are now in the nation's top quarter of the richest 1 percent of households and stand atop a global pinnacle of wealth almost too enormous to contemplate. By the late 1990's,

there were an estimated forty thousand households with more than \$25 million and five thousand with over \$100 million. They may be asking themselves, as Bud Fox queried speculator Gordon Gekko in the 1987 film *Wall Street*, 'How many yachts can you water-ski behind?'¹¹⁷

While almost 15% of Americans, 45 million people, live in poverty, the 400 most wealthy are reported to have a net worth of 2.34 trillion dollars, as much as the combined assets of the bottom 61%. The wealthiest 100 households own assets equivalent to the entire African American population and the twenty wealthiest Americans own more wealth, 732,000,000,000\$, than the 152 million people who comprise the bottom half of the American economic spectrum.¹³⁹

"Once poor people are persuaded that their poverty is their own fault," Ha-Joon Chang wrote in *Economics: The User's Guide*, "that whoever has made a lot of money must deserve it and that they too could become rich if they tried hard enough, life becomes easier for the rich."

The result from this sort of imbalance is that the financial elite have an inordinate amount of influence regarding policy change. As Gilens and Page report, "When the alignments of business-oriented and mass-based interest groups are included separately in a multivariate model, average citizens' preferences continue to have essentially zero estimated impact upon policy change, while economic elites are still estimated to have a very large, positive, independent impact."

What we commonly refer to as a democracy is largely an occasional media sensation, giving the populace the opportunity to rally behind pre-selected players from either of the two factions of the Money Party, leaving most feeling marginalized, disenfranchised, and uninspired to take part in the process. This is probably why we have some of the lowest voter turnouts of any country that proclaims to offer democratic elections. Although the idea of American democracy was a beautiful one, so beautiful that most still hold to the delusion that we actually have one, the sobering reality is that Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis was

right when he observed a century ago, “We can have concentrated wealth in the hands of a few or we can have a democracy. But we cannot have both.”

YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH

*"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting.
It has been found difficult; and left untried."
- G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World**

There are few places on Earth with as much concentrated wealth as Vatican City. As one of seven remaining absolute monarchies in the world and the foundation of the Catholic Church, no one can begin to estimate exactly how much wealth has accumulated there, but The Vatican Bank, a private bank with a limited clientele formally known as The Institute of Works of Religion, is said to hold about eight billion dollars in assets. With around 800 citizens, most of whom live abroad, and an estimated GDP of over 300 million dollars a year, Vatican City could be considered the wealthiest state in the world, per capita. That's a lot of wealth, especially for a group of people who have pledged themselves to a life of poverty.

Yet each week, some 85 million Americans give at least ten dollars to their parish, boosting the economy by over 44 billion dollars a year. And that doesn't even account for the rest of the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world, nor the members of the 33,000 international Protestant denominations.

Suffice it to say, there is a lot of money in religion, especially Christianity. Were this money used well and for more of the purposes highlighted in the red letter versions of the New Testament, chances are good that we'd be seeing a lot less hunger and homelessness in the world. But since Queen Elizabeth urged the government to start taking care of

the indigent through welfare, that has freed up churches to focus on other aspects of the religion, like evangelism, politics, production value, and wealth development.

As Richard Halverson, former chaplain of the United States Senate, said, "In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centered on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece, where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome, where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe, where it became a culture. And, finally, it moved to America, where it became an enterprise."

For instance, televangelists do little to nothing to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, or visit the sick and imprisoned, as Jesus told his followers to do. Instead, they sell advertising and merchandise while begging people on fixed incomes for money so they can fund lavish lifestyles for themselves. And although they may not be following Jesus' example nor commandments, because they say they are producing their theatrics in his name, they have built a two and a half billion dollar industry without even having to participate as citizens by paying taxes.

Since it comprises just under a third of the world's population and forms the majority in 158 different countries and territories (about two-thirds of the countries in the world), if Christianity is not operating well, it can have a drastic effect on the rest of the population. Christianity has certainly changed since it started, originating in the loving messages of a humble carpenter urging people to simply love the source of all life as well as those who share it with you, only to transmogrify into the most powerful organization on the planet. Yet although it has arguably amassed more wealth than any other concerted effort in human history in the name of caring for the homeless, hungry, sick, and imprisoned, it seems to have veered from its original message and lost touch with its origin.

While Christianity may have its roots in the Middle East/North Africa, after it spread around the rest of the world, this region now has the smallest concentration of Christians on the planet. A century ago, about two-thirds of

the world's Christians lived in Europe, as they had been for a millennium. Now, only about a quarter remain in Europe, more than a third are in the Americas, an eighth in Asia, and a quarter in sub-Saharan Africa, where the percentage of Christians rose from 9% in 1910 to 63% in 2010. Christian missionaries have done such an incredible job of spreading the message to all parts of the globe that it is now so widespread that no single continent or region can indisputably claim to be the center of global Christianity. Yet although they are more spread out, as the world's overall estimated population rose from 1.8 billion to 6.9 billion, the percentage of Christians around the globe has dipped a little from 35% to 32% of the population.

About half of the Christians in the world are Catholics, and about twelve percent claim to be Orthodox Christian, meaning, among other things, they do not strictly adhere to the Catholic Bible. A little less than forty percent of Christians are some sort of Protestant denomination, which means that while they no longer have such reverence for the Catholic priesthood, they still accept their scriptures as the only true Word of God. The remaining one percent of Christians are comprised of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other sects.

Ultimately, for the last thousand years or so, Western civilization has been guided heavily by the Judeo-Christian heritage. "It is in Christianity that our arts have developed," wrote T.S. Eliot in *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. "It is in Christianity that the laws of Europe - until recently - have been rooted. It is against a background of Christianity that all of our thought has significance. An individual European may not believe that the Christian faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning... I do not believe that culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole

culture goes.”

Since the Bible was first bound as a compartment for what we know as God in about 900 AD, ushering in the dawn of the Dark Ages and providing the impetus for the Crusades of Christianity, this collection of books has directed the course of our culture’s development by offering us a variety of stories, metaphors, laws, and practices that has arguably done as much to hinder our progress as a society as it has helped. And the same can unfortunately be said about the organizations that demand allegiance without fully embracing its core message.

Because the Roman Catholic Church and many of its Protestant subsidiaries have been established as corporations subservient to the debt-based monetary system, the movement of Christianity is not always very effective at meeting the mandates of its honoree. Many churches have been predisposed to channel great amounts of wealth to themselves, while others have tended to the cultivation of poverty. Many are merely organized more as defenders of ideas than as true representatives of Christ.

Sadly, it also seems the clergy of the Catholic church are no better at upholding their pledge to poverty as their pledge to chastity. Just as their wealth is derived from what was given to help the most vulnerable, their sexual hungers are also often satiated by those who are the most vulnerable. It is impossible to say how many children have been sexually abused by clergy in the Catholic Church, but it is probably safe to say that more children have been sexually abused by clergy in the Catholic Church than by any other organization in the world.

However, because the organization has done such an effective job of protecting the predators in their midst, it seems very unlikely that their victims will see any justice through the legal system. And because the belief system their abusers told them about grants religious rapists complete immunity from all transgressions in the afterlife, few people who have been sexually abused by ministers of the Christian faith will ever feel that justice has been served. Overall, it is estimated that only ten percent of sexual abusers will ever be

prosecuted, yet it seems an even greater abuse when perpetrated within an organization offering comfort and sanctuary.

It is estimated that only about 32% of sexual abuses will be reported to police, and that number is most probably significantly reduced when those abuses are perpetuated within a religious organization. Most victims of religious sexual abuse fear coming forward because they do not want to disrupt the ministry. Although their own lives may be shattered, they cannot bring themselves to shake the faith of another and are still not compelled to leave the Church themselves. Those who have been mistreated by Christianity have often been its greatest defenders.

In the United States, which claims the top spot for most Christians living in the country (230 million of them), 72% of Christian women say religion is “very important” to them, compared to only 62% of Christian men. And while 74% of American women claim to pray every day, only 60% of men do. Across the board and around the world, women are more religious than men and certainly outnumber them in the pews, in spite of the fact that the religion regards them as the inferior gender.

Today, two-thirds of religious Americans still belong to a community that refuses to consider women for positions of leadership. The United Methodist Church didn't ordain their first female minister until 1956, and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reform Judaism, and the Episcopal Church waited almost two decades before they did the same. Today, Catholics, Baptists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and most evangelical denominations still do not have enough respect for women to ordain them as ministers.

Even among homosexuals, who have been historically considered as an “abomination” in Christianity, based on a verse in the Jewish book of Leviticus and the writings of Paul, there is still great reverence for the Christian church. Based on a survey by evangelical pollster George Barna, 70% of gay Americans describe themselves as Christian, with 60% of them saying that their faith is “very

important” in their lives.

Regardless of how Christianity, or the Judeo/Christian/Islamic tradition at large, may reveal its fallibilities, whether they be financial indiscretions, sexual abuses, psychological abuses, or shirking responsibility, it is still dear to our hearts. The reasons why it is held in such esteem are likely as numerous as the people who hold them. Yet whether it be due to a true desire to follow in the example of Jesus, genuine fear of the eternal torment the religion describes, or simple tradition, there remains a fervor in the hearts of Americans and people around the world to embrace the message of selflessness and connection to our Creator at the heart of the words attributed to Christ.

And indeed, that faith is still put into action to help the hungry, homeless, sick, and in prison, among other things. A 2014 report by The Giving Institute found that 62% of religious households give to charity while only 46% of non-religious households do. Of course, this also means that religious organizations receive the largest share of that money.

The most recent estimates show that religious congregations received 41% of all charitable donations in 2016, and organizations with a religious identity received 32%, leaving only 27% of charitable giving for secular causes. So while religious organizations received a total of 122.94 billion dollars from American households, education, as the next largest subsector, only received 59.77 billion. In addition to those donations, religious organizations also receive a great percentage of their funding from taxpayers, as evidenced by *The Economist's* 2012 report that 62% of Catholic charities' support came from local, state, and federal government agencies.

However, those religious organizations are providing a good part of social services, with Politifact estimating anywhere from 17-34% of all nonprofit social-service charity coming from Catholic charities alone. With cuts to spending for the federal government under the current administration, it is likely that religious organizations are going to have to increase their role in providing for the needy

in America. Although a survey conducted by Duke Divinity School found that 83% of congregations have some sort of program to help needy people in their community, including food and clothing drives as well as temporary shelter, federal cuts to education, food stamps, Medicaid, homeless programs, and other services may put greater responsibility on religious organizations at a time when they are already finding it difficult to meet their demands.

Possibly due to the number of scandals that have permeated religious organizations, fewer people now say they believe in God than they did a few decades ago. When Gallup started asking people if they believed in God in 1965, 97% were affirmative, a number that has dropped to 86% in recent years, with only 56% saying they believe in the anthropomorphic God of the Bible, and 33% believing in a more abstract spiritual force. Additionally, Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study shows that the number of self-identified Christians in the US declined by 7.8% between 2007 and 2014.

With attendance down, religious organizations are in danger of receiving less money to operate, which is already a challenge in itself. Numerous studies into church spending have found that roughly 50% of a church's budget is spent on pastoral and staff salaries, with another 22% going toward property expenses, leaving little more than a quarter of the budget for church programs, missions, and actually serving the needy. Now, possibly more than ever, we could use some actual faith.

PART FOUR

RETHINKING WHAT'S BEEN THUNK

*"If you understand others, you are smart.
If you understand yourself, you are illuminated.
If you overcome others, you are powerful.
If you overcome yourself, you have strength.
If you know how to be satisfied, you are rich.
If you can act with vigor, you have a will.
If you don't lose your objectives, you can be long-lasting.
If you die without loss, you are eternal."
- Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*

As we've developed this thing we refer to as "society" over the last ten thousand years, we've certainly come to embrace our share of memes. Yet to grow into a people, we've got to reconsider some of the ideas that we take for granted, as many of them do not serve our best interests. While we can certainly still hold dearly to the principles that our beliefs point toward, it would serve us well to comprehend that any belief we hold may have just started as a rolling pebble of an opinion that snowballed its way into mainstream tradition, whether it be a notion of religion, politics, gender roles, or economics.

For instance, considering that the vast majority of this stuff we call money is now merely bits of light and

information, essentially, we're going to have to recognize what Naravana Kocherlakota stated in her 1996 report for the Federal Reserve Bank: "Money is Memory". "Since the dawn of its use, money has been used to account for things, a way to remember who did what, who contributed what, who used what, and who used whom."⁷³ Yet especially throughout the current worldview of capitalism, though money does still serve as memory, we have largely forgotten what we most dearly need to remember.

If we continue to use money as a forced mechanism that we are indebted and beholden to, a debt that can never be repaid, it will continue to manufacture as much poverty as it will wealth, perhaps more. Yet if we open up to it as a method for accounting for our gifts, there is a good chance that it can still be a tool for our betterment.

As Kocherlakota went on, "if we account for the fact that money itself is useless, monetary allocations are merely large interlocking networks of gifts." Should we wish to get a grip on our obsession with money and move into a more expansive understanding of abundance, it is vital that we start recognizing the greater gifts available to us, instead of continuing to embrace the illusion of scarcity and the control mechanisms it inspires. By adhering to the myopic understanding that the most important thing in life is capital, and driving the expansion of commoditization at all costs, we have come to view even human suffering as good for the economy, thereby severely limiting the greater gifts that life has to offer.

"Some degree of rejection of the current system must occur in order to increase the pressure to change the whole structure," writes Peter Joseph in *The New Human Rights Movement*. "One method is to work to reduce economic involvement in money and trade as much as possible. The use of collectives, shared library systems, time banks, mutual credit systems, and other mechanisms can help not only reduce economic growth but also help those currently suffering. This is a difficult line to walk, however, as the systemic chain reaction of a loss of economic growth is also a loss of work and purchasing power for some... The new

measures of success must be based upon finding balance with nature and one another, not gaming, exploitation, and advantage seeking. Only sustainable values can create a sustainable culture."

Since we have seen the toll industrial agriculture takes on the earth and realized the unsustainability of merely using food to make money, many are realizing the viability of backyard and community gardens, as well as newer technologies, like aquaponics, hydroponics, and grow boxes. For property caretakers who have the vision to see beyond the real estate model of fences and lawns, there is enormous opportunity in developing edible landscaping and common gardens. While we have adhered to the industrial agriculture model for eons because we've been told there won't be enough food without it, the truth is that there isn't enough food because of it.

Because we are more beholden to money, America alone throws away 40% of the food we grow because it is not profitable, while over 48 million Americans don't have enough food to eat. Because we have been beholden to money, America has an estimated 18 million empty houses and 3.5 million homeless people. And because we have been beholden to money, much of our penal system has evolved as an industry in itself, making the fact that America now houses 22% of the world's prison population (even though it is comprised of only 4.4% of the total world population) an economic boon.

As we move forward toward what Charles Eisenstein calls "The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible",⁷⁷ let's realize that establishing a higher quality of life isn't about keeping track of numbers that will eventually prove themselves to be irrelevant, but by ensuring that the people that share our time and space with us have their true needs met.

"Money is not wealth," says David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule The World*. "Money is a number we agree to exchange for things with real value. The very vocabulary of finance and economics is a world of doublespeak that obscures such essential distinctions and in

part explains why economists have such a hard time understanding either money or the economy.”⁷⁴

The challenge with money is that most people view it as a currency through which the economy can flow, while the small minority, who dictate how money is to be used and control the majority of it, see it as a commodity. So while most spend their time working to earn and spend it, the small few are more concerned with hoarding it for themselves while doing very little, if any, actual work. Unfortunately, our system is designed to honor, esteem, and reward the non-virtues of greed and selfishness, regardless of their impact on others.

As Mark Boyle describes it in *The Moneyless Manifesto*, “Money – that soulless, empty, arbitrary concept, subject to the fickle whims of markets and inflation, in itself good for neither feeding us, sheltering us, nor loving us – has become more meaningful, more valued and more sacred in our lives than trees – providers of oxygen, water, food, shade, shelter and soil structure. We are in Alice’s wonderland, where nothing is what it seems, and nothing is as it should be. We are completely delusional about what we need in order to live nourished, meaningful lives, and our delusion is destroying not only our ability to do that, but the ability of every other species on the planet to do so too. As the Cree Indian proverb goes, it seems that ‘only when the last tree has died, the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught, will we realize we cannot eat money’.”⁷⁵

Because money isn’t an ideal quantifier of true value, many have found it extremely disempowering as they have strived to pursue their purpose. As Charles Eisenstein writes, “the money system is not aligned with the Story of Interbeing, enforcing instead competition, scarcity, alienation from Nature, dissolution of community, and the endless, nonreciprocal exploitation of the planet. If your life’s work does not contribute to the conversion of Nature into products and relationships into services, you may often find that there isn’t much money to be made doing it. There are exceptions—glitches in the system, as well as the halting attempts by benevolent people and organizations to use

some of their money in the spirit of the gift—but by and large, money as it is today is not aligned with the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible.”⁷⁷

Regardless of how many recessions our obsession with finance may produce, the greater danger is the depression of our true economy. Beyond our history of forced subservience, our current depression is as well derived from the dismal reality that we are largely reliant on men we don’t trust to make decisions on our behalf. It is as if we are collectively involved in an abusive relationship, but fear leaving the relationship because we don’t think anyone else will care for us, and we’ve been conditioned to believe that no one will.

“Money has an even darker side,” explains Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens*. “For although money builds universal trust between strangers, this trust is invested not in humans, communities, or sacred values, but in money itself and in the impersonal systems that back it. We do not trust the stranger, or the next-door neighbour – we trust the coin they hold. If they run out of coins, we run out of trust. As money brings down the dams of community, religion, and state, the world is in danger of becoming one big and rather heartless marketplace.”⁷⁸

The fortunate reality is that we have only practiced this addictive lifestyle for 5% of our species’ known existence. It is not any less feasible for us to release our grasp from this crutch and walk a new path than it is for a fifty-year-old human to spend a year battling addiction or illness and find recovery and a renewed appreciation for life. The application for this program of recovery involves a restored relationship with the spirit we all share beyond our folklore, mythologies, and traditions, the realization of our roles as part of Nature instead of her conquerors, a greater appreciation for the knowledge at our disposal and our ability to innovate beyond it, and forgiveness for whatever past behaviors and decisions have contributed, and continue to contribute, to our separation from the life of abundance that is our birthright.

After all, the Latin translation of *homo sapiens* is

“wise person”. Perhaps it is time that we wisen up and live up to our namesake. There is an old Chinese proverb that translates to “A wise man knows that he knows nothing,” which is reiterated in the West through Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians when he wrote, “And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

Our current economic system of capitalism, the undercurrent of the American Dream, certainly has done much in helping us to develop new technologies, industries, arts, and methods for helping our fellow man. Yet we must also consider that the phonograph, eight-track, cassette, and compact disc all did much to develop the opportunities for listening to music. Nevertheless, technology has now advanced to a point where we can listen to the music of our choice anywhere and at any time with only a smartphone. Isn’t it possible that our monetary technology can be upgraded as well?

Given the instability of the financial system, and the growing amount of mistrust that people have in it as the money we’ve created becomes increasingly absorbed into the accounts of a very few, it is not difficult to imagine the whole house of cards falling in upon itself. The Federal Reserve Bank has already enabled roughly fourteen crashes since the Great Depression, and thanks to Nixon’s lesser known act of treachery, the US Dollar, the linchpin of the world financial system, has no intrinsic value of its own. Given that the average American must now work harder and longer than ever before in order to accumulate this worthless legal tender, and is still often unable to meet the most basic of needs, would it really be such a terrible occurrence for the monetary system to be replaced by something a little more supportive of the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness we long for?

Popular culture is already offering visions of a life less complex. *Lost* gave us six seasons of people living beyond the monetary economy and establishing a collaborative, although often confusing, way of living together. The TV series *Revolution* has shown us a world

without power and the attempted reestablishment of a societal infrastructure. And *The Walking Dead* has given us a vision of complete societal breakdown as humanity is absorbed into the cannibalism required in order to continue the monetary system as we know it.

Granted, none of these examples paints a necessarily rosy picture of a future without money, yet they do each offer resolute examples of how people can come together in times of adversity and work with one another collaboratively in order to establish a greater sense of economic balance and stability beyond the established system. For the time being, we do not have to create such means of survival under the duress of catastrophe, yet at the rate at which we are depleting the planet's natural resources to feed our habit of unyielding consumption, many fear that time is not far off. Should we find the strength to release the fears and bigotry that keep us bound to this unquestionably flawed system and embrace a lifestyle of stronger communities, greater resilience, more enjoyable innovations, and more widely spread happiness, we can continue our societal evolution, or we could just wait to allow absolute necessity to be the mother of invention.

Currently, money serves as a proxy for trust. America has so promoted the idea of independence, a large portion of the population does not realize the interconnectedness of humanity. Having been subjected to so many years of isolation through watching television and the horror stories that have been spoon-fed throughout the media landscape, our trust in our fellow man is seemingly nearly depleted. The loss of money as a proxy for the trust we once had may just push people into panic and savagery if we can't find a way to make our civilization civil enough.

As Yuval Noah Harari states in *Sapiens*, "For thousands of years, philosophers, thinkers and prophets have besmirched money and called it the root of all evil. Be that as it may, money is also the apogee of human tolerance. Money is more open-minded than language, state laws, cultural codes, religious beliefs, and social habits. Money is the only trust system created by humans that can bridge

almost any cultural gap, and that does not discriminate on the basis of religion, gender, race, age or sexual orientation. Thanks to money, even people who don't know each other and don't trust each other can nevertheless cooperate effectively."²

Of this first 200,000 years of known human existence, these 10,000 years that we consider history are not really human history, but largely the history of money and the words we use to tell stories about it. We had a good 190,000 years that are unaccounted for in which we didn't use money at all. Yet just because we've used it kinda poorly in this last little while, doesn't mean that we can't learn to use it in a better manner until we eventually may not need to use it at all.

Given that our society came to use a strategy like slavery, but corrected the practice and stopped, it should give us hope that we can stop using other practices that do not work in favor of the whole of us as well. Or at least practices that aren't as devastating to the human spirit.

Our standard operating procedures have produced a level of gluttony, injustice, obesity, violence, slothfulness, and selfishness never before seen in the world on such a grand scale. It is apparent that our chasing after money is not giving us the quality of life that we truly want for ourselves, our children, or for future generations. Perhaps it's time we wisely open up to a more substantial experience of life through a new understanding of our spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional wealth.

Unfortunately, the American economic system is, as Gore Vidal, described it, "free enterprise for the poor and socialism for the rich."

Economics was defined by Lionel Robbins as "the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses,"⁷⁸ but what often gets forgotten in traditional economics, especially with capitalism and its obsession with capital, is what Edgar Cahn, the inventor of time dollars, calls the "Core Economy."⁷⁹ This is comprised of the families, neighborhoods and communities that love and care for one

another, come to each other's rescue, enact democracy and promote social justice. They are important ends, means, and alternatives that aren't given enough consideration in our current economic discussion.

"All of our economic planning omits at least a third of the map," says Edgar Cahn. "It omits an economy that I think you need to be aware of. It's called home, family, neighborhood, community, civil society. It probably doesn't do anything important from the point of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). It just raises children, makes neighborhoods safe and vibrant, raises strong families, takes care of the elderly, gets involved in things like elections, tries to make democracy work, tries to hold officials accountable, fights for social justice, tries to keep the planet sustainable, but nothing of economic importance, you understand."

Money is a tool we have used to develop a *civilization* whereby there is more than enough shelter for every human being on the planet and the means to grow food, get water, and connect in ways that were heretofore unimaginable. Yet we still find ourselves with a large percentage of the population unable to afford housing, food, water, or connection. Money is still a fine tool, and it will still have many applications as we maneuver our way out of the vice in which we have found ourselves.

However, the sooner we realize the value of our Core Economy, the value of one another, when we see clearly the abundance of life that manifests outside of the parameters of fiduciary profit and corporate control, the sooner we will realize how ridiculous the game of money really is, and how much we have actually lost by playing with it in so many inappropriate instances. But even more importantly, if we can refocus the intention of our lives from this game of money to the merits that truly matter – our families, our communities, our creativity, our environment, and our collective happiness – we will find that our investments into these accounts pay off much more richly than folds of bacteria-ridden paper ever could.

As we move out of the industrial mentality and realize ourselves as more than merely cogs in the financial

wealth machine, people around the world are starting to realize the true value of the roles they play in their everyday lives, beyond the things they do to earn money. For in America, and in many places around the world, we have been so accustomed to doing things for money that we often find little reason to do things if the exchange of those manufactured denominations are not the result of our actions.

“Modern man has transformed himself into a commodity,” wrote psychologist Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving*, “he experiences his life energy as an investment with which he should make the highest profit, considering his position and the situation on the personality market. He is alienated from himself, from his fellow men and from Nature. His main aim is profitable exchange of his skills, knowledge, and of himself, his ‘personality package’ with others who are equally intent on a fair and profitable exchange. Life has no goal except the one to move, no principle except the one of fair exchange, no satisfaction except the one to consume.”¹¹⁵

Finding ourselves in this interminable rat-race in order to satiate our induced hungers, we are exhausting our most precious resources for quick fixes and not recognizing the true value of what we so often take for granted. This places us in an awkward state where upward mobility is mired in a growing assortment of garbage while an opportunistic few absorb the wealth from our activity. Unfortunately, most of us are too busy earning money just to get by to really even know what true wealth is.

“For millions of people, ‘wealth’ amounts to little more than a few weeks’ wages in a checking account or low-interest savings account, a car, and a few pieces of furniture,” says Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. “The inescapable reality is this: wealth is so concentrated that a large segment of society is virtually unaware of its existence, so that some people imagine that it belongs to surreal or mysterious entities.”⁷⁶

In our current state of operations, a lot of what we do is motivated by the need to get money, but much of what we

truly want to do is for the sake of purpose, and for doing what we can to help those we love. Consider most of the content on the Internet. Now that the Information Revolution has given us the technologies we so often take for granted, the majority of content on the Internet was created not for money, but for free, out of the sheer passion of doing it. What we do out of passion has value that should not be ignored.

As Laurence Boldt says in *Zen and the Art of Making a Living*, “Those who take up their work as a creative pursuit, those who are really working from ‘the inside out’ in a spirit of service, need a wider range of alternatives than the conventional nine-to-five job format alone.”²⁸

In the old paradigm, which guided the American experiment through its apex in the fifties, the nine-to-five job was something to be desired, offering status, stability, and security. However, as the dream of industrialism has begun to fade, and the populous has opened up to greater possibilities in the realm of entrepreneurship, that status, stability, and security are no longer offered from the dying breeds of nine-to-five jobs, but seem to be floating in the ether somewhere between the past and future. If we are to guide this transformation toward a Renaissance rather than a Dark Age, to help the populace transcend the limitations created through the faltering Age of Separation, we must open up channels for people to embrace the coming Age of Reunion.

“The Age of Reunion,” as Charles Eisenstein calls it in *The Ascent of Humanity*, “is rather a new human estate, a return to the harmony and wholeness of the hunter-gatherer but at a higher level of organization and a higher level of consciousness. It does not reverse but rather integrates the entire course of separation, which we may begin to see as an adventure of self-discovery instead of a terrible blunder.”¹¹

The old paradigm of separation continues to reveal its fallibility, and wisdom allows us to see how much damage it has caused. With this realization, we are given the auspicious occasion to offer forgiveness to the entirety of humanity for clamoring its way through our societal

development, and realize new inroads for attaining the quality of life we are actually longing for. However, to seize this potential, we must recognize that throughout our journey toward civilization, Life has provided in a myriad of ways and will continue to do so. And if we bring our inherent creative potential to the task of weaving together these disparate pieces of abundance, which have been largely torn asunder by the Age of Separation from which we are waking, we truly can usher in the Renaissance we seek as a catalyst for the Age of Reunion, and find an entirely new understanding of economic viability.

However, to do so, we are going to have to rethink the way that we view our culture.

ECONOMICS BEYOND MONEY

*"Those in power have made it so we have to pay
simply to exist on the planet.*

*We have to pay for a place to sleep, and we have to pay for food.
If we don't, people with guns come and force us to pay. That's violent."*
- Derrick Jensen, *Endgame, Vol. 1: The Problem of Civilization*

The irony of the Industrial Revolution is that it was often sold as the path toward the life of leisure. The methodology of machinery meant that we would create labor-saving devices that would afford us the ability to not work so hard. However, exactly the opposite has happened, and where much of the work that we were once trying to escape was geared toward meeting the basic needs of food, water, and shelter, much of the work that is performed today in order to attain money is largely involved with establishing extravagances and superfluous materialism.

As Charles Eisenstein states in *The Ascent of Humanity*, "In the United States, leisure time did seem to be increasing throughout the 20th century until about 1973, when it began a gradual, sustained decline. Most researchers agree that leisure time has decreased in the thirty years since then: we are spending more time working, more time commuting, more time running errands, more time meeting the obligations of life. The computer, trumpeted as the final key technology that would do for the drudgery of mental labor what machines had (supposedly) done for physical labor, has brought about the opposite: more time spent in

offices, at desks, at keyboards. By now it is apparent that the computer has not eliminated the drudgery of office work, any more than the steam engine eliminated the ordeal of physical labor.”¹¹

While our culture demands that people work in order to pay for their survival, we’re not so demanding about what type of work people do. In the mad rush to pay off our indebtedness to the wealthy for allowing us to live here, we’ve developed a multitude of jobs that, although they offer little for the greater good of humanity and are often quite detrimental to communities and the planet, because the end result is the movement of money, we have come to accept it as necessary for the health of our economy. This has unfortunately resulted in a slough of cheaply made, disposable, often toxic yet trivial products, and the exhortation of billion dollar industries in activities such as pornography, prostitution, drugs, and organized crime. Nevertheless, as long as people are working for money, we find some sort of contentment that things are working out nicely.

For most of us in the lower and middle classes, we believe that others need to work because we have to work. While there are some who are proactive enough to find something that they love to do and get people to pay them for it, the majority of us are not given that luxury, finding ourselves in Tyler Durden’s stated dilemma of “working at jobs we hate to buy shit we don’t need.” Due to our state of indentured servitude, we can’t stand to see people not working, and for those who can’t find it, due to either the fallibility of our manufactured society or their personal limitations of addiction, mental illness, physical illness, or downright apathy, some of us are loathe to enable them by offering them charity that has not been accordingly offered to us.

And so, while 14.8% of Americans live in poverty, according to the 2014 Census,⁶⁴ one in ten of whom work full-time jobs, according to the *Huffington Post*,⁸¹ and half a million Americans suffer from homelessness, almost a quarter of whom are military veterans who have worked

harder than many of us will ever experience, we continue on in our blind devotion to industrialism and a work ethic which still leaves us wanting. Yet to give up this system of ingrained acquiescence to the mandates of money begs the question as to how we will get people to work if we don't hold this societal indebtedness over their heads.

Yet truthfully, humans enjoy work. We actually love the sense of purpose that a job well done provides beyond the economic demands required of us. For anyone who has worked honestly and with passion, we know that the true value of the work is greater than the money we are paid. As Viktor E. Frankl wrote in *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."¹¹⁶

The fact that over 25% of Americans donate over 7.7 billion hours a year in volunteer services is a testament to the fact that people actually do enjoy participation in life and serving others.⁸¹ I would go so far as to say that if the population were not forced to work so many hours in jobs that do not make them feel purposeful, they would be much more likely to engage in volunteerism even more.

If we are to move beyond our current system of indentured servitude, wasted resources, and unbridled consumerism for the sake of mere money, "We must do away with the absolutely specious notion that everybody has to earn a living," as Buckminster Fuller said. "It is a fact today that one in ten thousand of us can make a technological breakthrough capable of supporting all the rest. The youth of today are absolutely right in recognizing this nonsense of earning a living. We keep inventing jobs because of this false idea that everybody has to be employed at some kind of drudgery because, according to Malthusian-Darwinian theory, he must justify his right to exist. So we have inspectors of inspectors and people making instruments for inspectors to inspect inspectors. The true business of people should be to go back to school and think about whatever it

was they were thinking about before somebody came along and told them they had to earn a living.”

Now it is true that if we were to give people more opportunities to work toward more purposeful endeavors than those that industrialism demands, we will most likely find ourselves with shortages of Spongebob Squarepants beach balls, leaky plastic squirt-guns, and a majority of the products that currently fill our landfills. And we may have to deal with having fewer than fifty different varieties of Oreo cookies, as we have seen in the last few years. However, we would also most likely see a greater assortment of organic foods being grown in community gardens and backyards, expanded research on more sustainable practices, and a renewed sense of community resilience as people reclaim their time and energy, diverting it into activities that matter more to them than doing whatever they have to do in order to make a buck.

As economist Ha-Joon Chang wrote in *Economics: The User's Guide*, “Even in the richer countries, what happens at work can make people fulfilled, bored, valued or stressed. At the deepest level work shapes who we are.”

What if our resources of time and labor were viewed as more than just capital from which we can derive monetary movement? What if, instead of an economy based on money, we looked to an economy based on the resources we don't have to manufacture?

Unfortunately, as Chong points out, economics, “is not – and can never be – a science; there are no objective truths in economics that can be established independently of political, and frequently moral, judgements. Therefore, when faced with an economic argument, you must ask the age-old question ‘Cui bono?’ (Who benefits?), first made famous by the Roman statesman and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero.”

Were we to view economics as a system of regulating actual resources instead of merely the money we manufacture in order to increase the continued disassociation of the wealthy, we may have a chance of utilizing the soft science in a way that would meet the needs of the entirety of the population. However, as we have used it

so inadequately, we find ourselves in the throes of imbalance, where our resources are largely squandered in a perpetual game of sleight of hand. Should the people of Earth engage their abilities to sincerely measure economics as the “rules of the house” established by the Greek *oikonomia*, from which we get the word “economy”, then perhaps we can save ourselves from this seemingly unyielding instability. Based on the human ingenuity that has gotten us this far, it is possible to establish a more adequate means of meeting human needs while simultaneously serving as the caretakers of the planet we have so greatly ignored due to our obsession with money.

In *The Ecology of Commerce*, Paul Hawken discusses the difference between *oikonomia* and *chrematistics*, which has been the hailing practice of industrial society. “It (*chrematistics*) can be defined as the branch of political economy relating to the manipulation of property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary exchange value to the owner. *Oikonomia*, by contrast, is the management of the household so as to increase its value to all members of the household over the long run. If we expand the scope of household to include the larger community of the land, of shared values, resources, biomes, institutions, language, and history, then we have a good definition of ‘economics for community.’”¹¹³

It may be no coincidence that the Greeks, who coined the phrase for our estimation of value in the world around us, were among the first to have their economy crash and revert to the simplicity of barter and local currencies. Although their recent transition into a more meager version of economics was largely forced by crushing debt, the struggles to find balance in their new operating system need not be so catastrophic for the rest of the watching world. It may very well be, as with all trailblazers, that the suffering endured by Greece during their involuntary emancipation from the fallibility of the world’s monetary economy may just be the sacrifice that the rest of us have been longing for as we seek the way to our own freedom.

Economics, in its most perfect sense, should not be

the means through which disparity is cultivated, as it is in our modern understanding of the commodity-based world view and the competition that it thrives upon. If we are to look at the breadth of humanity as the family that it is, economics should be used to ensure that the needs of the entirety of humanity and the rest of the planet are met, instead of being used as a constant call toward competition, culminating in the relentless outcome of “winners and losers” and “haves and have-nots”. The “rules of the house”, the true *oikonomia* that will provide for the human race, cannot be sustainably based on endless gladiatorialism and the misconstrued Darwinian concept of “survival of the fittest”, for the truly fittest among us are not the strongest, but the most adaptable. It will ultimately be our ability to change from that which no longer serves us that will be our greatest wealth.

Our method of looking at the world through the eyes of duality has culminated in the theoretical competition between capitalism and communism/socialism. While capitalism focuses solely on the individual, and the capital each individual can accrue for themselves (whether that individual be a human or a corporation), it largely ignores the fact that although we are each individuals, we are also part of a greater community and society at large. Moving forward, it would do us well to realize that there is no one single “ism” that will meet all of our needs, but that we need a more pragmatic approach which recognizes the greater abundance of a broader world view.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his book *Where Do We Go From Here?*, “Communism forgets that life is individual. Capitalism forgets that life is social, and the kingdom of brotherhood is found neither in the thesis of communism nor the antithesis of capitalism but in a higher synthesis. It is found in a higher synthesis that combines the truth of both.”

By looking at the needs established in Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy, we are able to get a greater sense of what is facing humanity, how we can utilize our resources in order to meet those needs, and assist our fellow brothers and

sisters in accessing the abundance that is our birthright. Unlike his contemporaries, who studied pathologies and the nature of mental disease, Maslow's focus was on those who were more successful at navigating the waters of good mental health and managed to create happy and fulfilling lives for themselves. In creating avenues through which a greater percentage of the population can meet their needs in order to have a more vibrant and fulfilled civilization, we would be wise to follow the paths of those who have excelled rather than mire ourselves in the pitfalls of failure.

Maslow's original hierarchy has five tiers addressing the needs that humans encounter in their experience of Western civilization. First are the physiological needs of breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, and excretion. As the commodity world view began to value food as only a product, a house for its investment potential more than its potential as a home, and healthcare as a for-profit industry, many of these needs are daily struggles which ensure that an increasing number of our citizens will not be able to fulfill their potential as human beings.

For those that do find food to eat and a place to sleep and use the bathroom, their struggles are further agitated as they strive for the needs of safety, such as security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of health, and of prosperity. Given that the vast majority of Americans are a paycheck away from having these securities stripped from them, since morality is still being legislated, and disease itself has become a commodity, a huge portion of the population devotes much of their attention to only meeting their basic needs. Again, due to the societal mismanagement of our resources and the inordinate disparity between classes, our standard operating procedures force us to dismiss an immense contribution to our economic viability. Because so many are devoted to meet needs which are readily accessible, yet held just out of reach by the complexity of the financial system and the ruse of its fundamental necessity, our economy is a shadow of what it could be, valuing scarcity over abundance.

For those of us who manage to meet our

physiological and safety needs, we can direct our attention toward addressing our belongingness and love needs, cultivating our friendships, family, and sexual intimacy. Finding a place and a people to which we belong, we are able to address our esteem needs, nurturing our self-image, bolstering our confidence, and gaining a sense of achievement, thereby being respectful of others and garnering respect from others in kind. With healthy esteem, we are able to focus on our self-actualization to cultivate our own morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem-solving ability, and understanding of our place in the world.

If we, as a society, continue to operate in a way in which the majority of the population must struggle to meet the most basic of needs so that only a few can live in opulence, how can we expect them to find belonging, to feel any sense of confidence or achievement, or to orchestrate their own self-actualization? In moving forward together and realizing that we are all one human race headed in the same direction, should we actualize our unity by ensuring that our resources are managed in a way that will meet our collective needs, we will be able to grow and evolve together. Should we ignore our collective needs in deference to the game of competition, domination, and selfishness that has manufactured them, we will continue to be engulfed in unmet needs.

BALANCING SEX AND ECONOMY

*"We still think of a powerful man as a born leader
and a powerful woman as an anomaly."
- Margaret Atwood*

In order to usher in true human fulfillment, a good place to start finding our balance is in recognizing the limitations of the masculine sensibilities. While males have steered the course for our patriarchal civilization, we are now realizing how the virtues of femininity, which have for so long been subdued, can open us up to a fuller enjoyment of life.

It may very well be that our paternalistic world view has had a big effect on our infatuation with scarcity. Because males cannot create and carry life the way that a female does, we have an ingrained deficiency in fully recognizing and embracing the creative process. Due to this limitation, as we have given masculine energies a much greater reverence over the last several thousand years of developing our economy of scarcity, we have fallen short of fully embracing the true power of the abundance at our disposal.

If we can recognize that our civilization has been lopsided in its praise of masculinity and limited appreciation of femininity, we may be able to rectify our problem. Because a large number of our dilemmas are directly created by our tendency to pattern our behavior on the masculine traits of aggression and penetration, evidenced in our preoccupation with warlike activities and competitions, it would do us well as a society to get in touch with our feminine side.

“Since violence is largely a male pastime,” says Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, “cultures that empower women tend to move away from the glorification of violence and are less likely to breed dangerous subcultures of rootless young men.”¹⁴⁹

That is not to say that women never act aggressively or fight, for these are challenges of the human condition, as each individual contains both masculine and feminine energies regardless of their predominant gender. Similarly, not every male is an aggressive neanderthal wanting to merely pillage and plunder. Nevertheless, for anyone who has moderately studied human behavior and the difference between the sexes, there is no escaping the fact, as is blatantly seen in the act of coitus, that men seek to penetrate while women yearn to accept. Without a doubt, although man’s penetration is essential to the process, it is the feminine acceptance of his seed that allows life to flourish, grow, and continue.

Because we so greatly emphasize the power of masculine behavior in our society, and perpetuate the activities of violence, competition, and scarcity that accompany this power, we also perpetuate disharmony and imbalance. Our mission, should we choose to accept it, is to allow our feminine virtues of compassion, collaboration, and sharing to shine through us, and co-create the world that we truly want to live in.

“Remember, the polarization of the sexes is brutally hard on each,” Ken Wilber reminds us in *A Brief History of Everything*. “Men and women both need to be liberated from the horrendous constraints of agrarian polarization. Industrialization began this liberation, began to expand gender roles beyond biological givens – transcend and include – but we need to continue developing this freedom and transcendence.”¹⁰⁷

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

*"The difference between a democracy and a dictatorship is that
in a democracy you vote first and take orders later;
in a dictatorship you don't have to waste your time voting"*
- Charles Bukowski

Beyond the constraints of agrarian polarization and the gender roles it created, we also need the freedom to transcend the bipolar nature of our political system. While it is largely billed as the world's most successful democracy, it is high time we recognize the government of the United States of America for what it truly is. Though it started as a republic with occasional democratic processes by the 6% of white, male landowners that wrote the rules, it has since become an oligarchy run by the richest 1%.

Although the United States often likes to tout its democratic successes, its voter turnout is a testament to how many Americans don't actually have faith in the system. In November 2016, 64% of adults over the age of 18 reporting to be registered voters. Yet, in one of the most hotly politicized presidential races in history, only 55.7% turned out to vote, allowing Donald J. Trump to take office with ballots cast by less than 19% of adults of voting age.

Of the thirty-two countries considered to be highly developed, democratic states by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United States placed 26th in voter turnout for the 2016 election. Belgium, which has compulsory voting laws, had

the highest turnout rates with 87.2%, followed by Sweden (82.6%) and Denmark (80.3%), both with voluntary voting. Switzerland had the lowest voter turnout with less than 39% of voting-aged residents casting ballots in 2015.

While each of these countries have multi-party systems that keep any one party from gaining control of the government, like in the US, there are other variables that may also affect voter turnout. The parliamentary democracy of Sweden promotes greater trust in their electoral system, and voting every four years gives citizens time to consider their options. Yet, the complexity of the Swiss voting system, which requires four participatory elections a year, may be a bit too overwhelming for most citizens.

In America, problems cited for why people don't vote include not finding appropriate representation in the two predominant parties, not liking the candidates, a lack of education, the challenges of registration, and plain, old apathy. Some states still have laws permanently revoking voting rights for felons. Until recently, more than 10% of the population of Florida was ineligible to vote after serving a prison sentence for felonies.

Of course, many have great fear of an actual democracy. Beyond those who are currently benefiting from the oligarchy, many refer to democracy as “mob rule”, describing it as two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for dinner. While Winston Churchill famously stated that “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others” he also pointed out that “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.”

As John F. Kennedy said, “The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all,” and it can certainly be argued that, in the United States, ignorance has been cultivated and fully embraced as a way of life. So, instead of leaving their fates to the collective population and actually trusting the people, a good portion of Americans are perfectly content to let the .000017% who are elected to federal public office continue making laws for them.

Although we may not yet have enough faith in

humanity to currently embrace democracy as a government, there are steps we could consider in order to at least give citizens a greater taste of the democratic process. While we may not yet trust the masses, we would still be wise to stop enabling the corporate parties.

"The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself," warned FDR. "That, in its essence, is fascism - ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power. Among us today a concentration of private power without equal in history is growing."

Now that the concentration of private power has reached such a state, it should be of primary importance to most Americans to overcome this status quo and evolve through innovation and participation. And it should start with the dissolution of the two parties that are not mentioned in the Constitution but have continually steered the course of every election toward their continued economic totalitarianism.

Although our first president and many of our Founding Fathers were vehemently against the development of political parties, America went immediately against that better judgment, and instead of continuing to step out in faith into a full democracy, they established our two-party system in order to better manage economics. Today, although there are dozens of registered political parties at the state and federal level, we still only give credence to the two parties obsessed with finance, even though they've gotten no better at managing it in over two centuries of trying. However, because we feel beholden to the two-party system and do not believe that any other single party stands a chance against the two parties in power, we have dozens of other choices that never get made.

Since shortly after its inception, the US Congress has been comprised of Democrats and Republicans, with the occasional Independent, Libertarian, Whig, or Green Party representatives making their way in to shake things up.

Basically, it's been the Grand Old Party and the... well, those who aren't the Grand Old Party.

Just as with any other spectator sport, in the last few decades, television has allowed us to really get into this back and forth repartee, legitimizing them as "blue" and "red" parties in the Eighties. Nevertheless, can you imagine how humdrum the NFL, NBA, MLB, or NHL would be if each of them only had two teams? If our entertainment gives us so many choices of colors, teams, mascots, and players, why does our government, which actually kinda matters, only have two teams of red and blue, donkeys and elephants, and so many players with lifelong appointments?

The tedium of the left versus right duel is wearing thin in this age of innovation and information, and I recommend a more expansive tournament of politics in order to establish a more thorough and accountable democratic process. For, in defense of our forefathers, no previous generation has ever had the technology to develop an actual working democracy before. Until now.

I propose America form a bracket system much like the systems used to reach the Final Four, the Super Bowl, or any other tournament. Throughout the campaign cycle, empower a vetting process whereby citizens use online educational platforms and voting to trim all of the parties, and their representatives, down to a good ten or so, ensuring that by ballot time, the people have candidates they can actually have some hope in. By using this process to educate the American public about other political options that may allow us to rise from the status quo of two parties which consistently serve the financial forces that be, perhaps America can be better equipped to start finding candidates beholden to the people instead of special interests.

As FDR said, "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."

Obviously, the two parties in power are quite comfortable with the current situation so we can't really expect them to participate in any procedures that might

work to unseat them. In order for the tournament to work effectively, we may have to consider sacrificing them for the greater good of America, and dismantling them, thereby empowering current members to stop enabling financial interests and invest in a more diverse democracy. Unless other parties besides the Democrats and Republicans are given credible participation in the democratic process, this system may just be too far gone to be functional.

At the very least, America should expand its voting processes to include instant run-off voting, also called ranked-choice voting, a program which allows voters to select a first, second, and even third candidate, so that, should their first choice not get a significant percentage of the vote, their second selection would receive their support. Choosing between only two parties for a melting pot society is a ridiculous notion, and anything less than four parties to address the various facets of humanity should not be considered a democracy.

Additionally, if the United States government is to truly be representative of the people, it must be made in the image of those people. As such, if the Executive branch represents the Heart of the people, the Judicial branch represents the Mind of the people, the Legislative branch represents the Body of the people, what of the Spirit of the people? Perhaps a fourth branch would give our government the properly representative four limbs in order to balance out our precarious, three-legged teetering and mediate the dramas of heart, mind, and body?

While it is indeed revolutionary to suggest such an amendment to the Constitution, and while developing a fourth branch may seem radical to some, the foundation of this country was based on radical revolution, and if we have any inclination to build further upon it, we must be conscious of and subservient to the spirit which created it. Should we choose to accept the current operating procedure of the United States government, and turn a blind eye to its apparent lopsidedness and ineffectual penchant toward conflict and violence, we have already abandoned our country and given it over to forces beyond our control.

However, if we take responsibility for the operations of our government by instituting the systematic changes necessary to steer clear of the wreckage our imbalance has caused, we have the opportunity to save our country from certain destruction and usher in a new age of harmony and abundance.

Given that technologies exist today that were undreamed of by our Founding Fathers, a fourth branch of government could be used to help the other branches to set their agendas. Currently, legislators can get elected to office and start working on whatever laws they are drawn to. Perhaps the people of America should have a greater voice in what politicians do once they are elected to office.

Truth be told, there are a number of ways in which we can use innovation to create a more perfect union. But ultimately, it is going to take political will, and that has to start in the heart of the people.

“We are not 'merely' talking about nurturing democratic community practice,” Gar Alperovitz reminds us in *What Then Must We Do?: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution*, “we are talking about community practice as the basis of fundamental experiences of critical importance to the nation as a whole and of democracy in general. The answer to the question 'Can you have genuine Democracy with a big *D* in a continental nation if its citizens have little genuine experience of democracy with a small *d* in their own lives?' is simple: No.”

RECLAIMING OUR POWER

*"Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance,
order, rhythm and harmony."
- Thomas Merton*

For the last several thousand years, this game of finance has allowed many of us to have a great deal of fun, and stretch our imaginations as we have challenged ourselves with this mathematical puzzle of fabricated limitations. Yet if we wish to survive as a species, we had best learn to refine our practices to more adequately stand our balance on this spinning dirt clod in space we call home before we make it uninhabitable. We would be wise to recognize that the fuel for our game of finance is largely comprised of the liquefied remains of the last dominant species on the planet, and we may want to use it more sparingly, as Mother Nature does not ask for a refill gently.

To make our economy sustainable, instead of merely looking to make more money, and increase the debt with which it coincides, we should be looking for as many ways as possible to operate in which money is no longer needed. We should grow food to feed people rather than to make a buck. We should administer the highest care for health in order to establish greater well-being instead of managing disease in order to increase profits. And we should develop every product with a cradle-to-cradle methodology, recognizing that waste, garbage, pollution, and trash, like money and its associate, debt, are all distinctly human constructs that should no longer be exalted as they have been.

“If the primal tribes knew that by cut and burn they would ruin their habitat and endanger their own lives – if they actually knew that with a scientific certainty – then they would at least have thought about it a little more carefully before they began their bio-destruction,” says Ken Wilber in *A Brief History of Everything*. “If the Mayans knew that in killing the rain forests they were killing themselves, they would have stopped immediately, or at least paused considerably. But ignorance is ignorance; whether innocent or greedy, sacred or profane, ignorance destroys the biosphere.

“Ignorance backed by primal or tribal technology is capable of inflicting limited damage,” Wilber continues. “But the same ignorance backed by industry is capable of killing the entire world. So we have to separate those two issues – the ignorance and the means of inflicting that ignorance – because with modernity and science we have, for the first time in history, a way to overcome our ignorance, at precisely the same time that we have created the means to make this ignorance absolutely genocidal on a global scale.”¹⁰⁷

There is no “away” to which we can throw things, and there is nobody on their way to bring another shipment of natural resources once we use all of ours on making disposable products that don't decompose. Our current economic policy has us drawing extremely valuable, life-giving resources out of the planet so that they can be used once in order for us to play our inventive little game of accounting, and then be useless for the next several generations. A strong economy should not be measured by how much garbage we can grow, but how effectively we can make resources flow.

The cumulative sum of all of the money printed by all of the banks at the behest of all of the governments on all of the continents throughout history has been created by nothing more than the imagination of our collective human population. And though we have imagined the majority of it into the bank accounts of an ostentatious few, should we utilize the technologies at our disposal toward more

democratic means, and instill a new set of rules into the game to ensure that every player gets the opportunity to play without having to gamble with their survival, we may have the opportunity to create a sustainable way of living in the world.

Currently, our method of valuing human life is of gelatinous consistency and getting thinner. We squabble over establishing a minimum wage, using a tumultuous market to inadequately measure the value of time, energy, resourcefulness, and service that a person offers. Yet we rarely question initiating some sort of maximum wage, instead demanding the necessity for multiple losers so that we can merely have a few really big winners. Although we've developed some very creative means of establishing a basis of worth for a human life and the proportional ingenuity, dedication, industriousness, and skill, it is still rather arbitrary, and the methodology behind valuing one person at ten dollars per hour while another earns a few thousand per hour for doing less has very little scientific rationale to it at all. What if we could assign a value to human life, ensuring a living wage to every member of the species that would ensure that they have an adequate amount to comfortably survive and the guaranteed potential to make more money based upon their participation?

In the game of *Monopoly*, each player gets 1,500\$ to start with, for without that investment, the banker would have no game. Since the entirety of our population is forced to participate in the game of money, why do we not empower them in the same manner? What if we were to more greatly value human existence and ensure their ability to engage with the construct we've created by automatically meeting their basic needs of safety, security, and health, so that everyone has a stable starting point from which to advance in their relationships, education, profession, self-actualization, and participation in society?

"Equality of opportunity is not enough," says Ha-Joon Chang in *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*. "Unless we create an environment where everyone is guaranteed some minimum capabilities through

some guarantee of minimum income, education, and healthcare, we cannot say that we have fair competition. When some people have to run a 100 metre race with sandbags on their legs, the fact that no one is allowed to have a head start does not make the race fair. Equality of opportunity is absolutely necessary but not sufficient in building a genuinely fair and efficient society. The best way to boost the economy is to redistribute wealth downward, as poorer people tend to spend a higher proportion of their income.”

What is currently being referred to as a Universal Basic Income is nothing new. English radical Thomas Spence, French revolutionary Marquis de Condorcet, and American founding father Thomas Paine all proposed the idea in the 18th century. It has been mentioned a number of times since, perhaps most surprisingly by US President Richard Nixon. The new generation of billionaires like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg, as well as a number of other Silicon Valley executives, support the idea as well. Countries like Canada, Finland, Scotland, Germany, and India are discussing its possibility to support the livelihood of citizens,¹⁵⁷ and many of them already have experiments underway to test its feasibility.

As many of the tasks people are currently getting paid for become automated, it may very well be that the leisure the Industrial Revolution promised may come to light, and people will be out of work. A study from Oxford University estimates that as much as 47% of the population will be unemployed due to automation. But the question remains... how do we decide how much of a basic income people should get?

What if every person on the planet were to receive a standard living allowance based on their age? An infant would receive 1,000\$ for her first year on the planet, increasing incrementally each year so that as a twenty-year-old she is receiving 20,000\$, as a forty-year-old she is receiving 40,000\$, as a seventy-year-old she is receiving 70,000\$, and each and every person is granted the same, to then invest and play with as they wish, while we all create

the lives we imagine, and no one need suffer unnecessarily.

Would our economy work better if we all started at the same level, with the ensured ability to pay our way and live an enjoyable life? How would we fund such a thing you may ask? How about redistributing some of what's being hoarded?

For those who have over 15 million dollars, as William Gates Sr. said, you've got enough for you and your progeny to live comfortably, luxuriously, and downright irresponsibly if you want to be, for the next few generations. So we could feasibly leave that 15 million alone, and the rest, we could put back into circulation, and buy some freedom for the other people who share the planet with you, those who do the heavy lifting so you don't have to. If you need any of it, like if you somehow manage to spend that 15 million on Faberge egg omelettes and demolition derby yachts, you let us know, and we'll have your back to make sure that you still have your basic needs met as you learn how to be a decent and responsible human being.

For the devoted capitalists who crave competition, we have, according to Maslow's expanded theory, eight actual levels of needs: Physiological, Safety, Belonging, Self-esteem, Cognitive, Aesthetic, Self-actualization, and Self-transcendence. Could we possibly provide at least the physiological needs of food and water and the safety needs of shelter and healthcare for all of our citizens, and limit our competitions to some of the latter needs? Could we recognize the abundance to ensure people's survival and reserve our ego-based competitions for our self-esteem, education, décor, position, and godhood without forcing poverty upon others?

In our current operating system, we are, in many ways, moving along in a very imbalanced way. Our politicians can't seem to balance budgets. The gap between economic classes creates astounding disparity. The consumption rates of industrialized nations exhibit extreme imbalances in relation to what resources they provide. Isn't it time that we started taking a more conscious approach to our economic energies and how we engage them on both

individual and collective levels?

Although I am no big fan of the government taking money to do things that we as a people should be doing for ourselves, I do recognize the role of taxes in distributing the wealth of each individual so that we all may have a stronger and more abundant common wealth. Yet as free people, this money should not be taken from us so that the Law becomes such a reigning force in our society and serves to limit our freedom.

However, the technology at our disposal could allow us to ensure that the digital monies we move around between one another bring abundance not only to our individual selves, but to the collective wealth of the world we inhabit. My recommendation is the development of a voluntary system which would work within the established parameters of the current system, but by bypassing the quagmire of bureaucracy, would inevitably make the current system obsolete. There is indeed a necessary element of socialization, as there should be with a social system such as human civilization, yet it would not be forced, would offer more involved participation in societal development, and would grant a more adequate proliferation of collective abundance and personal choice.

For instance, the development of the blockchain now allows each individual the power to personally account for all of their economic energy. Imagine if we each had a choice as to where our money went with each transaction, and what systems it helped to support. Imagine an infrastructure through which our financial energy could be channeled to cultivate the lives we truly want instead of being co-opted to support initiatives that do not uphold the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that we are entitled to. Isn't it possible to use blockchain technology to program an individual's transactions to channel portions of them to address the ways they naturally interact with the world?

There is an aberration in the way we currently view our economy as something that needs to grow. We should be seeing it as something that needs to flow. The economy, this mental construct that we've created, should not be seen as a

way to make money by assuming more debt, but as a means of providing for life to flourish. Perhaps we should take a look at how life flourishes in the natural world.

In western civilization, we tend to consider the four elements of Nature to be Water, Air, Earth, and Fire (Eastern thought sometimes includes wood, metal, and ether, depending upon the region, but let's just keep things simple with four for now). Likewise, humans are said to be made up of four complimentary elements of Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit. The Heart provides the emotional flow (and as a muscle, moves blood/water through the body so that it may realize life), the Mind conceives ideas as if out of thin air, the Body connects us with the physical world and the earth we live upon, and the Spirit provides that fire within each of us that inspires us to connect, grow, and prosper.

We see that society is also comprised of four different parts. We have the emotive expression of Artistry as we create our individual lives, the rational understanding and infrastructure of Business, the living ecosystem of Citizenry, and the warming connection of Community. Through all that we do, we are each the Artists of our own lives, in the Business of providing for ourselves and others, the Citizen which participates in society, and the Community to which we give ourselves. In order to address our abundance adequately, and no longer have to trouble ourselves with not having enough, our financial energy should be channeled into balanced streams so that our economy may prosper in a more balanced way through a healthy flow.

By developing a technological infrastructure that would accommodate an individual to select the channels through which his/her digital financial flow can be dispersed, we could empower individuals to take a more proactive role in their lives and the lives around them. Utilizing this simple ABC² Economics model, individuals could ensure their livelihood as Life Artists, the infrastructure of Business which supports their participation, the Citizenry that comprises an

interdependent society, and the Community which ensures the cessation of suffering caused by the current engine of unlimited growth, industrial enslavement, economic inequality, and unyielding debt.

Let me give you an example. What if, for each dollar that I make (or any economic unit, be it a bitcoin, yen, euro, or time dollar), a portion goes to support me as the Artist of my life, a portion goes to the Business (or businesses) that served as the means through which I was able to accrue that dollar, a portion would address my Citizenry by supporting my local infrastructure and necessary governmental functions, and a portion would go to the Community with whom I share the world, wherever I decide I'd like to help. In this way, we map out our connection to the world around us through this web we create, bringing us into greater harmony with Nature, our community, and the needs of the planet.

It would ensure that I was provided for to create the life that I want, allow me to be purposeful in my endeavors as I would be able to support other entrepreneurs, empower me to participate more closely in my government, and give to what I think is worthy.

Practically, many citizens already utilize this model in some way, shape, or form. Citizens who have found themselves in a place of conscious participation in the economy know that these four aspects of their reality must be addressed in order for them to create an enjoyable life for themselves. By building upon this model, which comes so naturally to those who most masterfully engage their economic prowess, and making it more accessible to the mainstream, we can provide the opportunity for every citizen to take a more active role as a co-creator in the life we all imagine, thriving harmoniously in abundance, creativity, purposefulness, and peace.

What if, instead of the government taking a citizen's money and continually enabling an imbalanced budget, each citizen could decide how much financial energy each department would receive from their financial flow? What if they could also assign a percentage from each of their

transactions to support charitable efforts they care about? Aren't we technologically advanced enough to support a true economic democracy?

Considering that so many of our transactions are now electronic, could we not guide our personal digital economies similarly to the way that we establish our Facebook profiles? I see a time soon that I will be able to click the businesses involved in a given transaction, click the endeavors for infrastructure that I feel should be addressed, and click the needs that I want to help fill, and then go out and live my life without having to worry about all of the problems of the world. Until I can find someone to help me write the algorithm, now that I'm using money again, I suppose that, for the time being, I'll just have to do it manually.

That, I suppose, is a subject for another book.

THE POWER OF FAITH

*"You must not lose faith in humanity.
Humanity is like an ocean;
if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."
- Mahatma Gandhi*

In his book *Power vs Force*, Dr. David Hawkins portrays the difference between the two being that force requires effort while power is effortless. Based on these definitions, we have often misused the word *power* and relegated ourselves to using much more *force* than we often had to. When we consider those who have ruled over the various facets of our civilization, they have not always done so because they had power, but because they implemented force.

Force is used quite effectively in negotiating conflict to ensure that one side comes out of the conflict better than the other. Power guides both sides through the conflict to find a better outcome for both. Force is used in making something so, while power abides in knowing that it is so and merely participates in the process of becoming.

Too often in our society, we are still forced to do things that do not work in our individual or collective self interests, and though different means are used now than when whips inspired cotton pickers, we have still become enslaved through those who forcefully demand our energy and time in order to make their vision manifest. Yet, given the communicative resources and technological means at our disposal, we are at a pivotal moment of human history,

where we have been granted immense opportunities in recognizing the power we have to help guide the world toward a better vision for all, and not merely those who claim to wield power.

It may very well be that the greatest amount of force we have exerted has been in getting people to choke down the knowledge of good and evil, and pitting ourselves against one another, standing on the logic that we must be good so “they” must be evil. Yet, by the biblical account, in that first week of Creation, before mankind tasted of the duality that morality mandated, God had created everything - light, water, sky, plants, animals, and even humans - with “good” as the defining characteristic. Although our newfound knowledge has enabled us to define all sorts of things as “evil”, and even make up a few new things of our own to promote this new dimension of reality, we will be much more adept at truly understanding our power if we look back to the original blueprints and see once again, that life is good, and nothing need be forced to be what it is not.

Those who are drawn to the lower vibrations of force feel some compulsion to make others do things the way they want them to be done and see things the way they want them to see. And so are many laws made, both religious and bureaucratic, as people look upon the world with fear of what is, and feel the need to force it to become something different. Yet there is great power in accepting life as it is provided with grace and gratitude, and humbly accepting our responsibility to participate without having to manipulate.

“With humility comes the willingness to stop trying to control or change other people or life situations or events ostensibly 'for their own good',” writes Dr. Hawkins. “To be a committed spiritual seeker, it is necessary to relinquish the desire to be 'right' or of imaginary value to society. In fact, nobody's ego or belief systems are of any value to society at all. The world is neither good nor bad nor defective, nor is it in need of help or modification because its appearance is only a projection of one's own mind. No such world exists.”⁶⁰

In the civilization of force that has been developed

over the last few millennia, there have been many egos at play, seeking to control others by playing with emotions, planting ideas, administering brutality, and even limiting the parameters of spiritual growth. And while these trends may continue with the worldwide proliferation of ego boosts, there is now, more than ever, a movement of people who are reclaiming their own emotional health, thinking for themselves, working toward their own passions, and cultivating their own unique relationship with their Creator. Although some may decry the plethora of selfies that now fill the Internet, they are a testament to the rising mantra of “I’m here, and I’m doing my thing.”

Throughout this story of ours, there are many moments that could be attributed to the existence of evil, yet in total, they’ve created the steps to Now, and considering the opportunities they have granted us to learn, grow, and prosper without such need for the forces that have compelled us throughout, I think that’s pretty good. Should we be able to once again be grateful and in awe of the Life that provides for us, and move beyond the burden of force, there is great power in store for us, through our artistry, our activities, our communities, and our prayers.

Although I may often come across as anti-Christian, I still resonate with what those fingers have been pointing to all these many years, but for each finger that points, there are four that grasp. I cannot deny the greater Power in the Universe to which they try to point, with sometimes crooked fingers, nor that It works with us as we co-create our existence, yet for true eternal life to fully engage, the search for the answers to Mystery must end, and the pointing fingers must each become open palms, so that we may all be open to the abundance of Power.

At the tail end of the Information Revolution, having long fought the battle of religion versus science, we still have a predominantly large number of people who still subscribe to having faith in some sort of Divine Entity. Religious organization has largely guided our conception of whatever Divine Entity formed this ball of matter we’ve come to call Earth, the inhabitants upon it, and the Universe around it, of

which it is a very small part. Yet there is a growing spiritual maturity that is helping people see beyond the remedial stories and rudimentary depictions of our Creator, and open up to a new understanding of faith, one more grounded in love as a state of being.

As Jesus is reported to have said in The Gospel of Thomas, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

In what remains of the story of Jesus, the four canonical gospels, as well as those that the Church didn't accept, the words speak much to the topic of *oikonomia*, at least our personal economies. It is a measured blend of forgiveness, faith, hope, kindness, and non-attachment, with an inflated budgetary attachment of love. While the first "red letter" Bible to highlight the words attributed to Jesus in blood red crimson wasn't published until 1899, it's unfortunate that the opinions of Paul and the Jewish traditions have played such a predominant part in the development of Christianity. Nevertheless, as Jesus broke down the Ten Commandments to loving God and loving each other, for those who truly want to follow Christ, more emphasis should be put on just those red letters than the other books that supplement it.

Although the proliferation of ideas to support Christianity has often been fueled by fear and intimidation tactics, there are truths in those red letters that effortlessly transcend religious ideologies, and are evident in most of the religions that have been developed as a way to deal with the civilization spawned from our totalitarian agricultural system and the hierarchies it has created. Beyond the efforts that have been made to homogenize beliefs and establish parameters around how people may find connection with the Source of their being through purposeful service and the full enjoyment of life, there is a core message of loving God and loving your neighbor that ultimately relegates the rest of the scriptures to the annals of commentary. To tap into the power that each of us has as our birthright as the children of God, we would be wise to release ourselves from the

trappings of whatever dogmas our egos might use to inhibit our joy and simply open ourselves up to experiencing a life lived in love.

A true faith in Christ, or God, or Allah, or Buddha, or any other religious fulcrum, need not be relegated to being a belief in the dogmas that other adherents have collected, but knowing that the efforts we put into participating in the world around us will have some sort of positive result. Yet the radical notion of treating others the way that you would like to be treated in order to participate in creating the kind of world you want to live in is not limited to a belief in Christ or in any Divine entity whatsoever. For those who are not of the Christian tradition, whether you be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Scientologist, or Atheist, we all breathe the same air, are comprised of the same water, live on the same earth, and are illuminated by the same sun. Although we use different words to describe our connection to the essence of divinity that created all that we know, it is within our ability to transcend our "isms" and regard one another with common respect and the love of pure spirit.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT AND I FEEL FINE

*"The apocalypse is not something which is coming.
The apocalypse has arrived in major portions of the planet
and it's only because we live within a bubble
of incredible privilege and social insulation
that we still have the luxury of anticipating the apocalypse."
- Terence McKenna*

Some say that we will have to suffer through a catastrophe before waking to a new way of being. "The sustainability revolution will occur," promises Richard Heinberg in *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*. "The depletion of nonrenewable resources ensures that humankind will eventually base its economy on renewable resources harvested at rates of natural replenishment. But that revolution will be driven by crisis."

And crisis has indeed been long prophesied by the religious traditions that have guided the culture we know as reality.

In the Christian tradition, the story goes that the apocalypse, the end of the world, will be preceded by the second coming of Christ, who will come like a thief in the night. No one will know the day or time, but many have tried to guess. According to the popular interpretation, first pieced together by Charles Spurgeon in the 1800s from John's

Revelation and segments from other books of the Bible, Jesus will come down on a cloud and scoop up those who believe in him, an event which will begin the thousand year war of Armageddon. It will basically be as a world without God, where the very face of God will be taken from the world. There will be wars, famines, natural catastrophes, boils, diseases, and plagues. Kind of like it's been for the last thousand years.

The story goes that the War of Armageddon will culminate in the final battle where Christ will defeat the devil and all of his minions once and for all, and throw them into the lake of fire. Then, he will destroy this Earth, create a new Earth and a new accompanying heaven, and hopefully, the next time, he'll figure out how to do it without having to eternally punish everybody .

This version of the apocalypse story has had people looking toward the end times since its inception. Aligning with the growth of the Industrial Revolution and the systematic degradation of the planet ever since, it would seem that Western civilization has set a course determined to bring about this prophecy. However, there are other, lesser known interpretations of the largely perplexing book of scripture that might offer a more hopeful picture of the future that awaits us.

There are a variety of ways that have been considered when interpreting the Christian apocalypse. *Futurism*, the seemingly most widely accepted interpretation, has us still awaiting the end times, as Spurgeon, Hal Lindsey, and many in the Fundamentalist Evangelical movement have predicted. *Preterism* states that John's vision is a literal account of what already happened in the first century AD. *Historicism* also suggests that Revelation is symbolic of events that have already taken place. And *Idealism* presents the possibility that the book of Revelation is currently being fulfilled with the book offering a symbolic narrative of spiritual events.

Among these four ways of viewing the eschatology of Christianity, there are also various ways of looking at how it will or has played out. The views of *Premillennialism*,

Postmillennialism, and *Amillennialism* offer three different possibilities as to when the Second Coming of Christ would occur in relation to the thousand years which follow the war of Armageddon.

Fortunately, we, as creatures granted free will by our Creator, have the opportunity to believe whichever interpretation we wish to, or to not believe in it at all. I tend to think that if there is any validity to the story, it is only through metaphor. The Second Coming of Christ is not the literal return of a man riding on a cloud, but as a shift in consciousness toward a more Christlike way of interacting with the world. This growing awareness is often simply called the "Christ consciousness," and the literal interpretation of "apocalypse" as the "lifting of the veil" refers to seeing beyond the illusion of self and realizing that God has been within you this entire time. And beyond all of the commentary, the gift of eternal life is the realization that it is all good and that every breath is a gift.

"Apocalypse does not point to a fiery Armageddon," wrote Joseph Campbell in *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor*, "but to the fact that our ignorance and our complacency are coming to an end. The exclusivism of there being only one way in which we can be saved, the idea that there is a single religious group that is in sole possession of the truth - that is the world as we know it that must pass away. What is the kingdom? It lies in our realization of the ubiquity of the divine presence in our neighbors, in our enemies, in all of us."

Although many will find this very difficult to accept, especially the Fundamentalist Evangelicals who have been taught to despise this planet and anxiously await moving onto the next one, Jesus himself was quoted as saying that his followers would do greater works than he, imploring them to be perfect as his Father in Heaven was perfect. Since the teachings of Christ have been echoed throughout most every religion practiced by mankind, is it too far-fetched to think that we might actually be able to practice the lessons we have learned in order to be the conduits through which a new heaven and new earth is created? Can we not build upon

the understandings we have achieved by honoring the Divine Intelligence which consistently provides us with the supreme gift of life while sharing this gratitude for living with our fellow man? Is that not the culmination of the Ten Jewish Commandments which Jesus boiled down so eloquently? “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” reads the book of Matthew. “This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

Imagine if we as a people could simply shift our thinking from the need to promote our own beliefs, campaigns, interpretations, and understanding to humbly offering gratitude to the God of our personal limited understanding and expanding that admiration, adoration, and desire for service to all of the other people that He/She has so wonderfully placed in the life we inhabit. Is it so impossible to imagine a time that we throw off the shackles of imprisonment that we have created for ourselves by so vehemently adhering to man-made systems, and simply allow our faith in divinity to sustain us? Compared to the present system of giving our power to synthetic governments and corporate structures, which largely serve as parasitic organisms feeding off of the value we give them, is it not feasible that we could recognize that the inalienable rights granted to us by our Creator of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness have much more power than we have imagined?

There has been much speculation on whether or not the forefathers of this country based the foundation of America on Christian principles, yet nowhere in the Constitution nor Declaration of Independence does it mention anything more religiously oriented than honor to a “Creator.” Considering that one of the basic guidelines for this new world was the right of religious freedom, it should be considered common sense that there is no one singular way of associating with the spiritual realm of our being. Yet suffice it to say, our forefathers unquestionably allowed for

the possibility that a grander Intelligence than their own was at work in setting forth this foundation, as is evidenced in their developing a Constitution which allowed for constant amendment.

As this Revolution of Wisdom continues to grow, just as the preceding Revolutions of Agriculture, Industry, and Information before it, there are sure to be many questions of how we will implement the changes that need to be made. However, the primary first step is an acknowledgement that there is a system of order in place that surpasses our understanding. From this system, we have developed cultures, governments, religion, and science. If we can first simply be grateful for how far we have come since living as nomadic cave-dwellers, and realize the potential we have for further evolution, we can harness this power of wisdom to develop new systems which will align us more closely with the benevolence of our Creator as we share that benevolence with our fellow creations.

Basically, if beyond the field of our religious mythology and understanding, we can come to an acceptance of a Divine Intelligence powered by Love, one that metaphorically went back to work on the 8th day and continues to work on this masterpiece called Life, we can realize ourselves as the tools of His/Her/Its creativity, becoming co-creators in the world we imagine. Throughout many traditions of the highest consciousness, the understanding of this Divine Intelligence is “I Am That I Am.” If we are made in the image of this benevolent Creator, are we each not “I Am That I Am” as well? The question which each citizen of the world must answer is, “Which I Am am I?”

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