

the **Call**



**Towards Personal Independence
and Responsibility**

A pamphlet for teens and others to take control of their life and world

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and Responsibility

Joe Andrade

Take control of your life and world:
www.2andrade.org

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Preamble

THE PLANET HAS VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND ISSUES. We are generally not happy. There is fear, even paranoia, stalking much of the country.

Those in charge don't know what to do – they are constrained by out-moded assumptions and ideologies.

There is a need for **new and creative thinking and doing in government and politics – and for people who can question old assumptions and policies**. We need people who can examine and search to seek their own personal philosophies, values, education, and place in the world.

The hormonal and physiologic changes associated with puberty aid exploration and searching. Adolescent brain development facilitates some risk taking and creative thinking. Youth have not yet fully accepted – or bought into – the 'standard' assumptions, rules, and expectations of adult society. They can think (and behave) out of the box. They can encourage and even pressure new and better approaches. And – if the situation is truly untenable and unchangeable – they can protest and revolt. Rather than feel alienated, depressed, or hopeless, youth – and others – can become engaged and involved.

This pamphlet encourages such concern and action.

(See the films *Berkeley in the Sixties*, *Freedom Riders*, *Bringing Down a Dictator*, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*, and *How to Start a Revolution*.)

Nearly all countries have their own serious problems and issues.

Most families and individuals now have serious problems and issues. The 99% is struggling for jobs, health, housing and education.

The American Dream has become a nightmare. 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness' is not happening for most. Life (survival) has become the major activity and focus.

The World is both old and young. Life expectancy is increasing in much of the world, and yet one third of the population of the Middle East is under 20; roughly two-thirds is under 30. The same is approximately true for South America. One third of the people in Utah are under 20!

Governments, historically, are run by older, mature, and supposedly 'wiser' segments of the population – generally men over 50 – hopefully educated, ethical, responsible, and with values appropriate to participating in government. Increasingly, however, this is not the case. Our own United States of America government is largely persuaded and bought by lobbyists, bribes ('donations'), and personal enrichment.

Many modern governments are monarchies, dictatorships, theocracies, plutocracies, or 'incompetencies'.

The youth-led protests in the Middle East are concerned with such problems. The Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, and the complementary movements in cities throughout the world, have brought attention and awareness to the issues of financial inequality, political influence, corruption, and plutocracy.

Women, historically greatly under-represented and even disenfranchised, are increasingly becoming involved in political and professional activities.

Education, experience, and decision-making skills are indeed important – which is why government officials should generally be older, experienced, and educated, i.e., 'wiser'. But in those situations where that is clearly not the case, the creativity, imagination, and even impulsivity of Youth can help redirect and change the system.

Education and experience based on outmoded assumptions and even unethical rules and laws is almost always not in the best interests of the overall population. The 'baggage' of accepted assumptions, traditions,

dogma, and even laws make it very difficult for imaginative or creative solutions to emerge.

It was Einstein who said, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

The old generally do not have the energy to protest and revolt – and are often financially and culturally entangled in and compromised by the status quo. Youth have the energy – and they have ideas and perspectives useful to modern society.

In some countries you can **run for public office** at 18 years of age! The same is true in many States (for many State offices) – see *Age of Candidacy*). And in most States one can easily run as an independent. (I ran as an independent, unaffiliated candidate for US Congress in 2012 – see *The Run*.)

Part of the aging population is mentally youth-like. The politically aware and active youth of the sixties are now retiring. Although they may not have been very active over the last 40 to 50 years, many were very active in their much younger days – in their teens and twenties. Many are becoming ‘reactivated’. Most are healthy, mentally alert, and ready to become re-involved. Youth – and youth-like older people – need to team up, support each other, and get involved.

Thomas Jefferson said, “*An educated citizenry is the only safe repository for democratic values.*”

Others have said, “*In a democracy, people get the government they deserve.*”

If we want a functioning democracy, we must participate and be involved – and that requires the knowledge, the perspective, and the motivation to learn, do our ‘homework’, and question, analyze, debate, and think critically and rationally.

It also requires personal independence and responsibility.

Let’s start with your own personal declaration of independence and responsibility. Here’s a draft, based on our own Declaration of Independence. Review and revise it often – as you grow, learn, and develop.

Declaration of PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

I hold these truths to be self-evident:

- All men and women are created equal;
- All men and women are endowed with inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I accept a government whose power arises from the consent of the governed.

If my government proves to be ineffective, corrupt, or otherwise non-functional, it is my right and duty to replace it with one that is effective and functional.

Our present government (in late 2012 in the United States) is largely ineffective:

- It does not and indeed cannot pass laws of immediate and pressing importance;
- It has refused to effectively deal with budget, debt, and revenue needs;
- It has refused to deal with the nation's economic challenges and well-being;
- It has refused to communicate with its citizens in an open, rational, responsible, and adult manner;
- It has refused to deal with the needs and challenges of national and planetary health and well-being – including air, water, land, and oceans;
- Its elected officials have accepted large amounts of money and favors from lobbyists and other sources, allowing the purchase of access and

influence – and thus compromising and corrupting the legitimacy of government and of elected office – even including the Federal Judiciary and Supreme Court;

- It has failed to deal with the challenge of citizenship, immigration, and resident documentation and security;
- It has failed to deal with the needs and problems of the military and veterans – and of others who provide and have provided selfless public service;
- It refuses to address the opportunities, challenges, and needs for quality, public education.
- It refuses to address climate change and planetary-wide pollution and resource issues.

I, therefore, declare my independence from such a corrupt and ineffective government.

I declare my responsibility to change it.

I solemnly pledge to solicit, support, and work to elect candidates with the wisdom, education, energy, and values to serve their country honestly and effectively.

I pledge my skills, time, energy, and resources – and my honor.

Name

Date

(see *The Declaration of Independence*.)

The Principles – the Scaffold

TO BE AN AWARE AND EDUCATED CITIZEN, we must have some understanding and appreciation of the nature of the Universe, of planet Earth located within it, of the forces and energies present, of the life form which is now dominant, and of the socio-economic-political systems which Man has developed and utilized. These are *The Principles*. With them we can separate fact from fiction – reality from fantasy.

An integrated and complete perspective and background is difficult to attain. The subjects and problems important to modern societies are distributed through dozens of ‘majors’ and hundreds of courses. That’s why we’re encouraged to read, study, go to College, and learn about the world and Universe of which we are a part.

Big History is the new name for this very old challenge – to somehow cover, appreciate, and partly understand the big picture – from the Creation to now.

(See Discovery Channel – *History of the World in Two Hours*; Bryson – *A Short History of Nearly Everything*; Christian – *Maps of Time* and *Big History*; and Sagan – *Cosmos*.)

We need a short but complete overview in order to have an outline – a structure, a **scaffold** – upon which to organize and develop our education, thoughts, and interests. We must study, learn, question, and challenge – and do our ‘homework’. And, like Leonardo da Vinci, we need to be almost insatiably curious. We must continually study, experiment, question, challenge, and modify our scaffold. Your brain has the capacity, the ‘wiring’ and the skills to do that – just let it loose!

We begin with...

The Beginnings

It 'began' roughly 12 to 15 Billion years ago with the 'Big Bang'. Some refer to the event as **The Creation**. A huge explosion distributed Energy throughout Space. Some energy coalesced to Matter, and some of that matter coalesced into stars and planets (and other stuff). What happened before that? No one knows.

The Sun, our local star, formed some 5 billion years ago and has about another 5 billion years of life before it engulfs its solar system and transforms to a very different type of star.

Planet Earth and the other planets formed at roughly the same time as the Sun, resulting in a Solar System containing Earth and 7 other major planets orbiting the Sun. The Sun 'burns' hydrogen via nuclear fusion, producing the solar energy which bathes and powers Earth and the rest of the Solar System.

Early Earth consisted of all the natural elements in the **Periodic Table** and great amounts of solar and chemical energy. Reactions and rearrangements resulted in minerals, rocks, oceans, and gases. Complex molecules developed roughly four billion years ago and 'simple' life shortly thereafter. Molecules and structures to collect and use solar energy to produce organic molecules (photosynthesis) likely came next. This process produced oxygen as a byproduct, which then allowed oxygen-based respiration to evolve – resulting eventually in Man and related oxygen-based life forms.

Multicellular life came on the scene perhaps a billion years ago and animals as we normally think of them a half billion (500 million) years ago. Man as we commonly recognize him and her appeared perhaps 5 million years ago – and modern man (*homo sapiens*) can be traced back perhaps 250,000 years, more or less.

These are *The Beginnings*.

It all happened – and continues to happen – under the influence and control of the ‘Laws’ and processes of Physics and Chemistry.

If you find someone who does not ‘believe’ these Principles, ask why – ask for their contrary evidence. Scientists are always modifying and improving their understanding. But an extraordinary claim – or a rejection of very well recognized principles – requires extraordinary evidence. ‘Belief’ just doesn’t cut it!

The ‘Laws’

In the ‘old days’ (say 50,000 or so years ago) curious and inquisitive men and women wanted to know *How* the world worked. They were the early **Scientists**. Some men and women wanted to know *Why* the world exists and *Why* things happen as they do; they are called **Philosophers**.

The process by which scientists figure out the way things work is called **Science**. The field in which people think and argue about questions for which there are no answers is called **Philosophy**. Science generally operates on the principle that the simplest explanation is the most reasonable and most likely one.

After thousands of years, scientists realized that the entire Universe operates under a set of physical and chemical laws and principles. The two most basic have to do with **Energy**.

The Universe apparently has a fixed total amount of Energy (what it started with at the Creation); that total Energy cannot be increased or decreased. That law is called *Conservation of Energy: Energy can’t be created or destroyed*.

The other equally basic law is that energy has many forms or types – and one type can be transformed to another type, and perhaps again to another – but the transfer is generally a one-way process. Every transfer results in less useable energy – the energy gets less intense – more disordered. That decrease in order (increased randomness) is called **Entropy**. And that’s the *Second very basic Law*.

Time, which goes in only one direction (forward!), is related to Entropy and thus to the very basic laws of the Universe.

Don't worry about Why that is – that's just the way it is. (If you want to worry about the Why, talk with a philosopher, but choose one who knows her physics!)

Conservation of Energy and increase in Entropy (disorder) are the two Laws of Thermodynamics. They are as basic and fundamental as it gets.

Matter (stuff) is solid energy. You know from Einstein that Energy and Matter are related, via $E=mc^2$. Energy can 'create' matter and matter can 'create' energy, but their total is always constant (so the law should be conservation of matter **and** energy).

Stuff (matter) is made of atoms. Atoms have a center – a nucleus made up of matter particles called protons and neutrons. Atoms have a 'cloud' or outer zone of electrons (little matter particles).

There are 92 different types of atoms – which are the 92 elements in the Periodic Table. There are actually more because nuclear scientists have figured out how to make 'man-made' ones (using lots of energy). All the stuff in and on the planet, including you and me, is made of those 92 elements. Atoms react or bond with each other to make molecules.

All this atom and molecule stuff is called **Chemistry** – the subject of chemists and chemical and materials engineers.

Physicists deal with Energy and with Forces. Some principles of forces:

Matter attracts other matter – like Earth attracting You, keeping you pinned to the planet. That force is **Gravity** – mysterious and not easy to explain (ask a good physicist – but ask questions!).

Another one is electricity and magnetism. Since electricity and magnetism are so closely interwoven, we call this one the electromagnetic force. It has to do with electrons and protons ('negative' and 'positive' charges) and with something called the 'spin' of electrons (that's the 'magnetic' part).

Nuclear forces involve neutrons and protons and the stability of the nucleus, as well as the enormous energies of fusion and fission processes (nuclear energies).

Our physicist friends can't really explain (in any everyday language) why these **forces exist**, but they can predict the strength, direction, and transformation of them – and work with engineers to 'harness' and use them.

There's a lot we do not know – and some things we may never know. There's an inherent uncertainty in natural processes, especially those in the molecular, atomic, and sub-atomic realms. So another key principle is *Uncertainty – 'things happen'*.

We don't like uncertainty – or statistics. We want reasons – but often there are no reasons. Our brains don't like that, and neither do scientists, but that's the way the world works.

Remember when you asked Mom or Dad a question – and their answer was (is) *because!*

Science tries to answer questions using the smallest number of 'because's'. For now our *because's* are the Laws of Thermodynamics, the Fundamental Forces, and an Uncertainty Principle. Scientists (mainly physicists) keep trying to simplify or consolidate these into something even more basic (and hopefully simpler!).

Science keeps probing into the unknown. The development of new understanding and new tools permits scientists to probe new topics – areas that could not be scientifically studied before. Examples include brain physiology and neurochemistry, planet-wide changes and issues, and even inter-Galactic space and cosmology. Edward Wilson calls it *Consilience* – the synthesis of new and old knowledge – and the expansion of knowledge.

Carl Sagan referred to science '*as a candle in the dark*', where dark refers to the unknown. As science expands, the unknown recedes – the light of knowledge grows and expands; but there is always so much more to

learn and know! There will always be ignorance – we can never know it all!

And there will always be **uncertainty – and, of course, risk.**

That's enough background to appreciate the energy and matter balance of Planet Earth and of you and me – and the method and importance of Science. There are lots of wonderful, well-written books to keep you learning and questioning – doing your fascinating 'homework'.

(See Andrade – *Science without Walls*; Angier – *The Canon*; Atkins – *Creation Revisited*; Sagan – *The Demon-Haunted World*; Wilson – *Consilience*.)

Now to the most common mammal on the planet...

Man and Woman

Life on the planet carried on for some 3 billion years or so – evolving multi-celled creatures, mammals, and some pretty smart primates. 'Primitive' Man arrived some 2 million or so years ago – *homo sapiens* (us) even more recently. If you want to know more, look at a modern college general Biology textbook – 1,000 pages of pure fascination! Really – just sit in a library or campus bookstore and flip through the book. You'll like it.

Men certainly experienced **fire** from the very beginning via lightning strikes – and he (and she) began to tame, control, and use fire a half million or so years ago, providing a source of energy – heat and light. They burned biomass (plant stuff) for thousands of years. They 'discovered' coal (really concentrated plant stuff), burned coal to generate heat and steam, and started the industrial revolution – only some 200 years ago. That was Industrial Revolution #1. Here's a summary of our industrial revolutions:

- #1: Burn coal, make steam, steam engine, steam-powered technology, printing, ... the beginning of CO₂ increase in the atmosphere;
- #2: Electricity, electrical communication, oil (gasoline, diesel)-powered internal combustion engine; telegraph, radio, TV... massive increase in CO₂ and thus global climate change;

- #3: Distributed renewable energy (underway in Europe but not yet in the United States):
 - Buildings as micro-power plants for energy collection...
 - Hydrogen and other storage technologies...
 - Energy sharing via intergrid and internet technology...
 - Transport fleet ...electric and fuel cell vehicles... enabling storing and distributing electrical energy.

When fully implemented Industrial Revolution 3 should result in decreasing CO₂ and the beginning of the re-stabilization of the climate. The Third Industrial Revolution infrastructure is likely to dramatically change the distribution of economic, political and social power in the twenty-first century. (See Rifkin's *The Third Industrial Revolution* and Lovins' *Reinventing Fire*).

By about 250,000 years ago those primitive men and women looked (and acted!) a lot like us; they hunted, they gathered fruit and other edibles, they ran, they slept, they had sex and reproduced, they argued and fought – and they reacted to their environment. Their big brains made them curious, adventurous, and inventive; they made tools and weapons, they traveled and explored. They ran about and lived in families and tribes, and even in small societies.

They certainly made sounds, gestures, and primitive music.

Communication really took off with the development of oral language some 50,000 to 100,000 years ago. Written language came much more recently – perhaps 5,000 years ago. When the practical printing press developed 500 years ago, books and writing and literacy exploded. The exposure to language and books eventually modified their (and our) brains, turning us into more linear and analytical beings, rather than the more emotional and holistic attributes of our early ancestors.

(See Shlain's *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*.)

About 10,000 years ago the climate entered an especially stable period, called the **Holocene**. Our inventive ancestors learned how to stay in one place and farm – rather than always moving for hunting and gathering. They went from being nomads to being residents. They built homes and then cities. They became civilized and used their big, curious brains to develop art, music, science, literature – they began to develop **civilization**.

They learned to buy and sell – to trade; to specialize; to count. They ‘invented’ economics. They had to defend themselves – so weapons, armies, and generals were developed. Of course that had to be paid for, so they invented tithes, **taxes**, and fees. Somebody (or bodies) had to organize and oversee all this, so they developed and agreed to (tolerated) governments, public officials, kings, and queens.

(See Bryson – *A Short History of Nearly Everything*; Christian – *Maps of Time* and *Big History*; Discovery Channel – *Big History*.)

A long time ago societies liked and even worshipped **Goddesses**; they had Earth Goddesses – Mother Earth and Gaia – and lots of other ones.

After written language took over, men obtained more influence; they printed ‘sacred’ books where the god-ladies were replaced by god-men (Man-Gods) – and the temples to female goddesses became temples to man-like gods.

This led to highly **patriarchal societies** – with men in charge of everything. This has carried on into nearly the present. Women could not vote in the United States until 1920! Since then we’ve become more concerned about male-female ‘equality’, but we still have a long way to go.

(See Shlain.)

Man and Women are indeed different. They are different anatomically, physiologically, chemically, emotionally. Their brains are different. Time for...

Brains, Belief, Education

We have big, restless, curious brains. Actually we each have two brains – a right and a left brain. They are connected via lots of neural wiring called the *corpus callosum*. Our left and right brains communicate and collaborate, but they also have their own distinct specializations and duties – and ‘genders’. Women tend to be more right-brained than men – and men more left-brained than women. The right side is more focused on images, holistic perceptions, emotion, and art – the left on linear and time-based activities, language and reading, reason, science and engineering. The right–left connections and coordination (via the *corpus callosum*) also appear to vary – strongest for women, less so for men. Leonard Shlain summarizes all this nicely and efficiently:

LEFT	RIGHT
<i>linear</i>	<i>holistic</i>
<i>sequential</i>	<i>simultaneous</i>
<i>analytical</i>	<i>synthesis</i>
<i>kill</i>	<i>nurture</i>
<i>masculine</i>	<i>feminine</i>

We perceive using the input we get (from the senses) and via the experience and background the brain provides. We don’t like incomplete stories – so our brains fill in what our senses do not (or cannot) provide. If we don’t understand something, such as why there are strange noises under our bed, we can investigate and look. But, if it’s dark and cold, our brain can just ‘fill in’. Maybe there are monsters, or demons, or mice – but probably not. Our brains insist on ‘reasons’ – on a complete story – even if it is wrong! There are good evolutionary reasons for why our brains evolved to fill in – to help make ‘sense’ of situations where we don’t have adequate information.

Our big brain is very good at taking in information from the world around us, using our experience and memory to fill in for information we do not have, and presenting us with scenarios for what may be going

on. We then select or choose a scenario, perhaps discuss and embellish it, and develop a **Story** – to help us make ‘sense’ of the world.

We don’t like uncertainty or mystery. We use our stories to explain what we don’t know. And we develop new stories for new mysteries or concerns. Where did we come from? Why must we die? What’s after death? We developed stories and myths about creation, birth, death, and beyond death.

(See Campbell – *The Power of Myth*.)

We tell those stories, we expand them, we write them down; they become comfortable. We print and distribute them. They become accepted. And many of those stories – in many cultures – are codified and some become ‘sacred’.

Myths are common stories with little or no evidence, like *why* the Universe was created –and why you are here. Myths are non-scientific *because*s – fabricated by our brains to help minimize uncertainty and discomfort.

Myths develop – and the stories are told and retold so often they become believed; we assume they are indeed fact. If we hear something often enough, we generally begin to believe it. As Lewis Carroll (of *Alice in Wonderland* fame) says in his poem *The Hunting of the Snark*, “*Say it thrice, ‘tis true.*”

If we’re used to the myths and the stories, then when we do get more evidence, more information, we often refuse to believe the new, more rational, story. We’re used to the old myth – it’s comfortable, it’s ‘hard-wired’. That’s one reason why youth are so important – they are generally less ‘myth-wired’ than their elders and thus potentially capable of more rational and reasonable thinking.

Religion comes from myth – to deal with *why* we were created, *why* we must die, and what could be beyond death. Those are tough questions with no answers. Religion helps many of us deal with the uncertainty and confusion of death – and other things we need or want to know but do not know. Religion is an elaboration of brain-created myths and

stories. Think of religion as a way of dealing with the unknown – of dealing with ignorance.

Most ‘modern’ religions are based on the myths and stories of 3,000 years ago, which have been written, collected, and printed as sacred books: the Old Testament/The Talmud, the New Testament, the Koran (Quran), the Book of Mormon, and others. Although Mankind has learned a lot in 3,000 years, little of that knowledge is reflected in modern religions and beliefs.

(See Harris – *The End of Faith*; Agora film)

The academic study of myth, religions, and belief is the field of **Theology**.

Thousands of years ago we did not know the origins or basis of earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes – we attributed them to Acts of God. If God was pleased with us, good things were expected to happen. If bad things happened, He was obviously displeased. So we developed commandments, prayers, rituals, and sacrifices to please Him.

We now know that natural disasters are indeed natural – the result of living on a young, dynamic, and unpredictable planet.

(See Wyssession – *How the Earth Works*; Christian – *Big History and Maps of Time*.)

Long ago we did not understand disease, famine, plagues, inherited and mental disorders. We often attributed such problems to God’s displeasure – or that God is ‘testing’ us – or that Satan or other evil spirits are ‘invading’ us. So we developed scapegoats, such as witches. We developed exorcism rituals; we performed sacrifices – all to appease and eliminate evil spirits or God’s displeasure. And we continue to do so today – thousands of years after the birth of science.

You know now that once we are hard-wired about something, it’s very difficult to change that wiring – to change our mind. So stuff that’s been told, written, and accepted as ‘gospel’, as dogma, as religious ‘truths’, is resident – and hard-wired – in our brains. Much of that stuff makes no sense in today’s modern, science-based world. We know better. But we

continue to accept and even worship those ancient stories and teachings – that ancient dogma. And we continue to preach and ‘teach’ it.

Science is always probing and expanding – shining light on the unknown. So science advances today into areas which represented ignorance yesterday – pushing into those areas which were in the domain of religion. (See Wilson; Sagan.)

We are each individually unique. We are born into, grow up in, and belong to families, tribes, societies, and cultures – societies. And we all want to survive and be healthy, free, and productive.

We have a 250,000 or so year old brain ‘wired’ for hunter-gathering in small tribes and for dealing with fear and ignorance. That same brain is curious, inventive, experiential, creative. Some brains tend to be more creative and curious than others. And some tend to be more fearful and myth-bound than others.

The really curious ones often tilt toward science; the more fearful or less curious ones tilt toward belief and religion. We are all different! Some tilt towards individualism, others to collectivism – more individualistic or more collectivist.

(See Triandis – *Individualism and Collectivism*.)

This also reflects political persuasions – individualists tend to be more ‘right’; those more interested in groups, families, societies tend to lean more ‘left’. The ‘right’ tends to be more rule-based, wanting certainty, and looking for it in ‘sacred’ texts (including the Constitution). I live in Utah. Forty years ago, when I first moved to Utah, one of the local papers (now the *Deseret Morning News*) had the masthead: ‘We believe the Constitution is divinely inspired’. (It doesn’t say that anymore.)

The ‘left’ tend towards equality, group decisions, community, grass-roots democracy. The ‘right’ tilts to individualism, independence, rules, ultra-capitalism, and Ayn Rand. (See Domhoff – *The Left and the Right*; Mooney – *The Republican Brain*; Haidt – *The Righteous Mind*)

Education used to be about learning to think for ourselves – distinguishing fact from fiction, reality from fantasy, right from wrong – learning to become functioning, responsible participants in a representative democracy. ‘Education’ today is often far more about acquiring skills for specific jobs.

Psychologists and educators have learned that there are up to nine stages of intellectual and personal development, organized in three broad categories:

- Dualism: good and bad, right and wrong, we vs. them, authority
- Relativism: multiple frames and values
- Responsibility: self, identity, personal values.

(See Perry – *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development*.)

Generally we begin as infants and children with an authority figure (parents) telling us what is good or bad, right or wrong. That’s comforting, for a while. Then, particularly as we enter puberty, we begin to question that authority. We begin to consider our own identity and self. In college we get exposed to philosophy and history and other courses and discussions related to intellectual and personal development.

For most people, hard wiring is difficult to undo – to re-wire. Those often find it convenient and comfortable to stay with the hard wiring they know. Others do change their wiring – and begin to think for themselves.

We have special words for the rare times and situations when a very deep, solid belief is drastically changed or reversed: ‘Revelation’, ‘Eureka Moment’, ‘Epiphany’.

Some people get through all of the 9 stages of development – some rarely get beyond Stage 1; most fall somewhere in between. Most of us do get beyond Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy!

If you are on one far end of the Believe Spectrum you question everything and believe nothing. These aren’t critical thinkers, they’re non-thinking non-believers. They often think they are very open-minded. But

there's an old quote, "*I believe in an open mind, but not so open that your brains fall out.*"

Ideally most of us strive for an open mind, but also a critical one. If we are not critical, rational, objective – then we cannot think or judge for ourselves. When there's enough evidence, enough reason, then we can accept some fact or idea – we can begin to 'believe' it (our brains haven't fallen out!).

True scientists are always objective and open-minded, and at the same time are highly critical of very new ideas or criticisms – unless those new ideas come with a great deal of evidence. The key is to develop a balance between being critical or skeptical and being too believing. Here are two relevant quotes by the famous economist Keynes:

"When someone persuades me that I am wrong, I change my mind. What do you do?"

"The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones."

Those on the other end of the Believe Spectrum – the very strong believers – are often the most vulnerable in our society. Someone offers them a special 'deal' or 'opportunity' to provide riches – or salvation – or fame. They don't know how to ask critical questions, or how to seek and evaluate evidence or 'facts'. They *want* to believe. If it's a trusted friend, family member, or even a priest, bishop, or preacher offering the deal, they want to believe even more – and so they get swindled, scammed, victimized. They are subject to Ponzi schemes, 'pyramid' schemes, and 'multi-level' marketing (especially in Utah).

(See *Fleeing the Flock.*)

We can be rational, but we are more often irrational – emotional. We make decisions via our 'gut' or emotions rather than deliberating and thinking rationally.

There are great books and documentaries about our approaches to decisions, including a recent one by Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman: *Thinking, Fast and Slow.*

Economics and Society

The Holocene – the last 10,000 years – meant stable climate, agriculture meant stable food, and cities meant a stable society (when we weren't at war!). So we could specialize – we could do what we were good at and interested in – and we could buy or trade for other needs. So economics developed.

(See Sedlacek – *Economics of Good and Evil*.)

If my land was better than yours, and I had good gardening skills, I produced extra food, which I could 'sell'. If you made better spear or arrow points, I'd trade you food for arrows. Buying and selling stimulated our learning to count and keep records (accounts).

If we were a close-knit family or tribe, we'd share and take care of each other. We were early Socialists. But if we were selling to another tribe, then we were less interested in their needs than in their goods. So we opted for the best 'price' – the best deals – we could get... the beginnings of Capitalism.

A focus on individual needs and wants relates to **Capitalism** – a focus on societal needs and wants relates to **Socialism**.

If we have a very large society, with millions of people (or economic 'agents'), then everyone looking out for him/herself (Capitalism) may actually work to the benefit of the entire society – the 'invisible hand' idea suggested by Adam Smith.

(See Wight – *Saving Adam Smith*; Sedlacek.)

If you can 'better' yourself economically, that's an incentive for innovation, increased production, better goods, etc. – and thus everyone benefits.

But, if you have an accident, get sick, inherit a weak brain or have a physical disability, then you may be unable to 'compete' in the highly competitive capitalistic economy. Pure capitalism can result in hunger,

homelessness, poor health, depression, great hardship, and even death for those who cannot compete.

Socialism tends to take care of most everyone. But, if you're overly 'taken care of', what's the incentive to create, to work, to produce?

So most modern societies try to balance the compassion of taking care of those in need with the incentives to encourage hard, creative work. The USA tilts towards pure Capitalism; most of Europe tilts toward Social Democracy, a capitalistic form of Socialism. Most measures of 'happiness' show that social democracies are among the happiest nations on the planet.

(See Happiness Index)

Processes for taking care of those in great need are sometimes called the social safety net or 'welfare'. Hard-core capitalists say safety nets should be the role of churches and neighbors, not of government or the economy. Socialists, of course, say the opposite.

Once we have enough to eat and maybe some protection against the weather (housing), most economics is about goods (*stuff*). Stuff is everything we buy and acquire to make life more productive, easier, fulfilling. Stuff is appliances, books, entertainment, furniture, cars, toys, on and on...

(See Leonard – *The Story of Stuff*.)

Today's economy is mainly about stuff. And stuff needs to be made out of something – some types of matter. That's called *resources*. And the processes by which that matter is re-arranged, assembled, reacted, and otherwise handled to produce stuff requires energy. And nearly all of that energy comes via the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas (fossil fuels).

(See Martinson – *The Crash Course*; Grantham – *Time to Wake Up*; Gilding – *The Great Disruption*.)

There are only two ways to get the '**raw materials**' needed to produce the materials from which our stuff is made:

- Mine or extract it from the matter which makes up planet Earth, basically the Periodic Table; and
- Grow it – using energy from the sun and raw materials in the air and soil, via photosynthesis.

We can also recycle the stuff we no longer need or want, so its matter can be re-processed to make ‘new’ stuff.

There are no other basic sources (occasional asteroids are impractical!).

For more and more people (population growth) to get more and more stuff, we run into serious limits and problems. Historically our economic system, capitalism, has ignored resource limits and related issues. But that is now changing – fast.

(See Wolff – *Capitalism Hits the Fan*; Kelly – *The Divine Right of Capital*; Hardin – *The Tragedy of the Commons*.)

The energy to drive all this work on matter comes from two major sources:

- Sun (solar) energy, mainly via photosynthesis, and
- Fossil fuels (which come from hundreds of millions of years of trapped photosynthesis).

The biological matter produced and deposited over hundreds of millions of years has transformed to the coal, oil, and natural gas we collectively call fossil fuels. We use that ancient solar energy by releasing it as heat via burning (combustion, oxidation) – releasing the carbon in the fuel as carbon dioxide (CO₂). Most of the released CO₂ ends up in the atmosphere and the oceans.

The CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere has increased dramatically since the first Industrial Revolution, resulting in significant global warming and major climate change. And the oceans are now more acid-like due to all the absorbed CO₂ (CO₂ in water becomes carbonic acid). This is now a major planetary problem and a politico-economic issue. We are taking 200 million years of biological production – and we and fellow humans are burning most of it in a hundred or so years!

(See Hansen – *Storms of my Grandchildren*.)

At the beginning of civilization and economics, thousands of years ago, and at the beginning of the first **Industrial Revolution** (200 or so years ago), the Planet was virtually infinite. Resources were abundant; there was lots of air and water – most of it very clean. If we ran out of stuff at home, we'd go get it and take it from somewhere else – that's called Colonialism. Today it's part of Globalization.

(See Madeley – *Big Business, Poor Peoples*.)

Back in the 1600's the King encouraged investors and explorers to explore new worlds, seek resources, riches, economic rewards. To facilitate such activities, the Corporation was developed and chartered by the King. Corporations have multiplied, grown, and expanded to become the foundation of the world economic system. Corporations have become largely free of governments and of regulation – so much so that there is now a major debate as to the role of corporations in modern societies.

(See Bakkan – *The Corporation* (book and video); Moore – *Capitalism – A Love Story*, video; Wolff – *Capitalism Hits the Fan*.)

We now know Earth is not infinite. There are now 7 Billion of us trying to experience '*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*'.

Earth is our common resource – she is our '**commons**'. She is our 'nest' and our toilet. We are rapidly fouling and even destroying Planet Earth. We have generated a planetary 'Tragedy of the Commons'.

(See Hardin; Ostrom.)

Traditional Economics ignores the 'commons' – they call it an '**externality**'. Water, air, oceans are externalities – they don't enter into traditional economic considerations.

(See Sedlacek; Leonard; Daly – *For the Common Good*; Costanza – *Solutions Journal*.)

The costs of the stuff we buy, use, and store do not reflect the costs to the Commons – to the planet and the environment. The traditional dogma of economics, including the externalities assumption, was formulated many hundreds of years ago – even before the first industrial revolution. And they were repeated so many times by so many people that they are now dogma – the ‘gospel’ of ‘traditional’ economics.

The basis of much of modern capitalism, Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, was published in 1776 – the same year as our Declaration of Independence. At that time the world seemed infinite – the atmosphere, oceans, land seemed unbounded. It was perhaps reasonable then to ignore externalities – but not so today.

We now know that Earth is not flat or infinite – she is a little spherical ball with a diameter of about 8,000 miles, a circumference of about 25,000 miles, and a finite volume. Carl Sagan called it ‘*a pale blue dot*’ in the vastness of space.

(See Sagan – *Cosmos* and *Pale Blue Dot*.)

Some economists are trying to deal with that finiteness and with the tragedy of Earth’s commons. They work in areas called eco-economics and **sustainable economics**. Although they now have their own courses, textbooks, journals, and a professional society, they are still a very small minority.

(See Daly, Costanza, Dietz, Rifkin.)

There is major activity in Europe toward a sustainable economic system. The plan is called the Third Industrial Revolution. We’ll get to it later.

Many economists believe that science and engineering will come up with ‘solutions’ to the problem of resource limits and environmental degradation (degradation of the Commons). Those that argue the strongest for ‘salvation’ via science and engineering tend to be those who haven’t studied the ‘principles’ of science and can’t comprehend the smallness and the limits of our ‘*pale blue dot*’. Their critics say they suffer from ‘physics-envy’ (and 18th Century assumptions).

We've been living in – and are the beneficiaries of – rapid economic growth. Our economic system has utilized more and more energy to produce and provide more and more stuff – more and more material 'happiness'. The growth has been fueled by fossil fuels and permitted by the perceived 'infiniteness' of planet Earth.

Continued rapid growth doesn't work with billions and billions on a very finite planet. The limits are now upon us.

It's going to be tough to transform from growth to non-growth – to sustainability. And those making money via growth will find it very hard to change.

Upton Sinclair said:

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

There's been so much dogma – so many assumptions – in traditional economics, that many have called it a type of religion – because so much of it is based on myth and belief that is no longer valid – if it ever was. Matt Miller has called this The Tyranny of Dead Ideas.

(See Nelson – Economics as Religion; Gilding; Martinson; Miller – The Tyranny of Dead Ideas; Daly.)

Economics is supposed to be regulated by Government – it is supposed to be subservient to Society – and to the environment. Economics, to be fair and equitable, needs to be overseen by the society in which it operates and that it serves – by government. Even Adam Smith said that!

(See Soros, Sustainability, Wight.)

Many in the economics and business communities are now beginning to understand the problems of limits, of externalities, of exponential growth, of climate disruption. But no one has any easy solution. The best approach so far is that being adopted by Europe: the Third Industrial Revolution.

(See Rifkin.)

There's another serious problem – rarely discussed – a Belief problem. Lots of well-meaning, very religious people *believe* that *their* God will provide and take care of *them* – that the End Days and the Rapture are near, so there is no need to worry about limits, about the environment or the planet. This has even been quoted and cited in the US Congress! Such believers are not worried about future generations because they *believe* the current generation – or perhaps the next – will be lifted up to Heaven – Planet Earth will no longer be needed. Seriously.

Other very religious people believe our duty is to preserve and protect God's Creation, including Planet Earth. Sometimes these are people of the same faith and even the same congregations.

It is reasonable to assume that there is only one known habitable planet in the Universe – and that is Earth.

(See Gribbin – *Alone in the Universe*.)

“*Say it thrice, 'tis true.*” If you've heard something often enough, you believe it – especially if it comes from your parents, bishops, priests, or pastors – or others you respect. But *it may not be true* – you must decide for yourself. We all need to question ‘authorities’.

There's a lot more to know about Economics: finances, foreclosures, assets, property, borrowing and debt, taxes, intellectual property, income inequality, the corporation, private property... Lots of homework to be done!

Government, Laws, and Citizenship

Societies and Civilizations – how can they organize, run, work?

How does your Family work? Is Dad ‘in charge’? Mom? Certainly not the kids. In some societies it's Granddad – or the oldest functioning elder. In extended families or tribes, there's a generally accepted tribal leader or Chief.

The USA is largely derived from European cultural and religious traditions. For the last 1,500 years or so, Europe has been a very patriarchal

(Dad, Men) society, largely due to the man-focus of the major religions: Christianity (that includes Catholicism and Mormonism), Judaism, and Islam. They weren't always man-focused, but that's another story.

King is an efficient system (a monarchy) – that's like a Chief. You can declare yourself a King if you have land and resources. For people to live on *your* land and use *your* resources (water, air), they agree to obey *your* edicts – to be *your* 'subjects'. These subjects or serfs work the land, produce food and stuff, pay the taxes or tithes you demand, and otherwise do as *you* say. That can work pretty well if you don't get too greedy or mean.

With their taxes and stuff you can recruit and pay armies and police and thus enforce your edicts and even expand your lands and domains. But if you really antagonize the 'masses', they can rise up and topple you. Usually your armies are smaller than your masses (or you couldn't afford them), so the numbers can get you eventually. That's what's been happening in the Middle East and may happen soon in other parts of the world – including China.

Kings often team up with religions and religious leaders to develop a Theocracy – sort of a King ordained or blessed by God. With God on his side, a King has a bit more influence. That's until he crosses with the religious leaders and then things can change. Kings can throw out religions – and religions can topple Kings. It's all about Power and the People.

A Dictator is like a King, except that dictators don't 'inherit' the job, they take it by political or military means. Hitler was *voted* into office by the German electorate; so was Mussolini in Italy. But Japan had an Emperor (sort of a King). Germany, Italy, and Japan were the fascist powers of World War II.

The King or Queen or Dictator generally fully controls the economy, often 'bleeding' it for personal luxury, armies, and other activities, which generally don't help their 'peoples'.

That happened to our old 13 Colonies (the 13 stripes in our flag!) in the mid-1700s. The British King assessed perhaps excessive fees and taxes, messed with economics and commerce, and didn't tolerate much input

or complaint – so we revolted. The original Boston ‘Tea Party’ helped start the process. We became ‘criminals’ – because we were disobeying established laws. We declared our ‘inalienable rights’, declared our independence, had to fight a Revolutionary War, wrote and adopted a very controversial Constitution and, a bit later, a Bill of Rights. That was all done by relatively young, well educated, and responsible people who had to greatly compromise to get to a solution which has worked remarkably well for the past 250 years.

(See Paine – *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man*; Zinn – *A People’s History of the United States*; Hitchens – *Thomas Paine’s... and Thomas Jefferson...*)

Who ‘owns’ the land is critical. In primitive times there were so few people and so much land, that we just ‘took’ it – pushed the animals and the natives off those lands. The USA is heavily based on ‘private property rights’. Property is a key component of the Capital in Capitalism.

If you were powerful, you could take lots of land. If there were people living on it, they became your ‘subjects’ – or they moved on in search of other land. If you were a powerful king or religious ruler (like a Pope), you’d have people working for you to go and claim lands in your name.

The United States has an interesting history. The original governments of the land which became the USA were Native American tribal societies and coalitions, sharing a nearly infinite land. They were largely communal societies, many respecting and involving women in their governance, and many with close ties and connections to the land.

(See Zinn; Mann – 1491 and 1493; Freyfogle – *On Private Property*.)

With the arrival of the explorers from Spain in 1492 and the early 1500’s (Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro), most of the native societies were ruthlessly taken over and almost eliminated. The British and other Northern European colonists and settlers in the 1500s to 1700s in the 13 original colonies did largely the same. Although many left Europe to escape religious intolerance, much of their own conquest was religiously inspired – treating the Indians as savages (because they were ‘irreligious’, from a Christian perspective).

With the birth and growth of the United States, a feeling of ‘manifest destiny’ developed – to expand the nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific – moving, destroying, or capturing whoever stood in the way. The old – and many new – history books leave out much of that story. Read Zinn’s book.

Much of our economics – and approach to native peoples, nature, and the environment – stems from the religious assumptions, beliefs, and practices of our European, and largely Christian, heritage. Our general approach to Nature – land, animals, resources – was to use it, exploit it, capitalize it – and most of our early leaders quoted the Bible to justify such actions.

(See White – *Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis*.)

Although the Declaration of Independence in 1776 declared our ‘inalienable rights’, those rights did not apply to Native Americans, to women, or to slaves. We were very selective – and patriarchal!

We had to fight a horrible Civil War to keep the United States from disintegrating in the mid-1800s. But even with the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation behind us, black Americans didn’t have full rights until very recently, after many difficult years of protest by the Freedom Riders, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his associates, and many others – many beaten, jailed, and even killed advocating and demonstrating for the rights which were legally available to them.

(See *Freedom Riders* film; Kelen – *This Light of Ours*.)

And even after the Civil War, women still could not vote. It took decades of civil disobedience, and more violence and oppression. Women finally got the right to vote – in the 19th Amendment to the Constitution – in 1920.

Patriarchy is still with us today. It’s a difficult attitude to change. Women are under-represented in all areas of government and the economy – and not fully engaged in many other segments of society.

Our history is not particularly nice. It's usually watered down and glossed over in junior high and high school. That's why Zinn's 'text-book' is so important – he tells it like it really was.

(See also his films *The People Speak* and *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*.)

The Constitution is the 'supreme' law of the nation, together with other Federal laws, statutes, and regulations. Our laws tend to be based on English Law.

Powers not directly given to the Federal government in the Constitution are the realm of the individual states. States can give their citizens broader rights than noted in the Constitution.

Many states seem to be curtailing individual rights. There have been attempts to balance state rights by Federal action, such as various environmental rights, abortion and contraception rights, health care rights, voting rights, etc. State laws and rights can vary significantly from one state to the next; examples include gay marriage, renewable energy quotas, death penalty, etc. So the Law of the Land often depends on where on the Land you live – which state are you in? States have their own Legislatures, courts and Supreme Court, etc. Counties, Cities, Districts (such as school districts, water districts, etc.) can generally have their own regulations and requirements.

(See *Law of the United States*.)

Citizens of the United States have the right to vote in all relevant elections, assuming they are registered. Voting rights and registration vary from state to state. The 26th Amendment guaranteed voting privileges for all citizens 18 years and older. The 26th amendment was finally ratified in mid-1971. Interestingly, Utah and 7 other states have never ratified this amendment.

Voter participation in the United States tends to be very low, generally under 50% – most citizens appear to be dis-engaged.

High school seniors should be aware that they can vote, if registered, on and after their 18th birthday. In some communities and states, they can run for political office if 18 or older.

(See *Age of Candidacy*.)

We live in a republic. We elect officials who then represent us (we the people) in local, state, and Federal government. They are our ‘representatives’; we are their constituents. People are nominated, ‘run’ for election, campaign, and are then voted in (or out) on a regular basis. Terms generally are 2 (House of Representatives), 4 (President and Governors), or 6 (Senate) years.

Voters learn about candidates via newspapers/magazines, television, internet, mailings, and live speeches or rallies. Since less than half of the eligible voters actually vote, elected officials are generally elected by a minority of the population. Modern campaigns are expensive, as they rely on expensive media (TV, film, video, etc.) to ‘inform’ and attract potential voters. Unfortunately, much and perhaps most of the media ads today are ‘negative’ – they criticize opponents rather than informing the public as to a candidate’s ‘platform’ and plans. They stretch the truth – and often present outright lies. And the ads run over and over and over (they run the ads far more than thrice – hoping you’ll think it really is true!).

The recent Occupy movements are very concerned with money influencing politics, via its enormous influence on political campaigns as well as the direct influence on Congressmen (and women) via lobbyists. There is now general agreement that the United States is no longer a true democracy, but rather a plutocracy – a government where the democratic process is greatly influenced and even controlled by large corporations, special interests, and the rich – via lobbyists and campaign donations.

(See Abramoff – *Capitol Punishment*; Occupy; Lessig – *Republic, Lost*; Moyers)

The public is now well aware that excess money in political campaigns – and in the overall political process – has corroded, demoralized, and

disgusted the electorate. The public is beginning to respond. There are candidates running who take no or only very limited contributions. The President of Starbucks, Howard Schultz, has urged corporate CEOs to stop giving to incumbent campaigns until Congress gets its act together.

(See Schultz.)

I ran for US Congress in 2012 on a no contributions – get money out of politics – platform. I lost. My one year adventure and experience in Democracy is available at *The Run*.

The United States has about 4.5% of the world's now over 7 billion people – a little over 300 million people. We have about 6.5% (nearly 4 million square miles) of the planet's land area. We represent about 22% of the global economy (and decreasing!). Our large economic activity is facilitated, controlled, and brought about largely by corporations. In the United States corporations are chartered by the states (there is no mention of 'corporation' in the US Constitution). Outside of the USA they are mainly chartered by independent nations. There are now thousands of corporations in the world with over \$100 billion in sales and revenues, many of those chartered in the United States. Nearly all of these are trans-national corporations (TNC), largely responsible for globalization. Many large TNCs are much larger than the economies of most nations.

(See Madeley.)

There is a wide range of national governments on the planet today. There are democracies, republics, socialist republics, communist, dictatorships, and monarchies. There is much movement and activity, mainly in North Africa and the Middle East, in overthrowing theocracies and dictatorships. There is a yearning, a taste, a need for freedom – which will likely be expressed in some form of democratic government – hopefully.

The United States is generally held up as the model – the standard – for human rights and personal freedom – and as a democratic government. There is now grave concern that the USA has become a plutocracy.

The 2012 Presidential Campaign spent over one billion dollars! Most of those funds were provided by corporate and other special interest groups and their lobbyists. Modern elections, at the Federal and even State level, are now largely ‘controlled’ by campaign ‘contributions’. A recent Supreme Court ruling upheld earlier, distorted interpretations (of the 16th Amendment) that Corporations are persons, with full freedom of speech rights via the First Amendment. The Court said there can be no restrictions on corporate donations to political campaigns. Giving money is the same as speaking, they ruled. The old motto of ‘one man, one vote’ has literally been reworded to ‘one dollar, perhaps one vote’. This has led many to argue that the United States government is indeed a plutocracy. The new Occupy movement and protests throughout the USA are, in part, outgrowths of the problems associated with corporate ‘personhood’.

(See Abramoff, Lessig, Moyers, *Move to Amend*.)

There are other questions of human rights and freedoms, even in the USA. The issues of jobs, health and health care, safety – all components of ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ – have been greatly challenged and altered in recent years.

The US ranks low among developed nations in measures of Happiness, Health, Safety, and other factors. Our Quality of Life seems to have deteriorated significantly over the last several decades. We have high poverty, high unemployment, the world’s highest incarceration rate, high infant mortality, a very high rate for medically uninsured, etc.

The USA has become politically very polarized – so much so that Congress has been unable to deal with many pressing issues and problems. There are questions related to ethics, morals, values, civility, and open-mindedness – or the lack of such. Hence the need for new and more rational perspectives and voices – and this booklet.

Many of the problems we face are global – beyond national boundaries – but we do not have international or global means to effectively address them. Although the economy is now global – and environment and resource issues are clearly global – there is no global government. The United Nations is an organization with little power or control. The

United States shares the planet with nearly 200 independent nations – members of the United Nations. The United Nations’ Charter begins with ‘We the peoples’, reflecting the fundamental principle of democracy that the will of the people is the source of legitimacy of sovereign states and therefore of the United Nations as a whole. But many of the UN’s current 200 members are certainly not democracies, including the United States, which is now a plutocracy.

(See *Democracy Index*.)

There is now one major world superpower – the United States – which often functions as a global policeman and arbitrator. It is also the major player in economics, globalization, and all other major issues.

We noted earlier, in a tongue-in-cheek manner, that ‘Society has Problems, Universities have Departments’. We can also say the World has problems, but the Planet has 200 independent nations – each with its own parochial social, economic, and resource concerns.

International issues and concerns are weakly addressed by international organizations, some affiliated with or part of the UN:

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Labor Organization (ILO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- and by some international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) providing generally humanitarian and health services:
 - International Red Cross
 - Amnesty International
 - Doctors without Borders
 - CARE
 - Oxfam
 - Greenpeace

We have a Planet with major problems but with no global government. That is a major challenge for this 21st Century.

The Scaffold – Perspective

That's it: You now have a brief but fairly comprehensive Scaffold – knowledge and principles upon which you can build, do your homework, learn, and further develop.

There's a lot of knowledge in the world's books, documents, and brains. Knowledge is fairly well organized in libraries (Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress catalog system) and in Universities. A modern large University has over 100 degree-granting Departments, organized in up to about 10 or so Colleges and Professional Schools. Most high school students (and their counselors and parents!) aren't aware of most of the majors and degrees available to modern students.

If you obtain a good four-or-more-year general college education, you'll cover much of what we've covered here – and a lot more. But most people with a recent undergraduate degree don't know much of the last 30 or so pages – because college today is more about training for specific jobs that it is about becoming educated – and functioning as responsible, aware, educated, involved citizens.

Actually all the material we covered should be part of high school – but we all know that's not the case! We don't treat high school students like adults, so we shouldn't be surprised that many of them respond as we expect! But you are different, right?

So now what?

Time to get to work – citizenship work.

We'll first review the needs, problems, challenges facing the USA and the Planet. Then we'll consider what YOU can do to help.

Responsibility and Action

Planet, Nation, You!

Nearly everyone is worried and concerned. There's a lot of anxiety, frustration, uncertainty – and even dread, despair and depression. It has to do with jobs (financial uncertainty), health (uncertainty and unavailability of health care), values and beliefs (government, politics, religion), climate change (planetary uncertainty and potential catastrophe), and general insecurity and vulnerability. It is not a happy time.

There are over 7 Billion people on our little planet – our 'pale blue dot', to quote Carl Sagan. You are one of those 7 Billion. If you're a resident of a country in the 'advanced' world, you have won the 'lottery of life' – the birth lottery, according to Nicholas Kristof. You are one of the billion or so residing in nations with generally sufficient food, health, lodging, and freedom. The billions who did not win that lottery are undernourished, sick and emaciated, destitute, oppressed, and generally have a very difficult life and existence. They'd love to trade places with you.

(See Kristof.)

We all live off the resources of Planet Earth. Certain civilizations and countries have done very well; many others have done very poorly. There are many reasons for these differences: geography, climate, history, culture, and luck.

(See Diamond.)

Humans around the world have roughly comparable brains, psychology, ability to do physical work (if they are properly nourished), and social skills. But some are clearly luckier than others.

Those in the United States, Europe, and other ‘advanced’ regions utilize far more of the planet’s resources than the less lucky parts of humanity. We tend to acquire and use so much – especially in the USA – that we are burdened by debt, large houses, large cars, and generally large (girth-wise) bodies – as well as lots of stuff. We each have a planetary ‘footprint’, which represents our use of basic planetary resources. The 300 million or so in the USA have the largest footprints, followed by Europe and then the rest of the ‘advanced’ world. We utilize and depend on an economic system that fosters and encourages acquisition of stuff, thus encouraging very large planetary footprints.

(See Footprint.)

We noted earlier that energy is the driver for the production, delivery, and use of stuff– and the major source of energy is fossil fuels, via combustion. Due to the exponentially increasing combustion of fossil fuels, we have, initially unintentionally, produced a planet whose resources and climate are now greatly altered and is rapidly deteriorating.

The billions who don’t have much want more, and the billion or so who have lots would rather not give it up. We are demanding more and more from our rapidly deteriorating little planet. It cannot go on.

(See Gilding, Martinson.)

So our first major need is to move from planetary exploitation and destruction to planetary preservation and sustainability – to live within our planetary means – all 7 Billion of us. If we become 9 Billion (population projections for 2050), then the problem is even more difficult.

So here are seven key challenges and needs – tied to the principles in our Declaration of Independence: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Life

Almost everyone is ‘pro-life’ but not pro-starvation, pro-plagues, pro-epidemics, pro-war. Continuing a rapid population growth means – for most of the world – famine and starvation, war and conflict, plagues and epidemics. The planet is already greatly overpopulated for the resources it has available. We cannot move to outer space, although some religions preach such possibilities. We need to encourage sustainable birth rates and family sizes – basically a replacement rate, where births and deaths are approximately equal.

We need to encourage and facilitate more sustainable living, thus decreasing our planetary footprints (smaller living spaces, less stuff, more efficient transportation).

We need to encourage and facilitate healthier (your health) and more sustainable (for the planet’s health) food production and utilization.

We need to encourage and facilitate jobs and related economic activities that permit financial ability and security with minimal planetary footprints.

And we need to do all these things rapidly, with little conflict; it really is urgent.

Liberty

After people deal with survival (Life), they seek liberty and freedom. It’s very hard to worry about freedom when you’re starving or very sick. That’s in part why some totalitarian and communist regimes have been ‘successful’ and long-lived. But people do not want to live under such regimes – they all seek liberty and freedom.

We need to encourage and facilitate more open, transparent, and effective governments – at all levels – and foster the ‘inalienable’ rights we all deserve. Democracy may not be an efficient or even effective form of government, but it’s the best we have come up with (paraphrasing Winston Churchill).

We need to foster and encourage democracy when and where appropriate. We need to encourage and support non-violent activism and protest, even if – in the short term – it may seem to be economically (to us) and militarily (to us) risky and uncertain. We must practice what we ‘preach’. Hypocrisy must not be tolerated.

We need to reaffirm our commitment to ‘one person, one vote’, meaning that money in politics needs to be greatly decreased and, ideally, eliminated. With much of the world now connected via the internet and cell phones, there is little need for traditional, expensive means to inform, cajole, and advertise to voters. The brainwashing of voters has to be ended.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Note that Jefferson wrote (in the Declaration of Independence) the *pursuit* of happiness. That’s not in the Bill of Rights or the Constitution. Happiness is not a right or entitlement, but we must be free to strive for it – to work towards it. In most societies measures of happiness include access to and participation in education, art, science, travel, etc. – those things we like to do when we aren’t ‘working’ or very ill.

It’s hard to be happy if you’re starving, really sick, or otherwise fighting for survival (that’s why Life comes first in Jefferson’s Declaration). It’s difficult to be happy if you’re not free. Controlling governments (including sometimes our own!) don’t like their citizens and voters to be *too* creative, *too* questioning, *too* curious – but it is exactly the freedom to do all those things that is the basis of real happiness.

(See Happiness Index.)

We need to encourage and facilitate education, creativity, culture, and the general well being of the community.

We need to encourage and facilitate activities rely much less on stuff and energy.

These needs and challenges have:

- planetary dimensions;
- regional and national dimensions; and
- local and personal dimensions.

And they all have a dependence on policies, government, and personal as well as societal values.

Uncertainty, God, and Man

We don't like uncertainty. But Mankind is subject to many natural catastrophes (we used to call these 'Acts of God' – some, especially insurance companies, still do). We reside on an active and dynamic planet, with earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, and severe weather events (hurricanes, tornados, floods, drought). We are also subject to plagues and pandemics.

(See the film *Contagion*; Wysession.)

We need to be aware of the risk and probability associated with such potentially catastrophic events, and attempt to minimize damage by appropriate preparation, caution, and predictive models and science.

We need to encourage and even mandate behavioral and system-wide change to mitigate the severity and damage of such events.

We need to encourage and improve regulations and codes related to seismic safety, defined tsunami zones and evacuation routes, flood plains, etc.

We now find ourselves subject to increased unusually severe weather events, due largely to the climate change caused by global warming. Unusually severe climate-related events should be termed 'Acts of Men' – albeit generally unintentional acts. Now that we are well aware that climate change is due to man's use of energy, and Man has chosen not to do much about such behavior – we have to say that climate change has become *intentional*.

It's like smoking or doing dangerous drugs. You know it's very bad for you, but you do it anyway. You choose to ignore the risk – or you are so

addicted that your bio- and neuro-chemistry drives you to do it. Our economy and society appears to be addicted to consumption, fueled by cheap energy, and thus we continue our planetary destructive behavior. Some also use the cancer metaphor – uncontrolled growth (of the economic cancer) results in eventual death of the host (the planet).

Our consumption-oriented culture, due to our growth-based capitalistic system, tends to result in pollution of the planetary commons – water, air, and land pollution. This has led to governmental bodies, regulation, and policies to deal with air and water quality and land utilization.

There are historical precedents for dealing with such challenges. There have been treaties and agreements related to pirates and piracy. We have an international ozone treaty. There are fishing and whaling treaties and agreements. There are regulations related to mercury emissions and pollution. We control and regulate radiation exposure and the ownership and use of radioactive materials.

But our society has done next to nothing about CO₂ and methane emissions (greenhouse gases). The delaying tactics by global warming ‘deniers’ have been fully exposed and documented – there is no doubt about global warming. It’s happening rapidly – due to the actions of men and women – you and me. Our society continues to tolerate oil spills, pipeline leaks, and mine disasters. Our society continues to depend upon a growth-oriented economic system fueled by very cheap energy.

(See Oreskes and Conway; *Merchants of Doubt*.)

There is now realization that the planet cannot continue to tolerate a rapid growth-oriented economy, with an insatiable appetite for energy and CO₂ generation – as well as air and water pollution. There is growing concern that the entire world economic system, and especially that in the USA and ‘advanced’ world, has to transform from a growth focus to a sustainable mode – quickly. There is hope that this can be done as a rapid but smooth transformation (metamorphosis) rather than catastrophically.

(See Gilding; Shlain.)

We can't blame much of our uncertainty and distress on 'Acts of God' when they are clearly 'Acts of Man' and Woman. And we apparently can't pray our way out of these problems and challenges. It's unlikely, really, that any Rapture-like event will 'save' us – or save our children and grandchildren. It really is up to You – and to me.

Problems, Issues, Needs

Much of Europe has been aware of these needs and developed plans for such a transformation – which has been called "The Third Industrial Revolution".

(See Rifkin.)

We need to immediately develop plans, means, and methods to develop our own third industrial revolution, perhaps working closely with European nations and others who are pushing ahead. (See Lovins.)

We need to rapidly move toward a much more sustainable society and economy. The Third Industrial Revolution focuses on addressing the energy problems and needs.

We need to move towards a sustainable agriculture – meaning much less energy-intensive and less chemically intensive (fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides).

We need to minimize our consumption of stuff. There is growing interest in and demand for a sustainable economy, based on renewable energy sources, extensive recycling, design of products for ease in component recycling, etc.

There is great concern today with acts of terrorism ('homeland security'), wars, civic unrest, and population increases. These are all actions of Men. There is great controversy about birth control, about abortion, about guns, about immigration, and even about how far individual freedom should go – especially as individual freedoms compromise public and group safety and well being.

We need to address these issues and problems creatively, non-ideologically, practically.

Albert Einstein once concluded his life experience in the sentence:

“It is impossible to solve a problem with the same means that caused this problem.”

And recall Upton Sinclair’s quote:

“It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.”

These are cultural, governmental, and planetary issues and concerns – all built upon and dependent on Economics – the global and regional systems of exchanging goods and services. There is now considerable interest and some activity in planetary ‘rights’ – the right to clean air, clean water, public lands – a clean, viable commons accessible to all.

In the USA there have been dramatic increases in income inequality (the rich get richer, the poor get poorer) and private-versus-public property rights.

There’s discussion and action related to economic rights – an extension to the abolition of slavery, including the right to a decent job – a means of sustenance and survival. The film *Slavery by Another Name* addresses a part of these concerns.

There’s discussion and action related to health – the ‘right’ to affordable health care.

Al Gore addresses most of these challenges in his recent book: *The Future*. Read it.

It is impossible to solve a problem with the same people who have caused the problem – because they are ‘hardwired’ with the wrong assumptions and perspectives. That’s why YOU are needed. And that’s why others – in the USA and around the world – continue to speak, protest, and act. Join them.

Metamorphosis?

Although there's anxiety, frustration, uncertainty – and even dread, despair and depression, there is also the potential for imagination, creativity, and even wisdom – for establishing new assumptions on old issues and current problems.

When physical or biological systems reach their limits – when they are up 'against the wall' – something quite dramatic generally happens.

If the temperature changes, liquid water becomes ice; if it changes a lot in the other direction, water becomes vapor – steam. Those are dramatic changes. When the conditions needed for the stability of materials, stuff – even systems – change, the system generally undergoes an abrupt *transformation*.

If a population grows exponentially until resources can no longer support it, it catastrophically declines – and may even go extinct. That's a transformation. Although transformations are generally abrupt, changes can be gradual and controlled. In biological systems the abrupt change can be very chaotic – sometimes chaos reigns for a long time.

Mankind regularly undergoes major changes – due to war, catastrophes, prophets, etc.

The change can come from within (such as the bloodless deposing of a monarch or dictator) in a more ordered manner, resulting in a transformation.

(See *Bringing Down a Dictator* and *How to Start a Revolution*.)

Discoveries in science, followed by developments in technology, also produce major socio-cultural changes and even transformations. The development of writing resulted in dramatic changes in society, as did the development of the telephone, radio, television, and the Internet.

Leonard Shlain believes that mankind is on the verge of a dramatic change in the utilization and effectiveness of our brain – a synergism of left and right lobes – a balance of 'masculine' and 'feminine'

approaches – of individualistic vs. collectivist/compassionate – a Leonardo da Vinci-like approach to problems and challenges – a new Renaissance way of thinking.

He is hopeful that we are the caterpillars, soon to be transformed to butterflies – a socio-cultural *metamorphosis*. Let's hope so. Stephane Hessel also considers transformation and metamorphosis in his new pamphlet-book.

You!

Commit

And now it's about *You* – a fresh, eager brain and body – searching for meaning, for engagement, for substance. What can you do to minimize chaos, destruction, and misery? What can *You* do to enhance 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness' – for *all* your fellow men and women on the planet – and also for the tens of millions of other species participating in and essential to the planet's biodiversity, stability, and viability.

Happiness is engagement – that's been well studied. Life is not a spectator sport – it's about living, learning, questioning; it's about engagement – about doing.

One way to begin is at the beginning – with your Declaration of Personal Independence and Responsibility – and then go from there. You need to know and be yourself. You need to use the principles and scaffolds you now know and begin to question, experiment, study, learn, and think for yourself. Add to that scaffold. Modify it. Rebuild it. Transform it.

You have to have *your* own foundation; not too rigid so you can keep questioning, learning, growing – but not too flimsy either.

If your scaffold doesn't exist, if it just crumbles, then you are nothing – you'll be subject to and controlled by those whose scaffolds, purposes, and strategies are strong. You'll be a slave to their brains – a robot, a machine.

To be really happy, you'll need to develop a purpose – to become engaged. You need to be *called* – not by others or by some religion but by yourself. Invent, produce, identify a calling – or several. Choose. Focus. Prepare.

Train. And then go forth and hopefully do some good. Then you choose another one – do more good. Grow, learn, do – and keep it up.

Although the Bobby McFerrin line was “*Don’t worry, be happy!*”, this version is better: “*Do – and that will make you happy.*”

Action and involvement are liberating: here’s Syrian protester Iyad to NY Times’ Anthony Shadid:

“We’ve already won... I lived a life of terror, fear, and killing, and now I’m free... I’m a person now. I can say what I want... I can denounce your beliefs, or I can support them. I can agree with your position or disagree with it... We’re not waiting to live our lives until after the fall of the regime. We started living them the first day of the protests. We began our lives.”

Learn, Grow, Connect

Begin with your Scaffold – expand it, build it, rebuild it. That means studying and learning - reading, taking courses, surfing good web sites. Be curious. Be interested. Expand your network of friends. Get beyond your ‘friends’, classmates, teachers. Talk with others – teachers, friends, family. Be critical and reasonable. Hang out at places where you can meet with and talk with other interested (and interesting) people: museums, libraries, museums, bookshops, lectures, film groups, subject interest groups (see below). The Internet

Take notes, write, draw sketches, take photos, write and make music, keep a journal – and review it often. It’s all connected, and it all helps you learn, do, reinforce. Musicians and writers have been and continue to be incredibly effective and powerful in helping people to become aware, active, involved.

(See Carson; Cohen – *Lonesome Heroes* and *Protest Songs*.)

Develop your interests, knowledge, skills. You must know yourself.

Dr. Stephen Schneider, a Stanford professor and climate scientist, who died in 2010, was one of the best science writers and communicators we had. His advice?

*“Know Yourself;
Know Your Stuff;
Know Your Audience.”*

Talk, Write, Teach

The best way to learn and understand something is to try to teach it. You teach yourself by teaching others. Tutor your friends and classmates; tutor and help students in lower grades. Question what you teach and then learn more about it.

Keep developing, growing, revising your scaffold. And encourage your friends, classmates, and even your parents to develop their own scaffolds. Your ‘students’ will have questions you may not be interested in. Become interested. Let them challenge your assumptions, as you challenge (gently!) theirs. Cultivate your own curiosity – and keep expanding your personal scaffold.

Focus, Volunteer, Work, DO!

Call yourself. Find and develop your interests and focus on a few causes or issues.

To really become engaged, you have to *do something*. You can do stuff individually and as part of a group or organization (see below under **More**).

If you think you’re a loner, you can do a lot on the Internet.

If you’re good with your hands, like tools, like to move – you can build, remodel, repair.

(See Habitat for Humanity.)

You can participate in organizations with interests and causes related to your own, including environmental groups, groups focused on justice, the homeless, income inequality, etc. There are groups focused on political injustice and awareness.

If you've built and revised your scaffold, feel secure and confident, you can become more of an activist, community leader, even a protestor. A good place to begin is with the groups related to Tim deChristopher's actions and activities.

(See deChristopher; Peaceful Uprising; Kelly; Piven; Sharp – and see the film *Bidder 70*.)

Run!

If you feel secure and confident, you can become a candidate for elected office! Or you can work to help elect another good person. States have caucuses, parties, and other means of selecting candidates. Just find out and participate.

When you're 16 you can get a car driver's license; at 18 you can vote.

(There are different ages of consent and candidacy in different states and nations. In some states you can run for legislative office (state house) when you're 21, or even 18 (you have to be 25 to run for Utah state office and for U.S. Federal office (House of Representatives)).

(See *Age of Candidacy*.)

It's time for a significant power shift. The old assumptions and dogma that now govern the United States are simply obsolete and out of date. You must 'inherit' the nation. The world has become less parochial, more connected, more global in scope and action. Get busy!

(See the film *Connected*.)

More

There are many very specific issues on which you might focus, depending on your interests, time, skills, and personal situation. Here are a few – this list will be expanded and more resources added.

- Bio- and Human Diversity;

- Carbon Fees and Taxes – the Citizen’s Climate Lobby;
- Copyright Law excesses and control;
- Corporate Personhood – the Move to Amend and related groups;
- Energy and Fossil Fuel issues, such as the Keystone Pipeline;
- Utah-based projects:
 - Alton Coal Mine
 - School Trust Land utilization;
 - Tar Sands project
 - Great Salt Lake minerals expansion
 - Kennecott expansion
 - Salt Lake refinery expansions
 - Snake Valley Water
- Federal Lands – state takeover challenges;
- Human Rights; UN Human Rights Day is Dec. 10;
- Income Inequality, Maximum Wage, Inequality Tax;
- July 4 – a ‘new’ Human Rights approach?
- Justice System, Prisons, for profit prisons, etc.
- Mandatory Voting or voting incentives; Election Day holiday?
- Open web and Internet;
- Peaceful Uprising, Power Shift, and Occupy groups and their actions and causes;
- Private Property and Public Lands;
- Ratify the 26th Amendment (if your state has not formally ratified);
- Rocky Mountain Institute – energy efficiency and negawatts;
- Wealth Transfer and Inheritance;
- Wilderness;

There’s a complete list of relevant organizations and groups at:
<http://www.hightowerlowdown.org/node/3213#.UQW1b6WLKE8>

There are many, many, many others!

Welcome to the world of engagement, activism, and responsible citizenship.

Your turn!

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