**On True Democracy**

**Excerpted from *Infinite of One***

**The following is a conversation held between the philosophical protagonist of the novel Infinite of One, Alex, and a cohabitant of his compound, Henry, held on the subject of True Democracy:**

“Democracy is defined as ‘by and for the people.’ That’s its one central, indispensable characteristic,” Alex states. “And American Government accomplishes neither of these obligatory objectives. It is ‘by’ an extremely exclusive, partisan-based and plutocratically-driven excluding minority of overly-privileged persons and groups and, despite the intention of honorably idealistic presidents like Obama and congresspeople like Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, is by and large ‘for’ those same excluding people. And it cannot be for the few and for the majority of the American people at the same time, because those interests are mutually exclusive. What profits the few almost always costs the majority by the very zero-sum nature of power and profit. Nothing is created from nothing; investing in increased means of control and wealth for the few deprives the many of the opportunity for the same increase in means, with said means also tending to be unsustainably extracted from the planet, despite the bullshit, disproven justifying attempts of the right to conceal this, as with the ‘trickle-down effect’ or global warming being a myth.”

“If it increases the ability of the rich to get richer it decreases the ability of the less privileged to gain greater opportunities for wealth and improvements in quality of life. If the scale rises on one side it falls on the other; this is the equal and opposite balancing nature of all things. Giving ever more to ever fewer means ever more must have ever less. This is incontrovertible law, not theory. If there’s a jump in GDP per capita by five thousand dollars, for example, but an increase of twenty thousand dollars for the top five percent of that capita, most people’s quality of life was diminished, not improved, as much as laissez faire economists might contend otherwise. And the more the few have the more they will use what they have to stake a claim on ever more of the finite income, wealth and political control available, reducing everyone else’s claim in the process. And pulling teeth and claws from the regulatory agencies and broadly protective, popularly-benefitting programs is how the plutocracy maintains this pursuit. So the truth is we’re mostly by and for the few, with progressives forever fighting to battle back against the exclusive control measures of that few embedded in the traditional fabric of every swatch of the nation, a fabric constituting, amongst other things, the false façade of democracy to keep people boxed into the constricting structure by which we almost entirely labor for comforts and conveniences without a share in our organizations or society at large while enriching the already wealthy through their equity-excluding corporations and plutocratically-controlled political mechanisms. The false façade of our national structure painted with ‘freedom, equality and democracy’ conceals serious rot.”

“So what specifically is absent in the American system of government in terms of meeting the requirements of legitimate democracy, in your opinion?,” Henry inquires, pressing Alex to delve further.

“I believe that in order for democracy to be legitimate two absolute imperatives must be guaranteed,” Alex answers: “Political power cannot be for sale and every voting age citizen must be able to vote their values *directly* without requiring those votes to be passed through political power centers; through sieves that filter out pure democratic will through entrenched parties of upper-class politicians and their colluding corporate shareholders. If political power is bought and sold, which it long has been in the United States, and if the democratic vote goes through the filter by which a preset, limited, cordoned-often, easily monetarily-coerced and corrupted group of people must interpret the demands of the electorate, true democracy is dead.”

“I say this because such political positions and their collusion with big money interests contradicts and is mutually exclusive with popular rule; as is the dominance of party politics. Money cannot be directly convertible into votes, or a plutocracy invariably arises. And people must be allowed to vote their values directly or, if unable or unwilling to represent themselves, must be permitted to pass their voting power to *anyone* they deem most capable of representing those values in the relevant city, county, state or nation. For democracy to truly exist political power cannot be dependent upon and necessarily consolidated within and controlled by a pre-set group of individuals or parties. The party system, or partisan politics, especially when dominated by a few or, worse, two parties that have any chance of controlling any significant block of political power, is inherently anti-progressive; it is inherently repressive, because it creates and rewards divisiveness and undercuts solidarity amongst representatives and the people forced into broadly warring camps whose at odds positions preclude the possibility of unity.”

“Therefore,” Alex continues, “true, direct democracy that doesn’t necessitate but *accommodates* parties and representatives when *directly* empowered by people free to choose any individual or party in whom to invest their political power is an absolute democratic imperative. But, of course, such a system is certainly not in the greed-based interests of plutocrats that force false democracy into constrained parties led by their few endorsed representatives for the purposes of consolidating control of the political process for their generally exploitative, profiteering purposes. Therefore, only a sustained movement of great popular demand and pressure placed upon the entrenched system can break us free from the plutocratic, aristocratic chains that currently lock away the greatest possible value for all citizens and, in place of the false façade democracy under which we are ruled, establish true democracy made for modernity.”

“In terms of American history and the general historical absence of true democracy, I would add that, though most people might call this a conspiracy theory, perhaps excepting those who know that the nature of wealth and power is that it compels the ego of those that possess it to conspire to find ways to amass ever more wealth and power… that I personally think that our political system was *built* to be divided and thereby effectively toothlessly dysfunctional, because if it was actually functional in the sense of translating the will of the majority into political policy, law and action then that majority would prevent the endless amassment of wealth and power currently crippling the potential of the human race in general, not just in the United States. One cannot empower the best interests of the vast majority and the capacity of the greedy to sate their greed simultaneously; these objectives are inherently at contradictory odds. And what could be done with the power and tax proceeds of a federal government overseeing a nation with the resources that we have were that power and money directed in truly populist, progressive ways, in ways improving the overall opportunities and quality of life of the populace in total, in comparison to the way that wealth and power is directed now, is inestimably great, representing a tragic opportunity cost; a gross crime against the people. And since our plutocratic republic is now the standard across the globalizing world, this crime is more a crime against humanity than any one nation of people.”

“So you’d argue that everyone must become aware of the fact that they are not ruled by a real democracy and understand and persistently press for true democracy in order to make it a reality..?” Henry asks.

“Yes,” Alex replies. “Enough men and women of progressive conviction hearing and taking to heart just such a wake-up call, a snap-focus into reality, is the indispensable first step. The first step is enough people realizing that without these qualities, without allowing direct and unlimited representation outside of entrenched political and business interests of established parties, government *cannot* be democratic. At the same time just democracy must guard against the opposite of oligarchy; it must guard against potential injustices of mob rule such that certain rights and privileges of citizenship and protections and provisions of the government for the public interest are guaranteed and not subject to majority violation; not subject to what is known as the ‘tyranny of the many.’ Fifty-one percent of voters cannot be permitted to deprive the other forty-nine percent of any of these rights, privileges or protections, including by voting to take money from the treasury that is reserved for the preservation of these rights, privileges and protections, as those that have advised against majority-rule democracy, from Plato to Jefferson, have admonished. The same tyranny of the many may not be permitted to appropriate and redistribute private funds from and to anyone, such as in the common concern that the poor may use a purer form of democracy to redistribute the wealth of the plundering minority; this cannot be permitted, no matter how justified the disadvantaged and deprived may feel such an action is in the face of their suffering and the exploitative means by which the super-rich came by their wealth; this would represent a slippery slope that would violate the sanctified protections of the laws and place the country under a dangerous form of mob rule descendant down a path as dark as the one they’d believe they are reacting against.”

“So you empower the will of the people within inviolable limits guarding against unjust, unruly, anarchic inclinations using the checks and balances of constitutionally-enshrined rights and the judgment of truly democratically appointed judges of the highest courts; this is the only *just* form of true democracy. And it is a form, I would add, that has *never* existed. Government for and by the people, by all people directly, not channeled through corrupt, entrenched political power centers purchased by an ever more exclusive set of wealthy plutocrats, has never existed. And in America it is precluded first and foremost by a political system that ignores the nature of wealth and its ability to buy more means to wealth amassment which, in turn, means wealthy plutocrats become ever more wealthy and powerful. True democracy cannot be known by a people that don’t see and a system that doesn’t recognize the fact that the division between money and state is just as imperative to justice as the old division of church and state. Historically there is little difference between these divisions, actually, as the church has long been used to manipulate people’s need for morality, meaning and the fear of the afterlife in order to consolidate wealth and control. Without this division corruption rules.”

“Without it you are prone to propagandist shows of democracy built to delude and placate the masses, like our republican government limited to upper-class puppets pulled by plutocratic strings, or, in the original aristocratic republics calling themselves democracies, government controlled entirely by land-owning males from privileged families, or in any other form of exclusion or precursor for unjust rule, including the majority-unrestrained mob democracy we’ve been warned against, and which conservative thinkers love to use to falsely disprove truly democratic structures such as the one that I advocate for. The best, most authentic form of democracy granting the people the greatest, clearest path to progress towards the highest quality of life of all the lives it might serve has always been but a dream waiting to be born into reality.”

“It has *always* been a dream?,” Henry incredulously inquires. “Even when it was initially conceived and implemented in Ancient Greece?”

“Democratic government in its truest, purest, uncompromised, unsullied, least corruptible form has never existed,” Alex replies. “Nothing near to it has existed, in fact. The invention of democracy was the right instinct, the right move in the progressive direction of political evolution in the best interest of people as a whole, but even in the beginning, thousands of years ago, it was compromised by the preeminent drive of those in power to preserve that power within a socioeconomic structure dependent upon slavery and the disenfranchisement of second-class females and non-land-owning citizens. True democracy cannot exist within these unjust confines in which *anyone* of voting age is excluded from direct participation in the political power structure, as they will inevitably not be adequately heard or served in interest due to this exclusion, or by any filter set downstream from their vote. *Everyone* of voting age must be able to cast their vote directly or through a chosen representative, and anyone empowered by others must be able to be a representative regardless of partisan affiliation, the support of wealthy people or any other precluding factor.”

“That is, only a *very* select set of people may be justly barred from voting or being a representative such as, arguably, those who are under age and have yet to develop the rational capacity paired with the basic understanding of the world to justly employ their political power, or those convicted of certain crimes or residing in the nation prior to establishing citizenship. Deny any other citizen in good legal standing the right to represent themselves, to vie for representative office through a platform *not* requiring a massive war chest in order to gain significant exposure, or to choose any other such citizen they want to represent them and true democracy is dead, because direct political power is dead. The use of the party system in US politics to reinforce exclusionary political control systems is interwoven with this democracy-killing prevention of direct representation by limiting the number and type of representatives, and was created for that very purpose, I would argue: to keep political power in the hands of the few by forcing the people to vote through a perfectly divided and perpetually warring partisan structure in which popular progress is grossly stalled at best and rendered impossible at worst. The result: true, direct popular political power is divided and conquered.”

“We the people are politically alienated and distracted by our constant equity-excluded toils on behalf of the corporations for which we work, and by the consumerist, classist, cutthroat-competing individualization standards of the nation, and possess no true power because established partisan structures and their financiers possess almost absolute power over our illusive ‘democracy.’ True democracy requires that representation never be limited to and dependent upon party stamps of approval, as such limitation and partisan choke-holds inevitably produce today’s globally prevalent plutocratic republics inviting the wealthy to buy government and corrupt the political agenda by purchasing the allegiance of our easy to target, preselected, moneyed set of so-called ‘representatives of the people,’ whether directly or through corporate bodies and PACs. What people are being represented? Certainly not all people, at least nowhere near to equally, with true democratic equality of consideration. If, on the other, just hand, we remove this preset plutocracy by making self and unrestricted representation an inalienable, constitutionally-inviolable right of every citizen, the plutocrats would be cut off at the knees, as there would be too many people to target and attempt to buy and control under such a true democracy. And our owning a fair share of our work and being supported in our opportunities by our government such that we are not distracted and beaten down by our lives would only reinforce this democratic justice. This is the only way to guard against plutocracy and its inevitably produced, globally-impacting evils, but it has never been done and the plutocrats will do anything to prevent it. It is for these reasons that I say that true democracy has never existed.”

“Not even when it was originated?,” Henry presses the point.

“Not in Ancient Athens, not in modern America or Europe or any nation on this earth at any point in history or the present day,” Alex replies. “The idea of democracy has always been compromised by greedily-consolidated wealth and power, with the word democracy used to placate the populace due to its association with freedom, justice and popular rule, but with its true form remaining but not destined to forever remain a myth. But so long as it remains mythical the human race governed by its pretense concealing a corrupt plutocracy will forever be prevented from realizing its greatest collective potential, for that potential is mutually-exclusive with the purchasers and holders of ever more consolidated wealth and power and their special interests that use our hollow democratic façades to pursue their consolidation. For those pursuits are inherently exploitative of the disadvantages of the vast majority and thus will forever perpetuate social, political and economic injustice.”

“Not government nor economics nor business nor social structures of any kind can truly be ‘for the people’ while political structures built to serve greed remain in place, for the simple reason that the dominating conservative traditions and ideologies of empire and their dynasties passed on through today and protected by the plutocratic republic will forever fight to kill *true* for the people political, economic and business ideas and systems because such theories and structures block that excluding minority’s absolute pursuit of the bottom line divvied-out to its minority ownership class from which the *vast* majority is almost entirely excluded. So long as we remain ruled by an aristocratically-governed pretense of democracy, and by a system of prevailing economic theory that prioritizes the bottom line and GDP growth over the quality of life of the total citizenry, and by business structures and their major shareholders that do the same while pulling the plutocratic strings, purposefully *not* investing in the best interests of the people and the planet because such investments would be seen as costs depriving their executives and tiny sect of major shareholders doing everything they can to greedily-exclude all but the select few from the fruits of commercial pursuits… So long as this remains true, humanity will remain a morally, spiritually and quality-of-life-hollowed-out shell of its greatest potential self. It reminds me of the documentary *Inside Job*, an elucidating film on the financial market implosion of 2008. Have you seen it?”

“No, I haven’t,” Henry deadpans. “I should, I take it…”

“Definitely,” Alex responds. “It’s the type of educational film everyone should watch. It’s one of the first things that any economics curriculum of any educational institution with a concrete moral core would show their students. But they don’t, of course, because most universities, like most Western cultural institutions, have long been grooming schools for the corporate world tied into conservative ideology and its propagators. I mean, I was already well aware that traditional Western business and economics practices ignore the impact of commercial activity and economic policy and teachings on the actual quality of lives of the vast majority and had developed my own set of political, economic and business designs before seeing *Inside Job*, but such films and paralleling writings add fuel to my fire. Without true democracy and the majority-best-interest-protecting regulation to which it would ultimately lead you leave the majority of power of the world in the hands of colluding contingents of crooks and their plutocratic control of our illusory ‘democracy.’ Those crooks, in the case of the economic crash that began in 2008 and the history that predated and precipitated it, found a way to extract immense sums of value from the world and its activities without actually producing any value or even assuming any risk or responsibility.”

“These criminals proved the saying: ‘Give a man a gun, and he can rob a bank. Give a man a bank, and he can rob the world.’ Who are the worst criminals? Those who rob with impunity because they bought the law through the plutocracy! These are the villainous parasites of the planet, and we the people must not allow them and their empowering systems and ideology to remain to the inestimably profound loss of our collective quality of life and the continuity of planetary health and stability. Despite their crimes against us, people such as those named in that film continue to sit atop absurd fortunes and conspire to extract ever more from their firmly lodged seats of power sitting above the law. They are the very definition of parasites: they add little to no value to our lives while extracting, consolidating and consuming massive value, weakening and oppressing the human race and the planet playing host to them while we remain unable to rip them from their parasitic positions upon our flesh.”

“How many more years, decades, centuries of injustice must be suffered by the indoctrinated, mentally-manipulated and parasitically-exploited majority before the lessons and pressures of the past push enough people to join the activist ranks of those demanding true democracy? And asking this question I am again struck by the parallel metaphors of building up from the foundation and growing up from the roots. If the foundation isn’t sturdy or the tree’s roots are diseased or don’t well enough penetrate the soil so as to firmly anchor and draw all the water and nutrients needed for the tree to become its tallest and strongest it can never support its grandest, fullest possible form.”

“Because everything it yields will be, as they say, fruit from the diseased tree,” Henry offers.

“In a way, yes,” Alex half-heartedly agrees. “Because everything depends upon, is built up from and draws its direction and inspiration from the foundation; from fundamental principles and systems which, when lacking, preclude the possibility of reaching the pinnacle of potential. You have to start at the ground level. In this case there are always progressive policies to pursue and liberal leaders that have greater conviction and moral centers than others, but so long as they attempt to build progress on a compromised foundation they will always be obstructed, their success will always be under threat of reversal and the building they contribute to will never be able to reach as high as it can and will always be prone to collapse. And our compromised foundation is the plutocratic republic itself, and everything this pathogen infects through the corporate control of Washington and every major political center. Just look at ALEC and Citizens United and the Koch Brothers and the endless attacks on environmental regulations and the countless attempts to repeal The Affordable Care Act, which itself is a watered-down version of the single-payer system that should’ve been instituted, and on and on and on… The plutocracy contradicts and entirely undermines the possibility of democracy. We cannot have the one with the other. They are mutually-exclusive systems. We must excise the plutocratic disease from politics in order to purify our democracy; the type of democracy necessary to create the greatest value for the greatest numbers. And this is why all of the systems I envision attempt to pull the traditional diseased trees out at their very root, for without pulling them up by the root the trees infected by greed will regrow and true for and by the people government, economics, business and spirituality will be consumed by the pathogens.”

“So what does the purification take?,” Henry asks. “How should we, people like us, those that have realized or are beginning to realize the truth… What political system should be fought for, exactly?”

“In terms of what to do about it strategically the challenges are immense; greater than can be imagined,” Alex replies. “A multi-pronged, long-sustained strategy leading to a widespread popular movement will be required in order to overcome the established ideology, conventional wisdom and misunderstanding that pervades people’s paradigm of good governance, business and economics. We are taught from the moment we can think conceptually that America is a democracy; the land of the free and the brave; the land of justice and equality for all. These lies are pounded into our brains from the moment we sit in school and stand up and obediently pledge our allegiance. We are inculcated with the idea that we are the righteous people, that in God we should trust, that freedom is alive and absolute, rather than something that is largely bought and exists as a two-way street of the ‘freedom to do’ and ‘the freedom from being done to.’ We’re told our government’s core concern is spreading the so-called ‘free market’ and ‘democracy’ across the world when our military typically forces its way into and occupies other nations that we then pretend to be duty-bound to liberate, or that we use as a leveraged threat of force by spreading our bases and forces across the continents and seven seas, all the while parading propaganda so deeply embedded that it’s inseparable from the fiber of our diseased wood.”

“We pretend as if power and resources and the cutthroat competition to penetrate and control new consumer markets across the multinational-corporation-dominated planet have nothing to do with the motivation of the colluding wealthy and powerful politicians and shareholders and their acolytes that pull the strings of the hawks in Washington and send our least privileged, easiest to manipulate men and women to die as sacrificial pawns in a global game of economic and military chess; an imperial game of gobbling up as much wealth and power as possible involving interwoven corporate and military forces, the ‘military-industrial complex,’ resulting in the murder of those simply defending the sovereign free will and autonomy of their nations that the non-critical-thinking are tricked into believing are ‘terrorists,’ terrorists that would be celebrated as heroes were they Americans defending America from invasion and occupation, joining the lost lives of countless thousands of innocent bystanders as ‘collateral damage’ across the less privileged nations we’ve historically encroached against, especially, perhaps, in the Middle East.”

“Our recent Middle East incursions are but one example of the hypocritical double standard of the American supremacists, a part continually trumped-up and played by the corporate-backed imperial, war-mongering hawks on the political right in bed with the military-industrial complex and all the many greedily-unbridled multinational American corporations standing to make billions off of their eastward expansion into under-tapped, under-exploited consumer markets. This global expansion of the means and opportunities to profit is what is being served more than anything by those that are said to ‘serve the nation’ by being nationalistically puffed-up with pride and duped into joining the military, which is predictable considering profiteering plutocrats dominate the economy and own the political process, selling liberation and justice and democracy and the like as the false, ostensible motives behind the international chess moves they direct their military chess pieces towards.”

“Ouch…” Henry interjects. “That diatribe would piss a lot of people off.”

“Yes, it would,” Alex agrees. “Because people are conditioned to equate military service with the service of the nation, as if the nation isn’t composed of people of every different mindset imaginable compelled by immensely different and very often contradictory objectives; as if we all have the same to gain or lose from our military conquests; as if we’re all perfectly united, protected and served by our government and the business interests standing behind it, trying to hide their true, duplicitous faces in the shadows cast by the false flag of righteousness flying over their hypnotically grandiose edifices of popular control and extraction. But when government is for sale and controlled by entrenched power centers as ours is, most must lose so few can gain in this global game of consolidation, and the military is the sword cutting down resistors to this worldwide struggle to corral and plunder markets, minds and resources. And I’m *not* speaking against those men and women in uniform whose relative lack of opportunity and knowledge of why most wars are actually initiated and why such extensive armed forces are maintained are taken advantage of by this chain of hawks, puppets and plutocratic parasites.”

“I never wish those in uniform any harm, or anyone else, for that matter. It’s the opposite, in fact: I wish to *prevent* them from being put in harm’s way. It is never people themselves that are the enemies, but what many people *believe*; what their egos, greed, ignorance and other weaknesses drive them to produce. In this case, conflating condemnation of the unjustifiable human and economic cost of warfare with a condemnation of our men and women in uniform has long been an imperialistic tactic of the plutocrats and their demagogic political puppets used to turn the non-critical-thinking and uneducated public, especially the reflexive Republican voters, against those that attempt to bring that injustice to light. Like all moral progressives I’m taking issue with the true motive by which our troops are recruited and sent to ‘ensure American interests abroad.’ It’s a simple, concrete line of logic. So long as a very small sect of the American public owns the vast majority of multinational corporate interests and wields such a lopsidedly large amount of influence over the political process through their lobbying and campaign financing machines and promises made to politicians post-political-career, mostly to ensure the maintenance and growth of their corporate interests, and thereby owning most of the profit and power in America, then ‘serving America’ is essentially equal to serving the greed of the few at the loss of those that are exploited here and those that are maimed and murdered abroad.”

“One needs no further proof that all the branches of the US Military are extensions of globalizing American corporations fighting to increase the disparity in quality of life than to pay attention to the content of commercials paid for and the major advertising campaigns concocted by each one of these branches of military service. Why even attempt to convince people that these ‘services’ are ‘a global force for good,’ per one of the most proliferated commercials, unless they aren’t?! Unless they want people to think they are because they know they aren’t? Because they know it’s not a self-evident truth, and that people need to be convinced not to have the suspicions that they do, especially if they’re educated and lean towards critical thought. If it were self-evident, if educated, thinking people weren’t trying to get others to see that it’s not true they wouldn’t feel the need to bombard us with the propaganda campaigns in the first place. The commercials are proof of the crime.”

“So who, or what, is really being ‘served?’ Our propagandists-termed ‘Defense Department’ is more often an ‘Offense Department,’ both in that our military is aggressively used to force the one percent’s interests onto others and because it has been used to commit countless offenses against non-compliant nations since at least the end of World War II. Compounding this, the shuttling of ever more of the world’s finite value into the hands of those that cannot use it to increase their quality of life wastes the opportunity to use that same squandered value to improve the quality of life of countless people and families that can desperately use it to vastly improve their quality of life. They count on our ignorance, complacency, conformity, gullibility, laziness and other weaknesses and distractions to keep us from realizing that there is a serious problem with the overall management of the nation and that we collectively will always have the power to change that; all it takes is the realization that such power exists followed by the conviction and will to apply that power.”

“This is a major theme of your comments on America’s foreign policy,” Henry notes. “That it’s too often an extension of the will of the one percent and major shareholders of growing American multinational corporations constantly looking for ways to expand unimpeded into new avenues ripe for exploitation. You’re saying we’re constantly being brainwashed into supporting the means by which American corporate shareholders press themselves into stronger positions to extract and compile ever more of the finite value of the world… that we are forever sitting in… what did you call it…? In that brainwashing tub of conformity; in the warmly beguiling waters and distracting bubbles built into conventional culture; into consumerism, corporatism, into our perfectly divided and controlled plutocracy and all the subtle, propagandist ways we are influenced by these prevailing forces and their propagators…”

“Yes,” Alex agrees.

“You believe that we’re essentially being duped into strengthening the very means by which we are excluded and weakened,” Henry continues. “That we are constantly being convinced to diminish ourselves by helping the few take advantage of the opportunities by which the disparity between them and the so-called ninety-nine-percent is increased.”

“Yes,” Alex agrees again. “You certainly have a strong grasp on the general theme. And when we employ a little knowledge and critical reasoning the commercials paid for by our military wings essentially say the same thing. The constant public relations propaganda campaigns waged by our military and its corporate sponsors points to how much money is made by the military industrial complex and its one percent beneficiaries. Organizations, including all wings of the US Military, don’t spend money unless they calculate that this money will be returned to them with interest; unless they believe it’ll be profitable to do so; unless there is a considerable return anticipated from the molding of public perception commercials are crafted to create. In this case that return is based upon paving the path to public support for political decisions and policies that allow a continuation, if not an increase, in the ability of globalizing corporations to sacrifice the most disadvantaged young men and women of the nation in the cause of controlling as many of the global natural resources and consumer markets as possible, especially those that remain relatively untapped and open to competition for control like those in the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia. Without this motive there would be no incentive or justification for investing in commercial campaigns.”

“Always look to motive when attempting to comprehend human behavior. Those commercials wouldn’t exist unless convincing the public to support globalization under the guise of national security and the spreading of freedom and democracy was profitable. These commercials are crafted to mislead us from the true motive for their conception and to conceal the fact that our military is the greatest terrorizing, imperialistic sword of globalization on the planet. Such commercials are built to disgustingly engender support from the gullible, traditionalist non-critical thinkers, the compulsive flag wavers and cross-bearers, whom, through their votes, purchases and investments and the careers which they seek and believe to be honorable, enable the globalizing spread of the means and methods by which the core injustice is committed against humanity: the consolidation of value and quality of life in the hands of the few.”

“And this is lost on many people, to the great loss of them and their progeny,” Henry states.

“Yes, they are enabling their own perpetuating oppression,” Alex continues. “For tied to corporatism *this* is what imperialist use of endless military expansion really represents: the gravest of injustices against life; the continued short-selling of total quality of life and health and sustainability of planetary environments through the same course that kills, mentally-enslaves and physically maims the least advantaged and anyone else that stands in the way. And with the incalculably immense costs of this core injustice in mind we must ask: what constitutes a patriot, truly? Someone who does what those that profit the most and control the political policies and processes tell him or her to do without question, perfectly willing to invade nations and fight for traditions regardless of the cost?! Or is the true patriot the one that fights for the greatest good, the best interests, the highest total quality of life of all those within his or her country and all those with whom his or her countrymen may establish mutually beneficial, peaceful relations?!”

“Though of course never outright honestly expressed, for propaganda is inherently deceitful in its misleading intent, every military commercial attempts to conflate patriotism and love of country with the agenda of the military industrial complex that actually fights to *reduce* overall quality of life, including the overall quality of life of the vast majority of Americans, by increasing the globalizing disparity touching every aspect of every life here and abroad, murdering countless civilians and ‘terrorists,’ many of whom do not target civilians but are merely defending themselves from invaders, occupiers and oppressors. Such a hollow form of patriotism is patently false; it’s absurdly biased, narrow-minded, prejudicial and extremely costly both to those that endorse it and those run roughshod over as a result of that endorsement. This hollow brand of patriotism is, to any thinking person of moral scruples and relative worldly awareness, the exact opposite of patriotism. It’s another example of where the paradigm, the way in which something is commonly understood, is near to the opposite of its greater truth, needing to be flipped on its head. In this case such a form of ‘patriotism’ is closer to treason, actually, because you’re betraying the greatest good of the vast majority of people whom a real patriot fights to defend and serve.”

“Such a false form of patriotism also completely fails to put the shoe on the other foot, so to speak. It’s entirely hypocritical. Were those killed by military forces Americans defending themselves from Middle Eastern invaders those same conservatives and *Fox News* would call them freedom fighters and patriots, which is exactly what the victims of our military adventurism and behind-the-scenes-supporters of progressive movements hurting business interests have done throughout our history. Every one of these commercials is evil in its propagandist manipulations, yet the majority seem not to be offended and are okay with these mind-controlling campaigns and their conflation of the entire nation and its populace with total-quality-of-life-decimating military adventurism, in the case of our recent campaigns since Desert Storm. Their claim to fight for freedom and democracy and ‘in defense of all we hold dear’ and in support of ‘the best and the brightest,’ even going so far as to call us the greatest nation on earth… for anyone that can see with an open heart and informed mind knows there can never be one greatest nation… it’s all lies disseminated at the absolute greatest of costs to the human race.”

“Just look at a map of US military bases and deployments across the planet. Look at the sheer number and geographical span. If you look at such a map and still think it reflects a ‘defense of all we hold dear back home,’ then either you’re entirely brainwashed and deluded or what we hold dear is the spread of greed for wealth and power, for what it truly reflects is a leveraging of force and its threat across contested profitable areas of the world for the sake of billionaires as a result of a plutocratic system of lobbying, financing the careers of and making quit-pro-quo deals with hawkish politicians running our sham of a ‘democracy.’ And if you wonder why the taxpayer-supported debt is trillions upon trillions you’ll find much of the answer in the same place. It’s not the impoverished receiving welfare and health insurance benefits, it’s the absurd and growing cost of fielding such a global threat of force for the excluding few! Our tax dollars are going to the weapons developers to get rich off of making things that kill people that get in the way of the ambitions of the major shareholders of globalizing multinational corporations! Not to mention the fact that the tax proceeds meant to benefit the majority, a great many of whom so desperately need any opportunity the government might grant them to improve their substandard quality of lives, are drastically reduced through tax-cutting and loophole-making policies purchased through the plutocracy.”

“The costs of gullible, generally uneducated, non-critical-thinking, easily manipulated Americans of supporting what amounts to fascism for the profits of a small slice of the population that, in the long run, costs most of the people immense quality of life value and their greatest potential…” Henry summarizes.

“Yes, well said,” Alex replies. “That is the essence of neo-imperialism. And Americans in general should possess the same type of grasp you and I demonstrate, because they and everyone else are affected by that grasp, what amounts to a grasp around our throats… well… maybe not *your* throat,” Alex can’t help but add. “But this should be a part of the public awareness because we are all affected by it, regardless of the extent of that awareness and the knowledge of the long-running forces behind ever-evolving imperialist tactics; tactics continually reflecting an adaptation to the countervailing ideas and tactics of its objection and resistance. And that is, of course, a long-running theme in the history of ideological conflict. In fact, the falsely misleading propaganda in contemporary armed forces commercials reminds me of Orwell’s *1984* and Hitler’s Germany. Hitler is infamous for saying: ‘Repeat the same lies over and over again and eventually they will be accepted as the truth;’ eventually all but the most critically-thinking members of the public will accept the falsehoods. And if your methods of brainwashing and indoctrination of the newly minted youth are effective enough this will remain the case even if, as in *1984*, you change the story next week; even if the allies suddenly become the enemies in the rewritten reports.”

“One step further and Big Brother, in this contemporary case the Big Brotherhood of the globalizing corporate oligarchy and its major stakeholders plutocratically-pulling governmental strings, will force you to say our allies have always been our allies and our enemies have always been our enemies, even as we remember that our enemies used to be those our government financed and supported when those corporations considered it profitable to support the regimes of dictators like Pinochet and Saddam Hussein and those we branded freedom fighters when it benefited the wealthy and powerful like Al Qaeda, even when such regimes and outfits actually crush democracy while murdering countless civilians and violating every known human right. It’s not much of a leap to imagine much of Orwell’s dystopian prediction coming true; to imagine this oligarchic brotherhood moving ever closer to the extremes of actually transforming language and revising history to further impede our ability to think critically or to sell whatever narrative supports their objectives.”

“And the commercials for our Armed Forces do this, though not as overtly as in Orwell’s Stalinist vision; a vision many unfortunately equate with socialism when, in fact, the past failures of socialism were due to the failures of tyranny, not socialism. Said failures are simply used to undermine socialistic principles that contradict the greedy agenda because socialism was adopted as the official ideology of many dictatorial regimes in the nations they ruled, from the USSR to Maoist China to Castro in Cuba, all historical epochs within those nations whose failures were the failures of too much consolidation of power in the hands of government controllers and their small oligarchic bands of beneficiaries. So, ironically, the more we move in Trump’s direction and away from Bernie’s the closer we get to creating such a state, just under the false auspices of democracy rather than the false auspices of socialism.”

“The problem, in other words, is and always has been the consolidation of wealth and power and the publicly-disempowering control measures that produce them, whether through corporatist control of government and commerce and the exclusion of its greatest benefits, as in modern America, or through communistic means of making everything ‘public’ which is then controlled by the head figure, or figures, of government, as in the previously cited examples. The plutocratic neo-imperialist of course can’t acknowledge this because they want people to associate communism and socialism with the economic failure and fall of the Soviet Union, not with the failure of tyranny. They don’t want you to realize that socialism, when judiciously applied to certain economic segments under any true democracy, can lead to *more* freedom and *far greater* quality of life for the general public by granting them increased opportunities and protecting them from having their needs for certain products and services exploited, among many other measures such a semi-socialistic democratic state can institute on behalf of the best interests of the vast majority.”

“And you think the commercials you mentioned are a part of this deception?,” Henry asks.

“It’s all part of the same propagandist, revisionist, mind-controlling strategy the plutocrats and corporate oligarchs use to take advantage of people’s ignorance and critical thought deficit in order to pave the way for increasing future profits from which those same targeted people are excluded, and from all the lost opportunities to increase their quality of life this exclusion and its directly perpetuated and broadening disparity leads to,” Alex replies. “None of what’s in US Army, Air Force and Navy commercials is supported by historical evidence. The Vietnam War was fought on the premise of the ‘domino effect,’ which was essentially greed-based fear; the fear held by the super wealthy plutocrats pulling our government strings of one nation falling to a cultural ideology closed to capitalistic profiteering leading to nearby nations and regions influenced by this ideology falling to the same closure in profitability that might, in turn, continue to grow to influence more and more nations and regions. This motive was of course packaged and sold as something other than what it was and led to our youngest, most disadvantaged and vulnerable young men, before they could develop the critical capacity and knowledge to uncover the true impetus behind our violent aggressions, being pushed to become killers of Vietnamese defending their right to sovereign self-determination. The counter-cultural and anti-war movements were a direct result of this, of course, as non-conforming free thinkers saw through the lies and recognized the moral repugnancy of our invasion.”

“And the greedy have sent the disadvantage to kill the disadvantaged ever since! Since World War II virtually every conflict our military and intelligence wings has forced themselves into, and us with them, from Korea to Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan to Cuba to supporting North African and South American dictators in their brutally repressive fights against populist movements seeking to improve the paltry quality of life of their fellow citizens, to using funds from narcotics traffickers to fund the regimes of those that seek to crush pro-democracy parties and on and on… all the evidence contradicts the claims made by these commercials… all the evidence points to a history of consolidating and colluding power between the super-rich, their corporate interests and every wing of the intelligence and military commands. I hope you don’t take offense at this, but one thing I’ve learned from my time with you and your family is that these corporations and government organizations are not isolated, self-contained units. Once people leave the office, the boardroom and the command center they talk and scheme for greater control and profits, and the upper-class tends to scheme amongst itself within its excluding social circles, because greed is contagious, and everyone is looking for more profitable angles. And such collusion is fostered by our plutocratic republic; by a political system merely masquerading as democracy for the sake of sustaining the status quo. It’s long past time for true democracy!”

“Yeah, after a while you don’t even think about it,” Henry replies. “All those commercials. We’ve all been exposed to them for so long, over and over again, that it supports reflexive, non-critical thought, which I suppose is the intent. I think people are especially susceptible to supporting the bullshit and open to being brainwashed because they aren’t protected by the truth; by the evidence you allude to. They haven’t been set free by the truth. They first have to see the evil before they can fight it.”

“People are hypnotized by the flag and peer pressured and conditioned by conventional, conservative standards to believe that ‘our government’ truly is *our* government,” Alex continues. “But consider this… When the gang grows to sufficient size and strength, it becomes an army. When the army is well enough equipped and organized and lays claim to sufficient territory for which it receives sovereign recognition, it becomes the government. Governance, in other words, is not innately different from a gang, nor is it innately honorable. The honor of government and leadership in general is entirely dependent upon the principles underpinning the system of government and the way in which its members comport themselves. ‘Serving one’s nation’ is not the same as serving the army or the government until such time as the government is truly, *directly* directed by the majority of its constituents, and until the army takes its commands from that truly democratic government. When this preeminent prerequisite is not met, government will serve those that control it, and the army takes its orders from that government. And we are clearly a lobbyist, special interest, corporate-billionaire-controlled plutocratic republic above all else. How then can serving in government or the Armed Forces be legitimately considered the same as serving one’s nation; one’s people? To any critical thinking person it cannot.”

“I’ve never thought of it quite like that before…” Henry mutters.

“If I had the funds I would devise a commercial campaign of my own that satirically mocks the evil-fostering lies of American military propaganda,” Alex adds. “Something that shows all the bases and weapons deals and tanks and assault vehicles and the deadly wares of ‘defense contractors’ our government pays trillions for… that shows them going into offensive actions and the bombs dropped by drones with massive collateral and property damage and our invading and occupying legions marching through nations whose resistors are branded terrorists and all the dictators we’ve supported and populist movements we’ve helped destroy for access to natural resources and expanded opportunities for multinational corporations entering and building up their oil derricks, pipelines, ore mines and chains of businesses in the blood-soaked rubble.”

“Show the dead bodies, the suffering of the people of underdeveloped nations whose oppressive regimes we support, the aftermath of our invasions with our corporate behemoths extracting the now unprotected natural resources auctioned off by our puppet presidents and the establishing of modern-disease-making *McDonald’s*… show all these images and video clips in short, dramatic succession and then have a member of each military, intelligence and defense contractor wing come together in a shot where they pridefully puff out their chests and put their hands on their hips and say something like: “The US Military Industrial Complex: the greatest mass murdering, terrorizing, exploiting, democracy-killing, globally-spreading force for one percent profit in human history.”

“If you produced such a commercial I’m betting that you would wind up experiencing a premature death for your troubles… *after* being branded a traitor, of course,” Henry says with an uncomfortable little snicker.

“Exactly,” Alex responds. “I would be the communist terrorist for speaking the truth and fighting the evil and attempting to stand up to the greatest injustice-promoting, quality-of-life-disparity-disseminating force on the planet. This is what pisses me off so much when I hear arguments that anything less than supporting every military action is a treasonous offense and failure to support the military men and women ‘defending our nation.’ This argument is wrong and wrapped in propagandist falsehood on every level. There is an immense difference between supporting the people duped to put their lives on the line in our invasions and occupations and supporting those invasions and occupations themselves. It goes without saying, or should to thinking people, that I don’t harbor ill will for the actual troops. It is the campaigns, the policy, the human and taxpayer costs, the fact that foreign policy and military actions are waged under the pretense of righteousness while actually perpetuating immense evils and increasing disparities in quality of life that I take umbrage to.”

“I saw a T-shirt for sale online the other day that said: ‘If my American flag offends you call 1-800-GET-OUT.’ These arrogant, destructive, stupid asses. *You’re* the force of evil! You’re a purveyor of the dark side. No, I won’t abandon this country to deluded, ignorant, immoral supremacists like you! *That* would be unpatriotic. I’m not offended because I hate this country and the rights and privileges it grants us. You don’t have to be a mindless drone, a sacrificial pawn, a part of the thoughtless herd or a puppet on a string to belong to this country. What offends me is what any person that would wear that shirt represents, and all the injustice they foster here and abroad by spreading the narrow, ignorant-minded belief that any one nation or people can ever be the best and that we are all united in support of a government in which we possess no true share.”

“When you speak of ‘Americans’ and ‘the nation’ in conflated, simplified terms, as if we’re all united in purpose and share the same goals and opportunities and benefit equally from the status quo and the overriding pursuits of our government’s domestic and foreign policy you commit a grave injustice against the vast majority of Americans by perpetuating the myth that those controlling the nation and consolidating most of the wealth and power of American corporations and political institutions speak for all of us; even as those corporations and institutions maintain both literal and figurative command centers mostly separate from and not beholden to any public scrutiny, ramification or influence and largely act against the best interests of American citizens and citizens of the globe in their continued efforts to extract as much value from the people and the planet as they can, thereby minimizing the total quality of life potential of the human race. Such a shirt is emblematic of the divisiveness that destroys the best things in life; that fails to see that we are all the same in every way that matters most; that every nation, culture and people has many things of great value to offer us; that there can never be such a thing as the one best nation; that God and spiritual unity and total quality of life are all betrayed by this mentality of the blind, morally hollow, progress-crushing false patriot; the true traitor that would adorn such a shirt; it’s the parlance and symbolism of the flag-waving, globally-bullying, murdering and exploitative American supremacist form of patriotism that is akin to fascism and costs the global majority incalculable quality of life!”

“So we need to supplant this immensely detrimental form of patriotism with a full, moral, progressive form that creates and protects increasing quality of *total* life,” Henry suggests.

“Yes,” Alex continues. “We need to educate our youth along progressive lines away from the ‘might makes right’ imperialistic and aristocratic lines and traditions forming the true core of American military history concealed from our kids from elementary school through college and beyond. All of my economic and business courses in college were steeped in the same consolidation of value objective, completely ignoring total quality of life, which is the *far* greater, *far* more progressive objective. The simple truth is that total quality of life is that which is of greatest value. Yet this principle is never taught and, arguably, all that which contradicts it takes precedence, beginning in the earliest of classes. We are indoctrinated in mistruth from our first Pledge of Allegiance at the latest.”

“But a slim minority muster the courage and conviction to teach their kids to *always* question where their lessons come from and *why* they’re lessons in the first place. The motive is always the most important factor. *Why*? Why is this being taught? What is the objective being pushed? Who benefits? Is this what I want to support? It seems that very few even bother to ask these absolutely imperative questions. It is only a minority that tells their kids that the economy primarily serves the wealthy few; that everyone else has to fight through the unjust control measures of the profiteers just to survive, much less to gain the comforts of the dwindling middle class; that the underprivileged are exploited as a rule; that the wealthy and powerful control the country and the world and that their constructs have tendrils penetrating every societal system. *Everything* is corrupted by greed in most so-called ‘advanced nations,’ and America is the standard-bearer of this corruption. Shedding light upon and extracting those tendrils will take a very extensive commitment of time and energy coupled with courage and unwavering conviction by those that realize the truth. Putting politics, economics and business to work for people as a whole to improve quality of life as a whole will take years of gradual awakening and education led by *many* of understanding and conviction.”

“This is not a new struggle, of course, but one that must be amplified by a growing popular determination while remaining adaptive to the ever-evolving tactics of those conserving and concocting new such oppressive measures. Our children will have to be taught the truth, and their children after them, and gradually the majority will have to summon the strength, resilience and resolve to fight for true democracy, and ideally some version of the other ideological concepts I talk about, in order for those immensely valuable concepts and systems to have any chance of being embraced and instituted in the service of increasing total quality of life. A progressive purification of our democracy has so many deeply embedded obstacles to overcome that we’re unlikely to see it in our lifetimes. It could take hundreds of years. But I think it begins with those of us that realize these things, that know the root cause of globalizing injustices, to refuse to back down from the truth when others, cowed by fear and ignorance and peer pressure and mental weakness and corruption and ego attempt to bully us into dropping truly righteous causes. You can’t be a good, progressive person if you realize the truth and refuse to act.”

“And the first act in this ongoing war is spreading the truth until enough people possess it pursuant to banding together to fight for true progressive change. And I believe our own Declaration of Independence may be interpreted as imploring us to dissolve our current plutocratic republic in pursuit of this change. Consider its iconic second paragraph: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government.’”

“I say we’ve clearly been alienated from our consenting right to such self-government. When our consent consists of choosing from a handful of overly privileged persons strung upon plutocratic strings to represent our interests, and when those interests tend to be mutually exclusive with the interests of their puppet masters, no true consent exists, only deception and widespread delusion. It is therefore our right to alter or abolish all the plutocratic mechanisms that deny us true democracy, obstruct our political and economic liberty and impede our capacity to pursue our happiness; our highest quality of life, especially among the least advantaged of us. These include, at the very least, not only the manner in which our representatives are preselected and their campaigns are financed and their relationships with the plutocrats are maintained via the lobbying and backroom, corporate colluding, quid pro quo system, but the limited nature of our representative government that denies us the right to choose whomever we wish to represent our interests and grant us the best opportunities to pursue happiness, including representatives that have suffered disadvantages and their pains and pressures and thus possess the experience to truly be able to understand the nature of injustice in the West and thereby grant us the clearest path of such pursuit, up to and including the possibility of our representing *ourselves*; so long as such representation doesn’t deny anyone certain inalienable rights, as Jefferson says; rights specified in the Constitution, especially its first amendments, the Bill of Rights. I believe we are thereby empowered to abolish the false democratic system that has become destructive of the aforementioned ends and to erect, or ‘institute,’ new, true democracy.”

“So, say people are starting to accept such a truth, what then?,” Henry asks. “How do you create a form of true democracy that can pull up the disease roots of the plutocratic republic and see through its society-wide propagandist control? What system will enable people to remove its self-serving, greater-good-sacrificing tentacles in order to pursue the greater collective good? What, exactly, does your true democracy look like? How would you structure it? What are the fundamental features of its design?”

“Those features are revealed in the contrast between true democracy and the nature of modern plutocratic republics, and by how much better the greater good of the vast majority will be served by true people power,” Alex replies. “People have to understand, first of all, that the nature of representative politics, especially when that representation is restricted to a set number of seats and open to unlimited big-money influence, is one of inherent, unavoidable deceit that is mutually exclusive with true democracy. Deceit is a prerequisite of survival in the plutocracy. If politicians aren’t charlatans, if they aren’t ably duplicitous, if they can’t convincingly say one thing while believing another, if they aren’t able to make contradicting promises to different segments of the population, to accept what amounts to bribes and favors for access and fealty in matters of special interest to the wealthy that fight to maintain any and every means by which they can take advantage of the weakness and lack of protection of people and places to consolidate ever more of the finite value available in the world, then they’ve chosen the wrong profession. Their career probably won’t even get off the ground, much less last.”

“Under the modern faked democracy if you tell the truth, say what you think, fight for what you believe when that belief isn’t supported by the prevailing voters, beliefs which change from the primary to the general election in national politics, you die a political death. If you don’t vote and construct policy in a manner calculated for political control, if you don’t deliver on the quid pro quo nature of accepting money for making speeches, for advertising yourself and campaigns… if you refuse to be wined and dined, you cannot triumph over those that can and will. Surviving and public-oppression-based thriving in the plutocratic republic necessitates that your words and actions don’t represent progressive convictions that tend to appeal to a thin, critically-thinking, morally-developed slice of the constituency. As I was just reading in Machiavelli, everyone has eyes but few can truly see, which generally means appealing to the truly sighted is a losing cause, though, hopefully, this is changing.”

“Bernie Sanders’ popularity suggests that this slice is growing, but it’s still not large enough to enable its champions to take command, and so long as the plutocratic structure and mechanisms undermining men and women like Sanders persist, people like him are unlikely to make much headway even if they take the presidency, because the parties and their reinforcing system of representational limitation prevent it. They obstruct it. Thus, modern plutocratic republics deny the pursuit of the greatest total quality of life due to their very nature. They are mutually exclusive with the greatest good, because that good is antithetical to plutocratic aims. Justice demands the plutocratic republic be overturned by true democracy in which the best interests of the majority may be fostered without the professional death of its champions who would be *encouraged* to speak the truth; to inspire; to possess passionate conviction rather than political survival requiring duplicity. Future democracy allows *unlimited* representatives *and* self-representation.”

“The new, true democracy as I envision it is a system wherein both the self-represented and those that would act in representation of others can actually fight for what and who they believe in without being thrown out, where politics cannot be bought and corrupted because it possesses the inherent dynamic of being both direct and representationally unrestricted. But in terms of designing that true democracy, in terms of the specific constructs of a system that gives the government to the people and enables them to directly exercise control over the government… you read my book. You tell me.” Alex can’t help but test the validity of Henry’s assertion that he’d read and been inspired by *Time for True Democracy*. If this is the case he will have some idea of Alex’s description therein of a possible future form of such government.

“Well,” Henry begins after a reflective pause, “you would build everything upon an online, social-media-paralleling platform.” Henry looks at Alex for confirmation, who nods slightly. “As I recall you compare the system under which you envision true democracy best being fostered and administered to a political version of *Facebook*. Every person of voting age, everyone legally eligible to vote, is automatically granted their own profile page after being registered to vote; the same with every registered party, of which there can be innumerable; as many as there are voters, in the extreme hypothetical case of everyone starting their own party.”

“Right,” Alex confirms, pleased by the accuracy of Henry’s recollection.

“And there are pages for different groups and for different party affiliations,” Henry continues, “including pages for different portions of the political spectrum wherein those that identify with those positions can go for relevant information, and can post and share information and ideas. The pages are used for multiple purposes, including tracking the political perspective and opinions of people that are being followed for their politically-relevant insights. And for every vote relevant to the voting individual, relevant to the city, county, state and, for everyone, the nation of their primary residence, people are informed as to upcoming ballot initiatives and approved measures, with a set number of votes to occur per year, perhaps two per year. Anyone can propose initiatives and those initiatives that receive enough support, using something similar to the ‘likes’ feature on *Facebook*, become supported initiatives, and the top supported initiatives receiving the most nominations by relevant voters pass to a democratic review board, with every voter permitted a set number of nominations per voting period, perhaps ten per period.”

“In this manner,” Henry continues, “the most demanded initiatives have a chance of becoming actual ballot measures for referendums; for pure, popular vote. The democratic review boards check the highest nominated supported initiatives for clarity and lawfulness, making certain that they don’t conflict with established law or act to deprive anyone of constitutionally inviolable rights. I think you mention at one point that the review boards might work with public law and political science schools and their students and be led by professors that review the work of those students, and that final arbiters must sign off on their reviews; a way to encourage an understanding, appreciation and perpetuation of the system through relevant fields of study and their educational institutions. Every voting period must possess successive steps leading to the ballot posting on the website, including blocks of time for initiative, nomination, review, ballot initiative posting and finally an open ballot vote for every city, county, state and the nation. Time is permitted for several rounds of back and forth between the reviewers and the author or authors of the original initiative in case of the need for clarification or correction. Those highest nominated initiatives that pass the review process make the ballot.” Henry pauses to think, then asks: “What am I forgetting?”

“I am impressed,” Alex replies. “Excellent memory. There are other details and ideas for how the system might work. The highest possible cyber security would need to be put in place, for example. And it cannot be forgotten that the process you just so ably recited in which every voter at every governmental level of jurisdiction is able to participate in the initiative process through the website and the support of his or her fellow voters would be monitored by a panel of policy experts and accountants whose task it would be to assure that certain matters requiring political attention are not overlooked. When there are budgetary issues, including shortfalls and excesses, and when previously successfully adopted measures expire, and when there are changes at the federal or state level that supersede lower levels, this panel possesses a straight line to a section of the system, call it the mandatory agenda, where these issues are posted for popular resolution. In this way proposed initiatives for every voting period would overlap this mandatory agenda. This panel would also be tasked with assuring that all initiatives that make the list of final ballot measures for vote are posted therein in as neutral, objective, clear and concise wording as possible so that voters receive the necessary information pertaining to what they’re voting on in as unbiased a manner as possible so as not to be confused and misled as they are now.”

“Another thing that shouldn’t be left out of the description of the system is the perfectly open, voluntary, customizable aspects of said system,” Alex continues. “People that don’t pay attention to politics or don’t care or don’t feel like they are well enough educated or up-to-date or able to judge the merits of ballot measures can simply pass their power to other people or parties for application to all or any number of the proposed initiatives. For example, they can choose to vote on one or a few measures they have strong feelings about and pass their voting power on all others. They can make another person or party their default representative because they like what they posted and said and how they’ve voted in the past, with each individual and party’s voting record fully transparently presented by necessity; and unless the voter de-selects this default on the site their vote continues to be automatically passed.”

“Every person and party’s profile page is a running log of opinion, past votes and shared information used to educate and influence based upon their convictions. And each personal and party page displays their popularity and political pull based upon the number of people that have passed them political power for the coming ballot vote, with their relative power continuing to change, and with people able to retract their pledge at any point up to a certain cut-off date. It should also be made clear that most governmental departments would remain intact, they would just be subject to the system of true by and for the people, except in the case of the day-to-day decisions of the intelligence and defense wings that would have to maintain a disconnected secrecy for the protection of operations and operatives. Their larger scope and mandate of operations, however, especially war proposals or anything requiring the use or the threat of the use of force, would be subject to this true democracy. Most governmental branches, departments and positions would remain, but would now be directly plugged into the authentic democratic will of the majority of the people and thereby shielded from corruptibility, as the system is corruptible *because* of the limited number of, and thus the targetability, of the holders of political power. Distribution diminishes corruptibility.”

“So you would keep the Presidency, Congress, State Department etc. all intact?,” Henry inquires.

“Yes,” Alex answers. “They would retain the same responsibilities and powers, for the most part. The central differences would come in those ways demanded by for-and-by-*all*-citizens democracy; specifically the ability of the people to *directly* impact government policy, agenda and action *without* that democratic impact being filtered out by a controlled system of restricted parties and pre-selected representatives hand-picked by those with the wealth and power necessary to be a part of the excluding sect of the population. Currently, our so-called representatives are, upon election, immediately predisposed to represent and be loyal to those that support their candidacy; that finance their campaigns and lobby them throughout their career on Capitol Hill, which of course amounts to buying votes and corrupting the political process, turning it *away* from the democratic will. Real representatives of the people cannot possess this corrupt basis, for it innately precludes democratic rule.”

“Our plutocratic republic is, in other words, mutually exclusive with true democracy. This corruption can, again, only be remedied by making *anyone* available to be a representative and *everyone* able to propose legislation and policy in a manner where such propositions may be democratically judged. Democracy demands that the majority will be the metric of merit *regardless* of campaign war chests and without being compromised by the currently legal bribery of lobbying and closed-door quid pro quo deals offered to those in carefully controlled and restricted partisan power centers. All people must be able to propose laws, policies and actions, be open to being nominated for office by popular democratic demand, and must be not only free to do so, but effectively able to do so, as promoted by a system that naturally fosters the best ideas and policies with the broadest public appeal and benefit free from big money special interests and the power those interests have under our current system to effectively block any initiative that contradicts their greedy will.”

“Which a website such as the one you envisioned naturally does, because it is based upon sharing, discussing and advancing information and ideas judged upon their own merit, not upon buying advertising campaigns and legions of lobbyists and the writing of legislation dictated or even written directly by corporations and their major stakeholders,” Henry adds.

“Yes, that’s right,” Alex concurs. “Such a system would be designed to keep the plutocrats out and encourage people to engage in real political discussion in order for the most valuable ideas and policies to naturally rise above the rest, not because they fit the agenda of half the political spectrum and their financing beneficiaries, but because they’re the true democratic cream of the crop. Drastically curtailing inherently anti-democratic big money influence and inherently divisive, progress-stalling or outright blocking partisan politics from government would be one of the natural, invaluable benefits to be derived from the institution of such a form of true democracy. The two party dominated primary system is a major impediment blocking true democracy, as it encourages the divisiveness that suffocates progress. The two party system polarizes politics and puts the power in the hands of those that attract the most extreme ideologues on the right and left side of the spectrum. It is built to encourage conflict and, rather than prudently slow the course of progress so that it may be judged before being instituted, which is worthwhile, it more often acts to hobble or outright kill it. There is plenty of evidence that the two party political system is a product of a divide and conquer tactic descendent from the aristocratic playbook of which our founders were contributors; one that keeps us from doing anything to interrupt the course of those with the most to gain from maintaining the status quo.”

“The argument was that the people in general weren’t educated or well-reasoned enough or, indeed, trustworthy and level-headed enough as a mob to see to their best interests, so systems of control had to be put in place so the people could be ruled over by those better suited to rule under the semblance rather than the authentic existence of democracy. All for the people’s benefit, of course. And yet a well-designed democratic system can be effectively insulated from the risks of the mob mentality, using safeguards such as those I’ve already noted, and, using an online social media platform as a hub for political discourse and power distribution, great wisdom and prudent action can naturally be derived from the collective mind pursuant to the greatest good. The arguments against true democratic rule by our founders are, in the face of today’s technology and with the hindsight of the true motives of our original American ruling aristocrats, moot, and certainly not in the interests of the vast majority. For, instead of the true collective best interest being pursued by a collaborating majority, that majority is almost entirely precluded by a primary and representative system that effectively disempowers anyone that falls into the so-called ‘centrist’ or ‘moderate’ camps; anyone between the polar extremes; which is the vast majority.”

“Is it any wonder, then, why voter participation is so low and why such a minority of the population feels that they are truly included in the so-called ‘democratic process’ currently in place?! We are kept constantly at odds with one-another, and little gets done that is not eroded or outright reversed in the next, inevitable exchange of power amongst the parties. It is almost impossible for the majority of people standing inside the extremist edges of the two parties to have their voices heard, and this polarization keeps the majority will from being realized; it keeps that will fractured. In the true democracy design I envision party loyalty is unnecessary and candidates are not elected through the party-dominated primary environment. Everything must be opened up so that those that act to corruptively control have too many people and paths to target and direct in their attempt to control the political course of the nation, thus rendering their corruptive plots mostly impotent. This system of true political representation of genuine democracy should be connected to the same online system in which every citizen maintains a *Facebook*-esque page on their political positions, ideas and objectives, and where the same system by which people follow your page and propose initiatives that may eventually become ballot measures for democratic vote also tracks people’s popular following and the accruing of nominations for elected office followed by the actual voting for those nominees.”

“All other wings, the State Department, Judiciary etc. that are nominated by the President and confirmed by Congress will be filled the same way they are now, but the Congress and Presidency underpinning all those posts are nominated and then elected through the online, purely democratic system. And they are nominated free from the gerrymandering that further conflicts with democracy by consolidating political power in pre-designated and perpetually re-edited geographical areas that would be abolished by a system of ideal power distribution within every relevant legal jurisdiction. And, of course, everyone would be nominated and elected free from the necessity of hob-knobbing with the super-rich and special interest groups in order to even be in contention for office. Essentially the political point system, which we can review if you wish, that is awarded and utilized by the online system also creates the basis for the election of members of the national and state legislature, the county and city government and even the United States Presidency.”

“The passing of points from the people at every jurisdictional level determines the nominees for office at each of those levels, correct?” Henry recalls.

“Right,” Alex confirms. “Again, I think it’s useful to compare the *Political Point System of Democratic Governance* to *Facebook* and its use of pages and likes and friends and such. The website will serve as an online accrual of ideological popularity, information gathering and idea sharing that can be very useful in instituting true democracy. When people post their stances and ideas on political issues and when they propose ballot initiatives either from their elected posts or as private citizens, for now any and every voting-age citizen can propose legislation, not just those holding public office, those that follow them as their political ‘friends’ will see their comments and be able to weigh in on their ideas which, if those ideas gain enough popularity, will have the popular force behind them to propel them through the proposal and initiative processes. In all these democratic matters people spend or pass political points or fractions of points to be spent by their directly selected representatives in the initiative and ballot measure voting system. Some will retain the points to use themselves and some will pass them to other people or parties.”

“I anticipate, again, that many people would pass their points and empower representatives for a variety of reasons, such as feeling as though they’re not well enough informed or up-to-date or simply don’t care enough or think someone else is better informed and able to represent their system of values. Those that receive these passed points are thereby truly and directly made into duly empowered representatives, with citizens no longer being limited to choosing from pre-selected upper-class politically-connected and plutocratically propped-up, necessarily duplicitous professional politicians. And this passing of points can, and I think should, serve the purposes of the nomination process for the most popular of those point-passed representatives that thereby go on to have the opportunity to hold public office. Those individuals that receive the most points passed from their fellow citizens at every level of government are automatically nominated for public office. They may, of course, decide not to accept the position and remain private citizens, at which point the nomination goes on to the next person on the list. If and when there is a tie a simple referendum vote takes place to determine the nominee.”

“And this nomination process is incorporated into the currently existing term limits, correct?,” Henry asks.

“Right,” Alex continues. “Throughout every block of time representing a term of service at every local, state and national representational post, points are accrued that represent the popular, democratic nomination. And because a clear democratic-republic hierarchy is created across *all* jurisdictional levels, with the president considered the top dog followed by national Senators and members of the House of Representatives before moving on to the state level, I think you could combine the whole nomination process. In fact, I think it would be quite natural and conducive to authentic democracy to do so. You don’t even need an ‘election season;’ it’s always going; always accruing and changing, with the merit of each future post constantly being assessed and reassessed through the majority. After the current term expires for the presidency, for example, the highest national point recipient becomes the next president, assuming they accept the role, the highest two per state become Senators, assuming one of them wasn’t elected president, of course, the next set, with the number of course depending upon the state, become men or women of the House of Representatives, the next are nominated and elected to the State Senate and on down the line.”

“The best men and women for the jobs as determined by democratic demand are automatically nominated and elected, all without the money spent on campaigns and the Super PACs and the lobbyists and the gerrymandering and other controlling corruptions that undermine and are mutually-exclusive with true democracy. It’s all one wide-open yet appropriately ordered system of democratic will. It goes from our current plutocratic republic platform that is exclusivist, closed-off, concealed and controlled by the wealthy and powerful political influence peddlers to being perfectly inclusivist, opened-up, fully disclosed and ultimately subject to the will of the people who are mostly free from having their voices silenced by a corruptive minority. In this system the president and senators and congressmen and women are the true leaders as demanded by the people and can propose legislation and use their democratically-passed points to vote on initiatives and ballot measures at every level of government just like everyone else. And they’ll play much the same part they currently play, from the operation of every congressional committee to keeping tabs on budgetary considerations that they bring to the people’s attention to the president being the commander-in-chief and leading diplomatic efforts and so forth, but now they’ll be the true representatives of the people and no longer the sole source of legislation and policy decisions. Instead they’ll be looked to for the value of their ideas and the passion of their convictions as proven by their online popularity. They’ll also put the final touches on the formal legislation, bringing our demands to term so long, again, as those demands don’t violate the basic rights, protections and privileges of the citizenry.”

“So how are the political points assigned again?,” Henry asks.

“The democratic design I proffer in the book could function without the point system and stand as a perfectly valid democratic system,” Alex continues. “But I added the point system for the purposes of incentive and meritocracy that I believe are vital to motivating and justly rewarding people’s efforts. Incentivized meritocracy is central to the Business Collectivism theory I advocate in the book as well, for the simple reason that people tend to put forth their best effort and produce their greatest value when best motivated; when ideally incentivized. Within this democratic construct the principle of meritocracy is instilled through a two part point system. Every citizen of every jurisdiction votes with these point values directly or passes them to others to represent their political positions through the aforementioned system. Those points are granted to each individual based upon the previous years’ tax records. They can be granted upon any clear-cut scale, whether from zero to one, as in the book, or zero to one hundred, as obvious possibilities. For the purposes of this discussion I’ll use the zero to one point scale. The first of these two points is what I call the Citizen Point, and is the same for everyone. It equals one full point for every of-age voter within every voting district.”

“This is the purely democratic portion of the two-part system and balances the influence of the second part, what I call the Contributory Point. This second point is granted based upon the intertwined principles of merit and incentive, with the idea being that those that contribute more to the functioning, departments and programs of government and to the welfare of their citizens through government and through charitable donations to well-vetted, integrity-confirmed institutions have earned the right to a greater influence over the agenda, policies and publicly-benefiting programs of their government than those who contribute less. The Contributory Point is thereby graded on a curve based upon the primary residence of registration of the voter at every jurisdictional level of government. It is calculated based upon government taxation combined with the donations made to select, highly-vetted pre-approved charities, and thereby encourages generosity, goodwill, an investment in the public well-being and a communitarian mindset while also rewarding voters based upon the merit of their contributions.”

“And because this Contributory Point is based upon the primary residence of the voter, it even encourages a greater distribution of financial resources and spending across the nation, as well as less gentrification and less geographically-isolated areas of wealth and poverty concentration, generally speaking, as those with more money moving away from more wealthy areas receive a greater Contributory Point total than those who don’t because their contributions will be greater relative to the area in which they live. Using the zero to one scale, the second part of the point system is graded between 0.01 points and, for the greatest contributor per jurisdictional level, one full point; or, again, between one point and one hundred points if the one to one hundred scale is used.”

“You combine the two point totals to get the total amount of points that every voter is awarded and may use to influence the outcome of every vote relevant to their respective jurisdictions. In this way the plutocracy is prevented at the same time as those that contribute more deservingly earn more influence over the democracy, but only up to degree justly falling *far* short of today’s disparity, because the richest, highest-taxed, most charitable citizen can possess no more than double the influence of the least-contributing citizen. As things currently stand, of course, a Koch Brother has *incalculably* greater influence than the vast majority of those not committing millions to buy political power. Can you imagine the impact, the buttressing of true democracy, if such an individual could never possess more than twice the influence of any other democratically-empowered citizen?! And that’s the most extreme comparison. People in similar economic positions will possess very similar point totals.”

“That last part’s interesting. I like it, but it would be considered controversial…” Henry comments. “I like the idea of rewarding people for being charitable and contributing to the public spending of government and the welfare of their fellow citizens. I like the possibility of encouraging a ‘we’re all in it together’ attitude, and of acknowledging the value and importance of taxes in maintaining and promoting the public good, as taxes are most commonly seen as a negative…”

“What they provide is taken for granted and undervalued,” Alex adds, “which such a meritocratic aspect of democracy could go a long way toward changing. Charity and taxation would be better valued.”

“However,” Henry interjects, “I suspect some would argue that rewarding people for their contributions *isn’t* democratic and bolsters inequality.”

“Democracy is still there,” Alex responds. “It’s a meritocracy democracy. And I think that, for the reasons that both of us just cited, what may be gained by the point system outweighs any subtraction. And can you imagine the level of civic participation and sense of popular empowerment and the ideas and increased goodwill that might flow from people *actually* composing, directing and being an incorporated part of their government?! They’d learn and feel the difference between true democracy and its false façade almost immediately. Instead of being pandered to and, unless sitting on the extreme fringes of the two parties, being all but ignored and powerless, they’d be truly plugged in; their voices would be rendered loud and clear; democratic input would be direct and consequential. Students could be taught the system in junior high and high school so that by the time they come of voting age they know its ins and outs, and are prepared for their integration into *real* by-and-for-the-people democracy; a true part of the governance of their city, county, state and nation. People actually knowing that they have a say.”