

CULTURAL  
CORNERSTONES,  
RECARVED



# Cultural Cornerstones, Recarved

---

---

THE FOUNDATIONAL  
CORNERSTONES  
FOR BUILDING THE  
HEIGHTS OF HUMANITY

---

---

Nick Jameson





© 2008-2023 Infinite of One Publishing

[www.infiniteofone.com](http://www.infiniteofone.com)

[publisher@infiniteofone.com](mailto:publisher@infiniteofone.com)



The following represents the final chapter of *Infinite of One*,  
here placed in sections, presenting the base theory  
dialogic of the philosophical novel, sans narrative.

The intent is to offer the ideology of *Infinite of One*  
to those uninterested in the fiction. However, please be aware  
that the novel contains a LOT more philosophy unincluded herein.





## THE INFINITE OF ONE SYMBOL: BOOK CONTENTS

The four overlapping, circumscribed infinity signs of the Infinite of One symbol represent the four fundamental conceptual cornerstones proposed by the protagonist of the philosophical novel *Infinite of One*.

These overlapping concepts are envisioned as emanating out from the essential shared Self and basis of all existence, Spirit, to spark a synergistic set of systems harnessed by humanity for the purpose of progressing towards our highest potential: the greatest collective quality of life for Spirit's manifestations in total. The morality and 'good' of all people and things is always relative to the extent which they strengthen or undermine the building of *total* quality of life on Earth.

**The Four Cornerstones are as follows:**

**Cornerstone 1: The Poly Point System of Democratic Governance.** (pg. 23) True democracy does not and has never existed in the U.S., or anywhere else. All systems said to be democratic have always been corrupted and compromised such that true democracy has never been made a reality. Our greatest collective quality of life cannot be known until a truly democratic, not-for-sale system of 'we the people' governs the entirety of global society.

**Cornerstone 2: Quality of Life Economics.** (pg. 77) The 'point of life' is the inherent value of the life experience. It constitutes its own point, or meaning. To strive to maximize this inherent gift of life in as many of life's present moments is the point; the reason for existence. Thus, the ultimate goal is to maximize the quality of the experience of life for all of the manifestations of the one shared Self. This system of

economic analysis redefines the indicators of economic 'success' based upon this foremost existential purpose, the pursuit of the maximization of total quality of life. In this paradigm shift towards the moral constitution of economic success, the conventional 'free market' indicators contradicting such perfectly inclusive success are identified, analyzed and displaced by more appropriate, moral, progressive indicators.

**Cornerstone 3: Business Collectivism.** (pg. 125) The conventional equity-consolidated business construct excludes the vast majority of contributors to the bottom line from receiving any share of its quality-of-life-increasing benefits. Through such exclusion, oppression of the people is guaranteed. Such a parasitic basis of business thereby grossly restricts overall quality of life and calls for a meritocratic equity-sharing model of business. Business Collectivism is the theoretical result of this realization.

**Cornerstone 4: Monoexistentialism.** (pg. 175) We're all mortal, material manifestations of the same immortal being of pure energy that expanded from a singularity into an infinite plurality of forms spread across spacetime for the purpose of infinite perspective upon and variety of existence.

#### **Appendix.** (pg. 209)

- 1) **The Economics of Existence** (pg. 211) A paper exploring the fundamental principles and ideas underlying and motivating the creation of Quality of Life Economics, demonstrating its superiority in serving total life when compared to traditional 'Free Market Economics' and the misleading of its one-way form of freedom.
- 2) **Bridging the Ideological Divide** (pg. 257) A short proposal for an online business in "equity-based crowdfunding," and a short discussion on some of the current webservices quietly bridging capitalism and socialism.
- 3) **A Prescription for Popular Progress** (pg. 267) A brief outline of what doctors *should* be prescribing to every modern day patient.





## INTRODUCTION: WE ARE INFINITE OF ONE

### **The Five Fundamental Laws of Existence:**

(1) Outside of theory and its conceptions, there is no such thing as nothing, as the complete absence of all things, such as the nonexistence of all energy, matter and spacetime; considering the interrelated laws of physics and philosophical logic, this is an impossibility that contradicts the nature of existence.

(2) Nothing that 'is' can be derived from 'nothing;' that is, everything that exists outside of the mind in material or its purer, essential energetic form within the dimensions of spacetime must come from something else that materially or energetically exists or existed; from another 'real' thing, as opposed to being derived from a nonexistent thing, or a non-thing, because no thing that is may be derived from a thing that isn't. For anything from or times nothing, or zero, is nothing and, therefore, nothing cannot constitute a beginning or end of anything. For the same reason there can be no beginning or end of anything, only a change in the structure and distribution of the thing.

(3) Per the last point, nothing that materially or energetically exists may be created or destroyed, only broken down into a more fundamental, or 'basic,' set of constituents, then redistributed, rearranged or otherwise combined with other compatible constituents to form one-plus 'new' thing(s); 'new' thing(s) which, by the same reasoning and logic, can never truly be *new*, only amalgamations and other derivations of what existed prior to the formation of the 'new' thing(s).

(4) All matter is composed of energy and, therefore, everything that exists is ultimately made up of energy, not of matter, for matter requires great energy to create and maintain mass and material form (as evidenced by, in one clear, dramatic example, the energy released upon splitting an atom), but energy does not require matter and may exist without a measurable mass, as with photons.

(5) Everything is connected by cause and effect (causality). Everything that exists and occurs does so because it was caused to exist or occur along the subsequent spacetime continuum as an effect of all preceding, interconnected contributing causes, which are typically beyond count. There truly *is* a reason for everything that exists and happens: the forever accumulating, interconnected effects of causes within spacetime. Many of these causes and effects, and their interrelated formative forces, remain unnoticed and unmeasured, creating the illusion of 'randomness,' or 'chaos.' The revelation, measurement and understanding of the interrelated causality of these forms and forces points to the advent and progression of the discipline generally known as 'science;' the discipline of measuring the relative distinction and interrelation of composing forms and forces of the irreducible One Thing.

## **What Does This All Mean?**

From these five fundamental laws we see that everything that exists has always existed and always will exist, for it cannot have come from a non-thing and cannot be created or destroyed. There has always been everything, and there can never be anything less than everything. Every uniquely manifested form of energy or condensing of energy into matter that exists, ever has existed and ever will exist, including every uniquely, finitely existing form of body and mind, must exist as a unique arrangement of and interaction between constituents ultimately

composed of the original source; the first cause: the premiere, irreducible energetic basis of all things, including every form of existence.

Furthermore, and in consideration of the aforementioned laws, tracing this energetic basis of existence reductively back along the spacetime continuum dictates that this first cause must have been a source of incomprehensively powerful energy of the purest possible form (a form which cannot be further reduced to one or more forms which are more basic, or fundamental) which caused the chain of causality leading to every individualized manifestation of itself. All things exist as relative concentrations and arrangements of the first thing, including the dimensions of spacetime dictating that relativity.

Therefore, everything and everyone that exists, or that has existed or will exist, must be composed entirely of the original, eternal source of the purest, irreducible energy, differentiated only by the concentration and arrangement of that energy and the point in spacetime in which that energy is concentrated in its current composition and relationship with other compositions, all existing within the all-inclusive source itself. Paraphrasing Einstein, the purpose of spacetime is so that everything doesn't occur simultaneously, in the same time and space; one of *many* spiritual insights made through science.

Thus, the existential purpose of spacetime is to potentiate infinite possible forms of the existence of the same source limitlessly rearranged such that the original source of energy may be infinitely divided into relatively unique existences, all occurring *within* that source. Dimension permits the division of one source, what humanity commonly calls God, or Spirit, into infinite versions of itself and experiences of its limitless potential interactions, concentrations and formations; the existential canvas drawn with life.

Therefore, we all exist as individualized forms of the original, eternal, purest possible source of energy that must have set into motion

the chain of cause and effect which led to every subsequent version of itself drawn across the existential canvas of spacetime. Thus, everything that exists must be a transitory arrangement of the eternal, unending energy source of all things, and everything that happens must exist as a cumulative cause set-off by the original cause: the expansion of the One, Spirit, into the building blocks of the infinitely many: the distribution of energy which, under certain conditions, is condensed into matter which, under yet rarer, requisite, hospitable conditions, is forever redeveloped into the building blocks of life through the intelligently adaptive coding known as evolution.

Indeed, all things in existence must exist only as relative differentiations, entirely dependent upon, within, and as versions of the Spirit composing and encompassing all things; the one constant, constantly being rearranged, with spacetime existing as a means to differentiate between unique versions of this no-possible-beginning, no-possible-end, omnipresent essence of all of existence.

For all the same interdependent reasons there can be no division between and individual possession of a 'soul,' or separating individual essence, as traditionally understood and disseminated by religious institutions to their followers. Instead, and informed by broad historical trends and their prevailing motives, this must be viewed as a historically-pervasive means of mentally manipulating the minds and actions of adherents through the typical fear-based coercions of punishment, reward and peer pressure to which all limited, relatively ignorant minds and needing, paining and pleasing bodies are susceptible. In truth, all things and all people are made of the same essence and share the same 'soul:' Spirit.

Only our minds, bodies and experiences of life are unique, existing as compositions of the perfectly ubiquitous building block. And even with this individualized uniqueness there's *far* more fundamental commonality across all biological forms of life than there are differences,



including the inseparable, indivisible essence and core spiritual identity of all life, aka 'Spirit,' or the 'Big Self,' and all the emotional capacities and motivations sprung from that Self.

Therefore, any conception of the nature of existence or of its source, whether you call this God, Spirit or otherwise, which in any way excludes or is said to be absolutely separate from anything or anyone that exists is inherently false, illogical and prone to perpetuating evil idea and action by way of its unnecessary divisions of identity and all the conflicts, exclusions and loss of solidarity and collaboration subsequently spurred through the spreading and acceptance of such divisive conceptions. Any version of identity that fails to recognize that it is fundamentally inseparable from all other identities and, thus, perfectly inclusionary, is equally unnecessarily false, divisive and perpetuating of evil potential.

In the core of our truest, irreducible, essential shared Self, there is but one identity. This is, of course, why the Buddhists distinguish between the 'small self' (the egotistic identity that thinks and acts upon the delusional self-importance of separation) and the 'Big Self' (the spiritual identity that knows that separation is ultimately an illusion), why the Rastafarians say "I and I," alluding to the physical self *hosting* the spiritual Self, why the non-dualistic concept overlapping what I call monoexistentialism goes back thousands of years, to the roots of Hindu, Buddhist and Jainist beliefs and their most sacred texts, and why spiritual philosophers tend to identify the ego, the self-perception and self-conception inherent to material, individualized existence and its illusion of self-separation, as the core cause of all evil.

Were we not to see this separation and, instead, see and act based upon every life being a version of the same life, the same inseparable identity of Spirit, no absolute separation of identity and evil action would exist, for we'd see that doing evil to any 'other' is doing evil to Self. It is for this reason that the protagonist of my first work, the

philosophical novel *Infinite of One*, hits upon the concept of The Spiritual Rule, a refined expansion of The Golden Rule: Treat everyone as you would have them treat you because, ultimately, they ARE you.

**We're all versions of The One. *We're Infinite of One.***





*If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu.*

Senator Elizabeth Warren



## RIDDLE ME THIS

Are there really people out there that, in defiance of all reason, logic and evidence, still believe that invading and occupying foreign nations that have never been a threat to the U.S., but happen to be VERY valuable to multinational corporations and their extreme minority of major shareholders, constitutes 'serving your country?'

Or that something as powerful and inseparable from every life, God, can be reduced to some wrathful, fickle, jealous human male sitting on a cloud rooting and acting for one group of people?

Or that a political system controlled by a perfectly divided partisan structure puppeted by an ever more exclusive, and excluding, sect of ultra-wealthy influencers isn't a plutocratic republic, but a democracy?

Or that any economic, business or political system that deigns to give the vast majority a share in the bottom line and vastly improve its opportunities and quality of existence constitutes evil socialism?

How is it that it's *still* politically incorrect to reveal these lies?

Why does such revelation remain controversial in the U.S.?

When will we wake up, break the chains and claim our country?





*The meaning of life is life itself; to maximize the experience of existence for one's self and others. Therefore, the relative goodness or badness, or morality, of every entity, whether an individual, organization or other group, has but one measure: the total quality of life they add or subtract.*



**CORNERSTONE ONE**

***THE POLY POINT SYSTEM  
OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE***



“If you wouldn’t mind beginning with the political ideology of true, purified democracy,” Henry encourages Alex to begin. “You don’t have to be comprehensive. I just want to touch on the broad strokes for now. Like why you consider the US not to be a true democracy, and what the requisites are for the existence 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’s ‘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 congress-people like Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, is by and large ‘for’ those same 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 Earth, despite all the bullshit, disproven justifying attempts of the right to conceal this, as with, in but two examples, the ‘trickle-down effect,’ or the claim that global warming is 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. Yes, GDP increases may say that the pot is growing, but if more and more of that pot belongs to fewer and fewer, less and less of it belongs to more and more. 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. Then there's the proven psychological phenomenon inherent to accumulations wealth, power and resources: the more the few have the more they'll 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."

"Pulling teeth and claws from the regulatory agencies and all broadly protective, popularly-benefitting programs is how the plutocracy maintains this pursuit, always selling it as something else and deceiving non-critical-thinkers into buying into their own oppression. So, the truth is that 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 used 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, all 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: "One: political power cannot be for sale, with anything related to this corruptive quid pro quo made illegal, and two: 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-offen, easily monetarily-coerced and corrupted group of people is said to interpret the demands of the electorate, then 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 political action, else a plutocracy invariably arises, with an oligarchy gradually growing up beneath it. 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's 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; plutocrats that force a false democracy dictated by constrained parties led by their few endorsed representatives so that

they may consolidate 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 boundaries that currently block the greatest possible value for all citizens and, in place of the false façade democracy under which we're ruled, establish a true form democracy made for the communication era."

"In terms of American history and the general historical absence of true democracy, I'd 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 simultaneously empower the best interests of the vast majority and the capacity of the greedy to sate their greed. These objectives are inherently contradictory. 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 has become a crime against humanity."



"So you'd argue that everyone must become aware of the fact that they aren't 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, which can be just as dangerous and unjust. That is, 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's 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's 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, for 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 descending down a path as dark as that which they'd believe they're reversing."

“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’s a form, I’d add, that has *never* existed. Government by and for the people, by all people directly, not channeled through corrupt, entrenched political power centers purchased by an ever more exclusive set of wealthy plutocrats, or by some other privileged cohort of excluding, aristocratic controllers, has *never* existed. And in the U.S. it’s 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 by 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 between church and state. Historically, there’s 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, these necessary boundaries constituting positive freedom, a form of freedom unknown, or at least misunderstood and undervalued by most, corruption invariably rules.”

“Without it you’re 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 pretend to 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's *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, or by any filter set downstream from their vote, as they'll inevitably not be adequately heard or served in interest due to this exclusion and filtration. *Everyone* of voting age must be able to 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 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. It does this by limiting the number and type of representatives. And it was created for that very purpose, I'd 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, rendered impossible at worst. The result: true, direct popular power is divided and conquered."

"We the people are politically alienated while being distracted by our constant equity-excluded toils on behalf of the corporations for which we work, as well as by the consumerist, classist, cutthroat-competing individualization standards of the nation, and we 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, money-eyed set of so-called 'representatives of the people,' whether directly or through corporate bodies and PACs. What people are *truly* being represented by such a sham of a democracy?!"

"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'd 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 aren't so 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's never been done, and the plutocrats will do anything to prevent it, including conditioning us to associate anything even *semi*-socialistic with the historical evils of tyranny committed under socialistic banners. It's for these reasons that I say that true democracy is dead in the womb. It has never actually 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 the past or present," Alex replies. "The idea of democracy has *always* been compromised by greedily-consolidated wealth and power. The word 'democracy,' from the Greek 'demos kratos,' translatable into the simple but vital term 'people power,' is used to placate the people due to its association with freedom, justice and popular rule. Its authentic form, however, has remained a myth, but isn't destined to remain so. Yet, so long as it remains mythical, humanity, governed by its pretense concealing a corrupt plutocracy, will forever be prevented from realizing its greatest 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 democratic façades to pursue their consolidation. For those pursuits are inherently exploitative of the disadvantages of the vast majority, and thus will forever perpetuate entwined social, political and economic injustice, including the legal means of corruption contradicting true people power; the ability to buy political power that precludes true democracy."

“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. This is the case because such theories and structures block that excluding minority’s absolute pursuit of the bottom line divvied-out amongst its minority ownership class, a bottom line 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*, a telling 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 that *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, thus being 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 parallel writings add fuel to my fire. Without true democracy, and the majority-best-interest-protecting regulation to which it would naturally 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 of 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're 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 the ideology and systems through which they maintain control to remain in prevailing positions to the inestimably profound loss of our collective quality of life, and the continuity of planetary health and stability. Considering causality and its Butterfly Effect, street criminals have nothing on these big-wigged white collar criminals, the emanating waves from whom crash into, capsizes or otherwise imperil and sweep out to suffering sea countless legions of people, places and progressive pursuits."

"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 set *above* the law; above the law that they and their colluders command and commonly rewrite, typically with little to no input, or even knowledge, by the people. They're 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 in asking this question, I’m again struck by the parallel metaphors of building up from the foundation and growing up from the roots. If the foundation isn’t broad and sturdy enough, 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, then both the structure and the tree lose their ability to support their grandest, fullest forms.”

“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’ll *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. The one cannot coexist with the other. They're 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 that I've envisioned attempt to pull the traditional diseased trees out at their very root, for without pulling them up by the root the trees infested by greed will regrow, and true for and by the people government, economics, business and spirituality will be precluded, their pretenses continuing to play oppressed hosts to the parasites."

"So what does the purification take?," Henry asks. "How should we, people like us, those that've 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; unimaginable," 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're taught from the moment that 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 first classroom moments, when we stand up to obediently pledge our allegiance. We're inculcated in the idea that we're the righteous people, that in God we should trust, and that freedom is alive, absolute and free of charge, rather than

being something that's largely *bought*, and exists as a two-way street of the 'freedom to do' and 'the freedom from being done to.' We're told that our government's core concern is globally spreading the so-called 'free market' and 'democracy' across the world, while, in the prevailing history, our military forces its way into and occupies other nations that we then pretend to be duty-bound to liberate, else that military is leveraged as a threat of force, our bases and naval armadas spread across the continents and the seven seas, all while parading its national-supremacy-stoking propaganda anywhere where people are susceptible to conflating national supremacy with patriotism."

"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 provide but one example of the hypocritical double standard of the American supremacists; those who fuel and stoke the flames of 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. I hate to say it, but the global expansion of the means and opportunities to profit is what's 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. And if they're incredibly lucky they *only* pay the price of being mentally duped, with far too many being brutally psychologically-scarred for life *if* they survive their military adventure."

"The prevalence of this recruitment strategy, of stoking the internally-ballooning, hollow sense of 'national service' in the young, gullible and uneducated, is predictable considering profiteering plutocrats dominate the economy and own the political process. These are, after all, the same liars selling liberation and justice and democracy and the like as the *ostensible* motives behind the international chess moves they direct their military chess pieces towards. In this country alone they've been doing it for at least seventy years now! When 'serving your country' becomes indistinguishable from serving international business interests effectively expanding the quality of life disparity between the overly-privileged few and most of your countrymen, then you have a serious issue with your sense of service."

"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 resisters 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 parasitic web of hawks, puppets and plutocrats."

"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's never people themselves that are the enemies, but what many people *believe*; what their egos, greed, ignorance and other weaknesses drive them to invest in. 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; a reprehensible tactic 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 who thereby possess 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. Nationalism, in other words, *isn't* patriotism unless the nation is truly *for* most of its people."

"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 the major advertising campaigns concocted and paid for 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, then they wouldn't feel the need to bombard us with the propaganda campaigns in the first place. The commercials, the prejudiced persuasions, prove 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's been used to commit countless offenses against non-compliant nations since at least the end of World War II. Compounding this heinous misuse of force is the socioeconomic crime that results: the shuttling of ever more of the world's finite value into the hands of those that can't 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's an irreconcilable issue with the overall management of the nation, and that we collectively *always* have the power to change that. All it takes is the realization that such power exists, then 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're 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're influenced by these prevailing forces and their propagators..." Alex finishes the line.

"You believe that we're essentially being duped into strengthening the very means by which we're excluded and weakened," Henry continues. "That we're 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. "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's a considerable return anticipated from the molding of public perception that 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'd 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-wearers, whom, through their votes, purchases and investments, and the careers which they seek and believe to be lucrative, enable the globalization of the methods by which the core injustice is committed against humanity: the consolidation of most of the means of fostering 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’re enabling their own perpetuating oppression,” Alex continues. “For tied to corporatism *this* is what imperialist use of endless military expansion really represents: one of the gravest of injustices against life; the continued short-selling of total quality of life and the 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. I mean, look at the PTSD rates and onset of mental illness and susceptibility to criminality and suicidal ideation of veterans, and how pathetically ineffectual and underfunded has been our government’s response to their suffering *after* they’ve served their purpose and been discarded! It’s disgusting! And, considering the wide-ranging, endlessly rippling effects of our imperialist incursions, that inestimable expense represents only a tiny fraction of the cost of our historical misuse of military might! And with that incalculably immense cost 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 their motivation and cost?! Or does the true patriot fight for the greatest good, the best interests, the highest total quality of life of all those within their country, and all those with whom their 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. In the process, countless civilians and ‘terrorists’ are murdered, many of whom don’t



target civilians but are merely defending themselves from invaders, occupiers and oppressors.”

“Such a hollow form of patriotism is patently false. It’s morally empty. 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 true, morally-concrete patriotism. It’s another example of where the paradigm, the basis from which something is commonly understood and judged for its relative correctness, is near 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. And such a truly patriotic defense of national sovereignty is exactly what progressive movements countering colonialism, imperialism and its more recent hegemonic corporate globalization have done throughout 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. 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 that there can never be one ‘greatest nation.’ It’s all lies disseminated at *immense* cost to humanity.”

“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 that map *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, and of 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 who 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 the tax-cutting and loophole-making policies purchased through the same plutocracy, adding egregious insult to the injury incurred by the fiscal policy supporting our foreign policy.”

“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’s the essence of neo-imperial propaganda. And Americans in general should possess the same type of

grasp that 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're *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. Amongst Hitler's infamous lines was: 'Repeat the same lies over and over again, and eventually they'll 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, in the rewritten reports, the allies suddenly become the enemies, and always have been, and must be invaded immediately as a 'preemptive attack.'"

"A few steps further and Big Brother, in this contemporary case the Big Brotherhood of the globalizing corporate oligarchy and its major stakeholders plutocratically-pulling governmental strings while consistently finding legal justifications to eradicate privacy, like the propagandistically-entitled Patriot Act, will force you to say our allies have always been our allies and our enemies have always been our enemies, even as the brave and moral refuse to forget that our enemies used to be those our government financed and supported when those corporations considered it profitable to support their regimes; the regimes of dictators like Pinochet and Saddam Hussein, and the organizations that we branded freedom fighters when it benefited the wealthy and powerful, like Al Qaeda and the Taliban, 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 backed by the perfectly penetrating public and private surveillance apparatus from moving ever closer to the extremes of actually transforming language and revising history in order to sell whatever narrative supports their current objectives, ever improving upon crimes like impeding critical thought and the fight for more justice and opportunity for the disadvantaged."

"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 mostly 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 that we move in Trump's direction and away from Bernie's, the closer that 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 over-advantaged have sent the disadvantaged 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 Middle Eastern, 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 while holding the door open to western multinational corporations to tap their natural and emerging consumer markets for profits pulled by those dictators and their excluding cadre of aristocratic colluders 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 it’s a well-known aspect of greed that it’s contagious, pressing those it sickens to seek more profitable angles. And such collusion is encouraged by our plutocratic republic; by a political system masquerading as democracy for the sake of sustaining the status quo. It’s 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 have to truly *see* the evil before they're able to target 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. And politics is simply the competition for control of governance within whatever system oversees that competition, which is why it's been said that 'politics is simply war without the violence.'"

"A government, in other words, isn't innately different from a gang, especially when it isn't directly empowered, and its policies and actions aren't directly authorized, by the people. 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 *isn't* 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 of people? To the critical thinking, it can't."

"I've never thought of it quite like that before..." Henry mutters.

"If I had the funds I'd 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 topple 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 puppeted foreign 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’d 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’d 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, as well as a failure to support the military men and women ‘defending our nation.’ This argument is wrong and wrapped in propagandist falsehood on every level. There’s an *immense* difference between supporting the people duped into putting 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’s 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 usually 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 empty-headed herd or a puppet on a string to belong to this country. And if you do, then this country is anything *but* what it purports itself to be. 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're 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, then 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're all the same in every way that matters most; that every nation, culture and people has many things of great value to offer all of 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, one of the true traitors 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's akin to fascism and costs the global majority incalculable quality of life, crushing and blocking all that's best!"

"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 that's 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, for the most valuable thing in life is life itself; the quality of its existence in total. Yet this principle is never taught and, arguably, all that which contradicts it takes precedence, beginning in the earliest of classes. We're 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's the objective being pursued? Who benefits? Is this what I want to support? It seems that very few even bother to ask these absolutely imperative questions. Instead, it's all about finding your most lucrative possible place within the status quo, regardless of its costs; regardless of the fact that doing so may very well render you complicit in wide-ranging, long-rippling crimes against humanity, against the planet, and against life in general."

"It's but 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 isn't 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 methods of oppression, themselves representing adaptations to evolving methods of progressivism. 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 entrenched obstacles to overcome that we're unlikely to see it in our lifetimes. It could take centuries. 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 that our 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 that 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's 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 prohibitions of authentic democracy 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 also the limited nature of our representative government that denies us the right to choose whomever we wish to represent our interests and help us pursue the best opportunities for finding happiness."

"This quest must include the possible existence of representatives that've suffered disadvantages and their pains and pressures, and thus possess the experience to truly be able to understand the nature and effects of injustice in the West and thereby grant us the clearest path around such injustices, and in avoidance of such suffering effects, 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 that we're 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 diseased 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's 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 in when that belief isn’t supported by the prevailing voters, beliefs which change from the primary to the general election in national politics, then you die a political death. If you don’t vote and construct policy in a manner calculated for control, if you don’t deliver on the quid pro quo nature of taking 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 that appealing to the truly sighted is a losing cause. Thankfully, there are signs that 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; a democracy in which the best interests of the majority may be fostered without the professional death of its champions who’d instead be *encouraged* to speak the truth; to inspire; to possess passionate conviction rather than a political survivalism demanding duplicity. Future democracy, the authentic form purging all elements of false form, 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. It’s a democracy wherein politics can’t be bought and corrupted because, instead, 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, then he’ll have some idea of Alex’s description therein of a possible future form of such government.

“Well,” Henry begins after a reflective pause, “you’d 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're 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 officially 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; as a way to encourage an understanding, appreciation and perpetuation of the true democracy 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'm 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 which 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 aren't 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 often are now."

"Another thing that shouldn't be left out of the description of the true democracy are its perfectly open, voluntary, customizable aspects," Alex continues. "It is *this* that makes it workable for everyone. People that don't pay attention to politics or don't care or don't feel like they're 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, voters can choose to vote on one or a few measures that 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've 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'd 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 be not *perfectly* shielded, but certainly far *better* shielded, from corruptibility, for the current system is corruptible *because* of the limited number of, and thus the targetability, of the holders of political power. Distribution diminishes corruptibility."

"So you'd keep the Presidency, Congress, State Department etc. all intact?," Henry inquires.

“Yes,” Alex answers. “They’d 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 supported 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, all free from big money special interests and the power those interests have under today’s system to effectively block any initiative that contradicts their greedy will.”

“Which a website such as the one you envisioned naturally does, because it’s 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’s 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 progress. There’s 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; a playbook preventing us from interrupting the course of those with the most to gain from upholding 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 hindsight upon the true motives of our original American ruling aristocrats, mostly 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're truly included in the so-called 'democratic process' currently in place?! We're kept constantly at odds with one another, and little gets done that's not eroded or outright reversed in the next, inevitable exchange of power amongst the parties. It's 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 that I envision, party loyalty is unnecessary, and candidates aren't 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're 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're 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's 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 true democracy 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. And if those ideas gain enough popularity they'll 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's 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 this would lead to a clear democratic-republic hierarchy being 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 that 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 the electoral college and all 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’s 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’re 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, except 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 they don't violate our basic rights, protections and privileges."

"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 it 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’s 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, because 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 a 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?!"

"Of course, those like the Koch's will still seek ways to corrupt the democracy, but will be *far* less able to do so with such a distribution of political power, especially if, ideally, you make all such attempts illegal, and empower a white collar crime watchdog group to enforce such protections of the authentic power of the people. The truly democratic system *itself*, of course, won't recognize extreme political power disparities; disparities that are mostly accepted and ignored in our current 'democracy,' regardless of empty rhetoric about cleaning up corruption that will *always* be endemic to shams of democracy, and can only be prevented through systemic overhaul. With the true democracy *I* speak of, and will always advocate for, people in similar economic positions will possess very similar point totals, and even the so-called 'lower class' won't be far removed from the 'middle class,' or the 'middle class' from the 'upper class.' The plutocracy that prevents democracy can, in other words, be traded for a form of democratic meritocracy."

"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. "Again, 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."

"It's hard to imagine, actually," Henry admits, staring off into space. "I could see how, over time, people might say: Can you believe what *used* to stand for democracy?!" He pauses. "Is that it, then? The whole system?"

"Those are the main points, I'd say," Alex replies. "You can refer to the book of course. It not only covers all this but delves into all the reasons why American government does not qualify as a true democracy, and attempts to anticipate all the ways in which the American people, and most any government that adopts this or a similar system that puts political power directly in the hands of the people, stand to benefit."







**CORNERSTONE TWO**

***QUALITY OF LIFE ECONOMICS***



“How about moving on to your economic theory then, Quality of Life Economics?,” Henry requests.

“Okay.” Alex takes a deep breath and pauses to collect his thoughts, then plunges ahead: “Quality of Life Economics essentially argues that traditional conservative economics, hailing from unrestrained, laissez-faire capitalistic theory and prioritizing and encouraging the accumulation of wealth by a very select ownership class that leads to an immense and ever-growing disparity in the distribution of all things of value, and to total quality of life, or the life experience of the total populace, fails in its duty to stand as an economic theory serving the best interests of people *as a whole*; it fails to promote the creation of the greatest total quality of life for the totality of life, which *must* be the goal of progressive, morally-grounded economic activity. The theory asserts that it’s the ability of the economy and its contributing companies, organizations, individuals and practices to increase the quality of life of the citizenry as a whole that constitutes true success. This as opposed to pure ‘free market economics,’ which stresses the one-sided version of freedom for those with relative advantages to freely take advantage of those with relative disadvantages in order to extract as much value from the efforts of the relatively disadvantaged majority as possible, as well as from the insufficiently protected resource-rich regions of the world, in the course of funneling that value into the hands of a consolidating minority of wealth amassers.”

“Quality of Life Economic theory points to the fact that this bottom-line-is-absolute, labor-and-resource-cost-minimizing business exploitation being heralded as ‘successful’ by our economic analysis naturally promotes the perpetuation of immense and growing disparities in income, wealth and directly connected quality of life between the ownership class and the working class; between the equity-holding class and the equity-excluded class. It also highlights the fact that most of this disparity in value distribution equates to a squandering in quality

of life value, because the ownership class consolidating ever more of the finite value in the world continues to do so indefinitely, even long after having reached its ability to use that financial value to increase its own quality of life, as illustrated by the law of diminishing returns; by the fact that as wealth is accumulated, the quality of life return per dollar begins approaching zero. That value is therefore wasted after a certain point, incurring an *immense* opportunity cost considering how many suffer such a low quality of life that could use the aforementioned squandered value to *radically* increase their quality of life, because they're positioned at the front end of that diminishing returns curve, when it's still ascending precipitously upward. Hopefully you can envision the graph, as we've both seen examples of it in the econ classes that we took at UCSB."

"Yes, I can envision the diminishing returns graph," Henry replies.

"Good," Alex responds. "So, as illustrated by this graph backed by any accurate assessment of the diminishing correlation between financial accrual and quality of life return, it becomes clear that traditional free market economic theory encourages an *immensely* inefficient conversion of total value to total quality of life. In this way Quality of Life Economics advocates for a paradigm shift in what constitutes success for individuals, organizations and the business practices tied to economic theory; a shift from deeming the extraction, consolidation and immense waste of value as 'successful' to success being defined by the ability of the economy to increase quality of life as a whole. To this far more valuable end, then, for the purpose of life is to maximize its quality, the goal of every commercial entity is to create more value in the world than they consume, and not to consolidate more value than can reasonably be used to increase the quality of life of their owners, when that entity is a business, as beyond a certain level of accrual more and more of that value *isn't* convertible into increased quality of life,

and is effectively wasted, representing a horribly tragic and unjustifiable opportunity cost.”

“That’s quite the shift...” Henry replies. “A redefinition of economic and commercial success based upon its total life impact.”

“Yes, precisely,” Alex responds. “Total life. The goal of the Spirit as well, I’d argue: the maximization of the life experience of its totality of individualized manifestations. The only *moral* goal of *any* social system, political, economic, business, spiritual or otherwise, is to *serve total life*, *not* to have life serve it, as much as conservatives would like to confuse this issue. So, in a very real way the paramount principle of Quality of Life Economics pays homage to that quote by Einstein I’m sure that I’ve mentioned to you before, where he said: ‘Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value.’ He saw the stark contrast between conventional societal values focusing on material and monetary accumulation as the measure of success, and the creation of true *value* for life. He only needed to take this insight a step further: fight to redefine success *in terms of* added, total value. This is the crux of almost everything to me; the center of my moral universe. Simply stated, the nihilists are flat wrong about morality having no value.”

“Morality is *about* value. The best moral principles are based upon increasing or, ideally, upon maximizing total quality of life value, the highest value, at least from my perspective. For, in my mind, the ‘point’ of life is life itself. Life is innately of the highest value. And the purpose of moral people is to increase that value. That’s *the* moral code: protecting and increasing the value of life. It’s the service of life that matters; the ability of government, the economy and the businesses, of the whole of society and its systems and contributors, to continually increase and protect from reduction the quality of life *as a whole* of those whom it’s its fiduciary duty to serve, including by protecting

and serving the healthiest, liveliest, most sustainably vibrant planetary environments that underlie and support every form of life.”

“So this, then, is the core of your economic theory... You put it in front of all other considerations?,” Henry asks. “Including the profitability of enterprises, the traditional cornerstone?”

“That’s the conventional, immoral motive,” Alex replies. “The premise that profit, what’s *extracted*, is the bottom line, rather than how much the quality of life of all those involved increases, including the consumer and the worker, not just the extractors and excluding owners. *Net quality of life impact*, in other words, is the only *moral* bottom line. As I believe I’ve mentioned to you before, all the profit in the world means nothing if it turns to cash or capital that sits or accrues unapplied to the service of life. If people’s commercial and economically-measurable endeavors produce unused or poorly applied profit after passing through the commercial system and into the hands of its claimants, it has little to zero to *negative* value. It’s dedicated to those that have maxed-out the ability of wealth to improve their quality of life, and is thereby sucked down an endless hole of opportunity cost and very often used *against* any movement towards increasing overall quality of life, further applied to strengthen the mechanisms, practices, systems and structures that have the ultimate effect of severely *restraining* total quality of life potential.”

“Everything starts for me at the moral center: What’s most moral is *always* what’s best for life as a whole. Which is why the total quality of life calculation is the core. The question is always: How do we produce the greatest life value? How do we best serve life in totality? It’s a moral, progressive imperative to ask the total quality of life question of *all* things, before and with priority above everything else. To do anything else is to morally fail to some degree. Achieving total quality of

life value is the marker of true, progressive success, while the question of how to maximize profit is usually the opposite question, especially when that profit is narrowly distributed and comes by way of exploiting disadvantage and causing environmental devastation and planetary warming. So, from the total value perspective, traditional economic theory and our conventional value system and understandings have the measure of success mostly backwards. And that inverse measuring system is a reflection of a society and a globalizing cultural system of values that reveres wealth and greed above all things, which means the championing of the extraction, consolidation and, ultimately, the *waste* of value. This twisted western version of success is a clear betrayal of honorable, righteous cause.”

“The woman that volunteers at the local homeless shelter when she’s not working for a nonprofit that assists the underprivileged in finding greater opportunities and earning higher qualities of life for themselves and their families is the *true* success,” Alex continues, “while the oil baron polluting and warming and generally degrading and increasing the severity of costly weather extremes across the planet to enrich himself and his few major shareholders beyond the point where they can utilize that continued wealth accumulation to increase their quality of life, and therefore wasting that value at immense opportunity cost to life, is the *true* failure. For the woman successfully adds *far* more value to life than she consumes, while the oil baron and his cronies fail to do the same, extracting, consuming and *wasting* far more value than they add. And yet we’re taught to look up to the oil baron and merely give the beneficent woman a condescending, sympathetic pat on the back for her efforts.”

“So traditional free market teachings actually promote a loss of total value, you’re saying, because they purposely disregard the net effect on quality of life that matters most,” Henry offers.

“They disregard it, else fail to seek and assess for it in the first place,” Alex replies. “The traditionally cited numbers mean little without the application to life and, in fact, are more often a sign of true failure than success. All the profitability, the stock market statistical growth, the employment numbers and the housing starts have no value without creating quality of life value. These numbers belie quality of life value and can conceal the fact that overall quality of life may not only *not* be improving, but may be decreasing. Traditional economic statistics could scream ‘success!’ while people’s lives scream ‘failure!’ If one percent of the population receives all the profits generated by business while everyone else’s income remains flat because the profitability produced by that ninety-nine-percent is absorbed by the other one percent, and because that one percent responds to any domestic labor and environmental challenges by outsourcing its labor and the harvesting of its resources to underdeveloped and preyed-upon places and their people, how is profitability increasing total value? It’s not. Therefore, it can’t be the measure of success to anyone moral and progressive, only to conservative-minded big business beneficiaries and those they deceive through marketing, political propaganda and other mind-control methods. Most conventional economic stats have the same misleading quality.”

“A very small percentage of the population owns any considerable amount of stock, for example; any significant amount of privately-held equity in general, actually. Not only this, but stock price increases are based upon the aforementioned profitability that generally stalls or reduces quality of life measures for the majority of the population, especially the globalizing population. Therefore, stock market levels are not suitable measures for evaluating the success of the economy at increasing the quality of life of its citizenry. The movement of financial markets tends to be inversely correlated with total quality of life changes, actually, because the improving stock prices of a company represent an increasing capacity to extract as much value as possible. And such extracted value comes directly from the majority of the



people and the planet, for there's a finite amount of value to go around at any one point in time. Don't believe the conservatives: wealth, income, resource and value statistics are always a zero sum game at any given moment. The more that goes one way, the less that goes the other. Let's consider some other economic indicators and see how they correlate with the difference between promoting absolute wealth and promoting total quality of life."

"While in many respects it's certainly better for a person to be employed than unemployed, if the majority of jobs are wage-based and pay so poorly that many of their holders are barely surviving, much less thriving and opening doors to greater opportunities, including equity possession, to what degree do unemployment levels indicate changes in quality of life? Most of those measured in this statistic remain excluded from the profit-based fruits of their labors because they can't afford to buy into an equity position; a disadvantage that's unscrupulously taken advantage of as a rule by the ownership class. Few people even bat an eye at this accepted truth, but we all should. It's unacceptable on the total quality of life level of morality."

"And with housing starts, if one percent or even the top ten percent of the population is responsible for the vast majority of the new construction starts, putting up the developmental funds for their own vacation homes and rental homes and apartment complexes to take advantage of those individuals and families that can't afford to mortgage a home and are forced to lease them at rates of financial hardship that preclude them from saving up for their own homes, to what degree do housing starts indicate more than the rich getting richer? If and when increases in income aren't generally confined to the top tier of earners, then housing starts might indicate increases in overall quality-of-life. But as it now stands and long has, they more likely indicate *decreases* in total quality of life; more exploited tenants, fewer first time homeowners."

“So, then, the idea is to find indications of quality of life improvements for the population as a whole, instead of increases in the very things that indicate a broadening quality of life disparity?,” Henry suggestively asks. “Almost to flip the analysis on its head, from service to the exclusive to service to the excluded?”

“Yes,” Alex continues. “Flip from a focus on statistics that ignore and conceal quality of life disparities and reductions to putting indications of total quality of life increases at the forefront. A flip from the small, narrowly-serving assessment to the big picture, totally inclusive assessment. Refocus the questions on the impact of economic activity on the lives of people. What’s the total value to overall quality of life of this individual, this economic entity, this system or program or policy? To determine total value, the amount of value that’s contributed by that individual, entity, program, policy etc. must be considered, as well as how much value that same entity removes from the system, stockpiles and consumes. Are injustices promoted? Is the environment and all the people and lifeforms that rely upon it put in jeopardy? Are the quality and the extent of people’s lives increased or decreased through the consumption of the goods or services offered by the entity? Take, for example, those companies perhaps most directly responsible for reducing the duration and quality of people’s lives; those companies that undermine health for profit: the fast and processed and artificially-sweetening and unnaturally-preserving food producers and distributors.”

“Americans suffer from an epidemic of modern diseases and disorders directly traceable to the consumption of empty calories, blood-spikeing high fructose corn syrup and processed wheat, artery-clogging unnatural fats, laboratory-derived preservatives, flavor enhancers, growth hormones and antibiotics in the food supply, plus inflammation-increasing high Omega 6 plant oils and diets composed largely of the gut-disturbing seeds of plants, including all grains, nuts, seeds and legumes that evolved inflammatory, toxic lectins to protect their propagating mechanisms; all those seeds we have to process to eat, all

spiking the risk of the biggest interconnected killers and quality-of-life-reducers in the nation, including heart disease and its strokes and heart attacks, insulin resistance and adult onset diabetes, autoimmune diseases triggered by overactivated immune systems and obesity and the cancers that come from ingesting the chemicals and hormones and having a degraded system unable to compensate, and the resulting degradation and mutation of cells. If there were such a thing as Hell, all the pushers and profiteers of this industry would have a special place reserved there for their crimes against humanity.”

“Considering that health is the most important, valuable, indispensable aspect of quality of life, our existential basis, I’d estimate that no other industry creates a greater negative value. No other industry produces more suffering, disease, low quality of life and unnatural death, not to mention the fact that our productivity dives and healthcare costs skyrocket because of them. The *McDonald’s*, *Coca-Cola’s* and *Lays* of the world, to name a few, degrade and cut short more lives selling hedonism and gluttony disguised as happiness than our military does selling globalizing profits and imperialism disguised as freedom and democracy.”

“And their profits are made off of the same people that prepare their debilitating fare,” Henry adds, having had this conversation with Alex before. “It’s adding insult to injury. Or perhaps you’d say just two versions of compounding injury. They eat the food because they can’t afford any better, and thereby grow weaker and decrease the quality and extent of their lives while their work and sickness enriches the major *McDonald’s* and healthcare industry stakeholders, all while that same profit could do so much more to increase the overall quality of life of those same workers were some of it distributed to them as earnings.”

“Yes, exactly,” Alex continues. “Opportunity cost of value consumption must be considered as well. In fact, opportunity cost is a highly

valuable concept because, like all the most valuable concepts, it has near limitless, universal application. It represents not only an economic principle, but can be applied to essentially everything, every purchase, action and, arguably, every thought, and is directly connected to the cost-benefit analysis that everyone performs before doing anything, whether they're aware that they're doing it or not. And, with sufficient moral development and knowledge of the root causes most of the suffering in the world, it sheds clear, harsh light on the immorality of western cultural standards and values. If I look at a businessman getting out of his *Porsche* wearing a *Rolex*, I'm supposed to look *up* to him; to think him a success. In the morally hollow West that pays perpetually dishonorable disrespect to the value of life, we're inculcated in this manner of thinking from the moment we can reason. Yet morality dictates a total quality of life consideration of that picture. How can I wear a *Rolex* or drive any vehicle worth over, say, thirty grand, knowing that I can exchange that watch for something that works just as well, or drive a fully functional automobile for a fraction of the cost of the *Porsche*, and exchange the difference for *immense* increases in the quality of lives of those experiencing compounding daily stresses, pains and pressures?"

"Yes, this businessman successfully played the business game and likely put in a lot of work to get there, assuming he wasn't born into it, but is this really how we should be taught to view success? In terms of the value extraction and immense opportunity cost column rather than the value *addition* and service to total quality of life column? There's a simple truth about business: Businessmen are legalized crooks, as the art of business is the art of manipulation and exploitation. I'm not talking about the production and marketing of products and services of value, but of extracting *far* beyond that value. The better you are at extracting value from the world and consolidating it your shareholders' hands, regardless of the value of what you're offering in return, the more successful a businessman, or woman, you are. And extraction is

based upon maximizing revenue and minimizing costs, which, in turn, is based upon taking advantage of every possible weakness and predisposition of the buyer, worker and planet, and reinvesting in these profit-making sacrificial pawns as little as possible in order to keep costs as low as possible and profits as high as possible. This is the modus operandi of both the successful businessman and the successful parasite. Keep 'em *just* strong enough not die or be induced to rebel and fight you off so you can suck as much blood from them for as long as possible."

"We revere business people because we're spellbound by all of the trappings, inconsiderate of the total effects of the derivation and costs to life and planet of those trappings, and because we're *conditioned* to revere them by our conservatively dominant culture historically hailing from empires and their consolidating aristocratic classes. This value system is inherently immoral, and based not upon the creation of total value and the overall quality of life of the lifeforms of the planet, as morality demands, but upon much the opposite: upon sacrificing quality and opportunities of life for the greed of the few. Thus, no moral, progressive person can be in business, unless they're against 'business as usual,' and are working to redefine the practice."

"It's not something that most consider, that's for sure..." Henry grants.

"No, because the conventional, conservative confines of Western Culture dictate otherwise. Yet it's crystal clear to me that there's a much higher standard of success, and it's based upon adding more value to life than you extract. This, in turn, creates a *spiritual* reward; a currently commonly undervalued fullness of heart built around things like finding compassion through connectivity, and fostering solidarity of identity and purpose; becoming fuller by making others fuller; comprehending and living by the irreplaceable value of morality as tied to

the *total* impact of our lives on the lives of the others. The creation of financial value, wealth and its materialistic trappings is often produced and stockpiled in manners *reducing* total quality of life, which can *never* constitute a moral basis for success.”

“How financial value may be used to *improve* the value of life, improving its quality of life utility value, is the *far* more moral, progressive consideration, and is connected to the moral and spiritual heart of it all: service to total quality of life; to the whole of the manifestations of Spirit. The imperative question becomes: What's the best way to apply our abilities and the finite financial and natural resources of the world to increase total quality of life? What most people don't seem to realize is that this moral form of success *isn't* mutually exclusive with feeling happy, or even with being well-off financially. In fact, it's very much possible to contribute to one's own increases in quality of life at the same time as serving increases in the quality of as many other lives as possible. This, in turn, should lead us to ask: What's the difference between this ideal and whatever we might be endeavoring towards for whatever organization we labor on behalf of... i.e. what's the opportunity cost of our profession? And, in truth, some form of this opportunity cost question touches everything, not just our professions.”

“Economically, and as an aware, moral worker and consumer, is the product or service that I'm purchasing or spending my life providing *worth* that price, especially considering the money and energy invested could be dedicated this or that product or service, or to fund this or that relief instead, and considering the extent and severity of some people's suffering and inability to meet their needs... considering that there are so many people that suffer such low quality of lives that you could grant them an opportunity to shoot into a skyrocketing improvement of their existence with prudent use of the value squandered upon poor, even *negative* total quality of life utility returns? Within these questions, it's also clear that inherent to this universal principle of opportunity

cost is that everything is a trade-off; *everything*. Everything of value that's purchased, consumed or hoarded is traded at a direct cost, a cost of earning, paying for or stealing that thing of value, and an indirect opportunity cost, the cost of sacrificing what might otherwise be gained with the effort, money or other thing of value used to acquire it. In the pursuit of anything of value, a trade's being made; you're trading direct *and* opportunity costs for the desired thing."

"The key question, therefore, is always: Are you getting as much value as possible for that cost? For that trade? And if there's to be any progress we must go beyond the corrupted conservative cultural consideration of this question, and think not just in terms of are we getting as much as we can for *ourselves*, but are we getting as much possible total quality of life value as we can in exchange for the money or other traded thing of value? Everything is connected, and we must therefore attempt to see not just the immediate, direct consequences, but the *total* effect of our thoughts and actions. So, in the case of our consumerism, are the costs of acquisition, the direct costs and the sacrificed opportunities, worth more than what we're trading it for? What is the best value to pursue at the lowest opportunity cost, made so because that pursued value *is* the best opportunity?"

"What's the best trade? What should I do with my time, energy, money and all the other resources at my disposal? What's the best opportunity for my own benefit, in the conservative mindset, or for life as a whole, in this progressive, total quality of life framework, considering that every action we take, including the acquisition of goods and services, has a rippling effect across the market and the whole of life? It is, of course, not possible to grasp the *full* extent of this rippling impact, nor to keep it ever present in your mind when making *every* decision. But it is, nevertheless, the nature of causality, one of life's prime principles; that there's a rippling causality connected to *every* action, including all financial, commercial and professional decisions,

especially with ever increasing globalization. Thus, every true progressive should strive to keep the concepts of *total* causality and value in mind as much as possible.”

“And we’re all conducting some level of cost-benefit analysis all the time, even if it’s not to this idealized extent...” Henry offers.

“Yes, most definitely,” Alex replies. “From the small, the ‘do I want the beer enough to expend the energy to get up off the couch and get it, when I could just lounge?’ to the big, ‘will this profession earn me the most wealth and happiness considering I could be pursuing this other profession instead?’ or, in total value terms, ‘will this profession put me in the best position, considering my aptitude and convictions and all the other things I could dedicate those characteristics to, to produce as much value in the world as possible, and through this purpose allow me to earn the most satisfaction; the greatest happiness and spiritual dividends for myself and others?’ With every minute, ounce of energy, disposable dollar, indeed with every *thought*, within the context of attitude, ideology and all things, the tying together of the concepts of total value and opportunity cost compels us to ask: Can this be better spent to increase total quality of life?”

“In economic evaluations, how efficiently is monetary value being translated into quality of life value? From a business standpoint, when monetary value is removed, stockpiled and consumed, the type of value that’s perhaps the easiest to measure, how much quality of life improvement is made in exchange? As an example, take a business that extracts a billion dollars of net profit for its collective efforts; efforts contributed by *all* of its employees and independent contractors. To simplify things, is that billion dollars going to someone who’s already a billionaire in order to create little to no increase in his or her quality of life that, in considering the opportunity cost, could instead be dedicated to *dramatically* increasing the quality of life of countless others? If it is, a



*massive* total quality of life opportunity cost is being incurred, and that money was most certainly *not* successfully utilized. Much, if not most, of its total potential value was squandered. From a broader analytical standpoint, this quality of life opportunity cost can be evaluated within the ‘value-to-total-quality-of-life-conversion’ concept I’ve alluded to.”

“This conversion concept is essentially a measure of return on investment assessed from the standpoint of quality of life return instead of financial return, and can be extended to assess the potential quality of life increases that can be produced by *anything* of value, whether that value is financial or otherwise. It asks: What’s the best use for this thing of value for life as a whole? And this is but the post-production assessment, as, in this example, it doesn’t even take into account *how* that billion was extracted; only, in the case of the billionaire, its abysmal value-to-quality-of-life-conversion; its horrendous opportunity cost and absurdly inefficient, likely even *negative*, conversion to quality of life, considering what billionaires tend to invest in: things that broaden the quality of life disparity across all segments of society. But, again, this is the post-production, or *utilization*, value, which is only half the assessment. In almost all cases *how* the billion is extracted is *just* as abhorrent, if not more so, than the unjustifiable opportunity cost of its distribution and squandered quality of life conversion, involving exploitations of every form of human weakness and non-protection of the workforce and the environment.”

“Yes, that’s right,” Henry recalls. “In your book you emphasize the fact that to get anywhere near a complete total value picture of any commercial enterprise you need to assess the total value of both its profit derivation *and* utilization, involving the quality of life value of its products and services and all those individuals and practices involved in supplying those products and services, *as well as* the distribution of those profits from the enterprise to its claimants. How much value is being produced, how much is being consumed, and how ably is the

consumed value leading to quality of life increases, with consumed value being a general term for value being taken out of the economy through income, including equity compensation. And I remember how you joked that the value-to-quality-of-life conversion principle is an almost invaluable tool because it can be used for evaluating the best use of *anything* of value, not just those things of traditionally assessed financial value... including anything from a billion dollars to a bicycle to a kiss from an attractive woman."

"What was it you said..." Henry continues, "something like: You give a multi-billionaire a billion dollars and little to no increase in their quality of life is achieved; a *massive* misallocation of funds considering the quality of life increases that would be produced by distributing that same billion amongst families facing food insecurity and the daily stresses of survival. You give a bicycle to a kid with a closet filled with unused toys and it's almost always just sitting in the garage, producing next to no quality of life improvement, whereas that same bike given to a kid whose parents can't afford Christmas presents will end up being the center of his activity and enjoyment, considerably increasing his quality of life. An attractive woman kissing a wealthy, charming, good-looking lothario swimming in sex has little impact upon him, whereas the same kiss could sustain the sad sex-deprived guy for a year. Were you joking when you wrote that?"

"Not really," Alex replies. "I mean, it was meant to be a tragicomic example of the principle, but jokes are based upon reality, are they not? There's some truth to every joke, right? That's what makes it identifiably funny and sad. If it was pure fantasy, if it wasn't grounded in reality to some degree, no one could understand or relate to it. It would have no impact; contain no humor. People tease others, and when those others get upset the teaser will commonly reply: 'Come on, I was just kidding.' But nothing is ever really 'just' anything. The kidding comes from some fractional truth at the least, not from pure imagination,

which itself is drawn from what the imaginer has some knowledge of. Nothing comes from nothing. But, anyway, that last example you mentioned comes from personal experience, unfortunately. I say that that it's tragicomic because, while someone that can't empathize with the agony of such severe sustained deprivation might find it funny, those that can will see it for what it is: tragic; inestimably painful. I was that guy for years on end, struggling with serious health and drug problems, lonely and deprived, uncomfortable in my own skin, seeing gorgeous women and feeling sheer heart-rending torment at how badly I wanted *anything* to do with them. A smile. A hug. *Any* type of interaction."

"And yet I was unable to naturally earn such satisfactions, because I was locked into a highly unnatural, afflicted state of existence. I felt like even a hug would lend me the strength to persevere. *Any* of it would have increased my quality of life *dramatically* for a time; briefly filled my heart and made it that much easier to carry on. But that's not how it works. Women smell that desperation, and such suffering thereby snowballs into increasing isolation and despair through the impact of the cruel, cold psyche of those so desperately desired. And a *lot* of people are in that general position, though not for the same reasons that I was."

"Socrates said: 'Those that are the hardest to love need it the most.' They don't readily receive love or the associated forms of intimacy, so they get far more out of the rare instances when they do. This is a truth applicable to *anything* of value, including all that which we've been discussing. And, again, the psyche exacerbates the costs connected to this truth, as there's an inverse relationship between our desire of anything of value and our ability and likelihood of attaining it. This is, of course, why we feel compelled to disguise anything approaching need in personal matters, and why, in a tragic form of irony, we tend to feel the need for something right up to the point where we can actually attain it. I also can't help but feel that this need is intrinsic to our spiritual

nature. Since our divide from singularity to plurality, from the singular Spirit into its infinite forms, we have this constant need to move back towards singularity, our natural state; to seek unity; to feel connected mentally, physically and spiritually, which is what's behind our being social beings and, after survival, I believe constitutes our primary existential drive, fulfilled through the force that we call 'love.'"

"That's sad, in a way, but beautiful too, I suppose," Henry says. "But you're right, us good-looking wealthy guys don't get as much out of such things as others would," he says with an awkward little laugh. "But back to Quality of Life Economics... Can you talk more about how and why traditional free market economics short-sells quality of life?"

"Traditional economics makes few, if any, of the Quality of Life Economics considerations," Alex replies, "and asks few, if any, of the questions it poses in the pursuit of maximizing total quality of life. It's my belief that this is because traditional economics hails from the aristocratic ownership class that's only really concerned with feeding its greed and consolidating value within its excluding minority, only really *pretending*, owing to the corruptive, biasing influence of wealth accumulation, to care about moral considerations; considerations like the greatest collective quality of life for people as a whole and the health of the planet that hosts every moment of every life, with its most decimated regions, of course, tending to host the most miserable individualized existences, because the rich buy themselves out of the areas which their 'interests' tend to decimate."

"The economics I was taught, like most every other western collegiate student, was geared towards maximizing profits for the excluding class, *period*. And with few reservations. And both my spiritual beliefs and the concept of Quality of Life Economics assert that productivity and wealth generation are of no value absent total quality of life increases, for increasing total quality of life *is* the core value.

*All disciplines, economics, commerce, politics, theology... all of them should serve total life, else they're immoral; immoral exactly to the extent which they betray this one moral imperative; the one basis by which almost all evil effects are created. What's known as 'Free Market Economics' actually purposely ignores people in its assessment of economic success, because it's not the welfare of the citizenry contributing to the economy that's of concern, either historically or contemporarily, it's the ability of the economy to make the rich richer that irresponsibly constitutes success, regardless of the cost to total life."*

"Free Market Economics' is itself a propagandist term, considering that it's concerned with the freedom of big business and its owners to do as they please, no matter the cost to the broader public whose freedom to be protected from its trespasses and the gross limitations it places upon their ability to increase their quality of life is all but entirely disregarded. This, of course, is tied to the broad ideological inability of conservatism to acknowledge *positive freedom*, pretending, and perpetuating through its rhetoric falling upon the uninformed, gullible people that it manipulates to fight for their own oppression, that only negative freedom, the lack of obstacles, exists. Again, this is consistent with the motives from which conventional economic theory was sourced: Empire; dynasties; aristocracy; those that write history and prevailing theory, backing it with force and money to make certain that it prevails. It's the conquerors that generate and perpetuate the commonly understood theories and ideas in order to advance their wealth-and-power-consolidating agenda. Ideas that survive the conquering fires of history, and which are thereafter spread by literal or figurative sword, are seldom those that have the greatest good of all the people in mind, precisely because that greatest good contradicts the consolidating agenda of established powers and interests. And when those ideas *do* spread, such as with democracy, they tend to be but preserved in name for the sake of controlling people."

“Conservatism is oppression. Oppressing people by way of repressing our greatest total quality of life realization. Think about economics class and every economic assessment you’ve ever read. Almost all of them rely upon statistics that leave people’s lives out, as if economics has nothing to do with people and the quality of life that they lead. Our hearts and their communication of the Spirit’s instinctive knowledge and wisdom knows better than this, of course, as do our minds when they heed this communication. The quality of *every* life matters. Traditionally, however, this spiritual truth is subdued by the greed that controls political, economic and business theory. The result is that humanity is ever under assault by its oppressing, dividing and conquering enemies: the value-consolidating ownership class actively excluding us from holding any considerable share in the bottom line, politically and commercially. Think about our economics and accounting classes at UCSB: misdirection is built into what are meant to look like unbiased, objective statistics. And the cost to the people and the planet we depend upon are left out because they reflect negatively upon the bottom line that goes mostly to a small slice of the population, with most people remaining in the liabilities column of the balance sheet as to-be-minimized costs of doing business.”

“So you think the statistics themselves are biased and misleading...?,” Henry asks.

“Definitely,” Alex replies. “Again, take the economic statistics we hear and read about and are taught at the university level in economics, accounting and business courses. Gross domestic product is a total production statistic that disregards the connection between economic productivity and the lives of the people. But, in the most extreme example, all the production in the world means nothing if the goods actually being produced, and the profits extracted by the business entities through their production and distribution, don’t do anything to improve the overall quality of life of those that produce, consume and

are otherwise impacted by those products. You can hypothetically have an economy producing an *immense* quantity of useless crap that adds little value to the lives of those that feel the need to buy that crap thanks to effective, psychologically-manipulative marketing. In such a case you'd have an immense total GPD and GDP per capita accompanied by meager, if any, quality of life increases from the consumption of such products."

"Per capita, of course, has nothing to do with the impact upon people in and of itself, it's just a production per person statistic. Yes, countries with higher GDP's tend to experience higher qualities of life compared to those that don't, because much of that produced value ends up in the hands of the citizenry. And yet there's *far* more to this quality of life conversion than the production value itself, especially the relative distribution of that value and the protection of the people, the planet and inelastic goods and services like healthcare that continue to be demanded almost regardless of cost due to their so directly connecting to and influencing the quality of life of the demanders. But even when that production is near to valueless in terms of improving the quality of lives of those that produce and consume it, an economic value will be assigned to that productivity based upon the cost of its absorbed labor and material resources, all the way through its chain of production, through to its final sale. It's the value that those products and services add to the quality of life of their consumers, and the distribution of those products and services across the population, and the financial value extracted by the entities that produce and sell them and how that value is distributed amongst those that contribute to the production and sale of the goods and services that determines *total* value; value additions minus value extractions. GDP entirely ignores this most salient of statistics: the impact upon people's lives. And it's certainly, again, not the only statistic that paints a false picture of the well-being of the total citizenry."

“Stock market scores reflect investor confidence and profitability, ignoring the fact that a very small percentage of the population holds any considerable stock or equity of any kind, and that increases in stock scores and GDP measures more than likely are gained via the same mechanisms that increase the disparity of quality of life experienced across society, and especially between the ownership class and the working class whose lack of privilege is exploited by the ownership class to cut costs, keep profits high and maintain investor confidence. And while the unemployment measure is relevant to quality of life, a very high portion of the workforce is barely getting by and experiencing a very low, subsistence level quality of life in which no money is being saved and over half their income goes to their landlord that’s preying upon their inability to acquire their own home. From a moral standpoint, leases are larcenies; theft from those who are deprived the opportunity to build equity because of their financial disadvantage. If there were *any* morality there, the law would dictate that all leases must be equity-building 'lease-to-own' contracts. But when it comes to economic statistics, perhaps the most misleading, salient fact of all is that most of them are *mean averages*.”

“Why do you say that?,” Henry asks, suddenly feeling a creeping sense of guilt enter his heart and mind as he reflects upon a life of lavish indulgence and cool, detached assessment of the same statistics working for his father’s investment firm, which plays with hundreds of millions of dollars in family funds.

“Well,” Alex continues, “to illustrate, take the most extreme hypothetical case of one person in our nation of three-hundred-million-plus people receiving all of the income and wealth derived from our gross domestic production, and everyone else receiving nothing, starving and surviving on handouts from the one person, and from whatever they produce off of the land when they can escape this absolute rulers’ compulsory servitude. And while productivity would be lower because



starving people have a hard time working, let us just pretend that GDP is exactly what it is now.”

“Because the per capita scores are mean averages, the stats would say the same thing they do now. They’d say that income per capita is, whatever it is, around fifty thousand dollars per year, because the one absolute ruler’s trillions of dollars is averaged against the other three-hundred-million-plus with nothing, producing the fifty thousand per year mean average. So non-critical-thinkers without any understanding of socioeconomics or economic statistics and averages would look at that number and say: ‘Okay, the people in this nation have it pretty good. The average person makes fifty thousand dollars per year.’ But this isn’t true. It paints a rosier picture for, arguably, public-placating propagandist purposes, in order to make the public believe things are better than they are so that they’re less likely to demonstrate discontent through their beliefs, dialogue and actions, including through their political participation which, of course, is already abysmally low considering people are all, to varying extents, aware that they’re disconnected from any true, direct influence upon government. To paint a true picture and emphasize what should be the priority, the quality of life of the people, the *median* average and an altogether different statistical set needs to be used.”

“And what would that statistical set include, exactly?,” Henry inquires with genuine interest.

“To begin with, again, it would include median averages and the percentage of the public that meets certain quality of life indicators that are purposefully given very little attention, if not outright ignored; indicators that are submerged and undervalued by traditional immoral conservative economists and their ownership class beneficiaries. Since income and wealth are the primary means by which quality of life is determined, as it is wealth that buys greater opportunity, greater

access to high-quality goods and services, comfortable, secure homes, the ability to travel and generally get more out of life etc., the median income and median wealth per capita *relative* to GDP is a core statistic in the Quality of Life Economic assessment of the relative success of any economy; of how successfully the economy converts production to total quality of life.”

“And, again, as a median score it’ll much better reflect the *actual* financial resources available to people and families used to create and maintain quality of life, as it won’t be a number falsely inflated by those very few making millions of dollars a year from large financial portfolios of stocks of those companies most successfully increasing the disparity in quality of life, or from private equity in the bottom line of major business interests not being publicly traded but typically producing the same negative total value result. So long as equity is by and large held by a small segment of the population its fundamental role in determining the growing disparity in income, wealth and quality of life can only continue, and most likely grow. Only by spreading equity, by allowing the majority to be sharing members in the bottom line success of commercial enterprises rather than simply being cost-minimized, exploited tools of enterprise can this growing disparity be reversed, and most of the national and global injustices along with it.”

“But I’m getting ahead of myself. That’s business theory, and I assume we’re coming to that... For the purposes of Quality of Life Economics theory we start with median income and wealth per capita relative to GDP as a primary barometer of how successfully the nation translates its economic productivity into quality of life. We can call the income statistic median income per GDP, a statistic created by dividing median income per capita by GDP per capita, and can call the wealth statistic median wealth per GDP. Perhaps this pair of statistics is already in use by the more liberal economists, though I’m unaware of them, and don’t hear of it. Access to IRS records would also be necessary to generate this statistic. And you couple these median income and median wealth

per GDP stats with one or more disparity measures. Disparity statistics are already in use, of course, though underemphasized from the standpoint of any moral assessment, as nothing highlights the failure of the so-called 'free market' to serve the people as a whole; to oppress their ability to 'freely' pursue open avenues towards improved life circumstances. I imagine my own such stats."

"In one such dreamed-up disparity statistic, you cut the population into five pieces relative to their aforementioned median income and wealth per capita per GDP numbers, giving you five quintiles and ten total statistics, five median income quintiles and five median wealth quintiles. You can then add the differences between each quintiles' median numbers and divide by five to get a mean average disparity for both income and wealth across the nation. This set of statistics, the median averages per GDP and the disparity numbers derived from them, will demonstrate how ably or how poorly a nation's economy is dedicated to the benefit of its total populace. You can round-out this assessment with related statistics, such as by asking: What percentage of the workforce is able to save at least ten percent of its income for non-essential future purchases? A disposable income statistic that can be approximated without a survey by comparing average living costs with the median income statistic per living region."

"What else?," Henry asks. "Let me try to remember... something to do with stock distribution."

"Yes," Alex continues. "The fewer people that own stock in any company, or in an equity fund or any other financial security, the less that its changing valuation influences collective quality of life. So you need to track the distribution of securities, not just their performance. You can do this for every security by tracking the number of shareholders per dollar amount of valuation, say the number of shareholders per million dollar valuation. And you can apply the same statistic to the financial market as a whole, and to the various segments of the

market. How many shareholders are there for every million dollars of value placed in all the firms in the S&P 500? Along with this you can track the percentage of households that have at least, say, five thousand dollars' worth of equity in any combination of privately held or publicly traded companies. And you can do the same thing with all the other traditionally tracked economic indicators, turning them on their head such that they're indicative of quality of life. Housing starts, for example, are generally used as an economic indicator; as an indicator of the health of the economy. But are they, or any of these traditional statistics, *truly* indicative of the financial health and quality of life of *all* those participating in that economy?"

"That is, of course, the most important question, and the one too infrequently asked outside of progressive economic theory such as Quality of Life Economics. For, in this case, the problem is that a very high percentage of these housing starts, these approved new construction projects, become primary residences, with far too many of them representing secondary vacation homes, real estate market speculations or investments by the wealthy that rent them out at extremely high rates to those individuals and families that can't afford to acquire a residence for themselves, and are thus ripe for exploitation. So, instead, you track the percentage of home purchases made for the purpose of primary residency and the percentage of adults that are at least partial owners of their homes, and what the median valuation of primary residences is across states and the nation compared to the median income and wealth in those states and the nation in order to determine how difficult it is for people to purchase and afford to keep their own homes, and how much of these average homeowners' wealth is tied up in their one home. How feasible is homeownership for the average individual and family? And how much risk does this entail, in terms of their overall financial position? The primary residence consideration is a critical component in the whole quality of life equation; a major marker of the population's financial and connected mental and emotional stability, both because it tends to represent a *major* source of financially-induced

stress for the less well-off, and because living conditions are central to quality of life.”

“So you do the same for the affordability of rental units across different cities, states and the nation by comparing the median income of those living in rented units in each area to the median rental price in said areas. What type of financial burden is placed upon individuals and families that choose to live in these areas? By asking these questions and gathering these statistics we have at our disposal information relevant to seeing the connection between the real estate market and the average citizens’ financial stability, even granting us a significantly enhanced ability to predict when real estate becomes an overvalued bubble to the great risk of those overly invested in it and set to lose their homes and fall on hard times when that speculative bubble bursts. For history tells us that those most responsible for these collapses are those who are the *least* exposed to the resultant risk, because related regulation is gutted or non-existent. I was a real estate broker when the last bad bubble burst, and saw firsthand the results of the tying together of the financial and real estate markets, and the unjust exposure to risk position the millionaire and billionaire investors put the majority of the nation in.”

“Is that it...?,” Henry asks, attempting to remember the economic section of Alex’s book.

“No, not at all,” Alex responds immediately. “Ideally, you want to generate as complete a picture as possible. So you also have to track the effectiveness of government and the national culture at generating and ensuring a high quality of life, and at protecting the sanctity of the environment that guarantees that quality of life into posterity. This includes, at the very least, statistics related to higher education, healthcare, incarceration and energy production and utilization. What percentage of graduating high school students go on to attend college, and at what level of long term burdensome debt commitments? What’s

the average cost of a bachelor's degree relative to median income? Considering its role in assuring mental enrichment and the overall quality of life of its beneficiaries, I personally think that higher education up to the bachelor's degree at state universities should be a free, guaranteed right of citizenry, as should health insurance, if not healthcare itself within reasonable limits, and that, short of this, they should be paid for in a way least burdensome to those least able to be further burdened. Trim down the defense budget, tax carbon use and inheritance, cut tax write offs and tie taxation to profitability and distribution of equity. The more profit claimed by the fewer people in the enterprise, the higher the tax rate."

"Healthcare and education are among those select things that *shouldn't* be profitable, because the quality of life cost of taking advantage of those that so desperately need such products and services is particularly exorbitant and morally repugnant. Assuring that young people receive a quality education and the improved prospects and general opportunities to go with it throughout their life *without* being forced to take on the stress of life-long debt, and that individuals and families don't face financial burden and even bankruptcy due to health woes, are among the most vital indicators of progressive nations. Guaranteeing that such basic opportunities to live a decent quality of life are not preyed upon by the unscrupulously opportunistic that believe nothing is off limits in terms of seeking out a lack of advantage to exploit for value extraction is an indispensable marker of national success. The societal benefits are *well* worth the tax-paid cost, and nothing the conservative politician can ever say will convince progressives that anything other than greed dictates otherwise; that fiscal policy should be set to serve *the people as a whole*, not the over-lording parasites so tragically revered by so many."

"From where do you think the money needed to pay those costs might be drawn?," Henry asks. "Do you have any specific fiscal policy ideas?"

"Again, trimming the defense budget and increasing the capital gains and inheritance taxes would be good places to start," Alex responds. "As would, as Warren Buffett has pointed out, preventing business executives from passing investment and business income through so many loopholes and write-offs that they pay a lower *effective* rate of taxation than their secretaries, even as they're the ones most able to absorb the cost of greater taxation rates. Those making the most money off of the efforts of everyone else contributing to the economy, and off the planet's natural resources, *should* pay *effectively* more, not just nominally more. Then there's the possibility of upping the taxation of anything that lowers collective quality of life and costs us all immensely in the long term, such as industrial carbon emissions, coal and petroleum extraction and the sale of things like cigarettes, fast food and inefficient, polluting vehicles. Tax and fiscal policy is its own immense ball of wax, but suffice it to say that they're typically horribly inefficient at creating improved quality of life opportunities for the majority, owing mostly to the greed acting on *both* sides of the equation, taxation and spending equations."

"But back to the educational system. Quality of Life Economics asks: What's the financial burden entailed in a university level education? What's the median cost per year of tuition, board and other expenses at the state university level compared to the median income per year earned for the average graduate? And what percentage of students are forced to take out loans for state level education, and what's the median debt upon graduation? You do the same evaluation with health insurance. Compared to median income, what's the median cost for the higher-quality health insurance policies? Don't allow the statistic to be artificially watered-down by allowing the lower standard policies to

be included in the average. Non-risky, full peace of mind, high quality, low deductible health insurance plans are the only plans worthy of inclusion, so factor in only those with near comprehensive coverage. Ideally, of course, the government pays for bachelor level education at state universities, and for all health insurance policies. Or, taken to the progressive extreme, healthcare is socialized, making it a right, entirely cutting out the profits and business model of the insurance companies that we finance.”

“Healthcare should be about making the body stronger to cure and stave-off disease through a ‘food is medicine’ approach making *much* better use of the extraordinary array of medicinal compounds offered through nature, and by backing healthier stress-coping mechanisms, like yoga and meditation, and by educating the patient on the invaluable rewards of exercise, turning away from pharmaceutical and surgery dependencies that tend to mask disease and weaken the patient over time. Not only are these approaches wiser in terms of being far better aligned with our organic constructs and being sustainable and mostly free from possible negative side effects, but they’re *far* less costly and *far* more likely to lead to a nearing of complete health, as opposed to a healthcare dependency.”

“Then there’s the so-called ‘correctional system’ that usually doesn’t correct a damn thing, and which influences the law enforcement side in a particularly reprehensible manner by fighting for lower standards of crimes deserving of incarceration and longer, harsher sentences in order for private, for-profit prisons to turn suffering into patronage. What percent of the adult population is in prison, and what percentage of these are from non-violent offenses? And what’s the recidivism rate? And what percentage of those that are imprisoned are incarcerated at prisons privately run for profit? All told, the more a nation is able to create the type of socioeconomic environment that keeps opportunity and general quality of life high, thereby reducing the pressures,



disadvantages and desperation that tend to lead to criminality, the better the indication the nation's economic system serves the least advantaged members of its citizenry. And the less often those that are incarcerated are imprisoned again in the future, the more likely the underlying causes of criminality, whether they be in the individual and/or their environment, have *actually* been corrected. And the less profit is made off of incarceration, the less likely the profit motive is corrupting the system of law enforcement and imprisonment. Then you move on to the environmental considerations."

"Right, the environmental assessment, starting with the carbon footprint that's connected to general environmental ruin through pollution and the precipitation of global warming, climate change, gradually more extreme and destructive weather patterns, and environments less accommodating to life," Henry offers. "The less pollution and the more green energy is used, the less the environmental degradation, the stronger the ecosystems, the more the environment can sustain life and support us."

"Yes, spot on," Alex concurs. "And for me, and for anyone even somewhat in tune to the spiritual channel, so to speak, it's not just a human concern. The quality of *all* life is environmentally dependent. The healthier the environment, the more environmentally responsible the business practices within any economy, the greater the overall quality and longevity of life that can be supported. And so the Quality of Life Economics analysis must include some environmental assessment taking into account the costs to the environment of economic and energy production and utilization. The total amount of energy that's produced within the nation through carbon-zeroed or carbon-minimized means is one critical statistic. But this statistic should be a part of the overall assessment also taking account of the source of all energy production and its relative polluting and carbon-burning rate, and which calculates a total score by multiplying the percentage of

the state and nation's energy production from each means by the environmental factor of each score and adding them together, and then dividing this by the number of people this energy serves, such that an environmental cost per capita can be calculated. This same cost can then be applied to different businesses, such as by determining this environmental costs per dollar of revenue."

"The more that the individual households, businesses and general organizations utilize energy derived from green sources, and the more they produce their own energy, such as through solar panels and wind turbines, and the more high-energy-efficiency standards that households, businesses and organizations enlist in their operations, the lower this cost per capita or per dollar of revenue will drop. Transportation pollution and carbon emissions must also be estimated and, as more and more vehicles become not just hybrids but entirely electric, the transportation assessment must take into account the energy production assessment behind the powering of said vehicles, as it matters little if you drive an all-electric vehicle if the electricity your vehicle uses comes from a pollutive power plant. So the average miles per gallon of new vehicles sold per year must be combined with an appraisal of the environmental cost of the hybrid and all-electric vehicles sourced from powerplant statistics."

After a long pause, Henry asks: "Is that everything?"

"I'm entirely certain that you could come up with more," Alex replies, "but I can't think of any more at the moment... So what you do now is create a composite of the combined scores for every state in the nation. You add all the scores together to get your Total Quality of Life Value. How successfully does that state or that nation promote, produce and protect a high and increasing quality of life for its citizens as a whole? You can then compare state against state and nation against nation, even subdividing into county and city comparisons, depending upon your ability to gather economic data. And, of course, you can

attempt to learn from the comparison. And you can compare changes over the years and decades in order to determine relative improvement and its causes.”

“You can apply lessons gleaned from the relative success of one against the relative failures of another. And if you really want to do a comprehensive assessment, you apply Quality of Life Economics principles not just on a macroeconomic level, as per the statistical set we’ve been discussing, but on a *microeconomic* level as well, as the compendium of micro constitutes the macro, and the details of the micro can be very telling, revealing valuable information. This means evaluating individual companies, institutions, systems, and potentially even people. What total value is the company responsible for? With many companies the answer would be a negative value, depending upon your assessment. What quality of life addition does its products or services offer relative to the price at which it offers them? What total added quality of life can be attributed to its sale of goods and services after subtracting what it extracted from the people of the economy and from the planet’s environments for its efforts? To what extent are its business practices ethical and environmentally responsible? How much pollution does it create? How much of its energy use is sourced from green, renewable generation? To what extent does the profit that it produces improve the quality of life of those involved, including its patrons, workers and owners, both domestically and, if it’s a multinational company, globally?”

“This, of course, includes how well its employees are compensated, in terms of salary, benefits and, ideally, equity sharing. The same median, disparity and quality of life measures applied to the broader economy can be applied within each business by, for example, comparing the median executive pay with the median non-executive pay, and determining the quality and general value of benefits offered to the median employee and the environmental costs of its business practices, both in terms of its production and the source and quantity of its

energy consumption. And the whole supply and distribution chain that feeds the company must be considered, from raw material extraction to production to sales and distribution. If it's sourcing the raw materials for the production of its wares and/or is having its wares produced in an area of the world with few, if any, labor and environmental regulations and policed protections, this must be accounted for, as must the carbon costs of transport."

"Okay... So, ideally, with enough people dedicated to deriving, compiling and calculating the statistics, you'll derive a massive database of Total Quality of Life Values for every entity, from the national and state governments on down," Henry offers. "And... right... if I remember correctly from your book, you advised this database be used as a guide for everyone involved in the economic paradigm shift, correct?"

"Correct," Alex confirms. "These measures would serve as effective signposts in directing the shift away from economic analysis supporting the consolidation of value and quality of life toward that analysis supporting a pursuit of *total* quality of life maximization. The total quality of life impact assessment can be referred to as a basis for every economic input and output, and for any decision with economic implications, with statistics such as those we've discussed supporting the effort. The consumer, worker and investor can all take heed. Like many, I long ago realized that everything is connected, and that the causal chain stretches from the past through the present into the future in ways that are impossible to perfectly estimate with our limited perception, instrumentation and other means of data-gathering and calculating."

"Nevertheless, we possess a moral imperative to at least *approximate* the causality of anything substantially impact total quality of life. We must all be aware that economic and business causality are as real as any other form, and are inseparable from total quality of life concerns.

There may be nothing more imperative to this paramount pursuit, in fact, for quality of life requires a wherewithal more dependent upon economic policy and business endeavors than perhaps any other matter. Most people don't seem to think about it or take responsibility for much of this causality, but they're a part of it nonetheless. It's an inescapable fact of interconnectedness."

"When we buy a product or service, we financially support everything and everyone that goes into creating, marketing and distributing it. We contribute to the demand that perpetuates its supply, and the manner in which it's supplied. Most everyone has heard the Latin expression 'caveat emptor,' or 'buyer beware.' Usually this is a reference to the consumer protecting his or herself from an overpriced, poorly produced, even dangerous product. But within the context of Quality of Life Economics 'buyer beware' has *far* more profound, far-reaching implications. Beware of who and what you support, the total net quality of life value of those persons and things being supported, and the practices and chain of causality being perpetuated for all those impacted by that support."

"When I consume chicken or eggs, for example, I contribute to the manner in which most of these beings are treated, when they're conventionally raised and slaughtered, at least. Most of the males are killed at birth, and the chicks are packed into foul, cramped confines, beaks rounded off so the squabbles inevitably resulting from their forced proximity won't harm the merchandise, separated from their offspring, stuffed so full of growth hormones that they can barely stand, and then sent through a conveyor belt slaughtering system. It's torture of a feeling being followed by murder, plain and simple. The combination of our detachment and associated ignorance encourages our complicity because we don't witness the evil first-hand, even when we're aware of it on some level. Out of sight, out of mind, but *never* free from effect. For our ignorance and detachment, willing or not, never relieves us of

our responsibility when we financially reward those directly involved. It makes us complicit aiders and abettors of the moral crimes against life, regardless of the law's failure to reflect that crime. A true progressive must ask why the crime isn't recognized in the first place, and who undermines the necessary regulations that *would* criminalize it. But that's another big ball of wax bound up in the plutocracy's perpetuated evils."

"That's why you don't eat meat?," Henry asks.

"Some wild seafood," Alex replies, "at least on my current diet," he adds with a self-deprecating snort. "But the average American consumes four times the protein they can healthfully utilize. Amino acids, the constituents of protein, are in almost everything, and, generally speaking, plant-based protein sources are *much* more nutritious than animal flesh, in terms of all the micronutrients that accompany the protein in the plant, and contain little to no heart-disease-precipitating forms of animal-based saturated fat. Those plant foods contain *far* more of what we need and what protects us, and minimal to nothing of what threatens the quality and extent of our lives. So if you're consuming whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds and other plant-based protein sources in addition to meat, something which I don't recommend for most people owing to the fact that these plant seeds produce inflammatory responses, you're likely overloading your system with protein, the excess of which your body processes as waste, stressing the kidneys, or converts into body fat, encouraging obesity, especially when combined with an overconsumption of carbohydrates, and especially still unnaturally processed sources of carbohydrates; the so-called 'enriched' grains, which is actually a euphemism for 'stripped-down with a few essential nutrients added back' so that those who foolishly rely upon them don't become malnourished, as they did in the past, the historical cause of the deceitful 'enriched' terminology."

“‘Enriched’ is but one example of food industry propaganda, essentially. Too much animal product consumption also opens the door of dire consequence for your cardiovascular and digestive systems while supporting a factory farming industry that’s irrefutably immoral, and that uses more water and energy and releases more planet-warming gas into the environment than almost any other sector of the economy. Because of energy lost in the conversion of plant food into animal protein, it takes somewhere on the order of five to ten plant calories to produce one calorie of animal protein. Therefore, for reasons of health, morality and environmental protection, I try to eat as little animal-derived food as possible, as such consumption breaches irrefutable codes of ethics and personal responsibility on several critical fronts: health, morality, environmentalism and economics. And when I *do* eat it, I make sure it fed upon its natural diet, as we’re not only what we eat but what we eat eats.”

“Ruminants like cows or bison naturally graze and eat mostly grass, not grains, one of the effects of which is that the *naturally* fed animals possess *far* healthier, Omega-Three-rich fat profiles. I prefer wild seafood overall; not ‘wild-caught,’ as this is another misleading, propagandist term, but *truly* wild. ‘Caught’ is the operative word there; it means originating in a farm, then released and allowed to experience some of its life cycle in a natural environment before being caught and killed. Such misleading of the consumer *should* be illegal, of course, but industry buys the law, to a large extent; an extent *far* exceeding moral acceptability. Just more proof of the plutocracy, as if anyone the least bit observant needs any further proof. Anyway, when you combine the fight for progress across these fronts of the food production and distribution industry, you find that the highest dietary standard is organic, whole vegetable and fruit centric, wild and as raw and local as possible.”

“Organic for environmental ethics,” Alex continues; “for sustainable high levels of soil health and the microorganisms they host, and to prevent the pollution of rivers, lakes, the ocean and the water table from the runoff of unnatural elements. Vegetable and fruit centric for health reasons, for such a diet means you’re likely consuming a ton of micronutrients, but also for moral and spiritual reasons; to prevent the torturous suffering of lifeforms raised in horrid conditions with no lives or purpose other than to be fattened for the slaughter of *far* more protein than we need, plus the food, land and carbon cost of raising animals for slaughter.”

“Raw, uncooked food, because such food is in its whole, unprocessed, uncooked form, and is thereby the most nutritious, quality-of-life-boosting form of the food that you can eat, as the heat of cooking and the mechanisms of processing destroy nutrients and degrade the health of the consumer. Local for many reasons, including the carbon cost of transporting foods, the unnatural, health-degrading preservation elements packed into foods that need to pass very long periods between production and consumption, the mentally and spiritually-enriching benefits of being more directly connected to cultivating crops, the fact that the closer to the source from which your produce is derived the fresher and more nutritious it’ll be, as it begins to degrade upon being harvested, and the economic ethics of supporting local growers instead of massive, irresponsibly-pollutive agricultural and shipping corporations. Ideally, everyone will be supporting a local CSA and growing as much of their own organic produce as their circumstances permit. It has been the dream of many progressives, going back to Thomas Jefferson, that we *all* become enriched in this immensely undervalued way, through the running of our own familial and communitarian gardens.”

“The absolute pursuit of profit absolutely sacrifices what’s best. And on this localist front the ideal is obviously food grown by those that consume it; grown on the very property they inhabit. Such food is the



freshest and most nutrient-dense because, again, degradation begins the moment of harvest, and there's almost zero cost of transport, environmentally or monetarily, and no need for chemical preservatives. But it's also critical to realize that 'organic, vegetable and fruit centric, raw and local' needn't be an all-or-nothing practice in order to serve as a highly valuable guide. It's the platinum standard; the pinnacle of progressive, quality-of-life-supporting consumption, in my opinion. The total value your dietary habits create or cost the world, and especially yourself, is relative to your level of adherence to this highest standard. My own consumption is closer to a gold standard. This property doesn't produce everything we eat, for example. And, again, I eat some wild seafood and cook some of my food."

"The extent to which I'm a proponent of Hippocrates' 'food is medicine' approach to consumption can't be overstated, as nothing is more vital to the quality of one's existence than health, that which impacts every thought, action, outlook and potentiality of the individualization. And nothing is more determinant of health than what one consumes. And to that end, with all my research and experimentation, I've learned that the Standard American Diet, perfectly acronymized as 'SAD,' leads to gut damage, inflammation-spiking fatty acid imbalances, the displacing of more nutrient dense foods and the conditioning of the body to build rather than burn fat. I've come to wholeheartedly embrace an approach to consumption that adheres to the way our ancient, pre-agricultural-revolution, even pre-fire ancestors ate; an approach that consequently honors our evolved biology's by keeping as much of our food as possible in its most nutrient dense, natural, entirely unprocessed and uncooked form, as cooked food not only drastically degrades nutrient density but creates toxic, carcinogenic and inflammatory compounds. If over half our food is cooked our bodies react as if to an invader, triggering what's called 'digestive leukocytosis.'"

"To all these ends, to maximizing all the vitality-maximizers and minimizing the vitality-and-longevity-minimizers, I've become a

raw-plant-centric paleo eater, and close to a 'Raw Pesca-Paleo.' That is, I emphasize an approach that I believe is in line with human evolution, how we evolved to eat for highest health, and which doesn't cause autoimmune and inflammatory issues. One principle that I've picked up along this front: if it sprouts directly, *don't eat it*, as Mother Nature protects *all* of her unborn and newly born offspring, flora and fauna alike. This means cutting out grains, legumes, seeds, dairy and nightshades due to their toxic lectin counts, instead emphasizing raw, organically-sourced healthy fats, vegetables, fruits and truly wild seafood, not deceptively labeled 'wild caught' seafood, which isn't actually wild. Wild seafood has the healthiest fat profile amongst the animal products while being a lot less carbon intensive and not promoting the environmental ruin and abject cruelty of conventionally raised-for-slaughter land animals. I also eat probiotic fare like kimchi, sauerkraut and kombucha and eschew inflammatory excess salt, plant oils and added, unnatural concentrations of carbohydrates, especially all forms of sugar."

"Over time such a disciplined, educated diet cleans out the system, solves the unnaturally permeable gut issues rampant in our society, the 'leaky gut' underlying all autoimmune issues and most modern health ills, remedies inflammation, strengthens the immensely symbiotic healthy bacteria colony in our guts and gradually makes the body a natural fat burner, rather than a carb dependent body fat accumulator. I consider this approach, which runs largely parallel to the popular Ketogenic, Whole 30, Paleo, South Beach, Atkins, Wahls and similar approaches, the 'Evolution Diet,' meaning that which we physiologically evolved through the *vast* majority of our genetic history to consume for complete health and vitality."

"It's a natural, organic diet of whole, nutrient-dense foods that places your body and brain in the mild fat burning state of ketosis in which we evolved to thrive as hunter-gatherers, entirely eschewing

all those post-agricultural-revolution foods, cooking and processing methods traced to modern consumption-based ailments, which are *most* ailments. It's disturbingly telling that somewhere around *three-quarters* of healthcare costs and health industry profits are based upon *lifestyle choices*, the majority of which are made up of *consumption habits*. These entirely preventable ailments *drastically* diminish the quality and extent of our lives while enriching the doctors and surgeons and pharmaceutical companies that we'd largely run out of business with anything like the aforementioned approach."

"So you're basically saying that, ideally, we must be aware of the full impacts of our economic choices..." Henry says. "Which includes every aspect of our lifestyles. An immensely tall order, indeed."

"Ideally, yes, we'd be fully aware of the total extent of our impact upon the world; upon the quality of our own lives, upon the lives of others, and upon the health of the environment," Alex replies. "But, as you imply, this isn't feasible. It's the target for which we aim, but rarely hit dead center. Alas, with the right economic tools and tracking mechanisms we'd at least have the ability to *see* the target, making it all the more likely that our arrow could come near to its mark; a mark we can't currently see. It's near impossible to hit a target in the dark, after all. And it's only the progressive or idealist that has the strength and courage to search and shoot for the target in the first place, and that strives to be principle-bound. This includes the principle that knowledge is not only personal power but, through causality and conviction, empowers all of life; everyone and everything our choices touch."

"Quality of Life Economics is about focusing on the production and gathering of information relative to the connection between economic activity and the impact upon the quality of life of the people and planet as a whole. *That's* the knowledge that it seeks to accumulate, champion and disseminate in service of life. The easy route, of course, is usually

the opposite route; the route of lowest value. In this case, the easiest route is to pretend that the target doesn't exist. The easiest route, in other words, is not to pay attention or, not far from the lowest standard, to pay attention only to conventional, blindingly-misleading indicators that betray the service of life."

"Most seem to consume based upon whim and pure hedonistic desire; based upon instant gratification alone. And this method of buying and consuming is *extremely* costly when extrapolated across the entire global consumer base. Also, of course, the progressive practice of analyzing the total costs involved in the things we purchase, use and consume goes well beyond application to the food industry. It applies to every sector of the economy. When we buy a product or service that has a negative total value we're complicit in that reduction in total quality of life. If you patronize a company that does evil, *you* do evil. If you patronize a company that produces great value, that does great good, *you* do great good. There's no way around it, regardless of your ignorance, detachment or justifications."

"It's the same when we interview for a position with a company, or decide to invest in a company; we're supporting and encouraging that company, and whatever profession we decide to vie for and whatever practices the company continues thanks to our support and the support of others like us. Investors don't generally take this into account. It's only profitability and future stock market valuation increases and decreases that're prioritized. This is pure greedy irresponsibility. It's morally and spiritually hollow, as it ignores the negative total value impact produced when we invest in, buy from or work for companies whose endeavors yield negative values for life as a whole. This is why it's *highly* irresponsible and detrimental to life for us to determine our professions based solely upon our compensation, the way of the bourgeoisie."

“While it takes great moral development and discipline to live by this principle, it’s irreplaceable and undeniable: Not witnessing or being directly adversely affected by your actions *doesn’t* eliminate the effects that you cause, or absolve you from your contribution to those effects. You’re part of the causal chain, admitted or not. The same goes for value-adding effects, of course. If a tree falls in the forest and you didn’t see it or hear it fall, *it still fell*. And if you took a hack at it with an axe before handing the axe over to someone else and walking away, you’re inseparable from its fall. Don’t be self-centered, be selfishly rewarded from fostering the greatest quality of life with what you contribute.”

“Is this why you decided to become a writer, and to work to develop a property that would sustain all the needs of its occupants without depending upon the production of food, energy and other commodities from sources you feel as though you can’t trust, and don’t want to depend upon?” Henry inquires.

“That’s what I’m shooting for,” Alex replies. “What *we’re* shooting for, I should say. We still depend upon the outside world, and to a great extent this might be seen as unavoidable, especially considering the fact that the world has so much to offer that we can’t, or shouldn’t, dismiss or ignore... so many people, places and ideas that stand to enrich us in ways that financial enrichment can’t come close to approximating. I think that determining your profession, what you’ll dedicate your life to, is a *very* difficult decision that shouldn’t be taken lightly. It’s one of the most important determinations anyone can ever make, in fact, and will have wide-ranging effects rippling across the world, most of which we won’t be privy to. I think that when we strive to make this decision, we have to consider two factors above all else: conviction and aptitude. Developing your own outlook on life must come *before* determining your profession in order for that profession to truly represent you... for you to be ‘true to yourself,’ as is said. I discussed this with someone the other day...”

“Unless your work represents who you are, unless you contribute to what you believe in to the best of your ability, you won’t feel that highest sense of fulfillment that comes from finding your purpose. And, again, this is a two-fold objective. You have to combine your conviction with your aptitude. Determine how you’re best naturally endowed to contribute to the outcomes you most believe in *through* the organization that provides the best avenue by which those outcomes may be pursued. And if that avenue can’t be found, *pave it yourself*, or along with other men and women of shared conviction. Ultimately this will yield the most satisfaction and sense of purpose *because* it’ll represent your best possible personal total value contribution, or close to it. This satisfaction will be all the more attainable for those that do the required self and societal examination and research in order to, again, find their conviction, aptitude and the best organization through which to apply them.”

“If, on the other hand, you forsake such a total value greater good in the pursuit of mere profitable extraction of the most exploitable people and places of the world, following the purely capitalistic model, there’s no way to avoid feeling unfulfilled and morally and spiritually accosted by your personal contribution to such an unjustifiable opportunity cost. This is the curse of those that serve the greedy impulse encouraged in the West and most of the globalizing world. Unless they’re a sociopath, amongst the Trumps of the world to whom capitalism tragically caters, they feel an internal conflict, guilt and hollowness because they’ve forsaken their truest self and their greatest possible total value contribution to the world, trading it for the pursuit of profit and material accumulation.”

“And while not *necessarily* the case, the more profitable a company is the more likely it is to have a negative total value. This tendency is due to cost-cutting measures and to artificially inflating the sales value

of products and services by controlling supply. Most practices centered upon minimizing the cost of doing business can be traced to worker and buyer exploitation and environmental degradation and lack of protection; to taking advantage of people's disadvantage and to extracting natural resources and manufacturing products in places with the poorest environmental and labor protections."

"The lower the protection, the lower the cost. The less educated and privileged the worker, the more desperate they are for a job, the less they can be paid, the lower the cost of their productivity dedicated to a bottom line made larger through their exploitation. In fact, the stock market encourages *decreases* in total quality of life by rewarding companies and stock owners for this exploitation; by creating a competitive environment in which companies and their executives and investors are *rewarded* for their ability to extract as much value as possible from life and the planet, and reinvest in that life and planet as little as possible. For this reason the more profitable the company and the more appreciative its stock market history, the more likely it is to have a negative total value. This is what stockbrokers, investment bankers, equity fund managers and the like are *really* selling: *reduced overall quality of life*. And if consumers, job seekers and investors are armed with quality of life scores, then they'll at least have what they need to make a more positive total life value decision."





**CORNERSTONE THREE**

***BUSINESS COLLECTIVISM***



“From what I recall the business structure that you advocate for in your book is designed to facilitate the economy’s capacity for increasing overall quality of life by drastically curbing the exploitative nature of the equity-consolidated company that delivers the vast majority of the value produced by its growth and its profitability, its bottom line, to a very select, excluding group of owners,” Henry says.

“Yes. Well said,” Alex replies, impressed with Henry’s representation of his concepts. “It’s the exploitative nature of commercial enterprises that extract value from the vast majority of those contributing to the economy, and that funnel that value into the hands of a very exclusive class of major equity holders whom thereby possess the wealth to buy into newer and ever more consolidated ownership positions, positions of privilege that exclude the vast majority. This causal chain produces the disparity in income, wealth, opportunity and general quality of life which is itself the cause of the vast majority of national and global injustice, and most of the suffering caused in turn.”

“It’s the consolidated equity of the conventional business, and especially the sprawling, market-dominating corporate model, that makes modern business practices and the effects they produce in the world inherently parasitic. The host, the global populace and natural environment at large, remains far weaker and unfulfilling of its greatest potential quality of existence because the one percent parasites keep us in that state by leeching away our potential through their disadvantage-based oppressions. And, as I recently stated, the traditionally one-sided ‘Free Market Economics’ model and the plutocracy that controls the political establishment and the messages beaming through our TV’s maintains this parasitic status quo, corrupting, corroding and eroding everything in its path, which includes almost everything.”

“The greedy and brainwashed will condemn this truth as socialistic, but they don’t actually *understand* socialism, or how and why morality dictate that socialistic principles be balanced against capitalistic

principles: The absolute pursuit of profit corrupts and degrades everything that it touches. And the fewer that claim that profit, the truer this becomes. The more that profit is consolidated by fewer corporations and their ever fewer major stakeholders, the more wealth and power is given to an ever more exclusive few and their paid cronies, the more the profit motive corrupts, both because it's more easily and efficiently controlled and wielded, and because it better represents the few taking from the many. This is one reason why the establishment and spread of a business structure such as the model that I conceive of, what I call the Business Collective, is so imperative: it counteracts this movement of consolidating quality of life value that's costing humanity and the planet so immensely and unsustainably. The pervasive success of the Business Collective would represent a major shield against the corruptibility of the human mind, as well as a countervailing force fighting disparity in all things, including and boiling down to the egregiously growing global quality of life disparity."

"Don't get me wrong: Profit is, at least at our current stage of mental development and spiritual awareness, integral to incentivizing the productivity, innovation, risk-taking and meritocracy of just reward that are fundamental to the ability of any economy to increase the overall quality of life of those that participate in and benefit from that economy. But it's my belief that if any economic contributors are denied that incentive and meritocratic justice, then they remain mere tools in the profiteering tool belt. They're oppressed victims whose value is extracted by bloated and ever more bloating, unscrupulous parasites."

"Which is why you focus on equity, correct?," Henry inquires. "On a claim to the bottom line?"

"Right, because it all starts in that one place: business structures that use the majority to enrich a small and decreasing minority," Alex responds. "The inherent injustice of the traditional capitalist model of consolidated business ownership and its major equity holders' claim

upon the vast majority of profits accumulated into wealth is revealed in the zero-sum concept: Every dollar of profit claimed by one individual or group is a dollar that can't be claimed by all other individuals and groups, such that increasing the profitability of the one to five out of every hundred individuals with any significant equity holdings must necessarily decrease the profitability of the other ninety-five to ninety-nine individuals. That profit is produced through *many* inputs, including some innovation and risk-taking, but mostly through hard work, extracting finite resources from the planet, and taking as much advantage of workers and consumers as possible. Nothing is free. Everything has a cost. That cost has *always* been unsustainable, both socioeconomically and environmentally. And both that cost, and the opportunity cost paid by the vast majority through the conventional equity-excluding business structure, remain both beyond calculation and mostly unrecognized."

"So when, as we often hear, up to five percent of the population claims ninety-eight percent of the profits through their consolidated control of the equity of a business, most of the cost is incurred by the other ninety-five percent of the population and the planet, both in that those ninety-five percent of the people lose the right to claim ninety-eight out of every hundred dollars that the global economy produces, dollars that they'd use to increase the quality of their lives in ways that *far* surpass what the exclusive ownership class does to increase the quality of their lives with more money, *and* owing to the fact that much of the rest of the negative side balancing the zero-sum equation boils down to the business being profitable *because* its products and services are marked up so high above their cost to produce, and because every disadvantage of the workforce and lack of environmental protection is exploited to create the negative side balancing the zero-sum equation. Not to mention the fact that it's that vast majority that tends to live in proximity to the environmental ruin, and is vulnerably exposed to the increased risks of pollution and extreme weather patterns which the

excluding minority tends to be insulated from thanks to spending some of their extracted means on said insulation. It is, in other words, the consumer, and especially the vast majority constituting the workforce, and the planet which that vast majority depends upon to assure its continuity and basic quality of life, that pays the negative, balancing side of the total value equation. Most people, most forms of life, are zero-sum losers, paying these costs entirely unrecognized and unaccounted for by traditional economic and business paradigms.”

Henry says nothing, poking at a mound of Redwood needles with a stick while reflecting upon all the companies that his family’s investment firm has speculated on over the years, and how many of them he’d subsequently heard about on the news and in liberal publications with regards to everything from bribing public officials to denying employee benefits to constraining supply in order to artificially boost profits to outsourcing production to cost-effective locales like India, China and Southeast Asia.

Alex continues: “Honestly, it pisses me off that I had to uncover these truths on my own, because their popular dissemination, that even hinting at the existence of such ideas in school, would threaten corporatism and the plutocracy it puppets and that wields that power in so many deceitful, concealed ways, including by influencing lesson plans from elementary school all the way through the highest ivory towers of academia. Why? Because truth and profitability tend to be inversely correlated. There’s no money in teaching the moral, progressive perspective. It isn’t just history that’s written by the inheritors of lands and fortunes wrought by military and economic conquest.”

“Every academic discipline has been tainted by the twisted motives of those afflicted with the disease of greed, and it takes a questioning, skeptical, historically-informed and so-called ‘cynical mind,’ which simply means recognizing the inherent nature of being a self as it

relates to motive, just to break free from the confines in which conservative tradition attempts to cage our minds before we can even *begin* to see the truth: that the interrelated motives of greed and power are the driving forces of history, and that but a select sect of morally and intellectually developed men and women, many of whom have been adversely affected by those driving historical forces and have witnessed first or second hand the suffering its injustices have wrought upon those unable to defend themselves, that've found the conviction and courage to battle the brainwashing on behalf of the brainwashed. Thankfully the pressures that push for moral progressivism have been mounting for so long that it's starting to break through to the political stage, as evidenced by the idealism-killing obstructionist tactics that had to be used against Obama and, more recently, by the rising popularity of rare progressive politicians like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. While I don't know if she's the original source of the quote or only the most recent individual credited with saying it, Warren may have summed up this whole fight as succinctly as possible when she addressed the winners made through losers, zero sum nature of profit and power consolidation with one astute aphorism: 'If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu.'"

"It reminds me of that scene in the film *Braveheart* when Gibson's character, William Wallace, is attempting to rally the Scottish clans to his cause of fighting for Scottish independence, but, in so doing, has to prevent those clans from fighting amongst themselves for the bribes that the King of England extends in order to keep them divided and conquered, for if those that may oppose a ruling system fail to unite and form an indivisible front, then it's easy to divide, repel and scatter that opposition... Wallace says something like: 'You're so busy fighting for the scraps that fall from the King's table that you've given up your God-given right to something far greater.' Whether we're fighting for the falling scraps or are the main course itself, the message is the same: We don't truly have a seat at the table, even though those that *do*

possess such a seat do everything in their power to convince us that we sit beside them, citing such fallacies as 'we're a democracy' and the 'everyone can get rich' American Dream that sidestep the truth: We're a plutocratic republic in which most of us have been rendered effectively voiceless, and in which not everyone can get rich, as this would leave no one to get rich *off of*. In *Braveheart*, Wallace was talking about Scottish nationhood and the right of his people to determine their own destinies, but the principle holds true today across the U.S. and the globalized world in the broader political and economic context dramatically affecting all of our lives."

"And that broader context is..?," Henry asks, playing along.

"Again, that 'we the people' have no true control of or ownership stake in commerce or the plutocratic republic that, especially through the Republican Party, does everything in its avaricious power to prevent any popular movement away from the ability to exploit the people for the consolidating of value in as few hands as possible," Alex replies. "Regardless of what they say to conceal it and dupe the gullible, this objective defines the conservative agenda and has throughout American history, both domestically and in our foreign policy, from the Cold War to Vietnam to the surreptitious undermining of countless populist rulers and the insertion and propping-up of brutal pro-corporation dictators."

"It's their one *true* motive. Freedom, democracy and the like are merely used as justifying façades to fool the non-critical-thinkers; to trick those that can only see what's said, not the truth concealed beneath the façade of misinformation. And so long as we remain dogs domesticated for *their* self-serving purposes, strapped to *their* sleds, mushed to pursue *their* greedy interests while content to fight amongst ourselves for the scraps that fall from *their* tables, possessing but an illusory seat at those tables, we can never be 'we the people,' only the



ever conflicted, divided, distracted, oppressed, fractured factions of a nation and a race sacrificing its greatest total quality of life potential in delay of our greater destiny.”

“Now, I’m *not* saying there shouldn’t be a table, so to speak; that there shouldn’t be private ownership and interests and a market economy, as forcing everything to be held in common regardless of contributed value is unjustly non-meritocratic, and I strongly believe that you need incentive, reward and private property in order to encourage productivity, efficiency and innovation, to permit people autonomous developments and to avoid the pitfalls history has demonstrated when it comes to outright socialism, such as the inefficiency of planned economies and communism’s invitation to tyranny, as few individuals and governments can be trusted with the essentially absolute power possessed by the communist regime. What I *am* saying, however, is that everyone needs a seat at the table and that, for the best interests of the vast majority, not everything, not items of inelastic demand due to their immense quality of life value, should be on that table. Commerce requires the same in order to be just and promote total quality of life: seats for everyone at the table. No, it doesn’t require an equal position at that table regardless of merit. But business must be made of people working *with* one another as fellow owner-operators rewarded a merited equity share of the bottom line, not *for* a greedy minority that hoards all the equity. *Equity or exploitation.*”

“I was always taught that it’s but a matter of hard work and determination,” Henry replies after a moment of reflection. “That anyone can become wealthy and prosperous if they want it bad enough...”

“There’s no denying that hard work is irreplaceable,” Alex replies. “And that through ability, hard work, education and determination a person hailing from an underprivileged family has a chance to fight their way through the parasitic business structures that economically

enslave and repress the potential of most lower classmen, so to speak, and can, through that fight, hope to improve their station and enter the thinning middle class. And a very select, determined, capable few even break through to the upper class that does everything it can to exclude them from its thin minority membership, for the greater the number of owning upperclassmen, the less each may own, something which is understood at least on a subconscious level by those in the ownership class. But by and large, the lower and middle classes are tools in the belt of an ever more exclusive class of profiteering major corporate equity shareholders. And the fewer advantages these tools of profit possess, the more they're taken advantage of, for exploitation always exists relative to the ability of the exploited to fight off exploiters whose exploitation is not only sanctioned but encouraged within any few-holds-barred capitalistic economic system such as that which reigns over the western and globalizing world. And when the vast majority still believe in that version of the American Dream that you just cited, all of the injustices inherent to systemic exploitation remain concealed behind the lie that this is all simply the inalterable economic reality, and that you might as well accept it, else be naïve."

"In fact, the immoral exploiter often calls his or herself a 'realist' when justifying his or her actions, for, as has been said since the ancient Athenian Empire ruled the Hellenic world: 'The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.' This is where mankind's overall evolution has been more or less stalled for the last twenty-five-hundred years. This immoralist-labeled-realist ideology is still used to justify evil action today; a so-called realism that denies the *true* reality of man's inherent *corruptibility* for the commonly accepted belief perpetuated by religion and aristocracy that man is inherently evil. This belief is encouraged in order to coerce and control us in the facilitation of wealth and power consolidation. For if we believe that we're inherently evil, we can justify our evil and the evil of others as unavoidable."

“Similar to believing the American Dream, this misleading, disempowering belief permits the justification of the commonplace American Nightmare as an unavoidable aspect of the one and only possible reality. And businesses taking advantage of weakness is the most common form of evil that everyone involved in business, including the consumer supporting reprehensible business tactics, as I mentioned, contributes to. Saying ‘it’s not personal, it’s just business’ is one of the most cliché and misleading of justifications, for nothing impacts more persons, more workers and consumers and qualities of people’s lives, than business; than commerce. True, the losers in business are typically not personally *targeted*, they’re simply in the way; they’re set between the profiteers and their profit. But that’s precisely the problem: people and planet are bulldozed over as if they aren’t only *not* sacred, but as if it’s entirely natural and even ethical to do so. That’s the business ethic: run roughshod over anything set between you and the almighty dollar, only pretending to possess a different ethic as a marketing ploy to manipulate public perception for profit. Most ‘persons’ lose, so the results are *very* personal.”

“Implying that it’s okay to wrong people and destroy the planet because that’s simply the nature of business is essentially what’s being said. It’s an indictment of conventional business structures and tactics, and a concealed admission that Free Market Economics is a moral failure. And, as we’ve discussed before, evil can never be logically justified as an inherent quality of humankind or an inevitable outcome of humankind’s interactions, as the truth is that evil isn’t an inherent characteristic of humankind, isn’t an inborn quality of humankind, regardless of what the Church says to guilt us into submission, and what the corrupted big business interests repeat to justify their evil actions. In truth, evil is an action and outcome born of *inherent limitation and corruptibility*. This is a fact, not an opinion. I’ve proven it both to myself and many others, including our group here, I hope. There’s an *immense*, indisputable difference between inherent evil and inherent

corruptibility built upon mental and physical need and limitation, as we've discussed. And, in the difference between them, the lies of the aristocratic ownership class, the conservatives, the 'realists,' and those historically controlling minds through the Church are revealed and rendered erroneous. They're the unjustifiable justifications of the weak-minded and immorally greedy."

"The consolidators are leading people away from truths that, if known and well enough spread and accepted, would set people free from their yoke," Henry adds. "They're perpetuating falsities that keep people bound to pull the plows of profit, the yields from which they're excluded."

"Nice," Alex says. "Not a bad metaphor. And you're absolutely correct. For without a share in the bottom line, you're essentially a modern day servant or workhorse, segregated from enjoying the sweetest fruits of economic production and relegated to a cost of doing business. This has long been the case. And it's of course due to the fact that the prevailing societal status quos across the western and globalizing world hails from conservative traditions and values perpetuated by political and business empires and their ruling dynasties. And most of these largely irredeemable traditions and values, and the beneficiaries that invest in their continuity, will have you believe that anything else, any economy comprised of anything other than the traditional equity-consolidated businesses, is non-free-market, and is therefore not free and evil and akin to communism. As clever as this lie is from the standpoint of propagandist efficacy, it's still a lie, and the collective cost of believing it is beyond appraisal. It's tragic that the majority, very sadly, and to their own disservice and the disservice of everyone with whom they come in contact, swallow such propaganda whole without mentally chewing and digesting it, letting it pass through them to be excreted out the other side as the crap that it *should* be considered."

"As we've discussed, the freedom to be protected from the exploitations of those with greater wealth and power is just, if not more, important to the well-being of the people as being free to do whatever you like. The greatest freedom comes from denying the corrupted the freedom to do whatever they wish, including controlling the government, preventing true democracy and setting about tearing down anything that inhibits their capacity to extract as much of the world's finite value as possible, for such abuses deny us the possibility to freely pursue our greatest potential and highest happiness. The wiser individual knows that the more valuable freedom is this freedom *from*; the freedom from the aforementioned evils, in the broader context of protecting society from the unlimited, unrestrained trespasses delivered upon it by the prevailing powers ruling over it, and the freedom from one's more self-destructive inclinations born of need and the mental and physical corruptibility that go hand-in-hand with being a physical and mental self."

"The personal type of 'freedom from' granted by the development of discipline; by way of the difference between knowing what's right and *doing* what's right; by knowing what's in one's best interests and having the will to enact it, and deny anything that precludes it. A wise friend of mine once asserted that *this* form of freedom, positive freedom, is the truest and most valuable form. And it's a form that laissez faire capitalism purposefully ignores and undermines. We can't have slim customers who refuse to give over to powerful parasites, now can we? Furthermore, absolute capitalism and absolute socialism are the extremes. It needn't be such a simple dichotomy of all production and property being either commonly or privately owned and operated."

"The notion that capitalism and socialism are inherently at odds and even mutually exclusive is false. I believe the best system lies in their considerate convergence, protecting certain segments of demand from being taken advantage of, using tax revenue to do a better job of

paving the way for broader public benefit and guaranteeing that those that contribute to the bottom line receive a merited share of that line, not a restricted, cost-minimized straight-line compensation regardless of profitability and contribution. In the modern day political parlance, the word 'socialism,' much like the word 'terrorism,' has become mostly hollow demagoguery; propagandist terms used to rule over people by taking advantage of their ignorance, fear, vulnerability to peer pressure and other mental shortcomings. These terms are largely insubstantial."

"That's quite an assertion," Henry responds. "And, I imagine, not one that would curry much favor with most people."

"And that's by design," Alex immediately replies. "Those terms are part of the compendium of tactical terminology used to produce knee-jerk, prejudicial, emotional reactions of condemnation of anything that conservatives deem 'un-American' or 'un-democratic' or 'unpatriotic' or infringing upon our 'freedom,' as if, again, freedom is a one-way street that everyone benefits equally from keeping wide open, even as the overly-privileged minority plow over the vast majority and keep us under their tread by way of that street *being* so wide open; wide open to exploitation. It's mass mind-control strategy used to tear down anything that challenges the ability of the ownership class to continue to reinforce and expand their capacity to extract and consume the vast majority of the world's wealth and power to the gross detriment of the vast, excluded majority of people. If you read, watch, write, talk about or otherwise support any idea or activity that shines a spotlight on the injustices produced by this one-and-only conservative pursuit, then you paint a target on your back as an 'anti-American.' And if people start to listen to your 'socialistic' ideas and 'unpatriotic' posts or writings or group meetings, you're an insurrectionist primed for NSA surveillance. Call me delusional, but I've reason to believe that I'm being monitored myself, as a couple of *Facebook* ads I've created in the past and a *Kickstarter* campaign I concocted as attempts to drum-up

support for projects that dealt with such subjects were mysteriously wiped-out. And when I contacted customer support for those sites I was informed that my accounts were hacked, and had to be deleted as a result. Now, who would have the motive, means and opportunity to pull that off? It reminds me of that line... what was it again? Something like: "To find out who rules over you, find out who you're not allowed to criticize."

"The freedom to think, speak and act in any non-violent manner is supposed to be sacrosanct and guaranteed by the Constitution, but as soon as you speak against prevailing systems and commonly-held conceptions you're looked upon and potentially treated as an enemy of the people, even as you're *actually* a champion of the people dedicated to their best interests; to their collective victory. And if you become too active in your pursuits than half the American public and the imperialist hawks in Washington and anyone loyal to them in the intelligence and armed services wings is comfortable calling you an anarchist on the verge of terrorist ideation. Ironically, however, the US military and the actions spurred by imperialistic neo-conservatives have terrorized more people across the planet since World War II than anyone. And yet, those that resist their violent meddling, incursions, coups, puppet dictators and occupations, whether in their beliefs, writings, thoughts and actions here, or through the violence-against-violence resistance in invaded and occupied lands abroad, are the ones branded 'terrorists.'"

"Of course, not all terrorists are created equal, and there are some that attack indiscriminately that're deserving of the condemnatory moniker. But that doesn't change the fact that non-critical-thinkers on the right of the political spectrum are conditioned to believe that anyone that fights against corporate-sponsored imperialistic adventurism designed to expand the ability of the few to extract natural resources and profit off of the many, but packaged and sold as the spreading of freedom and democracy to the unjustly ruled, is immediately 'evil'

or 'unpatriotic,' when, in fact, most of the time the exact *opposite* is the case."

"It's outright Orwellian: the truth being masqueraded as lies, and vice versa. Fact puppeted as fiction, fiction painted as fact. For, in the aforementioned cases, evil is what's being *resisted*, and true patriotism is fighting for the best interests of the majority of citizens, whether that fight is political, macroeconomic or in the microeconomic business environment. And that current conventional business environment is most certainly *not* the best that we can do; it's *not* in the best interests of the majority, and it isn't 'free' as a form of business organization either, because we're *not* free to own any piece of the pie until we can afford a buy-in price that most will never be able to ante up. That said, the type of business structure that grants us all the freedom to earn a merited share isn't purely socialistic either."

"Because you're not arguing for public, governmental control of property and the means of production in all but the most sensitive and select segments of the economy, correct?," Henry asks.

"Right," Alex continues. "Socialism is public ownership of industry and property. What you want is a system that naturally fosters a broader distribution of opportunities and benefits, *not* mandated equality regardless of merit or total public takeover, both of which would be both unjust and, in the long run, ineffective. Except in the case of selected segments of the economy supplying necessities for guaranteeing a decent quality of life, and that are always in high demand regardless of the price of their products and services due to this necessity, what are known as inelastic markets because demand doesn't stretch with increases or decreases in the price of supply, I don't think that socialism is the answer. As I said, certain markets of inelastic demand, such as for higher education, utilities, health insurance and even, in my opinion,



healthcare itself, *should* be socialized, because people, especially people that can least afford it, shouldn't have their needs, often their very financial and even literal survival, exploited for profit, increasing their stress load and their financial burden and lowering the quality of their lives because they aren't free from having their *needs*, not their desires, but their direct-line-to-basic-quality-of-life *needs* taken advantage of. This is why these foundational goods and services *shouldn't* subject to the profit motive, because exploitation in these markets is *particularly* costly to the total quality of life of the people. And certain such vital goods and services can be cost-effectively provided if freed from profit. With fiscal policy supporting the best interests of the people as a whole, they can even be taxpayer paid, rendering this immense popular value at a minimized cost-to-benefit ratio."

"Take higher education, for example. Except for the inevitable political backlash and obstruction that would come from for-profit educational institutions, teachers unions and student-loaning financial schemers, there's no good reason why the instant, unlimited communication and edifying capacity of the internet couldn't be used to encourage programs following a model like *Khan Academy* to take over a *major* portion of the higher education system at an *astronomically* decreased cost to the student, or, ideally, to the state. Add some regional test-taking facilities and the ability of all of these purely internet-based educational institutions to award degrees signed off on by accrediting boards, and any properly motivated individual could receive a college degree acknowledged by employers at minimal cost, such that even if the students and their families have to pay that cost they're nevertheless freed from crushing debt as they virtually attend courses that can be just as educational, empowering and professionally-applicative as the education provided by any brick-and-mortar institution. Of course, they'd miss out on the social skills development and fun of attending a 'bricks and mortar' university, the only major drawback to such a system."

“You’re suggesting that the prestige of attending and receiving a diploma from well-reputed higher education institutions comes at too high a price, especially without financial aid,” Henry says.

“Definitely,” Alex agrees. “I mean, don’t get me wrong, I personally see immense value in a lifetime of learning and in being liberal about the education process, challenging and asking questions and constantly expanding one’s edification and perspective, never discontinuing the learning process which, for the most part, can’t really be discontinued anyway. For experience is the greatest teacher, and books can be read anywhere, and are only restricted to the academic experience for people who detest and generally underestimate the value of reading. And discussions with learned individuals are, of course, possible everywhere as well, and offer an equally valid educational pathway. It’s the *social experience* of attending a physical university that can’t be simulated, and which I, myself, have missed since leaving academia, as both that level of socialization and open-minded learning, the energy and attitude and communally-fostered intellectual expansion, are hard to find outside the ivory tower. While it doesn’t fit the conservative paradigm of education and the way that conventional society equates degrees framed and mounted in your office as an indication of your worth, I long ago realized that *far* more is learned *outside* the walls and books of the formal educational environment than within, especially over an extended timeline, and even more so when it comes to naturally inquisitive individuals whom insatiably consume and digest ideas and information.”

“Again, personal enrichment is about experience of *all* kinds, from reading to exploring to every interaction we have and every observation we make, and this empirical edification occurs far more extensively outside the traditional classroom than within it. But to the extent that formal education is beneficial and required by employers, it need

not place an unnecessary financial burden upon those that'll *always* have a demand for it, especially the young that're currently commonly saddled with a burdensome debt for what should be a guaranteed, cost-minimized opportunity. And while we're discussing education, I'd add that there are at least two subjects that I believe are *highly* undervalued in conventional curriculums, to the great disservice of students: aptitude as it pertains to careers, and nutrition as it pertains to quality of life. There's nothing more important to quality of life than health, and nothing more important to health than consumption. And there are few bigger decisions anyone makes in their lives than determining what they want to do with their lives professionally, and a lot of young people need guidance in this, especially if they're anything like me: predisposed to find interest in most any subject."

"What are you suggesting, exactly?," Henry inquires.

"There should be dedicated courses in high school that continue through at least the freshman year of college on aptitude testing, the exploration of career courses and financial aid planning, as well as on budgeting and paying off loans, and the best grants and loans to seek etc.," Alex continues. "It shouldn't all come down to the student finding the motivation to go to a career center and doing all their own research, for the simple reason that not everyone is that highly organized, self-motivated and disciplined, and we must, if we deign to become a truly progressive society, aim to serve everyone, perhaps most especially the indecisive or the vulnerable, stressed or otherwise disadvantaged; those whom, in this case, can't summon the courage or, in my case, are too overwhelmed by the endlessness of options, to do what's required to discover the best path for them; those lacking the ability to fully take advantage of everything required to put them in the best possible position to succeed in the future. I mean, if you're not preparing students for the best possible future *post* matriculation, how are you not failing them? And how is extensive aptitude testing, career

exploration and navigation of the financial student aid system, which shouldn't be necessary, as it *should* be free... but how is the absence of these services being integral to the educational system *not* representative of such a failure? High quality education should do a greater service to the students through such alterations in the curriculum, and by not placing a huge financial burden upon those that can't afford what *should* be a right. And this setting up the youth for future success, and for the providing of great value to society, is but *one* example of how making the guaranteed, inexpensive yet immensely valuable supply of a commodity approaching an inelasticity of demand the priority over the profit motive can yield a *far* greater total quality of life output."

"I believe I've said this already but, because of its importance, I feel the need to reinforce the fact that the core Quality of Life Economics principle isn't applicable to just private pursuits; to the activities of privately owned businesses and their effect upon people's lives through the economy. Rather, it's a highly valuable, even invaluable principle in that it can and, I believe, *should* be applied to any consideration of the expending of resources, including not just money but time, energy and general effort. The question should always be: How best to translate this resource into *total* quality of life? To the improvement of the existence of ourselves and as many others as possible? Politically, the subject of inelastic goods and services is directly applicable to the moral imperative of good governance to provide for and guard against the exploitation of anything that's necessary for assuring a high quality of life."

"Earlier I alluded to the fact that our government's fiscal policies are woefully inefficient at translating public resources to total value for the public; limited resources that're commonly tragically spent to maintain avenues for the wealthy to maintain or increase their wealth, including through our 'Defense Department' and its positioning our corporations to tap into overseas markets of all kinds. Tax write-offs,

or deductions, as well as government-paid subsidies to big business, also sacrifice fortunes every year to those already sitting on massive fortunes. Tax code and fiscal policy is complicated, of course, but they all too commonly render a paltry, even negative value of return on the public's limited resources, especially if you account for the opportunity cost of such misuse."

"What cost?," Henry continues to play along.

"The cost of sacrificing the opportunity to use such funds to invest in anything that substantially, even incalculably adds to the public welfare, even, and I'd say *especially*, if this involves spending public money to help the wealthy increase their wealth, as that wealth tends to be used to consolidate more of the limited wealth and power to the disservice of anyone but the already wealthy. It's crystal clear to anyone with progressive inclinations that governmental budgets, federal or otherwise, require a *drastic* overhaul in this Quality of Life Economic manner; in ways imparting great, broad benefit across society. We all know the spending categories that I'm alluding to: increasing environmental protections, improving opportunities for the disadvantaged, upping green energy investment and spending on social services, providing free or at-cost higher education and healthcare, increasing spending on parks and communal areas; increased 'public spending' in general; even the financing of collectively owned businesses like the Business Collective that I advocate for, which would, over time, produce *massive* total quality of life improvements. With our current fiscal policies we're missing inestimable opportunities to provide for the public good, to equally inestimable reductions in total quality of life return."

"So, in line with such taxpayer-paid or cost-cut, broadly-benefitting goods and services, your business concept, Business Collectivism, seeks to close the disparity in quality of life across society further by better distributing the profits produced by the majority of the economy,

reinforcing the lessons and priorities advanced by Quality of Life Economics, going from a macroeconomic to a microeconomic, business by business basis?," Henry asks.

"Yes," Alex replies. "The economic theory I put forward in *Time for True Democracy*, Quality of Life Economics, is a theory of economic assessment aimed at promoting success in terms of how successfully an economy supports the continued creation and maintenance of the greatest possible total quality of life. This as opposed to other traditional measures of success that disregard the quality of life measure that I believe must be made paramount if your economic analysis and policies are bent on producing just progress. And its principles, statistical focus and studied indicators are based upon facilitating the only moral goal: the creation of as much total value for life as a whole. On the level of the individual business, the just, or most meritocratic, progress is made possible by plugging people into the bottom line; by making people *partners* in the institutions to which they dedicate their efforts and much of their lives. This is, of course, not unlike the purpose of true democratic design. For no system can truly serve all the people if the people don't have an actual seat at the table; if they're not a directly plugged-in, directing part and bottom-line beneficiary of that system. And, again, there's no reason to be tied to black-and-white, all-or-nothing conventional concepts."

"When it comes to the theoretical contest between socialism and capitalism, between the private and public ownership of property, and in consideration of the means of production and the distribution of economic value, it's clear to me that it shouldn't be a contest at all, but a calculated collaboration between the two relative sides of the spectrum. Dispensing with the unjust aspects of the two while preserving and promoting the most valuable aspects of each promises the greatest output and total quality of life impact. The goal should be to maintain the merited incentive and reward of hard work, risk-taking and ingenuity

of capitalism while supporting socialism's increased opportunities to pursue the best interest of the people as a whole. This would include redirecting the tax dollars of, ideally, a purified democracy towards removing certain economic segments from the total pursuit of profit and the prevention of the exploitation of need, as well as preventing unjust over-consolidation of commercial profit and all the disparities in opportunity and quality of life and the evils that such disparity lead to."

"So, just to be clear, you'd leave commerce open to private business and market mechanisms in all but select inelastic, fundamental economic sectors," Henry summarizes, "like education and healthcare and... maybe utilities and basic foodstuffs. And when it comes to basic foodstuffs, if my memory from past discussions serves me, you help protect them through federal, state and local governments advocating for and investing in widespread, affordable community supported agriculture subsidies, and in low-rent plots in community gardens and the like whereby most anyone is granted access to affordable, locally, organically-grown produce. And you say that you design your business concept around the blending of the most valuable aspects of capitalism and socialism..."

"Yes," Alex concurs. "You don't preclude profit or force a redistribution of wealth or command the economy or foster government participation in or ownership of anything but the most vulnerable markets most sacrosanct to the guarantee of basic opportunities and quality of life. Instead, you naturally encourage an environment that preserves the complementing qualities of the two systems in terms of how they naturally synergize to support the best interests of the vast majority. Again, pure socialism fails for many reasons, including because it tends to consolidate too much power in the hands of those controlling 'public property,' thereby inviting nepotism and tyranny. Of course, outright capitalism causes much the same calamity, except that the oligarchy which *it* invites lives through corporations rather

than public institutions. But pure socialism also fails because it decimates the incentive to work hard, innovate and take risks; because it undermines the motives and rewards which render so much of the value within any economy and its individual commercial operations and their operators.”

“Even if you were to discount merit and fair reward, the simple fact is that we’ve not yet evolved to the point where we can depend upon most people to provide their best effort, harness their greatest ingenuity and take the type of chances that lead to the best rewards for the greatest numbers, including themselves, based solely on love for their country, on a sense of honor or community, on a strongly ingrained and well-developed morality, on a heightened spiritual awareness of the inseparability and interdependence of life, or on any of the other aspects of elevated consciousness. This was Mao’s naïve overestimation in communist China before the country began to blend in more of the ‘free market:’ that patriotic zeal was sufficient to compel people to follow a planned economy, regardless of the contribution-to-reward ratio.”

“But even if you could produce such a non-compensatory-based emotional, spiritual, patriotic fervor, it would remain unjust to remove commensurate reward for hard work, innovation and risk from the commercial system. It’s reasonable to argue that people *should* personally benefit from providing more value, whether that benefit is financial, moral, spiritual, political or otherwise. Ideally, reward should be multifaceted, actually, involving all of these forms for their combined force of motivation, if for nothing else. But, of course, financial reward tends to be preeminently motivational in a society in which most forms of value are for sale, including many forms that shouldn’t be, as we’ve discussed. So where the choices of consumers, or demanders, of any commodities nearing desire, rather than anything nearing necessity or fundamental opportunity, is driving the demand, natural market mechanisms tend to produce the best, most just results, both



because they justly reward those that produce more value, and because more value is created for the people to benefit from, with this increased value production being due to value-to-cost increases made from the existence of reward-based incentives and market competitions. Not to mention the fact that the more markets that're socialized, the more powerful, bloated, slow-moving and open to corruption and nepotistic collusion between industry and the government that controls those markets becomes, which often leads to tyrannical regimes and their commercial cronies that've historically given socialism a bad name, betraying its ideological core."

"Pure socialism places all of the nation's wealth and power in the hands of the government and its hierarchy which, again, is just as great of a threat to the people as capitalistic consolidation moving towards oligarchic plutocracy, as in the US. Possessing such total control only encourages corruption, cronyism and nepotism on the way toward tyranny, as Nazi Germany and the socialist regimes prevalent in Russian, Chinese and Cuban history, citing some of the best-known examples, have essentially proven. Again, however, I feel compelled to emphasize the fact that these are only failures of outright socialism in states lacking sufficient democratic controls balanced by well-spread private business interests and equity distribution, which is why so many progressives, like Senator Sanders, call themselves *democratic* socialists, recognizing that socialism unbalanced by true democracy is treacherous, inviting the cronyism, nepotism and tyranny of the past. But to consider the failures of these aforementioned historical regime to be demonstrative of *socialism's* futility is erroneous and misses the point; it misses the lessons offered by the respective histories of these states as applicable to the political, economic and business theories and structures which we've been discussing."

"So pure socialism and especially communism destroy merited incentive and lead to tyrannical regimes and autocratic rulers that suck the life out of the people," Henry offers. "But the same thing happens

if economic and political power are too wide open, too 'free' in the traditional sense of those with power having too little restriction on their power, such that those with all the advantages are 'free' to do much the same as autocrats and their backing bands of cronies."

"Yes, exactly," Alex replies. "Going too far the other way, from the socialistic extreme to the capitalistic extreme, produces a similar result. When politics are plutocratic, when prevailing economic theory emphasizes wealth creation while paying little more than lip service to the total quality of life application of wealth and all other resources of value, when business structures funnel all the profit generated by the economy to an excluding clan of owners who use those funds to buy politics, you end up with the same unchecked, unbalanced wealth and power inviting the same collusion between business and politics; the same corruption, cronyism and nepotism. Except, with unchecked, no-holds-barred, entirely *negatively* free capitalism, you move towards corporate oligarchy, with mega corporations and political factions hogging all the wealth and power in a contentious yet often cooperative relationship with one another whilst the disparity in quality of life between them and everyone else, those lacking the *positive* freedom from having their disadvantages, including their inability to buy into equity positions, can only grow."

"This is due, again, to the zero sum nature of the control and extraction of the ownership class produced by equity-consolidated profit-producing business, resulting in a thinning middle-class and a large portion of the population living a painfully low quality of life struggling to survive because far too much of the reward produced by the economy and all the power divvied-out politically is passed to a very select and excluding group of people, encouraging greed and corruption and sucking an extremely disproportionate portion of the value out of the majority's endeavors. Therefore, it's clear that the only just forms of politics, economics and business empower, motivate and reward all people in a merited manner while protecting them

from over-consolidation and its propensity to propel corruption and destruction of the greatest good.”

“People are, in other words, generally unaware that communistic and capitalistic extremes are *equally* enemies of the people. And the government has to be well enough insulated and power-distributed to protect people from traditional versions of purely capitalistic business structures that’re just as unmerited as communism, but for the opposite reason: instead of communism’s destruction of just reward because everyone is theoretically given an equal share and disallowed from owning and operating the means of production regardless of merit, regardless of their contribution of value, pure capitalism perpetuates injustice by rewarding the privileged few that can afford to buy into an ownership position, and that’ll inevitably use their equity exclusion to further consolidate their grip on commercial revenue and its amassed wealth, the only set claim to any major piece of the business bottom line. This places everyone else in the exploited position of being parasitically preyed upon and excluded from the best benefits of profitability. What all this amounts to is that the best way to promote an economy that works to improve total quality of life while maintaining merited treatment of economic participants and encouraging of innovation and hard work is by restructuring the balance sheet.”

“Into the Business Collective,” Henry preempts.

“Right, the Business Collective,” Alex replies. “That’s my recommendation, at least. Whereas Quality of Life Economics aims at nurturing a more naturally fertilizing macroeconomic framework, the overall nurturing and supporting of the root systems of the tree, if you will, for growing the greatest total quality of life, Business Collectivism aims at training the tree branch by branch, bringing it fully into the photosynthesizing light and assuring it doesn’t grow out of balance. It’s the more micro-focused part of the growing process; the daily watering, tending and disease prevention, ever-vigilantly protecting against

imperiling pathogens. One of the critical concepts here, one that I feel I need to mention right off the bat, and which I discussed in the book and may have mentioned to you before as well, is that while there are many ways to *reduce* injustice, that it's vital, if one aims to *permanently* rectify those injustices, to target their *causes*, not merely their effects. You always, if at all possible, target the disease so that you eventually don't have to alleviate the symptoms."

"In this case Quality of Life Economics attempts rectification by pointing at traditional businesses' and prevailing economic theories' failure to focus upon the correct indicators of the quality-of-life-based success of the economy. It's all but impossible to clear a path toward the greatest good when you're failing to look in the right direction. This theoretical failure of the prevailing 'free market' economic theory supports a massive disparity in the distribution of the financial value created by all economic activity and enterprises amongst all those that contribute to that value creation, which in turn produces all manner of injustices based upon disparities and opportunity, freedoms and privileges of all kinds, the vast majority of which aren't free and guaranteed, as we're taught to believe through conservative dogma, but, instead, must be *purchased*. The proper application of socioeconomic principles traces this causal chain of injustice and resultant suffering from the few fundamental sources to the far more numerous effects, as if from the trunk of the tree, the disparity in income, wealth and opportunity produced by prevailing economic theory and business structures, to its multitude of branches and leaves. Crime, poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, alcoholism, neglect and misery of every order spread across the spectrum of low quality lives, all that evil which tends to grow commensurate to disadvantage, might make up the tree's smaller branches, with the victims being like the leaves."

"Granted, there are factors that go beyond business and economics, like education and even the inherent capacities of the person and those

who raise and nurture him or her and all of their roles in assuming some responsibility for not being more resilient; for allowing the pressures and horrendous inequality of opportunity they face to lead to crimes and abuses that tend to be passed on to their children, in one example of the cold, cruel, crushing snowball effect's cyclical, perpetuating nature. But I find that those that suffer are placed in their position more by a failure of the overarching systems serving them, or *failing* to serve them, and all of society, than by any other factors, *by far*. Remove the pressures and disadvantages that directly lead to crime and abuse, and crime and abuse will inevitably plummet. And those pressures and disadvantages are largely political and economic in origin; in source cause; in root disease. And we can take *many* measures to address the symptoms of that suffering, building and administering homeless shelters and drug abuse treatment centers, promoting food drives, pouring capital into charities that direct their funds towards giving those born into low income families toys and cost effective education and better professional opportunities and on and on."

"Again, the short-term acts of misery mitigation are at least as numerous as the number of smaller branches on a massive, fully grown tree," Alex continues. "But these are treatments of *effects*, not treatments of the causes. If you don't cure the disease itself, if you don't address the core, root sickness infecting the trunk from which everything else branches, the symptoms will only continue and you'll forever be scrambling to minimize effects, spraying fungicide on the leaves as they continue to fall away. You have to go to the *cause* if you want to create the greatest quality of life value improvement, and if you want that improvement to actually last. What's making the tree susceptible to fungal and bacterial outbreaks in the first place? Rather than spending all of your energy and resources examining and trying in unsustainable vain to treat every leaf, dig down into the infected root system and inspect the diseased trunk, identifying the one or few core causes

which, in turn, will illuminate potential cures that, when successfully, sustainably treated, will naturally set the leaves up to flourish.”

“When you look at the billionaire that steps over the homeless man sleeping in front of his office building, and that makes his fortune off of cost-minimizing, highly pollutive manufacturing operations in India, paying workers a fraction of what they’d earn in the West, and that daily fight to keep their families alive on their subsistence wages, you can’t allow yourself to be content with merely attempting to enact short-term treatments of the symptoms he spreads; of the disease of greed that has infected every system failing the human race, which he may be said to represent. If you *really* want to rectify the situation, you can’t stop at feeding and sheltering the homeless man and fighting for labor and environmental protections here and abroad. These are noble causes, but not the noblest; not the ideal, most valuable, most fundamental and universally-impacting of causes.”

“You have to go to the *source* of the symptoms that he’s perpetuating: where his company’s profits come from and how they’re distributed, and why his company’s structure prevails, and how and why the economics and politics props up and protects that lopsided structure. Look at the root disparity feeding up into everything, across the totality of the socioeconomic, business and political landscapes eventually spreading out to deny the homeless man all the many possible paths he might pursue toward an improvement of his circumstances, or which might have prevented the reality of his circumstances in the first place, were the root injustices not obstructing such a pursuit, or had they not led to the pressures, suffering and insufficient opportunity giving rise to his pitiable, desperate situation. Your remedy has to be *systemic*, in other words. And the parasites feeding off of the general population *through* that system will *always* fight to conceal this fact.”

“If I recall from your book you say that the only direct treatment of the disease is creating a system in which everyone involved in the production of profit receives a merited share of that financial value such that its creation symbiotically benefits all contributors, instead of being parasitically drawn from the majority to expand the financial value of the few major equity holders,” Henry recalls. “This is the only way to assure the profit serves to increase rather than stifle or reduce all the opportunities for the total populace of commercial contributors to improve the quality of their lives, ideally both domestically and abroad.”

“That’s right,” Alex continues. “It’s about systemic parasitism versus systemic symbiosis. The first is about suppressing the life and potential of disadvantaged agents in the greedy service of those that take advantage of their disadvantage, oppressing the disadvantaged at best and weakening them at worst, while the second is about just, merited mutual benefit. As with the political and economic theories we’ve discussed, and in parallel with my monoexistential theory as well, the Business Collective is a design for encouraging justice on the micro-economic level by ensuring that enterprises are inclusive and symbiotic, rather than promoting the imbalanced exclusivity and parasitism of the conventional business structure. Quality of Life Economics explains the macroeconomic angle; why traditional economic theory and business practice stifles or reduces total quality of life improvements, and why it’s a moral imperative that this economic theory is thereby dispelled and displaced by a theory that encourages a far greater total value result.”

“In league with this, Business Collectivism offers a general structure for addressing this inherent injustice on a microeconomic, business-by-business level, instilling justice on a case-by-case, grassroots basis. The idea is that businesses, the constituent entities of the economy, should serve the best interests of *all* of their contributing members in a merited manner, and thereby naturally encourage the pursuit of the greatest total quality of life in partnership with Quality of Life

Economics. Similar to the cooperative model, and largely in parallel with the concept of the 'employee-owned enterprise,' enterprises which are typically employee-owned only to a minor degree in order to deceive and placate employees and patrons, in order to buy goodwill, Business Collectives are privately owned enterprises that diverge from conventional private business structures in one critical manner: everyone that works for the enterprise owns some piece of the enterprise, with that piece determined by merit."

"Ownership is the key, then," Henry suggests. "Like stock sharing programs? But these already exist, do they not?"

"Yes, ownership is key, because that's how profits are distributed: based upon the accounting equation," Alex replies. "But you don't stop with the conventional 'employee-owned' paradigm; with reserving some paltry portion of the equity for the employees vis-à-vis a stock sharing program in which a miniscule fraction of company stock is reserved for employees, essentially in order to trick them into thinking two percent of the company's equity being reserved for otherwise salary-and-wage-capped, straight-line-compensated, poorly-incentivized employees qualifies the company as being 'employee owned.' You start by *eliminating* the position of employee; by reordering the balance sheet and making everyone a legitimate owner-operator. The basic accounting equation dictates that you subtract the cost of liabilities from the value of assets in order to derive equity. Without putting everyone that contributes to the enterprise in the equity column, cost-cutting exploitation of those remaining in the liabilities column is inevitable, as will be that enterprise's contribution to the growing disparity in income, wealth and quality of life and all the resultant socioeconomic injustices that result across America and most of the globalizing world as an effect caused by the equity-consolidated model that makes most everyone a cost of doing business."



“And there are many ways that the merited share of equity may be calculated for everyone contributing to each enterprise, but the way that I usually envision that calculation is through a two or three part evaluation. And this evaluation is pretty basic. The first part is based upon personal financial investment, and might be called the 'investment value' that's translated into equity, with all equity to be paid to owner-operators through dividends derived from the net profits of the subject business per assessed time period. As in traditional business, when you invest in the start-up or continuity of the going business concern, it's just that you receive equity in return. When the Business Collective is launched everyone brought into the fold, from the CEO to the janitorial staff, is awarded the opportunity of a capped amount of money that they may invest, and, later, when people cash-out or the stock is split or in need of more cash to maintain or grow its operations, that they may invest or reinvest in the company, with these investments translated into increasing equity shares with, of course, increasing risk if the company were to go bankrupt. However, the total equity that can be garnered in this fashion must be limited, as it can never be the case that any owner-operator may simply throw funds into the business for increasing equity shares and control of the enterprise to the disinterest of their fellow owner-operators, as this would defeat the very purpose of the Business Collective.”

“However, generally speaking, when there's room for investment *all* owner-operators, regardless of their position within the company, must be awarded an opportunity to increase or maintain their equity interest, with all said owner-operators given advance notice of said opportunity regardless of the cause, whether it involves expansion plans or the company being 'cash poor' and not 'liquid' enough or whatever the case. No owner-operator can be excluded from the opportunity, and they must all have the same capped amount that they may reinvest whenever this takes place. And, obviously, to maintain the meritocracy, the more money that the person puts in the more of the enterprise they

own, and the more of the net profit that they're entitled to as dividends paid out at predetermined intervals based upon a contract that every new member of the company, every owner-operator, agrees to when they join the company."

"The second part of the merited equity share evaluation is also fairly conventional and intuitive: it's based upon the importance of the person's role within the enterprise, and might be called the 'positional value' assigned to the owner-operator. The more value the individual contributes to the Business Collective, the more responsibility they take on, the more skill, knowledge and experience they bring to the table, the more their performance translates into the relative financial success or failure of the operation, the greater the equity share they merit. Each owner-operator receives a 'positional value score' that translates into a part of their equity share. This, too, is a part of the contract every newly joining owner-operator signs upon being officially brought into the fold. It goes without saying that everything must be comprehensively detailed in the Business Collective formation and new owner-operator contracts."

"And the third part is the owner-operator survey, correct?," Henry attempts to recall.

"Yes," Alex replies. Henry definitely read the book. He didn't just skim it. "This part *might* be deemed less necessary than the first two parts, but I think that it can play an important role in motivating and incentivizing improvement and consistency of performance, as well as in creating a positive atmosphere that encourages greater collaboration and an increased sense of communally-reciprocated respect between the owner-operators. Of course, it might also be argued that it increases the chance of internal company politics, diplomacy, duplicity and popularity contests playing too large of a roll in the compensation of owner-operators and the decision-making within the organization..."

it could go both ways at the same time to some degree, but I think that it has more potential to increase incentive and goodwill than not. This value, which might be considered the 'democratic value,' could round-out the picture and help keep everyone honest."

"Essentially, what this third part entails is the distributing of a form via paper or an email or a log-in on the company website where, once a year or every six months or every quarter, based upon the contract the original owner-operators sign when the Business Collective is launched, it's disclosed to every current owner-operator where every owner-operator's positional value score currently stands; at least the score for every owner-operator of the subject, relative branch of the company, if the company has branched-out to include multiple locations. After reviewing this information, each owner-operator then marks for every relevant owner-operator included in the survey, including themselves, whether or not they believe that they deserve a higher score, a lower score, or already have a score accurately reflecting their relative contribution to the company or branch."

"There might be five options, say: deserve a much lower score, deserve a lower score, possess an accurate score, deserve a higher score and deserve a much higher score. They'd go through the entire owner-operator roster in this manner. Alternatively, and perhaps most effectively, every owner-operator may dedicate their total assigned democratic point value, which should be equal amongst all owner-operators, to someone or something *other than themselves*, and wouldn't be required to consider *every* owner-operator or other entity, but only those whom, or that, they want to benefit or improve. Perhaps, for example, everyone is awarded ten democratic points to assign per quarter. Someone might choose to distribute five points to one owner-operator that they consider grossly undervalued, and five points to, say, the retirement fund or the office party fund. Another owner-operator might dedicate one point each to ten different owner-operators. And

with all three values, investment, positional and democratic, the original Business Collective contract must recognize the percentage of net profit dedicated to each portion of the calculation."

"The percentage of equity owned by every owner-operator won't be static, obviously, but will be dynamic based upon at least the first two portions of the evaluation, and upon how many owner-operators are brought in or move on over time, and is calculated using a pre-established equation for calculating all equity shares. If this third portion of the evaluation is included, a final adjustment is made to the overall equity distribution based upon the averaging of these responses, with this adjustment being based upon whatever the forming owner-operators agree to when they establish the enterprise. They might, for example, permit this democratic value to make up to a ten percent adjustment in the positional value score, or, in the alternative that I just mentioned, to have up to a ten percent impact upon the total value, or total score, assigned to every owner-operator and eligible fund or other entity. And, I would guess, the contract and founders would rarely allow this adjustment to go over a third of the total calculation."

"So, for example, if there's no faith in the current CEO who's currently contractually awarded a ten percent positional value score, a company-wide survey reporting that he or she deserves a much smaller score might drive his or her share down to somewhere between seven and nine percent, with that other one to three percent re-distributed to those voted as deserving of greater value contribution scores, and with all of this being separate from the first portion of the score, the investments and reinvestments. Everyone that's ever had a job knows the type of thought that this honors: this person is undervalued, and that person is overvalued. This third portion of the evaluation will allow every owner-operator the satisfaction of expressing that sense of injustice in a tangibly rewarding or correcting manner that alters the net-profit dividend awards for the owner-operators until the next survey is completed."

"I like it," Henry replies. "So the three factors are plugged into the equation and the share of the net-profit-based-equity is distributed as dividends accordingly. One thing that occurs to me, however... one possible issue with this whole scheme of yours. Won't this distribution of equity make the decision making processes more difficult – next to impossible? What if all the owners disagree on a direct course of action for the business? Does it come down to which decision has the most equity backing? And even if total equity breakdown is how decisions are made, won't this take too long? It just seems like it would be inefficient; like business would suffer because by the time the decisions are made it's too late, or too much is lost... I think that you'd have a competitive disadvantage compared to more traditional business structures."

"Just because equity is distributed amongst all the owner-operators in a merited manner such as we've just discussed doesn't mean that all decisions have to go through all the owner-operators," Alex replies. "That's one possible means for making decisions, but I think that voting through equity would only apply to certain big picture decisions as spelled out in the common-most organizing contracts for the Business Collectives. The day-to-day decisions would likely go through the head officers of the Business Collective, just as they do in more traditional structures, and for the good reason that you mention. The CEO would have the final say in most decisions, and, compared to traditional business structures, would be just as motivated, and likely more motivated, to make decisions for the best long term interests of the company; for the benefit of all of the owner-operators; because he or she would be one of the foremost of those owner-operators and, having the most responsibility, would tend to possess far more equity than he or she typically would under any traditional stock sharing plan."

"At the same time, you could make certain that the other owner-operators feel like they have influence over these day-to-day decisions *through* the CEO and other chief officers by having the organizing

contract include a one to four year service period for those officers, or at least the CEO, similar to the terms served by politicians, except with unlimited term potential. If the other owner-operators, who vote based upon the percentage of equity they control, have confidence in the CEO, they keep him or her running the company when they vote every one to four years; otherwise they vote for a replacement. Providing the possibility of ousting owner-operators at every level and compensating them for their equity shares, if they're vacated from the company entirely or demoted to a lower equity-holding level, would be another possible element spelled out in clear language in the contract."

"I see," Henry responds. "So, is that it, then, the entire structure of the Business Collective?"

"Well, there's more that can and probably should be said about the Business Collective concept," Alex replies. "Like the fact that this business structure not only distributes the bottom line in the merited manner that I just described, but also stands to *drastically* improve the morale within these businesses in comparison to the typical morale experienced within and used to motivate the contributing members of the conventional business model. Most everyone that's an employee in a contemporary, conventional business, especially wage earners, and especially still those working for the larger businesses more disconnected from any sense of real community identity, feels the truth of their subjugated position."

"Even if they don't conceptualize it as such, they know to some degree, or have some sense, that they aren't *really* an honored part of or partner in the enterprise, but are closer to a tool; a piece in a profit-building machine that's excluded from experiencing the greatest benefits of its production. This certainly affects their attitude, their self-esteem and the regard with which they view, think of and treat not only their organization and co-workers, especially their bosses and owners whom are the likely focus of their negative, resentful feelings

and low morale, but society as a whole. With orthodox workers, their only real incentive to work hard is to maintain their jobs in order to survive, but even then they'll work only as hard as needed to keep their jobs; for no other reasons."

"In the Business Collective, most of this emotional deadweight and animosity will be removed, and executives are more likely to be seen as respected, leading partners than as overlords. And I think that owner-operators that receive any share in the bottom line will not only be better motivated because they know they'll see tangible financial benefit for their harder work, but they'll inevitably possess an improved attitude and state of mind when they feel that they're a legitimate part of their enterprises and the economy at large. It's similar to true democracy's ability to instill a sense of belonging and contribution to society as a whole, rather than our being given mere lip service as contributing members, which most of us sense is false to some degree and which, in turn, inevitably breeds a persistent low-level sense of disrespect and discontentment in its disconnect, and a low voter turnout and concern for political matters as a result. Regardless of the efficacy of the lip service, we all sense the difference between the pretense of inclusion and its authentic form. And when it comes to feeling like a contributing partner in the businesses for which we work, I believe that this will, in turn, have a positive impact upon not just our professional lives and relationships, but upon *all* of our relationships, and upon our general outlook on and approach to life."

"And since everything is connected," Alex continues, "I believe that these effects will positively snowball. The increased motivation that comes with receiving a share in the bottom line and the increased self-esteem and regard for their coworkers-turned-partners will encourage more productivity which, thanks to the Business Collective structure, and especially if backed by Quality of Life Economics and true democracy, will be better utilized in creating and sustaining improved total quality of life. All contributing citizens will be more optimistic and

even, dare I say, possess more faith in and carry greater goodwill for the human race. This will ripple across society, combining with the waves emanating from all the points in which Business Collectives are established. People's hearts will be better fused with their efforts as a result. It's like the love of Spirit, of feeling you're a true part of the whole, that the true identity is an infinity of one, rather than our being individual, separated cutthroat combatants divided between the over-advantaged exploiters and the disadvantaged whom they exploit *as a rule*; an unevolved, oppressive rule that the so-called 'realists' would have us believe is natural and inevitable. People sense the disunity, and that they're being used and forced to squabble amongst one another to secure a decent piece of the commercial pie in order to live a decent quality of life, and this has an undeniable effect upon all of us, even when we aren't consciously aware of it, for we're inevitably still sub-consciously accosted by it."

"I can see that," Henry agrees, thinking of the constant lack of enthusiasm, the sour scowls and the general sense of unhappiness he sees in the faces of most every worker that he comes into contact with.

"Compared to traditional employees, the fully inclusive membership of those individuals comprising Business Collectives will be in the position to benefit in all these ways," Alex continues. "They'll make more money and be less vulnerable to all the injustices created by the disparity of income, wealth and opportunity across traditional societies; they'll be better motivated to work and possess greater self-esteem; they'll likely create greater value for the world and will hold their enterprises and fellow owner-operators in higher regard, and are likely to develop superior attitudes and general outlooks on life and their prospects. They'll feel like they're vested members in their enterprises and in society in general, a benefit that would be magnified were they to become contributing members of any form of true democracy such as the form which we've discussed. Their voices would *truly* be heard."



"They'd have some direct control and be duly rewarded commensurate with the value they produce through the enterprises in which they'd finally be legitimate, vested members. They'd no longer be tools. They'd no longer be marginalized, subjugated or unjustly taken advantage of. They'd be a real, directing, much-better-benefiting part of the economic chain and the political system, and there's no way that they *wouldn't* feel this, regardless of how they'd conceive of it within their minds. Can you imagine what this might do for humankind were it to spread nationally and, ideally, globally?!"

"It's hard to imagine what might be engendered, but I think that I have some sense of it," Henry says while staring up through the branches of the canopy of the little grove, the clouds briskly banking across the sky, propelled by the accelerating winds of the warming morning atmosphere.

Alex continues: "Most evils endured by the global populace are rooted in socioeconomic injustices; in the fact that people experience stresses from the pressures and disadvantages that they face, with these stresses tending to be commensurate with their resources and opportunities, and tending to snowball into further compounding stresses. There's little risk to health, wellbeing and quality of and outlook upon life that *doesn't* connect to financial, material, opportunity and basic necessity disparities, and which doesn't compound as these risks and disadvantages cruelly roll together. All of it correlates. Abuse, neglect, drug and alcohol dependency, homelessness or living in squalor and abject poverty, shorter lifespans... all of it connects to not having the means to avoid an increase in the risk of experiencing such ills."

"And all of this, in inseparable turn, connects to overarching economic, commercial and political systems that fail to serve the majority due to being corruptively dedicated to siphoning off far more than a

just share for the minority. Yes, personal responsibility, work ethic, determination, resiliency and the like play a role as well, and it's also true that the more ability that one has the more one is likely to escape his or her disadvantages. And yet there's no greater cause of misery than *systemic* failure, including the failure of systems to assist those experiencing the aforementioned disadvantages. Social studies support this fact, but I don't need them, only logic. For it's simply cause and effect. The more pain, pressure, disparity and disadvantage endured by any person or group, the more likely they'll endure resultant misery in turn, and the more likely all said ills will compel them towards criminality."

"So, with regards to the ideal which every progressive is driven to seek, considering the concept's potential for increasing socioeconomic justice by cutting such disparities and all of their connected ills, it would be *extremely* valuable to find any and all means to encourage the spread of the Business Collective structure and its benefits across as wide a swath of the national and, ideally, the *global* economy as possible," Alex continues. "One major means for accomplishing this might be through government support of the Business Collective based upon a broad public understanding of its vast potential benefits for the people as a whole. To promote Business Collectives the federal and state governments could, for example, establish a new business filing type that grants Business Collectives tax advantages, or could subsidize or provide part of the start-up funds in the Business Collectives in exchange for an equity share, up to a certain max amount, say ten percent, in the Business Collectives that voluntarily apply for and receive this government investment. I can even imagine cutting out taxation of these enterprises entirely by trading that business income taxation and the typical tax dodging of business income write-offs for the share in the dividend-based equity held by the government at all levels that government contributes. Government could, in other words, be a small albeit empowering vested partner in collectives."

"In addition to or in lieu of these promotions, the local, state and federal governments involved could grant people the right to give money directly to a general Business Collective start-up fund in a manner which would be treated as a donation that could be used as an income deduction. Or, if this is seen as unfair to conventional businesses, the government could allow these tax-write-off donations to be made to an organization whose mandate it would be to assist applying owner-operators with the logistics of establishing Business Collectives, and which would be empowered to serve as consultants for those Business Collectives. To serve as a bastion for this total-quality-of-life-expanding business structure, I envision the establishment of a new governmental agency that would help organize the processes involved in establishing new Business Collectives, and would be on call when problems arise that the Business Collectives need assistance with."

"The agency would devise and implement a system for bringing people together based upon mutual interest and qualifications vetted for complementing qualities of experience, ability and the possession of available funds for start-up investment. Working from a default contractual template, the agency would arbitrate the discussions and negotiations under which new Business Collectives would be contractually established between the original owner-operators. The agency would then help the newly established Business Collectives file with the relevant city and state agencies. It may also assist in procuring all necessary licenses, and might even assist in other details, like finalizing a business plan, seeking additional start-up funds, or locating suitable commercial real estate for lease or purchase by the Business Collective."

After a long pause, both Alex and Henry lost in the imagination of such a structure and what it might mean for the people were it to spread, Henry inquires: "So that's it, then?"

“There are many more details that would be included within a comprehensive founding contract for the Business Collective in which all possible contingencies are covered, but that’s the crux of it,” Alex replies. “I might also say that the potential of the Business Collective concept and its underlying realizations and principles goes beyond privately held business concerns. People banding together in common cause in order to prevent being preyed upon by profiteers that exploit our division... coming together to create the buying power and combined, collaborative strength to avoid being taken advantage of in every way, politically, professionally and commercially, is the general theme here, as you may have noticed. And that theme possesses *massive* potential for protecting and benefitting the lives of the vast majority that it would seek to include as beneficiaries: working people as a whole. And those benefits, and the prevention of parasitism, is also the only reason that individualism and the reflexive dismissal of socialism are focal points of conservative propaganda.”

“It’s very simple: Divided we’re weak and easy to control and take advantage of for the greed of a small controlling sect of the population; the aristocratic ownership class. Most of my ideas are based upon this realization; on how much this costs us; on feeling a moral, spiritual imperative to do as much as possible to prevent people from collectively paying the unscrupulously profiteering bill imposed upon us and grossly restricting our collective quality of life by the controlling few through all the major systems of society, in politics, in business, commercially in what we pay for to live and have what we need to lead fulfilling lives, even theologically, in the chance for pure spirituality to overcome what I consider a corruption of spirituality: religion.”

“This is the general, all important theme, and for me it begins with understanding. It begins with fostering the most broadly-beneficial ideological beliefs and social systems, fanning their incalculable value in service of total quality of life. In terms of specifics, in the commercial arena you have the Business Collectives we’ve been discussing that are

designed to prevent the people's equity exclusion, and their general exploitation and exclusion from the benefits precluded by parasitism, but there are many other opportunities as well, as I just alluded to. For example, I had this idea recently that I called 'collective condominiums.' It's a concept constructed around the objective of preventing people's inability to afford their own place, their residential equity exclusion, from being taken advantage of in the landlord system whereby we pour *massive* amounts of money down the proverbial tubes just to have a place to live; another inherent injustice of parasitically conservative systems. Landlords are leeches; a subset of the leeches sucking away total quality of life across the intertwined corporate and plutocratic realms. So I imagined a protective construct."

"How would that work?," Henry inquires.

"By cutting out the profits pulled from this particular personal disadvantage of those with limited means as much as possible through a banding together of those with similar situations, and with complementing tastes and capacities," Alex responds. "By bringing people together in such a way where their collective abilities, tastes in construction and interior design and combined buying power puts them in the position to avoid paying the profits of the landlords and new home developers and their sales forces. You're cutting-out the middlemen, and cutting-out the landlords, excising the residential leeches to as great an extent as possible. Create a company, likely funded by a progressive set of philanthropists or angel investors, that facilitates the bringing together of people and the providing of services like identifying property, filing new construction permits and, most importantly, funding what would typically be seen as an overly risky form of debt, a collective mortgage, that allows an agreeing collective of people and families to finance the construction of a new condominium development. A subset of these people might possess construction experience and be involved in the construction of the development, being compensated by paying less into the collective mortgage payments. This

would reduce the cost of construction by avoiding paying part of the profits of an outside construction company.”

“A ‘Collective Condos’ company could oversee all of this, allowing those playing host to leeching landlords the ability to pry them off. And the concept needn’t be restricted to condominiums, of course, but could be applied to any property in which portions would be reserved for private use, and in which the remainder would be open to any members of the collective, like large properties with parks and community centers mixed with private homes. Countless such project types could be collectively financed for direct construction and ownership, with portions collectively owned and legally-accessed, and portions privately owned and accessed.”

“And this concept could be applied to other sectors of the economy in which people are paying the profits of those that take advantage of their disunity, disadvantage and lack of collective buying power. It’s comparable to the difference between paying retail and having the means to buy in bulk. It’s economies of scale. When we’re individuals forced to pay retail costs, the costs which we collectively pay are maximized, and our capacity to create greater opportunities in our lives are thereby limited, as we’re prohibited from, in the case of traditional businesses, earning a fair ownership share of the bottom line and, in the case of conventional residential rental arrangements, from owning our own place. In general, we’re prohibited from being protected against paying too much for invaluable needs and life opportunities. We, in other words, pay a *massive* collective price for our lack of *positive* freedom.”

"And I could see the people coming together in similar ways to provide one another with cost-minimized healthcare, utilities, insurance, produce... the possibilities are endless. At least, taking such direct, collective economic actions should be considered an option in the

face of a perpetually obstinate plutocracy obstructing the people from realizing their greatest collective quality of existence by refusing to support the socialization or semi-socialization of such select industries in which we're most vulnerable, and in which the exploitation of our disadvantage is most costly to our potential to improve our collective quality of lives. And I'm not, again, advocating for a communistic total takeover of industry, as the small-minded, reflexively-condemnatory conservative will likely dismiss such an idea as representing. What I *am* advocating for are the best possible means by which groups of people may be empowered by coming together in combined stakes in exposed areas in order to grant great advantages and protections against preclusions in the realization of our greatest collective quality of life."

"And, again, I'd reemphasize the fact that this is the *only* reason that exploiting profiteers hate any sort of collective action and label it 'communism,' or 'socialism,' knowing that most propagandistically-primed conservatives will thereby dismiss it: because, by being in the best interests of the people, it cuts into the ownership class profits made *off* of the people. Attempt to pry away the glorified, overfed leeches of our western systems of oppression, and those leeches cry 'communism' as a conditioned rule. And manifestations of the collective concept needn't be full-on 'publicly owned' and nationwide in order to impart irreplaceable benefits."

"Any scale of compatible individuals forming equity-sharing groups granting them immense benefits of profit distribution, cost cutting and other innumerable advantages, such as learning from one another and sharing a sense of identity and commonality and spiritual togetherness and all the other examples of power in numbers... any scale upon which such formations come into existence will reflect the scale of gain from such collaborative formations and pursuits. In connection, so much is being sacrificed to the American culture of individualism; all the best things, including the spiritual currency of love. Honor those things that

make us unique, yes, but never forget that the rewards of unity *far* outweigh any benefits of staying too starkly divided as individuals. This may, in fact, be the crux of the American cultural injustice: individualism. It's tied to egotism, me-versus-you tribalism, wealth worship and all the ways in which we're inhibited from coming together for mutual gain, and thereby costs the world more than can be estimated in countless ways, economically, politically, in business, in social interactions, in sacrificed love... All of these elements, cleverly disguised by right-wing propagandists as the 'virtues' of individualism, exemplify how divided *is* conquered."







**CORNERSTONE FOUR**

***MONOEXISTENTIALISM***



“The fourth and final cornerstone supporting the ideal basis for building and housing the greatest quality of life for the greatest numbers is the supplanting of religion with what I call monoexistential spirituality. Replace narrow, weakening, dividing, idolatrous, hierarchal, imperially-propagated theology with fully inclusive, empowering, unifying, philosophy-backed spirituality. What I call the Spirit, the source energy to which no one pronoun can ever perfectly fit, is the core element composing and encompassing everything in existence, all parts of itself existing within its Self, its expansion from singularity to boundless plurality producing all spacetime and each of its contained beings and the canvas upon which every such being paints every experience of their lives as individualized manifestations of this one shared essential Self. It’s a spirituality that can never be housed by any one religion or their confining, reducing, narrowly-defining theological systems.”

“Spirit is the essential, indivisible, irreducible component of not just every fundamental element, but of every atom and particle composing every element. For if you break everything in existence down as much as possible, you’re left with the part that cannot be broken down or divided any further. It’s a logical certainty that the reduction of every material form and type of energy must stop *not* at zero, at nothing, for everything that exists cannot be composed of nothing, cannot be built upon a foundation of nonexistence, but must be composed of the one original thing that was never created and cannot be destroyed or even broken down. It, and thus the indestructible essence of we, as elements of It, are free from the illusory concepts of ‘beginning’ and ‘ending.’ Spirit is the source and core substance of all things, and everything that exists is differentiated from everything else that exists only by the relative distribution, concentration and arrangement of this source substance.”

“Things only appear different to our limited sensory capacities because of the relativity of this one source substance, so that we may sense

for our survival and our limited spacetime frames. For to sense beyond this would make it impossible for us to focus on the requisites of our survival in our endlessly adapting, mortal material forms. Common knowledge will one day include the fact that our essential Self is never created nor destroyed and isn't constrained by or dependent upon time, space or the ephemeral nature of each of the relative arrangements of Spirit into different forms of energy or matter, including into beings that developed the neurological qualities that gave rise to consciousness, self-perception and the illusion of individuality."

"Everything is a facet of this one thing, essentially..." Henry summarizes.

"Yes, that's right," Alex agrees. "We speak of things as if they're distinct and separate from one another, but they never truly are. Nothing is truly spaced from anything else, because the core of all things, including us and the relative space between us, is composed of this one thing that we all exist within and are entirely based upon as semi-autonomous versions of. The Spirit is not bound by time or space or matter or energy because all of these things are relative only to its willed plurality lying atop an endless singularity. It's the only constant, other than the relative change of its arrangement and accumulation into different forms. This is a truth that's very, very difficult for our minds to capture and live within, as we think and sense in terms of distinctions for the sake of survival, differentiation and understanding. But the fundamental truth is that distinction is an illusion born of ignorance, sensory and mental limitation and our existential constraints. And during those rare moments when I'm best able to lodge this truth in my mind as triggered by its tenuous grasp upon the communications cast from my heart, the world seems to wash away, as I sense in my deepest, truest Self that our existence, and the world that seems to encompass us, is far grander than we can conceive or perceive."

“We’re inseparable from that which is all things. The starting point that had no start, but has always been. *This* is God, communicating with us and guiding us through our hearts, the greatest point of energetic consolidation within our impermanent material forms. And how, I ask you, can such a universally-applicative basis for everyone and everything’s existence ever be consigned to any theological construct that in any way bars anyone or anything from *perfect* inclusion? How can any constricting identity, any specific set of myths, deities, prophets turned to idols, or any artificially conceived hierarchy, ever be the one and only, in exclusion of all the others, without perpetuating ignorance and prejudice leading to conflict, division, a lack of harmony and solidarity and the destruction of our highest potential as a race? A potential that can only ever be approached in a collaboration boosted by perfectly inclusive shared identity such as is offered by the truth of Spirit. Religion is false and destructive of our highest personal and collective potential on *many* levels, as we’ve discussed as a group many times. Theological specificity is pure folly; pure arrogant, self-righteous presumption pretending to stand for a purifying, all-inclusive truth that it can’t come close to representing, and which it betrays by its pretense of absolute representation.”

“So you see religion as the greatest enemy of mankind,” Henry interprets. “You see it as the greatest impediment to our unification and evolution.”

“So long as religiosity maintains popular acceptance and is practiced over all-inclusive spirituality it’ll ironically remain the greatest force of evil in mankind’s present,” Alex responds, “just as it assuredly exists in our past, seeing as how it effectively acts to corrupt and divide us and misdirect us away from the one truest, indivisible, incorruptible identity. It’ll continue to cost us more than any other construct in history. The value religion offers, the principles and sense of comfort and community religion provides, are far outweighed on the negative

value side by what it costs. I was thinking about it again this morning, in fact..." Alex removes a cluster of post-it notes from his pocket. He's long been in the habit of writing down anything that comes to mind that he thinks may be of value. Post-it notes, magazine covers, the inside of book jackets and within their margins, any scrap of paper that he can get his hands on is fair game for being scrawled with thoughts on an endless array of subjects, often inspired by what he's reading or watching or discussing at that moment.

Reading from the first post-it note, Alex says:

"Consider what religion is, its attributes and its effects. Through its denial of science, reason and critical thought, it encourages and, within its bubble of adherents, rewards and perpetuates ignorance. It rewards a refusal to learn about and take advantage of the boundless body of knowledge offered across all disciplines that in any way contradict religious teachings, and that *could* empower people in priceless, countless ways, were they not controlled by their religion. Instead this empowerment and quality of life improvement entirely bypasses them. They are lost to it, and it to them, at incalculable cost both to them and anyone and everyone to whom they may contribute. By teaching that there's an omnipotently-overbearing God that's in charge and is the driving force behind all things and punishes evildoers by casting them into eternal hellfire, the wrathful puppet master stringing us all along rather than the essential guiding force of indivisible universal Self possessing no such motive, nature or desire, but much the opposite, religion promotes disempowering ideas like divisible, controllable souls subject to punishment and the possession of zero free will and, via that promotion, encourages its adherents *not* to take responsibility for their lives and *not* to proactively improve themselves and the world around them because they're ultimately not in control and not responsible for what happens in the world they're meant to treat as a test or a warm up for the real thing ever-after, which itself is an invention.



This even though they're still judged and held eternally accountable for the choices they aren't really making, since it's God who's in charge. To live by such false, often contradictory, always disempowering ideas is *inestimably* costly."

"Saying 'God's in charge' makes for no accountability, and little encouragement to make the world a better place for its lifeforms left tragically underserved. Teaching that there's a heaven or hell only exacerbates these costs by further encouraging people *not* to be overly concerned with this plane of existence, and with positively affecting change in people and the world around them, because this life is said to merely be a prelude to everlasting life, where existence is far superior or, as a way to scare followers into controlled conformity, where existence is torturous. But there's no afterlife, only life itself; only infinite variations of energy born into biologically-enlivened and evolving matter."

"And, like the denial of science and reason, this same belief in the afterlife and its arbiters, agents and forces, encourages people to perpetuate the anachronistic practice of filling gaps in their knowledge and understanding with myths; with blind, un-seeking faith; with internally-affirmed fantasies requiring no logical support or confirmation of any kind, further blunting the intellect and robbing the education of its adherents. This archaic practice dates back to the pre-scientific era, where non-evidentiary myths filled gaps in our knowledge. Such a practice possesses no place in an educated, progressive populist seeking truth and all its innumerable empowerments and emancipations. It's one thing to have faith in God, especially when you actively seek Spirit. It's quite another to pretend that your faith is the only true faith, which, in its specifications and exclusions, denies the legitimacy of all other forms of faith, all without reason or logic or your own seeking, doubting and experience; without those indispensable characteristics and self-improving practices protecting you from believing whatever

the *human* powers tell you about faith, with the perspectives and objectives of those human powers inherited from *long*-running traditions of power and popular control, sucking you into a narrowing form of faith that ultimately deprives you of seeking the truer, purer, all-encompassing forms of spirituality that are *actually* capable of elevating, empowering and freeing you. I know from experience that when that fuller form of God is found you'll find religion and its pretensions so offensive that you'll want to scream self-defensive, or capital 'S' Self-defensive, revelations from the rooftops, like: Religion doesn't own God! Spirit doesn't fit into religion! You don't have to be religious to have faith!"

"What else?" Alex unravels more post-it notes, then continues: "Religion is and has always been a champion of mind-controlling tactics and manipulation; the epicenter for coercing and conning people into doing what they, what the political and religious empires and their aristocrats, want people to do for the advantage of those aristocratic empires and at the great loss of their adherents who're encouraged to move with the unthinking, unquestioningly obedient herd. This same heart of the herd mentality is the center of age-old patterns of idolatry and hierarchy, where people are put on their knees and subjugated in positions beneath where they naturally belong, on the same existential plane with God, as the Spirit's material formations. Instead, religion's gullible, brainwashed believers are made to feel small and beneath gods, demigods, prophets, saints and disciples and all those mythological God-like beings said to exist above them and naturally fated to rule over them. People are made to believe that they're powerless over any afflictions which they suffer, such as in the twelve-step Alcoholics Anonymous mantra; that they were born into inherently evil sin against which there's no control, only acceptance. The truth, however, is that people are but corruptible through their mental and physical limitations and vulnerabilities, most of which can be greatly shored-up and reinforced with adequate understanding and discipline. People are

misdirected from finding the truth of their oneness with Spirit, and from the greatest strength and potential within themselves. Low self-esteem, subjugation and limited potential are inevitable results.”

“People are made to be less than they should be, always looking up for guidance and encouraged not to think for themselves, not to take responsibility or to be proactive, not to come together with the rest of the Spirit’s divinely-sourced community. In competition with other faiths, the practice of religion has always encouraged unnecessary division, strife, hatred, violence and the ‘us-versus-them’ mentality that our evolution will gradually overcome on all societal fronts. Then there’s religion’s quest to control people through the family unit by way of monopolizing the sanctioning of marriage. If you have sex outside of religious approval, regardless of the love that emanates from our hearts communicating *true* spiritual sanctioning, then you face being scorned and cast out of the herd. Marriage is by and large a product of state and religious control. Religion sows guilt and repression of sexuality, as well as a self-righteous judgment of those courageous and intelligent enough *not* to fall victim to the longest running con in history. Peer pressure, self-righteous disdain and mental coercion are amongst its cracked, unstable cornerstones.”

“So not falling victim to that con when you’re young, ignorant and impressionable... when you’ve yet to develop the knowledge and rational capacity to defend yourself from its tentacles, that’s the first step to overcoming its disempowering grip upon you, I suppose?,” Henry asks.

“Yes, it begins with doubt, with asking questions,” Alex replies. “I sometimes see the question of God as giving way to a typical trajectory, one that I walked myself, to some degree.”

“What trajectory is that?,” Henry asks, pushing Alex’s oratory forward.

"I sometimes see the quest towards spiritual truth as being a kind of journey in which religion is ironically the *furthest* from the truth," Alex replies. "Actually, I believe that we all begin with an instinctive awareness of God, of Spirit, before there's any intellectual conception existing in our minds. On a subconscious level we know it, for we're inseparable from it. We *are* it. We are Spirit, pre-conceptually, before we begin to conceive of it. And the first conception is handed to us in the hopes that we'll stop there. Religion is the default conception. It's the starting point; that which the youth are spoon-fed in order to remain under the control of those that control religion which, historically speaking especially, means the state and its aristocratic ownership class, traditionally extending down through the father and the rest of the familial hierarchy. Religiosity is the position in which we are small, beneath God and his 'representatives on earth' in a hierarchical structure."

"Religion relies upon scaring and pressuring the impressionable to believe on blind faith alone, convincing you that if you're worthy of God then you'll accept 'him' on faith. Only the fearful, gullible and non-questioning remain here, at blind faith; at what might be considered gullible obedience. You accept the commands of those that claim to have power over you in spiritual matters, failing to well enough consider the possibility that they may not actually have such power. Yet on some level you likely sense, but can never fully admit to yourself, that blindly having faith isn't the answer. You kill doubt as you're commanded, because doubt leads to a denial of religion and a discovery of the path towards truth. For the first step on the journey toward spiritual truth is doubt. The asking of questions is always what leads to truth. You begin to ask things like: Do the assertions made by my religion make sense? Is there any evidence, logic or anything concrete to back what's being claimed? How can any one religion reliably claim to have the best answers to these questions? Perhaps most critically, you

begin to think in terms of motive and history, asking: *Why* am I being fed these particular ideas?"

"Ralph Waldo Emerson said: 'Mysticism is the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for a universal one.' This to me is the distinction between mystically, mythically-infused religion and spirituality. It's the attempt to label, divide and control people's instinctively-embedded spiritual awareness and connected search for meaning through the enforcement of specific, artificial, irrational, non-evidence-based rituals, symbols, idols and mythical narratives. And if you never ask questions, if you simply accept, simply submit, then you've yet to even find the trailhead leading to truth. But if you have the courage and intellect to ask questions, your questioning will inevitably reveal the fact that religion not only *doesn't* have the answers, but, ironically commits hellacious sins against its adherents by killing their search and enforcing untruth. And if you're strong enough *not* to give into religion's sticks and carrots, its heaven, hell and peer-pressuring coercions and other deplorable, manipulative tactics of mind-controlling the masses, similar tactics used in conservative politics to get you to support the power, control and wealth consolidation of the few historically at the helm and benefitting from the Church's power over society, then you'll move towards *rejecting* religion."

"Those that ask the questions and develop the knowledge and strength to defend themselves from religious coercion may end their journeys with rejection, and with the belief that the falsity of religion is to be conflated with the falsity of spirituality. To me this answer, the rejection of the notion that there's any truth whatsoever to the concept of God, atheism, is based upon anger and arrogance as much as upon intelligence and its naturally-coinciding quality of inquisitiveness. You're angry that you, likely beginning when you were very young, were brainwashed into believing in such a hollow answer to the question of God. This anger is very understandable. Furthermore, you likely make

the mistake that's common to the scientifically-inclined, believing that no evidence is the same thing as no truth; believing that if you can't see the truth, or any evidence or concrete logical proof, then it must not exist. The next step for those that possess or find humility, that let some of this anger and arrogance go, that realize that no proof *doesn't* necessarily mean no truth, that science teaches, above all, that there's *always* more to uncover, and that their doubt continues, is to admit that you don't know. You begin to think that maybe the religious answer isn't so much *entirely* hollow as it's too small, specific or certain."

"At this point in the path you likely identify as agnostic, taking the position that there's no way to prove the question of God one way or another. But underneath it all you retain what you've always had, an instinctive awareness of Spirit; the Spirit speaking to your mind through your heart. And you may continue to ask questions. And this instinctive awareness may implore you to continue walking the path; to continue asking questions that may eventually end in *discovery*. You discover that you've known the answer in your heart all along, and you find ways for your mind to wrap around that truth. You begin to sense the implications of the fact that there cannot be such a thing as nothing, that nothing can be created or destroyed, that the starting point of everything that exists has always existed, that this source cannot possess a beginning or an end but has always existed and always will exist and must, by all of these properties, be the essential most thing inherent to *all* things, must encompass all things and be intrinsic to all things. And perhaps in this framework you begin to see the purpose of matter, and of the semblance of separation and the relativity of distinctiveness. You begin to see the role which these things play. You begin to see their purpose in providing an existential framework for the irreducible energy of oneness, Spirit, to be manifested into infinite forms for the endless variety of existence. That's the likely evolution; from religion, to atheism, to agnosticism, to a purer spirituality."

"I'd add that I call my own gnostic spiritual revelations those of 'monoexistentialism,' because I believe that it only *appears* as though they're multiple independent existences when, in truth, in the pure energetic, metaphysical heart of the matter, both literally and figuratively, it's God, one existence, having innumerable experiences of Its, of Our, existence. An infinite of one. I've since uncovered the fact that the Eastern theological traditions have long called this, or a similar concept, 'non-duality.' Separation is an illusion. Spiritually, it's the first illusion, and the one making for most of the evil in the world, for to act as though everyone is One, as We ultimately are, by what I call The Spiritual Rule, would remove the impetus behind most evil action."

"So, let's see..." Henry says after Alex ceases his oration. "Replacing the plutocratic republic that effectively puppeteers politicians pulled by corporate masters at immense cost to humanity with a true democracy made for the communications age that allows the people to take control of government and avoid paying that cost. Replacing what you call the one-way version of freedom's 'free market economics' that ideologically facilitates funneling the majority of the economy's produced value into the hands of the few by ignoring the quality-of-life-boosting potential of that value with the double-edged-sword-swinging freedom of economic evaluation that you call Quality of Life Economics. Replacing the equity-consolidated business model that places the vast majority of the economy's contributors in the to-be-minimized liabilities column of the balance sheet, and which thereby directly facilitates the funneling of profits to the few and the expansion of the disparity in income, wealth and quality of life with a justly meritocratic Business Collective that places everyone in the equity column, and thereby halts and eventually reverses that disparity. And, perhaps most importantly, replacing brainwashing, dividing, idolatrous, hierarchal and subject-producing religions with a purer, scientifically and philosophically-backed spirituality that you call monoexistentialism that empowers humankind and gets it off its knees so that it may spur its own evolution towards its highest collaborative form."

“And I’d emphasize that this monoexistential spirituality should act as a foundation for the rest. For if you begin to see existence and identity through its elucidating, fully-inclusive lens, then the rest will begin to follow naturally. Also, while dichotomies tend to be oversimplified and thus at least partial misrepresentations of the nuanced truth of any matter to which they’re applied, all of these systems can be said to split ideologies, attitudes and pursuits, as well as their purveyors and pursuers, into two general groups. The first and generally prevailing group, for it’s far easier and more seductive to give into and prey upon the weaknesses and limitations and resultant corruptibility of the human mind and body and, therefore, this group will be larger, is the group composed of the ‘for me,’ the ‘take all you can’ and the ‘us-versus-them’ *parasitic* type, at least in effect, if not in understood or admitted belief. They are those that, though they’re unlikely and unable to admit it even to themselves, choose or at least act to sacrifice total quality of life in self-absorbed service of greed of all types, as well as to satisfy their overblown and typically insecure egos and narrowly-perceived excluding identifications and interests. The second far smaller and generally overwhelmed or outright dominated group that will, nevertheless, prevail in the long run is the cohort of moral champions; those that refuse to give into the evils of the first group; that foster our progressive evolution as the ‘for us’ *symbiotic* group that refutes and refuses to think in terms of ‘us-versus-them’ for interrelated intellectual, moral and spiritual reasons.”

“This second group is made up of those that, again, though they may not think of it in these terms, act *against* those that sacrifice total quality of life, and whom stand for and support those ideas, attitudes and pursuits that aren’t purely centered upon themselves, their self-conceived egos and any narrowly perceived identifications in which we’re commonly compelled to place ourselves, but instead see the potential for life as a whole and think in far broader-minded terms along



inclusive conceptual lines which effectively act to move humanity and the entirety of life on the planet and the planet itself toward its greatest potential. It comes down to that simple dividing line: you're part of the problem, short-changing humanity and reducing and suppressing total quality of life in service of greed and ego, or you're part of the solution, investing in humanity's highest potential and ever prevailing upon yourself and others to act in body and mind for the maximization of total quality of life and in resistance to the first, historically-prevailing group."

"The symbiotic group standing upon the ultimately prevailing side of humankind's evolution, further along our spacetime passage in the long bending arc of the moral universe, knows, or at least senses, that what's best for humankind may never be achieved whilst warring amongst itself, with everyone fighting for the biggest possible piece of the pie for its petty, narrowly-identified factions. Their prevailing knowledge or instinctive sense is that they're not truly a part of any such faction anywhere near as much as they're part of the whole, and, thus, they sense or know that they don't fit into any constrained identification nearly so much as they're an indivisible member of the universally-shared identity of life. They're on some mental level, and in parallel with the Spirit speaking through their hearts, aware that 'their people' is the same as 'all people and all life,' for it's to *all* forms of life that they truly belong, and refuse to divide and reduce. Of course, most people stand somewhere between the ends of this scale, but that's the scale. Those are the two general sides to this seemingly endless war of and for humanity, and we all weigh into it on one relative side of the scale or the other."

"And this dichotomous truth either isn't realized or doesn't prevail over the weaknesses of the other group," Henry prompts, "the first group. The weaknesses they falsely affirm as inescapable 'realities,' the mistakenly 'unavoidable realities' of the 'realist' that you say is

actually the cowardly immoralist. Those that've commanded humankind through said weaknesses; through greed, ignorance, fear, ego, prejudice and the like, selling us all short."

"Yes," Alex agrees, "the misleading immoralists short-selling our greater potential and inhibiting our evolution. They're those that, whether or not they admit it to themselves or others, which they typically won't, for it'd entail an ego-destabilizing level of self-perception, are ideologically akin to those rapacious ancient Athenians that eventually took command of the ever-more twisted, oppressive, greedily-corrupt embryonic democracy and, during the Peloponnesian War, created the man-is-inherently-evil-so-evil-is-inevitable decree of the might-makes-right 'realist,' attempting to coerce the Melians into submission by saying something like, what was it..."

Alex searches for the memory before finally saying: "We both know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.' Justice, in other words, is only relevant when it has the power of enforcement behind it. This is the dark side; the side of mental corruption; the side that reveres greed, that has no legitimate grasp upon morality and that sanctions narrowly-received gain for the excluding few at incalculably great loss for the vast majority. They're the consolidating group championing limitless opportunity cost through funneling as much value as possible, including political, economic, financial and natural resource value, into ever fewer hands, while the second group is the merited distribution of value and opportunity-cost-quelling group that fosters the greatest total value for humankind and life as a whole."

"And, again, the first group, the mentally corrupted and exploiting group, is winning by a *long* shot. Yet history has constantly been pushing back through men and women of conviction belonging to the second group that's *always* had Spirit on its side. And the pressure of

this conflict and the injustices suffered at the hands of the first group continues to mount, propelling gradual progress in the slow bend of the moral universe towards an evolution that the first group can't *prevent*, only stall. I've vowed not to bend to the injustice, but to apply my own force toward doing anything that I can to help bend us towards justice, as any true progressive feels the absolute moral imperative to do. And, again, most people fall somewhere between the extremes of the groups as I've just described, with many applying a near to neutral force upon that arc."

"I've met many people of progressive conviction that play some part in helping bend the arc toward justice, but many more that, unaware of it, help to maintain the status quo in thought and action, pushing against that bend and thereby requiring the greatest progressive champions to apply more force than would otherwise be necessary to compensate. Most of those that resist the bend seem to be unaware that they do so, as so successfully indoctrinated into the prevailing culture of the first group are they that they believe that the prevailing course of history is the correct course, the course pushing *against* the bend; the course that's destined to be seen as ever more unevolved the more that we evolve. And so they speak and act to back the subjugation of the people. They've been deluded into acting against the best interests of total life."

"And yet it's only a matter of time... a matter of how long and gradual the bend... which is determined by how many add force to the bend and how many are corrupted and brainwashed into opposing it," Henry offers.

"Yes, something like that," Alex replies. "It reminds me of the *Star Wars* saga, one of the more recent episodes of which, *The Force Awakens*, I watched recently. I was struck to the core of my heart by many spiritually-resonant scenes in that film. The series obviously

takes dramatic liberties with the kinetic power of 'the force,' which is believable in the fantasy context of being set in 'a galaxy far, far away,' and yet I see the clearly spiritual core of these films to be an indication of the spiritual awareness that Lucas and I and many, *many* others share and, indeed, everyone likely instinctively senses to various degrees. The force surrounds, binds and guides us. And you can turn away from its total-quality-of-life-guarding-guidance when the corruptible aspects of the mind and body, when the gratification of the ego and the senses, when the 'easier, more seductive' side of self-absorbed gratuitousness overwhelms the drive to seek truth, serve life, deny the greedy amassment and subdue the egotistic self-identification that drive people to betray total quality of life. And while putting people on one side or the other of this conflict between 'the light' and 'the dark' is an obvious oversimplification useful for the dramatic narrative, for all people contain the corruptible 'dark side' and the incorruptible 'light side' within them, in the end every person will serve one side more than the other through their thoughts, words and actions; through everything they do; through their work, through their purchases, through their associations, through their votes, through their actions and words in total."

"Every person is, in fact, forever engaged in the struggle between the choice of selling out the greater good, the greater total value for life as a whole, for greedily perceived self-interest, or choosing to fight against this dark-sided force *for* that far greater total quality of life. Do I serve 'we' or 'me,' or might I finally come to realize that I can best serve me *through* the rewards of serving we? This war is perpetually waged within every individualization and, extending outwards from every one of us, engulfs the entire planet. We all must choose to enrich the over-advantaged few at the unjustifiable cost of the many, to be paid to play a part in the exploitation of weakness for the greed of the plutocratic ownership class, to do what is the easiest and the most egotistically or gratuitously gratifying in the moment, or to follow the spiritual guidance of 'the force,' of the Spirit, and its encouragement

of our moral development and its creation of the conviction to defend against exploitation; to conceive and support the ideas and systems best equipped to build the greatest quality of life for the greatest numbers, and to develop the principles best suited to this preeminent objective, followed by the discipline to live by them.”

“And for me this seemingly eternal fight between the dark side and the light side, between the corruptible nature of the needing, vulnerable body and the limited, egocentric mind and the way in which they act to bend our will against the best interests of ourselves and others, and the incorruptible nature of the Spirit materially manifested into spacetime to permit infinite variety and perspective of life and the experience of existence, and most clearly communicating its will through our hearts... this fight is best won with spiritual realization shedding light upon the heart of morality and the learning of paralleling principles, the acquisition of quality knowledge and the development of conviction and discipline, all of which coalesce to create the capacity of true progressive champions.”

“Once the champion is made, or while being made, he or she must decide *how* to fight for progress. And I personally believe that this should involve fighting to help build and serve those systems ideally suited to support the greatest total quality of life’s limitless manifestations. For all that which is *systematic* is that which impacts life the most. Socially-governing and motivating *systems* are the roots from which most of humanity’s endeavors grow. Ideally, it begins with infinite of one shared identity, stepping naturally from this into principled moral development precipitating courageous conviction and a fight for true ‘*demos kratos*,’ the original Greek root of the word ‘democracy,’ directly translated as ‘people power.’ The people have never *actually* known that power. And until we do, we’ll never be able to sufficiently wield the force of light to drive the dark side from its excluding,

inherently-exploiting posts pretending to be by and for the people in all things, but *truly* being such in *no* things.”

“This seems a focal point of your ideology,” Henry says. “That in order for true democracy to be pursued and eventually realized, a critical first step is for the popular realization to set in that this democracy does not currently exist in anything but name... it’s all essentially a masquerade. And that makes sense. For how can the people demand people power if they all entertain the delusion that it already exists?”

“Exactly,” Alex states. “The plutocratic republic has erased true democracy from our minds in its brainwashing masquerade, in its misleading show of democracy, with most believing the song and dance, it seems, and to the *incalculably* immense loss of the *vast* majority. But so long as those exist that know what true democracy looks like, that erasure is not absolute, and cannot last. The ‘freedom’ propaganda in everything from ‘free market economics’ to the idea that America righteously spreads freedom across the planet has blinded us from the fact that freedom is *always* a two-way street, and that the freedom to be protected from those abusing their consolidated wealth and power and acting against our greatest collective interest is just as important as the freedom to act. In fact, the less wealth and power you have the greater the value of the ‘freedom from’ and the lesser the value of the ‘freedom to,’ as the freedom *to* is largely purchased, else made by power, and the freedom *from* is based upon being protected against the abuses of those that buy or use power to act against those lacking the knowledge, resources, regulations and other advantages, protections and privileges that shield them from victimhood. This victimhood is inflicted and upheld in ways and by means that are now so deeply, culturally imbedded that most don’t see them as wrongs, and are largely unaware of their own victimhood, though they may sense it on some level, and simply accept things as part of the ‘reality’ that actually need not be. It’s not the one and only reality, only the immoral, long-ingrained status quo.”

“And so long as there are those that see through the blindfold they, we, will act to remove it from the eyes of others so that they, too, might see the fact that a far superior reality is available to us as a whole when we find the awareness, conviction and collaborating, common cause to bring it into being. The corporations that once supported a prosperous middle class and blew life into the American Dream have locked the American and globalizing workforce into the hamster wheel of economic production, feeding us only as much as is necessary to keep us running while dissuading us from realizing that the American Dream is now more likely to be a bad dream about surviving until the next paycheck, and that the only justifiable position for any economic contributor is to possess a stake in the ripened fruits of economic growth and productivity.”

“It’s a position far surpassing the sad, traditional standards of successfully raising the nibbling minimum wage and reducing the rate of those unable to find a wheel to spin for those subsistent morsels; those taught to see success in mere employment while exhaustingly, stressfully laboring the whole time to pay their rent or mortgage and, if they’re lucky, set aside enough to experience some comforts or to get out of town one week a year, having a hell of a time financing an eventual retirement and ever more commonly racking up a mountain of debt many will never pay off, but will pay fortunes in interest to bloated major shareholders in credit card companies just to maintain. So long as there are those who fight to pull people from the wheels and cages made of mental manipulation, corporate leverage and social and familiar pressure, the people that compose the economy will someday have an *actual* ownership stake in the ripened fruits of profit denied by every ‘free’ economy in history.”

“You’ve placed a toweringly tall order in front of you, my friend,” Henry replies after a few silently reflective seconds. “As tall an order as possible, I’d say. You mean to take on the whole world, it seems. You’d

fight to remake the entire western landscape: the political system, the economic system, the structure of business and the theological realm... to turn all the paradigms of society on their head, reordering the ways in which all the major ideas and systems are understood. You'd remake the whole Western Culture, and maybe the world, if you could. I think that many people, perhaps even most people, would say you're naïvely unrealistic."

"Yes," Alex replies. "I know that I'm speaking idealistically: that is, that I'm speaking in terms of courageously and honorably fighting for the best interests of humanity in our quest to overcome the so-called 'realist' conservatives that would have us believe that the long-entrenched systems, powers and interests are justified and permanent, and that those with advantages taking advantage of the disadvantaged will always constitute the prevailing reality such that it's naïve to oppose this one and only reality and the systems, powers and interests that promote it. I don't accept this, of course, and I never will. It's but the contemporary reality ever-changing relative to the proportion, conviction, determination, organization and ability of progressive people, and it's a reality that'll one day be seen as existing on the unevolved side of history. Fighting for the ideal, regardless of whether or not that ideal is reachable in your lifetime or *ever* reachable, frankly, is the only just course. Accepting the status quo as the one and only reality is cowardly and progress-stalling at best, regressive at worst, and profiting from it is immoral and self-absorbed, selling-out the far greater potential of humankind in the process."

"True conviction based upon this undeniable knowledge and the inviolable principles underpinning it knows no compromise, nor do those compelled by it, as this would constitute compromising justice and the greater potential and happiness of humankind. And the inevitable idealistic state of the world is reached relative to the victories of men and women of such true, uncompromising conviction and



courage. We may make compromises when this is the only short-term action available, like seeking to take three steps forward, but being restricted to one. But we can never compromise the long-term objective, because that's what idealism is: seeking to identify, understand and pursue the one right way; to locate and find the strength to climb the challenging, uphill path toward the one greatest good. No truly honorable individual can see anything but cowardice, ego, greed and, taken together in the creation of suffering-inducing disparities, *evil* in justifications like 'it's just business.'"

"Considering the nature of profit and wealth accumulation, such truly progressive people know, or at least sense, that, as illustrated by the creation and extraction of value analysis of Quality of Life Economics, the most successful modern business people are amongst the *least* successful human beings. The Business Collective concept is made to aid in a balancing of the value equation, such that this need no longer be true. But I also know how well dug-in the societal systems supporting the modern reality, the reality my four cornerstones seek to supplant, really are. So I know how immensely difficult it'll be to remove them from the conventional mindset of false wisdom so that the four cornerstones, or anything like them, may be pounded into their place in support of our gradually rising to our greatest heights as a species. I know it'll take a very long, hard, determined fight, building upon the effort of past progressives and relying upon a forming future army fighting for life as a whole. But, of course, nothing all that good comes all that easily. The level of reward is usually commensurate with the level of difficulty."

"All this being the case," Henry responds, "what can you *personally* hope to accomplish?"

"Going with the foundation and building greatest good metaphor," Alex replies, "what I hope for is to be able to contribute to the blueprint

designed to provide the best structures for supporting the greatest potential and quality of life for life as a whole, regardless of how long it takes for that structure to be built in the place of the current edifices of greed and corruption that have long stood, having been built upon the traditions of the monarchies and aristocracies and empires of the past constantly being restructured to fight progressive movements mounted in the best interests of life as a whole. This evolution of repressive, excluding tactics includes ever-remodeled variations of pretend democracy, of perpetuating the masquerade of contemporary governance being by and for the people, as in our plutocratic republic colluding with corporatism moving toward oligarchy; a prevailing history of strategy in which anything or anyone challenging the ability of the few to take as much value from the planet and the people as they can is instantly derided and dismissed using reflex-triggering, propagandist, demagogic rhetoric. Such rhetoric includes labels like 'socialist,' 'terrorist,' 'conspiracy theorist,' 'naïve idealist' and 'cynic.' These labels usually mean, and should respectively be redefined to mean, 'not exploitable for the profiteering of the few to the great loss of the many,' 'resisting forced globalization and the cultural homogenization of classism and consumerism through violent invasion and occupation or their threat,' 'seeing the motive, means and opportunity behind the drive to conspire inherent to greed,' 'courageously seeking the best interests for the greatest numbers,' and 'realizing that it's inherent to the nature of self to benefit the self, even when those acts also benefit others, which moral selfishness demands.'"

"Progressives such as myself must band together and keep repeating these truths until even those not disposed towards asking questions and thinking critically begin to see the nature of the corporation-controlled, value-robbing world that's destroying humankind's greatest potential and quality of life. I can only hope that my ideas become part of the dialogue and help to inspire action leading to more people joining that progressive fight against the systems that sell-out the greatest quality of life value of humankind. It's only a matter of time, a

matter of the long arc of moral history bending toward the establishment of systems such as the four cornerstones I speak of: The Political Point System of Democratic Governance, Quality of Life Economics, Business Collectivism and Monoexistential Spirituality. Four cornerstones promoting the highest quality of life as a whole by supporting the strongest structure best able to house mankind's greatest collective quality of life. Four cornerstones lifting us above the injustices born of greedy traditions that've stalled the evolutionary progress of our species. Establishing these cornerstones of society won't immediately place us on the higher plane of human evolution, but they *will* facilitate it, naturally motivating our evolution."

"How to proceed...?," Henry wonders aloud. "How to get people to push for that evolution?"

"Therein lies the greatest challenge," Alex immediately replies. "For if there's one thing that has been consistently demonstrated to me in my attempts to breathe life into my constructs and writings, in my attempt to get people to even consider them, it's that the realization of vital truths and the creation of substantial concepts and principles grown from such truth is only a fraction of the challenge, and perhaps the smaller part of the fraction. Of just as much importance is the strategy of seeding and spreading that content and cultivating its growing development until its immense unrealized potential value can no longer be ignored. Clearly, conclusively and effectively deploying the truth is just as important as the truth itself, for without mass understanding and solidarity of purpose rallying behind and demanding that realization, the truth itself is only of value to the few that possess it, and its far greater potential is forsaken. Therefore, progressing towards humankind's higher evolutionary states requires creating a progressive momentum built upon universal principles and ideas that most everyone can, and ultimately will, embrace; principles that exclude no one and which, when effectively, patiently, persistently and respectfully communicated, can't fail to rally anyone with any progressive inclination

to the cause which will eventually break through the barriers of greed, ignorance and prejudice and the related ego, fear and ignorance held by those that fight to prevent that inevitable, only-a-matter-of-time evolution. And I see this cause as a two-part process."

"The first part: bring together the like-minded, those already disposed towards universal justice, into the same course of conviction. It's well understood that significant progress, especially at the level of the paradigm-shifting, belief-status-quo-makeover necessary for the US and those following our lead to become agents of human evolution, isn't possible without moral men and women uniting in shared conviction. Many are aware of the injustices in the world and of the inherently unjust consolidations of wealth and power, and the systems that perpetuate it. But this isn't enough. The Occupy Wall Street movement clearly demonstrates this fact, that we need to unify behind and organize our efforts pursuant to clear, unbreakable objectives."

"I've heard an apt metaphor signifying the inimitable value and necessity of this union: Place stress upon one stick and it'll easily break, but the more sticks that you tie together, the harder it becomes to break the bundle, until, eventually, it becomes all but impossible to break an innumerably-bound bundle of such sticks. *We are* those sticks, and the greed, ego and other shortcomings of the conservative mindset compel its agents to disperse or bend us, hoping we'll scatter or break so that our resistance can be burned in the fire of greed and weakness that has engulfed the greater good throughout the history of humankind. We must, therefore, tie ourselves together, aligning ourselves as uniformly as possible, caring not who gets the personal credit. Only divided can we be conquered. United in common cause we can't be broken, and will support our greatest potential total quality of life."

After a pause Henry speaks up: "And the second part of the process...?"

“The second step,” Alex continues, “is convincing those that, out of the aforementioned, intertwined mental shortcomings, out of ego, fear, ignorance, prejudice, greed and the like, act to effectively prevent progress, regardless of how aware they are of their complicity. This is perhaps the greatest challenge of all. And in this matter, the question becomes: How do you communicate your own realizations clearly, effectively and especially *non-threateningly* enough to compel people to actually listen, and ideally change their views and desire to act in league with life? Formulating such a highly effective, efficiently-delivered strategy of progress-propelling communication is doubly important when your target are those that, for a variety of reasons, are predisposed to resist or immediately reject your convictions and the concepts upon which they rest; those with conservative backgrounds and viewpoints, in other words.”

“Many in my own extended family possess such positions. The issue is that challenging those costly perspectives isn’t merely a matter of challenging ideas, but a matter of challenging their *entire world*; the only way they see and understand the world and themselves and their place within it, compelling a great proportion of their thoughts and actions. If your goal is to get such people to look at the world and themselves differently, how reasonable you are is nowhere close to as important as the manner in which you convey that reason, or so it seems to me. Attempting to overcome their objections by demonstrating the logical superiority of your ideology is almost always an ineffective strategy in such cases, because their egos and connected insecurities will take control of their minds and they’ll close themselves off to your ideas, *regardless* of their merit. They’ll still be able to hear you, but they won’t be able to *truly listen*. I’m gradually learning that winning arguments is of little progressive value; it’s but a hollow, prideful, egotistic type of victory.”

“If someone holding an opposing viewpoint understands or in any way senses that your contentions are compelled by pride, that your arguments are motivated by a desire to defeat them, they’ll wall themselves off, defending the fortress of their own ego from your assaults. This is why no headway is possible when the discussion is construed as a debate by either party, because a debate implies a winner and loser, and most egos are of the insecurity and size whereby an admission of being in the wrong is unfeasible, especially when it comes to major values and beliefs. And so the possessor of said ego is immediately put on the defensive when they feel they’re under assault, when they see you as sieging their fortress, so to speak. Being in this position in their own minds renders them unable to truly listen, as they’re, instead, always formulating an attempt to prevail. They’ll only think of the rebuttal, if not becoming outright emotionally unhinged, even feeling violent. They’ll never truly absorb what’s being proposed, or, as your words will be perceived while they’re in this mindset, to what’s being *argued*. The perceptive difference between a non-invasive, respectfully, ideally *lovingly* made proposal and a pride-infused attacking argument is the difference between most people being opened or closed. It’s the difference between the bridge being lowered, or raised and defended. I read something on a bottle of kombucha yesterday that concisely puts the principle to which I’m speaking, actually... I can’t recall to whom it was attributed. Whomever it was said: ‘When you talk *to* people, they hear you. When you talk *with* people, they listen.’ The difference is everything.”

“All such dialogues are like egotistic battles, in other words, with the person's idea of themselves being walled off within them. And most egos are invulnerable to head-on attacks. You’re wasting your energy. Even if you crack their walls they’ll busily work to reinforce those weak points. Headway is only possible when a contest *isn't* implied or inferred, except perhaps in those rare cases when speaking to those with a well-controlled, minimized ego. You have to approach the gate

while waving the white flag. So don't attempt to win a debate, for, in the course of making progress, you'll end up falling into the moat, so to speak. Instead, you must come at them with love and respect and an understanding of *why* they believe what they believe as much or more than you employ reason and evidence backing your own position. You must calmly listen to and attempt to understand the person whose heart and intellect you're trying to engage and lead to a more valuable set of truths for themselves and others, for they, of course, most likely believe they already possess them, and will defend them, and repel you, if they feel at all under threat. Egos lashing out in the perception of being under threat is a *huge* part of almost all human conflict."

"Preventing selective deafness and egotistic self-defense is an exceedingly difficult practice that begins within yourself," Alex continues, "for you must let go of your own ego, your own 'small self,' for the greatest progress to become possible. Be respectful. Even when you don't respect their stance, if they at least sense that you possess respect for them as a fellow human being, you've already gone half the distance. You've already begun crossing their drawbridge. And truly listen to them without thinking of your own position when they wish to speak. Try to see things through their eyes and methodically, patiently move toward the point of penetration, removing the walls between you from the *inside*, and not with blunt rational force or even cutting evidential precision, but with calm, considerate, steady stone removal, making sure not to push them into a defensive position where their mind and capacity for reason and listening shuts down. For once this happens it doesn't matter if you express your argument flawlessly; they'll put all their effort into maintaining their fortification, and nothing will get in. Only such a tactic based upon listening, patience, releasing ego and demonstrating mutual respect while making well-reasoned, logically-concrete arguments has the potential to change the minds of most that see your beliefs as wrong."

"I imagine that most people don't possess the principles, discipline and patience to enact such a strategy," Henry comments. "Which, I suppose, is why so few people ever seem to change their minds. So I'd guess that makes this is one of the biggest obstacles to progress."

"This is the way it goes with the restructuring of belief systems," Alex adds, "especially if this prospective reconstruction threatens the person's egotistic identity wrapped up in the deeply-ingrained concept you're attempting to break down. For, in these all-too-common circumstances, they'll persistently hang on to a prideful inability to admit any fault in their beliefs and ideas of themselves that they've so long built up and are comfortable being housed within. It takes a lot of calm, persistent, actively-listening, respect-reciprocating effort to effectively compel mental reformation, but it's possible. I've heard it argued that it's so gradual that it can scarcely be observed, and must be expected to take generations to accumulate to the point where any major shifts take place within certain families and sectors of society. But you have to break down the old before you can build up the new, and they have to actively participate in that mental demolition and reconstruction, so to speak; you can't do it for them."

"It's like the proverb 'you can lead a horse to water but you can't teach it to drink,' though I suppose some might find this insulting considering the context. Perhaps it's better to say it's reminiscent of the line from the original *Matrix* film: 'I can only show you the door, you have to be the one to walk through it.' You can't pound in the truth. Force is ineffectual. *They have to let it in*. They have to *realize* it, it can't be realized for them. They have to cross the threshold of their own accord. Thus, it's *very* difficult to accomplish this task, not only because it requires immense patience and a sustained strategy of active listening combined with their willingness and ability to step across the threshold between mindsets, but because your own ego will push you



to win the debate which, again, is usually futile. Any attempt to force the change will fail.”

“I have to admit I think you’ve nudged me towards the threshold,” Henry responds, though a bit unconvincingly, at least to Alex’s ears. “And I see your point: One of the biggest challenges is fighting through people’s misconceptions, such as that they’re part of a ‘democracy,’ that they contribute to a ‘free economy,’ that the American Dream is open to everyone equally, rather than largely being the purchased ability to funnel increasing quantities of the value produced through our economy to one’s self, leeching off of the people and the planet. And that we’re a righteous, Christian nation earning our way into heaven, rather than the truth being closer to people being marked for conning and becoming self-righteously blinded and deluded... that religions turn the truth that we’re all variations of the same eternal being into empire’s need for hierarchy, mind control and costly, violently-competing mythologies of the one version and words of God.”

Henry submits his summary of Alex’s morning exposition before reaching over and stopping his phone’s recorder. With a heavy sigh and deep breath, he adds: “I’m heading back to Austin with your ideas in tow. I don’t possess the same conviction or grasp of the concepts as you do, but hopefully the force will guide me,” he adds with a little grin. “That is, if I’m able to keep my ego at bay. Hopefully I can summon the strength and words to inspire my pops to support us.”

Having already packed his belongings, Henry finishes loading his vehicle with Alex’s assistance, and moments later drives his Range Rover down the hill, vacating the property. For good?, Alex wonders. Knowing full well that Henry lives a lavish life of luxury lacking nothing once within the sphere of his family’s influence, it’s more likely that the corruptibility of the ego and the flesh will win over the drive of the Spirit willing him to be a part of the push toward realizing a more prosperous future for humankind as a whole, whether by Alex’s conceived

route or another. His case is particularly difficult, Alex thinks, seeing as he can have it so well so easily and would be forced to trade this unobstructed path for a strenuous uphill path replete with obstacles. The body and mind's corruptibility and the connected consolidating pursuits of his family's investment firm, despite his father's easy nature and philanthropic predilections, are overwhelmingly influential forces to anyone but the most disciplined and motivated people of steadfast conviction and spiritual attunement.

And therein lies the problem. Not just with Henry, of course, but with anyone possessing any shred of progressive will: the limited ability of that will to overcome the mental and physical seduction and corruption of wealth, power, materialism and gratuitously-addictive sensory gratification when it's dangled in front of them, and the similarly limited ability to overcome the demands and expectations of family and conventional society that steer us down the well tread path. Which is why progressive willpower must be potent and bound to the ironclad will of others in order for the individual *not* to take the bait; for the progressively-inclined not to be divided and conquered so that total quality of life progress may break through sooner rather than later; so that a greater existence and less misery may be realized by ever greater numbers as soon as possible. Without that will and solidarity, progress is easily stalled by greed and conventional cultural values and expectations, if not by the demands of survival and the potentially overwhelming distractions of modern life; by appetites, ambitions and conventions. The easier, more seductive path. The path of culturally-encouraged winner-eat-loser cutthroat contention, overindulgent consumption and narrow identification.

"Divided we're conquered by the consolidators and their political, economic and commercial machines," Alex thinks while looking out across the unspoiled forest. "But together we have more power than we've ever come near to realizing." Most power is forsaken when its possessors don't realize they possess it. But when they *know* they

possess it, and when they realize that power is exponentially greater when woven together with the power of other people of progressive conviction, and when it's pulled upon by the right leaders propelled by the right ideas, the whole world can be pulled up to a higher plane.



# APPENDIX

**THE ECONOMICS OF EXISTENCE**

+

**BRIDGING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE**

+

**A PRESCRIPTION FOR POPULAR PROGRESS**



## **PART ONE:**

### **THE ECONOMICS OF EXISTENCE**





## *Introducing the Theory:*

### *Quality of Life Economics*

As a philosopher with strong progressive convictions, I'm compelled by the belief that all systems made to serve humanity and to organize and channel its pursuits, including economics, must be first and foremost concerned with creating the greatest possible total quality of life for humankind. Production absent total quality of life increase is not only morally hollow, but it betrays all those whom contribute to it.

Therefore, the 'point' of all human systems is to best serve humanity as a whole, and, thus, the crux of this project is to create a basis for reframing the economic debate and, indeed, to refocus the very *purpose* of economics upon total quality of life. This belief, in turn, is based upon the implications of what I assert to be 'the point of life:' As life is inherently valuable and constituting of its own purpose, the point of life is to strive to maximize its inherent value for both oneself and for as many others as possible.

There's nothing more important to any life than its quality; than the quality of one's experience of existence. Furthermore, the quality of every existence is equally important. If we accept these premises, we must also accept that the foremost concern of any system impacting life is to facilitate the greatest possible increase in the quality of all the lives which it serves, while simultaneously protecting those lives from reductions in existential quality. Thus, all things of value, including all financial, natural and manmade resources, are only of value to the extent which they serve this preeminent quality of life objective. This may be considered the *quality of life utility value* of the resource.

Based upon this moral impetus, we are honor-bound to construct, maintain, support and otherwise influence every system in a manner conducive to maximizing its total quality of life utility value. We pursue this *not* by communistically enforcing a perfectly equal distribution of financial and material resources and opportunities regardless of merit, but by working to assure that every system we craft or influence that has an impact upon life naturally cultivates a merited means of granting financial rewards, material resources and opportunities to *everyone* contributing to and depending upon those systems. Being compelled by this morally-sound impetus of economic evaluation highlights the failure of unrestrained capitalism; it is both unmerited in its conferral of benefits *and* grossly underserving of total quality of life, leaving the wealthy and powerful and those that buy political patronage the freedom (hence 'free market economics') to exploit every vulnerability of life and the planet in a manner which ultimately severely restricts total quality of life. Put another way, we must craft and contribute to *symbiotic* rather than *parasitic* systems. And Quality of Life Economics serves to examine and ultimately shed corrective clues upon the gap between parasitism and symbiosis within the context of economic study and its modes and means of analysis.

The purpose of Quality of Life Economics is to seek to understand the constituents of quality of life as much as possible in order that those whom rely upon it may work to provide as many opportunities as possible for the people as a whole to improve the quality of their lives, and thereby the total quality of life. Once these constituents and the means of their creation and expansion are understood, they must thereafter be made to inform the ethical foundation, policies and procedures of business, economics and politics in ways which are conducive to the foremost objective of maximizing the quality of human life *as a whole*.

For economics to truly serve life, this pursuit must be uncompromising with conflicting pursuits, including those of excluding business

owners and those suggested by the prevailing 'free market' economic theory in the West and most of the world at large, as said conflicting pursuits hail from the priorities of those entities which, regardless of motive, effectively act to undermine the majority best interest. It's clear to me (and *many* others) that the U.S., and most of the globalizing world following our lead, does a horrendous job of utilizing its total available resources in the facilitation of improving total quality of life. This simply isn't the prevailing motive within our overlapping political, economic and business spheres; spheres which are heavily influenced, even dominated, by individuals, corporate entities and theories concerned with maximizing production and wealth for the benefit of an ever more exclusive class of profiteering individuals who effectively bar the vast majority from possessing the opportunity to pursue a maximization in their respective and collective quality of life. Worse yet, it's not only the people who pay the unsustainable price of the greed served by the one-sided form of freedom underlying the 'free market,' but the planet and most of life.

"Free Market Economics," the prevailing system of economics in the United States, is defined as the price of goods and services being determined by the 'free,' open market through the buying and selling of consumers. "Capitalism," the prevailing system of commerce in the United States, is defined as 'capital goods' being owned by private individuals and business interests whose production and supply of goods and services is dictated by demand in the 'free,' open market. Under a 'laissez faire' capitalist system "private individuals are completely unrestrained in determining where to invest, what to produce or sell and at which prices to exchange goods and services, operating without checks or controls (Kenton, 2019)."

Most modern economies are not entirely 'unrestrained' in this manner, with their governments enforcing regulations to protect the worker, consumer and environment to some extent. In the U.S. and most of the world following our lead, this extent is rather minimal, as

those controlling most of the wealth and the power that it grants them *freely* work to assure that little inhibits their interests. The funneling of cash and connected influence into a political system that fails to bar such plutocratic influence amounts to systemic, culturally ingrained and indemnified corruption effectively undermining any concrete capacity to serve the best interests of the vast majority, interests which, by and large, are mutually exclusive with those of the laissez-faire-fringe capitalists controlling every apparatus of our nation. Core to these considerations is that Americans, and most of the world, it seems, has reduced 'freedom' to mean only *negative freedom*.

What's seldom discussed and sometimes even understood in economic, business and political circles, and amongst the people of the U.S. in general, is that freedom is *not* a single-edged sword. Almost all truths, in fact, aren't absolute, but are relative, exist on a spectrum and 'cut both ways,' per the double-edged sword metaphor I find to be near universal in its capacity of illumination. Within the conceptual context of freedom, this means that there exists both 'negative freedom' and 'positive freedom,' essentially and respectively meaning the freedom *to* and the freedom *from*, as in the freedom to do something and the freedom from having something done to you. On a relative scale, one can't cut one way without cutting *away* from the other direction, making the need for balance between the two, for the desire and attempt to cut down the middle, imperative, and, I'd argue, an essential function of government related to assuring the rights connected to both forms of freedom.

Critically, one can deduce from U.S. history, especially the founding of its government and leading institutions by wealthy upper class aristocrats from Europe, that U.S. cultural norms emphasize the negative form of freedom, the elimination of obstacles, due to the fact that this benefits those that own equity in commercial interests and all its connected controls and door-opening opportunities, and whom

wield directly connected political power in a country whose political class remains mostly comprised of and financed by the upper class, and whose laws, again, don't prohibit the financial influence (even the outright purchase) of political parties, institutions and leaders through the lobbying and campaign finance systems. This has been all the more true since the *Citizens United* ruling cleared the way for private citizens and their corporations to funnel funds through political action committees (PACs) in avoidance of campaign contribution limitations, thereby undermining the very purpose of such limitations.

Amongst the innumerable cascading effects of these national historical, cultural and systemic influences is a nation whose disparity measures are outlandish and continue to grow, with the top 1% of the nation's population receiving over 20% of its total income while experiencing a rate of increase in their incomes *seven times* that of the income increase of the bottom 20% of the nation's population (Inequality.org, 2019).

As another disturbing piece of pertinent statistical information, *Wikipedia* states near the outset of its article "Wealth inequality in the United States," that: "The net worth of U.S. households and non-profit organizations was \$94.7 trillion in the first quarter of 2017, a record level both in nominal terms and purchasing power parity.<sup>[4]</sup> If divided equally among 124 million U.S. households, this would be \$760,000 per family; however, the bottom 50% of families, representing 62 million American households, average \$11,000 net worth. From an international perspective, **the difference in US median and mean wealth per adult is over 600%.**<sup>[6]</sup>"

Personally, I often see these statistics relative to the zero sum game concept, and in the metaphorical light of a stretching rubber band. That is, there's only so much income, wealth and resources to be allocated across humanity at any one time, and there's no way for the

exclusive few to take ever more without the remainder having ever less. This is all the more true when we consider that the few make most of their profits *off of* the many and the planet; off of the working, mass-consuming class and the ever more taxed and destabilizing planet paying for the unsustainable profits of the ownership class. A dirty little secret that conservative economics denies, of course, using misleading arguments like the forever growing pie, concealing the truth that the pie is fully baked and set *at any given time*. The effect is much like wrapping a rubber band around the classes. As the equity owners pull in their direction, the lower classes must be pulled in the opposite, and the ever thinning, insecure and under-increasing-tension middle class sits in the middle of this rubber band. “The middle class is shrinking, stagnating and becoming less secure, even as the world enters the 10<sup>th</sup> year of economic growth and the U.S. experiences a decade-long bull market (Arends, 2019).”

This unsustainable stretch ultimately impacts almost every aspect of life, as our ‘free’ capitalist market, in which the socialization of any market is viewed with suspicion at best, reflexive condemnation and purposefully-fanned, misleading association with history’s most brutal dictatorships at worst, dictates that almost everything that impacts quality of life must be paid for. Immorally, this includes necessities like healthcare and education. And, generally speaking, the higher the quality of the good or service being purchased and consumed, the higher its cost and the greater its impact upon the quality of life of the person, family or group consuming said good or service. This being the case, there are objective means to analyze the quality of life disparity experienced by the population of the United States as a whole, including the use of economic statistics, and to extrapolate from this that the total quality of life experienced by the U.S. population, taken as estimating a quality of life value for every citizen and adding these values up across the nation, is *far* lower than it could be were we to do a better job of improving the equality of the distribution of the

means and opportunities available to the nation's population at large. While certainly not a novel concept, it's nevertheless a commonly misunderstood and under-appraised concept, and leads back to economic, political, business and even spiritual theories, institutions and cultural norms and their failure to prioritize *total* quality of life. Tracing such a concept backwards in time may also lead you to the work of previous economic theorists who concerned themselves with the utilization, or utility value, of all resources.

William Jevons (1835-1882) was one of the greatest champions of the so-called 'marginalist economic revolution,' with he and his cohorts drawing attention to a principle which I myself landed upon in my own thinking, entirely independent and ignorant of Jevons' work and the theoretical revolution which he helped inspire. It is, obviously, not uncommon for thinkers operating within any discipline to come to similar, if not perfectly overlapping, conclusions, entirely free from one-another's influence. "Value," Jevons said, "depends entirely upon utility." "Jevons went on to define the *equation of exchange*, which shows that for a consumer to be maximizing his or her utility, the ratio of the marginal utility of each item consumed to its price must be equal. If it is not, then he or she can, with a given income, reallocate consumption and get more utility (The Library of Economics and Liberty, 2019)."

I'm in total agreement with Jevons, and believe it a moral imperative to evaluate political, business and economic theories and practices based upon their aforementioned quality of life utility value. One of the central concepts of Marginalism is 'marginal utility,' which essentially attempts to evaluate goods and services based upon their increased or decreased usefulness when their supply to an individual is increased or decreased. For most resources it's clear that what may be highly useful in the earlier stages of supply becomes less and less useful as supply is increased; that is, with most resources, it does less and less to improve the quality of life of those who consume or otherwise utilize it

as its supply continues. This is an example of the Law of Diminishing Returns.

While only recently looking into Marginalism, and thus being unaware if this theoretical framework might reach the same conclusions, I believe that the total quality of life utility and connected marginal quality of life utility are preeminent considerations in whether or not a resource should continue to be supplied to any individual or group beyond a certain quality of life return. The marginal quality of life return to anyone from the supply of any resource dictates that resource's quality of life utility relative to its supply, and can be graphed and analyzed for its connected return, which, again, almost always diminishes per unit of supply as said supply increases.

What I believe to be most revealing from the analysis of these curves is that there comes a point in the supply of any resource to any one individual, family or other group where the quality of life return is *minimal* and, therefore, instead of increasing supply to said entity, said resource must, by the moral dictates of Quality of Life Economics, be distributed to another entity who has not come near to reaching such a minimization of return. If I can move the supply of some quantity or quality of a resource from one person to another and increase the marginal quality of life return significantly with this redistribution, then it's clear to me that I've done a 'good thing.' The difference between these two, between the quality of life return experienced by the former and the latter individual, family or group, respectively, defines the *marginal opportunity cost*. And it's my moral position that any economy and connected society that pays too much of this cost should not be deemed successful and hailed as 'advanced,' regardless of its total productivity. If being 'advanced' ignores honoring the quality of people's lives, and thereby dishonors those lives, then it's certainly an empty form of advancement suggesting that *true* advancement has yet to be achieved.



Another way to state this position: it matters little if a country is the most productive (in terms of GDP) and possesses the highest mean income and wealth in the world if the difference between its mean and median income and wealth is immense and, in connection, if its increases in production, income and wealth have little to no impact upon the total quality of life experienced by its population. This foremost principle can be illustrated many ways. For example, we can compare someone in the top 1% of U.S. income earners to someone in the bottom 20% of U.S. income earners and consider the relative marginal increase in quality of life experienced by the two individuals for every, say, one thousand dollar increase in their respective incomes. Or we might measure the quality of life impact upon each of their respective families if we were to give them each, say, twenty thousand dollars, or provide their children with free healthcare or university level education, or grant them innumerable other increases in their resource bases or wider-opened doors of opportunity to increase their quality of life.

What we'd invariably find is that the former would experience little, if any, increase in his or her quality of life and the overall quality of life of his/her family from most of these increases, while the latter would experience a *dramatic* increase, and that this gross separation in quality of life return continues to increase as the disparity in where-withal between the two parties grows. And it's not just money, but the overall quality of life value of *any* resource being supplied to each that determines its impact upon the particular marginal quality of life return disparity. This, in turn, is mainly based upon the *necessity* of the resource.

For example, a starving homeless individual will receive *immense* quality of life increases from even a bare-bones allowance restricted to food and shelter expenses, whereas a billionaire would receive no such increase from the same gift. For the homeless individual, the immensity of the quality of life return in this instance relates to resources

of 'inelastic demand;' resources whose level of demand remains consistently high, even unchanged, among those who need it, even with substantial increases in the price at which the market supplies it. Inelasticities of demand draw attention to resources that should be protected from having people's need and immense quality of life correlation exploited by those that use that need against them, in order to unscrupulously profit off of every form of vulnerability, entirely without legal consequence (largely because the suppliers have undue influence upon the law that morality dictates *should* restrain them). But even without delving into inelastic markets, simply considering our immense income and wealth disparities in the United States and their quality of life impact, it's feasible to posit that our country is highly *unsuccessful* in its servicing of total quality of life, paying an unjustifiable opportunity cost in quality of life through our major social systems and their dominating operators who refuse to take responsibility for the quality of life opportunity cost paid by everyone else. They are, in essence, committing a crime against their countrymen that goes unrecognized by the law; a law that, instead, protects their exploitative capacity.

That said, there's clearly a subjective component to this quality of life discussion which also deserves consideration and, thus, which must be accounted for in *any* study of the quality of life of the U.S. population that comes anywhere near to being considered comprehensive. That is, not everyone views quality of life the same way, with some placing great value upon certain contributing factors which others value very little. This, in turn, is driven by beliefs and lifestyles, which, in turn, is driven by everything that impacts the person's attitude and outlook, from their genetics to their upbringing to their geographic position and demographic profile. Thus, while these innumerable contributing factors can't be perfectly measured and accounted for due to the fact that there's a subjective interpretation of their quality of life impact across any population, we nevertheless *can* study the perception of quality of life and attempt to distill its greatest contributing factors. Through such

study, we may derive a set of 'data points' for tracking, surveying and analyzing the impact upon the quality of life of the average U.S. citizen with changes in the supply of relevant resources. The revelations from such examinations shall inform us as to the factors possessing the most universally-judged and significant impact upon quality of life which, in turn, may guide our ability to craft not just systems of economic analysis, but of commerce and politics, which are best able to put the greatest number of people upon a path to increasing the quality of their existences, which *should* constitute the 'point' of every such system.

While building an entire system of economic analysis around the goal of maximizing quality of life, rather than GDP, wealth and the other traditional 'free market' indicators of economic success is not something that I'd heard of before beginning work on this theory, the study of quality of life within an economic context isn't new, of course. Let us turn to two online economic resources for examples, *economicshelp.org* and the European economics institution *Eurostat*.

*Economicshelp.org* published an online article (originally in November of 2017) entitled "Quality of Life Indicators" in which it opens with the statement: "Measuring economic welfare is not an exact science. Often in economics, we focus on GDP statistics (measuring national output). However, quality of life depends on many other factors apart from just GDP (Tejvan, 2017)." This in-depth article goes on to lend its own interpretation of those elements most impacting quality of life based upon its own extensive trove of gathered information, references and analysis, and to evaluate nations and even provide a color-coded global map of this 'economic welfare' experienced across the planet. Amongst the indicators this *economicshelp.org* article emphasizes are:

**GDP – the total output of an economy.** This is a guide to national output and influences the level of consumption. Higher GDP enables a country to alleviate levels of absolute poverty.

**Distribution of Income in society.** e.g. looking at the Gini Coefficient and how income is distributed. Some countries have high GDP per capita while many of its people still live in poverty.

**Employment / Unemployment.** Unemployment is one of the main economic causes of poor life changes. Also, quality of employment, e.g. widespread part-time/temporary contracts may suggest underemployment in the economy.

**Life Expectancy.** Dependent on health care standards, environmental factors and cultural factors.

**Education Standards.** One simple measure is the rate of literacy in an economy. For example, Sri Lanka has a higher rate of literacy than Saudi Arabia, despite a lower GDP per capita.

**Housing.** The standard and quality of housing and related amenities. Also, include the rate of homelessness.

**Air Pollution.** The quality of air can influence the quality of life and also health issues.

**Levels of Congestion and Transport.** Congestion can lead to time lost sitting in traffic jams as well as being frustrated. For example, average traffic speeds (11mph) in London (2010) are similar to 100 years ago when we still used the horse and cart.

**Environmental Standards.** Quality and quantity of 'green spaces' where people can escape pressures of cities, e.g. London does quite well on this measure.

**Wildlife Diversity.** Protection of wildlife and areas of natural beauty are important. e.g. a new road may reduce congestion but damage areas of outstanding natural beauty.

**Access to clean drinking Water.** Basic necessity is often taken for granted in the West, but is a big issue in the developing world.

**Climate.** Climate can make some areas inhospitable leading to defensive spending, e.g. spending on air-conditioning or heating. Global Warming could tip the ecological balance in some countries with fragile eco-balance.

**Social Investment v Present Consumption.** GDP doesn't measure what is actually produced and consumed. A state with high military spending will have lower living standards than a country that invests heavily in public transport, education and healthcare.

The online European Union statistical analysis website *Eurostat* makes a similar case for needing more than the traditional economic indicators of the health and 'success' of an economy in order to compose anything near a complete picture of the total quality of life experienced by the contributors to that economy. The organization provides a link on one of its main pages to a section entitled "The need for a measurement beyond GDP," in which it opens with the following statement: "Quality of life is a broad concept that encompasses a number of different dimensions (by which we understand the elements or factors making up a complete entity, that can be measured through a set of sub dimensions with an associated number of indicators for each). It encompasses both objective factors (e.g. command of material resources, health, work status, living conditions and many others) and the subjective perception one has of them. The latter depends significantly on citizens' priorities and needs. Measuring quality of life for

different populations and countries in a comparable manner is a complex task, and a scoreboard of indicators covering a number of relevant dimensions is needed for this purpose (Eurostat, 2019).”

The article goes on to make its case for why the production of an economy is an insufficient indicator of the quality of life experienced by its contributing and dependent constituents, citing factors such as income and wealth disparity, potential negative correlations between production and household consumption and possessions, environmental sustainability etc., before providing its own list of pertinent factors:

“Based on academic research and several initiatives, the following 8+1 dimensions/domains have been defined as an overarching framework for the measurement of well-being. Ideally, they should be considered simultaneously, because of potential trade-offs between them (Eurostat, 2019):”

- **Material living conditions (income, consumption and material conditions)**
- **Productive or main activity**
- **Health**
- **Education**
- **Leisure and social interactions**
- **Economic and physical safety**
- **Governance and basic rights**
- **Natural and living environment**
- **Overall experience of life**

The *Eurostat* article goes on to provide information on each of these “8+1 dimensions/domains” and their importance in determining the quality of life experienced by the constituents of the population.

These two websites and the organizations behind them are but a couple examples of some of the valuable work done by others related to illuminating the insufficiency of traditionally-relied-upon 'free market indicators' in the determination of the quality of life experienced by the citizens of a nation and, therefore, in the determination of the relative success of that nation within the context of Quality of Life Economics which, of course, is the focus of this paper. But before composing my own list of indicators to study, track and bring together within a predictive framework for estimating the quality of life of any person or population, I'd like to highlight and/or revisit some key interrelated Quality of Life Economics concepts so that we have a stable theoretical foundation upon which to build in connection to said indicators.

## *Foundational Concepts in Quality of Life Economics*

### **Total Quality of Life**

This is the core conviction and driving principle of Quality of Life Economics, and may be stated thus:

With any great consideration of one's fellow members of humanity, ideally not just in one's nation or family or other isolated group, but the world over, and with any correlation between what might be considered 'good' or 'successful' and the existence of life as a whole, we inevitably come to the moral conclusion that the relative quality of the existence of all the members of any society added together is the best indicator of the relative success of that society. In order to make this assessment in as just a manner as possible, we should also consider the level of financial, natural and manmade resources available to that society relative to the total quality of life produced with said resources.

On a person to person, organization to organization level, it may be argued that the extent to which they contribute to total quality of life dictates the extent to which they may be judged 'good' or 'bad.' Such a judgment must itself be made in consideration of their relative available ability and means.



## Law of Diminishing Returns

The utility value that we receive from anything of value, of any resource, tends to diminish as more of it is supplied, such that we inevitably reduce our demand of said resource and the price at which we're willing to acquire it. In order to illustrate this point of decreasing demand, utility and return (or value received), the formerly cited economic theorist William Jevons liked to use the example of supplying the most essential of resources for life, water, and the spectrum of going from dying of dehydration to drowning. Of course, this is but one dramatic example, and for our purposes herein it's critical to realize that this is an economic law applicable to most things imparting benefit, whether a good or service or opportunity or anything else of value or perceived value, and is a core principle in Quality of Life Economics, as it illustrates the waste and opportunity cost which we collectively pay when this law is neglected.

There are limitless examples of this law being played out, but perhaps the most fundamental example in modern society is based upon financial resources; upon income and wealth. The disadvantaged with very limited income and often zero to negative wealth (debt) might be seen as existing within the 'needs' spectrum of the resources that they demand and pay for, as they haven't the means to acquire most of those resources that might be considered 'desires' or 'luxuries.' Existence at this end of the demand spectrum is highly stressful, and this stress accumulates and correlates with almost every quality of life measure, as well as with the pressures precipitating criminal activity and anything that may temporarily reduce this stress. This, in turn, typically leads to many unhealthy habits, such as narcotics and alcohol abuse and the reliance upon extremely unhealthy foods, which, over an extended timeline, only exacerbates their low quality of life, inducing a perpetuating diminishing quality of life cycle.

One example of this phenomenon being played out: If I give a significant sum of money to the responsible head of a household whose members exist on the far extreme of the needs spectrum, a household suffering constant food insecurity and forced to live in an unsafe area in substandard conditions with very little opportunity to extricate themselves from such a perpetually stressful situation, the potential for this money to increase their respective quality of life is *immense*. If, on the other hand, I gave this exact same sum of money to a billionaire and their household, the potential for it to increase their respective quality of life is minimal to none. In fact, it's very likely that this money will simply be placed in an interest-accruing account that not only has no quality of life utility but which increases the billionaire's ability to take advantage of the disadvantaged, and thereby to reduce the total quality of life of any society and the qualitative state of any environment that they may thereby influence, which, in today's ever more internationally-interconnected world of economic globalization, can come to include anyone and everyone, and every place. Such an impact may be so widespread and rippling through relative degrees of separation that it may ultimately impact the global climate, resulting in rising ocean levels, enfeebled ecologies and increasing emissions, waste and weather extremes, all of which are *much* more likely to adversely affect the uninsulated first family.

Between these extremes on the respective quality-of-life-return-to-resource-availability graph illustrating the Law of Diminishing Returns, we can position other households whose quality of life return/utility per increase in financial resource availability spans the spectrum between the two aforementioned extremes. Furthermore, this same principle is applicable to most anything that increases or has the potential to increase quality of life, which is what makes the principle so valuable (its philosophical/elucidative utility), from natural resource availability to the supply of most goods and services to educational and professional opportunities to the quantity/quality of available relationships and on and on...

## Opportunity Cost

Working from the previous Law of Diminishing Returns concept and its examples, if we accept the premise that the total quality of life of any population is what matters most, and that the extent to which that quality is increased is based upon the relative availability of beneficial resources, it's clear that as the disproportionate distribution of said resources increases amongst that population, so too does the opportunity cost. The opportunity to increase the quality of life of one household decreases substantially as increasing resources that *could* have gone to that household are instead granted to a wealthy household.

With all of these foundational concepts being tied together, it's likely already clear to you, the reader of this paper, that opportunity cost is applicable to the quality of life utility of *every* measurable resource.

## Distribution Morality:

### Quality of Life Utility Value, Marginal Utility and Marginal Opportunity Cost

These concepts are heavily tied to the previous three, yet they're also worth considering on their own, providing their own relative perspectives.

Simply put, the quality of life utility value of any quantity or quality of any measurable resource is the relative extent which it impacts the quality of life of the recipient. While not every recipient will receive the same impact, owing largely to their subjective consideration of the resource being supplied, as well as to other factors, we can, nevertheless, approximate and generalize the quality of life impacts of both

objectively-measurable and subjectively-evaluated resources. Generally speaking, the greater the income and wealth of an individual, the less the quality of life impact/return/utility value they receive with increases in resources. In fact, all resources, not just income and wealth, tend to correlate this way, and the more resources one already possesses (with 'resources' being a very general term in this context for anything possessing the potential to impact quality of life) the less the marginal quality of life utility of any more of said resource. If we supply further resources to one individual whom receives minimal quality of life return from them instead of supplying them to someone whom would receive substantial quality of life return from those same resources, then we can be said to pay a substantial opportunity cost based upon the value in quality of life sacrificed by the latter individual (or family or other group). This is an immoral, wasteful distribution. In fact, the greatest quality of life utility return would be experienced by someone most in need of that resource.

### **Total Value (i.e. Net Value)**

This concept is based upon the moral position that the relative 'goodness' or 'badness' of anything is based upon the impact that it has upon the quality of existence of life in total. If life is inherently valuable, even invaluable, and constitutes its own point, then it's 'good' to increase its quality and 'bad' to decrease it. While the exact numeration may be impossible to decipher, we can nevertheless assert that every individual, nation, state or other entity can be held to account for their quality of life impact. Thus, in direct connection to Total Quality of Life, the Total Value of any one entity is based upon their overall contribution to the Total Quality of Life of their nation, or, ideally, to the world as a whole.

While many other economic and social theorists and philosophers have concerned themselves with the concept of quality of life, my personal history with this question began with the realization that many of those people and organizations that we're taught to revere in the West actually have a *negative* impact upon Total Quality of Life, and that, therefore, our cultural foundations are, in fact, largely laid upon morally-unstable grounds. If an individual, organization, nation or other group extracts, consumes and hoards more value from the world than they create and distribute, their net quality of life impact is *negative*.

I've since realized that we can, and likely should, apply this analysis to anything and everything, including not only people, organizations and other groups, but even to theories, policies and practices. Is the best that we can do as a society to lionize those that *reduce* the total quality of life of the world by taking the greatest possible advantage of all the disadvantages and insufficiencies of protection of the people and the planet?! Of course not. Thus, we need a paradigm-shift in success *away* from promoting the parasitism that produces low total values.

This personal epiphany and its connected moral imperatives and convictions are what led to my calling this developing socioeconomic ideology *Total Value Economics* in my philosophical novel *Infinite of One*. I've since, however, edited the novel and connected works to call the theory "Quality of Life Economics," as I believe such a terminological change better reflects the overriding purpose of the theory.

### **Zero Sum Game**

If we look closely at the interconnected realms of economics and finance as global machines, with the activity of the first producing the relative increase or decrease in the financial position, the wealth or debt, of all its claimants, what we find is that there's only so much profit

being produced and distributed at any one time, and that, in turn, only so much wealth that can be derived at any one time. Furthermore, we find that this wealth isn't generated from nothing, but is based upon an extraction of economic value through service providers and from the planet through which the raw materials are harvested, as well as from the producing workforce and consumers. Thus, there's always a perfectly balancing equation between profit and its derivation. There's always, in other words, a profit *to* balanced by a profit *from*. Therefore, the greater the profit and the fewer its recipients, the more that everyone and everything else, the planet, the workforce and the consumer, must lose to balance the equation. If the workforce was entitled to equity and a share in the bottom line, and if our global business practices treated the planet as a partner to be reinvested in and sustained, the effects of this Zero Sum Game would be *very* different (see the concept: "Business Collectivism"). At this time, however, most people and places of the planet are the losers of this game.

### **Business Morality:**

#### **Equity, The Accounting Equation, The Bottom Line, Exploitation and the Ownership Class**

While some might consider these to be independent concepts, I believe them so inextricably interwoven that they're best considered together.

The first lesson of any accounting course is based upon the accounting equation, which tells us to subtract the 'liabilities' from the 'assets' of any entity in order to determine the 'equity' of the subject organization. Equity is another term for 'net worth,' which itself often seems to be

associated with people's absolute assessment of the 'worth,' or 'value' of the entity, whether that entity is an organization, individual, family etc. Capitalism conditions us to equate the concepts of 'wealth' and 'worth,' conflating personal worth with financial worth.

Without delving too much into the major cultural and moral implications of this tragic conventional wisdom, what's objectively clear is that wealth buys access to most of what imparts quality of life benefits today, and that wealth and equity are overlapping concepts. So while income has a direct connection to equity in that the more income generated by an entity the greater the likelihood that it may use that income to generate a greater 'net worth' via wealth and equity ownership, income itself is insufficient in determining the financial welfare of any entity and, in fact, pales in comparison to equity, for equity is composed of monetary and other capital resources free and clear of expenses.

Furthermore, when we look at the balance sheet of any entity based upon the aforementioned accounting equation, we see that most of those people involved in commerce, in the activity of any business organization, fall into the liabilities column of their respective organizations. And since the foremost concern of conventional business practice is to maximize the 'bottom line' equity evaluation by maximizing the value of assets and minimizing the cost of liabilities, we can very reasonably conclude that any entity considered a liability is in an unenviable position of being targeted for financial *minimization* by their organization.

It is, in fact, my position that *to not possess equity is to be exploited for the inability to acquire it*, and that this moral precept holds true no matter the type of equity being considered, whether it's equity in the business for which one works, being forced to pay rent because one can't afford their own home, not possessing the ability to purchase equity in the

stock market and thereby losing this opportunity, etc. In the U.S., in fact, equity distribution is so severely lopsided that the nation might be considered to exist in a dichotomy of those working to enrich those that possess equity and those equity possessors themselves. It is for this reason that, in my own thinking and writing, I often think in the dichotomous terms 'Working Class' and 'Ownership Class.' This might also be considered the 'Exploited Class' and the 'Exploiting Class,' and isn't far removed in concept or ethic from the 'plebian' and 'patrician' divide of the Ancient Romans thousands of years ago, this fact alone constituting an indictment of our 'advanced society.' In fact, when we consider this moral precept's connection to Western Society, we come to a disturbing conclusion: *The disparity in equity distribution is the degree of exploitation and disparity in quality of life.*

It is for these logically-tied-together reasons that equity and wealth considerations are preeminent to the consideration of total quality of life and societal success, and are core to Quality of Life Economics (as well as to the concept of Business Collectivism).

### **Freedom is a Double-Edged Sword (or Two-Way Street)**

As previously discussed, it's my experience that most Americans, especially those identifying as conservative, seem to view freedom in a linear, black-and-white, absolute sense; that is, from the perspective dictated by those in power: a lack of obstacles. For why would someone with immense wealth and power corrupted by greed and the need for control want anything to infringe upon their ability to profit, including the truth that *freedom is relative*. For what's known to moral thinkers is that *the purposeful imposition of protective barriers can be just as valuable*, especially in those places, to those people and in those specific contexts wherein this highly misunderstood and under-appraised second form



of freedom, positive freedom, is lacking. The examples demonstrating the two sides of freedom and the need for their balance are endless.

If a business is free to extract resources and produce however it pleases without regulatory restriction and enforcement (which it will typically do in a cost-minimizing manner), it can create as much pollution as it wishes through said extraction and production which, in turn, runs off into rivers and streams and can impact air quality and every natural environment, and, adding all such businesses together, even affect planetary health and a globally-warming climate that, in turn, can drastically reduce the quality of life of *everyone and everything*, including those humans and wild animals unable to insulate themselves from this impact. If the same business, operating in an area lacking environmental and labor regulations (the barriers protecting positive freedom) is free to exploit any and every disadvantage of a workforce forced to fight for the limited poorly-compensating jobs amongst themselves in order to survive, all so that that business may keep its costs as low as possible and its profits as high as possible, the quality of life impact upon that workforce will be one of minimization and immense opportunity cost compared to a well-protected, i.e. *positively free*, workforce. This is why, of course, so many products are made in relatively unprotected regions of the world.

And these are but two examples where positive freedom is invaluable, and why progress has created environmental and labor regulations/movements, unionization, activism etc. Morally sound government must regulate business such that it cannot 'freely' reduce the sustainability and environmental health of the planet and everyone and everything that relies upon it, and cannot exploit every possible disadvantage of the disadvantaged. Try to think of some of the countless other ways in which such negative repercussions are faced by an under-protected society experiencing imbalances between negative and positive freedom, and you'll soon get the point. In fact, this is the entire purpose

of law and, many would argue, of proper governance able to guarantee necessary rights and protections of a fully-inclusive prosperity.

Unfortunately, the wealthy have too large a hand in the formation of law, and in deregulation. Yet our illusory democracy, which is more akin to a plutocratic republic, is outside the purview of this paper. What *within* that purview is that the aforementioned protection of inelastic markets is directly linked to this discussion, and many 'idealists' and 'progressives' such as myself would go far beyond merely protecting consumers within such markets, emphasizing positive freedoms to protect the disadvantaged from the unscrupulously over-advantaged that use their wealth and power and underdeveloped morality against the best interests of the people and the planet as a whole which, again, is especially costly to the under-protected that perpetually pay the price for freedom's imbalance. It is, in other words, ninety-some-odd percent of the public that pays for our national ignorance and prejudicial bias on the extremely important subject of freedom.

### **Cultural Values (Conserving the Status Quo)**

As already alluded to and grounded in years of my own thinking and theorizing, it is my steadfast belief that most, if not all, of these underestimated and undervalued foundational concepts and connected principles are underestimated and undervalued *because* U.S. culture is derived from a European history steeped in the means and methods of conquerors and controllers; of those whose consolidations are oppressive to the potential and extremely restrictive of the opportunities made available to the great majority. U.S. history is by and large a tale of how Europe's aristocratic class evolved into today's equity-excluding ownership class, gradually reformulating and disguising their exploitative and manipulative tactics in response to the pushback of progressives.

In fact, I strongly believe that this highlights the ironic basis of the word *conservatism*: tricking as much of the population as possible into supporting that which permits those in wealth and power to *conserve* their means of generating wealth and power; to *conserve* the status quo that excludes the vast majority from any great or increasing measure of political, economic and financial control, reward, development and self-determination in this 'land of the free.' This true meaning of the word 'conservatism' overlaps with a long running history and prevailing school lesson plans 'written by the conquerors' in which the aristocratic class, what I call the ownership class, continually attempts to stall or reverse moral progress to the gross disservice of the vast majority.

Examine the history of the U.S. and the European nations from which it hails and assimilated its lessons of gaining and holding power, and our cultural course is clear: morally-void Machiavellianism prevails. Genocide, slavery and indentured servitude paved the way for the original wealthy U.S. ownership class, the new aristocracy, to take control of the land and resources of our nation, and progressives have been fighting to bring that nation onto honorable, mutualistic ground ever since.

### **Environmental Health and Sustainability**

There isn't a living being on the planet that isn't affected by their natural environment. This is especially true for those humans and other animals living without the resources and regulated protections to insulate themselves from the impacts of natural disasters, extreme swings in weather patterns and resource availability and the effects of things like pollution and general uncleanliness. With global climate change gradually eroding environmental health and the extent to which agricultural

production can be sustained and safe, stable living conditions can be maintained, it's impossible *not* to include the environmental impact of economic activity in any sound form of economic theory.

This consideration, in turn, has *many* contributing subcomponents to consider, including emissions, carbon fuel dependency, carbon sequestration technologies, green energy rates and subsidies, the cleanliness of food production, the sustainability and efficiency of land use, automotive fuel efficiency, waste minimization and green disposal methods, the countercultural encouragement of minimalism etc.

In fact, the environmental, economic, financial, social and spiritual losses sacrificed to the prevailing ways in which we profit the few at the loss of the many through our residential developments and divided means of living *alone* is inestimably vast. (See "What's A Collective" at [infiniteofone.com](http://infiniteofone.com), as well as the following, for more).

## **Communalism**

Related to the last concept and, indeed, to all the aforementioned concepts, Americans sacrifice untold quality of life increases to the prevalence of divisiveness and individualism endemic to our culture. My examination of our political landscape and U.S. History in general suggests that it has *always* been in the avaricious interests of the ownership class and their plutocratic mechanisms to keep us divided, and thereby more readily controlled. We are all, in other words, victims of the age-old success of the 'divide and conquer' strategy long deployed by the ruling classes since at least the time of Caesar. A divided population lacks the unity which any successful resistance requires. Walled off into our 'private property – keep out' areas and perfectly politically divided and controlled, we lack the sense and benefits of community

central to wiser, more unified, far more sustainable cultures of superior solidarity and shared identity.

The fact of the matter is that there's a significantly greater quality of life utility to be gleaned from a better sharing of resources and connected social connection, cohesion and cooperative endeavors. Yes, we've been conditioned by conservative interests to see 'socialism' as a dirty word, yet, used judiciously, and in balance with private interests, freedoms and pursuits, socialistic principles are indispensable to any just, progressive, *truly* advanced society.

While this subject is itself deserving of an in-depth research project likely leading to all manner of predictive models, equations and endorsements, what my own examinations, experiences and imagination suggests is that a much better, more balanced mix of publicly, privately and communally owned and employed land and resources offers incalculable potential for more common identification, solidarity, support, satisfaction and greater total quality of life than our current inefficiently wasteful isolation and dedication to 'private interests.'

The impact of human connection upon quality of life cannot be overstated. Sharing spaces and resources not only makes for more efficient, effective use of that space and those resources, but takes account of the fact that we're social beings naturally driven to connect and share with one another, something which our divided-is-conquered, individualism-centric culture denies us, to a large extent. Many would argue that the greatest fulfillment human beings can derive from life is dependent upon interpersonal relationships and endeavors; upon mutual understanding, cooperative pursuit, shared identity and loving connections. What are we sacrificing when we spend most of our lives in cutthroat competition for the benefit of corporate masters, separated into little social niches with minimal integrational enrichment?! What do we lose by allowing the few to isolate and feed off of the many?!

The design elements that might be folded into a greater appreciation of communal value are near to limitless, but some general elements to consider include greater communal ownership and use of residential and commercial properties, increased cooperative buying power and more mixed-use communities. Residentially developed areas, for example, would likely be better served by incorporating communally owned, operated and enjoyed recreational, commercial and green areas like playgrounds, clubhouses, parks, green-energy-producing energy systems, community gardens and collectively owned businesses wherein the residents and owner-operators are awarded a greater say and share and may derive *far* more social and spiritual value from their personal and professional environments.

***Traditional Indicators of Economic Success:  
Separating Income, Wealth and Production  
from their Total Quality of Life Impact***

As already explained and referenced through multiple sources, traditional 'Free Market Economics' fails to lend an accurate assessment of the extent to which the subject economy serves the best interests of its population as a whole. I'd argue that this is *by design*, but that's a Pandora's Box that, again, is outside the purview of this paper. For now, let me demonstrate how and why some mainstay economic indicators are misleading indications of what makes for economic 'success:'

**GDP (and GDP per capita)**

Taken from the total value of consumed goods and services, having a high GDP (or GDP per capita) *does* indicate a high *availability* of potentially quality-of-life-increasing goods and services within the subject society, but it does *not* indicate the efficacy with which that production of consumed goods and services increases that people's *total* quality of life. The *quality* of the goods supplied, their relative distribution and consumption amongst the disparate segments of society, and the disparity of financial benefits bestowed upon those same disparate segments through their production and consumption are ignored.

### **Mean income per capita**

If I sample a population of ten individuals and find that nine of them gross twenty thousand dollars per year each while the tenth grosses a million dollars per year, the income per capita based upon its traditionally calculated *mean* average income is \$118k each. Looking at this number, one would consider this a high-earning population. It's not. More likely the one owns the enterprise employing the other nine!

### **Mean wealth per capita**

As in the last example, the *mean* average is entirely misleading because it is heavily influenced by the outliers on both ends which, per disparity statistics, skew the results immensely, especially due to the most wealthy individuals. Take it from someone who has experienced firsthand the life of a Fortune 500 family: The wealthiest of Americans exist in a reality that is not our own and, in fact, this wealth is used against most of us to increase the ability of their business interests to take advantage of our disadvantage.

### **Housing starts**

Based upon the number of building permits applied for, it's typically seen as a good sign for the whole population when more houses, apartments, condos etc. are being built. But where's the assessment of the following contributions to this indicator: the number of housing starts that become 'secondary homes,' vacation homes and dwellings to be rented to those that can't afford to buy a primary home? Not being able to afford a mortgage or a direct path to home ownership/equity is one of the ways that the few leech off of the many in a few-holds-barred nation wherein almost everything is a racket, to inestimable oppressive popular impact.



## Stock market performance

If the *vast* majority of 'publicly traded' equity is owned by a *tiny* fraction of the population, how does an improvement in stock market indexes indicate an improvement in the quality of life of the majority of the population? *It doesn't*. In fact, it can be logically asserted that it more likely means the *opposite*: Increasing stock market scores indicate increasing investor confidence in the ability of corporations to profit off of the taking advantage of the disadvantage and lack of protection of the planet, the workforce and the consumer base. This is the basis of most of what constitutes a profit, the unsustainable driving force of stock scores.

## Corporate tax rate

Flying in the face of centuries of conservative propaganda, and belying the preconception of its indoctrinated victims, the public benefits *greatly* from taxation, *especially* with liberal governance dedicated to increasing the opportunities afforded the majority to increase the quality of their lives through *manifold* public spending pathways, something which conservative interests downplay because their only *real* concern is that corporate taxation reduces the bottom line that they extract through their control of equity. Yes, reducing the corporate tax rate makes it more enticing for multinational corporations to do business in the U.S., but who benefits the most from such business, and what's lost for the vast majority when government receives less tax revenue to pay for public expenses and opportunities? As in the previous stock market example, few hold equity in corporations, with most of us treated as a liability of doing business and, thus, being more likely to benefit from *greater* corporate taxation, so long, of course, as it isn't so extreme as to lead to corporate bankruptcy and unemployment.

### **Inheritance tax rate**

Without getting into the moral quandary of whether or not someone born into a wealthy family deserves to receive a fortune someday simply because they were dealt pocket aces at birth, what's clear is that very little of the population inherits much of significant financial value during their lifetimes, making this indicator relevant to the previous taxation consideration; that is, most of us benefit more when it's *higher*.

### **Mean total taxation rate**

Thanks largely to the tax code being open to editing by wealthy private interests through our 'public offices,' we must consider the ability to 'write-off,' or 'deduct,' expenses from total taxable income when considering overall taxation rates and how such deductions *heavily* favor the owners of business and other assets. Listen to Warren Buffet: Gross and net taxation are often *very* different things.

### **Employment rate**

Yes, being 'gainfully employed' is almost certainly better than not being so, yet such a great extent of the workforce is paid in wages, as opposed to salaries or directly from equity dividends, that having a high rate of employment is nowhere near as important as it may seem. If ninety percent of the population is employed in minimum wage jobs and their cost of rent, healthcare, education and overall living is so high that they're barely surviving and hopeless about the future, is this indicative of economic success? Certainly we can do better than equating mere 'employment' with labor market success.

## ***TRADITIONAL INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC SUCCESS, IN SUMMATION***

Taken together, such conventional indicators of economic health, or ‘success,’ emphasized in economics and business courses in the ‘western world’ through the collegiate level, and modeled upon the prevailing ‘Free Market Economics’ theory, misdirect us from the fact that productivity and wealth statistics taken on their own are *highly* misleading. In truth, when analyzed from a total quality of life impact perspective, most mainstay indicators of economic success relied upon by economists to determine the ‘health’ of the economy can be challenged. In fact, increases in many of these indicators actually mean the opposite: it’s *unhealthy* for the population and its total quality of life.

### ***Progressive Indicators of Economic Success: The Quality of Life Impact of Income, Wealth and Production***

While, again, there’s most certainly a subjective aspect to what constitutes quality of life, as well as near universal aspects, such as having a rich social life, that’re highly difficult, if not impossible, to judge, quantify and track, there nevertheless remain *manifold* clearly-impacting factors that can be quantified, tracked and analyzed for their impact upon the quality of life of the subject population.

Before I list some indicators, a caveat: each of these indicators is deserving of its own explanation as to why it was included herein, and consideration of the extent to which it might impact total quality of life. Alas, such a level of examination is outside the purview of this paper, though I sincerely hope that this theory will be better hashed-out and studied in the future, by myself and/or others that recognize its merit. Thus, for now, I'd invite anyone reading this paper, or listening to the connected presentation, to consider why they were included.

### *A Preliminary Set of Proposed*

#### *Quality of Life Economics Indicators:*

- Median income per capita and median income per capita per GDP – typical income stats are *mean* averages, which are misleading indicators of the financial position of the public because they're averaged against the incomes of the super-rich
- Median wealth per capita and median wealth per capita per GDP
- Median net taxation rate
- The difference between the mean and the median incomes and mean and median wealth taken as a percentage of median income and wealth (used as a statistic for disparity)
- *Many* other disparity measures across measurable factors contributing to quality of life should also be generated and tracked, including the Gini Coefficient
- Cost of healthcare through life (including the cost of health insurance)
- Cost of healthcare relative to healthfulness of the population (a measurement of the effectiveness of healthcare relative to its

- cost, measurable as cost of healthcare through life relative to the percentage of the population that suffers from chronic disease)
- Cost of an education through bachelor's, masters and doctoral degrees at the average university
  - Criminal justice – average cost of a successful legal defense of felony charges (cost of not guilty verdicts compared to guilty)
  - Criminal justice – crime rate
  - Criminal justice – incarceration rate
  - Criminal justice – recidivism rate
  - Criminal justice – percentage of the incarcerated being held in private for-profit institutions
  - Homelessness relative to total population
  - Receipt of public assistance (welfare) relative to total population
  - Cost of inelastic goods and services, such as healthcare, rent, utilities and education, relative to *median* income – owing to their being indispensable to quality of life, these goods and services are in demand almost regardless of the cost of their supply—the financial burden that they represent to the public relative to their ability to purchase them is a strong indicator of the extent to which the political, economic and business systems meant to serve society as a whole protect the public from having their needs taken advantage of by immoral systems and suppliers
  - Write-off utility value (percentage of population able to use tax deductions; average % used)
  - Percentage of the public that owns any significant amount of investment equity (at least \$5-10K)
  - Investment equity distribution and disparity (% of total equity owned per sector of the population)
  - Median average quality of housing supply
  - Percentage of housing starts that represent primary residences
  - Percentage of the public that owns their own residence
  - Average cost of rent relative to median income

- Percentage of the public able to save at least 10% of their income (disposable income statistic)
- Freedom of the press (relative consolidation and control of information dissemination)
- Social Spending (percentage of the federal budget dedicated to social spending, green spaces, education, public transit and other public infrastructure, public health initiatives like mental health, and other expenditures with a direct correlation to public welfare)
- Public infrastructure quality
- Political satisfaction levels – surveys
- Political participation levels – indicative of the extent to which the public feels politically empowered and believes that they have a true voice in, and may actually impact, their political system
- Political corruption levels (including the average wealth of national representatives as indicative of their ability to connect to, empathize with and improve the circumstances of the public)
- Minimum wage relative to the cost of living
- Percentage of the work force that's compensated with hourly wages (as opposed to being compensated through salaries and/or equity dividends)
- Median annual value of work force benefits paid by employers
- Median government-paid benefit rate (composite of benefits like social security, familial leave, unemployment etc.)
- Healthfulness of population (prevalence of disease etc.)
- Life expectancy
- Median annual number of vacation days per family
- Median annual value of travel expenses per individual
- Median cost of utilities
- Population density
- Pollution levels (and/or a general 'Environmental State and Sustainability' score)
- Air quality
- Drinking water quality

- Healthfulness and environmental sustainability of supply of food supply relative to price (accounting for % of produce that's conventionally versus organically grown, % of livestock that's CAFO versus at least partially-pasture and, ideally, free range raised, greenhouse emissions, pesticide runoff measures etc.)
- Percentage of energy production considered 'green/sustainable'
- Carbon sequestration rates
- Divisiveness vs. Unification in the Nation (cultural/social cohesion score)
- Family and/or cultural support considerations

A composite of these and other statistics correlative to total quality of life can be produced and compared across states, nations, regions etc. such that the relative extent to which each respective economy serves the betterment and total quality of life of its population can be compared and contrasted pursuant to finding the best possible means to progress.

### *Predicted Outcome, A Moral Assertion*

The relative 'success' of any society is based less upon its total resource production than it is based upon its efficacy at and efficiency of converting its resources into *total* quality of life, for even a society dominated by a ruthless dictatorship may be highly productive, and yet entirely fail its people. A much more morally concrete indicator of economic success is based upon *total quality of life relative to production*.

**Societal Success =**

**Quality of Life Score per capita / GDP per capita**

OR

**Total Quality of Life Score / GDP**

From this point of view, I'd hypothesize that the United States and those following our cultural lead might be seen as relatively *unsuccessful*, and needing of extreme revisions, if not outright revolutions, in our socially-impacting systems in order to become the honorable nation(s) that we're capable of becoming. This progress begins with a paradigm shift in what constitutes the 'success' of any one entity or society at large, reformulated along the lines of *total/net value*. Words like 'worth,' 'value' and 'patriot' require similar, connected paradigm shifts. That is, the successful, high-worth, valuable, patriotic entity is the one that provides more value to their nation, and to humanity and total life, than he/she/it costs said life through extraction, hoarding and consumption.



## References

- Wikipedia contributors. "Free market." [online] *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 23 Apr. 2019. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_market](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_market) [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Wikipedia contributors. "Marginalism." [online] *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 12 Jan. 2019. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marginalism> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Wikipedia contributors. "Citizens United v. FEC." [online] *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 22 Apr. 2019. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens\\_United\\_v.\\_FEC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_United_v._FEC) [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Wikipedia contributors. "Wealth inequality in the United States." [online] *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 10 Apr. 2019. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth\\_inequality\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth_inequality_in_the_United_States) [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Arends, Brett. "Why the middle class is shrinking." [online] *Market Watch*. 22 Apr. 2019. Available at: <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/why-the-middle-class-is-shrinking-2019-04-12> [Accessed 4 June 2019].
- The Library of Economics and Liberty contributors. "William Stanley Jevons." [online] *The Library of Economics and Liberty*. Available at: <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/bios/Jevons.html> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

- Kenton, Will. "Capitalism." [online] *Investopedia*. Updated Feb 23, 2019. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/capitalism.asp> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- org contributors. "Income Inequality in the United States." [online] *Inequality.org*. Institute for Policy Studies. Available at: <https://inequality.org/facts/income-inequality/> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Tejvan, Pettinger. "Quality of Life Indicators." [online] *org*. 6 Nov. 2017 Available at: <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/2445/economics/quality-of-life-indicators/> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].
- Eurostat contributors. "Quality of life indicators – measuring quality of life." [online]. Last modified 17 Apr. 2019. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality\\_of\\_life\\_indicators\\_-\\_measuring\\_quality\\_of\\_life#The\\_need\\_for\\_measurement\\_beyond\\_GDP](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators_-_measuring_quality_of_life#The_need_for_measurement_beyond_GDP) [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

***Everyone's worth is based upon the value  
that they make, not the value that they take.***





## **PART TWO:**

### **BRIDGING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE**



# Bridging The Ideological Divide

## How Capitalism Must Inevitably Merge With Socialism

### Business Proposal: The Collective Ownership Company

**“Fund dreams for a share: The future of crowdfunding.”**

Walking the razor thin line between capitalism and socialism, The Collective Ownership Company puts the people in position to pursue their dreams and finance the dreams of others, granting more opportunity for ownership, both of one’s own work and of the dreams one makes possible, than ever before. This is the future of moral investing, bringing capital to the doorstep of all those otherwise stuck in dream mode, opening the doors of popular opportunity and protecting the people from the parasites.

### Site Structure and Purpose:

Creators and entrepreneurs seeking investment capital post detailed information on their business concept, or the product or service that they want to develop and sell. This includes a business plan, an estimated timeframe on company/product/project (C/P/P) development and when the first product(s) will be offered on the market, how much of the C/P/P is available for ownership by outside sources through the site (as opposed to how much is retained by the owner-operators) in exchange for how much equity, an open dialog forum, and all other information that may be relevant to investors.

By making an investment, the investor shall thereafter own some percentage of equity in the C/P/P, which will entitle him/her/them to a percentage of the profit produced by the company *after* the C/P/P gains profitability (once it’s officially “in the black”). If the C/P/P fails to gain profitability, a “dissolution agreement” will determine how much of their investment, if any, the investor(s) are to be reimbursed.

Any potential product, service or organization may receive consideration through the website. The breakdown in the ownership of the C/P/P, and

what this ownership entitles the owner to, shall be explicitly laid out in the investment proposal. For example, ten people may wish to start a coffee shop, and may wish to first purchase applicable commercial property for the development of a specific custom coffee shop design, and, after extensive research and planning, may arrive at a figure of \$1 million in necessary start-up funds. If those 10 people (owner-operators) each invest \$10k in the proposed company, producing \$100k of the \$1m needed, \$900k is open to

investors that like the concept. If those making the proposal suggest a price of \$1k per share, there are a thousand total shares, 900 of which are available to outside investors through The Collective Ownership Company. If/when the company gains profitability, each share will entitle its holder to a commensurate payout in perpetuity (minus any amount of profit that may be invested in expansion and improvement, as laid out in the proposal contract).

Thus, every proposal that is posted to [collectiveownershipcompany.com](http://collectiveownershipcompany.com) will offer the ability of any investor to own some percentage of a proposed C/P/P in exchange for a proposed dividend paid out at an agreed upon date after profitability, plus other potential benefits as listed (like free coffee!). Investors will thereby be able to invest in making the dreams of creators and entrepreneurs a reality in exchange for an ownership stake. Investors will agree that, by furnishing the funds in exchange for share(s) in the proposed C/P/P, that they'll possess no voting rights or control of the company outside of the agreed compensation and benefits package, unless specifically stated in the investment proposal.

## **The Idea Crystallizes Through Discourse:**

### **Jesse (a collegiate friend of the author's):**

I read the (above) pitch for the project/business supporting platform! Interesting. I do think there are some similarities to some of the others, like Kickstarter and Indiegogo, GoFundMe, or even LendingTree. I'd like to see where you see the differentiation or what's missing in the market.



Also, check out these in particular, as I think they're more similar to your vision:

<https://republic.com/>

<https://www.seedrs.com/>

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/small-business/equity-crowdfunding>

Actually, are you familiar with the crypto space much? One benefit a crypto-based funding platform might have is that it would lower the overhead a lot of taxes, incorporating, banks, etc.

I'm a big fan of blockchain overall, of course there are a lot of scammy projects these days, it's very 'wild west' for now. But the tech underlying it I think is one of the most interesting game-changers for society I've seen in a long time.

Also, you might find this interesting: <https://thenetworkstate.com/>

### **Nick:**

Yes, those are examples of the same general idea; I wasn't aware of them. The article from nerd wallet in particular gets to the heart of the matter in defining "equity crowdfunding," and comparing it to "rewards-based crowdfunding," which are the only sites/platforms that I was heretofore familiar with.

The only way I might conceive of my idea as being different is that it would, ideally, be even more transparent about and integrated with the owner-operators. Who owns what and why, the meritocracy related to the equity distribution, would be crystal clear. Maybe it is on these sites... I haven't dug all the way through them yet...

The idea is to have a site that fully integrates with and supports what I call a "Business Collective" in a couple of my books. That is, I believe in entrepreneurialism beyond it being this hip cool techy thing... it's not about trendiness. I believe in it on a level of *conviction*, and that it's underappreciated; it's a natural bridge between capitalism and meritocratic socialism whereby everybody contributing to the economy has an ownership stake in the economy, and the businesses comprising it. From the janitor to the CEO everyone is an owner-operator; no wages or salaries. So a block of

equity belongs to the owner-operators, and a block to the crowdfunding investors, with the amount of equity awarded based upon the estimated value contribution of the owner-operators + the monetary value of the crowdfunders.

And I personally believe that this “equity crowdfunding” model has no limits... and can be used to rescue people from being preyed on not just as “employees,” as they’ve now become “owner-operators” instead, but in the residential realm as well; a top exploitative culprit keeping the disparity figures in the globalizing world as ugly as they are. Imagine, say, fifty families crowdfunding a tiny home development project, going in on a collective mortgage to fill any gaps in what they can’t afford directly/immediately through their pooled resources in terms of the total development costs in communities wherein they personally own their own tiny home and the space immediately surrounding it, but where the community owns shared space between, such as the park, community center, business collective etc.

Is there such a thing as a collective mortgage financial instrument? If not, there needs to be...

So, the general idea is to take the crowdfunding concept to the next level, harnessing power in numbers to save people from economic, professional and residential exploitation, such that everything is privately owned through the collective, each person owning their merited piece, blurring the line between socialism and capitalism.

Within the same paradigm, I had an idea in the past that I called the “collective condominium,” because I thought it would work well with a condo, because you can pack so many units into one massive structure, making it conducive to collective investment, development and ownership, as everyone is sharing the fixed costs of the development whilst building their own private equity. For example, 100 families might invest in creating a 100-unit residential dwelling, with the fixed costs of buying the land and building the structure being shared... the idea may still be on my site... it probably is, actually.

So I suppose where my conception (site and business design) MIGHT be different from those that you revealed to me is that it takes the concepts of entrepreneurship and crowdfunding to an ideological level...

I just re-summarized it in my notes thus:

Everyone who invests their time, energy and/or money in a business, residential community, energy production system (to name but three potential core applications) or other product, project or service owns a merited piece of those organizations, structures, products, services and systems commensurate with the estimated value of their contribution.

This “equity crowdfunding” model extends crowdfunding to its broadest possible developmental extent, to an ideological level, where “entrepreneurship,” “crowdfunding,” “collective ownership,” “private property” and “communal property” are rolled into one, thereby using “power in numbers” to strengthen and shield the people from all the ways in which the wealthy and unscrupulous exploit their division and disadvantage, thereby preventing their oppression through these common forms of exploitation and granting them a level of opportunity heretofore not experienced, bridging the divide between capitalism and socialism.

The other way in which my concept might be different from those that you informed me of is that, ideally, not only would the site serve as a conduit for channeling crowdfunds to startup companies and projects, but it would also facilitate the *formation* of those companies, such that those interested in the model of the Business Collective, the owner-operator equity-sharing model, could find proposals for companies and projects that inspire them and/or match their own ambitions, and use the site to contact whomever has made the proposals in order to join forces and/or make counter-proposals, so that the site (whether “[grassrootsinvestor.com](http://grassrootsinvestor.com)” or “[collectiveownershipcompany.com](http://collectiveownershipcompany.com)” or other) would exist as a hub for finding BOTH fellow owner-operators AND the startup funds. Everything would be laid out in fully transparent detail, as to what is needed by the one(s) submitting the proposal, including not just required funds but sought personnel (owner-operators fitting certain skillsets and experience etc.).

The equity offered at/for every position and investor level amount would be clearly laid out, so that the ownership of the company/project would be built and made contractually clear *through* the site.

P.S.: I don’t have much familiarity with crypto currency. That said, I think that it’s critical that this concept work *within* the conventional economic and financial systems in order for it to be viable, as funding through cryptocurrencies might make it seem less real or legitimate to the average

person, and would thereby limit the involvement and investment of interested parties. Collective ownership has to work within the standard currency system to be as effective, successful and sustainable as possible.

**Jesse:**

They are called cooperatives.

This one is by far the biggest: (link to a story on “Mondragon” in Spain).

I know very little about them but you might want to learn more about cooperatives in general, including this one, to see what works well and what doesn't. Personally I love the idea of cooperatives. People should own what they work for. Marxist-esque thinking.

**Nick:**

Yes, I'm familiar with the term. I prefer the term “collectives,” which I've been using in relation to the general idea for as long as I remember. I have my own system for meritocratic equity assignment. What needs to happen, though, isn't a sporadic sprinkling of cooperatives here and there... the idea I'm pushing for with the site I envision is an integration of multiple concepts; an overlap of the cooperative/collective and crowdfunding models, as well as collective financial instruments, like collective mortgages, all of which, when synergized and taken together, blur the line between socialism and capitalism: private AND collective ownership simultaneously, through avenues that open financial, economic and professional opportunities to ALL people, not just the wealthy who can afford to buy in.

So to clarify (thanks for the push):

The Collective Ownership Company would integrate:

- (1) the cooperative or collective business model, in a manner of meritocratic equity assignment
- (2) the crowdfunding model, in a manner bringing funds to the business collectives for an equity share
- (3) collective financial instruments, *at least* including collective mortgages, but potentially including many other instruments of 'risk/responsibility spreading'

With regards to your mention of "Marxist-esque thinking," I think it's an evolution in Marxism: rather than fighting and attempting to supplant capitalist systems that have become fully globally ingrained since Marx's day, this idea is like a Trojan Horse; something that works within the established capitalist system in order to gradually remake it in favor of the people as a whole. It's also not entirely Marxist, only semi-so, because private ownership is maintained, whilst, again, lines are blurred... not only between what constitutes capitalism and socialism, but even what constitutes 'public' and 'private.'

**Jesse:**

I wonder how it's similar or different from a kibbutz in Israel. I wonder how those worked technically.

As an idea I think it would sit really well in a futuristic or alternative universe novel, seeing what works and perhaps the challenges of this style of economy.

**Nick:**

It's the Trojan Horse man. How Capitalism mates with Socialism. It's the combination of the business collective and crowdfunding concepts, bolstered by innovative financial instruments. I think it's an inevitability; it's all a matter of how long it takes to catch on, and become the future.



## **PART THREE:**

### **A PRESCRIPTION FOR POPULAR PROGRESS**





## A Prescription for Popular Progress

- Replace the modern pretense of democracy with new, true democracy, such as “The Poly Point System of Democratic Governance” as described herein
- Advocate for the creation and spread of “Business Collectives,” which expand ownership and opportunity within the economy so that the benefits that the economy produces are more widespread
- Create and promote collective investment and development platforms in the “crowdfunding” paradigm that bridge the gap between capitalism and socialism and which, as per the Business Collective (and working in league with the aforementioned), permit expansion of equity-holding in the economy – see the example discussed in “Bridging the Ideological Divide” (previous)
- Establish the study of “Quality of Life Economics” as a more just alternative to the results produced by the dominance of “Free Market Economics,” which prioritizes profits over people
- Return spirituality to its pure roots, as ‘spiritual but not religious’ study and worship that purges all the disempowering, mind-controlling elements of religion (narrowing and excluding specificities, hierarchies, idolatries, irrationalities, propaganda, mind-controlling devices, denials of science and philosophy etc.)
- Supplant the use of chemically-manufactured pharmaceutical “medicines” with the study and spread of natural medicines, of which there are thousands, including psilocybin – natural medicines work *with* the body to offer healing, whereas pharmaceuticals mostly *conceal* illness – the paradigm must be flipped on its head so that Mother Nature is the first line, and the products of Big Pharma are the ‘alternative,’ mostly for acute cases (most cases are chronic)
- Publicly finance and spread the use of CSA’s (community supported agriculture) within all regions and socioeconomic spheres to address the woeful dietary state of the nation, dramatically increasing access to and consumption of micronutrient-dense organic produce, that which, along with popular, evolutionarily-informed exclusionary dietary programs (Paleo, Whole 30, Wahls etc.), champions the “Food is Medicine” movement that will heal most health ills

- Support more governmental protection programs (or even semi-nationalization) for “inelastic goods and services” – those goods and services qualifying as ‘needs’ and/or, at the least, imperatives for quality of life, which shouldn’t be ‘for profit’ because unscrupulous profiteers take advantage of peoples’ needs – examples include healthcare, education and energy
- Legalize, regulate, educate, provide health services for and tax black markets, such as narcotics and prostitution, permitting their use privately and within certain districts, and pour the proceeds into broadly-benefitting social spending programs (such as those mentioned here) – the “War on Drugs” is irrational, ineffective and outdated – stop supporting the criminals!
- Revise the woefully ineffective “criminal justice system” by, as but two obvious examples, removing it as a for-profit business by private institutions, and by backing incentives for inmates and employers which provide a means to escape criminal pressures and curtail recidivism rates – “correctional system” is currently just propaganda
- Trade currently exploitative residential housing practices, especially leases, with lease-to-own contracts building equity for the vast majority, such that the majority flushing their money down the drain of the rich getting richer don’t have their financial circumstances taken advantage of – along with the fact that the vast majority own no equity in their professions, this is a core injustice contributing to ever-broadening global disparities in wealth and opportunity
- Create more means for communal connection to combat the divided-and-conquered, perfectly polarized, walled-off ‘individualism’ that the monied class maintains to oppress and control the people as a whole – only united can progress occur
- Encourage living, working in and exploring nature as a treatment for stress and mental illness, much of which is based upon the simple causal chain of unnatural existences breeding unnatural bodies and minds – *nature deprivation* is a secret, leading cause of poor health





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR, BY THE AUTHOR

Born in the redwoods of coastal Northern California in the blue collar town of Fort Bragg, my early years were trouble-free times of active, youthful exuberance. I was very much a rural kid, playing sports with friends, catching critters, exploring the forest, shooting bb guns, swimming in the river and ocean and eating blackberries off the bush until my hands were stained purplish-black and my stomach ached. At the age of six my father was transferred to the rapidly urbanizing town of Santa Rosa, CA, in the heart of the Sonoma County Wine Country, an hour north of San Francisco. There, I gradually transformed into a video gamer with a strong creative streak. In my adolescence I concocted elaborate games for friends that captured their attention for hours on end, often during school hours. Some of these games were centered around toys, but the more popular were produced on paper, which I called “paper games.”

As I matured I came to the same conclusion that most young, observant people come to: money is the root of freedom, for freedom is *purchased*, not freely given. I knew that I had to do everything possible to accrue as much cash as possible, so that I could do what and be who I pleased. This culturally-pervasive mindset continued through most of college, during which I attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and studied Business Economics, entering the real estate business post-graduation. I was highly motivated by the orthodox ambitions inculcated into western youth by way of our aristocratically-hailing

conservative culture and, through them, decidedly driven to pursue what most consider the hallmarks of 'success:' a lucrative career, the socioeconomic rank and all the trappings. This was before I realized the subjectivity of 'success,' and the fact that the greater form is that which Einstein alluded to: "Try not to become a person of success but, rather, try to become a person of *value*."

Thus, I'd begun developing doubts during my last couple collegiate years that following the traditional path was what I was meant to do; that it was the best use of my abilities. Upon inspection, and in tracing the full causality, I realized that this path produces parasitism and suffering. The more you're said to 'make,' the more you *take*. Nothing materializes from nothing, and capitalism unbalanced by socialistic principles and equity sharing is less about freedom and hard work than exploiting disadvantage.

My heart and conscience thereby began to coalesce around the greater concept of success: defining it in terms of the *creation* rather than the *extraction* of value. Later, as my spiritual awareness grew and I began to sense that 'listening to your heart' is more than mere fleeting emotion, but a tapping into a truer, fuller form of universal Self, my earlier doubts began to crystalize along with my ideology and convictions, and everything changed for me. Though I continued to struggle with some serious health issues at the time, much of which continues to plague me, on another level I came into myself and began to harness a deep sense of purpose. I realized that I'm meant to translate the spiritual messages I receive which, combined with my intellectual inspection of the world, have led me to some profound conclusions about the nature of existence and the greedy heart of western culture compromising our collective potential. My innate creativity found a grander outlet in conjunction with my naturally-philosophical mindset, and I began seeking the underlying nature of reality, formulating my own ideologies and envisioning the type of societal systems that

might someday steer humankind away from a 'greed is good' attitude that necessarily short-sells total quality of life on Earth.

**Access my work @ [infiniteofone.com](http://infiniteofone.com).**

