

Aphorisms and Letters

The Grand Experiment—What Went Wrong?

A Layman's Interpretation

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General Albert C. Wedenmeyer (Wedenmeyer Reports) remarked, "one often hears individuals state that they want good government; but many seem primarily concerned with security, material rewards, power, prestige, recreation and entertainment rather than with their responsibilities as citizen." This book, written in Streams of Consciousness, will hopefully provide some notable examples of what he meant. It is a collection of my personal thoughts and opinions ranging in scope covering religion, politics, parenting, philosophy, social issues, immigration, corporations and history. My goal is to provoke critical thinking in an individual who is persistently directed with sound bites on how to think from all fronts. Consequences can be devastating when decisions are made without relevant facts. Hopefully this book will provide some insight to the reader from a layman's point of view.

"Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking".

—John Maynard Keynes

Preface

I make no pretense at being a scholar. My formal studies, by conventional standards, are considered average. Although I never distinguished myself in the classroom, I have a great respect for learning and learned individuals as well as knowledge for its own inestimable value. What follows are not so casual opinions and observations of some of the daunting issues confronting this troubled nation that I believe is in a rapid state of (moral) decline. Whether such impressions appear plausible, I will leave to the reader's discretion. Should the ideas presented in these pages be received by some degree of skepticism, then I consider this humble endeavor worthy of my efforts. My main purpose in writing this "book", aside from wanting to leave something behind, was to encourage people to think critically about things. We are a nation that has grown complacent in its social and political outlook and interactions with other people; progressively exhausted by material dynamics, that many of us have forgotten how to properly question or doubt, for that matter, which is oftentimes the case when a nation has grown at "ease" with itself. I believe that America's (increasingly) lax moral attitudes are placing the nation on the brink of national suicide. What sets this nation apart from the "inevitable" decline of other great nations, however, is that no other nation has ever purposely promoted its own self-destruction! At no other time in recorded history has a nation's internalized sense of guilt dominated its social and political thinking; never a collective desire to purge itself of self-fabricated guilt complexes whose origins are, more often than not, imaginary rather than real. We, as a people, have devolved into groveling apologists for such remarkable achievements otherwise perceived by the historically illiterate as the product of wicked or contentious designs; in a word, we are seeking redemption for being a great nation. The path of least resistance, it seems, lies in undermining the customs and traditions of time-honored institutions that (once) made many of us proud Americans. I dedicate this book of ideas to family and friends, living and deceased, whose thought provoking insights provided the material for expressing such opinions as I understand them. I wish to especially thank my wife Rose for her untiring support and patience during some rather trying moments. Whether I have offended any individual or group, such was not my intention. I too, am conditioned by what I believe. In the final analysis, I am an average man of ordinary talents who is trying to make a difference in his own way inasmuch as my (meager) abilities will allow.

Alipio Baldi

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Chapter 1

The Wilderness 1992 - 1995

Our lives are not segmented however parts of a continuous whole united with our past which explains, perhaps, inasmuch as events change they remain (intrinsically) the same.

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Mr. Clinton, the "Manchurian Candidate," along with his Bolshevik wife, in what should soon prove to be a co-presidency, appear determined to kick establishment opinion in the groin. He (Mr. Clinton) seems to have a talent for dissimulation. President Bush, who is basically a good man, if anything else, is overmatched and overconfident. His overbearing complacency will mark his defeat come November. Perot, on the other hand, is a pretentious gadfly, albeit a wealthy one, determined to embarrass the president at whatever cost to his immense fortune. I believe that he will be somewhat of a factor in the upcoming election and should siphon a sizable portion of the popular vote, although I suspect his votes will have a negligible impact on the Electoral College.

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The rising crime rate remains a hot button issue with each party pointing the finger of blame at the other. The exponential increase in felonious crime (396 percent since 1960) covering the last eight (8) presidencies begs the question, which party stands accused of benign (urban) neglect that has reduced America's once thriving metropolitan centers to urban playgrounds and sandboxes? Although poverty has certainly been a contributing factor to our nation's urban malaise, it doesn't completely define the phenomenon. From an economic standpoint, even the poorest segments of society are incomparably better off financially than at the turn of the last century. The problem as I see it centers on rising expectations. Wholesale improvement in our (collective) standard of living has failed to keep pace with our insatiable appetites driven less by what we lack or perceive is lacking rather than an envious desire of having what other people have for the sake of having it. In addition, our collective failure to properly distinguish between equality of opportunity and equality of results has produced an entitlement mindset. Everything else being equal, differences in aptitude and talent, motivation, values and (ingrained) habits, health or the lack of, not to mention accident and chance are all contributing factors to financial success. Finally, there exist among us incorrigibles; so-called enemies of society; sociopaths who commit acts of wanton violence not for (economic) gain but rather for perverse enjoyment. This last group, in particular, appears to be growing at an alarming rate.

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The expression "Tickle Down Economics" has come under assault in recent years by liberal economists and socialists of a Keynesian persuasion as "pernicious" to the functioning of a well ordered society. It is often referred to by its liberal critics as "Voodoo Economics" although I cannot possibly imagine how any clear-thinking individual could possibly argue against economic policies that have occasioned ninety-six months of unprecedented (economic) growth and the return of economic prosperity after nearly two decades of high inflation and unemployment. I suppose it all depends on one's point of view. Nevertheless, there remain skeptics among us, including, unfortunately, so-called moderates who (should) know better but, for expediency sake, are hoping to score political points by maintaining that our thriving economy has left far too many people behind and that the "poorer" classes continue expanding at an "unprecedented" rate, with the more militant among them continue equating our nation's economic climate with the Great Depression. Such hysteria fails to refute what recent experience has confirmed: that a (far) greater number of people embracing a variety of individuals and (ethnic) groups are presently enjoying the highest standard of living in nearly two decades. The poor, of course, will always be among us. The emphasis on a sound economic policy, however, should be on Movement. Statistical measurements are merely snapshots in time of individuals or individuals falling within certain groups (or classes) at a fixed point in time (and space). Statistics, properly understood, are constant, although the essential "components" of statistical measurements, considered separately, oftentimes vary. Everything else being equal, an individual or an individual within a certain group (or class) who is poor, however defined, at a given point in time, like today for example, may not necessarily be classified as poor next year or next month or next week or tomorrow for that matter as the (economic) condition of that particular individual or individual within a certain group (or class) will generally vary over time. Economic indicators report raw data, such as the unemployment rate at a particular point in time. These indicators neither measure movement nor track the (economic) success of a particular individual or an individual falling within a certain group (or class) at a certain point in time. That is to say, these indicators do not necessarily measure the same people at different points of time in their lives but rather extract abstracts of such people understood in terms of (statistical) numbers. They oftentimes fail to account for individuals or individuals within a certain group (or class) who have risen above their present economic condition superseded by others. In this manner, it could be argued that statistical methods measure individuals or individuals within a certain group (or class) at a fixed point in time however do not necessarily measure movement as it relates to time and space; that is to say; they do not measure the same people at different points in their lives. Therefore, immigrants, for example, entering the country in search of economic opportunity, or those lacking skills and/or formal education are likely to be situated among the lower social and economic strata. Whether an individual chooses to live as a member of his or her own ethnic group or (or class) or as an outsider among members of another (ethnic) group is irrelevant. The greatest number, however, must invariably gravitate towards the lowest (economic and social) stratum. In time however, given a proper work ethic coupled with favorable economic opportunities, most should improve their social and economic standing. Economic assimilation, if history is any indication, has been a brilliant success in light of the many people from various ethnic backgrounds and races who continue to migrate to our shores either as individuals or as individuals within a certain group (or class) in search of a better life for themselves and their families. We should have cause for alarm, however, if over an indefinite period of time, the same individual or individual within a certain group (or class) were locked-in a cycle of poverty without recourse to a better life, which appears to be the case with some groups. This anomaly, however, should be considered a by-product of social engineering courtesy of big government beginning with the Great Society which I will treat later on.

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How unfortunate that life is not (immediately) self-correcting and that many of us must often suffer the inevitable consequences of our own determinate actions or non-actions as the case may be. When we are willing to learn from our mistakes, however, and become a better person as a result of our experience, perhaps our oversights and/or lapses in judgment will have hopefully served some useful purpose.

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I would like to say a word or two about term limits. Troubling as the continuation of mediocre leadership in government may seem to some of us, should a politically capable and talented individual, who has diligently pursued and honestly fulfilled the requirements of political office, be compelled to relinquish his or her seat by the imperatives of arbitrary laws rather than by free elections? Should individuals who have (consistently) demonstrated high moral character, generosity and (political) courage be held to the same standard(s) as another individual who is (either) morally or intellectually unfit for public office or has (otherwise) disgraced such

privileges? It would seem that at a time in our nation's history when our (personal) liberties are coming under assault, we shouldn't be quick to surrender our elective privileges which arguably keep us one step ahead of Big Brother.

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Unless I am interpreting events incorrectly, principles often seem to define the national debate while wallets typically underscore (parochial) points of view.

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Our need to preserve our moral purpose, when unsupported by an uncertain future seeks its assurances in the past.

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Political Correctness has undermined social relationships subjecting prospective friendships to litmus testing including, for example, what a person eats, drinks or, whether that person, heaven forbid, either smokes or consumes alcohol, thereby determining the suitability of forging (potential) friendships.

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The achieving of one's fullest potential is the ultimate "becoming"

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The willingness to endure (spiritual) hardship paves the road to "becoming" .

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Dignity neither indulges in Self-Pity nor receives Indulgences.

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A thought about appeasement as it relates to Tyrants: Tyrants are unappeasable.

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Childish Behavior is a by-product of stunted (emotional) development. Childlike Behavior, on the other hand, is the offspring of joyful innocence.

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Judge what is; more so that which (is) seeks to become.

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Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I believe, was genuinely concerned about the welfare of our nation. In retrospect, the New Deal, dismissed by many of its critics as an (economic) failure, nevertheless provided some measure of comfort and relief to people who needed it most. Providence, it seems, has a way of summoning the services of political and social "visionaries", (however) distinguished, suited to the requirements of the times. FDR may have been such a man. (Ronald Reagan was certainly another) The 1930's were unusual times for our nation that required extraordinary measures to soften the effects of an Economic Depression triggered by intemperate (market) speculation and a prevailing sense of continuing prosperity that eventually humbled the global economy and brought it to a grinding halt. Roosevelt's New Deal, sought to restore dignity to the jobless and homeless. Implicit in its designs were monetary provisions in exchange for profitable work, a concept that has become conspicuously absent in today's welfare environment. Prior to Roosevelt's hard shift to the Left, a decision encouraged by his socialist advisors and political critics who argued that the program's initiatives weren't going far enough or reaching enough people, FDR, political realist that he was, understood the inherent limitations of Public Works conceived as a stopgap until authentic pro-growth measures would begin to weigh in and hasten economic recovery. He understood the importance of self-reliance and the inevitability that some people would (necessarily) lag behind because of (their) essential failings (if not the failings of the programs themselves, problematic in the eyes of many economic conservatives which is not the central issue here). Nevertheless, FDR sought to provide the greatest good for the greatest number while drawing a distinction between those seeking employment and the chronically unemployed. However sincere his intentions, his economic agenda would unwittingly lay the groundwork for the Welfare State including the trappings consistent with social engineering.

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America's population at around the time of the Second World War was somewhere in the neighborhood of 135 million people. That number has steadily increased to 275 million. It seems that in whatever manner our nation tries to (efficiently) manage its diminishing resources, the continual rise in underemployment (as opposed to unemployment) is gradually reaching a "saturation point" were (the) confluence of population growth and (the) concomitant requirements for job creation is hastening diminishing returns.

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The "Democratic Coalition" of the 1930s consisted of Labor, Farmers, Catholics and Immigrants, among other groups. Principled Democrats that many of them were, each group endeavored, through hard work and self-sacrifice, to assimilate into the American Mainstream with the hope of obtaining their "fair" share of the American Dream. This, in sharp contrast with what nowadays is

commonly referred to as the “Rainbow Coalition” of disgruntled factions who are seeking to reconstruct society in a manner that accommodates their (own) private entitlement agenda. For such groups, the Common Good remains secondary to their own specific “needs” at the cost of undermining the creditable standards of a generous nation whose historical mission has been to provide economic opportunities for all its citizens.

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Homosexuality was once considered an aberrant form of behavior. Nowadays, it is generally considered an “alternative lifestyle”. This “progressive” change in attitude may be construed as the touchstone of a society which has either “grown” or is morally regressing.

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Limousine philanthropists and liberal do-gooders are “ardently” committed to the welfare of “Humankind” in an abstract manner whose “good works” are oftentimes a calling of the Mind rather than the Heart; performed with an arrogant affectation of immediate purpose that serves in reinforcing one’s own good opinion inspired by an egregious sense of their (own) “lofty” morals and principals.

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I am not necessarily opposed to unconventional or controversial methods as they (otherwise) relate to teaching provided that students are allowed sufficient latitude in making informed and reasonable decisions and that our schools and teachers seek to promote (intellectual) balance rather than reinforce a decidedly left-leaning social and political agenda. It is one thing to teach and another to influence susceptible young minds that haven’t yet obtained (sufficient) insight to alternative viewpoints. I am especially troubled by the increasing number of schools that, rather than inspire provocative thinking, seek to advance (pre-packaged) ideas.

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Multiculturalism does not enjoy the support of homogeneously minded individuals nor is this situation likely to change within the foreseeable future. Racial and Ethnic Integration, whether circumstantial or determined, is more likely to achieve a greater level of acceptance among contrasting types when left to their own devices because the act of (coming) together in this manner is perceived as a question of choice. Desegregation, on the other hand, is a coercive (political) action imposed upon unwilling individuals or groups by (judicial) fiat. The compulsory assimilation of diverse groups (against their will) possessing different values, customs, habits and points of view must inevitably promote resentment among individuals who perceive each other differently.

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“Forced Busing” has not only inconvenienced families and communities alike, but its stated mission, since its inception, has fallen short of its intended designs. Its time, I believe, has finally passed. Government has endeavored to create a level playing field by relocating children from inner-city neighborhoods to “better” schools located in suburban communities. The fact of the matter is that many of the children involved in this “quixotic” attempt at achieving higher academic performance were unprepared for the (immediate) challenges facing them. A number of above average schools had to compromise academic standards in order to accommodate the influx of “under-educated” students who were ill-equipped to meet their demands. In some instances, such standards had to be reduced or eliminated altogether. I have always favored remedial programs designed to improve the academic performances of underachieving children that would make them academically competitive rather than setting those children up for failure, which happens to be the case most of the time. Under-Achievement has been (invariably) addressed by watering down (academic) standards, thereby depriving children of an opportunity of reaching their highest (intellectual) potential while curbing the development of brighter, more talented children who, engaged in a slower-paced environment, oftentimes find themselves shortchanged as well, while having to wait for the (intellectually) sluggish, indifferent or slower learners in general, to play catch-up. In the final analysis, such efforts aimed at achieving (academic) parity have served in further diminishing academic standards to the point where such standards are no longer meaningful. A universal pass/fail system will one day prove the most egregious, irrelevant standard of them all.

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I support Bosnian intervention provided that our military objectives are clearly defined (including exit strategies) and that our fighting men and women receive proper training and provided the means of achieving their objectives quickly and efficiently lest our troops risk losing the support of the American People whose “tolerance” for war remains vital to the military success of our fighting forces.

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Liberals are hawkish on Bosnia, or at least many of them appear to be as evidenced by their support of America’s intervention in that country’s civil war. The perception of Human Rights violations committed against the Muslim population by Serbian troops has many of them in a lather. Such raises some very important questions including where were these self-styled freedom fighters twenty years ago when Human Rights were being routinely trampled on in South Vietnam and Cambodia? Where was their unqualified support for the Contra Freedom Fighters at war against a Marxian Dictatorship? Where was their sense of duty and honor and proportion, for that matter, for the (untold) millions who were slaughtered and abandoned by their putative allies or many individuals in our time left to the arbitrary currents of oppressive governments whose (ideological) doctrines place little or no value on human life? At what time were their muffled cries heard when defenseless women and children were being driven to the sea by the tens of thousands following the most egregious military withdrawal in American History? Perhaps things have changed in the wake of political correctness!

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I am convinced that we are slowly devolving into a godless society. Perhaps nothing best exemplifies this opinion than the irritatingly obtrusive “Happy Holiday” which has superseded traditional Christmas greetings should, heaven forbid, Merry Christmas offend the secular sensibilities of non-Christians and nonbelievers alike. Christmas, it should be remembered, is not a “holiday”. For hundreds of millions of practicing Christians worldwide, it represents the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It seems ironic that our intolerance for traditional customs has increased in proportion to our tolerance for things “diverse.”

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Poverty is a humbling experience. Nevertheless, and I’m going to take some heat for saying this, there appears to be something human and less artificial among those trapped in its web. Perhaps such thinking is merely the romanticized musings of someone who has been more fortunate than most. I can lay claim, however, to my own humble beginnings, having been raised in a cold water flat (the building was condemned when I was six years old) in Manhattan until my parents moved on to greener pastures in the Bronx, New York. My immigrant father took whatever jobs he could find until he was finally able to secure a construction job that brought our family a steady paycheck. Although our family was poor, we were never “needy”. Be that as it may, such concepts relating to rich or poor or lying somewhere in between are meaningless to preschoolers until “comparative impressions” start kicking in, which, for most children, is generally around the time a child starts kindergarten. One good thing about poverty, provided it isn’t severe, is that it conditions a family to properly manage their limited resources and improvise on the little they have. Poverty is thought provoking in the manner it spurs the imagination of things possible; however I digress. How wonderful it would be if our government were occasionally a dollar short so that it too might develop economical spending habits. (I forgot about taxes!) It seems that the more government has available to spend, the more it feels compelled to spend it. At any rate, I am not trying to make an argument for the good ole days, which weren’t always so good, although heaven knows why many of us oftentimes feel the need to remind ourselves that they were. Neither am I making a case for poverty; you know, a character builder and all that. There’s a tendency among some of us who have risen from humbler beginnings, however, to wear our (erstwhile) poverty on our sleeves as an affirmation of our “incomparable” achievement or perhaps we wax nostalgic for simpler times however “unpleasant”. Perhaps it’s the struggle that we miss the most, that brought our families closer together or perhaps it’s the (simple) pining of our lost youth.

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It has often been said that inasmuch as things change they remain the same. This is partially true. (Essential) Human Nature, never changes; only the scope and limits of its immediate environment that conditions the way it thinks and acts.

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The Special Prosecutor’s Office has lost a great deal of credibility in recent years. This “bipartisan” office was initially established to investigate and prosecute political figures found guilty of political misconduct and abuse of public office. It has subsequently devolved, however, into a quasi political agency consisting of political hacks commissioned to persecute or discredit political opposition.

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The governor of the State of New York is proposing a bill that will increase cigarette taxes thereby raising the cost of a pack of cigarettes to \$3.00, the highest in the nation; in this manner offsetting the fiscal ineptitude and corruption of our state officials whose gross mismanagement of the public treasury constitutes a greater sin than the sin tax itself.

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The prison population received some welcome news from New York City after it announced plans to establish a Civilian Review Board, the kind that is likely to attract a number of ACLU types on its committee. This initiative should improve the chances for early parole for a number of hardened criminals who, in the interest of society, should otherwise serve their sentences. As usual, it’s the victim and potential victims who always seem to take it in the neck!

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Penal Systems were established to punish (hardened) criminal offenders by locking them behind prison walls. Efforts aimed at rehabilitating criminal elements should be pursued whenever possible without compromising its intended purpose, however.

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The Surgeon General is hoping to encourage condom use (especially) among teenagers through public service announcements as part of the department’s “safe” sex education program. This is like distributing clean syringes to chronic drug users. Why not simply raise the white flag and lay down our (moral) arms. Society’s inability to properly instruct and influence its own children by telling them in effect, that inasmuch as (some) parents are either unable or unwilling to control inappropriate behavior, let’s at least make improper conduct safer; in this manner sending a mixed message to our “wayward” sons and daughters.

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A major obstacle often encountered in most relationships is the expectation of mutual reciprocity; that is to say; expecting a “fair” or proper return of affection equal in proportion to one’s own measure. I don’t believe that this is possible, however, because of the

emotional boundaries that naturally limit an individual's capacity to either love or to love in return. The best any of us could hope for is that we continue loving others in a manner consistent with our nature or capacity to love while placing our hope and trust in the reciprocal affection of those we love.

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Abraham Lincoln said that "a government must not be as strong as to challenge the liberties of a free society while at the same time remaining strong enough to maintain its existence". Despite the number of rhetorical portents emanating from partisan politicians and doomsayers about the imminent demise of democratic principles and rule of law, a political dictatorship (I am using an extreme example) in this country would be very unlikely. Our nation's scrupulously crafted system of Liberal Republicanism, deeply imbedded in our political and social institutions, has rendered this an unlikely possibility, unlike old world cultures whose political origins were founded on authoritarian, monarchial or tribal traditions. America's Declaration of Independence inspired the thinking of an incipient nation whose formative ideas would one day lay the cornerstone of our inimitable Constitution. This great document was not artificially conceived. It acquired a spiritual character inspired by the principles of Natural Law and Equal Rights of Men eloquently expressed in the political writings of Locke, Paine, Montesquieu and Burke among others. That our system of government might someday submit itself to tyranny is diametrically opposed to the American mindset accustomed to freedom, unlike (subject) societies whose uncertain social and political environments keep many of its citizen living on the edge of tyranny. The political prototype established by Americans for Americans is unique in the manner it was able to harness and (limit) the energies and imaginations of thirteen independent colonies while integrating them without unduly compromising their singular authority.

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Circumstances and events have elevated many people to greatness. Nevertheless, those willing to confront potential challenges possessed the character, ability and mindset to override them.

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The "demise" of Communism is likely to re-ignite national prejudices in the Baltic States and Eastern Europe. Economic instability will likely ensue. Western Europe has been slow to learn the lessons imparted by two world wars that reduced many of its nations to the second rank. It will be interesting to observe how events will eventually unfold. I expect Western Europe may gradually re-open its markets to its Eastern neighbors although they have their own (economic) issues to deal with. The United States, on the other hand, will need to assume a stronger presence in that region by encouraging free and open markets that will allow these nation's to prosper. It might also prove to be an excellent opportunity for America to "repair" fragile relations.

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Attempts to control spiraling health care costs will require the reining of special interest groups which is unlikely to happen any time soon as long as taxpayer recourse remains the fallback option.

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The underlying principles of "equality" under the law have been grossly overstated by our higher courts whose primary function should be legal interpretation; assuring that existing laws are being properly and evenly applied without regard to special interests or favored classes or groups. It is unfortunate, however, that many of our courts are becoming (de facto) less juridical and more of an auxiliary law-making "branch" of the government where activist judges seek to adapt the elasticity of constitutional law to their (own) privately held views of Justice.

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Contrasting Liberalism Old and New: The older version encouraged entrepreneurship; the modern rendition, regulation and statutory restrictions. Classical Liberalism supported individual rights; Modern Liberalism, group rights. The (old) was subservient to the will of the people while the (new) has assumed the role of Social Guardian.

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Housing Starts has increased 18.5 percent over the past year. This isn't too shabby for an economy that candidate Clinton suggested was on the brink of a Depression. Mr. Bush's laid back, elitist incumbency (perhaps he should have campaigned on his front porch) has ushered a fifth columnist who, heaven preserve us, will never be elected to a second term!

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It follows that peace is conditioned in advance of naught once a threat has properly revealed itself.

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Freedom and Power are synonymous: Freedom is a position of Power while Power is the Freedom of Choice. However limited or broad in scope, their relationship is certain.

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The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was not the panecan quick fix that many of its (avid) supporters had initially hoped for. Redundant in many ways, it reinforced existing statutes by establishing more laws without addressing essential issues of immediate

concern; that is to say, in what manner does an individual obtain the necessary tools needed to acquire access to better schools and higher paying jobs without compromising competitive requirements? Government, in effect, reaffirmed existing laws with the intention of enforcing rather than promoting equal opportunities for those who were neither prepared nor equipped to meet its uncertain challenges. The major obstacles were not the laws themselves but their (historical) implementation or lack thereof. That is to say, our society, despite (its) existing laws, did not fairly treat some of its citizens in accordance with the spirit of those laws. The inconstancy between their (underlying) intent and (purposive) designs oftentimes lagged, especially as it related to our nation's unfortunate treatment of its Black Citizens. The real tragedy followed the conclusion of our Civil War when rising expectations occasioned false hopes. The aftermath of the war (again) provided an opportunity for a newly united and (wholly) "integrated" nation to redeem its moral and political covenants by fulfilling the promises outlined in the Declaration of Independence and in the American Constitution. Once again our nation fell short of its historical promises. President Lincoln understood that efforts aimed at assimilating the emancipated Negro would require modifying our nation's social and political mindset aside from amending its laws. The reality was that, bigotry aside, many African Americans at that time were unprepared, either by temperament or conditioning, to be free; that is to say, Free to do What and How or Where? The learning curve of most African Americans at that time, by all objective standards, was steep. Many, lacking either viable or meaningful outlets chose the safer havens of discredited institutions giving pause to the adage "better the devil you know than the one you don't." The more enterprising among them, however, packed what little belongings they had and sought their fortunes elsewhere. (Many of their offspring would go on to enjoy rewarding careers in a variety of fields.) Educational and training requirements needed to achieve (at least) minimal competitive advantages generally fell on deaf ears, especially in the predominately agrarian South where managing a plowshare was all the education a sharecropper required. Lincoln's untimely assassination would leave a spiritual and moral vacuum on both sides of the racial divide where a bigoted South and disinterested North seemed equally content with maintaining the status quo. Once advancements in biotechnology in the sixties rendered traditional farming methods obsolete, massive numbers of African Americans migrated North to seek (other) employment opportunities. The diminishing demand for unskilled labor in the North left many families petitioning for relief. The uncomfortable "presence" of growing numbers of unemployed people living on the margins, accompanied by the rise in (violent) crime in urban neighborhoods that inevitably followed, seemingly revived the slumbering sensibilities; that is to say, fears of (White) individuals and reformers alike whose "social awareness", conspicuously absent for nearly a century, suddenly reached a fevered pitch once the "problem" hit "home". This epiphany of sorts aroused a latent "conscience" that subsequently engendered a variety of (social) programs designed to assist the needy, although once the smoke cleared, such programs oftentimes benefited poverty pimps rather than their intended targets. Rather than introducing gradual, measured change, an entire society was placed atop its head in an effort to compensate for its historical misdeeds instead of trying to correct rather than manage its effects. Be that as it may, after all these years, we, as a society are still reeling from the aftereffects of political tampering and social engineering that shies away from (underlying) core-issues.

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The mainstream median has this annoying habit of reporting (partial) truths, at least as they relate to (its) political commentaries, by passing them along as (completed) truths thereby presenting distorted versions of (real) truths.

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"Health Nazism", a term coined by Peggy Noonan in her Reagan Biography, correctly describes the advancement of a consumptive agenda in keeping with the principles of (political) correctness. "Unhealthy" eating and drinking habits may someday require a fiscal palliative. Sin tax(es) anyone?

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(Spiritual) Sorrow, not to be confused with Despair, instructs the Soul in the manner of Wisdom that Despair seeks to disavow.

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Students are spending more time in classrooms at every level than at any other time in our nation's history. Having received more education than their predecessors, however, does not necessarily imply that recent graduates are better educated but have received, rather, the most "education".

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In a highly specialized society, most students generally gravitate toward curricula that many perceive will provide the highest financial rewards in his or her chosen field. I am speaking of individuals who have a vested interest in their careers. The idea of acquiring knowledge for its own sake appears passé which is unfortunate for a society in terrible need of a well rounded education. The idea of acquiring wealth is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. It seems however, that the practical pursuit of monetary rewards coupled with a diminution of comprehensive knowledge has left our intellectual cupboards empty, establishing in their wake, in a manner of speaking, a Civilized Barbarism.

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Social Engineering's obsession with trying to fit or (accommodate) parts to wholes without giving pause to how each part is likely to function or react in relation to a particular whole or how the incompatibility of certain threading must disengage the entire fabric and render it meaningless has compromised the character of an orderly society whose meaning may be understood and its effectiveness measured by correctly assessing the functional utility of each of its components.

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The main reason why an increasing number of urban municipalities are enforcing mandatory residency requirements on its civil service employees, especially its policemen and firefighters, is due less to the common perception of increasing efficiencies which closer proximity to the “workplace” would supposedly facilitate rather than a transparent attempt at recruiting more minorities. As a result, municipal employees are being coerced into forgoing the comfort and security of suburban communities for the sake of their jobs.

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An individual’s standard of living is promoted by means as well as by some vague notion of an ideal or appropriate lifestyle whose expressive habits, unfortunately, are oftentimes inadequate to support such lifestyles.

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Introspection must be wary of falling into a state of Self-Deception.

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Most psychologists, I believe, are kooky by Osmosis.

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I suppose that I’m being unfairly critical of the psychological community which, not unlike other professions, is merely seeking to justify its existence. This profession has traditionally justified its position in proportion to the increasing number of previously unknown “mental diseases” that have surreptitiously seeped their way into the mainstream (lexicon) by virtue of broader classifications defining mental illness or other (psychological) disorders or peculiar habits or by overstating common oddities and making a clinical case out of them. Modern revisionism is likely to label every peculiar quirk or eccentricity of no immediate consequence, an abnormality. I wonder that many of us haven’t already been ushered off to the loony bin given the oddity of our (own) behavior. Of particular concern, however, is the increasing number of hyperactive or disruptive children routinely assigned, in proportion exceeding what is actually warranted, to special education or “remedial” training classes. We, as a society, seem to have lost all sense of proportion, if not our common sense, as it relates to raising our children. In the manner the medical community involuntarily over medicates its patients, we are witnessing a disturbing trend among psychologists, teachers, guidance counselors and social workers alike to overanalyze our children by reading into things that simply aren’t there. Some children will arguably require special counseling which is well and good. The manner a child is evaluated, however, should be exercised with caution; allowing for the normal growing pains and rebellious designs of rambunctious children coming of age rather than pre-categorizing them to conform to subjectively meaningless (personality) theories understood in textbooks.

• • •

The portrayal of America’s military, its officers and men, in such an unfavorable light and the improbable characters oftentimes presented on the screen by the motion picture industry gives pause to how ragged bands of militia freedom fighters evolved into the best fighting units in the world today.

• • •

On Friday afternoon, in what was generally perceived to be the work of some terrorist organization, explosives were set off in underground garages located beneath the World Trade Center leaving seven people dead and many seriously injured. This event should (must) dispel once and for all the myth of America’s Impregnability. Our complacency may have been justified at one time when the world was much larger and less traveled than the modern age of rapid mobility and open borders. Although this horrific event must never shake our nation’s resolve in bringing these culprits to justice, it should (also) provide a wake-up call to all Americans that this was not an exceptional event but a likely precursor to future attacks against American interests both at home and abroad. It should be kept in mind, however, that not all wars are fought on the battlefield. The climatic rise of despotic and reactionary fanaticism emerging throughout the Third World should serve as a reminder to our nation’s leaders and their allies that American Intelligence must be provided the necessary resources and latitudinal discretion needed to meet the increasing challenges confronting the Free World by Islamic Terrorist Organizations. Are you listening, Mr. President?

• • •

Itlo-Americans are not the political force that their numbers might otherwise suggest. Clannish by nature, conditioned perhaps by the traditions of the Italian City State, many are productive individuals who are remarkably successful in their chosen fields. As a “non-political” group, many have quietly integrated into the American Mainstream without (much) fanfare. They remain hard-working, inconspicuous and collectively “apolitical”.

• • •

Litmus Testing appears to be gradually superseding Merit as a requirement for promotion in the Civil Service as government agencies continue to assume the “burden” for historical grievances at the expense of worthier candidates while broadening the margins of (self) perception.

• • •

Satan, a work associate recently explained, was conceived “in love” in God’s own image as was all His Creation, and that his subsequent Fall from Grace, precipitated by Prideful Will, induced him to choose Evil over Good. Evil, is a “concept” that for many individuals is oftentimes understood in abstract terms as “something” lacking (a) definitive substance or meaning that many are likely to treat casually or as an intellectual notion existing in the mind only or as “some thing” or “some one” personified, however lacking a tangible foundation. Evil cannot be understood apart from some contrary idea, that for discussion purposes I will refer to as “Good”, that provides it with its own exceptional predicates; that is to say, character and meaning. In this manner, Evil, or any other idea, for that matter, cannot stand alone, or so it would seem. For this reason, a society’s conventional notion of “Beauty”, as an example, is meaningless unless counterpoised by some other idea that opposes it with equal force which, for our purposes, is understood as “Ugly” or unattractive in appearance, not to be confused with something or someone an individual might otherwise consider morally reprehensible or displeasing to the senses which is not necessarily the same thing, if for example, that individual harbors a singular aversion or dislike to something or someone upsetting to his or her (personal) sense of decorum or “good” taste rather than offending the sensibilities of conventional customs. The same line of reasoning applies to Truth/Fallacy, Chaste/Defiled, Gentle/Harsh, Honorable/Unprincipled and so on. My point is that nothing taken by itself may be properly measured against itself. Neither does an idea convey meaning apart from itself. This argument does not imply, however, that some thing or some idea can not exist in its own right apart from other things or ideas existing within themselves. Our limited understanding of ideas, however, often distorts our impressions or ability to judge things critically or to reason correctly; factoring variation or intent or purpose whenever required in order to accommodate or justify some peculiar action or manner of behavior that, extended beyond its pre-assigned limits, often renders further interpretation futile. That God is all loving and good; whose Perfection embodies Perfect Goodness without fault or blemish, and having imparted His Goodness only; how or in what manner did (Humankind) manage to corrupt itself given the fact that Perfection is neither able to add nor subtract from itself without compromising its perfection thereby rendering itself less perfect which does not follow since Perfection, being aware of its own perfection, could not properly consent to its own degradation by assuming a less than perfect condition. God did not impart His Perfection to His creation but a likeness, rather, of His Perfection which is not the same thing, however. Having done so would have (paradoxically) occasioned the creation of nothing less than Himself which is neither feasible nor possible. He endowed His creation with the faculties of Reason and Free Will which, for our purposes, implies the absence of a nonexistent condition. Therefore, Free Will becomes a necessary condition of “Being”. God’s gift of Free Will is consonant with His gift of Life inasmuch as each mutually conditions the other. Angels and Humankind were created in a manner approximating or imaging God’s Perfect Nature. Therefore God created a universe which was potentially less than perfect although potentially perfect. Adam’s (Humankind’s) fall from Grace produced the first stain on God’s Creation, which did not proceed from God; however, insofar the potential for disobedience inherently lies in Free Will. Such was God’s intent, for where lies the merit in someone who is perfect and therefore incapable of sinning as opposed to (an) imperfect being that must continually prove itself in order to achieve perfection? An individual is therefore counted worthy by the quality of his or her own actions, not by what he or she is, but what he or she seeks to become. Free Will carries its own burdens understood as Pride. Human Nature, however, can not always separate Free Will from Pride. Pride, however, does not necessarily encumber our efforts to do “good” provided that we properly acknowledge the origin (God) of all human kindness and good works by recognizing God working through us. Pride’s (sin) lies in the mistaken notion that we (alone) are the eminent architects of our worldly achievements apart from the guiding light of our Creator. Pride would have us believe that it is God who should be indebted to us for having done his work! In this manner, pride in doing God’s Work, rather than self-pride, ennobles the Spirit whereas self -love remains the cornerstone of Pride that ultimately seeks its destruction. God, in His infinite mercy however, has provided a remedy to check its harmful effects. It is Conscience or God’s way of talking to us by directing our thoughts and actions while leaving final decisions to us. (Free Will) Abstracts become clearer in proportion to our (own) lively imaginations that otherwise provide substance and meaning to our lives.

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The Democratic Party is adept at embracing single issues and providing ports of refuge for its single-minded malcontents.

• • •

The selling of America by Corporate Profiteers is tantamount to Economic Treason.

• • •

A counterpoise to the “Practical Liberal,” I suppose, is an “Enlightened Conservative.”

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A major obstacle to balancing the federal budget is properly understood in terms of limited resources on the one hand and unlimited spending potential on the other.

• • •

Clean neighborhoods are functions of attitude and values rather than Ethnicity.

• • •

Lofty principles and ideals are impervious to financial setbacks inasmuch as they could not be purchased to begin with.

• • •

Memories preserve our lives (in their entirety) by making us (collectively) more thoughtful and wholesome, completing us as human

beings by reminding us of who we are, who made us who we are, why we have become who we are and who we hope to become, lest we forget “ourselves”. In this manner, our past secures a proper place in the present while becoming one with the present, brought closer together in harmony, neither conflicting with nor detached from the here and now however united in some manner, rather, as an integral component in its own time and place although remaining mutually sympathetic with time/present insofar both exist in the spirit of (a) past/present continuum; much in the manner the present will likely embrace the “unforeseeable” future that will soon find its (own) proper expression in the present, lending its own “retrospective” impressions that seeks becoming in (a) present/future continuum, who, along with the past, will leave its own inestimable imprint(s) as it seeks to achieve solidarity in a time/spatial continuum embracing all three.

• • •

The rise in (disposable) income among working class families is barely managing to keep pace with the rising costs of consumer goods and services as might be expected from families relying (solely) on their weekly paychecks as their chief source of revenue unlike middle to upper (income) classes earning above average salaries who are able to invest a portion of their savings in outside investments that may (hopefully) generate additional income.

Addendum to the above: Reduce (exponential) consumption while increasing (arithmetic) investment.

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Addendum to the above: It is not what an individual makes but what he or she accumulates!

• • •

The manner “family” income is defined should factor in the number of (contributing) breadwinners in that family, otherwise such statistics relating to income are meaningless; like comparing apples with oranges. As a general rule, a single parent supporting a family, unless he or she falls in a higher income bracket, will unlikely generate as much income as traditional two parent families where both husband and wife are working and bringing home a paycheck. In an age where higher divorce rates are occasioning more single-parent households, society needs to reconsider the traditional definition or boundaries of family as they relate to measuring income.

• • •

Engaged in mortal combat (for the body’s soul), the Spirit will inevitably override the Flesh although the latter will give the crowd its money’s worth!

• • •

The Academy Awards has devolved into a political three-ring circus highlighted by pompous, politically frustrated actors who are woefully mis-informed and should otherwise stick to the script while doing what many of them (often) do best; imitating their own (inimitable) imitation of life!

• • •

At what juncture does permanent arrangements clash with provisionary conveniences accorded to every individual under the law or conflict with (the) National Interest, for that matter?

• • •

Our military, since the conclusion of the Second World War, has provided a variety of educational and vocational opportunities for under-employed men and women (thereby) enabling many of them to (effectively) compete for better paying jobs once they retire from active service. This, aside from instilling the principle values and professional attitudes likely to produce worthier candidates in the marketplace. Deep cuts in defense spending, however, aside from compromising our national security, would (inevitably) place a heavier burden on social services that, although providing basic (the) material requirements for needy people, provides little else by way of Dignity and Character.

• • •

I haven’t any qualms with government spending that, aside from securing property and person for our mutual benefit, (also) provides equal access for all its citizens, apart from (the) unequal (tax) disbursements dis-proportionate to income, including social security, public schools, libraries and hospitals as opposed to divisive spending programs likely to incite the animosity of individuals who, having defrayed most of the (social) costs, are receiving a dis-proportionate return on their “investment”. This, in conjunction with the urgent requirements of a balanced budget.

• • •

We are all at God’s mercy. Therefore, although “good works” are essential for our spiritual salvation, Faith remains the cornerstone.

• • •

Nihilism is the folly of disruptive imaginations triggered by enfeebled intellects that have shamefully abandoned all hope for (their) spiritual and moral recovery.

• • •

To what extent, if any, should the United States impose trade sanctions against its (traditional) trading partners deemed guilty of human rights violations by the court of “public opinion”, when measured against its own historical standards of social or moral propriety? Should America, or any other nation for that matter, set itself up as (the) moral arbiter of appropriate behavior by interfering with or adversely undermining by economic leveraging the internal affairs of autonomous nations in putative violation of said rights that are often times transparent devices intended to mislead or appease, whichever is appropriate, domestic factions at home or abroad for political reasons without considering the potential long-term (global) consequences precipitated by such designs?

• • •

We seem to grow old before our time, positioned in present currents, drifting however stationary through a time/spatial continuum.

• • •

Tears of Joy, the Tears of a Clown: the Paradox of Man.

• • •

Equal protection under the Law means that the law should apply equally to every citizen in the same manner regardless of an individual’s (social) position or (economic) station in life. It is troubling, however, when the rule of law is colored unevenly by allowing “mitigating” circumstances or special privileges to influence fair and impartial judgment. The moral authority of a nation’s judicial system must inevitably be called into question and its laws challenged by law-abiding citizens who (otherwise) perceive that our legal standards are being arbitrarily applied.

• • •

Recent surveys disclaiming the findings of the Kinsley Report (1948) which placed the homosexual population somewhere in the vicinity of 10 percent now report the actual number closer to the neighborhood of 1–4 percent depending on the sampling methods employed. In light of these numbers, should this very vocal and sometimes violent minority be provided special treatment as it relates to outlining study courses in public schools or influencing military recruiting standards? It would seem that although our constitution was designed to protect the inviolable rights of minority groups/interests, such assurances did not properly extend to special interest groups seeking to impose their singular authority (or viewpoints) on the majority. Such was not the intention of our Constitution that sought to safeguard minority rights rather than advance private agendas. The rule of law should limit its scope to protecting privacy issues (as it relates to an individual’s sexual orientation) and that every individual, regardless of his or her sexual orientation should be accorded the right to live peacefully and with dignity without being harassed. (Social) Engineering designs disguised as enlightened tolerance, however, were not part of the original package!

• • •

Roots are less a function of Time than a condition of Heart and Soul.

• • •

Our (worldly) existence is a hybrid-like reality; a composite composed of what is or once was or what is likely to become or what may become or may have been or should have been, embracing every missed opportunity and possibility neither forgetting regrets, longings and desires, hopes and fears that, however real or imaginary, inevitably converge at the crossroads of life.

• • •

The immediate mandate of any government agency is its own preservation followed by public concerns.

• • •

I heard on the radio this evening that the president’s economic stimulus package was defeated in the House of Representatives. The president’s proposal, it seems, included research grants for measuring methane emissions from Montana cattle in order to determine their (gaseous) impact on the ozone layer. Allegations of pork barrel spending advanced by his Republican critics, however, was rather lame!

• • •

It is oftentimes forgotten that until 1932, the African American Community consistently voted the Republican Ticket. After all, the Republican Party was the “Party of Lincoln”. If memory serves me correctly, (Herbert) Hoover may have actually carried the Black Vote that year. The Great Depression followed by the New Deal would eventually alter that community’s traditional voting habits. I believe that most Blacks had every reason to defect from a party that never really had their best interests in mind and that party leaders routinely took their votes for granted. The Democrats are determined to avoid making the same mistake.....at whatever cost! The major difference(s) between now and then, however, has been the emergence of affluent Black Families who are steadily moving up the socio/economic ladder which, once custodial habits begin to subside, an economically vibrant, self-contained community will likely consider the “seductive” trappings of Big Government incompatible with financial success. I don’t expect that mass defections will occur anytime soon, however. Old habits are hard to break.

• • •

Modern parenting seems to be gradually distancing itself from old fashioned nurturing models. Recent arrangements, especially among “progressive” families, seem to favor developing “friendships” rather than promoting appropriate parent/child relationships whose (ensuing) friendships would naturally evolve on their own accord to begin with. This is a matter of balance and proportion rather than equal assumptions and privileges generally conceded to mature adults. Children, especially during their formative or “impressionable” years, should not be afforded the same rights enjoyed by their parents; however arbitrary, such decisions may appear, until a child has demonstrated the capacity for making reasonable and responsible decisions consistent with the requirements of mature men and women. Some parents have become obsessed with the notion of compromising a child’s affection, however, that many are prepared to abdicate the traditional roles of parenting while dragging themselves towards an adolescent center that seeks to promote a common frame of reference.

• • •

A federal court in Mississippi has (recently) determined that cigarette smoking promotes heart and lung disease. Imagine that! And to think that it only required four years of college and another three of law school to reach that weighty conclusion! These enlightened jurists have opened a Pandora’s box of would-be litigants seeking redress of medical grievances brought on by their own questionable habits by holding cigarette manufacturers liable for (their) smoking-related illnesses caused by years of excessive smoking. Unless it could be otherwise shown that a (tobacco) company or any company for that matter has knowingly misrepresented its product, where is it written that an individual, unless that individual is incapable for whatever reason, of making an informed decision, should be (otherwise) compensated for being careless or indifferent to the (potential) consequences of his or her (own) inestimable actions? Haven’t consumers been sufficiently informed about the risks associated with tobacco products that they should allow themselves to be seduced or coaxed into purchasing a toxic substance that they understand is harmful to their health and afterwards seek compensatory (financial) settlements for having made questionable decisions to begin with? Is it the responsibility of our judicial system to dismiss private decisions where such decisions have no ulterior motive or designs beyond private decisions that are made? Are (the) consequences uncertain as to require legal arbitration whenever such decisions prove fatal? Should an individual properly consider the harmful effects of bitter poisons before consuming them? Aren’t our airwaves saturated with public service announcements cautioning the harmful effects associated with cigarette smoking? Aren’t our public schools properly educating their students? Haven’t these programs sought to discredit the (perceived) glamour and excitement of smoking disingenuously portrayed in commercial advertisements? Hasn’t the Surgeon General’s office issued a warning expressing its opinion on the hazards of cigarette smoking? Hasn’t it been doing so for over thirty years? Human Nature being what it is however, intemperate habits will more often than not override sensible designs whatever the consequences.

• • •

The difference between an immigrant and an alien is that immigrants are generally conditioned over time by the customs and manners of his or her adopted homeland whereas Aliens, possess a transient mindset existing outside the margins of mainstream society. Although both generally emigrate for economic reasons, the alien is strictly a hireling, an economic mercenary taking in proportion what he or she has given in proper measure while remaining emotionally, morally and intellectually “alienated” from (that) society’s social, cultural and political establishments. The immigrant, on the other hand, gives a (little) something more; he or she gives (of) themselves!

• • •

America may take pride in boasting the most elaborately dressed poverty in the history of Humankind explaining in part why it (poverty) has become, in some circles, an “accepted” lifestyle in proportion with its rising levels of “tolerance”.

• • •

Tears of Perfection are achieved once we have conditioned ourselves to cry for others rather than for ourselves.

• • •

One of the (main) arguments for Centralization versus De-Centralization centers on the trade-off between Efficiency and Autonomy. As the question relates to school boards, however, I believe that they should be localized; in touch with the communities they serve.

• • •

Codes of Conduct in the workplace consist of a number of gray areas that make for a guarded working environment.

• • •

Wealth is often perceived by the lower classes as something evil unless it is otherwise directed into the hands of those eager to acquire it.

• • •

Government needs to provide equitable access to Wealth rather than devising clever ways of taking it from the “rich” and giving it to the “poor.”

• • •

To those who would deny the existence of God, I submit for their consideration Humankind’s immanent capacity to examine its (own)

thoughts and feelings or sensations that are not due solely to Chance; the capacity to think (critically) and to reason, insight into our spiritual being, of our (human) dignity and self-worth. A heightened self-awareness, conscience, intelligence and emotion and memory are not accidents of Nature, however divine gifts provided to us by God so that we may know Him better.

• • •

Faith is the cornerstone of Salvation. However well intentioned our works, they remain uncertain. Reason, however often it (may) correctly inform our actions, is also insufficient in achieving that desirable objective. In the manner it (oftentimes) lends itself to (moral) corruption.

• • •

The break-up of Eastern European Communism is likely to rekindle historical rivalries which America should try to distance itself unless its own (economic) interests are at stake. The Bosnian Civil War is one such example best left for the European Community to resolve. On the other hand, where geo-political ambitions threaten to undermine the stability in an area whose sphere of influence remains vital to America's (economic) or political interests, the United States should take every precaution to protect its interests within clearly defined parameters.

• • •

Laws are rules of conduct established by social customs. Laws are not arbitrary guidelines that a citizen may either choose to obey or ignore. Laws are not (inherently) moral, although most are grounded on (timeless) moral and religious principles. Whether or not laws are "fair" is uncertain. Therefore, a democratic society reserves the right to either revise or repeal them whenever it considers it appropriate to do so. Laws are meant to be obeyed, not (necessarily) valued, although any right-thinking individual should properly appreciate their inestimable contribution to a well-ordered society.

• • •

Affected laughter is either a sign of a very shallow individual or an unhappy one!

• • •

Residency implies a settled, conventional arrangement whereby Inhabitation suggests a seemingly more primitive, transient condition. Human beings reside, Animals inhabit. I am not certain about extraterrestrials, however.

• • •

Beware the shifting sands of Office Alliances!

• • •

The aged (may) conceivably find some measure of consolation in knowing that Youth, barring its untimely departure, is destined to travel in their footsteps.

• • •

President Clinton has ushered a Trojan Horse of sixties retreats concealed by (all) the conventional trappings. This "new" Democrat has sold out the (American) Mainstream including party moderates on both sides of the political aisle. He is a truly a worthy successor of Hegel and Marx!

• • •

Private and Public Morality are interchangeable. Each is deeply rooted in Nature; each spontaneous as they relate to an individual's essential designs or what is commonly understood as Character however high or low.

• • •

The Revolutionary War, The War of 1812, The Mexican American War, The Civil War, The Spanish American War, The War to End All Wars—World War II—The Korean War, The Vietnam War, The Persian Gulf War and The Bosnia War however justified, belies the notion of a peaceful nation however much it may desire peace.

• • •

A (moral) weakling is to be feared above everyone else because he is the more likely, in a time of crisis, to betray his fellows!

• • •

Genetics, on some level, seals our Fate.

• • •

A clever man understands words; a wiser one comprehends their meaning.

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The (intellectually) shallow are oftentimes verbose; the wise, more selective in the words they choose. The former create confusion,

the latter, promote clarity.

• • •

Independents, in whatever manner defined, generally lack core (political) values, which isn't a very good thing. Although (strict) ideology has its (own) inherent shortcomings, the lack of a firm commitment to values and ideas, however "open-minded" it may appear on the surface, (oftentimes) illustrates a lack of moral and intellectual confidence.

• • •

To young people starting out in life: Work hard. Be diligent and trustworthy. Be reliable and forthcoming. Be sober and determined. Approach every occasion with confidence. Accept every challenge as an opportunity to improve your present position. Always think positive, never negative. Avoid malcontents who would reduce you to their own level. Remain partial to things that are good; embrace sound values. Wherever possible, be kind to others and never hurtful; you will be repaid in kind. Never forget a kindly deed that accrues to your personal advantage. Never postpone an assignment, especially from a superior. Continue exploring avenues of growth. Be loyal without carrying loyalty on your sleeve, however. And never, never entrust your fate to fortune!

• • •

The counterpoints of Free Will vis a vis Predestination are one of hope versus despair; of optimism versus pessimism; self-guidance predicated on conscience and right-reasoning versus grace, exclusively; "uncertainty" versus skepticism or doubt; spiritual regeneration versus the musings of the waking dead; the potential fruition of man's essential goodness versus man, the irretrievable sinner; the former ceding a measure of latitude in charting one's own spiritual course, the latter rejecting free-will, altogether; the former (spiritually) confident and trusting, the latter spiritually and morally defeating; the former holding each individual accountable for his or her (own) actions, the latter discounting such actions as inconsequential and meaningless; the former encouraging good works, the latter regarding them without purpose; the former regarding evil as (the) fulfillment of choice, the latter as the effective designs of destiny; the former seeking salvation through the intercession of faith and prayer, the latter deeming them irreconcilable with (pre-determined) designs. Transcending the boundaries of time and space, the former is linear, segmented, however whole; integrating past, present and future; completing an "entirety" come full circle whereas the latter patiently bides its appointed time. It seems unlikely that salvation is merely a supernatural toss-up; a (fickle) expression of God's Will given solely to Chance. Such thinking must necessarily render God something less than Eternally Good. God, who created Humankind in His own image out of His infinite capacity to love would never pre-ordain the eternal damnation of His beloved creation.

• • •

Time is meaningless unless it is measured against some (assigned) standard. Eternity is timeless, therefore it cannot be compared with anything other than itself. It is not relative to anything other than itself inasmuch as it is incompatible with or unaffected by (arbitrary) time. In this manner, Eternity is (time) absolute because it is neither limited by time "continuum" or spatial restrictions. Absolute values and morality remain constant inasmuch as things or ideas vary (in) time. Eternity is timeless (endless); therefore every thing comprised in eternity is unchanging; its conceptions, absolute.

• • •

America's "manifest destiny" is/was a "material" phenomenon understood by the taming of its frontiers, its exceptional role as consummate world leader and its conquest of space. This process has yet to reach full maturity, however, until it fulfills its moral and spiritual obligations, as well.

• • •

A lack of historical perspective fails to promote a proper understanding of current events thereby locking in time-essential points of view vital to informed decision making by distorting one's capacity to appreciate such events in a more clearly defined manner. Such parochializes [sic] our thinking while undermining our ability to form fresh opinions.

• • •

Many of us are victims of our own disinclinations.

• • •

A (heroic) deed that is prompted by fear, let's say, does not (necessarily) rise to the level of a courageous act. Indeed, a heroic act is (oftentimes) self-motivating without regard to personal safety or reward, for that matter. Such (heroic) acts are selfless; however such (heroic) actions may sometimes seek redemption for (our) perceived failings.

• • •

If Nature is subordinate to Man as written in the Book of Genesis, how is it that I often feel humbled by its majestic splendor?

• • •

Leviticus instructs the reader in the manner of Judgment never to show favoritism to anyone however rich or poor; that lawful judgment must remain impartial and consistent with Truth. Such is a sobering reminder of how our judicial system, guided by special interests and political correctness, has corrupted itself!

• • •

Historical Revisionism has been unkind to President Andrew Jackson. His reputation as a social reformer and people's champion has been tarnished by modernists who feel that his Administration did not properly embrace a broader cross section of underprivileged people; favoring agrarian interests while ignoring the plight of the urban poor. Jackson wasn't indifferent to their hardships, however. The (social) ramifications of a nascent industrialized nation were not properly understood at that time; whose phenomenon seemed more an anomaly, perhaps, rather than a permanent condition.

• • •

The absence of Character is analogous to existing inside of a moral and spiritual vacuum.

• • •

I've been pouring through a collection of letters written by George Washington. He was truly a remarkable man, courageous and morally determined; a righteous and purposeful man possessing keen insight into the nature of "things". He was steady and uncompromising by example, practical in his designs; or what I would consider a practical idealist. His letters reflect a quiet manner and (subtle) intellect that oftentimes disarmed his critics. He perceived things intuitively and accurately. Although lacking the aristocratical trappings common in those days, his easy manner considered (hidden) possibilities and combinations without exception. In other words, he was a man of "Common Sense". His letters have reinforced my considered opinion in the intervention of a Divine Providence that has often summoned the services of exceptional individuals as circumstances and events command.

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It is sad to say that there seems exist a "permanent" underclass that is unable to ride the crest of economic fortune(s).

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Dear Dave -(David Huffman)August 23rd 1993

Enclosed is an article that I thought might be of some interest to you. Don't trouble yourself with any idea(s) of my trying to convert you. It was written by _____, a contemporary writer by no means an avowed proponent of political conservatism, although his recent writings suggest a softening of his 60's styled rhetoric.

What particularly caught my attention was his conjecturable argument centering on Freedom vis a vis Security and the average person's willingness to sacrifice a portion of the former for the latter. This is a rather heavy price to pay although the trade-off speaks volumes about the higher premiums some people are willing to pay for public safety.

We argued this point a few years ago, lest we forget "trains running on time". I was not trying to make a case for Fascism but merely explaining, rather, some of the reasons for its emergence. Fear, whether real or imagined, was the primary reason for its popular outgrowth. Shaky (social) foundations was another very important reason. Liberals have a disturbing tendency of casually dismissing such "airy" notions as chimerical by-products of over-active right-wing imaginations.

Liberals, I believe, should realize that such concerns are serious matters for many individuals and shouldn't be put out of mind in a carefree manner. Such indifference is one of the many reasons why Democrats are being less perceived as (traditional) populists rather than the elitists many of them have evolved into over the years. (Watch that Conservatives don't steal their thunder!)

I regretfully envision a nation divided; a revolution looming on the horizon that will not be fought on urban battlefields, but a (social) revolution defined by the systematic partitioning of prescribed values predicated not so much on color or race, religion, position or wealth, but on Ideas. The (ideological) balkanization of America, I believe, is right around the corner.

Fear is the motivating factor that has reduced our urban centers to "play grounds" for the poor. Even the well-meaning among us have (altogether) given up fighting the good fight and are gradually retreating to the safer havens of "Sugarloaf USA". I find it ironic how many working and middle-class families from all walks of life are involuntarily engaging in subtle forms of racism by moving into "homogenized" neighborhoods. I am speaking of people of all races!

At some point, before it's too late, we will all need to lay political correctness aside and make some very important decisions. We will need to rediscover that common denominator that will (hopefully) reunite us as a nation. Otherwise, I fear that our Republic, as we now know it, will one day cease to exist.

As Always

Alipio

P.S.

Thank Lara for the pictures

• • •

"The more homogeneous our citizens can be made in these particulars, the greater will be our prospect of permanent union" (George Washington, September 19th 1796 taken from his Farewell Address).

• • •

A Supreme Court justice, an individual of unqualified judicial prodigiousness, recently ruled that a loaded firearm pointed in the direction of a police officer in the line of duty does not (necessarily) constitute an intent to kill unless the would be assailant actually pulled the trigger. Perhaps this legal bastion of common sense might (care) to further qualify his position after the fact!

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Economics is a “quantifiable” science that attempts to measure trends in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Its precision in light of the varying spending/investment habits of millions of people triggered by a variety of fiscal and monetary policies influencing in one manner or another how people respond to such modifications is questionable at best.

• • •

Government has undermined the social and economic development of African Americans and other minority groups by its unwillingness to hold that Community and others to the same performance standards generally expected from Asians and Whites. (I am bewildered why Asians, given their relatively low numbers, are not a protected group as well, but that’s neither here nor there) I am referring to the questionable standards of racial quotas and disparate results that sprung from misguided attempts to correct the historical injustices that many were subject to. Two wrongs, however, do not make a right; neither do they correct a wrong. Ironically, the double standards that have ensued at the expense of other equally, if not more so, gifted individuals who find themselves victims of a political numbers game, has checked the vast potential of a very capable segment of our society notwithstanding carefully crafted premises that suggest, however incorrectly, otherwise. That is to say, pre-conceived failings are often times self-fulfilling prophecies whenever conscious impressions are (institutionally) reinforced. The egregious miscarriage of fair play is a condescending affront to the dignity of every individual. This transparent attempt at racial/ethnic massaging for the sake of political expediency and securing voting blocs has given rise to fantastic innovations artificially conceived.

• • •

NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was implemented to reduce barriers to trade and investment between America’s North American trading partners (Canada and Mexico) and thereby facilitate the flow of Goods and Services in an effort to promote wealth creation through increase production. It was passed by both Houses of Congress. A number of prominent Democrats closed ranks with a majority of Republicans to ensure its passage. In practice, however, its impact on the American Worker in both the manufacturing sector(s) and assembly industries has been negligible at best. Many workers have gradually lost their jobs. The real beneficiaries, it seems, have been corporate interests who have been given free rein to pursue Cheap(er) labor. It may sound cynical, although I believe that NAFTA was/is a half-hearted attempt at securing America’s (porous) borders. What our nation is witnessing is an unholy alliance between Corporate Executives on the one hand and Civil Rights Activists and (misguided) Libertarians on the other; the former looking to reduce wages and further undermine the ability of American Blue Collar Workers to adequately provide for their families and the latter seeking to alter America’s “homogenous” landscape. Through their combined efforts, our nation may one day suffer the consequences of prohibitively higher social costs that must inevitably ensue whenever high immigration rates and (the) unconscionable outsourcing of jobs go unchecked. America is committing national suicide without even knowing it or perhaps it has simply lost the moral authority to restrain its appetite.

• • •

The Israel/Palestinian “Peace Accord” is an absolute farce. It is all about political posturing by both parties; its mutual overture(s) as equivocal as it was sudden. Centuries of animosities between warring nations will not stop by the perfunctorial signing of a meaningless piece of paper lacking moral authority and a questionable commitment to peace. Once its (Israel’s) buffers have been (strategically) assimilated by (Palestinian) resurgents [sic], I anticipate a resumption of hostilities and unprecedented violence exceeding historical standards. The Lion is not yet prepared to lay with the Lamb!

• • •

Car alarm systems assault the senses, especially the senses of individuals sensible enough to be troubled by their whirlish (sic) designs. (Families residing in high-density neighborhoods understand my meaning.) Such disagreeable noises emanating from automobiles at all hours of the night are more a public nuisance than a deterrent to theft. Perhaps our legislators should consider outlawing them all together. Wishful thinking, perhaps; nevertheless, shouldn’t stiffer penalties be imposed against car owners who fail to respond to their alarms in a timely manner? Perhaps they might considering invoking the three strikes and you’re out rule by impounding the vehicles of repeat offenders. Perhaps some of us might finally enjoy a good night’s sleep!

• • •

America’s three greatest presidents during the twentieth century were Theodore Roosevelt, who presided over our nation’s nascent emergence as a world leader scoring high points as a (social) reformer as well; Dwight David Eisenhower, who managed to keep Communism in check during Western Europe’s economic resurgence at a time when a number of Western Nations were still straddling the fence while presiding over a sound domestic economy which many historians have all too often taken for granted; and Ronald Reagan, perhaps the greatest president of our century, for his ability to inspire a demoralized nation still reeling from the aftershocks of Vietnam, Watergate, and an economy mired in stagflation for nearly a generation under the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and

Carter Administrations. Reagan achieved singular greatness as the catalyst responsible for spearheading worldwide efforts that eventually triggered the collapse of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe; this as well as delivering our nation from the Economic Wilderness. The three worse presidents were Lyndon Baines Johnson whose “Guns and Butter” approach to government hastened our nation’s military debacle in Vietnam and the “Great Society” financial fiasco; Warren G. Harding because I’m still trying to understand the meaning of “Normalcy” and what the heck was the “Teapot Dome” scandal all about and who really cares for that matter? Perhaps the worst of the three was the egregious James Earl Carter, the “useful idiot” who, for all his native intelligence and well-intentions, perhaps, was a certifiable pinhead. I selected Johnson over FDR because whereas Roosevelt lacked precedential benchmarks to help guide his economic policies, Johnson enjoyed the advantage of hindsight that should have correctly informed his Administration of the historical failings of socialistic economic policies. Such does not alter the fact, however, that FDR established a pattern of social and economic engineering whose impact still resonates today. He too, was a “pinhead”, although a charming one.

• • •

President James Earl Carter’s “comprehensive” energy program, some people may recall, consisted of lowering thermostats and donning a Cardigan sweater. (I exaggerate, of course, to make a point.)

• • •

The two-party system dominated by partisan politics marked by a Jacksonian spoils system awarded to the victor; a system naturally divisive and likely to further divide opposing factions unlike multi-partied coalition type governments likely to assuage passions. (I really can’t say for sure) where real majorities are rare and often forged by uncertain alliances however fragile, or perhaps consensus among political factions may lead to true compromise, or perhaps majorities are no longer tenable in an era of growing (vocal) minorities, or perhaps the solution, if any, may be found within the majority of minority factions. (I really can’t say for sure). On the other hand, too much compromising and not enough consensus (building) and nothing of consequence ever seems to get accomplished by the way, and that particulars must soon give way to broader generalities harmful to the welfare of the nation. (I really can’t say for sure) other than (that) too many parties can not (efficiently) represent a (pluralistic) mainstream or collective body of (varied) opinions but rather ”exceptional viewpoints that (otherwise) allow for meaningful debate, perhaps too much so. (I really can’t say for sure).

• • •

Old Money is more secure than New Money. New Money, however, barks louder than Old Money.

• • •

American Generosity is second to none. No other nation has unselfishly shared its material abundance with other nations in time of need. It is unfortunate, however, that its generosity has been often greeted with indifference, if not contempt, in foreign circles.

• • •

Ayn Rand’s theory of Objectivism is a system of ethics that claims Reality is independent of an individual’s (inner) consciousness; that is to say, individuals either react or behave in a manner consistent with their own purposeful or conditioned designs rather than guided by essential sources informing their moral purpose. Her theory rejects altruism as inconsistent with Man’s rational self interest and that every “selfless” act designed to produce some salutary or desirable effect upon another individual, perhaps someone that we love or have fond affections, is not performed with that individual’s happiness or well-being in mind but is governed, rather, by our (own) self-interest. For this reason, it may be plausibly argued that a parent willing to sacrifice his or her life in the interest of a son or daughter, is less motivated by his or her love for that child rather than the thought of that child’s (intolerable) absence or that parental pride in that child’s scholastic or athletic achievements otherwise constitutes a projection of that child’s remarkable accomplishments. There is no place for love, for love’s sake, in a hard-boiled world of internalized values.

• • •

I feel that the most humane treatment of homeless, unadoptable (sic) strays would be to put them to sleep rather than locking them inside filthy cages in objectionable environments without proper nourishment that typifies a number of animal shelters nationwide. Recent arguments affirming the spiritual and human like qualities inherent in animals, however, renders this alternative a non-option among zealous activists who would not give a second thought to aborting life or “mercy” killing if the situation called for it. I would remind these individuals that a lame horse is humanely put out of its misery.

• • •

Many of us seem to be looking for easy religion, approval for how we choose to live our lives That is to say, where questionable patterns of behavior are perceived to be inconsistent with church teachings, many of us seek (principled) affirmation of our accustomed lifestyles. I am reminded of Isaiah, chapter 30 verse 10: “see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us the right things, speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits.”

• • •

A quick thought about Barbara Tuchman’s the “Guns of Autumn”. Her style of writing is rather dry and pedantic; suited for scholarly interests rather than casual readers like myself who prefer the “short version”. (Too detail oriented) She’s an excellent historian, however, who has thoroughly researched her subject matter. Much thanks for recommending the book to me. It was fascinating reading. It provided a comprehensive overview of the War (WWI) which is what I wanted. (Excerpt from a letter written to David

Huffman).

• • •

Political Correctness, rather than securing our nation's (legitimate) interests abroad, is guiding military policies at the State Department. In Somalia, for example, humanitarian efforts spearheaded by the United Nations (UN) to provide famine relief to that starving country has resulted in inter-clan conflicts among tribal warlords who perceive such intervention (nation-building) as a threat to their territorial sovereignty. American relief efforts have resulted in the ignominious death of eighteen United States servicemen dispatched to oversee the distribution of food. The political climate is no less uncertain in Haiti where U.S. warships were sent to restore the peace following a recent military coup. The island's first (I believe) elected president, a practicing Marxist and former priest whose efforts at nationalizing the country's resources has earned him the accolades of the International Left as well as misinformed Americans who envision this thug (Aristides) as some numinous divine, has been unceremoniously overthrown by a military junta only to be replaced by another equally ruthless gangster. Port-au-Prince is going up in smoke while American Naval vessels are anchored in territorial waters waiting for order to be restored. To what purpose may I ask? The American Government has been drawn into a quagmire of warring factions, each of questionable character, for no apparent (political) reason. American Foreign Policy under this present Administration has devolved into a theatrical farce by making a mockery of the death of young American soldiers who are needlessly placing their lives in harms way in countries that have little or no strategic value.

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The proliferation of "sensitivity" training workshops and seminars in both the public and private sectors sadly reflect how easily we bruise as a society.

• • •

Rising health care costs associated with higher malpractice insurance premiums are driving many doctors away from private practice. I wonder whether the gradual departure from the more traditional (doctor/patient) "relationships" that evolved when house calls were common, isn't driving a wedge between doctors and patients by rendering modern arrangements more impersonal while (further) undermining confidence and trust.

• • •

The First Amendment provides extraordinary advantages for many reporters and journalists in the news media pre-disposed, for a variety of reasons, to distorting (the) news in whatever manner considered appropriate in advancing either a social or political agenda that they may (otherwise) support. There is a disturbing tendency in (the) news media of interpreting rather than properly reporting (the) news. This is all well and good. After all, everyone is entitled to his or her (own) opinion provided that what the viewing audience understands as reporting (the) news is correctly distinguished from "spinning" or interpreting (the) news and that this distinction is properly conveyed to that audience. All too often, however, the two are passed off without qualification. The primary function of (the) news media is to inform the general public. Private interpretation(s) should be secondary to reporting (the) news. Such interpretations or judgments that inevitably follow once (the) news has been properly assimilated (often) reflect conditioned opinions, responses or explanations reflecting a journalist's essential points of view, not necessarily; however, the inherent properties of (the) news itself. (The) news, apart from informing the Public, is a medium (oftentimes) lacking underlying or supporting proofs or creditable evidence. It should remain apolitical, amoral, a-everything; that is to say, it should never engage in alliances with any side of a particular issue or (political) contest. (The) news must first be internalized by the viewer before her or she forms a "proper" estimate of things (oftentimes) based on his or her OWN pre-conceptions, (personal) experiences or worldly viewpoints. Personal interpretations (judgments) should be joined together with (the) news, however not in conjunction with (the) news. There is a subtle difference here!

• • •

The acquisition of Knowledge is impervious to ethnicity, gender or race. Familiarity with subject matter, awareness and comprehension does not distinguish itself among particular individuals or groups. Its only requirement is the capacity and willingness to learn.

• • •

America's Public School System has become increasingly obsessed with self-esteem rather than meeting the educational requirements of a competitive society. Feeling "good" about oneself, it seems, has superseded academic performance standards, much to the detriment of underperforming students.

• • •

Creativity and Imagination do not supersede Practical Knowledge whose foundation provides ballast to both.

• • •

It is fascinating how evolving customs (often) alter the interpretation or underlying meaning of words. A Jeffersonian "Liberal", for example, was likely to favor smaller government, faithful interpretation of the Constitution and private autonomy whereas Liberalism, by modern standards, is generally supportive of bigger government, judicial activism and intrusion into the private affairs of its citizens.

• • •

The result of November's off-Year elections may have sent a warning signal to the Clinton Administration as a number of prominent Democratic incumbents went down in defeat including the mayor of New York City where, in what might be considered a mild upset of sorts, Liberal Republican Rudolph Guliani narrowly defeated the empty suit Democratic incumbent David Dinkins.

• • •

Police bashing has become the prevailing custom in many of our urban centers despite the heroic efforts of the many brave men and women who routinely place their lives on the line each and every day protecting law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, the police have become easy targets for community activists and political malcontents with axes to grind; inclined to promote racial unrest and false allegations and other unfavorable impressions notwithstanding a few bad apples that have (otherwise) damaged the reputation of their honorable profession. The negative impact on morale, however, may quietly produce a backlash of indifference among police officers whose performance in the line of duty is often met with contempt rather than gratitude. Even more troubling is the growing number of people, themselves, crime victims, eager to enlist among the ranks of cop bashers.

• • •

Youthful Idealism is squandered in Time.

• • •

Novels, especially Classical "Romance" Novels, are sometimes read by older people with some measure of reservation or detachment or indifference or perhaps time has simply passed them by and they no longer give a fig unlike the youthful idealism characteristic of developing, inquisitive young minds receptive to all possibilities.

• • •

The chasms of perceptual bias have lent partiality to a number of potentially worthy endeavors.

• • •

When reading; comprehension, assimilation and recall are (more) essential to learning than velocity.

• • •

Our journey through life will oftentimes acquaint us with individuals "greater" or "lesser" than ourselves. Never shun the fellowship of the latter, however, as Wisdom is often numbered among those considered unexceptional and common.

• • •

Corporate restrooms provide a leisurely opportunity for employees to catch up on some light reading.

• • •

"To what extent does the public servant suppress the vocations of conscience in deference to the demands of the constituent or the nation security" (Profiles in Courage).

• • •

If a common denominator exists between European Colonial Imperialism and American Slavery and to a lesser extent, Social Engineering, it lies in the (underlying) assumption of "Native Inferiority". I'm not sure where I'm going with this so try and follow my line of reasoning inasmuch as I am liable to form an uncertain analogy as it relates to the childlike treatment of the (subject) people involved: undermining freedom, initiative, self-reliance, (human) potential and an individual's moral and intellectual authority; that is to say, contrary to an individual's inherent right to naturally evolve into a productive human being; to learn, think and act independently in his or her (own) inestimable manner. Neither institution sought/seeks to improve an individual's "natural" condition but exploit, rather, that individual's labored and intellectual resources for economic and political reasons. Whereas the Slave Owner or Imperialist sought to exploit human resources for personal economic gains, the social engineer, on the other hand, seeks to exploit the under-utilized capacity of individuals or groups for utopic reasons. Am I making myself clear?

• • •

The role of traditional customs in the Modern World may be properly measured in Half Lives.

• • •

Moral Relativism is a precursor to Nihilism. It (MR) advances the proposition that no single value (or moral) is exceptional in itself; that is to say, (conventional) moral or ethical assumptions do not properly reflect objective or universal truths, and concludes with (N) rejecting moral authority altogether.

• • •

Panhandlers, vagabonds and street merchants do not (necessarily) pose a threat to public safety in whatever manner their presence may (otherwise) be perceived offensive to conventional propriety, if not Quality of Life in general. Most people, especially those of us

residing in congested urban centers, have grown (sensibly) immune to the outbreak of unsightly or unpleasant appearances that are gradually undermining congenial customs and manners. The more “progressive” among us are likely to interpret such eyesores in a different light; as oddly urbane or reflecting the attributive characteristics of a multidimensional society. Perhaps guilt has triggered our indifference or resignation to devolving social and cultural standards that have assumed a life of their own. An environment which finds itself aesthetically challenged, however, must inevitably hasten the radical departure of polished elements to more refined environments.

• • •

That the Brady Bill mandating a five-day cooling-off period prior to purchasing a firearm will have an negligible impact on curbing gun-related crimes should be apparent to any clear-minded individual excluding knee-jerk liberals and well-intentioned, muddled-headed individuals who sincerely believe that adding another gun law to the thousands of gun laws already on the books will, in some (uncertain) manner, act as a further deterrent to professional criminals who want to acquire a firearm. As it is oftentimes the case, it’s the law-abiding citizen who desires a firearm for a variety of (legitimate) reasons; security, sport or collection, who finds himself entangled in so much Red Tape.

• • •

A cacophony of harsh noises assaulting the senses is less disturbing, perhaps, than the rhythmic expressions of uniform sounds.

• • •

The recent passage of NAFTA is a certain indication that labor unions are gradually losing their political clout. Although a majority of Democrats remained firmly opposed to this bill, a sufficient number of party defectors were able to secure a major political victory for the Clinton Administration and Free Markets. I am undecided what the immediate impact this measure will have on (Blue Collar) jobs in the U.S. although I believe the prospect for future job creation on the domestic front will not be a very promising one. Besides, how are diminishing (capital) resources expected to vie for cheaper consumer products when many workers will find themselves either under-employed or competing in greater numbers for lower paying jobs? (I exaggerate to make a point.)

• • •

Truth needs to be tempered with Discretion, at times.

• • •

...astonishing higher learning for convenience sake, knowledge subordinated to superstition and fear, censorship making cowards of us all, ambitions overriding moral authority, flattery superseding substance, principles arousing suspicion, abandoning Faith...

• • •

Although (private) values may vary, rules of ethical conduct governed by (the) accepted customs of decency and fair play and respect for human rights remain the underlying requirements of a well order society.

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Violent thoughts precipitate violent actions.

• • •

Faith, when called upon, supersedes “Common Sense”.

• • •

Youthful appearances, confident, proud and determined, quickly ravaged by the vicissitudes of Time, humbled in the flesh, however undaunted in the spirit that Time can neither violate nor impair.

• • •

America is celebrating Martin Luther King Day. This national holiday reminds me of how far we have yet to travel before our society eventually fulfills his “dream” of a color-blind society. Mr. King was not a perfect man; not unlike many of us, he was a flawed individual. His personal failings, however, in no manner diminished the essential nature of his vision. Unfortunately, his understanding of racial equality and all that it entails has been pre-empted by radical bigots and political opportunists seeking to promote racial animosity for their own political reasons, supported, in part, by the unwitting few who, however well-intentioned, have lent legitimacy to cynical designs superceding Mr. King’s vision of a society impervious to color where each of us is measured on the basis of character and quality of substance. These individuals have made a mockery of the very principles he firmly embraced.

• • •

...Let the dead bury their dead, whatever (our) perceived failings, having colored our impressions, devolving into self-mockery and despair occasioned by grudging acceptances/possibilities of what is (now) and will (become), mis-perceived at our own risk, piecing together the fragments of our shattered existence (while) restoring order and meaning to the underlying currents that define who we were, are and hope to become...

• • •

An alarming number of activist or “progressive” judges, depending on one’s point of view, entrusted by the American People to correctly interpret and impartially execute (the) law(s) of our nation, are (otherwise) engaging in cultural warfare aimed at rocking the (traditional) political and social foundations established by our Founding Fathers by anointing themselves the Guardians of the “Social Conscience.” Operating behind the protective shield of constitutional law(s), many are disingenuously distorting the Constitution’s essential meaning (or intent) by injecting their own value judgment(s) into the Law(s) in the manner of penumbral interpretations that seek to fulfill the social and political requirements of their peculiar world view. This (haughty) breach of public confidence must inevitably undermine the average citizen’s faith in a judicial system widely perceived to be governed by Men rather than Laws.

• • •

Relying on quick fixes rather than focusing on root causes perpetuates the problem!

• • •

A program coordinator at ABC News was fired recently for (unwisely, perhaps) proposing balanced points of view “unseemly” to that news agency’s left-leaning agenda. It took a great deal of courage swimming against the conventional tide by suggesting “conservative” viewpoints contrary to the network’s liberal orthodoxy. His sense of fair play may have cost him his job although he may (hopefully) derive some measure of satisfaction in knowing that his journalistic integrity wasn’t compromised in any way.

• • •

Ambition stokes the fires that (sparks) motivates behavior.

• • •

The Welfare State has “succored” many an individual at the expense of that individual’s Individuality by undermining that individual’s self-awareness; a sense of his or her (inherent) dignity and self-worth, thereby (existentially) alienating that individual from him or her self by becoming less a free-thinking individual than an integral component of the common herd.

• • •

A child’s maturity level is determined in part by that child’s (incipient) understanding of things that are factual or real (or possible) in contrast with ideas considered to be a product of wishful thinking or make-believe that are otherwise agreeable in themselves provided that the (rational) limits and conditions of the imagination are properly outlined. A creative imagination, one that isn’t utterly fantastic, is a necessary component of a potentially active, inquisitive young mind. A child’s imagination, however, should be grounded on a mature understanding of what is reasonably attainable, morally wholesome and possible or desirable, for that matter, rather than irrational, spiritually harmful, far-fetched or unbecoming while operating within the prescribed limits of a balanced mindset; that is to say, the manner that child will one day be expected to interact with other people; that is to say, by providing in measure what is expected in kind. The absence of sound reality checks, a condition common among dysfunctional households, oftentimes distorts a child’s (emotional) sense of proportion; conditioned as many of them are by undisciplined, emotionally challenged environments that fail to provide spiritual sustenance and practical guidance to that child. Provided ample opportunities to self-destruct, that child soon acquires disagreeable habits that, reinforced by common attitudes, establishes the rocky foundations of a society populated by lingering, single-minded adolescents who, guided by their own (“exceptional”) rules of conduct, acquire self-centered and perhaps anti-social points of view devolving into a collection of interchangeable parts reflecting the questionable character of that society’s lowest forms that must negatively impact its social, cultural and political institutions including schools, churches, political organizations, judicial system, the news media, corporations, all! A free and open society should never impose arbitrary limits or draw uncertain conclusions as to how an individual should (otherwise) think or act however eccentric or unconventional such attitudes may appear; although that society, by example, should seek to broaden exemplary manners and customs essential to the maintenance of proper form if that society hopes to function effectively.

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How many “sensitive” and “caring” types are likely to disregard the salutary requirements of their fellows!

• • •

The American Constitution is oftentimes referred to as an evolving or living document. I prefer “living” document, myself. Its elasticity is grounded on the assumption that our society is a living organism subject to the vicissitudes of enlightened opinions, changing social and moral values and evolving standards of decency. America is not the America of the eighteenth century; neither are most Americans. What has not changed, however, are the underlying assumptions of Freedom and Natural Rights that every citizen is entitled and the protection of such inalienable rights by our government. What quickly comes to mind is Prohibition. How ill-conceived! Or the “Unborn.” What law protects their Rights? Or laws conferring arbitrary advantages and special privileges to certain individuals or favored (“political”) groups at the expense of others? I am not at all certain that this is what the founding fathers had in mind when this document was initially conceived. Its flexibility wisely allows our judicial system to adapt to political, social and economic arrangements vastly complex in proportion to the evolving requirements of a pluralistic society. It was not intended, however, to undermine, through judicial fiat or perverse legal interpretation, the freedoms that every American should properly enjoy without exception. It was not intended to divide and conquer in order to advance an individual (or group’s) social and political agenda.

It was not intended to promote arbitrary designs by prejudicial jurists with political axes to grind. It is a (legal) document understood in its “strictest” sense, subject to revisions and amendments by both legislative branches of our government whenever called upon or required or by Referenda and Plebiscites sanctioned by Popular Vote.

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I don’t believe in the “Age of Innocence”, although I believe that recent generations have witnessed a rescission of innocence in proportion to mitigating sentiment in contrast with sentimentality.

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In its quixotic attempt to eliminate handguns, New York City has conceived a hare brained plan whereby any citizen possessing a firearm may redeem it, no questions asked, in exchange for gift certificates. This Pollyannish initiative appears to be catching on in other high crime urban centers as well. This political gimmick has little if anything to commend itself. Handguns are dangerous, of course. Although I agree that gun licenses should not be issued arbitrarily and only under extraordinary circumstances, isn’t reasonable to assume that the vast majority of individuals willing to surrender their “weapons”, that are (otherwise) gathering dust inside clothes closets, dresser drawers and kitchen cupboards, or stuffed inside a sock, for that matter, represent a small minority of law-abiding citizens who, in any event, would be unlikely to use them, unless pressed, unlike hardened criminal elements in the community who wouldn’t give a second thought to surrendering the tools of their trade unless they were compelled to do so? A fifty-dollar gift certificate from Macys is insufficient compensation for the criminally-minded. That’s 20th century liberalism for you!

• • •

A friend of mine recently stated that he envisions a day when America will return to a (de facto) separate but equal society. That would be unfortunate, if such an event were indeed possible, considering the hard fought efforts of individuals and groups spanning generations who strove to achieve a color-blind society contrary to the racial designs of bigots who, unfortunately, will always be among us. Neither would a movement as such, for a variety of reasons; secure a moral consensus among the American People who would properly consider such designs as morally repugnant and offensive to a society’s standard of decency. His argument, however, appears to have some validity from the standpoint that our nation seems to be more group oriented than at any other time since the early 20th century. Ironically, this trend appears to be declining among Blacks and Whites, although a reemerging phenomenon appears to be gaining momentum among “recently” arrived ethnic groups spanning second and third generations or perhaps it only seems that way. As our (collective) body of shared values continue to diminish under the dynamic influence of multiculturalism and where the evolution of self-contained communities, especially in our inner cities, continues mapping their (own) chartered course, such events must inevitably give rise to expanding pockets of diverse groups who, as a rule, feel more at ease in their (own) ethnic environments perceived to be culturally and socially sympathetic to their needs contrasted by “homogenous” groups who, increasingly threatened by “foreign” values that provide little, if any meaning, seek refuge of their own.

• • •

Tolerance for alternative lifestyles neither seeks to advance nor support a particular lifestyle but “accepts”, rather, an individual’s right to engage in a lifestyle of his or her own choosing provided that the adopted lifestyle neither challenges nor antagonizes “conventional” customs or manners; that is to say, that are otherwise considered ordinary or common or perceived hostile towards that society’s (own) partial values.

• • •

The absence of (ethical) standards must inevitably promote moral and spiritual confusion while ushering the decline of civilized manners whenever “customary” standards of right and wrong, good and evil no longer provide substantive meaning or moral authority. Moral Relativism, I believe, promotes moral laxity. Whether as (casual) observers or active participants, each of us is equally to blame, more so the former for our indifference!

• • •

The expression “Feet of Clay” implies a transitory, material existence that is essentially weak or flawed or (otherwise) subject to decay; contrasted with spiritual existence that is eternal, everlasting and timeless. If one allows that worldly values are the off-springs of worldly customs, (alone); that is to say, restricted to non-spiritual matters, and that eternal values are necessarily eternal in meaning; neither limited by space nor time, which would otherwise render them meaningless and incomprehensible in form; universal or eternal Values must necessarily embrace all existence, including the “Material” that (always) was, is and will become, without exception; the expression or starting point of God’s own Creation, in His own Image consonant with His own laws or (Eternal Values), whose impressions have been (indelibly) stamped on all things potentially eternal. By this argument alone, worldly and eternal cannot be separated otherwise such equivocations that must inevitably follow would negate the eternal order of things that transcends, although embracing, the worldly order of things each in conjunction with Eternal Designs.

• • •

I was deeply moved the other evening while watching President Reagan’s birthday celebration hosted by Republican Party notables. Addressing his well wishers, his boyish countenance revealing signs of age however retaining its youthful glimmer, his delivery, once flawless, however a tad slower and unsteady, I was suddenly overcome by fits of tears. Once again it was 1981 but of course it really wasn’t 1981 and therein lay the rub, that this great and gentle man, who was/is a genuine American Hero, a Man for all Seasons and

one of our nation's greatest presidents, would not be among us much longer.

• • •

Under the provisions of a proposed law sponsored by our co-presidents designed to promote smoke-free environments, tobacco consumption will soon be restricted or prohibited altogether in public areas traditionally frequented by smokers including restaurants, barrooms, casinos, racetracks and pool halls among other social venues. To ensure proper compliance, undercover "health agents" will covertly insinuate themselves in these "dens of iniquity" and report any violations to the federal agency(s) charged with its enforcement. Preliminary warnings will be issued to first time offenders followed by fines, stiffer penalties and suspension of licenses.

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Sincerity, not Intention, is the Hallmark of Forgiveness.

• • •

The greatest sinners are the Corrupters of Virtue.

• • •

Central Europe, because of its strategic (military) importance, will invariably find itself caught in the middle of a geopolitical tug-of-war between East and West.

• • •

Everything being equal, democratic forms seldom match up favorably against autocratic designs unrestricted by the codes of civilized conduct. This is especially true as it relates to our war against (cunning) terrorists adept at using our nation's (own) rule of law to their (own) strategic advantage(s).

• • •

Although American Foreign Policy should never enthusiastically embrace or commit its intellectual and material resources to nations of questionable (moral) character, geopolitical realities dictate that it remain flexible whenever its national interests are at stake.

• • •

Provided that the acquisition of (new) knowledge is properly assimilated and that individuals are mindful of what history has taught them, a society should acquire certain advantages over preceding generations. (We "stand on the shoulders of giants")

• • •

The time and place of our passing is written in The Book of Life. (Aunt Alice)

• • •

Assumptions extending beyond reasonable limits rise to the level of the incredibly absurd!

• • •

The biblical allegory of the Beast and the Dragon as written in the Book of Revelation foreshadowed, perhaps, the emergence of Science and Technology and society's insatiable attachment to Material Things (False Prophets). It seems that our society's consummate pursuit of Material Things proportionate to its increasing indifference to Spiritual Things has sterilized our souls in a manner that has left many of us intellectually and morally barren and susceptible to whimsical notions of corporeal designs.

• • •

A modernist version of wealth creation has superseded the (industrialized) "smokestack" economy ushered by the Industrial Revolution over a century ago. Softer skills in the field of information, commercial and industrial technology, computer and software designs, among others, are gradually replacing the diminishing demands for unskilled labor (especially) among manufacturing and factory workers whose positions are facing daunting challenges from computer-based technologies. The challenges facing our schools will prove to be enormous in the coming years. The American workforce will need to become properly schooled and trained in order to meet the specialized requirements of an increasingly high-tech global market environment or otherwise run the risk of having their jobs outsourced. To the swift of mind indeed go the spoils!

• • •

Excessive wealth accumulation, I believe, is a subconscious reaction to our fear of death inasmuch as we attempt to hold it in check by focusing our attention on material pursuits rather than the other way around.

• • •

That Economics will never achieve the status of an exact science is understood by the problematical parameters of arbitrary designs; fragile models subject to prejudicial or variable assumptions. They offer at best, an impressionistic view of economic reality.

• • •

While recently visiting the Smithsonian with a friend, (Patrick Kelly) I could not help noticing how underrepresented the Greek and Roman exhibits were in relation to Northern African and Central American exhibits on display. In fact, the latter were (the) more prominent. Although Western Civilization has not yet assumed a subordinate role vis-à-vis the politically correct cultures of antiquity, i.e. Civilizations of “Color”, the pattern(s) unfolding are unmistakable. The inevitable marginalization of Greco/Roman’s immeasurable contribution(s) to Western Civilization is well under way.

• • •

If the supposed importance of heated arguments were properly measured (beforehand) in proportion to their presumptive standing, there would (arguably) be fewer arguments.

• • •

The obsessive fascination with Socialism by Western European nations never ceases to amaze me. Its precedential shortcomings should be apparent by now after prolonged experience with failed (economic) policies. Even fledgling Third World countries, when given the opportunity, are superseding its flawed assumptions with more reasonable designs favorable to free and open markets. I can’t help wondering whether free enterprise isn’t better suited for the demands of energetically robust societies rather than thoroughly exhausted ones content on living off their remaining capital; expending what little energy is left on meeting the custodial requirements of its aging populations rather than the urgent requirements of its younger citizens.

• • •

The opponents of “Wealth” oftentimes ignore its humbler origins by rejecting off-hand the many hardships that many financially successful individuals had to endure—hard work, taking calculated risks and self-sacrifice in order to acquire their fortune(s). That many financially successful individuals should decide to pass along the fruits of their labors to their families and loved ones instead of having them arbitrarily redistributed to other individuals, should be a prerogative of acquired wealth; a privilege enjoyed by those who have properly earned it and should enjoy the right of disposing it as they think fit. I am not speaking of income taxes, which every citizen is expected to pay his or her “fair” share, however the (morally) insidious Estate or “Death” tax, that truly constitutes a miscarriage of justice!

• • •

Muckraking does not seek to expose political corruption for the benefit of an (enlightened) society but seeks perverse pleasure, rather, in exposing the moral and ethical failings of flawed individuals.

• • •

The decline of great civilizations is not entirely owing to economic reasons. It is a gradual process precipitated by a variety of factors including economic disruptions, natural disasters, over-population, famine and disease. It is often times, however, the result of self-destructive tendencies common to decaying cultures that have grown (morally) listless and (intellectually) indifferent to their (historic) traditions because of their (material) opulence, perhaps.

• • •

What is it about an affable scoundrel that makes us wink at improprieties or worse, legal transgressions? I’m referring, of course, to our own President William Jefferson Clinton who, along with the First Lady, have offered us Whitewater, Madison Savings and Loan, Rose Law Firm, Cattle Options, Travelgate, Filegate, Loral Communications, Buddhist Temple Fundraisers, (the) Lincoln Bedroom, (the) mysterious “suicide” of Vincent Foster, Sex Scandals and Arkansas Mafia for our consideration. Suspicious “suicides”, in particular, do not seem to make much of an impression on liberal journalists eager to protect one of their own by glossing over the legal and ethical failings of their favorite sons and daughters (which is putting it mildly) and reporting them on page 23 of the Washington Post or the New York Times; that would otherwise have discredited a Republican Administration and brought it down to its knees. That many of us can look at ourselves in the mirror each and every day and see a reflection of Mr. Clinton, is most troubling of all. Perhaps that explains why the Public has been willing to provide him with a free pass!

• • •

We should all stand on guard against falling prey to unwarranted suspicions as they oftentimes relate to other people who may otherwise think or behave differently than we do. On the other hand, we should also be wary of individuals of questionable character. In other words, we are ultimately defined by our (own) actions and the way we behave towards other people. The liberal exchange of ideas does not necessarily imply their acceptance although we should all properly respect (creditable) thoughts and opinions in whatever manner they may differ from our own private viewpoints.

• • •

Does anyone remember when (Sport) was only a game?

• • •

Nothing quite captures Americana as vividly as a Frank Capra film.

• • •

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, in a recent tax audit, was able to recall 14 years after the fact, \$1 dollar (each) deduction for “worn out” panties she generously donated to the poor (ugh!), however drew a blank when called upon to provide details on a \$1,000 dollar investment in futures that grossed \$100,000!

• • •

“Irresistible Impulse,” or the devil made me do it, has become the latest excuse employed by defense attorneys superseding, in part, the more traditional Insanity Plea.

• • •

I was watching a heavyweight championship fight the other night at a friend’s (Robert Favata) home. I forget which (boxing) federation was sanctioning the bout; there are so many nowadays that it’s hard keeping track. Boxing, I feel, has lost much of its mystique in recent years. The holder of the heavyweight championship belt was once considered hot stuff. The popularity of the modern fighter, however, is problematical. Some fighters, no doubt, still capture our imaginations. Many, however, have become the products of media hype. The fight game was once considered a poor man’s sport, not a sport tailored for millionaires and prima donnas fighting once or twice a year for obscene paychecks exceeding what many of their predecessors earned over a lifetime. Perhaps that was part of the “glamour” that attracted the working classes who were able to “connect”, in some manner, with hungry boxers fighting for nominal purses; average Joes that they could otherwise relate to.

• • •

Richard Milhous Nixon, thirty-seventh President of the United States, passed away over the weekend. A Conservative’s Liberal and a Liberal’s Conservative, Mr. Nixon was an enigmatic man of prodigious intellect and talent. He was a man who hoped to be loved by all but was loved by few.....including many of his political “supporters”. He resigned from the Office of the Presidency once impeachment proceedings appeared imminent. His most belligerent detractors on the Left have never quite forgotten his role in the Watergate cover-up although if the truth were known, “Alger Hess” was the underlying catalyst behind their unwavering contempt for the man. This staunch anticommunist was vilified by communist sympathizers, fellow travelers, and useful idiots not to mention a number of Conservatives who, as his party’s Elder Statesman, (properly) rejected his overtures to (Communist) China. His unfortunate flirtation with Keynesian Economic Policies (Wage and Price Controls) and prolonging the “Great Society” by introducing fresh initiatives, threw a monkey wrench into the economy but enough of that! Seeking (public) forgiveness, if not self-forgiveness, this tormented soul sought redemption in seclusion and productive writing. His political ambitions softened by age, Nixon’s geopolitical literary output subsequently earned him international acclaim and the grudging respect from his political enemies, many of whom he oftentimes consulted with on Foreign Affairs in his later years. Should history one day shed its political bias and evaluate Nixon’s career objectively, he will be remembered as one of the twentieth century’s most influential Statesmen but certainly not one of its more memorable Presidents.

• • •

America’s relative decline as the world’s eminent global leader is not unprecedented when understood by the parallel decline of many (Great) Nations. Times may change. Events influencing the winds of change, however, remain remarkably constant. A condition common to many Great Nations in decline is complacency; a weakening of (national) resolve that eventually causes many (erstwhile) Great Nations to gradually abandon their moral bearing. Having grown too comfortable, perhaps, many oftentimes acquire a taste for easy living, maintaining the status quo and aversion for confrontations; choosing to appease or soften criticisms both foreign and domestic, rather than standing on its traditional principles. In other words, that Great Nation subconsciously surrenders its role as World Leader because it has lost the Will to Lead. Its national designs become increasingly unclear, its moral purpose, uncertain. The Rabble grows restless, their material demands, insatiable. Rooted in pleasure, Human Nature’s inordinate capacity for consumption, having gone unchecked, losses all sense of moderation and proportion. Beleaguered by the overwhelming demands of its citizens, government must either pay proper tribute or risk shaking an already tremulous foundation. The loyalty of the Rabble must be preserved at whatever cost lest that nation’s political “leaders” fall out of favor. A depleted treasury must find creative ways of raising revenue however dry the well in order to pacify the demands of its citizens; engendering more spending promoting a vicious cycle of tax and spending policies sapping the energies and moral vitality of its productive citizens who grow increasingly cynical while the Rabble grows more demanding and the government more obliging.

• • •

Vanity: Moral Superiority and Self-Righteousness.

Appetite: Acquisition of Material Things.

Flattery: Nourishment for the Ego.

Each for their own sake...

• • •

Adornments are enhancements to dress requirements serving no functional purpose, other than satisfying Vanity.

• • •

My wife (Rose) and I had dinner the other evening at the Westchester Premier Theatre which featured a play, Sayonara, adapted from a novel written by James Michener. The story (in a nutshell) is about inter-racial marriages between American servicemen and their Japanese girlfriends and the conventional (racial) barriers that stood in their way. Alas, one couple commits double suicide because neither could any longer bear the thought of living apart from the other. This is too much! I must be spiritually and morally obtuse because these hackneyed storylines seldom seem to “move” me.

• • •

Retroactive taxes are unfair to taxpayers, not to mention unethical and in my opinion, unconstitutional. Taxpayers should not be blindsided after the fact; that is to say, forced to pay taxes on what basically amounts to paying taxes on taxed income that has already been spent or planned on being spent, perhaps, but provided ample opportunity to properly assess (beforehand) the impact prospective tax increases, or tax reductions, for that matter, will have on their household budgets. Faced with the prospect of paying (marginally) higher taxes, taxpayers may (otherwise) decide to manage their finances accordingly by (either) spending less or postponing spending on all non-essential items. Designed to provide a safety net for fiscal mismanagement, this egregious measure undermines financial planning while deflating tax payer morale.

• • •

There exist extraordinary quantitative standards or measures that exceed the potential capacity of average minds to absorb. Character, on the other hand, is a qualitative or subjective standard incapable of being measured although it is correctly understood that some people possess more Character than others. Neither is what many of us commonly refer to as “Right Reason” correctly understood in whatever manner we (may) otherwise perceive some individuals as arguably more reasonable than others. Neither are polite manners nor social refinement nor moral righteousness (Egads!) readily perceptible to individuals possessing limited insight into the essential Nature of Things. People, I believe, unless endowed with uncommon perception; that is to say, inherently sensitive to the ideas, emotions or circumstances of “like” individuals, should be properly conditioned by example.

• • •

An old fool is simply a young fool who has grown older but not wiser.

• • •

Clever minded individuals are oftentimes captivated by the perception of their (own) inestimable “Wisdom”.

• • •

I agree with Albert Camus that an individual can believe in God and still be an Existentialist and that both belief systems are not necessarily irreconcilable. If ultimate reality is not consciousness but existence, rather, how could anyone be reasonably certain of his or her own existence if not for the capacity to reason and to think critically about oneself? “I am consciously aware of myself therefore I am certain of my existence”. I am aware of the existence of other people who have a similar likeness to me that confirms my own existence” (Freely adapted from Rene Descartes) The troubling assumption with most (nihilistic) existential thinkers is the idea that the universe is fundamentally evil; without purpose or meaning and that alienated Man must overcome the evil dynamics of Nature through his or her own (determined) efforts or by exercising Free Will that ironically lends force to conscious expression. This is God’s most precious gift to Humankind.

• • •

President Clinton has vowed to end Welfare “as we know it.” Sounds like doublespeak to me!

• • •

Ignorance is a self-inflicting wound. In a free and open society with increased educational opportunities at every conceivable level, many of us are woefully misinformed through our own volition, by the choices we make or don’t make!

• • •

The signposts are clear. There are no detours on the Road to Success.

• • •

Twentieth Century Science and Technology have ushered unprecedented changes in our way of life in ways unimaginable to our grandparents, with every incremental unit of change (seemingly) exceeding our emotional and for some, intellectual capacity to adapt. It’s what Alvin Toffler referred to as “Future Shock.” To use a simple analogy, in the “old days”, before the emergence of superhighways, families planning their vacations were oftentimes required to take the “scenic” route; traveling through non-descript towns, subject to traffic jams, ubiquitous traffic lights and nervous breakdowns that sought a temporary reprieve at some roadside diner where the family would stop to eat and address their biological requirements before reaching their final destination. In some ways, this mode of travel was an adventure in itself. The traveler got to see the country and observe some of its interesting features. (It has often been said that half the fun of traveling is getting there.) The roadside diners and hotdog stands or ice cream “parlors” where weary travelers could stop and unwind and shake off some of the road dust, also provided opportunities to do some “sightseeing”, to take in the lay of the land or “connect” with the people or simply walk around town and clear their heads. This may seem inconvenient by present standards. Travelers, however, simply adapted and managed their time accordingly. In today’s age, where so much ground

is covered so quickly, the traveler no longer seems engaged with traveling. (Driving to the airport, waiting on line, checking luggage and walking through metal detectors is a (by-product) of modern travel however not traveling) American Roads have lost their quintessential charm. They can no longer be properly referred to as “roads”. Traveling nowadays has little to commend itself other than exit signs and billboards directing the traveler to uniform convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants and motels corporately owned, of course. In this manner, our way of life has rapidly evolved into a kind of superhighway where the end game is getting there as quickly as possible without taking any time to stop and smell the coffee. Although it becomes us to accept the times in which we live, perhaps we should give occasional pause to nostalgic notions that, in some manner, made us appear more Human.

• • •

Structure and Control are not synonymous. The former provides operating guidelines to orderly processes while the latter assigns some level of authority to those processes. Modern Liberalism has confused the (suggestive) relationship that otherwise separates the two.

• • •

Political Activism has taken it to the laboratories in its ongoing efforts to formalize its political agendas by manipulating, misrepresenting and obfuscating scientific data in order to lend credibility to false premises and passing such (plausible) assumptions for facts.

• • •

Having circumvented formal diplomatic channels, President Clinton took it upon himself to express, on behalf of the “American People”, his heartfelt condolences over the recent passing of North Korean Dictator, Kim IL Sung, a Communist thug and Human Rights violator who unmercifully starved 600,000 of his own people and led his nation against U.N. armed forces that resulted in the death of 50,000 American soldiers who died for the cause of Freedom nearly a half century ago. This end-around round the State Department should come as no surprise considering the president’s track record as a draft dodger and antiwar protester whose sympathies continue to lie with our nation’s ideological opponents.

• • •

Is it a question of mistaken identity that the nineteenth-century Populist has suddenly transformed himself into a twentieth-century Conservative? Not in every case, perhaps, although I am firmly convinced however, that provided a “proper” education, William Jennings Bryan would have been a reliable advocate of socially conservative principles were he living today.

• • •

Life seldom provides second chances, only second guesses!

• • •

Art Stupefaction conceals an inherent baseness common to affected styles and manners that is often lost on the casual observer, captivated as many of them are by erratic forms for their own sake without giving considered thought to their (social) implications; radical “art” forms whose intended meaning, if any, are often unclear, its premises anti-social, tasteless, adolescent, absurd, valueless and immoral. The shortcomings inherent in Modern Art (merely) serve to debase the dignity of our society, its customs and traditions, while degrading (higher) culture in general.

• • •

Multiculturalism is the antithesis of the American “melting pot” that promoted a common (homogenous) culture by assimilating peoples from different ethnic backgrounds and religions by tossing them into the pot, if you will. What was it that Lincoln said, or was it Christ, about a “House Divided”?

• • •

A goal that is considered improbable should never discourage the would-be achiever from trying to achieve that goal provided that that goal is worthy of achievement; like trying to lead the good life outlined in Christ’s teachings or living the Socratic or Introspective life. That either of these commendable goals is achievable is problematical. That they should warrant the efforts of serious-minded individuals is sufficient reason in itself to pursue them whether they are achievable or not.

• • •

Politicians have become increasingly monolithic in their approach to politicking, focusing more on groups rather than individuals. It’s easier and much more efficient harvesting votes with sweeping gestures and deceptive promises rather than stumping for votes the old-fashioned way by kissing babies and all that other good stuff. The Democratic Party, in particular, has been traditionally adept at targeting interest groups ripe for the picking. In the old days it was Immigrants, Catholics, Labor and Farming, among other groups that were routinely pandered to. In recent times, however, the politics of victimization has taken center stage. After all, who hasn’t an ax to grind nowadays? By having succeeded in its efforts at marginalizing the individual, group grievances and special interests have provided the Democratic Party an opportunity of gathering fish with a mesh net rather than reeling them in with bait and tackle.

• • •

Millionaire baseball players have set a tentative strike date of August 12th. The New York Yankees hosted a pregame ceremony at the stadium honoring Phil Rizzuto's recent induction into the Hall of Fame. Were it not for this very special occasion, (The "Scooter" was always a fan favorite), I would have passed up the ballgame. The pending strike, the eighth over the last twenty-two years, has soured my enthusiasm for a sport I have loved with a passion ever since I was a child. Nevertheless, how much longer must the average fan see their season(s) high jacked by self-centered, lingering adolescents; many of whom don't appreciate the value of a hard earned dollar? I remember when it was only a game. Now it's a business!

• • •

While many roads (arguably) lead to heaven, I believe that we would all be better served remaining on the "trusted path" rather than experimenting with detours which may lead us to "Heaven" knows where.

• • •

A society has an "inherent" attachment to its political institutions that is not inborn, however. Such fidelity, much like a child's attachment to a parent, must be earned or otherwise both lose "parental" confidence.

• • •

National Solidarity is measured in part by a nation's fidelity to its political and social institutions however symbolic; otherwise, the social fabric will begin to unravel.

• • •

Wholesome disagreements will inevitably arise between individuals who are intellectually honest, seekers of Truth.

• • •

"Might makes Right" when supporting "worthy causes."

• • •

A young woman in our office, a college graduate no less, mistakenly referred a domestic phone call from one of our Dealer's in "New Mexico" to our Export Division!

• • •

The decline of any great nation is hastened by intellectual and moral laxity and indifference to that nation's historical achievements; that is to say, that nation forgot the lessons that made it great.

• • •

The American Hero, I believe, has become an Endangered Species.

• • •

Suffering seeks consolation in Hope.

• • •

My perfect attendance record at the office has extended into its seventh (consecutive) year; a testimony to my physical endurance, company loyalty and stupidity! Old habits, however, are hard to break!

• • •

Vanity (Ecclesiastes) and Absurdity (Existentialism) are birds of a feather in the manner Humankind's intellectual pursuits, after all is said and done, are deemed pointless and futile!

• • •

Political Activism inside the Laboratory will one day sour society's implicit faith in Science. (Did I mention this elsewhere?)

• • •

The variable or uncertain characterization of descriptive terms or labels used to describe or limit some generic quality or feature invalidates the underlying assumptions of its composite nature when, for example, a label is assigned to someone considered to be an "economic" or "social" conservative. Such modifiers do not imply an inclusive arrangement but some common characteristic among other (synthesized) articles; each one exerting its own (interacting) influence on the other in a more broadly defined manner that, having inserted adjunctive qualifiers, will inevitably misrepresent its essential character (thereby) providing an altogether different meaning.

• • •

Reducing academic standards provides a free pass to underachieving students while undermining the (potential) progress of talented students (otherwise) capable of taking "it" to a higher level. In other words, higher performance standards in conjunction with broad-based curricular formats initiated by under performing schools is the only sure fire way of ensuring that each student achieves his or

her fullest potential in proportion to their natural capacity.

• • •

Human Nature... Multidimensional...Material however Spiritual...unrestricted by Fixed Limits...

• • •

Birthdays, once we reach a certain age, aren't necessarily a cause for celebration but a troubling reminder, however, of our mortality; A wake up call, if you will!

• • •

Laws are not self contained; that is to say, bounded by their own authority or judgment. Laws are dependent on a society's willingness to support them otherwise such laws are perceived inconsequential.

• • •

Apprehension hastens Anxiety.

• • •

A diminishing penis is woman's final revenge!

• • •

Society...conceptually uncertain...morally vague...variable components...falling short...general opinion...fine-tuning wherever required without surrendering itself to massive upheavals or turning the entire structure upside its head...private initiatives and remarkable achievements...and inscrutable designs, incomprehensible, difficult to digest...behavior, reprehensible and mean...holding the collective liable for the transgressions of the few...individuals considered abstractly...society at fault!

• • •

Elitist obsession with leveling sentiments provides an amusing contrast with (the) elegant bourgeois lifestyles many eagerly embrace (joie de vivre) yet rhetorically denounce. Ah, wretched creatures whose internal designs allow them to "enjoy" in practice what they routinely condemn on principle!

• • •

Modern Man has become no less the servant (rather) than the master of his (technological) designs.

• • •

Most software enhancement packages require human intervention. Nevertheless, a disturbing number of programs have demonstrated an uncanny capacity, on some level, to "think" for themselves.

• • •

Technology offers certain "evolutionary" advantages over Human Designs that appears to be striking a diminishing chord, however.

• • •

A well-organized society grounded on and supported by fidelity to its traditional customs and manners once superseded by falsely conceived revisionist assumptions promotes an impressionist view of that society.

• • •

Simplicity requires Effort.

• • •

Anti-Heroes have always fascinated our imaginations symbolizing, as many of them do, wayward lifestyles and manners in contrast with conventional customs (seemingly) common and lacking spontaneity and originality.

• • •

Intelligence is inherited; Knowledge, on the other hand, is acquired.

• • •

Many of us have earned our conventional stripes from the school of "hard knocks", (an idiomatic expression that implies an "education" received from life's (painful) experiences), rather than formal classroom instruction that oftentimes conceals (life's) harsher elements.

• • •

Trojan Horses bearing Ecclesiastical Heretics have been quietly infiltrating our religious institutions and subverting traditional church

doctrines by advancing plausible interpretations contrary to biblical teachings and superseding them with spiritually abstract new-age assumptions bordering on Pantheism.

• • •

The decisions that we often make provoke uncertain feelings and emotions in other people that a sensible individual should be aware of. Forethought cautions that such decisions may otherwise promote uneasiness and anxiety; that is to say, that they should be engaging without unnecessarily augmenting their concerns.

• • •

That broader capacities disseminate collective achievement to a greater or lesser extent is a grave concern to Social Engineers.

• • •

The jury selection process has become (the) key underlying component in winning high-profile cases whose outcomes are oftentimes predetermined before opening statements are presented to the jury. Inherent in the selection process is a disturbing tendency common among most attorneys of “nullifying” clear-minded, informed individuals in favor of unsophisticated, impressionable types who may otherwise render a “favorable” verdict predicated upon individual biases and pedestrian prejudices likely to promote the arguments of prosecutors and defense attorneys alike. Informed decisions based on evidence and points of law clearly and properly defined, are gradually giving way to preliminary jousting matches between opposing counsels seeking a propitious “mix” that will “carry the day”.

• • •

Yesterday’s (November 8th) historical off-year elections resulted in the Republican Party seizing bilateral control of the House of Representatives and Senate for the first time since 1954. In addition, Republican candidates won a majority of gubernatorial races. This overwhelming mandate from the American People sent a clear signal that many were dissatisfied with the Clinton Administration. This unexpected outcome will provide an excellent opportunity for the Republican Party to “walk the talk” after decades of wandering in the (political) “wilderness”. How effectively Republicans will govern remains to be seen, however. Old habits are hard to break, especially for a majority party possessing a minority mindset. I expect that once in power, however, the modus operandi will be consolidating power that may (ironically) impede the party’s ability or willingness, for that matter, to legislate meaningful reforms. We can only hope that it won’t be business as usual. Mr. Gingrich seems like a breath of fresh air. We will have to wait and see. I’m keeping my fingers crossed that Republicans and Conservatives, alike, will keep their campaign promises as outlined in their “Contract with America”, limiting the size and scope of government. I remain skeptical, however, of a Washington Mindset that seems to operate within its own guidelines whatever political party is in power; or so history informs me inasmuch as Republicans haven’t been in power during my lifetime, not at the national level, at least. On the other hand, there may be a strong incentive among Republicans to change the political climate in Washington that will justify the people’s confidence. Time alone will tell.

• • •

Moderate, as the word applies in the political sector, is a term that characterizes, in some uncertain manner, positions lying somewhere in the center of political extremes. Such labels may assume an entirely different meaning depending on one’s point of view, however. Therefore, A Conservative is likely to consider a Moderate Democrat a (Conservative) Democrat and a Moderate Republican a (Liberal) Republican.

• • •

Provisions inserted in the Constitution recognizing the separation of Church and State were introduced as precautionary measures safeguarding the (potential) establishment of State Religion. They were not intended to advance a godless society, however. The framers understood all too well the underlying influence of a Higher Moral Authority on the Character of a Nation!

• • •

Performance should properly fulfill its stated goals and objectives or otherwise final results will necessarily be called into question.

• • •

Socialism (without the brutal trappings) shares a number of characteristics common to Autocratic Rule including an inherent contempt for mainstream conventions. The former employs the legal system and democratic processes to achieve its stated objectives; the superseding of traditional customs and norms with “universal” standards, whereas the latter disregards such pretenses of limited authority altogether in its efforts to reduce a society to its basic components. Each seeks in their own way to marginalize the individual through inductive rationalization. In either case, Human Dignity is (ultimately) compromised; considered an impediment to practical designs thought to promote either an Ideal or Orderly society, or whatever other intent.

• • •

Character oftentimes requires playing the hand that has been dealt to us.

• • •

I believe that efforts by extreme, anti-religious groups seeking to eliminate religious symbols from public places is a cynical attempt

by Atheists and Elites to advance a Secularist Agenda, if not to promote a godless society. Such designs may one day trigger sizeable defections of (Democratic) Party Moderates, especially members of the African American and Hispanic Communities who, despite party loyalties, remain staunchly conservative on a number of social issues, especially religion. Specious arguments thought to convey the separation of Church and State on their own merits appear to be carrying the day, at least for the time being. I suspect, however, that such arguments will one day lose their appeal and be seen for what they really are: a calculated attempt at installing Atheism on the Secular Throne!

• • •

Historical Revisionism is rooted in a society's perceptions of its historical traditions; changing the ways a society looks at its past by rejecting or ignoring its essential (historical) features or underlying assumptions by misrepresenting and manipulating (historical) evidence in order to promote a social or political agenda in keeping with modern "requirements". Most Revisionists are motivated by an inordinate aversion to customary practices bordering on madness. The result has been an undermining of conventional customs and norms, including "inappropriate" language, for that matter, whose traditional authenticity is under fire by social activists who are trying to undermine or reinterpret the customary meaning of words in order to accommodate Politically Correct conventions.

• • •

Vision requires a bridging of abstract ideas and practical applications.

• • •

Shame is a conscious awareness or (the) private atonement of Guilt for some willful wrong-doing; that is to say, an individual "feels" ashamed" after having affirmed his or her Guilt. In other words, Shame is a form of self-reproach that seeks redemption in a broader sense by the profession of Guilt. Shame is predisposed to proper notions of right and wrong whereas the shameless are untroubled by the dictates of Conscience.

• • •

That certain ethnic or racial groups have historically outperformed others in a variety of different fields including sports, medicine, arts and sciences, literature or education in general, should not astonish critics skeptical of the underlying differences owing to cultural and (natural) agents that predispose achievement. Such distinctions, until quite recently, were common among certain cultures (or groups) who, for centuries, acquired cultural and intellectual sustenance from homogenous gene pools. Inter racial and ethnic marriages in recent years, however, have gradually erased such distinctions or genetic dispositions and environmental influences, by blending hereditary characteristics and socio/cultural factors that may otherwise enhance or (diminish) performance.

• • •

Addendum to the above: On the other hand, were a heterogeneous society composed of a number of distinct groups able to achieve a "perfect" genetic/cultural balance, the result(s) would nevertheless gravitate toward some center norm thereby occasioning a hybrid culture consisting of fewer dullards and arguably fewer exceptionally talented individuals, as well. That society must arguably "evolve" into something quite ordinary.

• • •

Wealth does not advance Self-Esteem (per se) but enhances, rather, Self-Esteem in the manner (that) Wealth was acquired.

• • •

That poverty may diminish Character is questionable as well as counter arguments that material abundance is likely to enhance it.

• • •

A nation's indifference to military preparedness and its uncritical assumptions regarding the inestimable intentions of hostile nations is consistent with the erstwhile requirements of a purposeful nation that has lost the Will to Lead by example.

• • •

There's "nothing wrong with the picture" that can't be corrected by the person who done hung it!

• • •

America's inner cities have unfortunately devolved into gladiatorial training grounds where young Spartans routinely hone their predacious martial skills in order to assault law-abiding citizens.

• • •

Today our nation is commemorating Martin Luther King. While I do not object to giving Dr. King his proper due, I find it troubling that two of our nation's most illustrious presidents, Washington and Lincoln, are no longer honored in their own right but must share their illustrious achievements with such notables as Franklin Pierce and Warren G. Harding on a day which is now referred to as Presidents' Day. Even more troubling are holiday advertisements portraying these two great men as pictorial caricatures.

• • •

Christopher Columbus is the latest inductee among an “illustrious” circle of Western Villains. This “butcher” of Indians and conveyor of foreign diseases!

• • •

I am still trying to figure out what is meant by a Conservative with a “Conscience” or what is now commonly referred to as a “Compassionate Conservative”. It sounds rather patronizing and condescending, if you ask me. How about a “Sober-Minded Democrat? Now there’s a double entendre that works well enough for me!

• • •

School Prayer intending neither injury nor harm but goodwill, rather, has provoked such violent passions and railings among cultural elites and atheists alike that this seemingly “innocuous” practice before class must give thoughtful pause to assumptions arising from moderate quarters affirming (putative) Liberal Tolerance.

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Employees are commonly referred to as Business Units; a nifty euphemism commonly employed whenever downsizing staff and other expendable...units.

• • •

The Soviet Empire’s pre-meditated attempt (and subsequent failure) at eliminating all vestiges of God from the hearts and minds of its oppressed subjects offers some glimmer of hope in America’s own internal struggles with anti-religious forces who, in a similar manner, are avidly seeking to promote a Secularist Agenda by advancing legislation aimed at removing religious symbols and displays from public forums and driving them underground where it is hoped such forms will one day be lost on future generations otherwise lacking the necessary (spiritual) predicates and values formerly derived by enlightened examples that, for centuries, provided structure and moral sustenance and meaning to religious thought.

• • •

Nationalism, provided it respects the sovereign rights and traditions of other nations without seeking to trump or impose its own social and political values and customs on the normative order of other cultures and societies preferring their own customary traditions, instead, (although such intrusions are oftentimes ruses for advancing that nation’s own geo-political designs), informs that nation of its (own) incomparable history and values and “common” identity; defining its origin; informing its citizens of who they are as a People.

• • •

The Balkanization of America will prove to be the inevitable outcome of ill-conceived immigration policies aimed at injecting “diversity” into America’s cultural landscape. The rapid influx of immigrants without providing them (sufficient) time or opportunity to properly assimilate, appears to be a calculated attempt on the part of universal designs to preempt American Culture. The solution to this unfortunate dilemma requires (the) reestablishing of and “enforcement” of Immigration Quotas designed to preserve existing racial and ethnic balances (for the time being) while allowing recent arrivals an opportunity to properly assimilate into their new environment. Whenever recent immigrants are encouraged to casually disregard the customary traditions that typify the character of the host nation, that nation will inevitably acquire an entirely different meaning.

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Addendum to the above: I suggested maintaining ethnic and racial “balances” for the time being because it requires a period of adjustment for everyone concerned before they are (emotionally) prepared to establish social relationships with unknown “quantities”. (So history informs us)

Forms are merely generic designs of “things” as we perceive them to be. We need to pass beyond sensual perceptions or outward impressions to what lies hidden and beyond, visualizing with our souls as well as our minds in order to correctly estimate (the) essential nature of things or (the) ultimate reality of what we think we see or go about thinking about “things” we think about. This argument equally applies to how a person perceives or chooses to perceive other people or events that shape their lives. Such perceptions involve not only sight and mind and “feeling” but soul searching and “right reasoning” that “correctly” informs or interprets what we see or think we see or wish to believe we see; that is to say, what each of us understands or believes to be factual or real.

• • •

Innocence breeds Tolerance, or perhaps it’s Ignorance I’m confusing it with. Either way, both, on some level, represent the same thing. What is certain, however, is that Ignorance hardens Innocence while Innocence, in its proper turn, promotes Tolerance. Am I making myself clear?

• • •

Patriotism or National Pride is considered in some circles common, vulgar and inconsistent with the requirements of a Universal Society. Traditional customs and manners, as they relate to love of country, while taking on an entirely different meaning in the modern sense, are under attack by Cultural Elites who consider national distinctions chauvinistic; outdated principle obstructions

impeding the advancement of its Universal Principles.

• • •

Humankind's capacity for mischief should never be understated. What wickedness, encouraged by the prescriptive designs of internalized customs and manners, lies within the Hearts of Men?

• • •

Canon or "Ecclesiastical" Law is a body of laws derived from biblical and scriptural sources as well as the inspired writings of (private) individuals governing the (organization) of the Roman Catholic Church and its members. The law(s) have provided a (living) traditional framework directing Christian conduct. In recent years, however, many of the "faithful" have been lobbying for easier application and/or interpretation of historical customs and teachings considered dated by contemporary standards. The gradual erosion of church authority, grounded on the written body of teachings of the Church, in favor of moral and ethical palliatives, has occasioned special accommodations for private viewpoints rather than conformance with precedential systems of principle teachings designed to guide and to promote proper Christian Attitudes.

• • •

Potential should never commend itself to random or variable designs but continue striving (however), towards the highest level of human and spiritual achievement.

• • •

Wealth is oftentimes attributable to Chance. It can be quickly taken away from us as suddenly as it was received. An individual should never feel overly confident or complacent (over) his or her ("own") good fortune, but stand guard, rather, (over) its capricious designs.

• • •

That minority interests do not necessarily share power equally with social or political majorities is not an inherent Republican failing; such "shortcomings", I believe, would be also apparent when, as is oftentimes the case, minority view points, advanced disproportionately in relation to its vested interests and (the) concerns of majority opinion, throw their weight around.

• • •

Social Welfare agencies have assumed a life of their own that seeks to penetrate the viability and scope of their operations by carefully orchestrating and sustaining the "needs" of the people entrusted to their care.

• • •

Viewer reaction to current news events isn't (necessarily) a function of the (underlying) content of (the) events (themselves) but the manner that news journalists reporting (these) events interpret them for the "benefit" of the viewing audience.

• • •

Thoughtful Imagination, unlike Form (or material substance), is neither restricted by Time nor Space. Although operating from relatively fixed points, it is able to extend backward and forward or beyond the (limits) of its (spatial/time) dimensional coordinates.

• • •

I am uncertain whether at any (other) time in our nation's history through the middle part of the present century has labeling been employed to characterize (or limit) a particular generation like "baby boomers," (or the self-indulgent generation), for example, or their offspring, the "generation x'ers," (or the non-descript generation). In what manner do we define a generation? The former are/were ideologically inclined and self-centered, the latter, ideologically indifferent and self-centered in their (own) right.

• • •

Objectivity and Truth, unencumbered by passion and internal themes, represent the highest forms of intellectual achievement. Neither are easy to achieve, however, inclined, as many of us are, to embrace subjective viewpoints that seldom have anything to do with the (true) "nature of things," that is to say, as "things" really are rather than how they appear to be or what we would like them to be. Subjective opinions are (often) reinforced by the "exceptional" characteristics of an individual that (oftentimes) make it trying for that individual to understand "things" correctly or place them in their proper perspective; guided and directed, perhaps, by an excessive regard for that individual's inestimable viewpoints that remains ignorant or unaware, however, of their underlying designs (or deficiencies).

• • •

I am generally receptive to arguments that casual attire in the workplace is the first step towards promoting an "undisciplined" working environment reinforced by the perception of relaxed professional standards. Although I firmly agree that professionalism is a function of character rather than appearance, I am equally inclined to support the notion that many individuals (including yours truly) require (some) structure in their lives and that the degree an employee adopts a more casual approach to his or her personal appearance, he or she will likely to adopt similar (laid-back) attitudes as they relate to work; that is to say, that the one arguably feeds off the other. Be that what it may, I would (much) prefer leaving my necktie on the tie rack rather than wrapping it around my neck.

• • •

Western intelligence agencies efforts to surveil and monitor the activities of Islamic terrorist operations have been compromised, in part, by democratic restrictions that otherwise provide certain (tactical) advantages to terrorist groups indifferent to the principles of rule of law. Unless America and other Western European nations are willing to level the playing field by conceding a portion of its (civil) liberties and placing national security and (public) safety ahead of the "unalienable" rights of (private) individuals, the Free World could conceivably wind up with neither!

• • •

Sorrow is oftentimes a necessary burden that helps to preserve the quality of being Human.

• • •

An individual should remain on guard against internal inventions whose inestimable patterns are oftentimes (inconveniently) projected upon others.

• • •

Immaturity is not (necessarily) a function of age but a by-product, rather, of an under-developed mind that hasn't fully ripened. Immaturity, however, should not be confused with Innocence; that is to say, an individual impervious to wicked designs; virtuous and childlike in manner; whose artless qualities haven't been compromised by age or external designs, for that matter.

• • •

Vast oceans no longer seem to provide adequate barriers against our nation's ideological enemies, opponents of Western Traditions, who, for a variety of reasons, most of them irrational, have been able to penetrate our borders without bother and establish bases of operations or cells in our own backyard.

• • •

Television producers of situational "comedies," apart from exceeding the appropriate limits of decorum and (good) taste, are openly challenging the conventions of core (family) values as evidenced by its cynical contempt for traditional arrangements while passing it off as comedy.

• • •

The House of Representatives recently voted down term limits despite high (80 percent) public approval ratings favoring its passage. So much for the "Contract with America!". What was it that I said about once assuming power?

• • •

Isn't it ironic that, two generations following European Decolonization, the descendents of families who were mistreated, abused and exploited for economic profit (and) after having waged hard-fought battles to expel their former "adversaries" from their home land, are now seeking "political asylum" and/or economic opportunities in the "mother nations" of their erstwhile "imperialistic" exploiters.

• • •

I anticipate that "Intellectual Conservatism" will soon encounter a number of populist or grassroots challenges in the coming years. I am referring to "Blue-Collar" Democrats, many of whom seem ripe for the picking but (will) still require courting by Conservatives sharing the same social and cultural values rather than wooed by the prospect of a tax reduction that remains the Republican Party's strongest suit.

• • •

The unreflective opinions of the "common man" remain the distinguishing features of our (great) republic.

• • •

High Achievement is the result of hard work and (exceptional) effort, a product of the choices we make, or don't make, for that matter; not of group expressions; within groups, (however), there must necessarily emerge exceptional talents exceeding the normative standards of each group. Such achievements, however, should be cultivated in an intellectually purposeful environment that encourages rather than represses imaginative and creative designs.

• • •

Wisdom is rooted in the Ages, the Origin of all (purposeful) knowledge and Experience.

• • •

Comparative impressions and effects, however constant or variable or however subtle their impressions, cannot, by their uniquely perceived status, be properly understood by their presumptive credentials or possess equal value.

• • •

Yesterday afternoon the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was bombed by what government officials believe was the work of a domestic terrorist organization. The extent of the damage and loss of lives has yet to be determined although preliminary estimates place the death toll at around twenty. Although no group has officially claimed responsibility for the bombing, it is certain that Conservatives will likely take some heat from the liberal community anxious to score political points over this horrific event by (alleged) right-wing fanatics. (Guilt by Association.) What is certain, however, is that once the smoke clears, the Clinton Administration, whose record on Terrorism has been soft to begin with, will walk away from this tragedy unscathed.

• • •

The family is the basic societal unit that provides structure and meaning, character and substance to (a) society. Families, however, do not exist in a (social) vacuum. They require the mutual support and interaction of its churches, schools and other (community) organizations to (properly) reinforce that society's customary values necessary for the functioning of a well-ordered society.

• • •

What has been traditionally understood as protecting minority rights and equal protection under the law, as outlined in our Constitution, has taken on an entirely different meaning. Modern (judicial) interpretations are likely to promote the cause(s) of imaginary victims considered entitled to compensatory rights and special privileges based on historical grievances and "disparate" results; superseding a rewards-based system predicated on the exceptional achievements of Individuals.

• • •

The aforementioned bombing has been traced to (former) members of a right-wing militia group from Michigan. This is precisely what Liberals were hoping for! Here it comes: "root cause" diatribes about the odious intolerance of Conservatives...and Republicans, that, to a news media handicapped by political blinders, will be perceived as "Guilty by Association."

• • •

Dear Alfonso - (Alfonso Zangardi) April 24th 1995

Your question on Saturday, how does an individual reconcile the Reincarnation of Jesus Christ with diverse Peoples and Cultures who knew or knew Him not, far exceeds my capacity to explain although I would like to give it a try. The Scriptures inform us that the Word preceded the Creation and that the "Word was Good". Therefore, it must necessarily follow that Humankind, at whatever stage of its spiritual development, was already predisposed to its eternal "meaning" although its (ultimate) purpose may not have been critically apparent to most; that is to say, moved by the Word or Holy Spirit, prior to the moment Humankind began giving pause to gods or God in whatever primitive or formal manner. The underlying premise of the Word preceding Creation, I believe, is fundamental to Christian Theology; otherwise, we would all be left with an uncertain notion that everything that is good, decent and worth pursuing is the arbitrary by-product of good intentions rooted in customs and manners rather than inspired by the Word of God. Isn't it peculiar how even non-believers or skeptics, neither of whom are properly initiated in the manner of God and religious thinking, are oftentimes troubled by their conscience(s) in the way it checks or limits their behavior; a conscience that instructs that individual in the manner of right and wrong and good and evil? I don't believe that this phenomenon is entirely owing to chance. The Word or the Holy Spirit is perhaps the least understood "Person" in the Holy Trinity however much He works within us. Nevertheless, it was the Word, the Holy Spirit, if you will, that, preceding the coming of Christ, inspired "Christian" Attitudes, on some level at least, among the more "civilized" cultures. Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise or Word, first to the Jew (who rejected Him) followed by the Gentile through Paul's ministry and afterwards to all Peoples and Cultures through the efforts of His Universal Ministry. It has been often said that there are many roads leading to Heaven. Perhaps non-believers and skeptics alike, inspired by the Word, albeit unknowingly, who have followed the examples of Christ's Teachings in a "non-religious" manner, may likely achieve eternal salvation through their own "good" works" inspired by teachings many summarily "reject." (As Doctrinal Christians of course, the inherent limitation of good works is correctly understood; that salvation is obtained through Grace alone.) Perhaps the Word, in whatever manner it is applied, provided that it is in keeping with its Spirit, will ultimately reconcile us all to Christ.

My Love to all

Alipio

• • •

Charity and Compassion, Memory and Reason, Language and Custom, among many other (human) qualities and characteristics, are what separate Humankind from lower forms of life. The above represent a sampling of the essential characteristics that typically define what is meant by "being" (human). It is Humankind's inherent capacity for being (human) that allows an individual to distinguish between right and wrong, for example, although that individual may oftentimes behave in a manner contrary to his or her (own) better judgment. (Why do we do the things we do when we understand (beforehand) that it is wrong to do them?) I believe that many of us are oftentimes "victims" of our own internal designs; adopting behavioral attitudes contrary to our discriminating nature(s) that fail to give proper pause to their origin, "the (cause) of their origin, its history, its qualities and attributes and its results and effects". (G.I. Gurdjieff); that is to say the how and the why we (often) behave the way we do.

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..... promoting misleading arguments rather than applying correct reasoning which should flow naturally from (our) intuitive understanding of (basic) human designs, respecting (all) people in (all) their various forms and aspects.....

• • •

The gradual erosion of a society's moral standing is not always apparent. Morality cannot be measured as one would a person's height or weight. It isn't visible to the naked eye. Morality, or Immorality, for that matter, is understood intuitively, implied beyond its outward expressions. An awareness of proper or improper behavior requires insight into the essential nature of things or ideas that otherwise inform our judgments. The eye often perceives uncertain or questionable forms of behavior at their face value, "observing," for example, an attitude, that, may appear charming and pleasant on the surface while in fact concealing a darker, insidious nature; that is to say, external impressions are oftentimes misleading. Therefore, can any of us ascertain, without qualification, that the manner an individual behaves is either moral or immoral without properly assessing that individual's underlying assumptions or conditions without compromising our (own) judgment? Insight into "things", as indicated above, requires that an individual be cognizant of the internal factors that correctly define the quality of his or her actions; that such qualities "unseen" are nevertheless as real as Character, Decency or Virtuosity, or their opposites, that become readily apparent to an inquiring mind.

• • •

Americans have been generally receptive to new ideas however many of them have been (sometimes) slow to embrace them. Its (deliberate) manner, that oftentimes tests the limits of its collective tolerance, can be traced to its traditional support of liberty and acceptance, within reasonable limits, of comparative viewpoints and expressions however controversial or unpopular to some. Operating in a free and open environment has historically encouraged Americans to consider the merit(s) and values of competing arguments by weighing the credibility of each in a manner that allows an individual to form accurate impressions and render sound judgments. When a society begins to lose its moral compass or becomes less critical of questionable points of views or unseemly behavior that diminishes an individual's intellectual and moral character, however, and when principled and far-sighted judgments(s) become increasingly muddled and uncertain and when that society fails to exercise reasonable discretion by indiscriminately embracing every hare-brained idea for tolerance sake or taking every (novel) proposition at its face value without giving serious thought to the matter and when an individual, lest he or she be perceived as close-minded or confrontational, remains on the sidelines as a casual observer rather than an active participant, such actions or inactions, whatever the case may be, must inevitably usher the moral and intellectual decline of that society.

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Mature relationships should be balanced by the essential requirements or needs of both parties involved.

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The requirements of job security and salary are inversely determined by age.

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Leadership, whether it is sought or thrust upon an individual, should balance the requirements of Duty and Ambition lest it promotes Corruption.

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Eternal or (Universal) Law is the final arbiter between Good and Evil. Humankind's intuitive understanding of the Law(s), informed by Conscience, does not entirely eliminate our doubt(s), however. Perhaps this partially explains why many of us are subject to Despair. An inquiring mind is always seeking higher counsel, answers to eschatological questions. Such laws often provide practical and spiritual guidelines that an individual may freely choose to accept or reject in proportion to his or her beliefs. The skeptic or nonbeliever, on the other hand, is likely to repudiate the divine "promises" of timeless standards; that is to say, of rewards and punishments, in favor of transitory principles lacking (eternal) assurances and meaning. The absence of spiritual references and indifference to Divine Law has hastened an (uncertain) moral relativism of dubious value.

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Learning informs an inquisitive mind by shaping unformed thoughts and opinions and providing form and substance to ideas while reconciling the diametrical dynamics of intellect and passion.

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Transcending the boundaries of (human) experience lies a dimension consisting of hidden truths whose meaning(s) extend far beyond the perceptual limits of an individual's (conscious) awareness. Such truths are faintly gleaned however "objectively" real in whatever manner they may (otherwise) lack "material" certainty that is not immediately apparent however properly informs an inquiring mind through the Intercession of Faith while fortifying the confidence level of (Intuitive) Reasoning.

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Poverty is not a permanent condition artificially conceived by conventional currents as many Liberals might otherwise argue. (On

second thought, however!) Their egregious ignorance of its transient nature and uncertain classifications often serve to persuade the misinformed and other well-meaning individuals to support (socialist) custodial policies that do little, if anything, to relieve its harmful effects. Capitalism, when unregulated and properly tuned, is designed to promote upward social and economic mobility along a broadly defined cross section of individuals and groups. Its (historical) track record has (especially) produced the highest margins among the lowest socio/economic groups in proportion to other income classes that are more financially secure. Despite its occasional shortcomings, (no system is perfect), Capitalism, especially in America, continues to provide the greatest benefits to the greatest numbers in a manner unparalleled in recorded history. Comparative exceptions owing to proportional differences in Character, Talent, Habit(s) and Motivation, however, are likely to produce a variety of (“disparate”) results. Such does not negate, however, its (overall) salutary impact on society. Certain groups in recent generations, however, have been hampered, for political and social reasons, perhaps, by bureaucratic “visionaries” whose (utopic) imaginations and impractical zeal for alternative (economic) reforms have repeatedly impeded economic progress, if not encouraged underachievement.

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Our perceptions are oftentimes unreliable, predisposed to conditioning and experience that undermines an individual’s ability to see and think clearly.

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What is not freely given is not worth giving...or having.

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The American People have historically supported the argument that in the event of a national or catastrophic emergency, the Office of the Presidency should be vested with unusual or extraordinary powers or, in time of war, (“unlimited”) wartime powers, in order to facilitate effective leadership unencumbered by political (party) partisanship. Such powers including, but not limited to, (temporary) wage and price controls, rationing, production quotas, extra-legal surveillances and curfews, limit, to some extent, a society’s freedoms. These draconian measures, however unpleasant, are sometimes required in order to get the nation back on track. President Lincoln, for example, limited Free Press, threatened to incarcerate Pro-Southern sympathizers in the Maryland Assembly and suspended Habeas Corpus during our nation’s Civil War. Although he wasn’t president at the time, General Andrew Jackson declared Martial Law in New Orleans after a number of its prominent citizens were preparing to negotiate a separate peace with the British. (“The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved”) In the absence of political consensus, common in Republican Democracies, a certain degree of latitude and discretion should be extended to our nation’s leaders with appropriate checklists in place.

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The alarming increase in anti-social behavior, especially in our inner cities, is, by every historical standard, unprecedented. Arguments exploiting “root causes” by advancing false notions based on questionable economic assumptions, rather than devolving moral standards, have gradually promoted our society’s collective disregard for human life while providing little if any credible solutions to this problem. Abortion, for example, has not only diminished us as a society, but undermined the very notion of our Humanity; that “life is cheap”! The conditioned qualities defining sympathy and compassion, charity and kindness have been marginalized; reduced to propositional afterthoughts. The banishing of prayer in the classroom and religious censorship in general are other examples that have engendered a moral and spiritual vacuum; especially among the middle classes. The nation’s (public) school system, in keeping with its own socialist agenda aimed at undermining parental authority; has purposely encouraged self-centered attitudes extending beyond the limits of conventional tolerance. Its emphasis on sterile, uniform “teaching” methods designed to promote “esteem” rather than learning, has further undermined an educational-based value system and moral character by providing “sustenance” to a growing number of mechanized, unthinking boys and girls overcome by their own (perceived) importance. Violence and outrage have increased considerably among socially and morally alienated young men and woman whose manners have seemingly lost all sense of proportion.

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In a society where youth is de rigueur and old age a nuisance, such (calloused) indifference is seemingly consistent with a society that has lost touch with its venerable customs. We have reached a stage in our “evolution” where, as a society, we are no longer willing or able to (either) appreciate or acknowledge the legitimacy of anything or any idea extending beyond our own immediate interests thereby engendering a Ptolemaic mindset where Man has become the center of his own universe.

• • •

Central Authority increases in proportion to a society’s Aggregate Demands. That is to say, authority is often conferred as a quid pro quo in exchange for (public) favors. A society that has grown comfortable with largess may consider private enterprise a threat to popular dependence. Individuals who have grown accustomed to such “favors”, let’s refer to them as tributes, will often take a rather dim view of exceptional or enterprising talents conveniently perceived as the personification of “greed” incarnate; mobilizing, for their own personal “needs”, resources that might otherwise serve the interests of people truly in need of assistance at the expense of other individuals who would rather manage their own affairs. This symbiotic arrangement has worked out quite conveniently for the appointed guardians of the “underdog” entrusted with their “welfare”. Isn’t it any wonder that the politics of victimization has often been the calling card of the governing rather than the “governed”? The more “victims,” the more power invested in those who govern. The key to retaining political power, of course, is to replenish the political caldrons of potential victims or those in “need”. To its

credit, Big Government can be very creative when it chooses to be. That it would employ its creative efforts in fulfilling its intended promise(s) by encouraging productive and self-reliant attitudes rather than government dependency, such endeavors would go a long way in achieving a (morally) wholesome, more vibrant society.

Chapter 2

Road to Damascus 1995 - 2001

Ayn Rand's Philosophy of Objectivism constitutes a cynical rejection of Altruism. Its (hardened) principles are based on the assumption that "existence exists", operating independently of "consciousness" and that the decisions that an individual often makes are based on Reason, (alone); that is to say, Reason is our (only) "proper guide to action". In this manner, the love an individual expresses for another individual is conditioned by self-interest and that the underlying motives behind every kindly and selfless act conceals an (inner) need or emotional requirement that an individual seeks to fulfill. Following this line of reasoning, a practicing Christian, for example, may perform charitable works for the sake of his or her (own) Salvation (counting in his or her favor) or a mother may selflessly place her (own) life in danger in order to save the life of her child whose absence would (otherwise) render that mother's life meaningless and without purpose. In the case of the Christian, (the) fear of eternal damnation is the underlying factor that informs his or her decision; the mother, an intolerable existence without her child. Another example is a philanthropist, or "good deed doer", who seeks admiration from his or her fellows; who therefore engages in charitable activities in order to enhance his or her reputation or popular credentials as a reliable advocate of worthy causes. The list is endless. In other words, no loving or kindly deed is performed for the sake of the "beloved". Rand's theory seems plausible enough on the surface. Most of us are conditioned, on some level, by the need to love and to return love in (proper measure). In this manner, every selfless act may be perceived as the outcome of conditioned designs motivated by a (reciprocal) rewards system that returns love for love. Rand's cold-blooded philosophy, however, fails to factor the spiritual dimensions that (also) inform our actions...perhaps more so... extending beyond the internal limits of our "calculated" thoughts and emotions. Her theory is intellectually and morally shallow (because it doesn't probe deeper into the essential nature of "being"), cynical (because of its disclaimer of kindly actions for their own sake), and mean (because of its negative constructions). It does not permit unselfish feelings or affections because such "designs" are perceived as being deeply rooted (or motivated) in the individual (alone). Generosity and Kindness and Compassion for their own sake or for the sake of others we love or care for, have no place in the movement's sterilized environment. It is a philosophy of form without feeling or (spiritual) substance; a philosophy that considers "things" as they "are" in a manner that rejects the notion of God in whose image Humankind was created; endowed with the capacity to freely love one another as God loves His (own) Creation; unconditionally. The self-centeredness embodied in Rand's thinking is a prime example of Individualism carried to an extreme.

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Government's diminishing odor represents the triumph of Structure and Style over Substance.

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Credibility (reflects) Prior Conduct.

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A number of practicing Christians have misinterpreted Christ's meaning ("Ask, and Ye Shall Receive"). His promise was to provide for the Faithful according to their (spiritual) needs rather than their (material) assumptions or desires; that such provisions underscored Questions of Faith. ("If he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?") His (eternal) promises were not intended for this world but markers pledged for the next. ("My Father's House has many mansions")

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Anger, Resentment and Shame are passionate expressions internalized by individuals who habitually rely upon, for a variety of reasons, private or public support without which many would be unable to (properly) get on with their lives. This is especially true in cases where people who require some form of support, whether it is financial, emotional or intellectual, are unable to return such "favors" (or reciprocate in kind). The "weaker", on some (uncertain) level, will often resent the kindly efforts of other individuals perceived to be "stronger", however well intentioned. The unsettling (perception) of being beholden to other people oftentimes engenders troubling notions of an individual's private failings that seeks its own outlet by projecting that individual's sense of frustration (and shame) on his or her "benefactor" whether it be a family member, a close friend or someone more abstract like (the) taxpayer. As such sentiments relate to the latter, the perception that financial support hasn't been freely offered but "coerced", rather, enhances some of the passions indicated above. This is because nobody wants to feel obligated to someone else although some measure of financial assistance is called upon when needed.

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One of the advantages of abbreviated life expectancies is our being able to pass the buck to Posterity for all our thoughtless indiscretions!

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Religious attitudes are private matters that need to be (popularly) reinforced lest a society's gradual indifference to ideas and their

subsequent forms vanquish religious belief altogether thereby creating a spiritual vacuum that Secularists would be all too eager to fill.

• • •

Per Capita Income, however much it has increased among (native) segments of our population, has been barely able to keep pace with the rapid rise in immigration whose recent emigrants are living on the (economic) fringe in unprecedented numbers. Higher fertility rates, common among the poor, exacerbated by lax immigration policies, have strained our nation's productive and material resources beyond their capacity to accommodate even the (basic) material requirements of its working classes. Improperly conceived immigration policies are compromising the quality of life in areas where poverty, congestion, disease, drugs, crime, substandard housing and decaying infrastructures are demoralizing (complex) social and cultural arrangements (and civility) as an alarming number of our citizens are feeling alienated from mainstream conventions that no longer seem to provide any meaning. It's a power keg waiting to explode! Our nation needs to recover its sense of balance while being aware that each additional unit to our society should be prepared to return what it receives in measure. Such thinking is implausible; perhaps, given the rise in social costs exceeding in proportion the exploited wages many of these families oftentimes receive. Equally important, is that our society's customs and traditions be preserved. This is supplementary to our present argument, however.

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What is generally referred to as National Sentiment is a composite of all the essential features (or values) embodied in a society's political and social institutions reflecting the consonant viewpoints embraced by every member of that society as well as its single-minded regard for its traditional customs and practices. Such lofty ideals, however, are theoretical, of course!

• • •

The cornerstone of the American Constitution, upon which its principled assumptions rely, is its judicial system. The rule of law, while providing legitimacy to the executive and legislative designs of government, is (potentially) non-binding unless it continues to inspire the popular belief of its stated mission; to correctly interpret the laws of our land, that it remains politically impartial and impervious to fortune and special interest groups without compromising its sacred trust to the American People lest it strains its credibility beyond repair.

• • •

The Clinton Administration's inept handling of the Bosnian crisis can be best described by its unwillingness to lift the Bosnian arms embargo (lest it encourage further hostilities) thereby preventing that nation from defending itself while its citizens are being ethnically cleansed.

• • •

...assigning (middle-class values)...egalitarian elitists...vitiating...venting...irrelevant and dated...assumptions precluding free choice for their own sake, irrespective of underlying motive(s)...focusing, instead, on problematical assumptions... undermining comparative privileges... renouncing time honored values neither (similarly) oriented or inclined...fortunes acting upon (fundamental) privileges... unique... triumphant... a variety of forms transcending cultural boundaries...however typifying attitudes common to most...experience, confirming private decisions..... not arbitrarily prescribed ...otherwise they are no longer choices...that others who would diminish their value(s)... not to enhance however... discredit its reputation...whose parity lies beyond distinction...wherein lies the status quo...

• • •

A (thoughtful) society mourns its Dead and honors the Living.

• • •

...Social Scientists preconditioned by fixed ideas and flawed assumptions raise conflicting propositions...human experience...one size fits all...

• • •

"Progressive" parents are oftentimes likely to appeal to "reason" rather than exercising proper parental authority whenever a child misbehaves. However well intentioned, this misguided approach to child rearing is characteristic of modern attitudes where level playing fields often encounter parents behaving (or reacting) like friends rather than parents. A child requires appropriate developmental guidelines that reinforces an underlying awareness of what is right and wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not; that he or she will one day be accountable not only for themselves but to other people as well. In order words, children have to be socialized. Balance is required, however. A child should be properly commended as well as disciplined whenever either situation calls for it. This system of rewards and punishment should not be arbitrary but applied in a consistent manner, rather, on the basis of acceptable standards of behavior. Some parents, I feel, place too much emphasis on wanting to be "liked" rather than running the risk of alienating their children's affections. In any well-adjusted environment, however, liking and loving will generally take care of themselves. Placing parent and child on an equal footing will inevitably work against the parent who must otherwise come down to the level of a child; who, unseasoned, is often unable to render sound judgments or make the right decisions at the right time. (This isn't T.V. Land) Excessively indulging a child's every fancy and whim must further weaken a parent's standing as a teacher and proper role model. A child may arguably reason within the limits of his or her experience or competence. To presuppose, however, that parents

and children should operate on the same developmental plane undermines the notion of comparative stages of emotional and intellectual development. All this notwithstanding that love/liking and respect necessarily walk hand in hand.

• • •

Nature does not distribute its bounty equally. We are all distinguished and/or limited by (the) essential designs conferred upon us by “Chance” or according to God’s Will; (whichever you prefer). To assist Humankind in managing its inherent shortcomings, however, Nature or (God), (whichever you prefer), has endowed each of us, to a greater or lesser extent, with the capacity to think critically, to form opinions and render sound judgments, especially in matters relating to right and wrong. The decisions that we make are oftentimes informed by our conscience or custom; (whichever you prefer), that seldom fails an inquiring mind. At whatever (intellectual) level we are operating at, most of us have the ability to think and to reason clearly and to give proper pause to the consequences of our decisions; unless such processes have been either undermined by mental illness or moral corruption; that is to say, a nature that has either been or corrupted itself. In other words, every one of us possesses an innate capacity to make the right decisions.

• • •

The purpose behind jails is to 1) incarcerate criminal offenders and 2) (hopefully) rehabilitate them. The former should be quick and certain while the latter, I suppose, is problematical. Although society’s ultimate goal should be, wherever possible, the rehabilitation of its hardened citizens; and allowing that a rehabilitated, productive citizen must necessarily accrue to the mutual advantage of that society and that polite and polished manners otherwise enhance the quality of life or, if not for humane reasons only, its immediate objective should be maintaining the safety and security of its law-abiding citizens by keeping them out of harm’s way. Such should remain its preemptive course.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Victims of violent crimes, however, are oftentimes reduced to afterthoughts; their demands for justice subordinated to the custodial designs of remedial entrepreneurs.

• • •

Knowledge, it seems, is no longer valued for its own sake. A book must serve some “useful” purpose or otherwise it is no longer considered worthwhile reading. Learning has become specialized (or functional) and “mercenary”, that is to say, subject to its own pecuniary measures while scholastic discipline and achievement have devolved into erudite dinosaurs, assigned to the historical dustbin, if you will, with some notable exceptions; inquiring minds who value knowledge for its own sake because of its redeeming qualities.

• • •

Natural Law, as prescribed by our Creator, affirms the Equality of Humankind within the Eternal Order of Things. Natural Law, while consonant with this essential quality or Equality of “Being”, does not recognize equal capacities or talents. “To whom much is given, much is expected”, however circumstantial. It (naturally) follows that the less gifted should (otherwise) entrust their confidence to individuals who are better informed or suited to sustain or encourage them and that the beneficiaries of such gifts should never breach their sacred trust as it relates to their fellows, whatever their (social) position or rank, as emissaries of God’s Kingdom and therefore equal in His Eyes, whatever their (inherent) differences.

• • •

Addendum to the above: We all possess special or unique talents, to a greater or lesser degree, that, as Christians, we are duty bound to share with others by setting ourselves up as proper role models.

• • •

Society’s are formed by majority consent joined together by common laws established by popular customs to ensure the safety of person and property without special consideration to an individual’s social or economic standing and that inalienable (human) rights be protected with especial provisions provided for the sick, elderly or disabled who, for a variety of reasons, are oftentimes unable to fend the arbitrary designs of the strong who would likely seek to enhance their reputations or good fortunes at the expense of that society’s (weaker) elements who must otherwise seek the protection of the law in order to ensure that they (too) are being treated justly.

• • •

Uncertainty is the mother of Anxiety.

• • •

Polite conversations, in whatever manner subject to opposing viewpoints, should never soften its principle assumptions that otherwise provide sustenance and meaning to one’s convictions; that is to say, that lays the moral and intellectual foundation(s) that (otherwise) strengthen an opinion.

• • •

Man is equal before the eyes of God although not equally honored among his fellows. Such (formalized) distinctions must be either earned through one's own (determined) efforts or allotted by Flattery.

• • •

Where Reason fails to solve the question, the question must be commended to Experience.

• • •

Reason defines and limits our Passionate tendencies.

• • •

Institutional reforms designed to supercede traditional conventions...social agendas...open (yet) hidden...inviting free and open discussion...encouraging opposing points of view...(yet) whose cunning deceptions...mask a cleverly crafted bias not uncommon among those seeking to upset the traditional order of things...diverting the attention of the gullible and unwary, the young and the restless whose (own) expressions...unformed and uncertain...seeking novelty in novel ideas and fashionable trends...(yet)...without definite purpose or ... meaning....superseding established customs that have grown tiresome and weary...especially among the young...confusing conventional propositions with modernistic assumptions...tireless interpretations...lost in the affected dynamics and idiosyncrasies of a new social order...where traditional premises are deemed inconsonant with the prescriptions of modern conventional wisdoms leaving experience and history in its wake...while achieving apparent legitimacy...have become common and vulgar and unremarkable in their own manner...setting aside traditional references...occasioning (yet) another ideological crack in the proverbial dam.

• • •

Life is too short in proportion to one's reluctance to part with it.

• • •

Board games, like Monopoly, for example, provide a fairly accurate barometer of a person's willingness to assume (calculated) risks in his or her (own) everyday life. They also reflect, I believe, a person's judgment, intelligence and common sense. There is an element of luck involved but the same is equally true of life. Games of this sort are also indicative of an individual's personality i.e. Passive/Aggressive.

• • •

Although international treaties and alliances are of vital importance to the security of any nation, they must neither compromise a nation's sovereignty nor permit conflicting (national) interests to undermine that nation's purposeful designs unless intended to promote harm to other (peaceful) nations. A nation's autonomy, whatever its global standing, should be respected within reasonable limits or otherwise it will ultimately devolve into a "kept" nation, autonomous in name only. Nevertheless, common interests should be brought together whenever possible, for such endeavors provide the necessary ingredients for peaceful coexistence.

• • •

Fatalistic viewpoints deplete the Will of the essential spiritual ingredients needed to live a rewarding and meaningful life, of the courage needed in making correct decisions and in helping an individual overcome his or her perceived failings. Courage promotes Hope that sustains our everyday lives. It is our underlying Faith in God and in ourselves that makes the seemingly impossible, possible.

• • •

A political leader, in order to properly fulfill the Oath of Office, must balance popular opinion with an "effective" conscience.

• • •

In times of national crisis, political leadership must oftentimes exercise informed judgment over the unconsidered demands of the people.

• • •

Laws that are improperly enforced are vapid and unmanly and should be unceremoniously repealed! .

• • •

One of the more common deceptions is apportioning influence, token trinkets tendered by political demagogues to appease unruly factions, a not so unique twentieth century "phenomenon".

• • •

Cultural Pluralism is a necessary ingredient for any thriving society that would otherwise grow intellectually and morally flaccid and stale. A variety of traditions oftentimes inject novel ideas essential to its moral and spiritual vitality by allowing that society to draw upon the ingenuity and wellspring of its talented citizens. Multiculturalism, in the manner it has evolved in recent years, however, has encouraged indigenous habits common among certain groups which seem to be pulling the nation in opposite directions. Instead of

offering something of value, the overriding tendency is to take. This opinion is not intended to refute in any manner the remarkable contributions to our society by the many individuals who continue to emigrate to our shores every year. There is some concern, however, over the growing number of individuals whose ethno-centrism has seemingly displaced the traditional patterns that made America a truly diverse nation. We, as a people, have, on a very disturbing level, grown increasingly less “diverse” in spite of our presumed diversity. More so, are we gradually disclaiming private initiative and achievement and, subsequently, variety for “diversity’s” sake.

• • •

Liberty suggests the freedom to think and behave in a manner consistent with and tempered by customary restraints or limits that inevitably weigh the consequences of causal effects.

• • •

Equality implies a condition of “Being” rather than an individual’s social or material standing although it permits every individual the essential right to pursue potential opportunities that will (hopefully) improve that individual’s station in life in whatever manner influenced by environmental factors or inherent designs.

• • •

Equality, as understood in worldly terms, is a product of opportunity and intended designs.

• • •

The “American Dream”, whose foundations lay on sound education, hard work ethic and diligence, self-reliance and thrift...a traditional workforce resilient and proud, confident and (once) secure...now foreboding grave misgivings about Corporate America’s enduring commitment to its employees.... competitive market environments, streamlining and downsizing...re-locations, re-engineering and re-structuring, mergers and acquisitions...flowcharts and layoffs, globalism, cheaper labor and diminishing prospects...have engendered uncertain working environments in recent years while lowering expectations...habits are hard to break...no longer able to support accustomed standards of living...

• • •

Reality is a remarkable expression of unanimous perceptions however unlikely.

• • •

Fidel Castro is coming to town! This poorly stylized villain, who for years has fed off the (romanticized) illusions conjured up by left-leaning individuals, will undoubtedly receive a warm reception in some quarters by disaffected groups whose alienated affections for this great nation have grown naturally disposed toward honoring every ideological enemy of America as some visionary liberator in their incorrectly perceived fight for “freedom.” (He who is an enemy of America is a friend of ours.)

• • •

What’s become of letter writing? Individuals are more likely nowadays to correspond through the internet rather than paper and pen. Such is the inevitable outcome, I suppose, of the faster paced environment in which we live. Although I don’t question the advantages of time; nevertheless, I can’t help feeling that our “personal” interactions have been compromised somehow; have become less intimate and perhaps less cordial operating in an environment where the “letter” writer has become a quasi extension of the apparatus it utilizes to compose its “letters”; such mediums of thoughts and emotions flowing together, whose spontaneity no longer provides sufficient time to assimilate what’s been written. It’s hard to explain, really. There was once (and still is) something special about receiving a letter from someone, especially from someone dear to us. Perhaps what makes letter writing so special is the perception of time and effort spent in writing it. Perhaps it’s the rarity of receiving them that makes us value them all the more; anticipating some favorable or direful tidings; giving pause to its contents; (should I open it now or later) or the tears of joy or sadness once the letter has been read. The (traditional) remoteness between writer and reader brought us closer together. We would read and reread that letter over and over again, savoring that special moment, embracing every word because who could say when we might expect another? Nowadays, everyone is an e-mail away in a world that seems to be growing smaller and smaller. Anyway, I’ve always enjoyed letter writing and receiving them from family and friends. Call me old-fashioned but I still enjoy receiving a letter and the anticipation of whatever news it might bring.

• • •

I have often wondered whether any creative project, whether it be a work of art, literature or music is expressed for its own sake or for the sake of its creator. When Thomas Paine, for example, authored The Rights of Man, did this self-styled libertine pen it in order to lend legitimacy to his own wastrel habits or out of some genuine, abstract concern for the “common man?” I am being unduly critical, perhaps.

• • •

The “Party of Lincoln” has been in a quandary in recent years over alternate strategies for attracting the African American Voter without seemingly compromising “traditional” Republican Party Principles. I am not certain that they do, however, although Democrats have certainly won, with little opposition from Republicans, the Battle of Ideas. I believe that most families in the African

American Community share the same traditional values with most mainstream Republicans and Conservatives however “marginalized” by Democratic Party Rhetoric. The Community has been held hostage by the custodial promises of Big Government whose convincing arguments have superceded the enterprising values and ideas that many of them would otherwise find appealing, if not economically rewarding, were they not held politically captive by their tempting designs. Purchasing group loyalties is not without precedent. It is a politically costly endeavor, however, when the guarantor is unable to deliver its promises save the promises, themselves. For the growing number of African Americans who are prospering economically, incidental to government programs and more in keeping with their own private initiatives, innumerable others continue languishing economically and socially. A jaunt through our inner cities will testify to that! The best-laid plans of “mice and men” are achieved through their own determined efforts. This is the message Republicans should be sending; rather than engaging in awkward, half-hearted overtures that are oftentimes perceived as transparent and insincere. Whether Black or White, we all share the same values, desire the same things; a proper education for our children, job opportunities and a friendly neighborhood environment for our families. We all naturally embrace what is good and decent while rejecting harmful “things”. The Republican message should center on opportunity, values, self-determination and (human) dignity. The alternative is being held captive by rhetorical promises.

• • •

Passions can only be tamed, never subdued!

• • •

The greater the struggle, the greater the reward(s).

• • •

Misery does not love company, per se, but Commiseration, rather!

• • •

The dinner table is the cornerstone of a closely-knit family.

• • •

Christian Humanism...predicated upon (an) unqualified faith in Humankind’s central importance (and) unlimited potential for (“self”) improvement (thereby) rendering Christ’s sacrifice, “unnecessary and unintelligible”....sustained...by a liberally “progressive” interpretation of the Scriptures...the freedom to understand “things” and behave in one’s own way...without “prejudice” ...superseding Faith with Conscience...“open-minded” ...“unassuming” and “nondiscriminatory”...modern propositions and neo-translations...falsely assuming scriptural elasticity...affected authority...worldly designs...variable, foolish, vain and...uncertain...

• • •

Each of us is characterized by our own (conditioned) habits, however good or bad. Some habits like brushing our teeth, buckling-up our seat belts or arriving to work on time, are considered good or salutary habits whereas using drugs, smoking or drinking to excess are considered destructive habits. Many of the (constructive) habits we (normally) adopt are not inborn; that is to say, performed “automatically,” but are conditioned or reinforced, rather, by social customs and practices essential to form. These habits are considered healthy and normal. Destructive or undesirable habits, on the other hand, are conditioned by questionable examples that are often difficult to break because many do not conform to “normal” behavioral patterns. Such habits are “individualistic”; that is to say, that provide style or “personality” to an individual or otherwise stamps that individual’s Character. In order to break bad habits, an individual needs to return unseemly habits back to the “realm of consciousness and regain the ability to make (constructive) choices.”

• • •

The Ancients appreciated the (essential) value of balance and proportion and the limits of material consumption...the consonant development of Man’s Inner Being.....moderation, not excess...the confluence of Mind and Body that sustains the “Whole”of religious and philosophical forms strengthening the soul...

• • •

...should never be recklessly pursued...mindful of its (potential) effects...insatiable consumption... a strain on the community.....taxing the endurance of limited resources.... balance and moderation...in the pursuit of the “good” things in life....

• • •

Individuals lacking (the) capacity to (naturally) charm or amuse their fellows often adopt, unintentionally, perhaps, the crudest manner(s) of obnoxious behavior.

• • •

(God’s) Natural Law affirming Humankind’s fundamental Equality has been undermined by Ambitious Designs.

• • •

.....following its own purposeful ambitions without regarding inalienable rights predicated on eternal assumptions.....consensual agreements and traditional arrangements weakened by privilege, contrary to..... (relative) standings....

• • •

Modernist classifications of mental “disorders,” superseding more traditionally restrictive definitions, embodying a broader variety of “aberrant” or unusual forms of behavior, provides a margin of freedom in interpreting “sociopathic” or “anti-social” forms of behavior otherwise considered offensive to conventional customs and manners. Social “improprieties” (I am being generous) are oftentimes conveniently sidestepped or (casually) dismissed by “social-minded” reformers who, eager for “root” causes, worsen matters by making (implausible) excuses like “social disease” or introducing psycho-babble into the equation rather than holding these tiresome individuals responsible for their actions. We seem to be caught in a network of “underlying” causes that disclaim (a) more sensible approach to the problem like censorship or a (proper) “spanking,” perhaps. It seems we are always on the look out for extenuating circumstances disproportionate to (the) codes of proper behavior. Such are the (ultimate) side-effects of a guilt-ridden society that develops a collective tolerance for undesirable forms of behavior that, in more sensible times, its citizens would have otherwise considered inappropriate. We often provide safety nets designed to excuse rather than formerly decry base or unbecoming behavior whose pervasiveness must inevitably weaken the moral imperatives of a well-ordered society. Modern conventions have apparently lost its (reasoned) capacity to appreciate, at their face value, the (potential) pitfalls of unbecoming attitudes although (seemingly) encouraging the flaunting of anti-social behavior that is typically provided refuge in recently minted (psychogenic) disorders.

• • •

.....existing however unknown to Humankind which has yet to achieve its highest level of (conscious) awareness because of its spiritual and intuitive limitations, “understanding” what seems “apparent” however mistaking its essential elements that remain hidden from (us) although existing within (us).....

• • •

Woman is truly Nature’s “Noble Savage;” a wonder to behold, to be worshipped and adored and..... feared; (which amounts to the same thing, I suppose!) however, having renounced her feminine charms and luring appeal in favor of a Feminist Identity that is appealing in its (own) inestimable manner, depending on one’s point of view.

• • •

The Distribution of Wealth by means of redistributive (government) policies must inevitably produce disappointing results. Wealth is variable; that is to say, subject to changing “fortunes.” Wealth (alone) cannot add to itself. Wealth Creation requires a starting point; arguably Capital. (Money begets Money) Wealth Creation also requires enterprising attitudes, a tireless work ethic, self-sacrifice, vision and a little bit of luck, perhaps. Wealth defines its own limits. Wealth is not randomly determined!

• • •

Jury Selection continues to reinforce the notion...raising disturbing questions...as they relate to trial by one’s peers, “impartially” chosen...the selection process...tactical maneuvers.....pro-offering favorable verdicts... pre-conceived outcomes...rules of evidence.....Justice.....secondary to (prejudicial) viewpoints ... superseding...informed decisions...properly arrived at.....

• • •

An inquiring mind is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge; an inquisitive one, to meddling gossip.

• • •

Knowledge and Experience, properly considered, render (sound) Judgment.

• • •

Marginalized communities existing on the (economic) “fringe,” normally consisting of recent emigrants, although many such groups often include native born Americans, who, for a variety of reasons, have been unable to elevate themselves above the “poverty” line, are oftentimes perceived or treated unfairly, as if their present social or economic standing were entirely owing to questionable value structures predisposing many to under achieve. These unfavorable impressions may be overcome in a variety of different ways including: 1) Making themselves less conspicuous by adopting conventional lifestyles and habits i. e. “Mainstreaming” 2) Considering every possibility i. e. “Beating them at their own Game.” 3) Developing positive attitudes by believing in themselves; that is to say, having sufficient faith in one’s self and becoming what he or she expects “to be.” 4) Lastly and most importantly, be passive on the “outside” however active on the “inside.” For the cynically minded, however, I would offer the following: 1) Divert attention from themselves by allowing easier targets to run interference for them. 2) Engage in social and political alliances among “similarly”disaffected” groups i. e. Establish a United Front. 3) Lastly and most importantly, seek government protection!

• • •

Man was created Equal. Unfortunately, not all Men were born Free. Freedom is circumstantial; that is to say, some are born in free societies while others are not; thereby rendering Freedom a by-product of accidental causes. A society’s democratic traditions, or lack thereof, underscores an individual’s identity, although there are no “individuals” proper in lawless societies; that is to say, societies whose putative “laws” lack a moral or politically creditable foundation, but nameless/faceless people, rather, who otherwise proceed

mechanically with their lives. In fact, it may be correctly argued that these aren't societies at all, however dimly perceived masses of people who have adopted a survival instinct rather than learned how to live a meaningful existence; to behave reasonably, within socially defined parameters, in his or her own manner, to pursue his or her (own) interests or to develop his or her (own) underlying potential or render informed judgments in consonant compliance with his or her Conscience. In this manner, there is no such thing as "birthright"...that otherwise implies rights and privileges conferred by Chance...but "accidents of birth", rather, which is one and the same...that allows the (more) fortunate among us to exercise "unalienable" rights and privileges denied to others because some of us, unlike others, may have enjoyed the good fortune of being born in the right place at the right time.

• • •

What our Founding Fathers (properly) understood by the Separation of Church and State was the essential right of every citizen to convene, for religious purposes, in houses of worship; allowing each to (freely) worship his or her God in his or her (own) manner in accordance with his or her (own) private beliefs in conformance with his or her (own) conscience; unencumbered by central authorities; (ever) mindful of the essential role of religion in society, in promoting an individual's moral development without (unduly) seeking to influence that society's formal designs. Many of them sought to instill the highest moral and ethical standards in its citizens reflected by the nation's political and social institutions in a manner consistent with Judeo-Christian principles. They all understood, whatever their religious beliefs, including those who were not religious at all, for that matter, the inestimable value that religious principles imparted on the spiritual vitality of well-ordered society mindful of its eternal origins; and that true Wisdom was destined to achieve its loftiest expression(s) in the highest moral offices that properly instruct the Conscience of Men lest they fall prey to Tyranny or other capricious designs.

• • •

Language has become a forgotten art form. Its "vulgarization" symptomatic of faster paced environments leaving little time for reflection. It has sacrificed its own traditional customs at the altar of fast food literature substituting in its place, unremarkable forms of written expressions.

• • •

Written expressions are not (merely) impartial bystanders indifferent to an author's tireless efforts to create something meaningful or consonant with the author's intended designs; exhausting its own emotional and intellectual energies by sustaining elements of singular merit however dire or tiring such efforts might (otherwise) be.

• • •

Incipient Knowledge represents the budding seeds of Wisdom. Learning pursued half-heartedly or lacking enthusiasm, however, will oftentimes yield unwholesome fruit; casting shadows over substance, engendering unformed assurances and intellectual arrogance by its failure to elevate itself to its highest potential; commending itself to half-measures or incomplete truths that are untrustworthy.

• • •

Underprivileged groups, that is to say, people living in (economically) depressed or impoverished areas, with some (notable) exceptions, have historically committed violent crimes disproportionate to their numbers. Such outcomes are not final consequences or random indictments of any particular member of that group, however. In whatever manner many have been unfairly characterized by virtue of their group identity; the majority of otherwise law-abiding citizens are oftentimes viewed with suspicion because of their ethnicity or the color of their skin or because they are simply poor. Some fears are rational, however. Few of us, acting on our own accord, would be willing to walk (alone) in an unsafe neighborhood at night, including people living in those neighborhoods! Whenever our (social) fears are carried to an extreme, however, many of us will likely look for a convenient target or scapegoat; something or someone who will validate our fears.

• • •

(Macro Level) Excessive (government) spending and higher tax rates negatively impact long-term economic growth by withdrawing (potential) capital from the private to the public sectors. It reduces productivity growth rates by inhibiting innovation and capital formation. Increased (government) spending increases interest rates which decreases private investment. It creates market uncertainties which reduces the return of long-term investments. Higher tax rates reduce incentives for employees to work longer hours or small business owners to expand their operations; that is to say, it reduces participation in the labor force by creating disincentives to work. It makes labor markets more rigid by hampering the efficient flow of workers from declining to expanding industries. It encourages "rent-seekers" to waste resources by currying political favors; thereby distorting (economic) markets, reducing economic growth and undermining the Free Market Ethic. Such are the opinions rendered by the Joint Economic Committee.

• • •

(Micro Level) Excessive (government) spending, especially over the last half century, has instilled unwholesome habits among Americans whatever their social or economic station; individuals who, from whatever walk of life, are unwilling or unable to concede its "entitlements" that many perceive to be a "right of passage," who have grown indifferent, perhaps, to fiscal restraints however often (many) feign their pretended support for balanced budgets on the political battlefields, if not in their parlors. It is easy to support abstract spending initiatives provided such measures do not directly impact an individual's "sacred cows." Our society has reached a point of no return where far too many of us have come to rely on Big Government to foot the bill for our extravagance. Unqualified

tendencies to accept what is “freely” given, once carried to an extreme, becomes a self-filling prophecy; conditioned as many of us have become to living beyond our means, leaving it up to nameless/faceless (taxpayers) to foot the bill. Such are the opinions rendered by Al Baldi.

• • •

Politicians are routinely elected into office on the basis of their (presumptive) promises to deliver the goods, to bring home the bacon, not the elimination, however, of goods and services the public has come to rely upon. In some respects, government assistance has become an extension of our paychecks. Some people may argue that they are merely receiving their proper due; that is to say, receiving in kind what they themselves have already paid into the system. Perhaps, but “reciprocity” as such doesn’t hold water when disbursements consistently outstrip receipts otherwise referred to as Deficit Financing.

• • •

The search for Truth must necessarily extend beyond an individual’s immediate consciousness or sphere of (self) awareness although such is arguably a good starting point. (Know Thyself.) At some critical juncture along this extraordinary journey, however, the traveler will (inevitably) be required to scale the guarded barriers of determined designs intended to protect that individual’s intellectual and moral assumptions. Truth seeks its own inestimable rewards. It avoids convenient or simple solutions to complex questions or easy expressions for hard-nosed assumptions that require testing, at every level; prepared to accept in whatever manner, the pretentious challenges of misleading or presumptive propositions whose attainment is (sufficient) reward in itself.

• • •

Immigration Reform is unlikely to occur anytime soon for the (very) simple reason that such measures designed to quiet the tides of illegal immigration must necessarily conflict with the efforts of corporate lobbyists and their political minions in conjunction with private enterprises that have come to rely heavily on cheaper sources of labor to operate their businesses and who have repeatedly demonstrated their calloused indifference to rules of law and native born working men and women and are willing to operate outside the law if that’s what it takes, at the expense of Native Americans for the “benefit” of Illegal Aliens who are “here” to collect a paycheck if nothing else, who routinely flaunt our nation’s laws while abetting an underground economy injurious to open markets.

• • •

Assumptions by modern revisionists seeking to belie historical traditions, avidly supported by special interests with political axes to grind, however discredited such assumptions oftentimes are, may further promote muddled-headed thinking by ultimately winning the battle of ideas, however questionable their premises, by perpetuating falsehoods that, on the surface, oftentimes appear plausible to variable, “discerning” young minds armed with partial knowledge, but sufficient enough to receive distorted impressions at their face value, rendering many vulnerable to questionable or unlikely propositions that bear little or no resemblance to the truth; advanced by (political and social) deconstructionists alienated from their (hated) customs, offering in exchange, contemporary standards predicated on historical fallacies, deception, inflicted reasoning and ignominious viewpoints.

• • •

Latent aptitudes oftentimes conceal, however invariably reveal, underlying potentials that an individual will (hopefully) develop in his or her (own) good time; provided sufficient encouragement and support; that such emerging currents essential to that individual’s moral and intellectual standing must first discover a suitable outlet for his or her natural expressions.

• • •

The effectiveness of any performance measure is (ultimately) determined by its results, not by its intentions; in which case, an idea would simply be an idea whose (intrinsic) merit(s), if any, would reside in a state of potential animation.

• • •

The federal government’s half-hearted attempt at reducing budget deficits is tantamount to a terminally ill patient disengaging his or her life support system. Which of the two requires the most courage, I wonder?

• • •

Governments do not reduce spending; they may (sometimes) reduce (accelerated) levels of spending understood as “rates of growth.” Attempts at reducing growth rates, however, are oftentimes perceived as spending “cuts” by political party opponents (who otherwise favor more spending) although spending has actually increased, however at a declining rate.

• • •

Discredited Arguments often seek refuge in Ridicule!

• • •

A thoughtful society is understood in the manner it treats its elderly and disabled; whose kindly and compassionate measures will ultimately achieve its (own) loftiest rewards.

• • •

That certain societies encourage thoughtful expression(s) allowing the private concern(s) or interests of an individual to take precedence over their own generic interests should never supersede in whatever manner, however, the critical requirements of those societies.

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Engaging in irrational behavior in an environment that has ceased to be rational or “normal” is considered rational whenever such behavioral patterns either conform or comply with the (otherwise) irrational standards of that environment.

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Whenever I am watching a silent film, I am (often) struck by the economization of dialogue thereby reinforcing the notion that a picture is (indeed) worth a thousand words!

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Security should always take precedence over Rule of Law. Safety first, Freedom second! The former pre-conditions the latter!

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Television, I believe, has assumed the role of surrogate parent for a number of children which is not a very good thing. I believe its (television) automated influence over the impressionable minds of young boys and girls has produced a crippling effect on our children’s imaginations. Many need to step outside their virtual environment and interact more with other children their own age; engaging in recreational activities and “doing” rather than “watching.”

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There was a time not so very long ago when families routinely convened at the diner table to eat and talk about the day’s events. Typical conversations were oftentimes ordinary and uneventful.....unless a daughter announced that she was pregnant, in which case all hell would break loose.....otherwise it fulfilled its (dual) purpose of recharging our nutritional batteries while engaging family members in casual mealtime conversations that brought the family (closer) together as a unit. Among the more traditional households, “formal” arrangements as such were seldom optional; they were expected, rather. Table talk was not always pleasant; it could be confrontational or trying, at times. Nevertheless it provided an opportunity for everyone to sit down and interact; kinda get to know one another better or iron out some of the rough spots. Unfortunately, in today’s faster paced environments, with working parents working longer hours, spouses and their children, alike, have become (virtual) strangers living together under a common roof however alienated on a number of very important levels.

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Dollar Value lacks precise measurement. It’s an artificial invention based on the number of dollars the consumer is willing to spend on goods and services based on its perceived value at some particular point in time. In this manner, a dollar is said to lack intrinsic value or worth. Not unlike other “commodities”, its (“timely”) value is subject to variable supplies and demands; that is to say, its value is generally determined by the perceived impact (variable) monetary and fiscal policies will have on the supply and subsequent demand (for dollar currencies). The volume of currency in circulation, understood as “money supply,” whether in paper dollars in the hands of the consumer or investor or held on deposit by financial institutions or the currency reserves of Federal Reserve Banks or the United States Treasury are indicators that will either stimulate or deflate investor confidence and subsequent consumer spending. Investment and Consumption decisions often receive their cue from the economy. When the value of a dollar has decreased in relation to its (historical) value; that is to say, if a dollar in today’s market will purchase less of a particular commodity than it would have, let’s say, a week ago, the consumer, everything being equal, will either purchase less of that commodity or seek (product) substitutes at a lower cost. The price inelasticity of certain, much needed or desired commodities, such as gas or cigarettes, (for those who have acquired the nasty habit) will often compel the consumer to purchase them at whatever cost. Such commodities could be said to possess an “indispensable” value to the consumer. Such isn’t lost on producers and manufacturers of such commodities or tax extortionists, for that matter, who artificially increase prices on their own accord by simply reducing supply (while increasing profits) because of its negligible impact on consumer demand. Government price supports is a prime example of artificially induced prices, scaling back on the supply of oil by pumping less of it, is another. “Sin” Taxes is yet another. The possibilities are endless so why belabor the point?

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In planned economies, “unlike” our own, foolish or whimsical policy decisions adversely impacting the economy have generally created multiple market disequilibrium’s in which case all hell breaks loose. Wage and Price controls and excessive regulations are prime examples that have produced dire consequences on the open market. Then again, aren’t such Keynesian practices still being routinely championed by legislatures in our own country?

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It remains a mystery to me how the mind is oftentimes influenced by initial impressions. Perhaps it’s because the sudden awareness of something or someone does not provide ample opportunity for (pause) or thoughtful reflection; that is to say, having been taken off guard, it is “reduced” to (merely) observing and/or reacting willy nilly, rather than properly perceiving (and assimilating) new

impressions. Such impressions (or events), for that matter, are more often than not, either circumstantial or incidental to what is (actually) perceived to be their essential characteristics. Initial impressions, however, are not “necessarily” subject to critical thinking. A well-ordered, unbiased mind, properly conditioned, will likely regard such impressions intuitively as well as “factually” rather than accepting them at their face value. Modifying uncritical impression(s) of someone or some idea requires open-mindedness rather than intellectually binding assurances. It also requires a level of (intellectual and moral) honesty allowing an individual to systematically revisit original assumptions formerly thought to be true. Such efforts further require a remaking of one’s (own) Self by discarding ancient prejudices likely to color our impressions. It is not uncommon, however, that many of us are neither able to see nor understand “things” beyond the limits of our conditioned preconceptions; that is to say, beyond our conditioned mode or state of “being.” Our unwillingness to reconsider them as they actual are rather than how they appear to be by testing our (presumptive) assumptions is rooted in intellectual arrogance or fear which are hard to overcome.

• • •

Whether or not “hate crimes” have increased in recent years as a matter of fact or (by definition) is not necessarily a function of diverse impressions, (although they might be) especially when there is nothing of material value to be gained other than the perverse enjoyment derived by inflicting harm on someone considered socially or morally offensive or inferior in some manner or for no other (apparent) reason than someone’s race or ethnicity. Our society has been conditioned to trivialize the “root causes” of violent crimes committed by one race (Black) against another (White) by advancing abstract arguments centering on “institutionalized racism,” although such crimes are oftentimes incidental to race. Such arguments are often advanced to score political points or are simply the by-products of ignorance. There is no question, however, that such perception(s) often provide irrational motives for individuals bent on committing some arbitrarily violent action for its own sake. For such individuals, race is simply a triggering mechanism that justifies (latent) violent behavior. As indicated elsewhere in these pages, many of us seek convenient targets to justify our hatred and fears. What such arguments conveniently overlook, however, is the disparity of intra-community assaults committed against members of some community by members of another community, racial, ethnic or otherwise, in relation to those committed by individuals living inside their (own) community; that is to say, violent crimes are often committed against individuals living within the same community. Such communities have been historically poor. At the turn of the present century, many Whites were similarly threatened by predacious White Gangs living in their own communities. This sociological phenomenon owed more to circumstance rather than bias. That crime rates have increased dramatically over the last forty years doesn’t alter the principled argument that crime is indifferent to race or ethnicity. It may be further argued that the rapid increase in urban crime, quickened in large measure by the gradual departure of (mostly) working and middle-class families to outlying regions, exacerbated the conditions of those who were unable to exercise similar options. Stable neighborhoods, however poor; that is to say, neighborhoods whose residents share a common interest in its overall health and prosperity, have traditionally, as far as may be expected, been able to hold crime reasonably in check. Families residing in traditionally ethnic neighborhoods were often able to acquire, in some measure, the resources required to promote safer neighborhoods. Once opportunities beckoned, however, the more talented or determined among them departed for “greener pastures”, leaving in their wake neighbors and friends lacking similar opportunities for a variety of reasons. Many of those left behind possessed neither the (financial) nor (political) wherewithal to preserve the integrity of their communities. Following this massive withdrawal, a rapid decline in innovative and entrepreneurial attitudes (and moral) purpose become apparent. The alienated poor have seldom felt the need for developing such attitudes. Despair will often do that to people. (Some of my conservative colleagues will undoubtedly take issue with me) Be that as it may, many of those left behind, law-abiding in every respect, were/are destined, it seems, to share a common environment with criminal elements and other (social) misfits who continue to create havoc in their lives, whatever their skin color.

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...each with something meaningful to offer, each providing the (essential) ingredients to meet present requirements, each reflecting wholesome attitudes, each rejecting single-mindednesseach embracing remote influences...in conjunction with their (own) determinant efforts.... each indifferent to intangible sensations vaguely perceived or understood.....each disregarding aggregate notions whose material effect(s) are upsetting or puzzling to (singular) designs....or conditions.... (whose) experience is (correctly) understood within the context of plausible events.... joined with the present..... each summoning propitious visions for the future...

• • •

Specialization in the Workplace...intellectual designs superseding muscle and rote...adaptation (American Worker) ...will become the critical requirement for many...retraining...acquisition of new knowledge and skills...modernization...cost efficiencies...rendering traditional descriptions obsolete...(faster paced environments) the “culprit”...velocity of change unsettling to most...(to the swift go the spoils, however)...especially for those firmly adapted in their ways...adaptively (inelastic)...unlike their younger counterparts... more adaptable to change...(faster paced environments) operating beyond (human) endurance...(Toffler)...witnessing, perhaps...the second coming of the Industrial Revolution...or an extension thereof, perhaps...or substitute Service in its stead...amounts to the same thing...History repeating itself?...anomie, displacement, broken homes, social diseases, political unrest, gradual erosion of moral values...meaningless...hyperbolic...perhaps...in whatever manner...(good) jobs remain the cornerstone of a stable society...provides dignity to the worker...as well as a paycheck...provides leisure (time) to develop sound (moral) values...provides (time) for family and friends...provides (time) to pursue other interests...provides (time) for introspection, (time) to develop into thoughtful human beings...or (time) to do absolutely nothing at all.... however insufficient (time) to promote mischief...Progress...necessary and inevitable...should proceed with caution, however,...lest unfavorable (social) side effects...override its stated (economic) advantages...

• • •

It's no longer a game! The modern athlete, caught up in the whirlwinds of big business and long-term contracts and commercial endorsements, playing up to fans but not for the fans, not really, and highlight reels that burnish self-serving credentials, begs the question, how about the love for the game for its own sake that has (seemingly) become secondary to self-centered attitudes and inflated egos; where gamesmanship has superseded sportsmanship? Bizarre behavior, taunting and jeering an opponent, especially common in higher profile sports, has (sadly) provided the modern athlete with a receptive audience. Such mannerisms that, in a more congenial era, would have been properly frowned upon by a politer society, are now routinely encouraged in today's bread and circus "sporting" environments that "vicariously" indulge an athlete's baser instincts. Have (true) sport legends ever truly existed or were/are they merely figments of our boyish imaginations? Or has our society simply grown more cynical, its own egos requiring its own vicarious outlets? The athletes of my youth, not unlike many of us, were flawed individuals. They weren't altar boys. At least they had dignity enough not to carry their flaws on their sleeves or flaunt them as something to be proud of!

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The increasing demand for skilled labor has gradually rendered (traditional) labor requirements obsolete... hastening the departure of (un)skilled workers... commitment and loyalty no longer the (corporate) virtues they once were... workforce(s) composed of inter-changing parts... expendable in many cases... always have been... time sensitive... constantly changing... faster paced environments... job requirements more broadly defined,intellectual resources... skill specific..... giving rise to... material disparities... technology rapidly progressing.....unable to keep up.... the new quickly superceding the old... in a heart beat!.... challenging... securing plum jobs... transitory... restricted to the ablest and brightest... although not (necessarily)... the American Dream under siege, novel propositions challenging antiquated assumptions... no longer valid...

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The Beast is not a co-partner in Nature with Man. Man was given dominion over nature's bounty including everything that walks on four legs, crawls on its belly, swims in the oceans or flies in the air, to put into use for his own material comfort; responsibly and humanely; neither abusing nor mistreating (God's) creatures entrusted to his care, while administering to his needs.

• • •

Humankind and Beast both share a common characteristic, the Survival Instinct. Of the two, Humankind, above all earthly creatures, is (the) more adaptable to its immediate environment by virtue of its superior intellect and remarkable ability to manage change by utilizing the tools of Reason. Humankind, not unlike the Beast, is guided in part by Instinct. Unlike the Beast, however, Humankind enjoys the singular advantages of native reasoning to promote its survival. The Beast, on the other hand, must rely on its instincts alone in order to ensure that it too survives. A conscious "awareness" extending beyond the "imagined" limits of its immediate environment is questionable, to say the least. The Beast is unable to make provisions for its long-term survival for the simple reason that it lacks the necessary predicates required in making reasonable long-term decisions. In other words, the Beast cannot plan for the future. Its long-term survival is owing entirely to chance or custodial designs. Furthermore, The Beast lacks the intellectual dexterity needed to anticipate, if not directly control, the dynamics of change. Humankind, however, possesses another "remarkable" attribute uncommon to Beast, the capacity to render extinct, members of its own species for reasons (oftentimes) considered dubious at best.

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Whenever the cost of labor becomes prohibitive or (comparably) higher in certain markets in relation to others, most businesses will likely gravitate toward (the) cheaper sources of labor. In modern times, with the exception of importing cheap(er) labor from (Mexico) or migrating to friendlier working environments in (Right to Work States), a growing number of companies are fulfilling their labor requirements by (Outsourcing) abroad. This not so extraordinary phenomenon, that seeks the path of least resistance, does not bode well for America's blue collar workers whose jobs are being systematically eliminated at alarming rates exceeding the market's ability to replace them, if such is its intent, which it is not, I feel. The comparative advantages most companies seek are not unusual in competitive market environments. In fact, everything being equal, (healthy) competition is a necessary requirement for strong, prosperous economies. Supply and Demand cuts both ways, and in most instances will (actually) generate higher salaries for workers in conjunction with their job's specific skill requirements. Everything, however, is not equal and therein lays the rub. The American Worker is likely to face (unfair) competition from overseas markets whose (worker) salary "structures" are anything but competitive or balanced as one might expect in a planned market economy (China) or fledgling, sweatshop economies (Everywhere) whose (native) pay scales, "good" for the native(s), perhaps, whose alternative lies in sleeping on city sidewalks, has given rise to salaries and wages that American blue collar workers could never hope to (viably) compete against. Although I don't object to salary/benefits reductions in principle, (such measures are sometimes necessary in order to keep a company solvent), I nevertheless object to workers being paid \$1 an hour, let's assume for argument sake, for a pair of sneakers selling for \$100 on the American Market. This is beyond the pale. Such practices, prompted by sheer greed rather than (simply) profit, are contemptible and should be properly regulated. Any (American) company operating abroad and selling cheaply made products at "home" at an exorbitant profit, should, in my opinion, be hit with the stiffest import tariffs imaginable to help defray the social costs incurred by the taxpayer for individuals who have otherwise lost their jobs or are (under-employed). A society that measures its economic output in terms of per capita GDP, a useless indicator in many respects, without regard to its components (people), may ultimately discover its social costs equally prohibitive.

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The Freedom of Choice, within acceptable limits, is the cornerstone of a Free Society. With choice, however, comes (privileged) responsibility. The choices that we make say a lot about ourselves and the society in which we live. Many of us, unfortunately, have proven ourselves unworthy of such “rights” by the choices we oftentimes make. This is the inevitable outcome, perhaps, of a society that fails to pay proper attention to its choices; that is to say, to the consequences of its choices. The litany of abuses predicated in the name of free expression, or proxy “decisions” made on behalf of others who are unable to make informed decisions, are understood by the hordes of mentally ill people roaming the streets, who should be otherwise institutionalized for their own safety, if not for the safety of our society, for that matter, who remain on the streets, unable to properly care for themselves, mandated by civil rights organizations fearful that their rights may be jeopardized, people otherwise incapable of making a rational assessment of their own condition; not to mention conferring legitimacy to sexual deviancy in all its varieties that many of us have casually resigned ourselves to as “simply” alternative lifestyles or championing (equal) protection under the law, that, in some instances, should call for censorship, or implausible assumptions regarding the “unborn,” (Abortion) remanding millions of innocents to an early grave, a convenience for women fretting over their figures or professional careers, abetted by spineless politicians, who for expediency sake, continue advancing legislation denying them (“unborn”) their own inalienable right to choose, had they the means, or encouraging a culture of death (Euthanasia) for the convenience of (the) would-be custodians of the terminally ill or perhaps to (simply) reduce the increasing costs of Healthcare, or the legalization of drugs because that too is a convenient alternative for a number of individuals who have seemingly lost the will to rid our society of rampant drug abuse and therefore justify such (hare-brained) schemes from the vantage point of opportunity savings or reduced social costs, or movements to eliminate God from the public consciousness lest society be reminded of its sins or perhaps because many of us have (conveniently) chosen to become our own gods. This is the inevitable outcome of a society that exercises choice without the benefit of proper moral guidance.

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The bankrupt policies of both major political parties (in many ways two peas in a pod) may soon usher the emergence of a (major) third party although old habits are difficult to break.

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Economic challenges pose the greatest threat to family unity, its dignity, moral values and purpose. Although gainful employment does not (necessary) guarantee a loving/supportive family environment, eliminating (financial) worries, however, increases the odds of families remaining closer together.

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Right Thinking should be properly encouraged, if not in its particulars, then certainly as a general rule.

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Virtue seeks its own reward(s) for its own sake in harmony with First Causes.

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There appears to be among Men of Science a Will towards God but nothing approximating the traditional Godlike Qualities that typify the faith of true believers but rather the assumption of godlike features originating from Reason’s assault on Faith, that, having shaken its resistance, seeks to discredit the conventional propositions of Eternal Wisdom.

• • •

Meaningful immigration reform is unlikely to occur anytime soon inasmuch as such efforts must necessarily conflict with the determined pursuit of higher profits by corporate interests at the expense of increasing numbers of underemployed (American) Workers forced to compete against cheap(er) labor from burgeoning Third World populations, whose (own) increasing demands for jobs are further reducing domestic salaries, (if salary is the appropriate word), paid to workers whose wages (that’s better!) barely places many above the poverty line (although I suppose it beats living in the streets). Meanwhile, future (employment) opportunities continue to look grim for the American Worker as companies are presently finding themselves in the enviable position of being able to secure their labor requirements from an expanding (global) pool of labor including such (potential) resources who are routinely flaunting our nation’s borders.

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Justice, I believe, is an uncertain proposition. It can only be approximated. Truth must (first) be understood before Justice may be properly served. But how does anyone go about discovering (the) Truth? If Truth is predicated on Natural Law(s) understood as God’s Eternal Law(s), because such laws (naturally) proceed from God, “hidden yet pre-determined,” and if Humankind’s problematical interpretation of God’s Law has rendered its meaning less viable than what was arguably uncertain to begin with, then how or where does anyone proceed in recovering important points of reference? Conventional wisdom, forged by the (social) dynamics of customs and habits and experience, is insufficient. It remains, on a number of important levels, uniquely speculative. “Truth” or Wisdom, in the conventional sense, is an approximation of Truth’s essential designs, although an important starting-point in providing reasonable guidelines in the manner a morally, well-ordered society should properly conduct itself, however subjective such notions oftentimes appear. “Truth,” in this manner, is understood by a society’s perception of Truth based on its intuitive reasoning of “eternal truths” or “innate and a priori truths whose denials are contradictions.” (Rene Descartes). Eternal Truths have a proper “seat in our minds” however unclear. Humankind’s collective assumptions provide a number of approximations because none of us “thinks” alike and

because not every (worldly) assumption is completely false as others are not completely true. In this manner, a society will often settle on some inscrutable “mean” or center point, conceded by popular opinion, that, however lacking the essential requirements of Truth, provides credible examples for others to follow. Legal covenants governing a civilized society, its rules of law, are based upon a system of morals and values agreed upon by the majority of its citizens seeking some level of assurance while avoiding extremes. I am not suggesting that Truth lies somewhere within some pre-defined center; that is to say, falling between opposite extremes since even extremes are oftentimes difficult to determine. I am merely pointing out that it’s a safer proposition for those eager to avoid uncertain positions. The (consensual) center, in this case, is a convenience rather than a certainty. Justice, in principle, reflects the interpretation of laws in a fair and impartial manner or to the extent reasonable assumptions guide it toward the “Truth” or what is understood to be the Truth. Although certain forms of behavior or crimes are generally understood, their (underlying) motives or reasons (or Truth) are not always apparent; that is to say, not necessarily evident in themselves although they should be to critically minded individuals. (Why do we do the things we do?) In other words, we may be certain that a crime has been committed but uncertain as to the hidden motives that explain why the crime was committed. An even stickier proposition may surface whenever conflicts arise between the peculiar aspects of Justice and private designs or what is properly referred to by many as Conscience, that oftentimes bows to its “own” Truth.

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Talent, Motivation and (Good) Fortune are the primary ingredients for Success.

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Adam Smith’s “Invisible Hand,” that guides free and open markets, is not (necessarily) a benign one (nor was it intended to be) but rather an efficient one, whenever left to its own devices.

• • •

Obscene payrolls in professional sports have occasioned a generation of boorish athletes whose churlish behavior has rendered many unfit to manage, in a mature and appropriate manner, the requirements of popular acclaim. This is especially evident among those whose pecuniary origins are well below standard. Arrogance, the off-spring of Low Esteem, is (fortunately) balanced, however, by the professional demeanor of other (exceptional) athletes with little or nothing to prove, whose quiet tenor, and business like attitude, free of pretentious designs and excessive self-regard; that is to say, individuals who are comfortable with themselves and in themselves, who feel that they have nothing to prove and are (generally) less likely to be influenced by money and glamour; speaks volumes about the fundamental character of an emotional secure individual.

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Choice remains the cornerstone of a free and open society. The choices that its citizens make, however, confirms the extent of that society’s (collective) moral and spiritual evolution or its regression, whatever the case may be.

• • •

President Clinton recently signed into law, quite reluctantly I might add, a Welfare Reform bill, much to the chagrin of his party’s left-leaning radical base. This measure, designed to restore the dignity and proper standing of individuals living on the peripheries of (productive) mainstream society is, of course, very unpopular among Liberal Democrats likely to perceive any self-contained, self motivated individual as (potentially) one less vote come election time. This bill, ushered by Republicans and Democrats from both houses of Congress, promises to reduce the nation’s deficit by \$56 billion over the next seven years, not to mention increasing revenues that, everything being equal, will further reduce deficits over that period. This should be welcomed news to everyone except politicians troubled by the “infringement” of their political base. Be that as it may, welfare reform is all well and good provided that it is supported by educational and economic opportunities. The next step(s) will be to properly educate and train this prospective workforce in jobs that will hopefully offer every able-bodied individual an opportunity to earn a decent living.

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The inherent “right” to terminate one’s (own) life as it relates to vague or questionable notions defining quality of life, introduces yet another dubious precedent as it relates to Choice, especially in rather gray areas where the decision to either perpetuate or curtail an individual’s life has been proxied (sic) at a time when that individual could not possibly foresee the (uncertain) consequences of such decisions entrusted to the care of family members or friends (concealing underlying motives for authorizing such decisions, perhaps) or where a potential illness at some uncertain point in time or that individual’s problematical reaction (to that illness) could not possibly be understood in advance; that is to say, until that individual is actually sitting on Death’s doorstep. Once push comes to shove, however, and despite all the rhetoric, few individuals will option for death, whatever the extent of their illness. By then, it might be too late. I wonder whether (similar) “progressive” standards relating to a “happy” and “rewarding” life can be far away?

• • •

Humankind’s attraction to things that amuse or provide entertainment “value”, however shallow or essentially superficial, must inevitably give way to a despondent search for happiness which many are (seemingly) unable to internalize in any meaningful sort of way. Wearied of life in its simplest forms, many seek pleasures in “things” that are oftentimes foolish and vain.

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Opinion Surveys, I have found, are of little or no consequence. “Popular” Opinion does not dictate but is dictated to, rather.

• • •

Infinity, in a numerical sense, does not boggle the mind. We can increase the numerical value of any number by simply adding another number to it. Adding 1 to some number will increase the numerical value of that number by 1. Repeat the process through infinity, if one is properly inclined. This equally supports the argument that Infinity is a mathematical certainty extending in two opposite directions. (Simply subtract a -1 to reduce the value of that same number by 1) It necessarily follows that the forward or backward extension of Time and Space, in the absence of some quantifiable or numeric value, is not a difficult concept to imagine. Space, within the limits of human understanding, cannot disappear into Nothingness. Space is not contingent upon Matter thereby allowing the possibility that Space is arguably some predetermined, predefined dimension capable of containing nonexistence or non-matter. Time properly fits into this equation, as well. Time cannot be separated from Space because Time “necessarily” exists in Space as Space must necessarily “exist” in Time. Time, in whatever manner it is measured, must (necessarily) exist in Space, wherever Space finds itself, and therefore Time must parallel Space inasmuch as Space continues to exist in Time. Even the existence of an Eternal Being is plausible in theory when one is willing to allow, however far-fetched to some, a (supreme) being transcending beginning and end; that is to say, the “possibility” of eternal life. What overwhelms the mind, however, is the idea of Eternal Existence without fixed limits, or without some starting or ending point, that has always existed and will continue to exist in Spatial/Time and in that manner could not possibly have risen from Nothingness because Nothingness is not a predicate of Existence, or in any event, Something cannot be created out of Nothingness. More so, Nothingness cannot create itself; that is to say, Nothingness cannot create Something and therefore, “Some Thing” must have necessarily existed however improbable such a proposition might appear. Even accidental effects or chance cannot occur in a vacuum, which exceeds the possibilities of Nothingness. It causes one’s head to spin just thinking about!

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There exists a very fine line that separates being >good< from being >stupid<.

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Women, most notably those whose mindsets haven’t been utterly corrupted by feminist attitudes, possess a maternal instinct that is quite formidable and..... resilient; that, in spite of the quelling designs of radical feminism, inevitably reasserts itself (regretfully, I might add) later on in life as they (gradually) approach the margins of their child-bearing years. This lesson, unfortunately, oftentimes expresses itself too late in life to the chagrin of “ambitious” women who willfully placed their professional careers ahead of raising a family.

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An individual who provides for another individual in need, in whatever capacity, with the kindest and noblest intentions and in a manner consistent with the highest regards that his or her abilities will allow, has successfully satisfied the requirements of good works. On the other hand, half-hearted efforts routinely performed do not meet the requirements of good faith and are therefore insufficient in themselves. “What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains immortal.” (Albert Pine)

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There has never existed a generation that hasn’t summoned, at one time or another, the return of the “good old days” when life was “less” complicated, or so it seems from the vantage point of Time. Nostalgia, I believe, is a natural reaction for those who, for a variety of reasons, are either unable to cope with their lives or regret the passing of their youth or are (simply) hopeless romantics. (I fall in the latter category)

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Our nation’s political leaders are not photo copies of electoral viewpoints; neither was that the original intent of representative government. An elected official is duty bound to serve as the people’s choice but not as their surrogate “proxy”; that is to say, not necessarily in accordance with their (own) intended designs. An elected official, however “duty” bound to promote the interests of his or her constituents, is equally bound, if not more so, to serve the interests of the nation in whatever manner such commitments might (otherwise) conflict with (narrower) parochial interests or concerns. The requirement of leadership, on every level, necessitates a willingness to make impartial decisions unencumbered by one’s (own) personal feelings or of special interests that seek to influence political decisions for their own benefit. It goes without saying that local and national requirements should be measured fairly and impartially. Any politician who is either unwilling or (unable) to govern objectively; that is to say, in accordance with the requirements of public office, should step down. (Fat Chance!) No elected official, however, (it gets sticky) should be expected to lend his or her political (or moral) support, to questionable assumptions, however popular, that, from the standpoint of that politician’s private viewpoints, are considered either unethical or immoral. (I am speaking here of social issues rather than economic or security issues) There are many notable examples which need not be elaborated. Matters relating to Conscience should be considered in light of that individual’s privately held (core) beliefs. (“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul”?) Once again, these (internal) conflicts should give pause to whether or not that individual should otherwise tender his or her resignation. Everything being equal, however, our political leaders remain duty bound to serve, whenever possible, the interests of his or her constituents. In all other matters concerning national interests, however, each is obligated to address its pressing requirements in a

manner consistent with the needs of the nation.

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Having recently read about the passage of partial birth (whatever that means) abortion in today's newspaper, I firmly envision a day when some undetermined grace period, a year or two, perhaps, will be extended to "distraught" mothers who, unhappy with their "untimely" decision to have a child, will be offered an opportunity, an escape clause if you will, to "correct" their "mistake". During that period (or window of opportunity) mothers will be permitted to dispose of their infant/child in a manner adjudicated by law. Society, I believe, will need to secure a euphemism for infanticide, some inoffensive term or meaning that will neither (completely) assault the sensibilities of a civilized society nor trouble the Conscience. Perhaps something suggesting an under-developed or not fully "conscious" stage of development or unformed potential or irrational.....or what does it matter! In any event, I will leave such devious constructions to more creative types. Aren't such euphemisms, after all, the staples of any civilized society that doesn't really destroy its young? Or do they? Oh yes. I nearly forgot about the ancient Greeks!

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Knowledge lacking the proper shadings is an intellectually precarious proposition.

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An individual who fails to support his or her nation during a time of war under (the) transparent pretext of it being an "unjust war," or worse, provides (material) substance or (moral) support to his or her nation's enemies, under the guise of free expression, is guilty of Treason; and having breached the (social) compact, subsequently forfeits all of its essential rights.

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Television sponsors have traditionally targeted specific segments in specific markets at specific times in an effort to promote their products. What has become troubling in recent years, however, is the "in your face," oftentimes violent, antisocial messages cutting across all segments of the population that have become commonplace. Such (distractive) manners speak volumes about how "progressively" impolitic we have evolved as a society; reflected in part, by commercial advertisements likely to offend the sensibilities of many viewers who don't otherwise consider them "amusing."

• • •

The Republican Party has been operating under the mistaken assumption that it will be able to successfully rally its conservative base, never traditional allies to begin with, by pushing for higher tax cuts. Although tax cuts promote investment, production and (economic) growth, not to mention spending, that fuels all of the above; and while such measures should be vigorously pursued whenever possible, the underlying crisis concerning most (critically minded) Americans is (correctly) understood as Moral rather than Economic; especially among social conservatives, the illegitimate offsprings of an Establishment Party who will not be easily swayed by the prospect of a few additional dollars in their wallets.

• • •

Leisure capital, however vital in supporting "quality" standards of living, is not (the) primary factor that develops moral character, although it certainly helps not having to worry about where your next meal is coming from. A child "learns" from environmental examples; that is to say, a child formulates the necessary tools that promote sound moral character. It is therefore the responsibility of thoughtful parenting to establish a (morally) structural foundation autonomous within definable guidelines.

• • •

.....conducive to developing upright moral attitudes whose benefits are (oftentimes) lost on families living in unfriendly environments under unfavorable (economic) conditionsalthough money has its advantages...it cannot impart (moral) values or increase confidence or enhance (self) esteem or teach an individual how to behave properly.....

• • •

Altering an individual's material environment without giving proper pause to that individual's spiritual requirements will not necessarily guarantee the "good" life, for such an awakening must necessarily transform itself from within.

• • •

The eternal fires of Hell are too horrible to imagine! I would "prefer" thinking of Hell as the absence of God, which is sufficient punishment in itself.

• • •

Opponents of Capital Punishment seldom base their arguments on religious reasons, as evidenced by their cynical regard for the "unborn," but rather on fluent expressions predicated upon equivocating propositions that appear less hypocritical.

• • •

Timid and/or expedient politicians pandering to off the wall, lunatic fringe groups, whose members should have their collective heads examined, have lent legitimacy to peevish, ill-tempered designs in exchange for political party loyalty.

• • •

The frequency that a society (re)defines itself is a fairly accurate barometer of that society's collective anxiety.

• • •

Taking things one day at a time does not necessarily imply living for the moment but living for every moment that comes our way.

• • •

A society does not merely invest its capital in order to meet its present requirements. If that were the case, its proceeds would cease accruing for the benefit of future generations. Such thinking also applies in the manner a society overspends or accumulates debt. Its (supposed) advantages or encumbrances will be either "enjoyed" or endured severally; including those who weren't involved in the decision making process to begin with. Any society should properly consider the impact that its elections will have on future generations who will most likely be affected, in whatever manner, by that society's "binding" decisions.

• • •

The Rebuke of Conscience, I believe, confirms the existence of God. Unlike Physiology that monitors a body's physical and biochemical processes; that is to say, ensures that (the) body's (mechanical) processes are functioning properly or Genetics, that provides a "comprehensive" blueprint of an organism's biological "inheritance," Conscience remains uniquely indifferent to the Laws of Science, but not to the Laws of God. It's origin is spiritual, not organic. Its spiritual essence transcends material ascriptions. It transcends the local authority of conventional prescriptions. It informs our moral judgments. It distinguishes between right and wrong. It occasions remorse when an individual behaves contrary to his or her moral or ethical directive. It is an inherent response to immoral or inappropriate behavior contrary to what God expects from any individual or what that individual (should) otherwise perceive intuitively. Nevertheless, there are many of us, who, conditioned by our obstinate desires, have seemingly compromised our ability to (consciously) distinguish between right and wrong, commending, by inuring habit(s), inappropriate behavior. A Conscience's immune system, however, continues to inform itself in proportion to its inestimable failings, that, despite efforts to disclaim or otherwise rationalize an individual's failings, will not concede a moment's reprieve.

• • •

There's a very fine line separating living one's (own) life in one's own manner and (properly) managing one's life accordingly.

• • •

Discordant (human) emotions are oftentimes the result of conflicting designs that drive an individual to distraction or despair; individuals who have lost sight of themselves; that is to say, of their intended purpose, that render their lives uncertain or without meaning.

• • •

Self-Development is a distinctly unique process that, when managed properly, completes the requirements of Character by assessment, reflection and taking corrective action.

• • •

..... an individual may sometimes engage in conciliatory alliances between formal conventions and artificial (behavioral) constructs driven by impulse rather than essential designs...fashioning a hybrid identity that can no longer be properly called its own.....

• • •

.....the moral elasticity of "modern" societies defining the manner a society chooses to either define or transform itself as prescribed by the "times," liberated by variable designs or unshaken by "popular" traditions, reinterpreting or bringing to task the legitimacy of (erstwhile) creditable customs and practices, great civilizations laid to rest, the mercurial fortunes of the vanquished, of rudderless societies that have ceded their moral and intellectual authority...

• • •

.....when (the) judicial interpretations of constitutional laws consistently run counter to original intent or are interpreted in a manner seeking to promote some "hidden" (political) agenda, inevitably paves the road towards civil disobedience...

• • •

Should sound moral character be a civic requirement for higher political office, or any elective office for that matter? If an office seeker is perceived to be immoral in his or her private lives, should that individual's character deficiencies override the potential for good works?

• • •

Consumer spending conditioned by "easy credit" will one day leave the taxpayer with an enormous tab to settle.....unfortunately not

the recklessly extravagant who have grown accustomed to living beyond their means...or off their inheritances.

• • •

America's "expanding" middle class is merely an artificial construct synthesized by the fusion of "easy credit" and arbitrarily defined (economic) assumptions. The "growth" of the American middle class is generally defined by its spending habits and adopted lifestyles rather than capital or income. The buy now pay later approach to consumer spending has provided many families opportunities to imitate extravagant lifestyles that many could not otherwise afford if left to their own resources. A car in every garage and a television in every room is the stuff that middle-class dreams are made of! It is questionable, however, in light of diminishing incomes and job displacements precipitated by the emergence of cheap(er) labor from across our borders and the outsourcing of jobs overseas, not to mention a bubbling economy, that American families will be able to sustain its frenzied lifestyles once that bubble bursts.

• • •

Income disparities are not troubling per se, nor should they be, provided that increases in marginal family income(s) (based on performance) are comprehensive and that every (qualified) individual enjoys fair and equal access to market opportunities as they present themselves. (During periods of low unemployment, the lower monied [sic] classes have historically enjoyed the highest "marginal" gains in disposable income.) Problems arise, however, when economic opportunities are discriminatory. Such is, quite rightly, likely to provoke (social) unrest.

• • •

I feel that it is only natural that a parent should expect a reasonable rate of return on his or her "investment." Cold-Blooded as this may sound, parents have a vested interest in the future success of their children; especially parents who have dedicated a great deal of time, emotional capital and... money, on their children's spiritual, moral and intellectual development. Although it may be personally rewarding to see one's child financially secure, it is equally, (if not more so), important that that child develops into a model citizen, an example for others to follow, a kind and thoughtful human being, considerate of others and of sound (moral) character, an individual who serves his or her family, friends and the community in which he or she lives and works, with distinction. There is no placing a price tag on such exemplary qualities that, in my estimation, are the hallmarks of a truly "successful" individual. These parents, I would argue, have much to be proud of!

• • •

The principal characters of our (early) youth, whether they be family, relatives or friends, especially those we have come to love dearly and who have left indelible impressions in our lives, are perceived in a wholly different manner as we grow older; where the confluence of a child's eyes and an adult's recollections seems to add "something" that we might have otherwise overlooked as children but have come to appreciate (more) as adults. It makes one pine for another opportunity to become better acquainted with them.

• • •

As our bodies gradually begin to grow weary and are no longer able to hold their own against younger lions, let us sit back and pursue the fruits of Wisdom, instead.

• • •

History should never be judged by contemporary standards lest we fall off the "shoulders of giants."

• • •

The Articles of Confederation were conceived as a federation of "United" States with each state retaining its own sovereignty and independence apart from assigned powers (otherwise) delegated to the federal government. This arrangement was a concession to skeptical opponents of centralized forms of government. Such fears were justified, in part, by the legitimate concerns of an incipient nation engaged in a war of independence against the British Monarchy. The "Articles" were created by chosen representatives from each of the states to secure the freedom, sovereignty and independence of an emerging nation. This system of government was unworkable, however, for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the federal government's inability to promote a national agenda, or any meaningful legislation for that matter, which might otherwise conflict with local interests. Government resolutions, requiring ratification by nine of the thirteen states, were, because of hardboiled regional rivalries and parochial prejudices, virtually impossible to adopt. In the final analysis, the main reason for its failure centered on the federal government's inability to levy taxes during times of national emergency or for public works or in order to advance the nation's burgeoning commercial interests. Such powers assumed far greater importance at a time when our fledgling nation was especially vulnerable to political intrigues foreign and domestic. I mention this to raise a point: that this form of government failed at a time when the American People, with few exceptions, were socially homogenized in the manner of language, culture, custom, habit and style, and, despite some variation in scriptural interpretation, predominately Christian in their outlook. In other words, its citizens, sectional differences aside, shared a common identity; that is to say, they were Americans. Of course, it was a different nation back then; a nation alienated by distance rather than ideology. I find it ironic, however, that while Americans have been brought closer together in time (and space), we appear more ideologically estranged in a manner unthought-of two centuries ago. I wonder whether as a nation we aren't slowly gravitating toward an ideological federation of sorts, prompted by our increasingly diverse customs and beliefs.

• • •

The (very) notion of democratic egalitarianism smartly presented and artificially conceived, operating under “level” playing conditions, is discouraging, despite the occasional emergence of exceptionable talents and genius. A society striving toward mediocrity by imposing checks on creative and innovative designs, while advancing ordinary talents to the detriment of meaningful social and intellectual progress in favor of the status quo for the benefit of individuals possessing low to average ability or who are otherwise indisposed to develop their underlying potential for whatever reason(s), trivializes genuine achievement lest it offend lesser aptitudes or indifferent attitudes.

• • •

Inquisitive travelers have transformed themselves into rural curiosities or “intrusive” neighbors.

• • •

Circumstances and Events may oftentimes change however Human Nature remains an enduring Constant.

• • •

How is it that the absence of mail disappoints us, even some unsought for advertisement or unwanted invoice?

• • •

The scarcity of intelligent designs and absence of original ideas in both house of congress characterizes the sophomoric attitudes prevalent in modern politics.

• • •

Unimaginative concepts in automotive design(s) have rendered most automobiles, even higher-end models, extraordinarily common in appearance unlike the classic styles and elegance of yesteryear.

• • •

With few notable exceptions, perhaps, the most anyone can hope for is an approximation or likeness to Truth, not Truth, itself, however.

• • •

The time has come and gone when a rough estimate of a worker’s paycheck may be determined by the color of that person’s “collar.”

• • •

Language is the cornerstone that defines a Culture.

• • •

Reality concedes certain advantages to Art, whose (creative) boundaries are endless, at liberty to move freely and explore imaginary venues without regard to either space or time , where the laws of nature need not apply and irrational designs may (routinely) supersede logic and reason; whose artistic expressions need only answer to its own purposeful intentions.

• • •

Talent is either an acquired or natural aptitude; that is to say, it may be either acquired by the steady application of one’s (own) determined efforts or quickened by natural currents. Although talent and its subsequent rewards(s) is praiseworthy, special consideration should be given, however, to individuals who have had to work (especially) hard in order to achieve their stated goals. Where (the) more accrues in greater proportion from (the) less, so much greater the fall of nature’s select in proportion to their aptitudes and abilities; however greater the rewards.

• • •

The “best” player is not necessarily the most “valuable” as in MVP (Most Valuable Player). An MVP candidate should be properly considered in relation to his or her supporting cast or (incremental) value whose overall value marginally exceeds all other values considered separately and whose (own) remarkable value (or contribution) is otherwise conspicuous by its presence or absence.

• • •

What has come to be understood as “jury nullification,” I believe, will remain a permanent fixture in the manner prospective jurors are now selected. A judicial system overwhelmed by rampant crime and civil law suits fueled by real or imaginary racial/ethnic grievances, coupled with its lackadaisical application of the law(s), are not lost on attorneys eager to exploit such grievances by recruiting and manipulating prospective jurists from the “community” who might prove (potentially) sympathetic to their argument(s).

• • •

.....when assimilation is no longer a national requirement...much less adapting to unfamiliar environments...or unreceptive to a (host) nation’s customs and traditions ...(especially) its language... when that nation seeks to accommodateby adopting the

customs and manners of immigrants...no less...(notably) their language... when that nation is unable or unwilling to preserve the integrity of its own (besieged) culture...(especially) its language...once that nation begins to embrace globalist (sic) designs, such intentions must inevitably sound the death knell of that nation as it was formerly understood....

• • •

One of the keynote speakers at the 1996 Republican Convention was a paraplegic, a decorated New York City police officer gunned down in the line of duty and permanently disabled as a result of his gunshot wounds. Appropriately enough, the officer's (McDonald) underlying theme centered on urban crime. His message was one of forgiveness and hope for the future. Not to be undone at their own convention, the Democrats countered with a disabled keynote speaker of their own, (Christopher Reeves) a fine young actor and quadriplegic whose acting career was tragically cut short after suffering spinal injuries after falling off his horse at an equestrian event. These shameless acts of gamesmanship by both political parties, especially the Democrats, for their questionable timing, typifies the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of both major political parties willing to shamelessly exploit the misfortunes of individuals for political reasons. An even greater tragedy, perhaps, is the manner some individuals will allow themselves to be exploited for five minutes of fame by presenting themselves as political props at political conventions/rallies resembling three-ring circuses.

• • •

America should seriously reassess the decrepit condition of its rapidly decaying interstate highways, many of which have grown exhausted, if not (functionally) depleted from wear and tear; dysfunctional anachronisms that are seemingly unable to meet the commuter requirements of rapidly expanding populations. This is especially true in highly congested (urban) areas where commuter travel has assumed nightmarish proportions. Rush hour, in particular, has returned commuter travel to the horse and buggy era, unfair as such comparisons may appear, since carriages, and horses, for that matter, did not break down as frequently as the (modern) automobile. Such comparisons further fail the litmus test of motorists frustrated and demoralized by mental exhaustion. (Road Rage) If I may indulge a science fiction fantasy for a moment, I envision a day in the foreseeable future when an elaborate, computerized transportation network transporting travelers in "PODS" atop elevated guideways will become a reality. This program will be contracted by public and private interests who will assume joint ownership rights in this collaborative effort designed to (efficiently) usher commuters, travelers and shoppers alike to their appointed destinations without (much) fuss or bother. Although this highly sophisticated and financially prohibitive and "impractical" venture may appear "implausible" to some, the reduction in stress-related travel, increased quality time, higher productivity at the workplace and the system's ameliorating impact on our environment (already) under enormous stress, not to mention our nation's increasing dependence on foreign sources of oil, may very well offset the cost(s) associated with this awesome undertaking. (George Jetson)

• • •

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was/is a military alliance established by the United States and Western Europe during the early years (1949) of the Cold War to secure and defend, through a system of "collective defense," democratic nations against Soviet (Communist) expansion ideologically opposed to principled notions of Liberty and Freedom. Recent events, however, have revealed a very disturbing trend; extending membership to "former" antagonists whose "democratic" institutions and putative reforms remain problematical and its designs, (largely) untested. Such nations, I believe, should be treated with caution until evidence of good will has been properly determined lest the "Trojan horse" achieves its global objectives by continuing to discredit and undermine liberal democracy within the framework of assumed alliances. Without common cause united by common principles and where the organization's respective members remain ideologically polarized, such overtures should be reprobated by sensible nations whose global mission should be promoting (world) peace and advancing the cause of Freedom. NATO is unsuited for rogue nations lest it (too) devolves into a meaningless and (utterly) ineffective organization similar to the United Nations, for example, that has transformed itself over the years into an assembly characterized by corruption and (political) intrigue, parochialism, (national) self-interest, political posturing, factionalism and unstable alliances with openly hostile, refractory nations opposed to Freedom.

• • •

While I was working on a Stephen Foster tune on the piano the other day, I noticed that the word "darkie" was conspicuously absent from the (original) lyrics. Such "denials" are symptomatic of a politically correct society utterly determined to refute the past by sweeping "offensive" expressions under the carpet and making believe they never existed rather than acknowledging that such indiscretions...however distasteful to (modern) sensibilities...were once common...and that it is what it was..... and that it's (now) time to move on with our lives instead of rehashing the same (old) formula.

• • •

It may be a bad omen that Conservatives are losing the "Cultural War" when well mannered individuals quietly concede inappropriate behavior that many would otherwise find offensive within their own private circles. A fear of being labeled "closed minded"...has conditioned a disturbing tolerance for disagreeable behavior that has seemingly lost its shock value; an essential requirement for any well-ordered and mannerly society.

• • •

If it tastes good, it must be unhealthy!

• • •

A thought about palimony: Whenever a woman, of her (own) free will, chooses to enter into a relationship of convenience with a man, a celebrity let's say, and that relationship subsequently sours, for whatever reason(s), (as is so often the case, the man in question has grown tired of the woman), and the woman seeks compensatory emoluments for "services" rendered or alleged physical abuse or "mental cruelty" (here we go again!), the woman or surrogate wife has either proven herself a victim of her (own) poorly conceived designs or her (own) short-sightedness. Such an event should serve as a thoughtful reminder the next time she is "propositioned." That woman should firmly insist on a wedding ring,....no ringy no nooky!.... if not to ensure her (own) financial security, then for the sake of her (own) dignity and self-respect. Should the "gentleman" in question veto her proposal, that woman should seek other domestic accommodations and throw the bum out!

• • •

In the absence of persuasive moral arguments does the end justify the means?

• • •

Man is not the celebrated "noble savage" oftentimes characterized in Rousseauian literature that underscores questionable faith in Man's natural goodness, but an uncivilized one tamed by conventional manners and rules of law.

• • •

Regional (Presidential) Primaries may offer a partial solution in staving off the (disproportionate) influence of parochial designs on political candidates stumping the campaign trail by allowing them to carefully outline their positions on issues of national importance without undue pandering to special interest groups. How many voters or lobbyists in Colorado, for example, could give a shout about the milking industry in Vermont? On the other hand, every voice has a right to be heard. The present process, however, is overwhelming, time consuming and oftentimes, dishonest. Fifty states, fifty campaign promises that are impossible to keep, doesn't appear feasible nor would any reasonable person expect it to be.

• • •

That the Present is constantly redefining itself provides meaning to the expression "the Future is now," in the manner in which it has become progressively anticipatory. (Yeah, I'm lost as well!)

• • •

Most of us are average people; of average (intellectual) capacity, of average outlook and of average dispositions. I do not say this condescendingly as I too fall in that broadly defined category of what I refer to as average, ordinary people. Some of us are average because of limited opportunities or social conditioning, by the choices we make or our inherent makeup. The exceptional among us are few and far between. Traditional Populism understood the limitations of the "common" man; cynically appealing to common sentiments through demagoguery and "catch-all" politicking designed to get out the vote by "connecting" with the "people"; the factory worker or farmer, for example. Political oratory was embellished however simple in style. It appealed to passion rather than reason. It was neither pedantic nor donnish; over-stated on a number of levels, perhaps,.....everyone enjoys a good show every now and then.....however delivered in a manner that oftentimes resonated with the uninitiated. Such overtures, depending on the (underlying) designs of the speaker and the receptiveness of his audience, could be incendiary and volatile at times, not unlike (the) rhetorical expressions that pass for populism in our own times. The country was much simpler back then. Oratorical gamesmanship played well with crowds that were less sophisticated.....perhaps (even) more so than what one might encounter today, as difficult as it may be to imagine. Horse or common sense resounded well among agrarian and industrial segments of the population; especially backwater, rural areas or inner cities populated by blue-collar workers, immigrants and transients. Although I am not entirely certain where I'm heading with all this, it appears to me that most politicians on both sides of the political spectrum, perhaps more so among Conservatives, often display an annoying tendency of intellectualizing social and political points of arguments; that is to say, of talking over an audience rather than to that audience in a manner that resonates with average people. Every (political) movement, of course, requires its pundits. For Conservatives, a William Buckley, for example, to help define the moral and intellectual climate of conservative viewpoints. It also requires a Phyllis Schaffly, however, to clearly articulate those positions to less erudite, average audiences unlikely to have read "God and Man at Yale." The Conservative Movement, I believe, has yet to fully recognize the vast pool of potential converts, people who are principle conservatives in their everyday lives yet are seemingly unable to define themselves politically because their values are not being properly reinforced by the "mainstream" media or are not being "targeted" by conservative groups, including members of the Hispanic and African American communities, who, aside from their voting "habits", are otherwise socially conservative in many respects. These individuals need to be "nurtured" by simple, straight-talking "folk" clarifying traditionally conservative social ideologies that are unambiguous and intuitively understood however seldom reflected in polling booths. The African American and Hispanic Communities, in particular, are two such groups that offer an untapped source for Conservatives seeking to advance principle traditional values.

• • •

Knowledge lacking perspicacity is analogous to striking a book of matches without first understanding the principles of fire.

• • •

An Intellectual Coward, oftentimes encountered among the ranks of our political leaders, however becoming increasingly common among politically motivated senior management corporate (types), is an individual who side-steps or evades difficult controversial

positions that he or she may privately support; that many perceive, however, to be at variance with “popular” opinion... and what is even worse, vigorously championing such positions by embracing them as their own!

• • •

Sport is a mesmerizing distraction. Give the people sports and turn their attention away from unforeseen, consequential events that may inevitably impact their lives!

• • •

The foods that we eat should not be subject to gastronomic scrutiny as if some life or death proposition were weighing in the balance. An individual should acquiesce to the demands of his or her own appetite provided that such (private) decisions properly fall within the requirements of a well-balanced, nutritional diet.....although it’s permissible to indulge every so often!

• • •

The prophet Moses, upon receiving the Lord’s Commandments on Mount Sinai, was instructed (by God) to return to the people and proclaim His Laws inscribed in “stone”. He soon discovered that, during his uncertain absence, the people had morally corrupted themselves (of their own volition) by pledging their allegiance to Baal. “These are your gods O Israel, who brought you up and out of Egypt.” Secularism, in modern times, may be properly considered the (metaphorical) false idol superseding the God of ancient traditions. Indifference to customary (religious) attitudes is a cause of grave concern; especially among practicing Christians and (Orthodox) Jews alike who perceive the gradual erosion of the underlying principles and teachings of proud (religious) traditions and its demoralizing effect on society; of Christians and Jews in name only who are routinely abandoning their churches and synagogues while shedding their religious customs and beliefs in alarming numbers to worship before the alter of the “golden calf”.

• • •

In view of the fact that vehicular congestion on our major highways, especially during commuter rush “hour,” understood as falling between the hours of three and eight at night, has become a common, everyday event that seldom seems to vary, why not simply pre-record radio (traffic) advisory updates, revising them every so often whenever some unlikely event should happen to occur such as the miraculous absence of traffic!

• • •

Reconciling the past in an (intellectually) honest... forthright manner... embracing... without bias or prejudice... or colored by revisionist designs... its remarkable achievements... as well as its inherent failings... however troubling to present sentiments... that no society is immune to sin.....faithfully regarding its legends or myths.....however narrowly or broadly perceived... that typically defines a society and its culture... nothing more or nothing less... while arousing the imagination...making possible “things”, possible... that is a good thing....a hopeful sign... while coming to terms with its traditions... that form the basis for the future... approaching it with an open mind.... with an eye towards things to come....although...for some, perhaps...that is only natural... or selective memory or (post) determined arrangements or conveniences designed to appease troublesome assumptions.... rather than instruct neither should any progressive society purposely seek to undermine or underestimate....the historical limits of its traditions... that for better or for worse.... have made that society what it is and... what it hopes to become... that its historical conventions... receive a cordial reception... however considered... irrelevant... by present standards... (whose)... propositions are/were (however) ill-conceived or improperly managed... if in fact they were/are.... that society should seek to inject vitality... and meaning to novel expressions.... without rocking its customary foundations... the requirements of an evolving society.....operating within the proper limits of change.

• • •

(Social) Conservatives are a nomadic group in search of a (political) home. Although Conservatives may be found among the ranks of both major political parties, shifting political and social alliances in recent years suggest a preference for the Republican Party; in whatever many of the rank and file have been oftentimes marginalized by Republican Party leaders. Although this “group” is routinely characterized by the “mainstream” media as right-wing fanatics, this enigmatic contingent, commonly referred to as “swing voters,” have, more than any other “political” group, perhaps, decided the (recent) outcome of national elections. Widely pursued by both major political parties, this “faceless” group consisting of (social) synergies comprising a vast number of individuals from every walk of life, represent what President Nixon referred to as the “silent majority.” Many came out in record numbers to support Mr. Nixon’s presidential candidacy (1968) although once in office, his casual indifference, if not outright rejection of conservative principles, and the voters who supported them, betrayed the confidence of his faithful followers who had come to expect so much from him. Years later, President Bush (1988) would similarly disappoint them, although his breach with Conservatives was not entirely unforeseen by politically astute individuals suspicious of Mr. Bush’s (putative) conservative credentials to begin with. Nevertheless, despite their many disappointments, Conservatives continue to be courted by the Republican Party and its vast array of chameleon “Conservatives” who routinely alter their political stripes once they assume public office. Many (Social) Conservatives were typically old-fashioned Democrats until the mid-sixties when the party made a calculated, if not risky decision to move to the left of its traditional base, utterly abandoning, without pretense, its populist principles in favor of centralized government platforms, (some might properly argue socialized), that ultimately demoralized its moderate base. In the process, the party sought to fashion new alliances with manufactured “victims” whose “needs” the party could (properly) administer to. It should also be kept in mind that subsequent generations had already started mainstreaming and that many individuals no longer considered the party’s divisive platform appealing. Self-reliant as

a rule, many Southern Conservatives, having felt abandoned by the party of Jackson, would eventually seek friendlier quarters perceived (more) in keeping with their social and traditional values. It is arguable that the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts was the (final) straw that broke the (proverbial) camel's back although I'm not so certain considering that a greater proportion of Republicans rather than Democrats supported these measures. Nevertheless, race unquestionably influenced their decision although I believe there was something more to it than that; a feeling, perhaps, that workingmen and woman were somehow being marginalized; that is to say, their religious, moral and social values were being discredited. Be that what it may, having weighed the possibility of a third-party (George Wallace) and finding it untenable or perhaps untimely might be the better word, many (Conservatives) sought refuge in the Republican Party who many believed reflected their values. Many, however, have become sadly disillusioned by rhetorical assurances that seldom seem to live up to their promises. Pleased perhaps, by the prospect of attracting a new coalition of voters, (Yankee) Republicanism, traditionally urbane in its demeanor, was nevertheless determined to preserve its (own) political identity that generally embraced liberal viewpoints as they related to domestic and social issues. Many Republicans, especially Northeastern Republicans, generally favored New Deal programs, Welfare and Civil Rights reforms. The only difference separating either political party was the notion that Republicans believed they could "deliver the goods" more efficiently than Democrats. (Not exactly a match made in heaven!) Rockefeller Republicans, in particular, have never really warmed up to these apostatizing (sic) "upstarts." Their resentment has manifested itself repeatedly over the years as Conservative influence within the party has gradually increased in proportion to its rapidly increasing numbers. If the truth were known, however, Yankee Republicanism has never been (instinctively) enthusiastic with conservative viewpoints; traditionally progressive and libertarian as many of the party faithful were/are in their social and religious attitudes. In this respect most Moderate to Liberal Republicans vary little with their Democratic counterparts. I am certain that had it not been for well-organized grassroots efforts by Conservatives in support of Life, the "Warren" Party would have jumped at the first opportunity to advance Abortion Rights long before the Democrats turned it into a campaign issue. It's nearly Machiavellian the manner in which this "desirable" although not so favored group continues to be courted by the Republican Establishment. The Reagan Revolution vindicated the Conservative Movement. Whether or not it will be able to maintain its momentum is problematical in view of a me-tooism mentality that has become firmly embedded in its thinking. Another problem confronting a number of disillusioned conservatives is that for years many were on the outside looking in whereas many have now become a part of the political "establishment;" that is to say, they subsequently sold out." It remains to be seen whether or not their leaders will remain reliable advocates of conservative causes or become submersed under the currents of political mainstream ideologies. Be that what it may, their numbers can no longer be ignored or casually dismissed and besides, who's to argue that some progress hasn't been made despite so much party in fighting and intrigue. Perhaps Conservatives are expecting too much too soon. Thirty years of time and effort, however, should immediately disqualify the notion of any third-party political movement in whatever manner it may appeal to "hard-core" types. The Democratic Party's socialist agenda is not a viable alternative, however. Conservatives have established a base of operations that will hopefully advance and preserve their social and moral directive. I suppose the Republican Party serves as good a place as any. Besides, where else can they turn to for an occasional tax-cut? And there you have it!

• • •

.....an agenda that seeks to discredit traditional assumptions...sowing seeds of discontent...especially among the working classes...in industrialized societies...especially...restless people...the disgruntled masses...the uprooted....contrived victimhood... class consciousness...(often)...more imaginary than real...questionable propositions...that go unchallenged.... yielding higher dividends for (social) nihilists... and deconstructionists.....hateful customs... detested...for their own sake.....reshaping existing covenants, rejecting "tired" traditions...encouraging a single-minded purpose.... enlisting abstract designs...however unworkable or untenable or undesirable or unstable..... compensating privileges and preferences... conferred by the self-appointed guardians of the public weal... costly investments yielding improbable returns...that must inevitably (morally) bankrupt that society...once enterprise has been dampened and initiative hammered beyond recognition...has the transformation of centralized forms been completed...

• • •

An individual cannot always control the currents of his or her own thoughts although it lies within that individual to critically examine the appropriateness of such thoughts or ideas that might otherwise influence his or her behavior in an unseemly manner.

• • •

Television sitcoms are sending mixed messages to young audiences. Although the purpose of television is to entertain (and instruct) and to provide a meaningful outlet for a child's (incipient) imagination, it should do so in a manner that correctly distinguishes between what is real from implausible or uncertain (impressions) that that child normally receives; that is to say, that otherwise obscure what is real from what is not real (or make-believe) but only appears to be real whenever taken out of context. Wisecracking, precocious young children superseding the worldly "wisdom" of their well-meaning but oftentimes bumbling parents, more often than not, the father; portrayed as "agreeable", however (somewhat) pompous, over-bearing, self-regarding and someone who just "doesn't get it." Awkward, juvenile attempts at "connecting" with their children is inconsistent with real life situations facing most parents who generally have to deal with a broad variety of (uncertain) thoughts and emotions that oftentimes alienate young children coming age. Most require the steady assurances that come with experience, not to mention proper role modeling. Children require the guidance and unconditional support of parents who should properly behave like parents rather than the lingering adolescents oftentimes portrayed on television. Fifties sitcoms did not necessarily reflect, but sought to project, rather, the ideal prototype of the "typical" American Family that in many respects was atypical of families in general. Such programs often featured a traditionally strong-minded, however loving, thoughtful father who was firm yet approachable. He wasn't perfect, however. Mom would sometimes have to come to the

rescue and bail him out. Even a father could learn a thing or two from his children; examples he had forgotten as a boy but remembers later on in life through his children. Nevertheless, our natural failings, common among those of us with “feet of clay,” is a condition that even the wisest among us must occasionally endure. However apparent, they never dampened a child’s love and respect...and gratitude. As indicated above, such programs also featured a wise and “knowing” mother who, although ceding “authority” to the father, knew when it was the right moment to step in and run interference for her children.....and her husband, for that matter. She did so in a firm, yet unobtrusive manner that did not attempt to undermine the father’s parental authority. After all, wasn’t he the “head” of the household? However unrealistic such programming may appear by conventional standards, they remain real in the sense that they underscore the importance of what many contemporary children are often lacking; meaningful parent/child relationships. What audiences are routinely being exposed to, however, are parents portrayed as unaware, uninformed, unstable in their own manner and out of touch, much to the chagrin of their complacently smug and obnoxious children who always seem to “Know Better.”

• • •

Ignorance, I believe, is a (conditioned) state preferable to Partial knowledge. The former is merely “harmful” to the individual who may be otherwise perceived as being uneducated or uninformed or deficient in some manner whereas the latter oftentimes tries to pass itself off as Consummate Knowledge irrespective of its (inherent) limitations or (uncertain) effects.

• • •

History must one day hold this generation, along with our feckless Congress, accountable for the transgressions of the present (Clinton) Administration. Mr. Clinton’s betrayal of public confidence, too enumerable to mention, is a troubling reminder of the Republic’s moral regression and indifference to standards of decency that its citizens need only look in the mirror to understand why this man has never been brought to task!

• • •

Collectivist Strategies offer one (minor) advantage over Free Enterprise; the former remains (intensively) focused on its intended designs whereas the latter is oftentimes likely to disagree on a variety of different viewpoints whose outcome(s) are unclearly defined or perhaps open to question. On the other hand, differences of opinion often promote viable alternatives that sluggish or stubborn attitudes are otherwise unreceptive to.

• • •

Time seems endless when measured in part, abbreviated, however, when perceived as (part of a whole).

• • •

Events shaping our lives are sometimes owing to accident or chance although more often than not by our determined actions or.....assignable causes!

• • •

We mourn (externally) for others, such as the passing of a loved one. We grieve, (internally) however, for ourselves.

• • •

Walking along the streets of Manhattan with some friends the other day and seeing so many homeless people sleeping on city sidewalks and in narrow passageways bundled up in cardboard boxes to shield them from the elements was a deeply troubling and humbling experience for someone like myself who has been very fortunate in life. That afternoon served as an unpleasant reminder of how their presence not only demoralizes us as individuals but diminishes us as a (civilized) society.

• • •

A society in moral and spiritual decline seldom fulfills its constructive designs although it often provokes cries in the wilderness among remarkable men and women not quite ready to surrender what remaining capital that society has squandered.

• • •

Essential Nature is transforming, Human Nature is not.

• • •

Believing is not Knowing although the (casual) relationship ”uniting” the two oftentimes encompasses a broad variety of assumptions consistent with an individual’s (private) belief system internalized by Reason and Intuition or externalized by Experience and Custom; each secured by Faith.

• • •

Wars fought with guns are (oftentimes) harmful to the body whereas wars of ideas are (sometimes) damaging to reputations.

• • •

I would like to express some (scattered) thoughts about Dress: Dress defines a society and its people; its customs and habits. Now call me old-fashioned but I subscribe to the notion that the way a person dresses says a lot about that person and how that person regards himself...and (perhaps) other people, as well. Our society's "casual" (hey!) indifference to proper attire has rendered formal/casual distinctions obsolete. Dress typically structured an individual within the context best "suited" (no pun intended) for some specific or special occasion. Dress, because of its "uniformity" (Ha Ha) was once considered society's equalizer; that is to say, Dress transcended Class. (An individual did not have to be a person of means to dress appropriately.) Dress did not need to be stylish or elegant but conform, rather, to some "suitable" (Ouch!) standard. People generally presented themselves with distinction; jacket and tie, (even at sporting events) much like everyone dresses today, only down-graded in tattered shirts, (torn) designer jeans and Gucci shoes. (Of course, the latter is arguably a sign of a decaying culture that has lost all sense of proportion) Dress, whether pricey or modest or falling somewhere in between, was always presentable and neat. Dress was seldom tacky or dirty. The working classes, including the poor, took pride in parading in their "Sunday Best" and made sure that the clothes their children wore to school, however worn or frayed, were clean and properly ironed; that is to say, presentable. Some people take pride in "slumming"; especially the well to do affected by an abstract need to "connect" with the "people" ("Hey, I'm just a regular guy like anybody else") while others, on the other hand, enjoy flaunting conventions for their own sake whereas others (may) feel that "proper" attire is no longer relevant and then there are those who have simply developed lazy habits.

• • •

An (evolving) society should seek to promote wholesome dialogue among its citizens. Familiarity with other cultures and customs other than our "own" helps facilitate the orderly transition of a pluralistic society. Its open-mindedness, however, should neither compromise nor invalidate the exceptional character which makes that society unique. That is to say, (the) parts should seek to accommodate (the) whole.

• • •

There exists an associative order endemic in (any) society; that is to say, of associations prescribed by custom where the "servant" shall abide the "master," the "lesser," the "greater." Such relationships are observed on a variety of levels as for example between parent and child, teacher and pupil, doctor and patient, priest and congregant or any number of relationships that typify the everyday workplace; obedient to (the) laws governing conventional wisdom and knowledge, experience and natural endowment tempered by amity and goodwill where prudent influences abiding in good faith seek to promote the (mutual) benefit of the respective parties involved.

• • •

The rescission of loyalty in the workplace has left many individuals little recourse other than maintaining allegiance to the specific requirements of their vocation, for such fidelity to an individual's chosen profession ultimately defines, in part, the character of that individual whose exceptional integrity and commitment to duty remain its primary rewards.

• • •

Our Creator has a vested "interest" in His Creation for whose (spiritual) well-being He has not left nothing owing to Chance; for creation remains, in its fullest measure, an extension of the creator, encompassing all that is considered good, for no one willingly creates something that he or she would otherwise consider unworthy of his or her (creative) efforts or without some (ultimate) purpose in mind. In this manner are Deist assumptions that God created the universe however did not interfere with its internal affairs, discredited.

• • •

The Saints provided many notable examples on how to lead a virtuous existence however troubling such examples of piety, benevolence and kindness are for modern times. Although, as practicing Christians, we should make every effort to follow their commendable examples, it is inappropriate, (perhaps), that we plead their divine intervention since these petitions, as they inevitably relate to our eternal salvation, are best directed toward the Final Arbiter who, alone, must ultimately determine the merits of our entreaties.

• • •

When popular opinion rejects discredited or controversial propositions considered morally vague or of questionable value, the stewards of "conventional" wisdom will (inevitably) reintroduce their highly regarded viewpoints, less obtrusively, perhaps, although in strict accordance with their own privately held beliefs in a manner designed to either mislead or misinform the public.

• • •

Guilt is a solitary phenomenon understood by a troubled Conscience. Shame is the unmasking of Guilt that seeks its own redemption. In other words, Shame is a cry for forgiveness. That an individual has been exposed is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, for some people, having been "exposed," or as is oftentimes the case, (I believe) exposing oneself, is understood as a purifying act of atonement. In this manner, Shame acts as a cleansing agent that purges Guilt. On the other hand, Shame is just as likely an accidental by-product of having had one's hand caught in the proverbial cookie jar. These individuals are "ashamed" of having been caught unawares rather than being (properly) ashamed for trying to steal a cookie to begin with. An individual willing to expose him or herself to Shame is someone who finds his or her Guilt too cumbersome or awkward to bear. The Shameless, on the other hand, feel

neither Guilt nor Remorse because their self-checking mechanism commonly referred to as Conscience, has broken down!

• • •

Humankind would be more inclined towards respecting its native differences if not for all the (troublesome) time and energy (otherwise) spent emphasizing its differences to begin with!

• • •

Character no longer appears to be the single overriding issue concerning most Americans accustomed to voting with their wallets...routinely electing into office men and women perceived to be morally flawed...seemingly of no important issue to the average voter, however...in this manner... character deficiencies are (otherwise) outweighed by promising fortunes... cynical and indifferent to moral designs has the electorate devolved...where behavior is considered a “private” matter...in a society whose disturbing tolerance to unprincipled and unseemly behavioral attitudes has increased in proportion to the size of its (financial) portfolios.

• • •

Who was it that said adversity brings the best out in people? I sometimes wonder whether or not what our country (really) needs isn't another good old-fashioned Depression! Our nation was once a whole lot poorer back then. Nevertheless its people were, in many ways, far more humane and considerate of others. Perhaps I am being unduly harsh in my criticism of American Materialism. How about a Virtual Depression, just a partial glimpse, perhaps?

• • •

The Republican Congress, in its infinite wisdom, has recently proposed a measure that would allow the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico a Plebiscite for Statehood. The party's leadership is hoping that this questionable electoral strategy will curry favor with Latino Voters. Republican leaders are operating under the mistaken assumption that the Latino “Community” is a uniform political and social body. “Latino” is an artificial construct comprised of Spanish speaking people each possessing their own (ethnic) identity, united in some degree by language, perhaps, that is insufficient in itself to achieve the party's broad-based political objective of “getting out” the Latino Vote. This one size fits all approach to politicking also ignores another very important fact; that most second and third generation Latinos have comfortably settled into the American Mainstream and that, not unlike most Americans, ideas matter the most. Aside from encouraging a scenario that promises to increase the national debt, Republicans should also be cognizant of their own diminishing fortunes once Puerto Rico routinely begins electing Democrats into office once this measure has been ratified. What's next on the agenda, proposed Statehood for The District of Columbia that will further increase the number of Democratic seats in both houses of Congress on the chance of attracting potential African American voters? This bill is without question a lose/lose proposition for the Republican Party which would better serve its (own) political interests and the interests of the nation by attracting party support on the quality of its (own) party principles rather than its transparent pandering for problematical votes.

• • •

I would like to raise a few questions as they relate to Tyranny: Should a society living under autocratic rule be held accountable, in some measure, for its passive compliance with an outlaw “government” that routinely shames, dishonors and ushers economic hardship on its people? Should its people, (they cannot properly be called citizens), be held liable for the criminal designs of its ruler(s)? (they cannot properly be called leaders) Should its people be subject to international reprisals by otherwise peaceful nations threatened by its existence? Should its people be perceived as innocent bystanders caught up in the whirlwinds of determined causes or willing accomplices drawn to “dynamic” currents exceeding their moral and physical endurance? Should its people be subject to (economic) sanctions imposed against that nation whose objectionable conduct at home and abroad poses a viable threat to its peaceful neighbors? Is ignorance an excuse, or complacency or cowardliness for that matter? The present situation in Iraq recalls Hitler's Germany. How could its people allow it to happen? Although events and circumstances may vary, I am also reminded, in part, of America's (own) struggle for Independence. Not unlike Iraq, America had to deal with its own domestic factions (Tories) who favored conciliation with Brittan and were willing to provide aid and comfort to its majesty's armed forces for economic reasons. In this manner the revolutionists had to contend with contentious factions both foreign and domestic. In fairness to the Iraqis, however, the Colonists, properly Americans, enjoyed the singular advantage of democratic traditions (as did Germany); however unbalanced both governments were at times. The Iraqis, on the other hand, have not (yet) enjoyed such traditions other than the (remote) examples of other nations whose democratic customs appear vaguely uncertain and undesirable, perhaps. I am not certain that Iraq would be able, at least in the short term, to manage its newfound freedom(s) should such an opportunity present itself if and when Saddam Hussein has been forcefully removed from power, replaced by Who or What? Such a scenario is reminiscent of Imperial Japan, a nation lacking historical democratic traditions. The aftermath of the Second World War was a period of adjustment for victor and vanquished alike. I mention this in passing because the day may very well come when such decisions will have to be made by parliamentary government or proxied by other nations. History has oftentimes shown that however primitive a culture or underdeveloped a society, most people are generally receptive to freedom. Freedom, however, is an acquired habit. I believe that this rule equally applies to Iraqis if given the chance.

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The Good don't die young. It only seems that way because they are oftentimes the ones we are likely to miss the most.

• • •

When principles of non-violence are either self-contained or practiced unconditionally under circumstances (otherwise) calling for a measured response, (sound) judgment and common sense appealing to the requirements of a peaceful, well-ordered society that every citizen (otherwise) owes an obligation, and whose conspicuous merits, perhaps laudable in some instances, however questionable at other times, and where (such) natural impulses are routinely rejected, even more remarkably when Property and Person and at times the Nation, are at risk by (anti-social) individuals determined to provoke harm; weighs in the balance, and where (institutional) recourse is problematical or uncertain, an (individual) is required, inasmuch as it lies within that individual's capacity to do so, to discourage such annoyances as they may present themselves to that individual as well as that individual's family and friends, however contrary to that individual's "nature," lest that individual's misplaced pacifism further encourage mischief makers and bullies alike, by providing license to habitually upset the harmony and safety of private and public concerns as it (otherwise) suits their primitive whims.

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Revenue Sharing is similar in some respects to Progressive (Income) Tax Rates in the manner that the greater the payout, the less likely the Return.

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Inflation occurs when the (marginal) increase in consumer spending (Demand) exceeds the (marginal) increase in the production of goods and services (Supply); that is to say, more dollars chasing fewer goods and services.

• • •

Never dwell on the future; anticipate and plan for it, instead!

• • •

(Our) failure to attain (our) full spiritual, moral and intellectual potential as human beings places a heavier burden on those entrusted to (our) care, especially (our) children who, requiring the best instruction possible, predicated upon the highest formative examples, otherwise suffer a grave disservice.

• • •

The phenomenon of public opinion, or its volatility, I should say, is rooted, in part, in the (composite) uncertainties of a society's moral, spiritual and intellectual positions that are often unclear, if not incomprehensible to individuals who have never been properly instructed to learn or to think critically about what they have learned or make proper sense out of what they have learned; whose "thinking" (otherwise) lacks keen insight into the (essential) nature of the things they have "learned". In other words, "right reasoning." Many individuals susceptible to teeming influences extending beyond their capacity to assimilate what is being conveyed and in what manner and why, for that matter, entirely dependent has the public become on its media "mouthpieces" commissioned to do their thinking for them in a fruitless attempt at sorting out unintelligent pieces of information that, taken collectively, are even more meaningless, thereby frustrating further efforts to attain (true) knowledge while unsettling core beliefs.

• • •

Everyday language has become vulgarized; less refined, functional, (however) lacking structure and style; expressing ideas (however) lacking the underlying essentials that (otherwise) provide quality and meaning to our thoughts.

• • •

The passage of time should never diminish the highest regards a society retains for its historical heritage.

• • •

Ancient cultures firmly embraced the customs and traditions of its venerable past in a manner unlike (modern) evolutionary designs underscoring a society's social development; that is to say, adapting to changing values; especially pluralistic societies that seem to be constantly redefining themselves. I believe that this was due, in part, to the homogeneous nature of their culture(s) that remained (relatively) stable for centuries. I am referring to their (highest) core traditions remarkable for their constancy.

• • •

.....novel or varied expressions... "Intruding".....conventional mainstream..... "Enforcing"preferential viewpoints...and... prejudices...pressing requirements..... overriding (historical) issues..... rejecting.... uncertain customs...meaningless.....irrelevant.....more so.....native born...restless...uncomfortable.....(historical) assumptions.... inconsonant...present fashions..... (inevitably) superseding.... (Society's).... storied traditions.... legendary characters.....provisional champions... sympathetic....amenable to.... modern conventions.... marginalizing... historical reference.... hastening... new heroes to admire.

• • •

Ideas are formed (by) the mind....they are influenced....however....by conditioning!

• • •

As purses keep rising through the roof, the modern-day boxer can no longer be properly considered a “prize” fighter.

• • •

Inorganic foodstuffs have seemingly acquired a numinous value.

• • •

There is a very disturbing trend evolving towards a problematical ”new age” spiritualism or modern day Gnosticism superseding official church doctrines and teachings considered inflexible and dated for undisciplined individuals pursuing an easier “religion” grounded on an individual’s (own) considered opinions; whereby that individual becomes the guardian of its (own) conscience, its (own) road to salvation, its (own) judge; in a word, its (own) custom-made god answerable to its (own) self.

• • •

I would like to express a few thoughts about Equality and Freedom: Equality implies an objective standard or rule of measurement; for example, two individuals equal in height or weight or of “comparable” intelligence or athletic ability (however imprecise) or other material objects or propositions subject to precise measurement like spatial dimension, volume or geometric quantities. The same principle holds that “all men are created equal”; that is to say, that each enjoys Equal (Natural) Rights as ordained by God, (however problematical in practice). In this manner, a quality perceived, if not completely understood, is considered subjective and therefore resistant to precise measurement; that is to say, (sentient) ideas do not share (intrinsic) equal value or meaning. Such principles, as they relate to Equal (Civil) Rights, for example, are recognized by social and political conventions allowing every individual, who is legally registered, for example, the right to vote or a licensed driver the right to own or operate an automobile or a prospective home buyer, with sufficient capital or credit, the right to purchase a house or a condo or whatever falls within his or her means. These inalienable rights offer expression to multi-lateral decisions conforming to the right of every citizen to make comparable decisions. Equality, however, does not (necessarily) imply Freedom although some might (otherwise) argue by the examples indicated above; that every individual is allowed certain latitude (or Freedom) in making personal decisions. Equality, unlike Freedom, however, implies a condition of “Sameness”. Individuals held in detention are Equal; that is to say, they are all (equally) imprisoned although some may enjoy certain privileges that others may not, but that is besides the point inasmuch as even the favored among them cannot properly be called Free. The same argument (once) held for slaves who were Equally degraded as men and women. Some labored in fields while the “favored” among them were retained as house servants. These people, it might be argued, are/were Equal in status (as prisoners or slaves) but not Equal in (relative) rank. Equality, therefore, is not necessarily conditioned by Freedom although Freedom oftentimes conditions Equality. Any number of individuals, as indicated above, enjoying equal rights and privileges consonant with the legal requirements of a free society, may differ in a variety of ways; materially, intellectually, physically, morally, spiritually, by temperament, motivation, its expectancies, the list is endless. These differences must necessarily circumscribe or limit, whether influenced by natural designs, circumstance or purposeful intent, the decisions that (we) make or don’t make, or are unable to make, for that matter; for example, a below-average student seeking enrollment at an Ivy League College or a modest wage earner looking to buy a home in a pricey neighborhood. It might be properly argued that we are all Equal to the extent that we are all Free, but that we are unequal or limited in the manner we are able to exercise our freedoms. Equality of Opportunity is the closest any free society may hope to attain “Equal Freedom.” For a variety of reasons, however, it remains problematical that equal access (if such really exists) will achieve equal results.

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(Social) Revolutions reach a fevered pitch whenever the traditional barriers to Change (once) considered impregnable are gradually breached, further arousing popular expectations.

• • •

Perfection will not, indeed, cannot transform (itself) into anything less than what it already is. It does not aspire to anything that is higher than (itself) because nothing higher exists. It does not require anything other than (itself) to complete what has already been completed or fulfill a potential that has already been recognized. It is self-contained, wanting or needing nothing. For this reason, would it make any sense that it would purposely seek a condition or state of “being” other than (itself)?

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The shameless remain impervious to their (internal) indiscretions!

• • •

News is (generally) unbiased. Those reporting the news, however, (generally) are!

• • •

Although marijuana use may not necessarily lead to harder drugs, it is certain, however, that those habituated to hard drugs started off on “softer” ones. A circular argument might be appropriate: Although some (undetermined) percentage of motorists have never been involved in a traffic accident, it is a 100 percent certainty, however, that any motorist that has, owns and operates a vehicle.

• • •

Any individual who decides to become a member of some community must (necessarily) subordinate a measure of his or her private interests in support of broader, public interests.

• • •

A mind's pre-conceived designs oftentimes determine what an individual sees, thinks or feels or believes he or she sees, thinks or feels or what he or she may wish to see, think or feel. In other words, Reality is oftentimes what an individual "expects" it to be.

• • •

Success, I believe, enjoys its own (inestimable) rewards based on an individual's internalized set of core values or beliefs. As a rule, every individual achieves some measure of success in keeping with his or her own purposeful designs, however modest or exceptional. Many of us, however, are oftentimes influenced by (uncertain) material standards that (otherwise) inform our judgment. This is especially true in today's competitive environment where "success" is generally measured in terms of (material) affluence(s), that, for comparative reasons, is oftentimes difficult to determine who, for example, is "successful" or who is not or who falls somewhere in between or whose fortunes are rising or falling and how such measures are determined by questionable premises that (otherwise) limit our perception of (material) success.

• • •

When standards of success are reduced to (material) things, they must necessarily limit our understanding of success. Success is oftentimes informed by Culture. In biblical times, a successful man was measured by the size of his cattle or vineyards. In oriental cultures an engineer was held in higher esteem than the physician. During the Renaissance, the revival of classical art and literature was considered the highest intellectual and (moral) achievement. (The Renaissance Man) For others, loving God and following His Commandments is the (true) measure of success. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" On a strictly material basis, however, wealth accumulation is considered the highest standard of success that partially explains why the stock market crash of (1929) caused many investors to commit suicide or why many of us grow despondent whenever our financial portfolios or 401K's suffer a setback. The true standard of success, it would seem, is "When your heart is at peace and content. When you have positioned yourself to follow your dreams. When you are happy." (Wiki)

• • •

Material Designs are self-limiting inasmuch as they oftentimes fail to consider every (human) possibility; that is to say, an open, discriminating mind receptive to all (reasonable) things that (properly) completes an individual.

• • •

What may be determined with some degree of certainty, however, is that an individual having acquired x amount of material substance; that is to say, accumulated more or less property or wealth than some other individual, has achieved more or less (material) success than that other individual although that individual's success on balance, in the absence of underlying measures, remains problematical.

• • •

Success, on a variety of levels, implies achieving some desirable goal; owning a modest home or receiving high grades in school or financial success or achieving popularity or (perhaps) having "made a difference" in someone else's life.

• • •

Success may also be defined as having achieved a stated goal.

• • •

It may be reasoned that an individual who enjoys more of something is more successful than someone who has less of that same something who otherwise desired more of that something. In this manner it may be correctly argued that the former is more successful by having exceeded the mutual designs of the latter.

• • •

That an individual may possess more of a particular something than another individual desiring that same something is limited or qualified, however, by their (private) designs; that is to say, each may be equally satisfied with the quantity each acquired of that same something.

• • •

We may furthermore amend our argument by stating that someone who has more of something is "better off" than that someone who has less of that same something. It raises the question, however, what does "better off" really mean? Who is to argue that someone with more of something is comparatively speaking, better off than someone possessing less of that same something?

• • •

Another problem arises once we begin engaging in the how much or how little or how much is enough or not enough circular (type) arguments. Such questions must further frustrate our efforts in defining (material) success that oftentimes relate, to some degree, to private decisions revolving around (the) individual. If (some) indeterminate (amount), that individual may conceivably go on endlessly chasing his or her own tail which is hardly the formula for success. Perhaps the (materially) successful person is an individual who requires nothing more or nothing less than what is needed. Perhaps this is too simplistic a view. In the final analysis, lacking some fixed standard by which to measure (material) success, such arguments must necessarily remain problematical. I have limited these observations to (material) success. There are other forms of success whose nature is internally defined. Unfortunately such “abstracts” are seldom apparent to those who, in compliance with conventional practices, are exclusively committed to pursuing material things for their own sake. These individuals are sadly diminished; however, I will not argue the point here.

• • •

An individual’s sexual orientation is a private matter that should be confined to the bedroom, behind closed doors. (This explains why bedrooms have doors to begin with.) His or her attitude towards sex involves intimate choices best left to that individual and that individual’s (consenting) partner to decide. Sexual preferences do not require the ratification of public opinion whose “consent”, in any event, would (merely) constitute formal acquiescence after the fact. This is especially true in today’s (modern) environment where “evolving” standards are generally tolerant of unusual or “quirky” (sexual) manners (otherwise) considered remarkable by traditional standards provided they neither openly flaunt nor challenge a society’s established customs. Such is often the case, however, with a number of “reform” minded individuals or groups harboring a decided agenda or with political or social axes to grind. Everything being equal, however, the average citizen is oftentimes content to live and let live, to “accept” what it may otherwise perceive as odd or peculiar in a manner consistent with an individual’s right to privacy. Such includes sexual behavior that some might otherwise consider, in other respects, inappropriate. (Note that I am referring to “consenting” adults of legal age!)

• • •

.....if not for obnoxious attitudes seeking neither tolerance nor acceptance, per se, however the purposeful restructuring, rather, of traditional customs and practices considered a threat to emerging (designs) seeking authentic parity.....

• • •

Critical Thinking, given its essential ambiguities, must ultimately return to Questions of Faith.

• • •

Moral Relativism is incompatible with Core Beliefs.

• • •

What recourse remains for Youth whose Elders have rejected the Moral Argument?

• • •

The House of Representatives recently voted to begin impeachment proceedings against William Jefferson Clinton, a wicked man indeed!

• • •

Honor and Virtue oftentimes emerge during times of social and political unrest whereas Rank and Privilege are likely to accrue during moments of relative ease and tranquility.

• • •

Law(s) must necessarily embody a moral premise otherwise its judicial interpretations will fail to inspire confidence among the people.

• • •

(Self) Discipline is “the” essential ingredient required for Learning. It’s “the” controlling or (motivating) factor needed in achieving Erudition (or any other goal for that matter).

• • •

When the Rule of Law is uneven; that is to say, arbitrarily applied, its inconsistencies or lack of uniformity must necessarily call its legitimacy into question.

• • •

An individual who sleeps on average eight (8) hours a day as opposed to someone who (otherwise) finds six (6) hours sufficient, sleeps 8.3 percent more than the latter. Projected over an average lifespan of eighty (80) years, the former has (potentially) squandered 6½ years of his or her life in bed. Oh precious time!

• • •

Perhaps nothing is more unsettling to unprincipled men and women than being in the company of virtuous people.

• • •

Urban (traffic) Congestion over the last half century has exposed the improvidence of infrastructural planning that have become inefficient before their time. Such are the (underlying) misconceptions of myopic designs that “visualize” future requirements within present time frames. These miscalculations will need to be corrected in the future, especially when rapid population growth will eventually transform many of our rural areas into bustling towns and cities.

• • •

There are many of us who are seemingly incapable of performing a kindly deed for its own sake but for the sake, rather, of anticipatory rewards or promises; such purposeful acts of kindness and goodwill have become “means to an end”.

• • •

.....reciprocation of some kindly deed in exchange for some other kindly deed offered in proportion to what each party hopes to receive in return.....

• • •

Television has engendered a generation of Americans lacking imagination or (creative resourcefulness). Such (thoughtless) attitudes are (especially) apparent among certain segments of our Youth who have grown indifferent, if not impervious, altogether, to nuance, irony and wit or subtle designs or delicate shadings that (otherwise) require a receptive imagination rather than taking “everything” at their face value, (as many of them seem to do); conditioned as their minds often are by the requirements of material “evidence” and visual “proofs”; neither able to draw inferences nor reach (meaningful) conclusions from underlying sources, opting, instead, for the path of least (perceptual) resistance.

• • •

Unless an individual has been properly tested, it remains a matter of opinion how he or she might (otherwise) behave or react under trying circumstances or conditions that he or she has not been properly exposed to. (Adversity ultimately defines the limits of Character)

• • •

Liberals seem to need a “guilt” check every so often in order to restore discipline among the ranks!

• • •

Humankind uncovers what God’s Wisdom inspires.

• • •

In anticipation of tomorrow’s (December 17th 1998) scheduled impeachment hearings, the Clinton Administration has authorized “preemptive” air strikes against selected Iraqi targets in “response” to weapons (inspection) violations sanctioned, but nominally enforced, by the United Nations following the Persian Gulf War. A politically opportune, diversionary tactic orchestrated by the cynical Mr. William Jefferson Clinton!

• • •

Sound coaching principles (generally) inspire winning attitudes. Good coaching is limited, however, by a team’s willingness to receive proper instruction. Such is unlikely in today’s marketing environment where coaches will oftentimes receive the ax before a highly profiled, highly salaried, highly flawed and underachieving athlete is either called on the carpet or benched for failing to perform up to his or her capabilities or who (routinely) places his or her ego ahead of the team. In this manner, owners seek to protect their “investments” by making sacrificial lambs of those whose job it is to properly teach and instill team discipline.

• • •

What is it exactly that constitutes a “classless” society; an elimination of (income) disparities, achievement and its highest rewards, uniform thoughts and opinions, a recasting of traditional social arrangements, cordial social environments or... rude and boorish behavior, lack of (social) etiquette, mindless conformity, intellectual mediocrity, sameness, “equality,” a rejection of lofty ideals, a cynical disregard for the natural order of things, Utopia?

• • •

When language lacks cognitive or measured expression, its symbols faintly perceived or understood; it falls on enlightened custom to settle its intended meaning.

• • •

Which of the two constitutes the greater evil, the emergence of (widespread) social immorality or a society’s casual indifference to

unsavory practices (otherwise) considered offensive to binding moral principles? It may be reasonably argued that both attitudes are equally reprehensible. Moral Excellence must necessarily recede in proportion to a society's collective reluctance to either admonish or reprimand inappropriate or disagreeable behavior by (otherwise) setting the proper examples for others to follow.

• • •

A foundation that is (intellectually) hollow or (morally) unsound must weaken its structural integrity. Such, appropriately applies to families and to the institution of marriage.

• • •

"He who is without sin cast the first stone" is a warning to (all) sinners who would otherwise stand in judgment of others. This admonishment does not recall the forgiveness of sin(s) but the penitent sinner, rather. "Go and sin no more."

• • •

The problematical assumption of Free Speech in our society, I believe, demands broader (interpretive) judgments than at any (other) time in our nation's history. Freedom of Expression is testing the limits of our collective tolerance like never before. The elastic demands imposed on our courts by modern impressions advancing the (unlimited) right to free expression have stretched its traditional boundaries in a manner that the Founding Fathers could never have possibly envisioned given the moral climate of the times in which they lived.

• • •

Individuals, who are thoughtful and/or unaffected by extraordinary circumstances, never allow unusual designs to influence the manner that they (otherwise) perceive themselves; always mindful of changing fortunes likely to alter the course of their lives in one manner or another.

• • •

Imagination complements Learning. An engineering student, for example, may acquire practical skills like mathematics or statistics and (subsequently) apply that knowledge to some specific design conceived by artful planning or that individual's (own) creative resourcefulness. Such inventions, however, stem from inherent qualities that cannot be acquired from book learning.

• • •

America's political landscape needs a heavy dose of "Progressive Conservatism" prepared to challenge the socio/economic assumptions of both major political parties that seem to have lost their vision in recent years; especially among Liberal Democrats and "Moderate" Republicans whose anachronistic ideas about the role of government and the people it purportedly serves has transformed their political platforms into a tireless repetition of recycled platitudes that no longer seem to meet modern requirements; especially those of working men and women. Conservatives need to provide (viable) economic alternatives to bilateral assumptions whose differences are oftentimes formal rather than essential. Conservatives should continue to encourage tax reductions and operating efficiencies that will further reduced government spending accruing to the benefit low-income earners and small business owners. It leaders will need to provide comprehensive guidelines articulating its position on abortion, assisted suicide, affirmative action, civil rights, conservation, environmental and family issues, education and the death penalty, among a number of issues of immediate concern to many blue collar voters disheartened with "business as usual" establishmentarians seated across both sides of the political aisle who seem to have forgotten the voters that elected them into public office or the reasons why they were elected to begin with. Such discussions should avoid narrow-minded, abstractly ideological arguments that are (oftentimes) indefensible or meaningless and serve no other useful purpose than scoring political points among its "hard-line" supporters (otherwise) indifferent to concerns of popular importance.

• • •

Conscience is understood as an (internalized) set of morals and values whose critical references, in whatever manner obtained and (assimilated), must necessarily enhance or diminish an individual's sense of guilt or other such feelings and emotions proceeding from that individual's private understanding of right and wrong or good and evil; that is to say, how that individual observes (external) events and assimilates the information that it receives. A moral relativist, on the other hand, is likely to embrace a broader set of (moral/ethical) assumptions whose arbitrary premises are less in keeping with absolute ideas that otherwise require critical thinking. Individuals might be less likely encumbered by Conscience although many straddling the fence may otherwise side in favor of customary expressions or principles considered worthy of their highest regard.

• • •

.....troublesome... Conscience.... assaulting (our) subconscious faculties.... on some level..... (the)...normative designs of conventional designs....providing form and meaning.....to...individuals.....however!

• • •

There exists an underlying current of confidence inherent in teleological designs reposed in a (presumed) understanding of "things" that are unknown however known, undefined however (not) uninformed. In this manner, immanent knowledge is understood by ideas that lay hidden and unseen, yet intuitively understood. Such explains a child's (implicit) trust in a parent however untested.

• • •

That the media considers it their sacred trust to correctly “inform” their viewers rather than properly “informing” them, speaks volumes about our society’s collective (intellectual) lassitude and (general) lack of critical thinking. The public’s reflexive response to fast food journalism and casual explanations that otherwise require measured thought runs interference for individuals who, for convenience sake, are prepared to accept (almost) anything at its face value without (first) questioning its authenticity.

• • •

The Stock Market reacts irrationally at times although “irrational” (investor) behavior, influenced by (seemingly) plausible signs, (oftentimes) represent illogical adjustments or illogical responses operating under illogical assumptions whose illogical designs are seemingly logical. Every market hiccup seems to trigger what has predictably evolved into wholesale (selling) frenzies under pretexts that (otherwise) appear to validate sporadic selling or profit taking by institutional investors whenever relatively sound (market) economies would (otherwise) dictate staying the course. In this manner, an occasional (market) quirk or (uncertain) political event would seem to “justify” bailing out; in turn spooking unsophisticated investors into selling off their own shares in order to cut their losses before their portfolios hit rock bottom thereby setting the table for savvier investors to acquire them on the cheap.

• • •

Wealth, in whatever manner acquired or however abundant, is never entirely our own; that is to say, an individual’s (purported) wealth is oftentimes contingent upon a government’s need for Revenue. In this manner, Wealth, however much an individual accumulates, remains a provisional (financial) arrangement between the “owner” and the government. How much or how little a government decides to spend generally determines what portion of earnings or savings, for that matter, an individual will be permitted to keep; that is to say, individuals are “entitled” to whatever portion the government is willing to allow in proportion to its (own) “urgent” requirements. If this sounds like so much hyperbole, the reader might properly consider the confiscatory tax policies of socialist governments that have routinely driven many of its most productive citizens to safer (tax) havens in order to ward off efforts designed to appropriate their wealth. Individuals are subject to indirect taxes as well. These taxes include, however are not limited to, consumer taxes, school and property taxes, “sin” taxes, egregious taxes on inheritance or the “death tax” and capital gains taxes whose earnings are taxed twice, no less. It should not be inferred from the aforementioned that I am principally opposed to taxes. I would be the first to argue that any orderly, well governed society requires the cooperation of all its (productive) citizens and that each should properly contribute his or her own proportionate “fair” share of the burden otherwise required for public services available to every citizen regardless of income. There was a time, however, when our government was less prolific and wasteful, the demands placed upon it less urgent; a time when most individuals looked to themselves and their families first, rather than the government for assistance. These are different times in which we live, however. I fear that there is no turning back the hands of time. By having surrendered our inherent right to make personal decisions considered appropriate to our own particular lifestyles and needs, we have summarily relinquished our customary right to appeal such decisions made on our (own) behalf by government institutions that we’ve provided with (reckless) authoritative powers far exceeding their intended scope and purpose; institutions that no longer pretend to be our servants but the masters, rather, of our own determined way of life.

• • •

Is Ignorance the beginning or the “end” of Wisdom?

• • •

Social Engineering and Micro-Management have become the political norm(s); government largess broadening its horizons, transcending every segment of society, bar none, including the “Middle Class(es),” once counted among the government’s severest critic(s), nevertheless compromising its middle-class principles and values in exchange for its own “fair” share of the (public) spoils—for shame!—disregarding the effects of (historical) extravagance(s) in proportion to its own evolving “requirements”...unprincipled chameleons and unwitting accomplices of (Big) Government’s unending designs to expand its scope and meddling influence over the private affairs of its citizens, maintaining lockstep precision through its march to the promise land of “milk and honey” and prodigal spending that must inevitably disappoint many, including unlikely bases of support!

• • •

...indifference to national loyalty.... not its (material) assumptions, however.....highly recruited.....functioning (best) in free and open markets.....neither affirming (formal) allegiance to (host) nation.....nor its customs and manners..... indifferent to domestic affairs..... unless prevailed upon...faithful to its (own) appointed ends..... wherever (such) commitments (may) lie.... operating within “unassigned” parameters...inconsonant with prescribed (legal) authority..... circumstantial or variable.....in whatever manner.....incidental to intended design(s)... morally “neutral”... unencumbered by borders... exploiting market opportunities.....

It is possible to “go home again” provided (that) we have properly mended our fences.

• • •

Intellectual Lassitude is conditioned by Habit reinforced by lazy attitudes; that is to say, a tendency (not) to investigate “questions”

thoroughly through applied effort.

• • •

An individual's essential makeup in conjunction with that individual's acquired habits oftentimes (render) popular opinion problematical although such difficulties that are likely to ensue, in the absence of a broad-based consensus, necessarily submits (to) a communion or joining together of distinguishing viewpoints commonly agreed upon, in whatever manner construed, (by) gravitating towards some amenable, plausible center that most individuals are willing to concede in the interest of a well-ordered society.

• • •

Freedom is informed by National Custom(s).

• • •

Truth, however "self-evident," when indecisive or poorly crafted must inevitably succumb to the unwavering dynamics of deterministic authority.

• • •

Loyalty in the workplace was once considered a (corporate) virtue. In today's increasingly mobile/faster paced environment(s), however, dedication and (long-term) commitment to one's company is likely to raise a few eyebrows rather than merit approval!

• • •

Events in and of themselves do not necessarily shape (public) opinion in whatever manner such events are (oftentimes) regarded by the (public) general.

• • •

I was reading recently where prime time commercial advertisements appearing on Superbowl Sunday are running upwards to \$53,000 a second. Are such sums imaginable? Commercial Vulgarly in its lowest form, unparalleled and unequalled by any conceivable standard, gives pause to the hordes of unemployed; cast aside by their employers because of specious budget "constraints." How many layoffs does each advertising unit measured per second equate to the number of potential jobs that might have otherwise been created (or retained for that matter) for every marginal reduction in advertising expense? How to transform precious seconds into jobs; a suppressed yawn for each livelihood, including employee benefits every year!

• • •

Ambition must oftentimes concede, if not altogether abandon, its challenging assumptions by softening its (own) urgent requirements that (otherwise) justify its Will to Power and Influence (inevitably) superseding rooted sentiments that (otherwise) kindled such eager designs to begin with!

• • •

Every society is subject to an undetermined, however certain life expectancy that varies in proportion to a society's demographic components, (the) statistical effects of (its) technology and medicine, temperament, market designs and.....evolutionary standards of (moral) decency! At some indeterminate juncture, having (nearly) exhausted its loftiest social, cultural and intellectual ideals, a society begins striking diminishing or marginal returns, also understood as the "law of relative increasing costs." In this manner, a society ceases to evolve and begins to (gradually) retreat from its traditional boundaries until it is no longer able to effectively fulfill its intellectual and moral obligation(s). Whenever social costs begin to (marginally) exceed their intended benefits because (limited) resources are either inefficiently allocated or mismanaged or depleting revenue is (simply) unable to keep pace with spending requirements or whenever non-recoverable anti-social attitudes begin to compromise that society's quality of life or whenever that society's efforts to rehabilitate its economic, intellectual or moral infrastructures or restore flagging morale are no longer effective or have lost their (spirited) momentum or whenever (public) proposals fall short of (private) expectations is that society said to be in a state of decline. This not so unusual phenomenon is oftentimes apparent in densely populated (urban) areas whose complexity and "urgent" requirements demand a higher level of financial, intellectual and moral support. Although it is unlikely that aging societies will.....or could, for that matter, be restored to their former rank, (age has a manner of setting limits on its own resiliencies or ability to heal itself), each retains a remarkable capacity (or genius) for transforming itself into something new, that is vibrant and wholesome although not altogether new however retaining, in some manner, its former character; allowing a society to maintain its relevancy in a changing environment in search of a "new" identity. A society that hopes to (otherwise) reinvigorate itself must redefine itself; that is to say, determine beforehand what it hopes to become. Such decisions should be carefully mapped out as they are likely to impact the course of future generations (curiously) different however (remarkably) similar to present conventions. In a word, change must inspire confidence in a society that must "die" in order to be reborn again.

• • •

Dietitians seem to be in a state of confusion; one moment commending the nutritional value of certain foodstuffs and the next warning the consumer of their harmful effects on the basis of controvertible studies predicated upon questionable assumptions and flimsy

evidence “consistent” with politicized “science” and “popularized” eating habits rather than (true) nutritional science, whose open-ended studies must necessarily promote uncertainty. A well-balanced diet consumed in moderation is therefore prescribed to the uninitiated and hopelessly naïve who have allowed dietetic hysterics to (otherwise) inform common sense.

• • •

Suffering (oftentimes) defines or softens the heart of an individual by making that individual (more) receptive to of other individuals who are suffering or who have suffered in some manner. It would seem that compassion is not some feeling “acquired” outside an individual but rather an impression internalized within that individual who, having endured his or her own (private) hardships, is likely to display a more benign, sympathetic attitude toward other individuals who he or she shares or has shared a trying experience; although suffering (in kind) is not a necessary requirement for individuals who would naturally express sympathy for other people because it falls within their “nature” to do so.

• • •

A wholesome environment, that is morally and spiritually instructive, guides and directs the activities of an individual. An exemplary environment, however, should never be (overly) excessive or overbearing that it discourages creative thought or initiative. It should be flexible enough in a manner that allows an individual some (important) measure of intellectual continuity and free-expression. There are notable exceptions such as our armed forces, for example, where the successful achievement of some military objective oftentimes requires absolute compliance and uniformity of purpose vital to its success. (On the other hand, brilliantly unconventional strategists have oftentimes altered the course of History)

• • •

Democracies have historically degenerated into the meanest populist forms or an equality of social and intellectual mediocrity or leveling (diametrically) opposed to the highest standards of achievement and exemplary behavior, for that matter. For this reason, modern societies are experiencing a (societal) devolution of manners from the cultured to the lowbrow, from the genteel and refined to the vulgar and crude, from creative imagination to common expressions, from the enterprising to the feckless, from (thoughtful) liberalism to (intellectual) intolerance, from broad-mindedness to censorship, from inquiring attitudes to moral and intellectual indifference, from gallantry to loutishness, from economy and prudence to improvidence, from principle to expediency, from Rule of Law to Mob Sovereignty.

• • •

We are all limited to some extent by our (natural) designs or (social) conditioning; that is to say, by “origin” or customs and manners influenced, in part, by our imperfect natures or, as some might correctly argue, the consequence of (original) sin that is shared by everyone although varying by degree that is partly negligible, however, when measured against every individual’s (underlying) potential for improvement.

• • •

A comparison of Liberal Attitudes past and present: Upton Sinclair’s graphic exposé (The Jungle) written in 1906 was a resounding indictment of the meat packaging industry at the turn of the present century. Its theme centered around inhuman working conditions, squalid housing environments, disease, illness, (premature) death, ruthless commercial exploitation, below average wages, rip-off company cooperatives, prohibitive mortgage rates, economic uncertainty, innocence, hope, anguish and despair. Fast forward to 1999 where Modern Liberalism is more likely to raise (moral) objections over the “mistreatment” of animals led to the slaughter.

• • •

The noblest (social) inheritance is model citizenship.

• • •

Pardon the Sinner, never the Sin!

• • •

It’s not how one starts, inasmuch as how one finishes!

• • •

The Nativity confirmed the coming of The Christ. The Resurrection consummated the Faith.

• • •

Liberty, unless affirmed by (popular) consent and validated by (lawful) customs and practices must (inevitably) devolve into Libertinism.

• • •

As a rule, every student should (generally) concede prudence and “wisdom” to those best qualified to teach, keeping in mind, however, that, however well-intentioned, the possibility of error and invalid assumptions are always present.

• • •

The Law seeks to preserve, not to promote Freedom. It therefore remains impartial to the (broader) designs of any individual.

• • •

When America's Public School System was first established in 1830, its primary mission was to assimilate Americans into the (collective) mainstream at a time our nation was predominately agrarian and (widely) dispersed; to harness our (fledgling) nation's intellectual resources as well as laying the moral foundation(s) of model citizenship by instilling Republican Virtues and establishing guidelines for being or becoming an American.

• • •

First Amendment interpretations have gradually evolved from verbal expressions to (expressive) manners, whose (penumbral) "legalities" must continue reinforcing every conceivable form of "inappropriate" language or behavior.

• • •

Whenever our daily routines are (being) constantly modified in order to promote serialized forms of amusement do we (quickly) tire of new diversions?

• • •

...commissioned to ensure that the Natural Rights of Man remains inviolate and uncompromised in whatever manner an individual chooses to worship without prejudice or bias to (any) individual with respect to that individual's (religious) customs and beliefs including nonbelievers; upholding such practices privately invested in the Individual and not the State without undermining the Public's (inherent) awareness of an Almighty Presence.... (including) other inalienable rights, for that matter, afforded to every citizen; providing equal access and protection under the law and the right of every Individual to redress affronts to person and property without ruinous (material) effect on that individual or that individual's character or standing....

• • •

...television's (gross) mischaracterization of "Conservatives" and Conservative "Viewpoints"...targeting impressionable young audiences and rallying their (intended) victims...

• • •

Wisdom and Justice, in whatever manner they may vary as practical matters, remain the (twin) cornerstones of Truth. Each ultimately defines a society's probable place in History. The rejection of this simple (truth), however, must inevitably "reassert itself and exert greater wonder than that which was previously understood." (Rudyard Kipling).

• • •

The (supposed) demise of Socialism has been greatly exaggerated. It continues flourishing in a variety of different forms in "free and open markets" much in the manner Organized Crime operates under the pretext of Legitimate Business.

• • •

Liberal strategies aimed at dividing our nation along racial and ethnic lines will continue heightening (social) unrest until their political designs are finally exposed for what they are; a pretense for harvesting votes while deceiving otherwise well-meaning individuals who are (otherwise) hoping to promote "honest" dialogue among a divided nation. (Divide and Conquer!)

• • •

Once the Supreme Court succumbs to external (political) pressures or its own unqualified assumptions of Justice, without regard to legality, that legal body can no longer be properly considered an objective interpreter of our nation's laws; its critically-minded reviews and summary conclusions centering on the (penumbral) legality of questionable (historical) assumptions.... and its (subsequent) mischaracterization of Original Intent, must remain foremost in the minds of thoughtful individuals..... and the legitimacy of rendered opinions (morally) non-binding to the sensibilities of affected establishments.

• • •

A woman defines (the) Sex; a lady defines (the) Character.

• • •

A society's notion of the "Ideal Society" is oftentimes baffled by its own (inestimable) understanding of Perfection.

• • •

Ours is a generation that nourishes a morbid and irrational fear of growing old...and death, perhaps; thereby occasioning (a) need to retain its youthful appearance(s) at whatever cost; inconsonant with age, at the expense of its (own) dignity, "eternally young," "young as one feels," (youthful) fashions and lifestyles, (adolescent) designs, the accomplices of artificial youth, pining for what is no longer

retrievable, envious of younger styles also marking time.

• • •

...whereby we seek to become the architects of our own salvation...a salvation grounded on shifting sands...on death's denial...and self-deception...wherefore have we abandoned God...our eternal (spiritual) comfort...and (final) ray of hope?...mischaracterized by modern times as a disinterested bystander...(some) intangible being of uncertain (spiritual) quality or substance....exceeding worldly comprehension... who has (seemingly) withdrawn his (unconditional) love and support...leaving each of us to our own devise(s)...in our own manner... in desperation...seeking to ward-off growing old(er) by renouncing age ...or remanding its inevitability to some uncertain future...for that which awaits Death, may well bide its time...

• • •

A memo to (insecure) parents: Unconditional Love is (oftentimes) an Immature Love. A truly loving and thoughtful parent understands that meaningful guidelines are essential for a developing child who hopes to one day stand on his or her own two feet.

• • •

More irritating to conservative sensibilities than a Northeastern Liberal, perhaps, is a Guilt-Ridden Southerner with a "Conscience!"

• • •

The social upheavals that typified the sixties resulted in a (net) reduction in (higher) culture as well as a devolving of (traditionally) sound arrangements. The nihilistic zeal to "reform" society in its entirety, vanquishing the good as well as the bad, has (subsequently) left an intellectual and moral vacuum in its wake.

• • •

A (social) courtesy or kind word may seem (relatively) unimportant to some people; of no remarkable occurrence. Nevertheless, its composite impact on polite society cannot be overstated. This is especially true in modern societies where formal manners and/or casual expressions are oftentimes feigned or forced; cheerless gestures or conveniences, artificial and insincere, neither genuine nor real; impersonal, lukewarm and detached, a solemn duty performed without conviction (or meaning). Our society's casual indifference to traditional amenities that have come to typify modern attitudes, must eventually shatter (the) social conventions that have "habitually" fostered goodwill.

• • •

I have encountered a number of practicing Christians over the years who are (seemingly) unable to resolve religious "questions" such as the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption or Transubstantiation, for example; considering such (doctrinal) propositions set forth by the church as operating outside the prescribing (rational) limits otherwise informed by Reason, who are unwilling to contest, however, the Incarnation, Resurrection and the Holy Trinity as matters of Faith.

• • •

Had we the means of prolonging our lives so we might allow ourselves "sufficient" opportunity to correct our historical indiscretions (or private failings), our (naturally) stubborn/inquisitive nature(s) might very well produce the same deleterious effects!

• • •

The liberal establishment appears reluctant to provide proper allowances for the underlying influence of genetics on (intellectual) achievement; brushing aside native assumptions in favor of environmental arguments lest such discussions undermine (custodial) efforts aimed at micromanaging the everyday affairs of the American People at every level of our society.

• • •

When legal customs fail to impart Wisdom or properly inform Citizenship are Republican Institutions destined to collapse!

• • •

How ironic that Republican Principle(s) designed to protect the rights of the American People are oftentimes the very catalysts that contribute to their debasement!

• • •

...Revenues projected years in advance...subject to volatile (market) conditions likely to invalidate forecasting assumptions...suggesting, perhaps, that financial "windfalls"...as they may occur....should be used...instead...to reduce The Deficit...

• • •

"Pro-Choice" advocates oftentimes employ specious arguments in order to support their abortionist agenda. One such argument, quite common among PC Advocates, centers on sketchy (Quality of Life) issues likely to recommend Abortion as a preferable alternative to

raising children in potentially hostile, otherwise unwholesome environments whose unpromising future would (“probably”) offer few, if any, tangible rewards for many. (Preferable or Unpromising for whom remain esoteric assumptions understood by custodial interests, only.) Adopting conspicuously faulty and (otherwise) self-serving reasoning conveniently side-steps a very important fact; that we all exist in a less than perfect world subject to changing fortunes and other unexpected events that routinely challenge our mettle; and that Nature, however, has its own inestimable manner of compensating each of us with an innate capacity to endure hardships and rise above our present condition however unfavorable or improbable our prospects for a “better” life may appear and that an individual’s threshold for suffering and privation oftentimes vary in proportion to that individual’s (mental) endurance and acquired habits in spite of that individual’s accustomed environment and in any event, such (gratuitous) impressions are problematical at best and should not serve as a litmus test in determining who should or should not be permitted to live or given an equal opportunity to exercise free choice(s) pre-empted by selfish motives indifferent to such rights; motives whose arbitrary designs are (otherwise) impervious to the apparent limits or consequences of questionable solutions whose (hardened) indifference to Life must inevitably diminish the (inherent) value a society confers upon its citizens regardless of their station in life. Once these unwholesome attitudes are carried to an extreme, who’s to argue against a “final solution” to questions regarding race, color or creed or national origin or income, for that matter, or an individual’s sexual orientation, eccentricity, or the elderly or others feeble in mind or body or other “distasteful” qualities incongruent with “desirable” standards designed to rid a society of its “undesirable” elements?

• • •

We are not Owners, merely Custodians!

• • •

God’s Eternal Absence is Punishment enough!

• • •

President William Jefferson Clinton recently pardoned 14 FALN Puerto Rican Terrorists on the condition that each agreed to renounce Terrorism. You Betcha!

• • •

Friendship achieves its ultimate expression once common experience rather than private designs or exceptional requirements seals the relationship.

• • •

The Present receives its instructions from the Past by “restructuring” its customs and manners and “adapting” them to accommodate modern requirements. It does not seek to alter traditions that no longer seem relevant or consequential to conventional practices merely to fulfill neo-modernistic “requirements”. The Present is informed by History; rejecting its failings, whenever appropriate, while retaining its merits. In this manner a (thoughtful) society seeks to promote dialogue and affect (meaningful) change(s) without (unduly) upsetting the natural “order of things.” A society that is either unable or unwilling to properly reconcile the Past with the Present, or has historical axes to grind, however, cannot properly evolve into something more meaningful.

• • •

A myth is a traditional story or product of an inventive imagination that may or may not be fictional or real. A belief, on the other hand, is predicated on intuitive impressions that, although not factually proven or supported by (observable) evidence, nevertheless provides Reason sufficient grounds to advance faith-based assumptions affirming its truth.

• • •

Inasmuch as perceptions matter, it behooves an individual to cultivate favorable impressions!

• • •

A society that has developed an immunity to shock or feigns indifference to offensive or inappropriate behavior when it should be properly outraged should consider itself in a transitional state of moral decline!

• • •

A savvy investor is seldom carried away by high P/E (Price/Earnings) ratios occasioned by frenzied speculation, overvalued stocks and lower than average earnings. With few exceptions, P/E Ratios should normally fall in line with industry averages. Insert appropriate stop features wherever possible!

• • •

“Artistic Expression” that has devolved into a decadent rite of passage, a vulgar assault against the sensibilities of certain religious groups, or a premeditative bashing of conventional manners and customs consistent with an “artist’s” (own) intolerant viewpoints, or where such offensive forms are involuntarily funded by (taxpayers) whose (own) religious or social values remain the subjects of ridicule by dim-witted nihilists, sustained by First Amendment rights that continue to provide constitutional support to intellectually and morally corrupted designs, recalls patronal times when talent and quality mattered before the egalitarian floodgates ushered an impetuous rash of (artistic) pretenders bounded by chains consisting of linked sausages!

• • •

A philosopher might correctly (reason) that a farmer cannot plant a garden with gold. A pragmatist, on the other hand, might (argue) that such a commodity would provide the necessary seeds.

• • •

An individual's (potential) moral character is determined at birth although there is no question of that individual improving his or her (own) natural condition through industry, conditioning, and habit...or (perhaps) undermining it, for that matter.

• • •

Personality types (oftentimes) emerge at a tender age. Consider preschoolers, for example, and you will likely encounter a variety of children who are thoughtful, serious-minded, generous and kind, sensitive and shy, laid-back and unassuming, vulnerable, brazen and bold, bullies, cowards, leaders, instigators, brown-nosers, stinkers or class-clowns. Such (indelible) characteristics (often) remain (relatively) unchanged over the course of that individual's lifetime.

• • •

America may one day acquire the dubious "distinction" of having been the only great nation in the Annals of History that purposely and systematically sought its own (internal) destruction.

• • •

Evil is motivated by a blind hatred of Good. It is less concerned, perhaps, with achieving total dominion over Humankind; its ultimate objective, being, the seduction and spiritual corruption of as many of the Faithful that lies within its Power.

• • •

An individual encumbered by circumstance(s) or events seemingly beyond his or her control, may perhaps attribute such misfortunes to bad luck or "assignable" causes although that individual may (otherwise) lack the (necessary) predicates to properly manage his or her life in a manner that might (otherwise) improve his or her (material) standing, not to mention spiritual well-being.

• • •

...rather than the outcome of some native "deficiency" or lack of exceptional talent, although such (estimable) qualities have oftentimes overcome a number of obstacles common among individuals raised in impoverished environments. This, in sharp contrast with other individuals who have enjoyed every conceivable (material) advantage however squandered such opportunities because of indolence, indifference and lack of moral and intellectual stamina....

• • •

A journalist who enjoys a First Amendment right to obtain certain information as it relates to his or her pursuit of a "storyline" should properly consider the sensibilities of the individual being interviewed; that questions raised should be fair and balanced and not intended to either harass, embarrass or otherwise offend that individual and that the highest (professional) standards should be (properly) observed at all times and that that journalist should neither conceal some hidden agenda nor interpose pre-conceived biases that purposely seek to discredit, distract or place that individual in a compromising position and that answers to stated questions should never be taken out of context or pre-determined and that, (most importantly), privacy rights should be observed at all times. In other words, that journalist should know when to back off.

• • •

Disgruntled Catholics, (including the Clergy), operating within the Church, are precursors of The Antichrist; unwittingly paving the way for his eventual return; preparing a spiritual wasteland, confounding all aspects of Church doctrines and teachings superseding authoritative truths with (spiritually) vague and uncertain ecclesiastical notions pandering to the whims of an uninformed Conscience; discrediting revealed wisdoms and traditional customs inspired by the Holy Spirit.

• • •

Television audience's morbid fascination with dysfunctional "reality" programming may conceivably occasion a time in the not so distant future when (televised) public executions or assisted suicides (perhaps) will (soon) become standard fares. Moreover, can virtual reality in the form of audience participation be far behind?

• • •

A Socialist/Marxist showcasing "prime time" examples of "crass commercialism" in all its material "decadence" for the benefit of his acolytes need only draw their attention to the ludicrous vulgarity of (television) game shows.

• • •

Satan's deceptions lie not only in his mastery over the (apparent) opponents of the Church but (especially) disgruntled Catholics operating within the Church itself; organizing, through crafty and subtle means an assembly of heretics, doctrinal apostates, "intellectuals," secularists, malcontents and (unhappy) people in general who feel that the Church has lost much of its (traditional)

moral authority, if not relevance, during these “Modern Times.” These individuals, disillusioned, in part, by the requirements of Faith, are counted among the shadows prefiguring the coming of the Anti-Christ forewarned in The Scriptures. Satan’s clever strategy of Divide and Conquer has been brilliantly orchestrated by his enlistment of the spiritually depleted who, although not inherently evil, and perhaps motivated in part by “good” intentions, have fallen victims to pride and self-love. Many are gradually approaching a critical crossroad in their lives when, exhausted by Evil’s constraining influence over mind and will, such designs must eventually overcome their spiritual endurance. It accrues to God’s (Infinite) mercy and wisdom, however, that He retains enough strength of purpose and spiritual endurance for us all!

• • •

What remains unsaid oftentimes reveals more than what is spoken!

• • •

That a number of journalists and other members of the news media (oftentimes) define themselves as politically “independent” is a matter of form rather than principle; a transparent attempt at deflecting criticisms stemming from (their) biased and unbalanced reporting.

• • •

Valet Parking provided at Municipal Parking Garages! Creating make-work jobs or simply fanning our vanity or perhaps both?

• • •

(Public) Oratory and (Public) Action(s) cannot be separated lest a (Public) Servant loses credibility before the (Public) Eye.

• • •

Philosophical speculation, as an intellectual exercise, does not require a standing (principled) commitment. Religion, therefore, is not a philosophical system.

• • •

The aging process is a fact of life. Therefore, how fortunate for many of our venerable movie stars who are able to preserve their youth in “reel” time while we, the movie-going public, continue growing older?

• • •

A strong economy may very well reduce government deficits but it remains a conditional expedient provided that the government is committed to reduce spending. Conditional because economists and lay people alike can ever be quite certain how the economy will continue to perform although the one remaining constant remains runaway government spending, especially when supported by a vibrant economy that continues generating (higher) revenue(s).

• • •

Individuals who are either unable or unwilling to form meaningful relationships with people outside of their immediate families or who generally walk in restricted circles have, in some manner, shortchanged themselves.

• • •

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should dispense with its farcical practice of holding mock elections and simply designate its Senior Senator Senate Pro-Consul for life and be done with it!

• • •

Judicial sentences should neither be (too) harsh nor (too) lenient however consistent with legal guidelines formally interpreted by law such that (the) ensuing consequences as they apply to its impartial application remain constant!

• • •

Stretch the Constitution far enough and a legal interpreter may (actually) discover something that isn’t there!

• • •

A society intoxicated by the dynamics of words rather than influenced by their factual substance (and meaning) is easily governed!

• • •

...the homes that nurtured them, the schools that instructed them, the churches that reinforced their Faith, the playgrounds where many (oftentimes) played, the institutions where they earned their daily bread... enduring testimonials of their lives, of their character and dignity as human beings, “timeless” within the subdivisions of Time, its charges, long deceased, companions no more...

• • •

To what extent should (any) civilized society assume (“partial”) responsibility for the character flaws of its (political/social) leaders?

• • •

I have never quite understood what is meant by “The End of History.” A society, if it wishes to remain vibrant and wholesome, must continue transforming itself into something “different and new”, however the “same”, if it hopes to achieve relevancy appropriate to modern times; that is to say, that society must be willing to test new assumptions. The transitioning from one form of social and cultural expression to another may properly conclude a chapter in that society’s historical progression however not the end of that society, per se, although it may very well mark the end of that society as it was formerly understood.

• • •

Addendum to the above: provided that a society continues operating within the boundaries of its core traditions unless unexpected events or changing mindsets no longer render it appropriate or feasible to do so. Slavery was/is one such example.

• • •

Addendum to the above: the same equally applies to the State of West Virginia!

• • •

Self-Interest is conditioned by Cynicism and Fear!

• • •

It would seem impolitic for Republicans to pursue Campaign Finance Reform. Aside from the fact that this measure would restrict or limit free speech, it would ultimately favor Democrats who already enjoy the broad-based support of the (mainstream) media, academia, trade and municipal labor unions, the teachers union, the arts and sciences and entertainment industries among other such institutions that continue to (explicitly) support the Democratic Party Agenda.

• • •

Addendum to the above: (Conservative) Grass Roots Efforts require a level playing field.

• • •

The unwillingness of most people to adapt to change is not so much a function of capacity inasmuch as an emotional attachment to (certain) assumptions that routinely override the prospect(s) of uncertain propositions.

• • •

That we all seek to secure our (own) social, professional or material niche as an issue of relevant importance isn’t so unusual among those of us anxious to preserve the integrity and quality of our “inestimable” achievements in whatever field. In this manner, the learned classes, for example, are often dismissive of “pretenders who would breach their professional authority or the clergy, its moral authority, or, as such questions may relate to propertied interests, the upper classes who try to remain inconspicuous by drawing attention away from their wealth or by downplaying its significance or the working and middle classes, who, equally envious or threatened by other groups situated above or below them, are likely to spend nearly everything they earn as fast as they can earn it while stashing the remains or the lower classes who seek hollow “comfort” in their anger and resentment of everyone else who may enjoy more of the “finer things” which have been “unfairly” denied them.

• • •

Moral self-righteousness, characteristic of the sixties mindset, elevated traditional inter-generational rivalries to unprecedented levels whose dire consequences continue to reverberate throughout our society today. Youthful Idealism has always had its differences with Pragmatic Realism. Nevertheless, the social and political divisions that typically defined that decade extended well beyond the appropriate limits of conventional tolerance. The sixties injected narrow and intolerant viewpoints, uninformed ideologies that sought shatter core-values and social customs by discrediting traditional conventions, unlike preceding generations that sought to establish their own unique identity within the conventional framework of existing social and cultural traditions. The “End of History,” perhaps not. The end of Western Civilization as we once knew it, yes, absolutely!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Such (oftentimes) occurs whenever parents (unconditionally) concede moral and intellectual authority to their children many have proven themselves worthy of confidence in such matters; that is to say, before they develop the necessary aptitudes and skills that will enable them to assume the burden(s) associated with such undertakings; before they acquire some measure of insight into the nature of “things.” In other words, before developing into thoughtful men and women. What our parents have bequeathed was a generation of lingering adolescents who continue to view the world as their own private playgrounds. What a fine kettle of fish!

• • •

The Bible instructs us that “the fathers should not be held accountable for the sins of the sons,” unless, of course, such sins are the result of parental neglect or failure to set proper examples.

• • •

Intending to do good without actually doing good is of no value. “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”.

• • •

Jealousy is (envious) of Success!

• • •

The “Propensity to Save,” especially among the middle classes, has been superseded by Social Security, Pensions, 401(k)s and Home Equity.

• • •

Once Science weds itself to the State, it ceases to be properly called a Natural Science but a “Political” Science, rather; a vassal to its political agenda.

• • •

It is humbling to note that Satan’s remarkable success in harvesting souls lies in his capacity to obfuscate, deceive or otherwise mislead a great many people (otherwise) harboring “good” intentions; humbling in the manner it calls to mind the scriptural passage about “a camel passing through the eye of a needle.” It is also a sober reminder that our (seemingly) good intentions do not (necessarily) serve God’s (own) purpose and that each of us remains in (dire) need of His spiritual guidance.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Far too many of us have embarked on the road to our (“own”) salvation!

• • •

The “Mainstream” Media’s selective biases; that is to say, its distortion of news worthy events, are intended to promote a “sufficient” level of awareness however masking or misrepresenting the essential properties or features required by an uninformed audience in order to obtain a more accurate description of that event and render an (appropriate) reaction. Its failure to properly connect the dots or present the entire picture, or, what is oftentimes the case, presenting a distorted one instead, ensures that the viewer remains unbalanced and off-guard; “informed” and ignorant at once!

• • •

Sensitivity Training, or “assisting” an individual in developing the “tools” that promote “thoughtful behavior,” is a euphemism for Brainwashing. A number of “diversity” workshops and seminars are being introduced to the workforce by private and public organizations seeking to either modify, limit or restrict varieties of (private) expressions and manners inconsonant with the doctrines of (political correctness). In this manner, certain forms of speech or behavior considered insensitive, offensive or hateful to protected classes are “reprogrammed” in order to satisfy the authoritative requirements of “sensitive” types.

• • •

Americans were once as much alike as they were uniquely different. Something happened along the way that subsequently changed all that.

• • •

Team Chemistry is the joining of professional attitudes and selfless efforts whose finished product exceeds the sum of a team’s collective talent.

• • •

Social Reformers have adopted cynical attitudes as they relate to (human) nature...oftentimes taking a dim view of other people whose “well-being” they (purportedly) have in mind...lacking confidence in the people’s capacity to make correct or informed decisions...(because at the very heart of the matter, reform is oftentimes a control issue)...or discrediting the underlying motives or conditions informing their private decisions...in this manner... taking it upon themselves to “reform” behavioral attitudes consonant with their own (doctrinal) viewpoints...however contrary to the (independent) points of view of other people who would much rather live their own lives in their own manner in harmony with their own interests and values.....

• • •

An Agnostic is an “open-minded” Atheist.

• • •

My (stubborn) refusal to understate the numbing moral and ethical indifference of the American People (under the guiding influence of a cynical mainstream media) never ceases to amaze me. In the aftermath of President William Jefferson (Weepy Eyed) Clinton’s eight-year tenure in office; remarkable for his Administration’s moral vacuity and brazen illegalities, (some might properly argue bordering on treasonous), a recent news poll, by a 37–35 percent margin, rated Vice President Al (the Mannequin) Gore trust worthier than his political opponent George (the Empty Suit) Bush Jr. I guess it (really) must be the economy, stupid!

• • •

Satan does not “hate” in the conventional sense understood by most individuals for the simple reason that the manifestation of this emotion necessarily implies the (potential) existence of an antithetical emotion called “love;” that is to say, extremes provide meaning to diametrical concepts or ideas. Inasmuch as Satan is incapable of expressing love, neither is he capable of (properly) expressing its antithesis commonly understood as “hate” or any (real) emotion for that matter, unless Pride is considered an emotion which I don’t believe it is. In this manner, Satan is the embodiment of Essential Evil defined as “a privation...negation of being...a partial negation of being in being.....absolute privation or non-beingwould be evil in the absolute sense” (Ibn Sina).

• • •

A Republican caught red-handed with his or her hand in the (proverbial) cookie jar is likely to feign shame and remorse for such an “unfortunate” incident. A Democrat, on the other hand, is likely to express bewilderment; inquiring with a straight face, “What cookie jar?”

• • •

A nation harboring hostile intentions against its neighbors requires an enemy, whether real or imaginary, in order to advance its domestic or geopolitical designs. If such an enemy does not formally exist, however, that “enemy” must be either manufactured or provoked in some manner. The same reasoning applies to politics. When an “issue” like racism, for example, is non-existent, it must be “created” for the benefit of “socially-minded” individuals or politicians with a political agenda in mind. Therefore, the would-be reformer will seek to promote public “awareness” of some (erstwhile) non-issue by manufacturing a victim by planting seeds of ignorance and fear into the hearts and minds of the people in a manner that gradually arouses suspicion, resentment, anger and hate. The world witnessed an example of this schismatic progression in Nazi Germany. (Such divisions were one-sided, of course). In a sense, America is experiencing its own (unhappy) progression in its own race relations fueled by politicians and “community” activists fanning the flames of racial grievance(s) for their own political reasons indicated elsewhere above.

• • •

(Monotonic) Whistling is oftentimes a condition of Sensate Privation Syndrome!

• • •

The wonders of Aerodynamics never cease to amaze me. How low density air volume in conjunction with (accelerated) motion is capable of supporting enormous weight(s) in flight may be simple enough to understand. It’s the Why that continues to puzzle me!

• • •

Virtue is the offspring of Innocence.

• • •

Minorities, especially African Americans and Latinos, have been unfairly criticized for the rapid rate of urban decline, (Remember what a nice neighborhood this used to be before “they” moved into it?) although an honest assessment would inform any fair-minded individual that many of these neighborhoods were already in a transitional state of decline years before “other” groups started moving in following the departure of White working and middle class families to suburbia in search of “greener pastures”. There was/is one major difference however, that, compared with modern standards, ethnic neighborhoods, however rundown, were generally safer, crime was lower, immigrant classes better educated, families more tightly knit, homes cleaner, children smiled more and engaged in sidewalk games, neighbors gathered on stoops on sweltering summer evenings, unemployment was lower and drugs virtually nonexistent and that, despite such dire conditions, many of those neighborhoods gave birth to remarkable genius and talents conspicuously absent in today’s poorer environments. The reason for this is quite simple: the Welfare State undermines genius, weakens initiative and self-reliance, eliminates incentive and dashes (all) hope for a better life. In the “old days” families were compelled to manage their own affairs in their own manner; to fend for (themselves) or otherwise find (themselves) lagging behind.

• • •

Addendum to the above: In the final analysis, values are what matter most!

• • •

There exist (Hidden) Truths that are neither ascertainable by Method nor Experience although revealed to knowledgeable seekers who understand where and how to look for them. Such efforts require probing (the) “Articles of Faith.” In what manner, for example, can we be certain of mutual love? Are demonstrable expressions of love sufficient proofs in themselves? Are outward appearances genuine or do such expressions proceed from affected emotions or selfish motive(s)? Does an act of love anticipate a reciprocity of tender feelings or is (that) love for an individual, apart from “loving” that individual, expressed less for its own sake rather than the sake of the beloved? At what juncture does Reason, justified by Faith, provide us with some measure of certainty that we may rely upon without imposing limits or placing conditions on that love?

• • •

...are universal effects, their harmonious order, the miracle of life, the complexities of human designs, nature’s creative impulses,

Conscience and the will toward self-improvement ...belying notions of Chance, a critical examination of wonders informing Reason beyond the limits of humankind's capacity to measure...

• • •

An individual represents the sum total of his or her composite beliefs. Attempts by other individuals to modify that individual's belief system without the consent of that individual will oftentimes encounter stiff resistance. Therefore, most people are likely to embrace viewpoints that have come to define them as (uniquely) individual. The more internalized an individual's beliefs, the less likely that individual will be to alter or modify his or her convictions. Such matters are of relatively minor consequence, that is to say, are non-threatening, provided that each of us remains respectful of one another's opinions (without necessarily having to agree with their stated positions)

• • •

Nothing can be either added to or subtracted from Perfection. Such an event would (necessarily) suggest a less than perfect nature or a nature that has not (yet) come into (perfect) being. In this manner, Perfection negates Potential; that is to say, the potential to grow or develop into something that has yet to become.

• • •

A predicate of Change is Potential. Therefore Change is an imperfect mode of Existence.

• • •

Matter is mutable; that is to say, subject to variation and change. Therefore Matter is an imperfect mode of Existence.

• • •

Human Nature is corruptible, subject to aging/disease; that is to say, subject to variation and change. Therefore, Human Nature is an imperfect mode of Existence.

• • •

Moral Excellence is a human quality subject to variation and change; that is to say, insufficient in itself. Therefore, Moral Excellence is an imperfect mode of Existence.

• • •

Moderation represents an uncertain center point between virtue and vice; that is to say, subject to variation and change. Therefore, Moderation is an imperfect mode of existence.

• • •

Reason is subject to lapses in judgment; that is to say, subject to variation and change. Therefore, Reason is an imperfect mode of existence.

• • •

Perfection is sufficient (fixed) in itself. Therefore, Perfection is the highest mode of Existence.

• • •

The highest form of (Human) Excellence is less than a grain of sand in all the oceans in all the universe compared with God's infinite Perfection!

• • •

God is the Essence of Perfection, a Completed Whole. Nothing may either add to His Greatness or diminish His Glory. Therefore, God is The Perfect Mode of Existence!

• • •

...joined together for purposes of price-fixing, unlawful trade practices and restraint of trade...acquiring an unfair ("competitive") advantage over its market rivals...resulting in artificially higher prices than the consumer could (otherwise) afford to pay for (certain) products and services...not so a highly successful company that has carefully positioned itself in the open market...(properly) planning, researching, developing, designing, manufacturing, marketing, selling and distributing its products and services at a lower cost than its competitors while passing the savings along to its customers...these companies, having legally complied with existing laws and regulations, should not be penalized for their achievements...coerced into sharing their formulae for success with their (underachieving) competitors as the courts oftentimes mandate...

• • •

The best of Intentions oftentimes fall short of our Designs!

• • •

Baby Boomers are caught in the middle of an ideological disconnect having categorically rejected their parent's customary values as well as the conventional values embraced by their (own) children. Such is the (inevitable) outcome that follows whenever (narrow-minded) ideas devolve into (esoteric) self-centeredness.

• • •

The human Mind is "similar" to a filing cabinet whose stored files (or memories) are periodically purged. As oftentimes occurs with old age, however, such purges, or memory losses are random and short-termed rather than time sequential.

• • •

For certain families, technology is oftentimes perceived as a two-headed monster, a social and economic evil that is gradually replacing labor intensive jobs with other positions requiring higher skill levels; in that manner broadening the gap between higher and lower income brackets while shrinking the middle-center to the (economic) detriment of our nation's economy.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Such arguments were also advanced during the Industrial Revolution. I believe that the world, however, is still in the throes of this inexhaustible scientific and technological revolution despite the many changes in its outward appearance. This is not some recent phenomenon, although it may oftentimes appear that way in light of the many enhancements that continue to emerge without reprieve, but a cross-generational work in process, rather, that often assumes different sizes and shapes yet whose fundamental principles remain constant. The fact of the matter is that there is no turning back the hands of time, if such was ever a reasonable option to begin with! As evolving technologies continue developing efficient ways of replacing brawn with brain, increasing competition for skilled labor in highly competitive global environments will require transforming (the) worker from a corporate to a human resource commissioned with the task of managing his or her (own) career paths. These efforts will require skilled-based education/training for individuals entering the workforce and remedial training for (more) mature populations caught in transition, should either group aspire, (especially the latter), for higher paying jobs. In other words, individuals will have to assume ownership for their (own) (career) development in highly competitive markets!

• • •

The Reform Party has devolved into a motley collection of self-centered businessmen, party exiles, Socialist Marxists, malcontents, political opportunists and has-beens, self-styled populists and libertarian wrestlers lacking a cohesive and principled platform!

• • •

When extravagant spending compels (local) governments to raise revenue through punitive lawsuits and/or "sin" taxes by targeting "unpopular" enterprises such as the tobacco industry or gun manufacturers, for example, in the "interest" of the public's "well-being," such transparent pretexts designed to increase revenue will likely encourage some companies to relocate to friendlier environments, whether domestic or foreign, where markets are free to choose its own "poisons" without the added burden of a political price tag.

• • •

Self-Centeredness is Individualism run amok!

• • •

The crisis facing many parents is attributable, in some cases, to ill-conceived efforts on the part of modern parents to "bond" with their children. Whether attempts at bonding ultimately achieve their desired effect(s) is questionable at best. There is no denying the fact, however, that (adolescent) designs on the part of parents trying to act "cool" and "hip" have actually undermined their effectiveness as parents. By accommodating the maturity level of their children by adopting their children's adolescent manners rather than setting themselves up as (proper) role models, parents have seemingly lost their proportional standing vis-à-vis their children. Mutual respect remains an important requirement in any loving/relationship, perhaps (the) most important. There can be no love in any family environment, without respect. Respect, however, has to be earned. That implies standing by one's principles, being a committed and devoted parent and making the hard choices however unpopular or "old-fashioned" they may appear.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Love follows Respect. Parents, however, must (first) conduct themselves as parents if they hope to gain the respect that many otherwise feel entitled to. (Love/Friendship remain secondary components that should otherwise [everything else being equal], follow its natural course.) I will allow, however, that it isn't easy nowadays for parents to (properly) parent, especially in today's social environment where egalitarian attitudes continue to routinely assault the underpinnings of implied "Authority." After all, no one wants to be perceived as autocratic or overbearing, especially a parent who wants to be "loved." Chalk up another in the W column for the sixties!

• • •

An "Enlightened Conservative" is a backhanded compliment much in the manner of a "Rational Liberal."

• • •

Establish enough laws and any society is eventually bound to break some of them sooner or later!

• • •

Progress implies a forward movement; an evolutionary process steadily advancing (on the basis of its own internal dynamics) towards some determined end. Change, on the other hand, is a process of becoming something different that may or may not be subject to (external designs). Although each seeks to achieve some desired effect, like promoting a common good, for example, Progress is inevitable whereas Change may go either way.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Progress and Change should not be confused with a purposeful lack of clarity prompted by expedient designs commonly adopted by “reformers” who actively seek to promote their (own) political and social agenda rather than advance (genuinely) progressive causes.

• • •

An old “dwelling” located in some far-off, secluded corner off the beaten track is likely to be characterized as quaint, picturesque and charming, enchanting, and (perhaps) sleepy-eyed (consonant with Southern manners) not to mention possessing character, whatever that means; its residents homey. That same “house” situated in a depressed urban area or in a neighborhood in transitional decline, on the other hand, is just as likely to be described as rundown, ramshackled, dilapidated and a general eyesore, its residents of low moral character.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Time and Location. If that house could only speak!

• • •

Observing an object up front and close or from too great a distance, for that matter, will oftentimes obscure or distort an individual’s visual perception. The same principle (equally) applies to an individual who is witnessing an “historical” event (like the Civil Rights Movement, for example) unfolding before his or her very eyes. In this manner, contemporary biases and prejudices will (often) cause that individual (or that society, for that matter) to misread or misinterpret the historical significance or social ramifications of that (current) event or misjudge its future implications as it relates to (race relations). The further removed from time and space from some noteworthy event, but not so far as to reduce that event to an historical footnote, but far enough to allow the passage of time to ease a society’s (collective) anxieties; future generations, no longer encumbered by such matters of immediate concern(s), will be in a better position to place these (historical) events in proper perspective, hindered as they might otherwise have been by contemporary currents or personal biases indigenous to the time(s) these historical events took place; that is to say, by being too close to the “action”.

• • •

Politicians seeking imaginative ways of defining poverty in our nation by targeting its “root causes” plays well among certain audiences however fundamentally flawed their analysis. There has been a disturbing tendency in recent years to categorically broaden (read: create more poor people) descriptive statistics designed to either support or reject existing assumptions relating to poverty rates that are oftentimes overstated, unreliable, unsupported by fact and likely to provide biased conclusions about poverty, its definition, extent, causes and prognosis for the future. The unwillingness of some politicians, however, to acknowledge even (some) improvement in this area suggests a political mindset concealing an agenda that seeks to advance, at the very least, a widespread perception of poverty for political reasons, if not poverty, itself! In this manner “poverty” oftentimes becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Such efforts are in keeping with custodial designs embarked upon in the sixties to promote bigger government rather than seeking viable solutions to arresting our nation’s poverty. They have (quietly) produced unintended results that may not bode well for its advocates as evidenced by a growing number of working and middle-class families who have grown wary of the dual requirements of pocketbook and conscience as forty years of public skepticism have gradually given way to cynical attitudes; substituting in place of compassion for individuals and families truly in need of assistance, a callous indifference, at times, for the “problematical” poor. Government has its own peculiar way of driving people to extremes!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Poverty is a relative term that should be properly considered in relation to a society’s (rising) economic expectations. The higher the bar is raised so too will the poverty line be raised in conformance with that society’s (rising) consumer standards. All classes or groups (generally) move in the same direction. As America’s “Affluent” Society becomes even more affluent so too will the “poor” expect its proportionate share of the wealth.

• • •

Addendum to the above: The undermining of traditional values has precipitated a socially divisive undercurrent in our nation that has further alienated lower income groups from the very values and customs that typically defined “middle-class” success; principled standards that have (historically) improved (its) social and economic standing in a variety of ways over the years.

• • •

.... how many of our alienated poor have (unwittingly) permitted our government to appropriate decisions best left for an individual to make, that must (otherwise) demoralize any individual naturally inclined to making his or her (own) decisions (otherwise) pre-empted by “social caretakers”.....

• • •

....although (general) economic conditions require improvement...poverty is not a universal phenomenon... measures designed to increase productivity and growth.....

• • •

Although “intellectual designs” are invariable in nature, such does not prohibit, however, the (inherent) capacity of most individual’s to reach the highest thresholds of their (native) potential.

• • •

Addendum to the above: What I refer to as the components of intelligence; that is to say, memory, assimilation, recall and the capacity to reason, may be developed by application and conditioning; although striking diminishing returns at some point. This law applies to everyone!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Although I am not entirely certain that Reason is an actual component of Intelligence, there is no denying its (practical) value that oftentimes exceeds the highest intellectual powers.

• • •

Who has never grieved or mourned who has (once) loved?

• • •

“Living for today” is not analogous with “Taking things one day at a time.” The former is bound by present conditions (only) while the latter cautions that an individual should neither feel discouraged nor overwhelmed by present conditions or expect everything to happen all at once.

• • •

An individual’s character represents the sum total of other people who, in whatever manner, have “touched” that person’s life. In the final analysis, we are (all) completed wholes or complements of one another. Death itself does not have it within its power to diminish lasting impressions whose effects continue to define who we are.

• • •

Conscience: A Homeric Struggle of Epic Proportions!

• • •

When every word, every thought becomes a question of honor, what else remains?

• • •

That Free Will may be properly rebuked or applauded by Conscience is a testimony to God’s Divine Guidance!

• • •

An individual who behaves or reacts in a manner consistent with his or her nature should not be equally commended with another individual who behaves in a similar manner under comparable conditions otherwise contrary to that individual’s (own) nature (I am speaking here of heroic deeds). In this manner, a timid or shy individual who performs some courageous act for the right reason(s) should be commended above another individual whose similar acts of courage come naturally. (This is not to imply that the latter should not be commended only that the former, by stepping out of character by doing something out of the ordinary, arguably displayed greater courage)

• • •

As a general rule, I disclaim fanciful notions like epiphanies or cognizant awakenings; those special moments of unusual psychic occurrence that (unexpectedly) heightens an individual’s spiritual, moral or perceptual awareness; unless providential, that is unlikely to happen. Such newly acquired “insight” into the (essential) nature of things is a common stratagem often employed by self-serving individual’s and/or opportunists hoping to convey the notion that they’ve “grown.”

• • •

Ideas shaped by experience or introspective designs involves a long, drawn-out process whose origins are oftentimes forgotten by the time they’ve become deeply embedded in our minds.

• • •

Our hidden arsenal of thoughts and ideas are seldom apparent, oftentimes revealing themselves gradually, their identity not entirely unknown, however; once understood in the aggregate, properly completes an individual.

• • •

“Hate Crimes” legislation belies the notion of “Equal Protection under the Law.” These measures constitute a “value-added” penalty of sorts designed to curry favor among (certain) minority groups by conferring upon them privileged (victim) status.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Somewhat likened to Endangered Species!

• • •

...rejecting the notion that virtue or (goodness) is an applied rather than a natural condition...that the will toward moral excellence or (goodness) is not (necessarily) assigned by (formal) conventions...(although a society scripted in exceptional manners would likely encourage lofty manners)...that seeks its (own) goodness for its (own) sake... rather than goodness’ sake...(that nevertheless offers its own special rewards)...that, notwithstanding, would (equally) satisfy universal sentiments...and that a society, however primitive or advanced, seeks its own goodness because it is considered good for that society to do so...that it naturally follows its (own) immanent understanding of what is good, whatever its form, to begin with...setting aside, for the moment, such advantages that might otherwise accrue to that society...(and) that...such goodness, however, should never be confused with eternal standards of goodness or (moral excellence) that naturally evolve in communion with Humankind’s (inherently) perfectible nature, that, properly informed, provides meaning and (further) insight and guidance into the essential nature of things or ideas or what it meant by “Good”...

• • •

An individual is seldom tested beyond the limits of his or her (emotional) endurance. Humankind’s natural temperament, by varying degrees, has its (own) peculiar manner of drawing from its (own) inexhaustible supply of resources, each specifically designed to moderate its passions however troublesome, rather than what (it) may believe are or would otherwise be required if and whenever called upon.

• • •

Brave young men and women who have proudly served our great nation in time of war and peace are deserving of our eternal gratitude. Their (unselfish) devotion to duty has made us (all) privileged to be called Americans.

• • •

Populist Sentiments, unless tempered by Reason, must eventually devolve into the meanest forms of Mob Rule.

• • •

If Heaven were a Luxury Hotel, I would count myself privileged serving as its Doorman.

• • •

Despair is a spiritually wretched condition underscored by a lack of Faith.

• • •

An individual should not be judged by his or her sins because aren’t we all sinners to a greater or lesser degree? Otherwise, who would be left to condemn the sinner; who other than God is best qualified to judge a Man’s heart?

• • •

Addendum to the above: A sin is considered apart from the “sinner.” It remains up to God’s (own) inestimable discretion to judge the sinner in the same manner an ordered society adjudicates crimes against society in accordance with its (own) rule of laws.

• • •

Truth, in whatever manner it is misrepresented or discredited, is oftentimes sufficient in itself to overcome the censorship of its harshest critics. Witness the “re-emergence” of the Roman Catholic Church amidst the rubble and ashes of a morally decadent Soviet Regime.

• • •

Superior (material) advantages do not necessarily provide the margin of victory. Such outcomes are oftentimes decided by keenness of mind and a swift heart.

• • •

The Creator of all Things will one day vanquish the forces of spiritual and moral denial, humbling self-imposed “doubts” and worldly conveniences suited for material comfort and private designs rather than spiritual necessity. At that time, the fallen will “discover”

what many have intuitively understood all along however conveniently ignored for their own inestimable reasons. This sudden, cataclysmic (sic) reawakening of the mind will prove an unpleasant experience for most.

• • •

A song does not necessarily require an elaborate arrangement whenever simplicity suffices, although such arrangements will oftentimes enhance the melodious quality of a particular tune.

• • •

Dignity and Self-Esteem are the constitutive ingredients of any Self-Contained Individual.

• • •

Values and Interests are never (quite) settled. Such qualifiers that otherwise define an individual remain subject to revision; modifying attitudes, a (calculated) means toward an uncertain end, that, when understood in the aggregate, however, ushers a uniquely complex, multi-dimensional individual unrestricted by the limits of determined viewpoints.

• • •

...that will leave a spiritual vacuum in its wake...”material” bodies overcome by a heightened sense of misery and despair...of unimaginable horrors aggravated by God’s absence...producing (surrealistic) images of ourselves in manner inconsonant with our own (naturally) perceived likeness...an essential emptiness maddening in its effects...every hope shattered, abandoned ...bringing shadows to light...unshakable despondency...left behind...alienated.... without (further) recourse to (our) loved ones...destined to walk along deserted streets...alone, in a dreamlike state of unbearable finality without (eternal) appeal...

• • •

...by their actions will they be judged...discrediting the worthy while commending the impeachable...applauding boorish behavior while disparaging character as mawkishly old-fashioned... war veterans, homeless..... while draft dodgers are elevated to higher office...where death is an option...where narrow-minded assumptions routinely dismiss Truth’s proper standing...where prescriptive authority seeks its (own) rewards rather than the public good.....where arbitrary corruption attends to its self-inflicted wounds, a tragic reminder of our (political) leaders who have lost their moral compass...

• • •

An individual’s “personal” relationship with God, however commendable in its designs, poses an uncertain intimacy whereby an individual may freely invest license to challenge or take issue with, (as if engaging in a casual argument with an equal), theological points of reference or doctrines inspired by the Holy Spirit and (subsequently) passed along to the Faithful by Church Traditions.

• • •

Addendum to the above: The greatest risk to an individual’s spiritual well-being lies in theological assumptions seeking to reconcile what that individual understands to be (private) matters of conscience and what God (otherwise) expects from His followers. We would all be well advised to proceed with caution. The ways of Man are not (necessarily) what God has intended.

• • •

Addendum to the above: I will conclude by saying that each of us should carefully attend the explicit divisions separating God and Man. This should not imply, however, that we must not make every conceivable effort to draw ourselves closer to God. After all, such was God’s intention when, for our (own) sake and for our (own) salvation, He became Man.

• • •

Hackneyed expressions such as “great” or “greatest”, as they relate to professional athletes, have, in my estimation, lost much of their (traditional) relevancy in recent years. Exalted characterizations of the modern athlete are consonant with neo-prejudicial impressions and lack of historical perspective.

• • •

Democracy’s most egregious failing, (depending on one’s point of view), lies in the inestimable opportunities afforded Ambition that oftentimes seems to attract the meanest and commonest of “talents” lacking natural distinction and merit; promoting an imprudent compromise of the loftiest standards in order to accommodate the requirements of (social) egalitarianism; however mediocre its outcome.

• • •

We are all (ultimately) defined by the choices we make whether or not such choices are circumstantial or embarked upon voluntarily.

• • •

D.H. Lawrence observed that “what the eye doesn’t see and the mind doesn’t know, doesn’t exist.” He was probably referring to God

or, should I say, “God?” Our religious beliefs notwithstanding, it is axiomatic that people, places and “things” (or) ideas exist in their (own) manner however unknown or unformed (in our minds). I believe that Mr. Lawrence is confusing Being with Knowledge. The eye can neither see nor clearly perceive everything that exists, limited as we are by time and space; not to mention our (limited) intellectual and immanent capacity to perceive or understand “things” clearly. That things and ideas exist in our minds, however, (necessarily) proves their existence inasmuch as they reside in (our) thoughts; that is to say, along the surface of our conscious awareness that equally supports the notion of similar thinking “beings”, (much like ourselves), with whom we share an (phenomenal) “bond”. Mr. Lawrence may freely plead ignorance of such matters that remain unknown to him. On the other hand, an individual may reasonably argue that the eye or the mind will often deny what it chooses not to see or believe; in this manner invalidating whatever objective or (plausible) certainty might otherwise allow. That we all perceive things differently is a matter of conditioning rather than their (underlying) essence. It would seem that such “unknowns” or perhaps distortions or what the eye doesn’t “really” see are merely conveniences designed to support our (own) private prejudices or impressions under assault by the mind’s eye.

• • •

Whenever a group of individuals gather around to establish a community, it is effected with the explicit understanding that each member is expected to surrender a portion of his or her (“natural”) freedoms; duty bound to impartially support, in a manner that is not prejudicial to any (single) individual, community laws ratified by popular consent for the benefit of every member of that community, without exception, lest unyielding power and influence fall into the hands of the Quick and Strong.

• • •

Silence, Order and Discipline are Essential for Better Learning!

• • •

Every generation, it seems, has appealed to a “kinder,” “simpler” past unencumbered by the dynamics of modern conventions considered either uniquely complex or morally deficient. For this reason, many individuals who may (otherwise) feel a (present) detachment seek a wistful alliance with a problematical past considered less alienated and more secure. These reflections represents momentary fancies that (alas) few of us are immune.

• • •

The “healing process” (I am speaking of severed friendships) is oftentimes achieved (less) in the manner of redressing (root) cause(s) but by not bringing them up at all.

• • •

An individual’s values (and interests) is oftentimes a study in contrast. For example, a child may be reluctant to part (at any price) with a prized baseball card of his favorite sport hero. Years later, that individual (adult) may be willing to sell that card if the “price is right.” That adult might be said to have “rationalized” his or her decision-making processeseither because he or she needs the money or because these collectibles no longer hold the same intrinsic “value” that they once did, so why not part with (them) for a profit? This is not meant to imply, however, that that individual’s principled belief system has been fundamentally modified in any manner; such accommodations do not (necessarily) alter the underlying (moral) assumptions that (otherwise) defines that individual. Something “valued” is not to be confused with a “moral” value.

• • •

Henry James’ rejection of “Moral Realism;” an ontological defense of “being” that at least some moral claims actually are true, underscores the position that moral absolutes are not the exclusive property of any particular individual or group. For example, that the needy are morally elevated while the wealthy are morally debased. Such propositions are (oftentimes) based on class antagonisms reinforced by common sentiments. An individual, irrespective of his or her material status, should be (otherwise) measured by the quality of that individual’s Character and that “fundamental” arguments of questionable design have less to do with that individual’s economic standing but that individual’s moral content, rather, that transcends class distinctions; that is to say, that individual’s (natural) state of goodness; and that an individual, however rich or poor, may be either meanly disposed or kind and generous in consonance with his or her Nature.

• • •

That we are oftentimes aware of our (own) failings explains in part our reluctance as individuals to correctly censor unbecoming behavior. Of greater concern, however, is our (own) growing indifference and casual acceptance of our (own) private shortcomings that rationalize their (own) ”rewards”.

• • •

Whenever the underlying assumptions supporting unlawful acts remain constant although the consequences of such actions considered separately may vary in their intended effect(s) does the final outcome of such actions either lessen or enhance their implied intent.

• • •

That the confiscation of personal property and private fortunes promotes wealth creation is a non sequitur!

• • •

Who's to question the limits of endurance characteristic among individuals resistant to self-improvement or to what extent a breach of self-confidence?

• • •

There are many roads leading to Heaven. Some take longer to get there than others, however!

• • •

If Moral Turpitude were a parade, William Jefferson Clinton would be the Master of Ceremonies!

• • •

The Will to Goodness is the rejection of behavioral attitudes repugnant to an individual's highest (moral) standing.

• • •

A surefire way of increasing job performance is by reducing performance standards! (Same rule applies in promoting academic achievement.)

• • •

Since the inception of time our world has never lacked for lawyers: its membership exceeding (all) the grains of sands in (all) the oceans multiplied by (all) the stars in the heavens. I suspect that one was in readiness at the time Cain bludgeoned his brother (Abel) to death preparing an opening defense argument for temporary insanity.

• • •

A quick word about two separate issues: Gun Ownership and Abortion: Gun Ownership (in itself) does not constitute a determinate act against Society. That a firearm may be used (illegally) by a criminally minded individual in a manner contrary to its intended purpose(s) counts against the potential action of that individual possessing the firearm rather than that individual possessing a firearm or the firearm itself or any other "potential" weapon for that matter. It is axiomatic that a probable action that exists as a potential does not necessarily imply criminal intent. (I am not concerned at the moment with formal legalities but potential actions.) The same argument equally applies to an individual who is considering having an Abortion that should be otherwise perceived as the pre-meditated taking of a (human) life. A determined action of this nature should not be considered apart from the purposeful action of having taken someone's life; that is to say, such potential no longer exists once it has been superseded by a definitive action. In this manner, the consummation of that action (Abortion) ceases to be a private matter, unlike Gun Ownership, that is not (unnecessarily) an unlawful act in itself, but the willful act of taking the life of another human being.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Counterargument as follows: An individual should neither entertain uncertain designs nor engage in questionable activities that are considered potentially harmful to the personal well-being of another individual whether or not they are properly executed with the intent of harming that individual or that may otherwise effect unintended harm, in either case legal precedence or (experience) should carefully consider the feasibility of preempting such decisions to begin with.

• • •

Addendum to the above: In which case, Abortion should be considered illegal! (Legalized) Gun Ownership, however, remains a topic open for discussion.

• • •

The Bush Administration's proposed subsidization of faith-based organizations intended to provide financial support to religious groups in their efforts to feed, clothe and shelter the poor is likely to encounter strong opposition from both sides of the political aisle. Modern Liberalism, naturally suspicious of religion to begin with, is generally reluctant to support initiatives that it (otherwise) considers a violation of constitutional provisions mandating Separation of Church and State. Conservatives, on the other hand, are (properly) suspicious in their own manner of federal programs that might otherwise compromise the operational authority of religious organizations as it relates to their spiritual as well as their humanitarian mission. (So much for the poor!)

• • •

...Eugenics' potential for modifying an unborn's natural makeup... advancing in instead, lifeless creatures without humor or soul...reminiscent of Huxley's production line of trancelike zombies depicted in his "Brave New World"...

• • •

The Past should never be judged by contemporary standards. "Modern" Society has always been complacent of its "exclusive" (evolutionary) mission; overbearing in the manner it assumes a (uniquely) higher moral authority predicated on vague, oftentimes mistaken (historical) assumptions (improperly) formed by modern ideology. There are many individuals who might argue otherwise; that Historical and (Social) Evolution are the exclusive properties of (the) Modern Society. (Such thinking isn't new, however.) The

only certainty is that the integral components of society, its institutions and its people, oftentimes remain an uncertain proposition and change, an uncertain process. Whatever we (as a society) once were, in relation to what we are now and what we hope to become, should not be considered separately. Although societal forms and conditions may vary, its essential foundations, as a rule, remain fundamentally the same.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Future Generations will undoubtedly enjoy similar advantages from the vantage point of time. Let us hope, however, that whatever judgments the future may one day see fit to render, will be tempered by gratitude for others who, having participated in history, made it possible for them to critically examine its failures as well as its accomplishments in an open-minded manner that will hopefully provide objective standards of measurement.

• • •

...remains uncertain, especially when it begins questioning (its) time-honored customs and practices otherwise requiring a candid appraisal of (its) intended designs... of the covenants that shaped (its) social and political outlook and contributed to (its) moral and intellectual development....distinguishing it from other cultures and societies that properly enjoy their own customary set of values..... although once (its) singular characteristics have been properly ratified and affirmed by majority opinion..... the process may find itself encumbered by any number of unintended consequences or competing designs operating within that (social) environment...

• • •

Affected laughter is either attributable to hidden sorrow(s) or arrested emotional development or perhaps both!

• • •

Cloning promises to one day transform Humanity from Children of God to Children of Science.

• • •

Many of the classical virtues are understood intuitively. They remain unknown to a society that has lost its spiritual and moral compass!

• • •

Impractical Designs are the hallmarks of Wishful Thinking!

• • •

Good seeks its (own) internal rewards, not (formal) recognition!

• • •

The following feature presentation has been rated R by the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences. Adults above the age of twenty-one must be accompanied by a minor!

• • •

How many people who (have) touched our lives, however brief, (have) left a lasting impression?

• • •

There are three main reasons why I have distanced myself from populist rhetoric: First of all, most politicians care little, if anything, about advancing the fortunes of the “common man.” Such expressions are more often than not cynical inventions conceived by scheming politicians to attract potential voters. Secondly, such intentions, in whatever manner their sentiments may be genuinely sincere, oftentimes fail to keep pace with popular expectations thereby heaping anger and resentment upon otherwise well-meaning individuals who may have fallen short of their intended purpose; that is to say, deliver their promises. Lastly, such attempts at stereotyping common attitudes merely serve to advance faulty notions of vulnerability and incompetence. In the final analysis, there are no common men, only common people!

• • •

Market Globalism has erased the “traditional” boundaries of American Corporate Patriotism, if such loyalty to nation has ever really existed to begin with!

• • •

The impartiality of our judicial system must be seriously called into question whenever fortune and fame, the twin offsprings of the privileged few, are able to unfairly influence the Commission of Justice.

• • •

Whittaker Chambers, lamenting on the imminent demise of Western Civilization, observed that “a nation cannot save itself unless it wants to be saved.”

• • •

Rabid Commercialism, Intellectual Inertia, Moral Malaise and Public Cynicism are a few of the underlying maladies whose symptoms may one day pave the road to Rome.

• • •

Rising prices (or Inflation) are the result of more money chasing fewer goods and services (or production's inability to keep pace with demand). The general argument for Supply Side Economics generally proceeds as follows: that private and corporate tax breaks will encourage savings and investment that will increase production that will increase employment that will increase disposal income that will increase consumer spending that will stimulate the economy, so there!

• • •

Addendum to the above: (Consumer) Demand remains the (one) prevailing constant.

• • •

Insatiable material "requirements" have taken a definite toll on consumers, their families and society in general by giving way to lifestyles that many are unable to afford, working themselves toward the brink of emotional and physical exhaustion for the sake of "indispensable" consumer products quickly destined for (the) trash heap, (the) storage bin, (the) broom closet, (the) attic, (the) basement apartment, (the) garage, (the) root-cellar, (the) front yard sale, and the (poor) house.

• • •

Receiving a well-rounded education (if such is indeed possible in today's academic environment), finding meaningful employment (good luck!), earning a decent salary (however defined), giving something back (according to one's means), good health (a crap shoot!), a loving and supportive family (how very fortunate!), and good friends (same), constitute the proper ingredients of the "Happy Life."

• • •

Addendum to the above: A Happy Life (however) should never be confused with the Good life. There is a difference, you know!

• • •

Recollection(s) of our childhood friends and other acquaintances remain firmly frozen in time and mind. Have they, like us, grown older? In what manner would they appear to us today? Would something from our (irretrievable) past be lost should our paths suddenly cross?

• • •

Every now and then we need to step outside (ourselves) in order to better observe (ourselves) from the proper vantage point.

• • •

I would like to express some thoughts about Scientology: Scientology is not a faith-based religion. Science and Technology are its principle fountainheads whose positivistic approach to self-actualization rejects every considered (theological) opinion or belief that cannot be systematically observed or measured; that is to say, it is an "applied religious philosophy" that does not require its followers to accept anything on the basis of Faith. What is true for an individual is what that individual has "observed" to be true. In this manner, truth is a function of how "things" or events are either studied or perceived. Scientology is based on the assumption that the universe and, by association, all life-forms, are "spiritually" joined together and that the applied sciences (and technology) are the pivotal means by which an individual may achieve a higher sense of spiritual awareness (and competence) that will ultimately lead to the discovery of that individual's "divine" self. By competence, I'm assuming that Scientologists are referring to technological competence and not spiritual "competence" inasmuch as no such thing exists. An individual may be aware of having achieved some contingent level of (material) competence in whatever manner, although an awareness of such competence oftentimes implies a presumption of knowledge based on reasonable evidence or what is otherwise assumed to be conditional knowledge because of the (existing) possibility of (potential) misunderstanding(s) or other faulty premise(s) that would otherwise call its absolute certainty into question. Knowledge about something is incomplete unless that something is understood without qualification. (I am speaking here of the Highest Order of Knowledge.) In this manner, awareness, whose condition is less certain or problematical, perhaps; that is to say more intuitive than substantial, necessarily applies to material arguments whereby an individual may be likely to feel the presence or awareness of that "something." Therefore, an individual might be sensible of an uncertain awareness of something spiritual, apart from a certain awareness of something in the material sense. The former is incomplete in a "certain" sense although the latter is complete in an "uncertain" sense. In my opinion, technology does not promote a heightening of self-awareness in a spiritual sense although it may advance, however, a "sense" of material awareness. In any event, it is doubtful that mastery over the material universe would lead any individual to recognize his or her immortal self let alone that individual's "divine" self! Have I made myself clear?

• • •

The Material and the Spiritual are competing dynamics!

• • •

Scientology does not seek to promote personal salvation (which otherwise requires divine assistance) but the culmination, rather, of an individual's "divine" destiny that seeks to become godlike through self-actualization. Such thinking runs counter to Christian assumptions that Man is an imperfect being and that his labors, however well-intentioned, must (therefore) be judged imperfect. For this reason, salvation is not (necessarily) the result of good intentions but the perfection of such intentions, rather, through God's (own) spiritual guidance.

• • •

Humankind may strive to achieve some (ideal) of Perfection; however, it remains certain that it will never achieve Perfection (itself) that is reserved for God alone.

• • •

Nothing arises from Nothingness. The effects of Movement or Change must necessarily proceed from conspicuous causes, which are observable and subject to measurement. That Nothingness fails to meet this criterion reinforces the notion that the "Initial Movement," from the vantage point of Nothingness, remains a permanent question mark. It is unlikely that Science will ever satisfactorily explain the Initial Movement that remains an eternal exception contrary to (worldly) causes and (their) effects and that God could not have created Himself because He always Was. God remains, of course, the "Primary Mover" or "First Cause" of the material universe; that is to say, God is/was not an initial event, that assumes pre-existing causal factors, but a "Being" rather, existing outside the boundaries of external causes. Therefore, God could not have proceeded from Nothingness but has always existed as an Eternal Being who endowed His creation with subsequent "Being" in His (own) image, however unintelligible to Science.

• • •

Such is the wondrous mystery of God that some would otherwise confuse with being one's own "god" rather than the offspring of God's (own) Creation; godly microcosms rather than God's (own) inestimable creatures.

• • •

An event, whether circumstantial or occasioned by design, is the outcome of some assignable cause. God could not occasion His own existence because such would imply (a) causation preceding His existence. Therefore, God "necessarily" exists.

• • •

Scientology: Finis.

• • •

Normalcy, (I am referring here to accepted standards of behavior) as understood by modern society, has devolved into a relativistic acceptance of (the) meanest forms of "casual" behavior.

• • •

An inquiring mind: a natural curiosity; an introspective diversion or spiritual awakening?

• • •

Criticisms (occasionally) leveled against besieged nations engaged in defensive maneuvers against their aggressive neighbors; responding militarily in proportion "exceeding" acceptable retaliatory standards considered excessive, underscore the premise of modern warfare that is (seemingly) not to win a war but rather repel or contain the enemy within "reasonable" limits perceived by international naiveté, regional prejudices, expediency and other geo-political designs.

• • •

The hastening of scholastic mediocrity in America's (urban) Public School System is understood by the efforts of (its) soft-headed administrators and educators seeking to promote equality of results at the expense of its brightest students, many of whom are routinely held in check in order to allow their less talented classmates "sufficient" opportunity to play catch-up; oftentimes necessitating a lowering of academic standards for the "benefit" of other students who are intellectually less gifted, thereby promoting false impressions of academic achievement where performance results are (oftentimes) questionable. In this manner, mediocrity in the classroom has become a self-fulfilling prophecy that, for egalitarian reasons, seeks to "level" the intellectual playing field by penalizing students who (otherwise) have the potential to perform on a higher level.

• • •

The Tyranny of Law as it is gradually evolving in American Society is best described as a Politically Correct strangle hold!

• • •

It is sad to observe how many of us are (seemingly) unfit for Freedom, oftentimes overstepping its boundaries beyond the limits of acceptable tolerance by openly abusing them! I am certain that an individual having never tasted freedom (or understood what it really means to be free) and having (subsequently) acquired it through heroic efforts must come to appreciate it more completely than

someone (naturally) born into a free society. I understand that this is a difficult proposition from an American perspective indifferent, perhaps, to the hundreds of millions of people existing on this planet who either live or have lived in virtual bondage. It would be well advised, however, that free societies not take its assumptive liberties for granted as history has oftentimes proven on any number of occasions, its variable nature.

• • •

...socialist designs seeking to optimize a nation's economic output...and income equality.... within the diminishing scope of its intellectual capital.... despite (the) overwhelming examples provided by free market economies that have consistently outperformed planned economies at every level.... can only be understood in terms of achieving absolute power.... at whatever cost to its (hard working) citizens....

• • •

.....religious symbols considered by Secular Deconstructionists (Atheists) "insensitive," inappropriate," or formally offensive to "pluralistic designs" subsequently banished from the public forum despite first amendment arguments otherwise protecting such expressions, are transparent attempts at marginalizing religion by seeking to drive it (permanently) underground.....

• • •

It is unreasonable to assume that (natural) goodness is either capable of self or mutual corruption because what is (naturally) good seeks to promote "good things" (only). That an individual is (inherently) "good" and that the corruption of (natural) goodness is understood within the context of conventional designs does not follow in the manner that (natural) goodness would never compromise itself inasmuch as it would be contrary to its (nature) to do so; each social unit being (naturally) good; that is to say, (natural) goodness, standing side by side with (natural) goodness, would (naturally) reject its mutual corruption as well as its own corruption and furthermore, the assumed absence of evil, understood as the antithesis of "good," would (otherwise) preclude the introduction of unwholesome examples seeking to promote a corrupting influence on (natural) goodness; moreover, were (natural) goodness corruptible, the source of its corruption would (necessarily) lie beyond itself; that is to say, operating outside the parameters of (natural) goodness; some other agency (evil), whose intention would be the corruption of (natural) goodness.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Therefore, every individual must summon God's gift of Conscience and Reason, the arbiters of Good and Evil, for (perpetual) guidance in overcoming (foreign) designs that would otherwise conceal (their) evil intentions.

• • •

I believe that Peta's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) hidden agenda has less to do with advancing Animal Rights (a silly idea to begin with), than setting the stage for citizenship rights for animals in the future. (I've never been more serious!)

• • •

Young boys coming into their own, especially during their formative years, should not be discouraged from engaging in physical activities; that is to say, the type of "horse play" or "rough housing", common among growing boys, that gives vent to their masculinity; that is to say, gender characteristics underlying decidedly masculine attitudes inherent in the male species. Aggressive behavior, contrary to violent or destructive behavior, is a natural (masculine) expression that should be encouraged, within proper limits, lest our society give way to effete young men.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Aggressive should not be confused with Aggression! By definition, an "aggressive" individual is someone who is energetic and enterprising as opposed to someone given to aggression who intentionally seeks to promote harm to other people. The fine line separating Aggressive and Aggression is understood in the manner each is (socially) channeled, whether constructively or destructively!

• • •

Addendum: Feminists, of course, are hell-bent on softening the male ego by encouraging less aggressive, more passive (effeminate) forms of behavior designed to undermine male "attitudes," that, in the long run, will only serve to confound both sexes, if it hasn't already done so!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Prozac, I understand, works just as well.

• • •

I would like to express some thoughts on Friendship: Its formative years generally embrace a broader cross section of people as variety seeks accommodating or more congenial venues underlining (unsettled) values and interests, opinions and beliefs that, once firmly established, a narrower consensus attending an individual's (natural) makeup and/or (environmental) conditioning, (notwithstanding a certain willingness to entertain the respective merits of a variety of different viewpoints), will become apparent as a number of (youthful) friendships begin to vanish, superseded by more "meaningful" or customary relationships for convenience sake,

(the latter constituting a lower form of friendship, however), while former friends move on with their lives...or grow apart... in search of more suitable arrangements although once maturer relationships suddenly flourish, will (ultimately) reveal that it isn't the quantity of friends that matter the most, however, but the level of intimacy among those counted as friends. (Got that!)

• • •

Addendum to the above: Circumstantial or life changing events brought about by marriage, children, moving into a new neighborhood, job relocation, divorce, retirement, illness or death, to mention a few, will oftentimes alter the course of friendships.

• • •

To what extent should any society be willing to compromise its "individual" freedom(s) by imposing limits on such freedoms by compensating other individuals who've chosen to exercise their (own) rightful freedoms, in their (own) manner, without regard to consequence, thereby placing them in an unenviable position of living in a "free" society?

• • •

Question on Global Economies: Was Henry Kissinger's observation that G.E's. would leave many "working people" behind, a valid assumption? Will higher corporate profits and salaries concentrated in fewer hands create a pyramiding effect? What would be the economic and socio/political fallout for world governments that would otherwise lose their middle/center?

• • •

Question on the European Economic Community (EEC): Independence/Unilateralism: How long before Uncle Sam tightens the reins?

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Question: Are environmental concessions commonly inserted within the framework(s) of most "comprehensive" energy reform packages legitimate components or merely transparent extensions of olive branches designed to appease extreme environmental factions?

• • •

Question: Will the future of the Republican Party rest on Immigration Reform; (especially) as it relates to the Hispanic Community, the fastest growing ethnic group in America? Will its resistance to open borders (if such were its intent) be perceived by members of the "community" as exclusionary and racist? How will changing demographics impact the party over the next half-century?

• • •

Addendum to above question: Should Western Culture step aside and let history take its course or is it possible for such groups to properly assimilate and operate within its broadest parameters?

• • •

Question regarding Mergers/Acquisitions: Are such destined to remain a permanent fixture in the American Corporate Landscape?

• • •

A flatterer is a parasite who relies on a (consenting) host for its venal nourishment; fodder feeding its vanity and conceit, that, having satisfied its provisional appetite(s), seeks additional sustenance elsewhere, unlike true friendship that is firmly grounded on genuine love and devotion.

• • •

The manner an individual prepares for the (future) properly defines that individual's (present) mindset.

• • •

A Perfect Being cannot "cause" its own creation inasmuch as (the) subsequent effects of Creation imply an (existing) potential for movement or change and/or possessing a set of predicates or determinants otherwise lacking in a Perfect Being that is "entirely without limit or incapable of any infallibility, whatsoever." Perfection can neither add nor subtract from itself in the manner that it (already) exists in a perfect state of existence resistant to change, unlike some (possible) being whose potential attributes or (undetermined) nature remain hidden expression(s) subject to (outward) conceptual designs.

• • •

God does not "think" in (the) conventional sense; that is to say, He neither "reflects" nor "imagines" in a manner otherwise inconsonant with a Being Perfect in Thought who "visualizes" every event "before" its time and who, unlike His creation, neither relies on Reason nor Experience before embarking upon some "pre-determined" course.

• • •

Stereotypes oftentimes contain an element of truth. The danger in stereotyping other people, however, lies in its exaggerated characterizations that either falsely misrepresent or grossly distort the character and limits of certain individuals or groups.

• • •

Avid cell phone users generally suffer from a form of sensate privation, a condition (especially) common among under stimulated young teens and adolescent adults lacking sensible assurances.

• • •

Choice (I am speaking here of the undetermined fate of the Unborn) is not a “moral” Issue, perse, unless (the) wrong choice has been made!

• • •

Choice, (again in reference to the Unborn), is not a “complex” moral issue. Otherwise, it would seek the spiritual guidance of moral and ethical teachings rather than the support of legal authority.

• • •

Pro-Abortion groups are oftentimes reluctant to examine the “complexities” of Choice, choosing, instead, the path of least resistance that (conveniently) defines Choice for its own (selfish) reasons.

• • •

A grave disservice is done to individuals who are not given an opportunity to either think or act independently, who, having grown accustomed to other individuals making decisions for them, oftentimes devote their time and energies in finding creative ways of avoiding (personal) responsibility.

• • •

I was reading recently where a British rock artist, well passed the peak of his popularity and presently a regular feature on the “tabloid” circuit, is offering his inestimable services to PETA as public spokesperson; exposing the “harmful” effects of milk and other dairy products on preschoolers. This, coming from a degenerate who routinely abused his body (over the years) with drugs and alcohol and heaven knows what else. Nevertheless, this self-serving has-been/know-nothing is considered competent enough to instruct impressionable young women on the “deleterious” effects of food products that have traditionally provided nutritional sustenance for millions of people but whose nutritional value is suddenly being called into question by Animal Rights fanatics; many of whom would otherwise consider a rodent the moral equivalent of a child!

• • •

In what can only be described as an American Tragedy, the World Trade Center (Twin Towers) was leveled this morning (September 11th 2001) by Middle Easterners who, after high jacking two commercial airliners, rammed them into both towers. The death toll, presumably in the thousands, has yet to be determined. The Pentagon and Camp David were hit as well. A third plane was brought down somewhere in rural Pennsylvania following the valiant efforts of its passengers who somehow managed to overcome their captors at the cost of everyone’s lives on board. I am declaring a moratorium on politics. There will be time enough for that!

• • •

An individual who is loved and admired by (all) may be fated to die alone; not destined, however, to be forgotten!

• • •

How troubling it was reading about an event that took place recently during a soccer match between Scotland and Greece. While observing a moment of silence honoring the victims of the World Trade Center, some of the fans in attendance set fire to the American Flag. This coming from a nation that gave birth to Western Culture!

• • •

Addendum to the above: The Left is already starting to kick-up a storm over (supposed) ethnic/racial profiling at our nation’s airports. That didn’t take long, now did it?

• • •

A criminal act, whether committed by an individual against another individual or against a group of individuals, notwithstanding that such actions may be either random or pre-meditated, constitutes a crime against society inasmuch as every member of that society is considered a (potential) victim that should otherwise be provided equal protection under the law and that any crime, whatever the motive, directed against (the) one represents a (potential) affront against (the) many; especially when such crimes are committed indiscriminately, without rhyme or reason; that is to say, in a manner that renders every member of that society a (potential) victim subject to arbitrary or uncertain (criminal) designs.

• • •

War is a (collective) act of aggression by one sovereign nation against another. Belligerent actions directed against another nation

without regard to any one individual or group of individuals are not rightly considered criminal unless such actions otherwise ignore existing international covenants (established among nations during times of peace), governing acceptable rules of military engagement, whose violation(s) are otherwise construed by the Community of Nations as constituting Crimes against Humanity.

• • •

Addendum to the above: These (monstrous) atrocities call for a swift execution of Justice whereby the offending party or parties are quickly apprehended and taken into (martial) custody, properly arraigned, expeditiously brought to trial and adjudicated in conformance with rules of evidence. This procedure must remain wary, however, of arbitrary or capricious designs whenever, for example, civilian populations are (unintentionally) killed or property destroyed (collateral damage) that oftentimes occurs during times of war yet are properly understood (or should be) as contingencies of war whose (untimely) deaths or destruction otherwise fail to meet the standards of (purposeful) criminal intent.

• • •

Air strikes have been launched against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance is expected to provide ground support. Let the games begin!

• • •

Time Magazine recently considered nominating Osama Bin Ladin, the gentleman responsible for masterminding the untimely deaths of three thousand American civilians, its “Man of the Year.” Its editors later withdrew their nomination lest this (egregious) selection be “misconstrued” or “taken out of context” by the American People. The less said about the liberal “mainstream” media, the better!

• • •

God neither “sleeps” nor is He (ever) absent from our lives. It is we who oftentimes fall asleep at the helm; we who reject His guiding presence and wisdom. It is up to each of us to manage our own private and public affairs in accordance with God’s gift of Reason and Conscience that properly instruct us in the manner of good and evil and right and wrong however many of us oftentimes choose to deny or ignore His guiding light. In this manner, Man, assisted by Divine Counsel, is a perfective being however incapable of perfection. (It is understood (here) that God informs or counsels the heart). He does not “interfere,” however, with Man’s deliberate actions (or Acts of Will) unless He decides to do so.

• • •

Leadership by Example!

• • •

On Matter: Matter is inanimate. Matter lacks Character (or Personality). Matter is restricted by its (own) physical dimensions (or material properties). Matter is neither autonomous nor does it possess Consciousness. Matter can neither generate ideas nor “evolve” on its (own) accord. Matter is “roused” into action by accidental forces or deliberate designs operating outside its (own) spatial limits. Matter cannot effect its (own) endogenous movement(s). Since Matter lacks consciousness, it is unable to act independently inasmuch as it lacks an essential awareness of its (own) constituted nature; that is to say, Matter is unaware of its (own) existence. Matter is “self-contained”. Since Matter is unable to think, however, it is unable to cause movement in other material forms. Matter may cause disturbances when united with other forms of Matter although such disruptions are the result of either pre-determined or unintentional (external) causes. Therefore, subsequent material changes (or consequences) that may ensue are considered apart from Matter’s (own) natural state of inertia.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Humankind is neither confined in time nor space by reason of (its) active imagination transcending (its) temporal or spatial limits.

• • •

Our nation seems to be slowly regaining its composure and returning to “normal.” The events (and lessons) of September 11th must never be forgotten, however. Its citizens must never allow the passage of time to dampen their resolve in rooting out and defeating our nation’s (ideological) enemies and bringing them to justice. I oftentimes wonder whether Human Nature wasn’t constituted for peace. (A cynical thought on this fine Christmas Morning!) Nevertheless, I can’t possibly imagine what it will take for Humankind to put an end to so much endless and mindless killing other than its own mutual destruction!

• • •

Relativity is a mistaken assumption inasmuch as (each) unit of relative measure enjoys its own (absolute) limits subject to its own precise measurements assigned to (each) unit of measure!

• • •

The concept of Eternity from a temporal perspective is troubling to the imagination inasmuch as it oftentimes seems that we are laid to

rest before we have (yet) to live!

• • •

Our associations with other people, on whatever level, however lasting or brief, are indistinguishable from the vantage point of (eternal) time, whose broadest assurances and meaning have yet to complete their predetermined course, explaining, perhaps, why a chance encounter with someone we might never “meet” again may leave a lasting impression or perhaps alter the course of our lives, destined as each of us are to carry on our timeless encounters

until the aggregate of our collective recollections, properly perceived, come full circle.

• • •

The greatest (moral) “tragedies” are oftentimes self-inflicted by individuals who choose to orchestrate their own disappointments by making ill-advised (decisions) without giving proper thought to the consequences of their actions, who are/were nevertheless capable of critically examining every aspect of such decisions; that is to say, their moral and rational dimensions, had they been properly inclined to do so and who, having suffered the unhappy effects of “unexpected” outcomes, are wont to attribute their personal misfortunes to Chance rather than their own indomitable designs and indiscretions. Such outcomes oftentimes reflect a convenient form of denial advanced by thoughtless/reckless individuals who, although aware of the potential consequences of their designs, gave willing consent to forceful expressions in a manner detrimental to their own (personal) well being as well as the well-being of others. Perhaps the latter are the real victims of such “unforeseen” events.

• • •

What I find truly remarkable about the servile mindset of politically correct attitudes (which appear to have taken on a life of their own) are the (internal) conflicts that (must) oftentimes arise whenever artificial expressions of a questionable sort inevitably collide with the thoughtful judgments of individuals who, in their private moments, (would) otherwise know better than to acquiesce to affected manners. Tolerance for opposing viewpoints is the touchstone of a free society, within reasonable limits, of course. A society, however well-intentioned, ceases to be “tolerant,” once that society allows itself to devolve into a sociopolitical checklist dedicated to the advancement of “appropriate” behavior and verbal expressions dictated by idiosyncratic designs rather than common sense lest its members be perceived as offending artificially constructed practices that have inexplicably seeped their way into the conventional mainstream.

Chapter 3

Revelation 2002 - 2007

(God) is “present” in all things although (God) does not exist “in” all things. God is the Creator of all things “infinite.” As an Infinite Being, however, God cannot be the cause of His own creation, which is Infinite; that is to say, God is not the cause of His own Existence but exists, rather, “within” His own Infinite, self-contained Self. God cannot exist apart from His own Existence although He exists “apart” from created “things.” Therefore, God does not exist “in” created things.

• • •

A nation that is unwilling to preserve the inviolability of its (own) language and customs or the foundations of its cultural and social traditions and, having renounced its national character and historical mandate, is not properly positioned to defend its (own) borders!

• • •

Institutionalized Thinking, Conditioned Mindsets and Reflexive Responses define the NEA and its anachronistic leadership, whose inflexible designs continue to view creative planning and progressive ideas as a threat to the status quo.

• • •

Question: Should public servants be permitted to own stock in companies that routinely seek political favors within their immediate sphere of influence?

• • •

It may be reasonably argued that the Private Sector traditionally attracted (more) talented individuals (less) averse to risk taking in exchange for the prospect of potential advancement while other individuals possessing less capacity (perhaps) or who, lacking the requisite skills demanded by most companies, generally opted for quasi-guaranteed job security provided by the Public Sector. This is likely to change, however, as higher paying positions and job security in the Private Sector are becoming less certain while the alternative prospects for longer term employment in the Public Sector coupled with generous employee benefits, equal or higher salaries and lucrative retirement packages are gradually attracting a broader cross section of recent college graduates including those counted among the “better” educated.

• • •

A “hate crime” is a political surcharge levied by pandering politicians seeking to shore up their (political) capital among (politically)

influential disaffected groups.

• • •

Now that the Caribou deception has been properly exposed, (I am happy to inform the reader that its self-contained population has been thriving quite nicely in recent years despite troubling reports presaging its pending extinction), other (anti-exploratory) efforts are presently under way propagating falsely conceived (cost/benefit) assumptions to support “economic” arguments against drilling for oil in ANWR.

• • •

A prizefighter does not begin training seriously for an important bout the day before the fight. Neither does a sovereign nation properly prepare itself for battle once the “contingent” threat of war is imminent.

• • •

President Bush is a Principled Conservative (however) not a Principled Conservative Politician!

• • •

The expression “Bull Shit Artist” has acquired new meaning within the Art Community in recent years. (The reader need only refer to the tasteless exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in order to catch my “whiff!”)

• • •

On Core Beliefs: Scientists and Materialists who perceive Humankind as the (ultimate) unitary measure are likely to invest (material) confidence exclusively on the practical merits or “wisdom” of empirical studies and certifiable assumptions (or rules of measurements) “properly” perceived by the senses whereas intuitive reasoning is likelier to repose confidence in (spiritual) designs requiring a broader range of creative powers and intelligence embracing Faith.

• • •

A society whose “scale of values” are in a precipitous state of (moral) decline is not understood as much by that society’s reflexive willingness to accept the moral and ethical transgressions of its political leaders and other “notable” figures who continue to flaunt and profit by their notoriety, (after all, a generous people is always prepared to forgive the repentant sinner), but in the manner that society receives vicarious pleasure of it (own) from otherwise unbecoming and morally offensive behavior.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Question: Which is the greater of two evils; moral indifference or immoral complicity?

• • •

Young People, enjoy the treasured companionship of your elderly loved ones while time allows!

• • •

A society is defined by its formal as well as its informal social and cultural institutions. The former is properly understood in the (traditional) manner as comprising that society’s political and legal bodies (its parliaments and courts, for example); the latter, by its community organizations gathered together for some specific purpose or function including its churches and schools (along with their established customs and practices). The former stand out in full view while the latter are less comprehensive by force of (accustomed) habit. A society in the throes of a Cultural War (or a War of Ideas), whose socially transmitted customs are under assault, is never quite apparent to the uninitiated, (unlike the attendant violence of civil wars, for example, whose apparent destruction of person and property, not to mention its deleterious effect on the economy, are much easier to assess), and whose consequential impact on that society’s traditions (usually) take longer for a non-engaging or morally indifferent society to absorb. A Cultural War waged by determined ideas is a much more subtle, deceptive and formidable form of warfare inasmuch as it craftily conceals its (unstated) purpose; a social and cultural conversion cutting at the (very) heart of a society’s traditional belief system; a gradual, however determined process that oftentimes goes unchecked until an awakening society (roused from its slumbers) suddenly finds itself in the midst of altered customs and norms no longer consonant with that society’s accustomed practices. Attacks on a society’s culture engender far-reaching ramifications whose transformations, having taken on a (systematic) life of its own, are oftentimes difficult to perceive or reverse, for that matter, unlike the destruction of that society’s formal (or physical) institutions that are much easier to perceive. Machiavelli correctly argued that internal revolutions that seek to transform a society’s social and political cultural must (necessarily) retain that society’s material forms in order to convey a semblance of continuity without seemingly undermining their essential character, notwithstanding its altering of prevailing customs and practices that would otherwise promote resentment among its citizens.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Historically, (impressionable) fertile young minds, the conduits for social and cultural change, have been their traditional catalysts as many are generally (considered) more adaptable to revolutionary thinking.

• • •

Eliminate national identity and thereby eliminate the characteristics and manners that properly define a Nation. Eliminate objective standards and rules of measurement and thereby eliminate inequality. Eliminate gender differences and thereby eliminate the particulars that distinguish the sexes. Eliminate religion and thereby eliminate Humankind's loftiest moral standing. Eliminate an intolerance for tolerance and thereby (promote) an overly simplistic view of (Human) Nature.

• • •

It is axiomatic that every individual who properly enjoys life, gives (reflective) pause to all that is meaningful and of certain value; held motionless by uncertain forms that have yet to take shape however aroused by such notions that (necessarily) compel he or she to probe deeper into their essential nature notwithstanding how they (may) oftentimes exceed the capacious limits of that individual's (private) understanding that nevertheless continues to intrigue inquiring minds cognizant of intuitive impressions part real / part imaginary yet real in the real sense of being One in All; (however separated) whose underlying presence, however, conveys a (higher) spiritual or moral standing...that the young, conditioned by the expectancies of youth united with the old seeking redemption for unfulfilled promises or missed opportunities; each converging toward the same starting/ending point, the one embarking on life and the other approaching its end, in some manner, however, occasioning a (new) beginning, a jubilee, an extension of life which becomes younger (while growing older), brought together, youth/age, childlike in all its manly/womanly innocence while the middle years patiently bide their appointed time.

• • •

There is a wide chasm that separates parents who try to provide certain advantages to their children from others who either pamper or (merely) indulge them. The former seek to provide an effective foundation (moral and spiritual as well as material), essential to their future well-being while the latter (unwittingly) engender a paralysis of will that stunts their children's emotional and intellectual development.

• • •

Suddenly awakening from a bad dream, at once startled however relieved; the gamut of one's emotions, a hairsbreadth (yet) seemingly lasting a lifetime. Thank heavens it was only a dream!

• • •

I believe that if an individual were given an opportunity to retrace his or her steps or revisit some critical crossroad; that is to say, given another opportunity to reconsider (decisions) made earlier in life, that after weighing a variety of options from the vantage point of hindsight or (experience) contrary to such (decisions) that were previously made, that he or she would in all probability make the (very) same decisions.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Experience and Memory is no match for Nature's Calling!

• • •

A "probable" law is probable inasmuch as it remains subject to "proof;" that is to say, until it is validated by common practices and/or legal interpretations by legal authorities consisting of nonelected men and women appointed to our nation's highest courts who remain unaccountable to the American People; subject to contingent legalities that directly affect them and whose "definitive" arguments are (oftentimes) subject to change as the ideological alignment of the courts may vary thereby overriding legislative authority vested by the people to sanction laws by rendering elastic, interpretations of (uncertain) legal propositions and subsequent laws of the land, thereby setting themselves up in an uncertain manner as supreme arbiters of the law.

• • •

The United States of America, otherwise understood as the "Grand Experiment," is gradually losing its standing as the world's preeminent super power. Perhaps this unfortunate turn of events is inevitable in light of the continuous assault over the years by the International Community (read: Modern European Democracies) whose leaders widely regard sovereign authority (other than their own) and political prestige invested in great nations with suspicion and whose (own) precipitous decline as world power brokers foreshadowed America's diminution of (global) influence by a half century or more. The main difference separating America and Europe, however, is that centuries of War and unmanageable Welfare depleted the economic stamina of most European Nations unlike America; however it oftentimes appears confused over how to properly manage its "manifest" calling historically pledged to support free and open societies. It would appear that America has, whether intentionally or not, (I will leave such questions for others to argue), hastened its own decline by reasons of "guilt," "shame" and (national) complacency or perhaps a combination of all three or simply because egalitarian attitudes no longer make it feasible for America to shoulder such (lofty) burdens. Whatever the reason(s), America, in the short-term at least, remains the final line of defense of world freedom.

• • •

Whatever conditions or incites (human) emotions, such expressions are triggered within the (core) of an individual's (basic) nature whose (essential) ingredients seldom vary.

• • •

Material Apathy and Intellectual Humility are consonant with Spiritual Repose, the lack of which properly explains the nominalization of religious and spiritual attitudes common among the more affluent societies.

• • •

Evil has its own inestimable manner of penetrating the hearts and minds of individuals who, although not evil themselves, unwittingly serve as conduits for a variety of sordid practices and assorted mischief.

• • •

Whether the United States should suspend its forty-three (43) year embargo against Cuba and resume normal trade relations with that country's communistic regime is one of the overriding questions presently being debated by our nation's political leaders. Fidel Castro's supporters on the American Left have historically argued that 1) most embargoes are ineffective in subverting autocratic governments (note these are the same people who summarily called for embargoes against Iraq as a viable alternative to war), and 2) that such restrictions promote unnecessary hardship to its citizens and should therefore be lifted if not for humanitarian reasons, alone. What such arguments conveniently side-step, however, are the valiant efforts of individuals who have dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom, many of whom continue rotting away in Cuban prisons, and America's obligation to lend moral and practical support to these brave men and women who continue to put up the good fight despite the many hardships that they too have had to endure as a (heavy) price for freedom.

• • •

Addendum to the above: What might have been avoided if not for the Kennedy Administration's unconscionable betrayal of Cuban freedom fighters during the Bay of Pigs invasion that not only failed to liberate the island at a most opportune time in history but subsequently engendered a domino effect of neighboring Marxist Dictatorships in our own hemisphere!

• • •

On ex-President James Earl Carter: The expression "useful idiot" oftentimes comes to mind as it relates to Mr. Carter's endlessly quixotic "peacekeeping" overtures to autocratic regimes throughout the Third World in a transparent attempt at redeeming his failed presidency; this is not to imply, however, that our ex-president does not (otherwise) share a certain sympathy with such leaders as evidenced by his fawning indifference to human and civil rights abuses routinely evident in many of those countries. Mr. Carter's consistent pandering to South/Central American, Caribbean and African Marxists and Middle Eastern Potentates, is understood in part as the product of a tormented "conscience" that, for political reasons, conveniently embraces a Christian/Marxism mindset that combines the religious instincts of his youth with Mr. Carter's "transformation" as a latter day, self-serving populist supporter of "oppressed" peoples of color that would ultimately redefine his political ambitions.

• • •

On ex-President Ronald Reagan: The expression The Reagan/Bush (Economic) Recovery does a grave disservice to President Ronald Reagan's economic legacy. It should not be shared with a man (Bush) opposed in principle to Mr. Reagan's supply-side initiatives who sought to distance himself from these policies after he (Bush) assumed the office of the presidency and that arguably cost him a second term in office. Mr. Bush is among a long line of Moderate/Liberal Republicans; a list that includes former presidents Nixon and Ford and (would) have arguably included former Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole had he too been elected president, who simply failed to grasp the fundamental importance of lower taxes and increased productivity as the primary drivers that promote economic prosperity.

• • •

On Ex-President Clinton: I am not entirely convinced that Mr. Clinton was/is a closet Marxist as some on the Hard Right would have us believe, although, as a child of the sixties, he may very well have favored a softened version consistent with "third way" ideas. I prefer to believe, however, that he simply lacked principled core values and that his pursuit of power was/is simply a political end game common among people of his generation, especially those situated on the left side of the political equation.

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What follows is a brief summary of President Bush's "Conservative" Credentials: 1) signed into law an education bill that even Ted Kennedy couldn't seriously challenge (so much for school vouchers and accountability), 2) proposed an immigration reform bill granting unconditional amnesty to illegal immigrants (so much for controlling our nation's borders), 3) signed into law a campaign finance reform bill considered by most constitutional scholars, unconstitutional (so much for Freedom of Speech), 4) signed into law a \$190 billion farm subsidy bill (so much for pork), 5) imposed import tariffs on steel (so much for Free Trade), 6) hasn't vetoed a single (spending) bill after two years in office (so much for fiscal restraint), 7) effectively restricted Israeli efforts to combat our mutual enemies (so much for the War on Terror), 8) unable to rein in renegade Senate Republicans opposed to oil exploration in ANWR (so much for independence on foreign oil). So much for Conservative Principles period! I suppose an Al Gore presidency could have fared a whole lot worse for Conservatives.

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Ideas are the foundation of all our designs.

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By its very “nature” artificial intelligence lacks the (natural) predicates that otherwise promote independent or self-contained thinking. At best, planned intelligence may imitate the various forms or likeness however not the sameness of human intelligence that cultivates its own rational manners by inherent rather than exterior designs. Such arguments extend to manufactured “emotions,” as well. Although “correct” intellectual and emotional responses may be properly programmed, these “attributes” (inevitably) lack spontaneity of purpose or meaning or the (essential) qualities otherwise produced by nature.

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On Baby Boomers: Television Sitcoms featuring dim-witted, out of touch parents made to appear foolish in contrast with their more enlightened, ratty off springs seems to be a by-product of deeply affected (adolescent) grievances common among aging “boomers” seeking vicarious payback or therapeutic relief from an Authoritarian Parent Syndrome whose symptoms many are seemingly unable to overcome.

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Addendum to the above: The children of the Great Depression foreshadowed a coming generation of men and women destined for eternal adolescence. How could they have properly imagined how things would subsequently play out? Such was/is the inevitable outcome whenever parents, lacking proper perspective; that is to say, an appropriate level of giving (that oftentimes exceeds their means), subsequently choose the “safer” path of least resistance by giving more rather than less. They could be forgiven, I suppose, in wanting to give what they themselves had never properly enjoyed.

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Addendum to the above: Happy as many parents were to provide a higher standard of living for their children (motivated in part by parading affluence), these “selfless” acts seldom elicited an appropriate level of gratitude or appreciation for their self-sacrificing efforts. The constant giving with no strings attached provoked childlike expectations among an overindulged generation of children whose detachment and immaturity caused many to incorrectly estimate or value the sacrifices made by their parents. Pampered and spoiled beyond their parent’s willingness to control or muster the required checks that separate rights from privileges (inevitably) gave rise to increasingly selfish attitudes common among a growing generation of young men and women accustomed to having their own way. These parents (unwittingly) sought to love their children the only way they knew how, by buying their children’s affection. Now their children’s children are the ones paying a heavy price for it!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Every generation is influenced in part by the prevailing customs of its time; challenging the formal assumptions of preceding generations. Baby Boomers were unique in the manner many were drawn to a sociopolitical ideology governed by faulty premises, unformed impressions and partial truths that artificially manufactured hybrid forms of reality further obfuscated by uncertain, abstract realisms or shadows (of truth) that gave way to a fictionalized account of reality that (eventually) assumed a life of its own.

• • •

There is a movement under way in a number of school districts across the nation seeking to abolish “contact” sports during recess that are considered “aggressive” including dodge ball, tag, and, incredible as it may seem, musical chairs, to mention a few, since such “rough housing” supposedly favors bigger, stronger, more athletic types at the expense (chagrin) of other children who, lacking the necessary corporeal endowments or, as they relate to musical chairs, quick feet and agility, (often) find themselves unable to compete at a higher level. For these “reasons” school administrators are gradually phasing out games considered intimidating or harmful to the self-esteem of “underachieving” children. This sporting pogrom is another transparent attempt engineered by Feminists (men and women alike) who are hoping to advance a unisexual agenda aimed at feminizing robust young boys and transforming them into docile she-men. I do not speak in jest! I am of the opinion that nothing less than the utter annihilation of the male ego will satisfy the morbid designs of its dourest members. What many of these women and their proselytized (male) cohorts fail to recognize, however, is that manly qualities are determined by nature and that although the underlying characteristics(s) that typically define (most) males may be artificially modified, nature’s tenacious capacity to overcome such efforts is demonstrated in the remarkable manner it is able to recover itself.

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Addendum to the above: Such typifies the feminist agenda that seeks to invalidate the (societal) benefits of socialization, character, leadership, sportsmanship and imagination while staying the course of emasculating young boys by making them more amenable to its distorted worldview.

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Dear Arthur-(Arthur Traynor)June 21st 2002

Heed the warning of unholy alliances between Christians committed to genuine reform and Secularists seeking the Church's destruction! You, as well as other well-informed Christians, are properly aware of the questionable character of men passing themselves off as priests. The recent scandals (Pedophilia) that have rocked the Church have properly upset you as well they should. The crisis facing the Catholic Church (today) was foreshadowed by the Second Vatican Council that sought to "integrate modern human experience with Christian Dogma" in an effort to promote a better understanding of the Scriptures. Such designs, in my opinion, produced the opposite effect by undermining its traditional teachings. Among its many reforms included an oath of celibacy taken by avowed homosexuals. We shouldn't be surprised by its inevitable outcome. Homosexuality, and not Pedophilia, is the real issue here. Although some cases of "pedophilia" may in fact exist, I am certain that the rate of such occurrences fall well short of the (social) norm. Nevertheless, doesn't it strike you as odd that the overwhelming number of reported cases involving sexual transgressions oftentimes involved adolescent boys (girls, with few exceptions, are seldom mentioned) between the ages of nine and fourteen when most were likely to serve as altar boys? I wouldn't expect accurate reporting from the media and other members of the liberal community unlikely to risk a political fallout over the question of "gay" (that sacred cow) priests although most people on the other hand would generally agree that Pedophilia is abominable and should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I am of the opinion that the media is purposely blowing everything out of proportion. I'm not implying that these transgressions did not in fact occur (and still do for that matter). I agree that these predators should be summarily rooted out, defrocked and thrown in the can for good measure. What I'm suggesting, however, is that men sexually orientated in that manner should never have been ordained to begin with. (There, I've said it!) Isn't it peculiar how many young boys (now grown men) traumatized some thirty to forty years ago seem to be popping out of the woodwork with such alacrity; the suppression of (such) painful matters buried for years suddenly provoking a reawakening of Conscience or whatever else you may choose to call it? Could it be that the promise of financial gain may be a (chief) motivating factor in their decision to tell all? I believe that a number of these accusations have been trumped-up or are simply the product of overactive or "extended" imaginations that have seemingly lost their perspective over time. Perhaps I'm being somewhat cynical or perhaps I'm unwilling to accept what is happening to our Church. Whatever the reason, this issue certainly needs to be addressed in a timely, impartial manner. My biggest concern, however, is that these horrific events, that have recently come to light, are likely to recall arguments about married and, heaven forbid, women priests! That the feminization of the pulpit would likely follow should be reason enough to raise serious doubts among traditional practicing Catholics. (I understand that you and I differ on the question of married and women priests so I won't press the issue). I don't believe, however, that the Church needs to reinvent itself in order to accommodate modern "requirements." However I digress. What was it that President Nixon once said: "We are all Protestants now" or soon will be?

Best Regards

Al

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It's not how you start off but how you finish that ultimately matters the most!

• • •

The unwillingness to forgive a perceived wrong is Pride's greatest Accomplishment!

• • •

A representative of the people should uphold the duties and (sacred) trust of public office by making informed decisions based upon the legitimate concerns of his or her constituents by promoting, whenever possible, majority interests without compromising the immediate demands of the nation. He or she should never pursue, however, his or her own immediate interests or the parochial interests of "popular" opinion that each may otherwise feel indebted.

• • •

Alexander Hamilton remarked in the Federalist Papers that "Power is neither too great nor too small; however "limited or proportionate to its intended purpose and that it is only excessive where its authority exceeds the limits delegated to some predetermined end." In pursuing this line of reasoning, Power, is not absolute but a variation, rather, of proportionate means and ends. Nevertheless, Power, however limited in scope or whatever its assigned role or whatever its form(s) or for whatever purpose (end) it is channeled, should be considered absolute or complete (or excessive) in the manner that it (Power) seeks to promote a desired end, and that however "restricted" by definition remains absolute in its intended design. I believe the confusion lies between Absolute Power and the (excessive) Abuse of Power (which need not be absolute in order to be abusive).

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Addendum to the above: I have taken the liberty of defining Absolute Power as excessive since Power as an arbitrary construct, does not (naturally) lend itself to self-imposed limits neither does it readily yield to ulterior designs that would otherwise seek to curb its influence or abbreviate its prestige.

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Once the brevity of human existence has been properly explored and the passage into the unknown of imminent concern, does the plausible expectancy of eternal life provide some measure of comfort? Such are the overpowering anxieties of Despair searching for the Light of Truth.

• • •

Reason, however compelling, is oftentimes no match against pre-programmed or “talking point” summations, biased opinions or ignorance in general.

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Prozac has become the prescription drug of choice among feminist activists seeking to sedate the (traditional) male ego.

• • •

Although an individual cannot always (control) his or her (own) thoughts, he or she should be able to exercise sufficient control over his or her (own) actions.

• • •

We are all conditioned (to some extent) by conventional formalities that do not necessarily conform to plausible manners although possessing sufficient force in keeping with ceremonial progressions and appropriate customs.

• • •

Whether the (Holy) Scriptures should remain subject to generational contentions or modern interpretations, much in the manner that Constitutional Law is persuaded by the (legal) authority of evolving standards of decency, such arguments that otherwise provide recourse to alternative viewpoints, must be equally troubling as arbitrary viewpoints relating to Papal Infallibility or the Divine Rights of Kings!

• • •

Faith in a (theological) idea does not exist in a vacuum; proceeding as it oftentimes does from Experience and Reason that provide moral and intellectual support to the Faithful. Faith is a “subjective certainty” unproven by worldly standards of measurement however “something” that is intuitively understood unlike “non material” notions (commonly understood as “some things” unsupported or untested by facts). Faith does not imply a paucity of discernable evidence but an immanent reflection of ideas, rather, that must (necessarily) exist in the mind however apart from the mind inasmuch as ideas have foundations of their (own) that support their (own) existence. Ideas perfect a thinking individual in a manner that unites the two; that is to say, cause and effect become one, each assuming a “mutual” consciousness of its (own). Therefore, Doubt has neither the power to extinguish or discredit an (independent) thought or idea that had/has a prior existence of its (own) to begin with.

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Addendum to the above: The assumption (here) is that Ideas have always existed in the mind; that they represent the hidden Wisdoms of God; that they are not formed as much as revealed to those courageous enough to seek them out.

• • •

Freedom is a privilege understood the most by individuals who were not fortunate enough to be born in a free and open society. The fortuitous advantages of those “born free” with a “Bill of Rights” inscribed on their sleeve, oftentimes display an annoying habit of setting themselves up as (global) role models without (considered) thought to (the) urgent requirements of oppressed peoples that must otherwise take precedence over manners of freedom formally understood by a free society.

• • •

The Electoral College was established to accommodate National and Federal forms of government (appealing to local interests). This plan was adopted as a compromise between political factions favoring the Popular Vote (states with larger populations) and others preferring a proportionate voice in government or (states with smaller populations). The E.C. has its (modern) critics, however, who are seeking to replace it with the Popular Vote. This measure, while upsetting the bi-cameral symmetry that remains the underlining genius behind our form of government, would likely invest (disproportionate) political influence in the hands of citizens residing in relatively fewer, however more densely populated states. What follows should give pause to those straddling the fence on this issue: California’s popular vote (54 electoral votes) for example, could potentially neutralize the combined votes of Delaware (3), Maine (4), Hawaii (4), Alaska (3), New Mexico (5), Nevada (4), Utah (5), Idaho (4), Montana (3), Wyoming (3), North Dakota (3), South Dakota (3), Vermont (3), New Hampshire (4), and Rhode Island (4) or fifteen states in all presently under the “protection” of the E.C. This measure could conceivably undermine the (varied) interests and concerns of a nation whose (increasing) plurality presently spans an entire continent (and beyond).

• • •

Addendum to the above: My line of reasoning may strike some as circumstantial or unlikely. I am making a case, however, for proportional voting. I exaggerate to make a point that although the E.C. is not the perfect solution, (a relatively handful of densely populated states strategically allied could conceivably influence the course of an election), abolishing it would further erode the (already) marginalized impact of voters residing in thinly populated areas.

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Addendum to the above: Al Gore won the Popular Vote against (now) President George Bush, while narrowly losing the Electoral College. Democrats are still throwing a temper tantrum over that bitterly contested election nearly two years after its outcome has been (legally) decided.

• • •

A creditable opinion is conditioned by an underlying awareness of the (essential) properties inherent in its (tested) propositions.

A central requirement inherent in any informed opinion lies in the credibility of its (tested) propositions.

A veritable opinion must overcome the challenges posed by a variety of different viewpoints.

A formidable opinion must be willing to confront the testimony of other opinions that might otherwise seek to either refute or discredit its (tested) propositions.

Opinions are oftentimes the extensions of (predetermined) belief systems.

The absence of (determined) counter arguments, on the other hand, must inevitably preclude any possibility of intended results.

Most Opinions are oftentimes impressed upon an individual during the formative stages of that individual's moral and intellectual development.

• • •

There exists an "inner" wisdom or "consciousness of knowing" that is not immediately apparent; exceeding the sum of everything that is (either) known or has the potential of being known that is (otherwise) unknown unless an individual is properly inclined to pursue or know (it); that oftentimes seeks the supporting testimony of other individuals engaged in similar trials of their own.

• • •

Conversion should not be confused with inherited superstition but some (hidden) knowledge, rather, properly revealed in all its forms.

• • •

An individual having been raised in an atheistic environment lacking religious content cannot be (reasonably) expected to make properly informed decisions about the existence of God; that individual having been conditioned by a preemptive notion of God's existence to begin with.

• • •

"Objective" pursuits such as ascertaining the validity of a mathematical or legal postulate or some other undemonstrated proposition, for example, are conditioned rather than perfected by scholastic examination.

• • •

An idea that has not been properly tested does not (necessarily) imply its non-existence!

• • •

That an individual may suddenly "feel" the unexpected "loss" of a close friend or loved one who is still living; conveying an (uncertain) sense that "something" is missing, whose "absence", occasioned by "unforeseen" events, are understood to promote suffering, conditioned as many of us are by the dynamics of the past/future that have already shaped and will continue shaping our lives.

• • •

Humankind is one with the Supreme Being whose inner-presence is a foretaste of His glorious designs that bear witness of Him, (yet) which is not Him, however suggestive of Him, (yet) unites us closer with Him, fashioned as each of us are in His own manner.

• • •

Christ's Resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity. Without it, Christianity is a chimera, a fanciful notion. The de-emphasizing of Christ's Divinity by nominal "Christians," (Protestants and sadly, Catholics alike), stressing His good works and moral teachings (only); that is to say, His "Humanism" in contrast with His Divinity, is troubling to traditional believers who correctly understand that without the Resurrection, the redemption of sin occasioned by His own self-sacrifice is meaningless. Such thinking oftentimes resonates with radical religious viewpoints that have influenced Christian thinking in recent years; that is to say, have willfully misinterpreted the teachings of Christ in order to promote capricious notions of "social justice" and other "progressive" causes.

• • •

Visionary notions of a heaven on earth, aside from diminishing Heaven's supernatural standing, sets a disturbing precedence among individuals seeking to place a higher value on their own capacities on the basis of uncertain designs whose "inestimable" qualities must invariably promote arbitrary standards of excellence proceeding from fallible sources susceptible to lapses in judgment however

“well-intentioned.” Where such perceptions are found to be extreme, the doers of “good deeds” are likely to internalize their own salvation through artificial applications that seek mastery over their own destinies.

• • •

Political Activism for some individuals, especially those coming of age in the sixties and seventies, has become a virtual fountain of youth that seeks to preserve a radical past within the framework of the present. Its youthful caricature has devolved into emotional and intellectual anachronisms indifferent to progressive methods and novel designs; unaware of society’s changing requirements and where that society is heading.

• • •

Initiative functions best in a non-controlling environment.

• • •

A mistake is properly understood as some misunderstanding or misconception or miscalculation; that is to say, an error in “intellectual” judgment that should not be confused, however, with an error or lapse in “moral” judgment. The former is oftentimes based on faulty (intellectual) assumptions or premises or an inability to think (critically); the latter, on deficient reasoning. In this manner, a lapse in judgment due to neglect or an inability to reason (clearly) is not necessarily a mitigating factor for behavior that (otherwise) occasions undue hardships on other people, especially when the intended outcome of some particular action, in whatever manner conceived, should have or could have been properly determined beforehand; apart from such actions performed under abnormal circumstances or under duress that should be provided certain allowances, perhaps; otherwise, in all other respects the consequences of determined actions should be reckoned with. Neither is “ignorance” or an “improper” understanding of its “unintended” results justified in every manner that oftentimes provides a convenient outlet for informed individuals who were (consciously) aware of the probable affects of their actions to begin with.

• • •

The War on Terror is encountering a great deal of opposition from the (hard) Left who continue to advance the notion of American Moral Culpability; that is to say, that America is the (historical) root cause of (all) worldly grievances and should therefore make every conceivable effort to redress certain points of contention that have evolved from its own (alleged) transgressions; thereby giving (justifiable) cause to the underlying motives that led up to the events of 9/11. These appeasing designs (cloaked as open-mindedness) are being advanced from a position of weakness that will (inevitably) strengthen the morale of our ideological enemies while proportionately weakening our nation’s resolve to defend itself from further attacks. The term “useful idiot” is no longer the exception however the rule among left-wing zealots at home and abroad whose uniform style of pacifism, internalized by guilt feelings, must inevitably encourage Islamic underachievers and malcontents who, given a “proper” forum, would gladly lay their collective failings on the doorstep of Progressive (Western) Cultures.

• • •

Placing the burden of proof squarely on the shoulders of the Office of the Presidency, although congressional feedback (Advise and Consent) remains a necessary requirement of any (informed) military decision that would otherwise commit our nation to war), is simply another in a long line of artful tactics employed by (terrorist) apologists for alleged American “misconduct,” whose quixotic search for incontrovertible proof (intelligence) that “correctly” links terrorist activities to renegade nations (Iraq/Iran/Syria/Libya/North Korea); that is to say, nations that support terrorist causes, notwithstanding the overwhelming volume of circumstantial evidence that, rightly considered, common sense should not (otherwise) refute, must inevitably undermine our nation’s ability to properly defend itself.

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Sexual Abstinence as a definitive means of avoiding teenage pregnancy is oftentimes treated as an afterthought in many of our schools Special Ed Programs. Although such programs are not (directly) encouraging teenage promiscuity, its putative “inevitability” seems to lend implicit support to (sexual) conduct that “conventional wisdom” otherwise considers the “norm.” Such carefree attitudes conveyed by teachers and school administrators oftentimes serve as self-fulfilling prophecies; whose (passive) acceptance continues to (willingly) lend its moral support to sexual tolerance; notwithstanding the waving of white flags seeking to override parental authority by withdrawing the support of schools that consider it their public duty to “properly” instruct their (own) children.

• • •

Whenever I reflect on the “Holocaust” (one of many since the latter half of the twentieth century), I am reminded of how many of its victims succumbed to the loss of life as well as the untold indignities that many individuals were (otherwise) subjected to in one manner or another. The survivors of these atrocities have never completely recovered from the painful recollection of their miserable and demoralizing existence that sought to degrade the human spirit. Its perpetrators and willing accomplices responsible for these tragic events lost something as well: their souls! Such will prove far more difficult to retrieve than their (human) dignity. It may be a minor consolation to the individuals and families involved, perhaps. Nevertheless, it gives considered pause to the notion that tragedy burns its candles at both ends, directing its prominent characters toward some fated center that must inevitably come to terms; the

offended seeking retribution, the offender, redemption.

• • •

A number of (politically) prominent individuals have achieved historical repute for their providential and skillful management of exceptional events that defined their tenure in (public) office notwithstanding the reluctance of some who were neither willing or able to meet the extraordinary challenges that confronted them; provoked to action, however, by the enlightened examples of others before taking formal or appropriate action in response to such events. The morally and intellectually constant are oftentimes prepared to assume the mantle of leadership in sharp contrast with other individuals who, lacking courage or insight, are likely to dismiss such opportunities that Chance has otherwise occasioned. In this manner, contemporary events aligned with historical processes have oftentimes “conspired” in overriding the feckless apathy or uncertain character of political leaders who must be properly guided toward “destiny’s” chartered course.

• • •

An individual can neither recall the dead nor make proper allowances to loved ones that he or she has disappointed in his or her lifetime. Nevertheless, I am not uncertain that many of us may one day reclaim their affections. Otherwise, why so much fuss and bother seeking redemption for perceived failings that made our mutual existence intolerable to begin with?

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Addendum to the above: That the passing of a loved one whom we’ve disappointed may (otherwise) occasion a better person is some consolation for our mutual sorrow(s), I suppose.

• • •

Savvy is a highbrow counterpart to Street Smarts.

• • •

Moral Relativism lacks a supporting structure; that is to say, lacks a universal standard by which to (correctly) assess the proposed merits of some moral or ethical proposition whereas Moral Absolutism, drawn to its own (unconditional) point(s) of reference or final conclusions, oftentimes assumes too heavy a burden that must otherwise be lessened by degrees or fall under its own weight.

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Unconditional forgiveness without qualification is oftentimes misguided!

• • •

Thought oftentimes transcends the material limits of its immediate environment explaining in part why the mind is never quite so much at “home.”

• • •

Certain propositions may contain a kernel of truth however uncertain, unless properly considered in their entirety. Such notable exceptions, however, whenever (correctly) regarded, should not be understood as relative or measured truths as they may otherwise relate to suppositions perceived in a particular manner under peculiar circumstances or falling within exclusive parameters.

• • •

The greatest obstacle in the pursuit of Truth is an individual’s reluctance to alter his or her (own) decided opinions.

• • •

So many stray and sickly animals, poor things! Once laid peacefully to rest, however, suffer no more; unlike the Human Animal whose quasi-spiritual nature (naturally) resistant to such designs has suddenly altered its course!

• • •

Ebbing (Spiritual) Faith in the wake of Secular Assaults designed to sow doubt in the minds of Believers by eliminating (Public) Reminders that further undermine Spiritual Resolve!

• • •

Among the notable screen legends of yesteryear, few commend themselves to modern audiences like John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart, both of whom continue to enjoy a certain cult following, impressing their mark on Conservatives/Liberals in a manner consistent, with some exceptions, to each’s own particular social or political orientation. The “Duke” epitomized the embodiment of Traditional American Values while “Bogie” personified the “Anti-Hero.” Among actresses, however, popular Liberal Icons Katherine Hepburn and Bette Davis continue to run unopposed.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Lest we forget Loretta Young.

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“I will vote for the best candidate,” the best qualified to lead our nation, possessing the highest credentials, of unblemished character and nauseam, are worthy sentiments that in practice, however, oftentimes succumb to the temptations of party loyalties.

• • •

Homosexual Priests, including those who have taken a vow of celibacy, falling prey to the appeals of temptation, whose sexual orientation are oftentimes viewed in broader terms, encouraged, in part, by a modern culture opposed to Traditional Church Teachings, form, on some subconscious level, at least, attitudes “naturally” opposed to such teachings considered either severe or inconsonant with “open-minded” modernist viewpoints.

• • •

Science has been able to modify the molecular structure of Matter understood within the (existing) framework of material laws; whose combination (of atoms) in specific alignment will alter its “identity.” Tinkering with an atom by changing its valence through the process of ionization, for example, will alter the genetic formula or assigned components of some erstwhile element. On the other hand, no amount of social engineering can permanently alter the unyielding character of Human Nature that, left to its own device, ultimately returns to its natural condition on its own accord.

• • •

Christian Theologians are generally in agreement that Abraham’s remarkable Leap of Faith; his steadfast obedience to God’s command that he offer up in sacrifice his only son (Isaac), constitutes the highest example of Selfless-Faith encountered in the bible. I must place Joseph right alongside Abraham as a Pillar of Faith. It required no less Faith, in my opinion, to remain loyal to his betrothed (Mary) at a time she was inexplicably with child; a woman he had never “known,” based on the testimony of an angel who appeared to him in a vision and cautioned that the child was the “Son of Man,” conceived, not in the flesh, but by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph’s decision to remain faithful to Mary required no lesser degree of faith.

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Working and Middle Class Americans have an obsession with wanting to live like Millionaires. Incredibly high have material standards risen in recent years; a great, big house furnished with all the modern conveniences, purchasing or leasing a new car every couple of years, a television in every room, showcase furniture, expensive trips abroad, extensive wardrobes, routinely dining out, consumer products purchased and quickly discarded, electronic gadgets, exercise equipment, cell phones for each family member, casino gambling, so on and so forth. These same individuals, however, are counted among those critical in their old age of the federal government’s inability to keep pace with the growing demands of an aging population whose extravagant spending habits over the years were seldom mindful of the need to set aside a portion of their income for a rainy day!

• • •

Addendum to the above: There is a great deal of truth in the familiar adage that where the Rich lead, the Poor will follow.

• • •

Question: What strategies should the Republican Party adopt in order to retain its majority in both Houses of Congress in the upcoming elections?

Response: 1) Remain steadfast on the War on Terror, 2) Continue advancing sound economic policies, 3) Pursue Immigration, Energy and Social Security reforms, 4) Continue behaving like Democrats on social issues, 4) Go through the motions of at least trying to curb spending, 5) Continue eating their own in the manner of Nixon, Packwood, Livingstone, Gingrich and (now) Lott, 6) Continue endorsing “Moderate” Republicans disguised as Conservatives.

• • •

Question: What has been the political impact of Gerrymandering over the last half century or more?

Response: A very serious one indeed! Although I am not opposed to this practice in principle, (its historical origins as they relate to proportional ethnic/racial representation have been well documented), even its most ardent detractors, however, must applaud the creative resourcefulness of those responsible for engineering such elaborate arrangements that have given rise to disproportionate (racial) representation rising well above of the national average. It has also occasioned a greater number of political pretenders and wannabes who, in my opinion, are unfit to lead this nation. (What was it that Alexis de Tocqueville once said about the Tyranny of the Masses?)

Question: What is wrong with the Catholic Church?

Response: There is nothing wrong with the Catholic Church but the questionable character, rather, of certain priests entrusted with its care. 1) What immediately comes to mind is the feminization of the priesthood (whatever became of manly priests?) 2) A sizeable minority of its parishioners who have gotten caught up in matters of “conscience” sounding more often than not like Protestants rather than Catholics. 3) A gradual departure from the Church’s principled teachings in favor of social reform. 4) Sexual Tolerance (Homosexuality) in the priesthood. (Church leaders fell asleep at the helm!) 5) Discussions centering on Gender and Marital “reforms”

in the priesthood that are demoralizing a growing number of traditional practicing Catholics. 6) The Church's position on Immigration (Reform) and its antiwar rhetoric that is especially troubling to Conservative Catholics who believe that the Church should shy away from politics and stick to preaching. 7) Nuns who should conduct themselves as Nuns rather than Social Workers.

• • •

Dear Arthur- (Arthur Traynor) December 31st 2002

I believe that you and I generally agree on apostolic points of reference whose teachings are "clearly" outlined in The Gospels. Where matters become a bit shaky for many practicing Catholics, however, are areas lacking definite assurances or clarity as they relate to the teachings of the Gospel or in the traditional writings of our Church Fathers. Many of Christ's teachings are "understood" in parables interpreted for the Faithful by Church Scholars whose explanations are oftentimes relied upon by lay people whose limited (scriptural) understanding requires spiritual guidance.

The fallibility of our priests who have followed their own conscience on matters of form and (personal) conduct, are gradually losing the traditional support of their parishioners. I am not necessarily speaking of homosexuality although that too has become an overriding concern to practicing Catholics in recent years.

I believe that many of us could use a little bit more of that old-fashioned-styled "Fire and Brimstone" conspicuously absent from today's sermons inasmuch as many of our priests have succumbed to politically correct manners inconsistent with church teachings. Sadly, a number of priests are reluctant, it seems, to challenge modernist viewpoints for fear of alienating their parishioners leery of a church presently under indictment by the courts of public opinion. (He who lives in glass houses.....

Speaking of which, while attending services this past Sunday, a semi-retired priest invited by our parish to say Mass, gave a sermon on family values. He stated in his sermon, and I quote, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Can you image that! How fortunate for him a reporter wasn't in attendance.

I believe that the Church must begin distancing itself from secular viewpoints incompatible with traditional church teachings. What we need are more manly priests who are not afraid to brandish the spiritual sword.

I consider it a Christian Duty to be on the "wrong" side of History, if that in fact is where most traditional practicing Catholics presently find themselves. Since returning to the Church, I have made every effort, inasmuch as it lies within my power, to place principle ahead of falsely conceived notions of Historical Determinism. The choices we make are not inevitable. The results of such choices are independent of "preceding" designs, that is to say, each of us has it within ourselves to influence our own spiritual destiny through God's gift of Free Will.

One final point, I wish to clarify what I meant by the Church's Infallibility. I was trying to advance an argument on two levels: On the one, that the Church stands "apart" from its members while on a higher level, the Church and its members are united as one spiritual body (or Community of Believers). In this manner, its members are integrated parts constituting a common whole in the manner each part is considered one with that body. Should one of its members (part) transgress (sin), every member (whole) is equally offended, that is to say, the body (Church) suffers the consequences of that transgression. A simple analogy will hopefully serve to reinforce my argument. When some part of the human body is traumatized, it doesn't matter which part, the shock will resonate throughout the entire body, that is to say, make that body uneasy or unsteady. Its origin is useful, however, in the manner of localizing a cure. One might reasonably adopt a similar argument whenever a member (part) of the Church (whole) has transgressed. Every member brought together as a whole is equally affected. Another way of putting it is that each part is inextricably involved with the whole. Returning to the question of Sin, the Church, therefore, has "sinned" by association and must therefore be held accountable whoever the sinner. I said accountable, not responsible. There's a subtle difference here! Each member, if my part/whole assumption holds up, is therefore held accountable for the consequences that may otherwise follow because the transgressions of any single member has unfavorably affected the reputation of the (entire) body.

Have a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Best Regards,

Al

• • •

The Federalist Papers is a remarkable body of work that has left a lasting impression on me. Included among its central arguments are:

- Elimination of Sectional Rivalries that often arise from Passion, Envy and Jealousy -
- Regulation of Commerce vital to the Economic Prosperity of the Nation -
- Fiscal and Monetary Policies enabling the Central Government to raise needed Capital for Public Works and other Public Services -
- Establishment of an Organized Army to promote the Peace against enemies Foreign and Domestic -
- Curbing Local Prejudices detrimental to the Nation's vital Interests
- Protection of Minority Rights -

- A Common Currency -
- Empowering the Federal Government to enter into Treaties with Sovereign Nations -
- Establish a Judiciary System to Interpret and Sanction laws -
- Preservation of (the) Union -
- • •

It would appear that the European Economic Community (EEC) is focusing much of its attention on micromanaging the private affairs of its member citizens rather than promoting sound economic policies. The EEC's Socialist Agenda has been constructed in a manner that seeks to eliminate (grassroots) autonomy altogether by gradually abolishing (national) social and cultural customs, imposing criminal sanctions against forms of behavior considered inappropriate or incompatible with standards of political correctness, superseding local political and legal authority with supranational (political) bodies and international courts, and (surprise!) imposing membership requirements mandating that each participating nation legalize abortion on demand, to mention few of its initiatives. No doubt there are others that I am unaware of.

• • •

...the emergence of a Eugenic Society populated by genetic freaks: (Eugenic Man); a soulless, trancelike creature artificially designed, not created, unlike (Rational Man) who was created in God's (own) Image...

• • •

Rational Man 1) perfect in nature, 2) a synthesis of mind and body grounded in its own (spiritual) essence, 3) able to morally define itself, 4) conscious of its own dignity (being), 5) volitional, 6) possessing unique awareness, 7) spontaneous, 8) visionary, and 9) directed toward its (own) determined ends. The Eugenic Man 1) a corruption of human excellence, 2) spiritually vacuous, 3) morally inert, 4) lacking critical proportion, 5) lacking free will, 6) possessing a corporate mindset, 7) predictable, 8) myopic, and 9) constructed for some intended purpose.

• • •

Cloning is Humankind's crowning achievement that defines its (own) conceited self-centeredness!

• • •

The cynical side of me hankers for another Great Depression to help restore some proper measure of (material) sanity to gross (consumer) spending habits that have seemingly lost all sense of proportion. The practical side of me, however, is worried about the future of my 401K!

• • •

Nature, in its primitive state, is a wonder to behold, provided the observer maintains a respectful distance; however, having been tamed, loses much of its captive appeal; that is to say, loses its magical effect in proportion to its domesticity, devolving into a distorted version of its regal eminence

• • •

...predicated upon an intuitive understanding transcending the broadest limits of the imagination understood as the "will to vision" expanding in proportion to (spiritual) phenomena that becomes (increasingly) receptive to (intuitive) logic and reason, a refined (spiritual) awareness that neither compromises nor inhibits the One constant at once approachable however "inaccessible" to the mind, a (seemingly) moving target within (the) reach of a receptive imagination however evading the limited scope of rational thought, whose mysteries eventually become apparent through a strengthening of Faith and Divine Trust, alone...

• • •

"Love" oftentimes devolves into Lust in the minds of the (emotionally) stunted who are unable to understand what to make of it.

• • •

The mind must be continually challenged or otherwise it will weaken its natural capacity for growth. In this manner an individual must tend to his or her moral development; that is to say, seek proper guidance in a way that reinforces principled rules of conduct; what an individual should do and avoid doing consonant with "what the heart teaches" (Natural Law).

• • •

Racial quotas and preferences are denying many promising students equal access to quality schools by promoting a "spoils" system that seeks to redress "historical" grievances by replacing academically gifted students with lesser scholastic talents by virtue of their race, ethnicity, gender and religion rather than academic achievement. C.S. Lewis properly observed that "Democratic Education...means give them all an equal start and letting the winners show their form." He was referring, of course, to Equality of Opportunity, not results. This disturbing pattern, apparent in many of our colleges and universities, must inevitably produce dire

results for a society once that society begins to lose its competitive edge. Individuals are by nature, unequal. (This has been discussed elsewhere) Natural endowment, however, is not ceded solely to the “privileged.” Competition, properly channeled, was/is intended to be “ruthless”, rewarding the talented and industrious above the ordinary and idle. Does modern society fear competition because of an uncertain, cynical apprehension of the potential “consequences” or unintended results that such competition might otherwise occasion? Although I am not qualified to answer this question, it would appear that replacing genuine with common talents for the sake of social/cultural diversity will eventually compromise (true) intellectual diversity that our schools once promoted.

• • •

Our military’s adoption of politically correct rules of conduct on the battlefield and other “proper” forms of military engagement, besides limiting or undermining its stated objective(s), is engendering a loss of confidence among its allies and other nations straddling the fence (aside from demoralizing its supporters at home) who (otherwise) continue receiving mixed signals while proportionately raising the confidence level of its enemies.

• • •

It is perhaps some minor consolation that the political left (reluctantly) acknowledges that Saddam Hussein is an “evil” man. What additional fodder to the antiwar movement had this villain been perceived as a benevolent and kindhearted individual!

• • •

Rene Descartes argued that “Wonder” is an impediment to Knowledge. I am uncertain of the context that this comment was made. I would imagine, however, that the acquisition of knowledge naturally arouses a (certain) excitement (or wonder) that leaves an inquiring mind thirsting for more. That Humankind never ceases pursuing new knowledge or (revealed truths lay hidden) is a wonderful achievement in its own right, a testimony to the unbinding limits of the imagination in search of new discoveries. Whether modern society is a worthy inheritor of such endeavors is problematical.

• • •

Positivism is a school of thought that attempts to apply pseudoscientific methods to human behavior. It argues that precise measurement, or what is actually perceived by the senses, is the only authentic basis for knowledge and that all other perceptual concepts or ideas must be considered problematic unless verifiable. Empirical studies based on observation or evidence observed by the senses, however, are not, in themselves, immune to faulty impressions whenever the senses (“mind”) are either inadequately formed, corrupted, diseased or subject to pre-conceived designs that otherwise interfere with the observer’s ability to render impartial or reasonable judgments. This is oftentimes the case whenever social and political expediency advances behavioral assumptions that experience and common sense otherwise refute. Such thinking has prompted a twentieth-century mindset defined by the supercilious designs of social engineers seeking to modify, if not micro-manage, human behavior on the basis of implausible, formulaic theories “underlying” (human) nature. Its flawed assumptions oftentimes fail to consider, however, that every Individual is subject to his or her own private set of moral and ethical assumptions that are naturally resistant to categorical imperatives or the conscientious “merits” of narrow-minded viewpoints that seek to impose their (myopic) moral authority on others.

• • •

Equality and Freedom are not identical. Equality is an artificial construct that is neither attainable nor desirable, for that matter, aside from the fact that it is (generally) unworkable; that is to say, incapable of being “implemented” successfully. (I am referring to Equal Human Qualities, not Equal Rights.) Freedom, that pursues its own course of action or seeks its own standards of excellence or acts in accordance with its own principled assumptions that seeks to advance its highest moral and intellectual potential by thinking and acting independently, is the antithesis of Equality in the manner Equality lacks the essential properties of Variety and Change.

• • •

The Trinity of Existence is Being (the object of Existence), Consciousness (that which properly informs Existence), and Essence (its spiritual component).

• • •

It is difficult to imagine that many Hollywood types once led normal, average lives before becoming stars. What is it about the Hollywood Culture that seems to effectively absorb all traces of their former selves, transforming them into Kafkaesque-like characters whose abnormal, dreamlike perceptions manufacture a distorted sense of reality?

• • •

When the truth behind some proposition cannot be properly ascertained or supported by fact, opinion must serve as the final arbiter, provided it meets the (litmus) requirements of feasible plausibility.

• • •

The following briefly sums up the antiwar movement in America: 1) Reflexive Pacifism, 2) Assumed Culpability, 3) Stylish Contempt, 4) Naiveté, 5) Conditioning, 6) Guilt, 7) Denial, 8) Partisanship. The (properly) informed reader does not require further elaboration!

• • •

Addendum to the above: The most contemptible of all are our putative (political) leaders. History will not look favorably upon certain members of this shameless Congress who have (deliberately) placed (political) expediency ahead of National Security!

• • •

Recommended reading for the thoughtful Christian include but are not limited to C.S. Lewis, G.T. Chesterton, Charles Williams, Romano Guardini, J.R.R. Tolkien, Eric Voegelin, Christopher Dawson, and Father D'Arcy to name a few.

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I am not convinced that Wisdom necessarily comes with Age. (Experience should not be confused with Wisdom).

• • •

Allowing notions of Evil to seep into our consciousness, even as dialectical counterarguments to Good, encourages standards of debate that Evil does not justly merit; that is to say, Evil poses a potential (spiritual) risk to individuals who (unknowingly) provide it with a plausible forum to deceive receptive viewpoints by (intentionally) mischaracterizing its harmful designs. Such efforts must place "inquisitive" minds in an uncertain position that may very well compromise their spiritual well-being. It is Evil's custom to shield itself from criticism in the (artful) manner it encourages (a) Moral Neutrality by obfuscating notions of Good and Evil, a condition of the mind susceptible to individuals who have failed in their efforts to cultivate a proper spiritual and moral awareness of the fundamental agencies separating the two and therefore likely to arrive at the conclusion that such differences are either objectively unverifiable or the product of social convention(s). Such thinking may inevitably give rise to amoral attitudes of horrible (moral) consequence to these individuals.

• • •

Where has it been written that a Great Nation must commend itself to the parochial interests or jealousies of ancient traditions that have lost their comparable standing or concede its leadership position among the Community of Nations, rather than conforming to its (own) enlightened self-interests? Such designs must inevitably tarnish that nation's highest historical achievements that it should (otherwise) enjoy and (rightly) pass along to posterity.

• • •

The notion that there is no Heaven is too terrible to imagine; its promise of eternal happiness, free from pain and worry and troublesome ambitions that harden the heart! To be born again without blemish, to rise above the petty quarreling that promotes so much unhappiness and sorrow, to be reunited once again with loved ones and friends who left us too soon, to make proper atonement to those we've disappointed and, most importantly, to obtain spiritual redemption.

• • •

My (uncertain) position on Stem Cell research is that it could lead to medical discoveries that may otherwise provide comfort and relief to the suffering although where such designs to exceed their intended purpose, however, counter (moral) arguments would necessarily compel me to withdraw my conditional support of programs of potential benefit to Humankind. I would not under any circumstances, however, support Embryonic Cell research that 1) is unnecessary in that SCR is generally considered by (most) specialists in this field a more effective means of targeting DNA, and 2) provides a forum to Abortion Rights Advocates who are disingenuously using this issue (ECR) to add "legitimacy" to their anti-life agenda.

• • •

I have often been reminded by Christians and Atheists alike that war, or any act of aggression for that matter, is inconsistent with Christ's Teaching. I agree. Given Humankind's insatiable ambitions and imperfect condition, however, it is unlikely that such attitudes will change anytime soon.

• • •

Whenever a woman presents herself in the manner of a whore, conducts herself like one or (even) thinks like one, because it amuses her to do so, perception (alas) will oftentimes supersede reality!

• • •

Perhaps it's me but I find it somewhat ironic, if not amusing, how nations like Russian, China and Germany routinely lecture the United States on Human Rights. Such coming from nations that gave the world Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong and Adolph Hitler!

• • •

We oftentimes have much to learn from the passing of loved ones or friends who (routinely) reach out to us from the "grave," who continue to inform our hearts and minds and make each of us a better person whenever we allow them to do so.

• • •

The problem with thinking you're a "somebody" is that everybody thinks he or she is a somebody. Given our unique personalities, it goes without saying that each of us is a special, not to be confused with exceptional, somebody and not just an everybody. That would be a frightening proposition! By "somebody", I mean the tendency many of us have of attaching far greater importance to ourselves than many of us justly merit, inclined as we oftentimes are of internalizing our self-importance. There is a (hidden) danger here: that popular attitudes of this sort oftentimes marginalize higher forms of excellence essential to the sensible management of a well-ordered society.

• • •

The Vietnam War was a defining moment in American and European politics that produced ideological divisions at home and abroad, giving rise to moral equivocations and modernist geopolitical assumptions whose (dire) impact on critical political thinking continue to resonate through present times. Existing political tensions transcending the boundaries of American Society have steadily undermined America's fragile alliance with Europe in recent years. Nowhere is this fissure more apparent than that separating its Liberal and Conservative components. Europe, in particular, has taken a decidedly leftward turn. Liberalism's gradual departure from traditional conventions and quasi/moderate viewpoints coupled with its uncanny fascination with centralized authority has engendered an utopic, foolishly optimistic worldview based on imaginary global assumptions rather than practical means. The "one size fits all" mindset of its more extreme elements is understood by their obligatory support of Socialist/Marxist governments, despite overwhelming evidence of government corruption, economic mis-management and Human and Civil Rights violations of every imaginable sort (that would have otherwise shocked the moral sensibilities of traditionally thoughtful liberals), and conditioned willingness to provide their ruthless leaders with a free pass. (Who was it that said "you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs"?) Nevertheless, such designs seem justified, on some uncertain level, at least, ('tis better to err on the side of "caution"), on the basis of radical liberalism's excessive aversion for anything Western and its fawning enthusiasm for its vocal opponents. Although the seeds of anti-Western Tradition were planted at the turn of the present century, they did not reach its climax until the sixties when the war gave plausible expression to such "troublesome" viewpoints. The Hard Left embarked on brilliantly conceived (however transparent) strategies of "Moral Equivocation and Relativism." The former sought to erase the "uncertain" boundaries separating Good and Evil (read: Capitalism and Communism) by its specious portrayal of American Institutions, advancing a laundry list of America's (own) moral failings: institutionalized racism, unequal distribution of wealth, racial inequality, civil rights violations, unlawful imprisonment, political disfranchisement...you get the general idea (Glass Houses and Stones). While not openly supporting Communism, the movement achieved its intended purpose that sought to deflect public criticism. Such arguments, of course, were designed to confuse and win over the naïve and (politically) gullible whose wayside seeds failed to firmly take root. The movement would soon provide legitimacy while running interference for a succession of ruthless dictatorships that gradually emerged throughout the world, including our own hemisphere. Many, like Fidel Castro and Daniel Ortega and today, Hugo Chavez, are considered fashionably chic in liberal circles not to mention media darlings of the Left. The latter, its fraternal twin, sought to undermine Western Moral Authority by calling into question the legitimacy or applicability of its (own) moral authority. This juxtaposing of two symmetrical (ideological) positions inserted a "moral" variable of questionable value into the political equation that ultimately achieved its (unspoken) purpose; discrediting Western Values.

• • •

Evil is the corruption of Good. All that God has created is inherently Good, inspired by God's (own) Perfect Goodness; that is to say, it would be contrary for anything Evil to proceed from (Principle) Goodness that was not Good in itself. Such an (implausible) event would (otherwise) contradict its (Goodness) essential quality. That God allows Evil to happen, however, should not be confused with His being the cause of Evil. (There is a major difference here!) "In Him no darkness at all" John 1:5.

• • •

An evil (or sinful) act is oftentimes voluntary (on the part of the sinner) however guided by ("involuntary") passions whose foreseeable consequences are properly informed by Reason. On the other hand, (Right) Reason would never allow any individual to voluntarily seek his or her own (moral or spiritual) corruption without first giving that individual sufficient pause to consider its harmful effects.

• • •

Whatever has been eternally pre-ordained has (already) been revealed by Divine Wisdom inasmuch as anything existing in time eternal, some (future) event, perhaps, already exists, not (will) exist; that is to say, it exists in time as a pre-determined fact or in a manner that is understood within the capacious boundaries of timeless time as already existing.

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Addendum to the above: I am speaking of the (once) was and the (will) become as the present (now); the product of God's eternal designs.

• • •

The State of California has taken a certain step backwards in its putative efforts to secure our nation's borders when its feckless governor (Davis) signed a bill into law extending driver's licenses to illegal aliens. The (official) reason behind this egregious measure was to promote greater visibility and monitoring (read: write up more tickets) of vehicular infractions (not to mention increased revenue accruing from licensing and registration requirements, inspection and other user fees). That illegal aliens continue to routinely

flaunt the laws of our land without fear of reprisal is of no immediate concern to some politicians entrusted with the welfare and security of its citizens.

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Common Sense understands intuitively without recourse to Experience.

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Reincarnation: the cycle of birth and death - a regenerative journey in search of (blessed) harmony and peace:

How does a (soul) account for (its) historical misdeeds whose antecedents are unknown?

In what manner do “prevailing” moral and spiritual agencies informing the “good life” reconcile contemporary standards lacking (historical) precedence; that is to say, whose identities or stores of knowledge have been irretrievably lost?

What has indeed been assimilated from having lived yet having forgotten all; that is to say, wherein lay the principle examples of forgotten impressions?

That life ends before it really begins; destined to revolve eternally in circles.

That the Wheel of Life appears much too harsh and unforgiving!

More comforting a God whose unlimited wisdom, immeasurable leniency and boundless capacity for forgiveness – we commend our souls.

Inclined to sin – Humankind – forgivable – self - correcting – (through) acts of faith (and) contrition - clemency in proportion to the sincerity of the supplicant’s request.

• • •

Materialism isn’t so much a Condition of Wealth as a Condition of Mind.

• • •

We oftentimes hear people say “I believe that there is ‘something’ out there” (whether “it” be good, bad or indifferent). Such thinking, in my view, sets a disturbing spiritual precedence among “believers” who, having failed to establish a close, personal relationship with God, establish (instead) an unwholesome pattern of skepticism.

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Its elasticity renders the Constitution a “living” organism subject to contemporary interpretations or (the) prevailing temper (moral climate) of modern times.

• • •

Laws, in the absence of binding (principle) origins constitute a transitory, variable system of rules conditioned by current fashions without regard to (the) underlying (moral) assumptions that otherwise provide (customary) perspective to a well-ordered, (continuous) society.

• • •

Whenever legal revisions are inconsonant with the underlying assumptions of Original Intent, such modifications are improperly considered and, in some instances, morally objectionable (Abortion) once their conceptual designs have been improperly compromised or incorrectly interpreted.

• • •

Although laws are not in every respect universally binding, many generally underscore the nature of time-honored (moral) precepts; that is to say, eternal truths and timeless values transcending the limits of parochial custom(s) and tradition(s); whose eternal precedence have been intuitively understood by a (variety) of people among a (variety) of cultures across the course of History.

• • •

“Death is too good for him. He should spend the rest of his natural life rotting behind bars!” Such remarks are oftentimes made by opponents of Capital Punishment as a point of convenience; the very same people likely to applaud the compassionate, “enlightened” decisions of (liberal) parole boards who routinely release incorrigible felons otherwise sentenced to serve “life imprisonment.”

• • •

There are two forms of bias: The first is inductive, whereby specific premises or assumptions are employed to support some general conclusion about some individual or group: Christians believe in God; therefore all Christians are religious fanatics. The second is deductive, whereby general conclusions (relating to same) are adopted to reach some specific conclusion: Scotchmen are stingy; therefore Tavish MacDougal is a cheapskate.

• • •

Although I am not principally opposed to inter-planetary travel, it would seem that given the number of pressing social and economic issues demanding our immediate attention right here at home, financial resources otherwise allocated to NASA would be put to better use by attending to the requirements of a planet that our progeny will continue calling home for centuries to come rather than exploring (uninhabitable) regions for no apparent reason other than satisfying quixotical designs.

• • •

A Self-Contained Community is unachievable unless Human Nature achieves some measure of contentment.

• • •

Western Democratic Nations have been conditioned by questionable rules of military engagement or “proper” codes of conduct alien to Middle Eastern thinking. Such attitudes must inevitably foster uncertain hardships on our fighting men and women engaged in battle with an enemy untroubled by such scruples.

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Introspection: or Quality Time with Oneself.

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Critical Scrutiny is a necessary requirement in forming a proper Estimate of Things.

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In the absence of absolute standards against which moral questions may be weighed, there can be no compelling argument between Right and Wrong.

• • •

A troubling (social) phenomenon has been gaining momentum in recent years: an increasing Islamic presence within the African American Community whose “converts” generally fall into one of two groups: Its more radical members with traditional “axes to grind” who have lost confidence in the American way of life or notions of a color blind society and a softer version that perceives the Christian Community as an extension of an oppressive “White Society.” In either case, the general impression of unfulfilled promises has sparked defections in favor of a “religious” culture perceived as inclusive (sic) and generally more responsive to the “spiritual” and social requirements of that Community. I do not entertain any doubts on this score, that this movement is politically and socially driven rather than motivated by religious principles although exceptions certainly exist. Although my line of reasoning may appear to be an oversimplification of a complex issue, its basic premise, I believe, contains some measure of truth. Be that what it may, one of the more troubling aspects of this “apostatizing” movement is underscored by its more extreme examples (Nation of Islam) whose members have parted company with America’s social and religious traditions adopting, in many instances, racist attitudes toward Western Culture that most feel alienated. More troubling, however, has been the emergence of Fifth Columnists who are using our college campuses, correctional facilities and, sadly to say, military establishments as recruiting (indoctrination) centers for advancing racist and anti-American viewpoints. Even more troubling has been the feckless compliance of our political and social leaders who have placed political correctness ahead of common sense by providing fertile training grounds for the “enemy within.” (Lest I come under fire, I am speaking of hard-core elements of which there exists a growing number!)

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A tie, in whatever sporting event, is tantamount to taking one’s sister to the prom!

• • •

Unless a teacher possesses extraordinary talent and endurance, he or she may only hope to be as effective as his or her “material” will allow.

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A steady stream of visual and graphic designs inevitably reaches a saturation point whereby the natural limits of conscious awareness or sensation are unable to properly absorb or assimilate additional units of (stimuli), unlike the insatiable capacity of one’s (own) capacious imagination whose extended authority categorically rejects such restrictions.

• • •

There was a time, (certainly before my time), when college professors harboring “progressive” or insurgent designs, teaching in more conventionally-minded (academic) environments, had to raise “false fronts”; that is to say, “operate” within the school’s customary guidelines, in order to “win” students over. The Cultural Revolution and its liberating impact on society altered the social dynamics of our schools and universities in a manner that encouraged its more radical members to step out of the (ideological) closet and freely pursue its anti-Western/ traditional mainstream agenda. Having abandoned all scholarly pretexts, many set off on their self-appointed course that sought to discredit all forms of traditional manners and customs that would eventually leave a moral and intellectual vacuum in its (nihilistic) wake. Such deceptions are no longer necessary in today’s “learning” environments where the pre-disposing limits and biases of intellectual argument(s) are freely flaunted. I believe that this proselytizing approach to “teaching” and its apparent transparency, however, hasn’t been lost on a number of critical-minded students who are beginning to take these distorted

(historical) mis-characterizations, especially those that falsely represent Western Culture, for what they really are. The emergence of a new, (more) independent minded generation of students has triggered a resurgence of traditional teaching methods and course studies in a number of (private) schools and colleges providing reasonable counter-arguments to out-dated designs while encouraging thoughtful (young) minds to correctly think for themselves.

• • •

The flaunting arrogance of today's teachers, themselves victims of social engineering a generation ago, is presently under siege by a new generation of (thoughtful) students who, armed with their own (ideological) arsenal of values, may not be such willing accomplices as their parents. The battle, however, will be hard-fought!

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Addendum to the above: Insert Thinking for "Thinking", for it is certain that many young students of my generation were not properly trained to Think (critically) but to "Think" ("correctly"), rather.

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Everyone is entitled to his or her (own) points of view provided they do not seek to mis-characterize the opinions of others.

• • •

Cigarette importers in Ireland are required by law to inscribe a warning label on every pack that reads: "Cigarettes Kill". That the Irish Government has no scruples over its unconscionable decision to levy taxes from the sale of a (toxic) product that it "knows" (for certain) is "definitively" lethal exceeds the hypocrisy of its warning labels. In this manner, the practice (of selling cigarettes) arguably constitutes accessory to murder!

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Today the "One World Alliance," tomorrow the "Federation of Planets."

• • •

Whenever I find myself on a structured tour of a venerable home (or estate) of historical interest; one inhabited by "ghosts", perhaps, it (oftentimes) strikes me as if my (unwelcome) presence constituted, in some manner, a retroactive intrusion into the lives of its "former" occupants; that in some (uncertain) manner, such intimacies, once enjoyed by families and friends, have been placed on (public) display. So too are our (own) private affairs violated in a present/future conjunctive by the prospective dynamics of subsequent designs of uncertain origin.

• • •

Truth is correctly understood as the systematic arrangement of thoughtful ideas and reasoned assumptions conforming to factual standards prescribed by the (Eternal) Law(s) of Nature. In this manner, the Highest Truth(s) are correctly considered Absolute or Perfect in Meaning. Formal attempts to override its essential features, in whatever manner, will not alter the infallibility of its designs; that is to say, make it any less true. This argument does not necessarily apply, however, to "lower" or evolving truths; that is to say, immeasurable "truths" lacking infinite proportion; conditioned by circumstances or events that (oftentimes) require a reassessment of their former assumptions whose (ambiguous) validity lacks a critical center.

• • •

Justice and Fairness are prescriptive normatives; legal and social assumptions that find public expression in the (established) customs and practices (or historical traditions) of societies whose customary standards are a work in process subject to oversight and subsequent revision, whenever required.

• • •

Tolerance requires an "intuitive" capacity to render sound (moral) judgments as they relate to essential motives and/or principle ideas that form the template of a well-ordered society that do not reflexively support tolerance for its own sake without giving proper pause to discriminating factors that correctly defines appropriate conduct.

• • •

Subtraction is a process whereby some known or (measurable) quantity is deducted from another known quantity. Therefore, it (necessarily) follows that nothing, understood as non-existence, can be subtracted from nothing. Neither can nothing be added to or create some other something, for that matter. In this manner, "Being" can not be the result of Nothingness but the outcome, rather of some pre-existing "Something."

• • •

Orestes Brownson once remarked that "man is not only a religious or spiritual being but a political or national one as well...[that] the absence of such military spirit, experience shows, encourages the evils humanitarians most aim to avoid."

• • •

Conscience is not always able to form a correct estimate of things; therefore, its "reasonable" faculties should be considered problematical unless assisted by Divine Wisdom or Right Reasoning.

• • •

Traditions are subject to changing societal assumptions operating within the prisms of modern insights that periodically revisit a society's established customs and manners although remaining faithful to their essential designs(s).

• • •

The underlying confusion over not being able to "tell the forest from the trees" lies in mistaken impressions that incorrectly estimate the relationship between a whole and its parts. Therefore, a forest populated by trees, in a manner that properly defines a forest, may be misconstrued by less discerning minds as a collection of trees (parts) rather than a forest (whole). The same argument applies, in part, to individuals "examining all sides of an issue." By focusing exclusively on a single dimension, (width, length or height), of some geometric configuration, for example, an observer may otherwise lose sight of what each spatial measure brought together properly represents; that is to say, a rectangle, square or triangle or some other material arrangement for that matter. In this manner, the vital link establishing a connection between integrated parts has been severed, thereby rendering each impression or idea, uncertain or meaningless by having assigned the essential character of that whole to each (constituent) part.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Therefore, by examining all sides of an issue, without giving proper thought to form, an individual may oftentimes lose sight of the issue, itself.

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Anti-American sentiment hasn't changed much over the years with the (notable) exception that Communism has been superseded by Jihadist Islamic Fascism equally committed to the destruction of Western Institutions. To this purpose, a number of terrorist organizations are being routinely supported by hostile (Arab) Nations sharing a common, distorted primitive worldview of Western Values encouraged, in part, by soft-headed internationalists, self-congratulatory appeasers, and useful idiots who continue to provide a moral and intellectual base of support to the ideological opponents of Freedom. The hard Left's calculated undermining of liberal values and common sense for its own political reasons, reinforced by its own self-loathing, has generated a leery perception of (supposed) Western arrogance and intolerance for other cultures that felicitously plays into the hands of our nation's mortal enemies.

• • •

Addendum to the above: In this manner, we oftentimes find ourselves wandering about in an (ideological) wilderness without purpose or meaning trying to find ourselves while each passing moment further alienates us from ourselves until we've forgotten who we are or once were or how we got to be who we are or got to where we are which, I suppose, amounts to the same thing.

• • •

America has been made to suffer the "ignominy" of its collective prosperity and....." shame" for its unparalleled generosity and....."apologists" for being the great nation that it is.... lest Eurocentrism raises "moral" objections over our nation's enviable stature as eminent leader of the Free World.

• • •

L.P. "Are you telling me that you would have someone arrested for picking a flower from your front yard?"

C.P. "Yes, I would."

L.P. "That's rather harsh, wouldn't you agree?"

C.P. "It's vandalism."

L.P. "Isn't the punishment rather severe for such a minor infraction?"

C.P. "So where do you suppose we should draw the line?"

L.P. "What line? We're talking about a flower, here!"

C.P. "A flower today, an uprooted garden tomorrow."

L.P. "Because of some minor infraction?"

C.P. "It may appear trivial to you, perhaps. Such attitudes, however, contributed to Mayor Giuliani's enormous success as a law and order guy."

L.P. "What does any of this have to do with picking a stupid flower?"

C.P. "Our former mayor understood—"

L.P. “Come on! A flower for cryin’ out loud!”

C.P. “—as most dedicated crime fighters understand, that while zero-tolerance may resonate well in some political circles as a theoretical application rather than a practical matter—”

L.P. “A flower, you idiot!”

C.P. “—that the public interest would be better served perhaps, that is to say—”

L.P. “A flower!”

C.P. “—especially in urban environments where criminal elements—”

L.P. “A flower!!”

C.P. “—what with the average, law-abiding citizen afraid to walk the streets at night and rising crime rates—”

L.P. “A flower!!!”

C.P. “—anyhow, I suppose there will always be those among us seeking to redefine the limits of tolerance that seemingly take the side of the criminal rather than the victim and—”

L.P. “A flower!!!!”

• • •

Subject: Mortal Sin

Personal Sin(1846–1876)

A mortal sin is a fundamental rejection of God’s love. By it, God’s grace-presence is driven from the sinner. Mortal means “death-dealing.” This sin kills God’s life and love in the person sinning. For a sin to be mortal, there must be 1) serious matter, 2) sufficient reflection, and 3) full consent of the will (1854–1861)

A venial sin is a less serious rejection of God’s love. Venial means “easily forgiven.” A sin is venial if the offense is not serious or...if the matter is serious...the person is not sufficiently aware of the evil involved or does not fully consent to sin.

• • •

A premeditated (action) is a self-motivated (action) whose (calculated) designs and (intended) outcome are planned and understood beforehand. Its specific aim or, as a point of argument, subject of intent, is not necessarily the overriding factor (however) but rather an ancillary consideration with respect to intent; that is to say, incidental to pre-existing intentions as such intentions and ensuing actions may (otherwise) produce unintended results triggered by original intent in whatever manner the outcome was unintended. Therefore, when some intended action has promoted harm to some individual other than the intended individual or subject of that intended action, and although the intended subject of that intended action has been spared injury, the unintended result of the intended action is considered a premeditated action against the injured party although that individual was not the intended subject of that intended action to begin with.

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Addendum to the above: The “intent” is premeditated!

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Reason is subject to a variety of propositions, uncertain assumptions and questionable councils that oftentimes limit its ability to estimate things correctly or by passions likely to promote a corrupting influence on its ability to make rational decisions. In some manner, Reason, unlike Instinct, lacks a natural capacity for self-sufficiency.....(and spontaneity). Reason must be carefully instructed in order to achieve the highest level of its natural potential unlike Instinct whose adaptive nature, restricted (solely) to immediate things, need not concern itself over substantive matters that should otherwise give pause to critical thinking.

• • •

I am not certain that per-capita income; that is to say, what each worker receives in monetary value on average from the yearly (gross domestic) income generated by a nation’s economy, is a reliable indicator of “national prosperity” (understood, in some circles, as the greatest material benefit for the greatest number) inasmuch as these indicators factor disparate incomes whose (broad) variances do not necessarily provide an accurate estimate of “average” earnings. Neither does the unemployment rate provide an accurate measure of how well the economy is performing in market environments where underemployment rates are exceptionally high. Neither does consumer spending, when measured against credit card and bank debt.

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Addendum to the above: Higher rates of lower-paying jobs; that is to say, higher rates of “under-employment” will oftentimes distort unemployment statistics in the same (inverse) manner statistics report higher achievement levels in “formerly” under performing schools, especially those located in predominately urban areas, in proportion to their lowering of academic standards. In this manner

these artificially contrived results should be considered statistically flawed as well.

• • •

...spiritual anxiety's fascination with new-age remedies, supernatural fashions and "messianic" forms; spiritual elixirs designed to tempt Faith that more often than not perjure rather than strengthen the spirit...

• • •

I envision a day when class distinctions, with the exception of two, (Master and Servant) will be formally abolished. These "traditional" arrangements, understood from a modernist perspective, however, will be reversed whereby (the) Master ("Oppressor") will serve (the) Servant ("Victim")...if Modern Society hasn't reached that stage already!

• • •

Speaking of Miracles: The body's self-healing powers are no minor miracle in themselves!

• • •

There is a very fine line that separates being (genuinely) helpful from being a (general) nuisance!

• • •

There is no recalling the Dead; no redemption, regrets, remonstrations, gashing of teeth or second chances, only Faith in our dearly departed who continue in their own inestimable manner to offer forgiveness (and guidance) from beyond the grave.

• • •

...where artificial assumptions are permitted to trump inspired ambition(s)...

• • •

A re-emerging Past oftentimes informs the Present; recalling its traditional customs... promoting an uncertain alliance or vague sense of being that is neither one nor the other, a society in transition (temporarily) held in check by (its) historical observances...lost causes... valiantly, however hopelessly, making a final stand...exhausting its remaining capital (or influence)...while that society's hereditary assumptions are gradually supersede by modern designs...in a manner whose key essentials, values, and moral imperatives that typically defined that society's traditional character, its social, cultural and political institutions, provide a "retrospective" overview of things to come.

• • •

President Bush's flawed Immigration Reform Bill providing "conditional" amnesty to 12 million illegal aliens must be reassuring to 1) (Moderate) Republicans who would consider its passage a political opportunity to place the party in better stead with Hispanic Voters and the Business Community, 2) Corporations seeking to attract Cheap(er) Labor, 3) Democrats who, for the same reasons indicated above, are uncomfortable with the idea of controlling our nation's borders at the risk of alienating a sizeable voting bloc and (who) would otherwise seize the moment, for purely political reasons, to challenge Republican proposals that (surprise!) "don't go far enough," 4) Multiculturalists and Internationalists likely to embrace such "reforms" as a (positive) first step towards achieving their (respective) Universalist Agenda, and 5) Shakers of Western Culture who would seek its destruction at any cost for its own sake and who would therefore (also) consider such measures as an appropriate step in the "right" direction. The formal passage of this egregious bill, that ties "guest" worker programs with proposed amnesty for "resident" aliens, would further encourage potential lawbreakers, who, not unlike their predecessors, would feel emboldened to enter our country illegally without fear of (legal) reprisal. America's laxity in enforcing its sovereign laws has provided carte blanche to lawbreakers who routinely flaunt our nation's laws. This scenario should be especially troubling to (otherwise) law-abiding citizens expected to operate under the rules and guidelines that these individuals casually ignore. This double standard or unequal application of our nation's laws must (inevitably) produce a demoralizing effect on the public. The Rule of Law, as it relates to Immigration Policy, or any other law for that matter, should dictate and not be dictated to. Grandfathering laws or conveniently making legal what was once illegal, should raise legitimate concerns over any nation's ability to properly enforce its own laws to begin with. Whatever the so-called political or social "realities" that engendered this ill-fated decision by the present Administration and its congressional allies, notwithstanding the program's perceived failings, this bill sets a troubling precedent for other (established) laws that might otherwise be ignored in the manner of "break it now, fix it later" approach to law "enforcement."

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Addendum to the above: The Bush administration is importing a modern day version of the War on Poverty!

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Each day should be looked upon as a final opportunity to renew one's life with dignity, replete with moral and spiritual purpose and meaning that present conditions may hopefully allow.

• • •

I believe that most Liberals have been unfairly characterized as Pacifists. From what I have been able to gather, few, if any, have ever

demonstrated signs of timidity or caution as they otherwise relate to their relentless persecution of the “Unborn.”

• • •

Secularists and Atheists alike have long expunged Evil (in its purest sense) from its lexicon as a word commonly thought to convey a religious (read: superstitious) connotation consistent with irrational impulses or ideas rather than “considered reasoning.” Instead, Evil has acquired a subjective meaning; that is to say, lacking certitude or prone to conventional (or essential) assumptions whose questionable propositions render formal interpretations problematical, if not (morally or ethically) judgmental because of their underlying “uncertainty,” thereby raising the question: what constitutes Good, for that matter? Plato argued that “which we call evil is merely ignorance and that good is that which everyone desires”. I find his line of reasoning far too simplistic. Ignorance is a condition of being uninformed (or uneducated). It is not “evil”, perse, in whatever manner many of us are oftentimes “ignorant” of its intended designs. That Good is what “everyone” desires doesn’t necessarily conform to what is “good” in itself. That we may desire something that appears useful or of immediate service does not necessarily constitute a “philosophical” good or that which provides moral value or meaning or (otherwise) accrues to our moral excellence but (rather) some thing we might otherwise consider ample or sufficient to satisfy our “needs”. Evil has acquired a quasi-mythical character whose “primitive” notions are considered unworthy of any “right thinking,” “enlightened” individual whose flagging (moral) perceptions no longer seem to bewilder the imagination.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Evil has become a word that is oftentimes employed like any other (common) word; that is to say, without any (special) meaning or regard to context. Therefore, President Bush’s political detractors may routinely compare him with Adolph Hitler or Saddam Hussein without risking political capital because, by and large, Evil has lost all sense of (definite) proportion.

• • •

I find it interesting how many modern biographers oftentimes portray Charles Dickens as a (minor) social revolutionary or a man possessing what is commonly referred to by “progressives,” a “social consciousness.” There is no disputing the fact that Dickens did indeed possess keen insight into the behavioral aspects and designs of Human Nature; that is to say, the “Hearts and Minds of Men.” It might be precisely for this reason that he was neither a committed iconoclast nor shaker of things but simply a passionate recorder of our human failings. His “benign” approach to reform did not in any manner imply a moral neutrality but a call for public awareness, rather. Dickens was in every respect a man of conventional manners and tastes who sought to reform existing (societal) arrangements without (needlessly) upsetting the social fabric. He placed little faith in the efficacy of legal and social institutions as potential forces for promoting (attitudinal) change that (otherwise) required a voluntary change of “heart” in order to eliminate the prevailing social injustices directed against the poorer classes at that time.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Contemporary Liberalism’s irrational contempt for anything Christian has given rise to the troubling notion that God has “vanished;” that is to say, left Humankind to its own devices....if He ever existed to begin with! This manner of wishful (Secularist) thinking has reinforced our society’s collective dependence on the very institutions Dickens was skeptical about. Perhaps such self-fulfilling prophecies are signs of things to come, absent the “Invisible Hand” of Providence that properly guides the actions of those (otherwise) given to Good Works.

• • •

The Will to Prosper is a powerful motivator in achieving Success. Experience has shown, on any number of occasions, how many individuals possessing (quite) ordinary talents have achieved levels of performance exceeding the limits of their natural abilities or what their native capacity might otherwise suggest. For this reason, every overachiever should take proper measure of his or her remarkable accomplishments.

• • •

There are two types of sin: Original Sin that proceeds from Humankind’s natural (fallen) condition or general state of mind and Willful Sin that constitutes a voluntary by-product of an individual’s (purposeful) actions. “What I am as opposed to ‘What I do’ ” (C.S. Lewis).

• • •

A final thought about spiritual anxiety: “ready to take any shape but able to retain none” (C.S. Lewis).

• • •

While allowing that the answers/solutions to certain questions/problems that are problematical/complex oftentimes require a higher degree of critical thinking or insight than is normally required, a more simplistic approach to problem solving should be pursued whenever circumstances allow. There is an underlying tendency, however, among certain individuals to render complex what are otherwise rather simple propositions. This attitude is common among high-brow individuals who, inspired by their own (conceited) self-importance, are oftentimes likely to complicate simple matters for their (own) intended purposes of being “misunderstood,” or for others, a cover-up for their ineptitude!

• • •

Addendum to the above: In the political arena: a form of deception common among politicians fearful of the political consequences such simple solutions might otherwise occasion!

• • •

I read that Howard Dean recently criticized President Bush for having “recklessly” engaged our nation in a war in order to satisfy a vendetta against “a pathetic old man.” Mr. Dean’s distorted reasoning and outrageous assumption makes me shudder to think that the former Democratic front runner might have been this () close to the presidency had this loose cannon not self-destructed during the Iowa Primary. His unreasonable attack (for political reasons) against a sitting president during a time of war should be encouraging to our mortal enemies who continue monitoring our nation’s internal divisions for their own strategic advantage.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Mr. Dean’s thoughtless remarks about a “pathetic old man” recalls the relentless efforts of dedicated Nazi Hunters who spent the greater part of their (adult) lives tracking down and bringing to justice “former” war criminals who evaded criminal prosecution after the war and lived to a “respectable,” ripe old age. Neither age, illness nor a new identity, or remorse, for that matter, properly absolves any individual for his or her past crimes, especially Crimes against Humanity. It would appear, however, that Mr. Dean is willing to extend an exculpatory “mulligan” for evildoers who have reached a “venerable” age; however uncertain that Mr. Hussein will ever be entitled to such respect.

• • •

There are (special) moments in our lives that many of us have experienced at one time or another that should be properly filed away for safe keeping and never revisited again lest we tarnish the exceptionable qualities that made those moments (in retrospect) special to begin with. Perhaps it would be best leaving well enough alone rather than trying to revive memories that presently lie above and beyond the (present) timeline continuum; that is to say, existing somewhere beyond “themselves,” in time. Such moments, that inevitably lose some measure of (reminiscent) proportion should we try to recapture them, can never be formally revisited without diminishing the (pleasant) memories that made/make those moments (special) to begin with; that should otherwise retain, however, a rightful place in our thoughts.

• • •

The middle-class exodus from the “Inner City” during the middle of the twentieth century hastened the departure of its tax base and, of far greater importance and consequence, an established set of traditional core values vital to the productive dynamics of a well-ordered community; leaving in its wake, a combustible mixture of rising expectations and diminishing (principled/intellectual) resources. These (formal) values radiated a spirit of (public) enthusiasm and (private) aspirations for a better future that seem conspicuously absent in a number of today’s decaying urban environments.

• • •

An individual should utilize proper discretion (whenever possible) when engaging in (public) conversation; especially when that individual’s perceived style or manner (of speech) or “problematical expressions” might be “misinterpreted” or considered offensive to certain members of his or her audience. This is sadly the case in a day and age when the uncertainty of “ill-chosen” words may oftentimes occasion unintended consequences damaging to an individual’s reputation. Feigned indignation and fabricated reprisals designed to redress historical grievances in matters of gender, race and ethnicity should be a troubling proposition for any society whose lack of (dialectic) proportion makes it increasingly difficult to correctly assess the (determined) aspects or (appropriate) limits of free speech.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Therefore, a casual remark like “it’s a bit nippy outside” might be considered offensive to Asian Americans or that a company is operating “in the red” equally offensive to Native Americans or suggesting that an individual is “niggardly,” a slight to African Americans or a “Mexican Stand-Off”...well, you get the idea!

• • •

That God exists in Eternity (or outside the limits of time and space) is consistent with His knowledge of “future” events that are uniform with the “past” and “present” and the doctrine of Free Will that operates concurrently along (the) space/time continuum. Free Will, however, does not preclude God from influencing (or changing) the course of events, however, for His (own) intended purpose(s) should He so desire although such is arguably in accordance with His (own) pre-determined designs; that is to say, what God wills has (already) been done.

• • •

Walter Cronkite, America’s “venerable” journalist, has agreed to cover the Republican National Convention for MTV. A radio talk show host recently referred to Mr. Cronkite’s “plum” assignment (“Gig”) as a coup for the television station. If Mr. Cronkite’s recent appearance at a Grateful Dead concert is any indication; his pending senility, rational declivity, and waning (journalistic) talents should fit in nicely with the program’s juvenile format.

• • •

The inconsistency of the Left is understood in some manner by its (quizzical) admiration for Evita Peron yet (decided) contempt for Imelda Marcos.

• • •

Should America one day recover its moral compass, Abortion will properly stand alongside Slavery as the most glaring examples of moral and spiritual corruption in our nation's history. If present attitudes are any indication of contemporary society's harsh assessment of its past, our society should not expect much sympathy from future generations that can only wonder how a society that called itself civilized and prided itself on its "evolving standards of decency" could have condoned such barbarous practices. I must take strong exception to specious arguments respective of causal/effects. It's ultimate effects what matter the most! A striking feature that characterizes both institutions lies in the conspicuous manner that both Slave and "Unborn" were/are denied citizenship rights, equal protection under the law, and judicial redress of grievances, not to mention their Natural Rights endowed by God. Instead each (victim) was/is subject to arbitrary legal standards and other (social) expedients that effectively bar recourse to Justice. In the final analysis, the crisis ultimately lies in a waning of spiritual attitudes that correctly underscore the meaning of Existence.

• • •

"Equality is a transcendent principle of justice and is therefore rightly regarded as one of the principles of natural law" (Reinhold Niebuhr).

• • •

What stands out the most about "rising" energy costs triggered by rapid population growth and higher standards of living, is that the price of a gallon of gas in "constant" dollars compares quite favorably with what Americans were paying at the pump a half century ago in relation to other commodities and services at that time. One need only compare the increase in gas and oil prices with the rising costs of Education and Health Care over that period to obtain a proper estimate of its comparatively lower cost(s).

• • •

Addendum to the above: Of greater concern to the consumer, however, is, in light of rapidly declining (oil/gas) reserves precipitated by the growing demands of emerging industrialized nations, coupled with our government's reluctance to pursue comprehensive energy reform, how much longer will the market will able to "stabilize" prices?

• • •

The NAACP does not properly represent the (mainstream) values of most African Americans. This organization has devolved into a sociopolitical anachronism whose dated agenda is presently designed to frustrate or otherwise confront the efforts of "right thinking" individuals who are gradually emerging within the African American Community. (Read: Conservative Blacks!) Although it is not my intention to marginalize the organization's historical importance (or value) for peoples of color, its neo-radical, oftentimes racist agenda has long abandoned its intended purpose of advancing civil rights and equal opportunity in favor of consolidating a political power base in a manner that incorrectly defines the "needs" of its "constituents" by propagating the meanest forms of race-baiting that (otherwise) serve to advance political ambition by fanning artificial expectations that have lost much of their historical relevancy.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Racism exists in American Society; America, however, is not a Racist Nation. (There is a fine line here.) Racism is informed by irrational hatred and fear (which are one and the same) or that which lies in the "Hearts of Men." Anti-Racism is guided by a higher "Moral" Authority that seeks (ultimate) expression in a society's social and political institutions; in its customs and traditions. Whether or not a society has properly fulfilled its moral obligations, however, is questionable in the minds of individuals who believe that that "society" has not gone far enough in fulfilling its intended promises. Such impressions, (oftentimes) guided by (opportunistic) political and social "leaders" harboring a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in order to consolidate their political power base by forging racial alliances designed to sever popular accord, are unlikely to change anytime soon in the absence of alternative, more creditable viewpoints.

• • •

Primitive Cultures possessed an inchoate awareness of its superior (natural) standing vis-à-vis the Beast although such impressions were comparatively intuitive rather than properly informed by "reason." Humankind's primitive condition was not the inevitable outcome of (essential) designs inasmuch as a starting point in Nature, rather, that would eventually launch its spiritual, moral and rational potential. Free Will is that which separates Man from Beast. The former is informed by Reason and Conscience, the latter, by Instinct. The faculty of Free Will allows Humankind to make (reasonable) decisions. Although the choices that we oftentimes make are the inevitable outcome of Free Will, such decisions, however, are not...inevitable! Unlike the Beast, that lacks a moral directory, Humankind enjoys a variety of moral templates derived from an eternal source. However imperfectly formed in their thinking, primitives were guided by a transcendent moral authority that, however unclear, informed their respective culture(s). These models (I will refer to them as models for purposes of discussion) that serve to properly inform an individual; that is to say, define appropriate rules of conduct, vary in proportion (or meaning) to that individual's or society's present stage of spiritual, moral and intellectual development. Where the mind is not completely formed (Primitive) or has corrupted itself (Pride) or has been corrupted (Illness or Disease), however, such models may be found lacking "significant" meaning or purpose or otherwise lose their appeal. What ultimately defines an individual's (moral) character are the decisions that he or she makes. (This viewpoint is based on the assumption

that that individual is able to correctly distinguish between right and wrong) These models are not necessarily mandates (for choice) but guidelines, rather, that provide compelling reasons for making the right decisions to begin with. Neither are these models necessarily intended to encourage “appropriate” conduct that should otherwise be left to Free Will to decide but reflect upon, rather, what is expected from a “right thinking” individual who is morally evolving. An individual who willingly rejects God, however, rejects (His) Natural Law as well. That individual is likely to assign “good” or “evil” as accidents of nature or circumstantial rather than “things” lying within themselves. Such thinking ultimately promotes amoral attitudes that typically characterize all forms of behavior as “morally” neutral. It fails to acknowledge sin as such; although it is willing to entertain forms of appropriate/inappropriate behavior defined by popular customs or manners that (in any event) oftentimes lose their social mandate as arbitrary conventions may vary. This (very) troubling development has provided license to the meanest (latent) tendencies, a Will to Evil justified by the negation of eternal consequence(s). The (critical) assumption of inevitable consequences as they relate to voluntary designs, however essential to the formation of sound moral character, does not predispose a Will to Good; that is to say, Free Will does not dictate the “Inevitability” of Choice. Such choices must be left for the individual to decide.

• • •

My wife (Rose) was recently assigned an audit at a nursing home in the Bronx that is owned and operated by Hassidic Jews. Her proffered handshake to one of the facility’s administrators was politely rebuffed for “religious” reasons. It seems that this gentleman considered shaking hands with a gentile offensive, although he didn’t express it in quite that manner. Although I genuinely respect religious traditions, I have to confess that his attitude was very troubling to me. I feel that his excessive manner, for whatever reason, represents the meanest form of religious (and social) intolerance. With so much animosity existing in the world today, what can any of us hope for when (extreme) “religious” types, professed followers of God’s teachings, conduct themselves in such an uncharitable manner!

• • •

The appalling episode at Abu Ghraib was just what the doctor ordered. The general tenor resonating within the liberal community can best be described as ecstatic indignation over the (comparative) mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners of war by over zealous prison guards. After all, it isn’t as if these primordial nitwits were guilty of decapitating heads or other unmentionable acts of violence. Nevertheless, such morally reprehensible behavior, that should otherwise offend the sensibilities of any civilized nation, requires a sober assessment of what actually occurred and placing this event in its proper perspective; meting appropriate punishment if warranted. More troubling, perhaps, is the negative impact this incident will have on the war effort at a time when public support appears to be waning. This unfortunate event—unfortunate because it was morally repugnant—has generated convulsions among antiwar protestors and professional agitators alike who have never properly supported the war effort to begin with. I suppose I should offer some counterarguments with a few observations of my own: How come the deafening silence or lack of righteous indignation over the mistreatment of captured American soldiers and civilians routinely paraded in front of media propagandists, their bodies horribly mutilated before being mercifully put to death? Where is the International Red Cross or Amnesty International that seem conspicuously absent whenever Westerners are mistreated? For what reason our obsessive concern over Saddam Hussein receiving three square meals and proper medical attention or that Afghan detainees at Guantanamo Bay should be issued copies of the Koran and provided legal counsel although nary a peep over the public executions of (American/European) soldiers/civilians that have become common throughout the Middle East and other parts of the world? This consistent pattern of cuddling up to our nation’s enemies by liberal activists has been well chronicled over the years following the Vietnam War when tears were seldom shed for the many brave young men and women who courageously served their nation in the cause of Freedom.

• • •

A partial truth is an incomplete truth that is an untruth!

• • •

History, as it is presently taught in the classroom, can no longer be properly thought of as History, however civic exercises in political correctness designed to advance society’s proportional requirements relating to gender and race. I do not mean to imply that America’s historical evolution was exclusively a White Male phenomenon. A number of women and people of color played prominent roles in shaping the course of our nation’s history. The rub lies, however, in far-fetched attempts aimed at distorting the commensurable accomplishments of relatively minor historical figures, many of whom do not properly merit their assigned place in history alongside the unquestionable giants of their generation. This by-product of social leveling has precipitated prescriptive efforts by revisionists seeking to recreate or redefine history within retro/present time frames that not only obscure our collective understanding of the events that shaped our nation’s history, but an understanding of its people, as well. Such is the dire outcome of misdirected atonement!

• • •

I do not subscribe to the idea of Universal Salvation because this viewpoint (necessarily) nullifies eschatological arguments regarding final events that must ultimately stand on an individual’s own (determined) “efforts”; that is to say, subject to final rewards and punishments. On the other hand, it is not for me to speculate the problematical fortunes of others that God (alone) must otherwise determine.

• • •

An individual cannot be saved by “good works” alone. Such works, in whatever (worldly) manner perceived, must be preceded by Faith that is (also) insufficient in itself unless acted upon by God’s sovereign favor or ”Grace”; the final arbiter of Good Intentions. What is confusing to individuals seeking salvation, is the troubling notion that Grace should be the “arbitrary” by-product of God’s (purposeful) designs in accordance with His Divine Will and that “earnest” appeals and (hopeful conference) remain an “uncertain” proposition irrespective of our “worthy” actions or “proven goodness”. All roads are paved with good intentions. Good Intentions, limited and flawed as they oftentimes are however, are not enough! The believer must (first) place his or her trust in God, alone, who reminds each of us, who are receptive to His Wisdom, that every kindly deed, however “ordinary” or “exceptional”, or every Act of Faith, cannot properly achieve its intended fulfillment without God’s guiding intervention; that is to say, unless properly informed by God. The best of intentions must inevitably come full circle, reverting back to God whose Grace alone is the prerequisite for our salvation; the Beginning and the End of who we are, what we do and how we do it. Grace does not invalidate Free Will that, however expressed in accordance with God’s (purposeful) designs, allows every individual to charter his or her own chosen course; that is to say, to decide whether to (freely) accept or reject what God expects from each of us or has to offer us if we willingly accept it with an open heart. “Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you”. To the Chosen, personal choice becomes involved with God’s (own) Choice. That many individuals seeking salvation have oftentimes found themselves in a State of Grace at one time or another only to have it rescinded, is a humble reminder of how difficult it is to sustain; a blessing suddenly conferred and taken away just as quickly through spiritual despondency or neglect. Grace is not passive. It must be vigorously courted.

• • •

Sufficiency Ratios relating to Income/Consumption are a function of our accustomed lifestyles. An individual who habitually consumes beyond the limits of his or her (material) resources, however, is unlikely to find any sum sufficient to support a standard of living that extravagant spending oftentimes adopts.

• • •

In any free society, in order for a minority group to achieve a proportionate measure of influence, that group’s influential or talented members must (first) marshal their collective resources. These resources may be either financial or intellectual. In this (traditional) manner have individual units joined together to form a common body reinforced by a common purpose. In today’s politically energized environment, however, victimization is found to work just as well.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Convene a number of disaffected groups that effectively eliminate the universal dynamisms that “alienated” such groups to begin with!

• • •

Aristotle once said that the soothing quality of (mellifluous) music exudes a spiritual quality or essence pleasing to the soul; that is to say, spiritually uplifting. That the musical odors indigenous to the culture of his day may very well have produced that desired effect is problematical in our own musically erratic times, however.

• • •

The origin of Modern Conservatism lies in Liberal traditional principles that respected religious and individual freedom and property rights, supported free and open markets, were suspicious of big government and encouraged a strong national defense up until the time a band of influential (socialist) thinkers began embracing centralized forms of government. “I have seen the future and it works” (Lincoln Steffens). That rather conspicuous moment in American History witnessed a troubling transformation in American political thought that subsequently ushered the moral and intellectual decline of traditional liberalism that would (eventually) invest it with an entirely different meaning; not to mention a peevish intolerance for liberal values deemed inconsistent with the emerging New World Order.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Modern Liberalism is driven by a consummate desire to achieve power for its own sake; whereby (political) power no longer constitutes a means to an end but an end in itself. It has adopted, what has been described elsewhere, “a softer version” of Marxism without the brutal trappings along the lines of Bolshevik model. Through a gradual process of social and political indoctrination, sanctioned by legal authority and centralized institutions, its leaders (intelligentsia) have been able to reconfigure the political landscape of our nation in a manner consistent with its intended International Socialistic Agenda.

• • •

Nature, presented to an observer in its (most) primitive, ”unrefined” and starkest form can be both terrifying and wondrous to behold (provided that the observer has sufficient imagination to perceive a diamond in the rough).

• • •

Christ’s principled teachings are oftentimes questioned by Secularists, Atheists and (nominal) “Christians” alike who routinely disclaim their authenticity by either challenging scriptural interpretations or biblical precedence(s) mentioned in His teachings; that is to say, questioning whether or not Christ specifically said this or said that or whether His (contemporary) followers/biographers simply put words in His mouth in order to lend legitimacy to an incipient religious movement inasmuch as Christ, Himself, never

committed anything in writing. It should be understood, however, that Christ made His (revealed) identity the focal point of His teachings supported by the evidence of the many miracles He performed while He was alive and immediately following His “death”. “Even though you do not believe Me, believe the evidence of the miracles, that you may learn and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father” (John10:38). It is also important to note that Christ spoke in parables or allegories in order to “challenge” His followers to unravel the essential meaning of His “simplistic” teachings for themselves. The Christian Community has been very fortunate, however, that it was/is able to draw upon a large body of Apostolic Testimonies passed along to the ancient fathers who promulgated the spiritual “essence” of His teachings.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Although Christ never addressed Abortion, at least not to our knowledge, He specifically stated that “Thou Shall not Kill,” a universal precept that any thoughtful Christian understands by association!

• • •

...are in many ways similar to the traditional ethnic gangs common at the turn of, up to around the middle of the twentieth century...

...most of its members who, the by-product of underprivileged or “entry level” environments, alienated from mainstream values and norms that did not seem to provide moral support, sought to forge their own (unique) identities in a manner that provided each a (collective) sense of belonging...however anti-social...

...young men and women trying to find an appropriate niche within artificially conceived environments that provided meaning and self-worth...

...that many would eventually assimilate or simply outgrow their adolescence and become productive members of society...

...today’s anti-culture(s) is (perhaps) unusual in the manner it (purposely) embraces the lowest common denominator and is (seemingly) unwilling to consider a higher level of (human) achievement...

...another troubling aspect of this “culture” is the seeming inability...or unwillingness of its members to step outside an environment that in some manner has captivated its “own”...

...an overlapping of first, second and perhaps third generations that have yet to properly assimilate within the (greater) community...

...(that is to say) particularly striking to the casual observer is an inability to differentiate between generations whose phonic accents and (ethnic) customs and forms seem to suggest an unwillingness to integrate into the mainstream...

...that the fault clearly lies in our social and political institutions that seem more concerned with preserving “national” identities for political reasons rather than escalating, as was once common, a process that gradually encourages the adoption of social and cultural attitudes characteristic of the mainstream society...

• • •

Mixed Emotions consist of (past) recollections, (present) sensations, and (future) premonitions expressed in a single event that produces an inverted humor where laughter becomes mourning and elation, dejection!

• • •

Liberals and (some) Moderate Republicans voicing their opposition over the outsourcing of jobs overseas and its dampening effect on the United States economy should give equal expression (as well) to Illegal Immigration that has similarly produced dire consequences on our domestic workforce; especially among lower wage earners. Perhaps unrestricted immigration should be properly considered a form of inversive (sic) outsourcing?

• • •

Presidential hopeful John Kerry and his Dickensonian running mate, “A Tale of Two Cities,” John Edwards comprise the wealthiest presidential ticket in American History. The former acquired his fortune chasing skirts, the latter, chasing ambulances.

• • •

As America’s political landscape continues its leftward lunge, Republicans are gradually transforming themselves into Democrats and Democrats into Socialists. Our European “Allies,” conditioned by decades of Euro-Communism, however, have beaten both (parties) to the finish line.

• • •

Abstract Art conveys neither Reality nor Truth. It is a meaningless hodgepodge of (disconnected) images that courts subconscious impressions and private interpretations of what an observer believes he or she sees or tries to see or believes is seen that is oftentimes something other than what is actually seen; that is to say, it indulges an uncertain mood at an uncertain moment of consciousness that produces an uncertain effect on the mind. Representational Art has its own, although not quite as conspicuous, shortcomings, as well. It merely imitates life in a manner that, however vague, is predicated on pictorial observations combined with (subjective) serial impressions formed by an individual over the course of his or her lifetime; that is to say, based on that individual’s pre-conceived ideas. The Truth behind what is “seen” or actually “felt” lies somewhere beyond.

• • •

An individual may shape the Future but not the Past. On the other hand, the latter provides instruction for the Present that establishes the guidelines for uncertain (Future) events.

• • •

I would like to propose a hypothetical question to the progressive reader: If given a choice, which of the following options would you choose: having been created in God's (own) Image or having descended from the apes? Should you choose the former, how come so many of you are willing to embrace evolutionary arguments that have been widely discredited rather than entertain the Divine Wisdom of scriptural teachings that offer a more plausible explanation for our existence? Why restrict your beliefs to worldly perceptions or ideas encumbered by the limits of your (finite) senses rather than explore the wondrous miracle of the human imagination, both moral and intellectual, or "a capacity for self-transcendence" (Reinhold Niebuhr) uncommon among the Beast?

• • •

Whether a cup is perceived as half full or half empty depends on one's point of view...or perhaps on some (undefined) starting point.

• • •

Entitlements are conditioned by the requirements of Diverse Assumption!

• • •

A reliable measure of individual character is a willingness to become "less" of an individual in the service of others. This is correctly understood as addition by subtraction.

• • •

Modern Society is in the throes of a revolutionary Revolt of Conscience; the solitary by-product of moral and intellectual parochialism that is gradually revealing itself in the vested self-interest(s) and manners of unbridled Individualism that has undermined equalitarian idealism, that once defined the national culture, by rendering every individual the sole arbiter of his or her own conscience and ensuing choices without giving proper pause to how such choices may otherwise impact, for better or for worse, other individuals or to a transcendent authority that each must (inevitably) be held accountable; that is to say, whose (social) consequences existing outside the provincial boundaries of that individual's (own) estate are no longer limited by (moral) restraint or prescribed rules of moral and ethical conduct but conditioned rather by circumventing designs contrary to the proportionate interests of a well-ordered society.

• • •

What sets our Nickelodeon Generation apart (in some manner) from prior generations is a troubling disregard for parental authenticity; a legacy passed down to them by their emotionally and morally stunted Boomer Parents whose puerile adolescence and (the) mixed messages conveyed to their offsprings have all but erased the traditional boundaries that formerly defined the (proper) role(s) of parent and child. Their indifferent attitude (at times) has given force to indulgently "tolerant" children, on the one hand, who have grown complacent in their (own) self-assuredness and distracted, fumbling parents who, however well-intentioned, don't seem to "get it". What goes around comes around, I suppose. Not that such obnoxious attitudes necessarily constitute an open form of rebellion, (although they may), but rather "good-natured" razzing that remains cordial in whatever manner lacking proper respect. Conflicting viewpoints and differences of opinion are perennial rites of passages that typically define traditional parental/child relationships. I am not implying parental infallibility. (Parents can oftentimes learn a lot about themselves by observing their own children.) It's the perceived lack of respect or grudging regard for the parent that troubles me the most. Such attitudes can be traced to an ill-conceived leveling of parent/child relationships precipitated by childlike (parental) idiosyncrasies that have (predictably) produced unintended results.

• • •

Specious arguments advanced by women affirming their (legal) right to have an abortion on the (plausible) assumption that it is their body to do with as they please is arguable from the standpoint that a woman, or a man for that matter, is at liberty to jump off a bridge if she or he is so inclined (laws prohibiting suicide notwithstanding) provided that such quizzical decisions are of consequence to themselves, only. Once a woman conceives a child, however, self-rationalization that seeks its (own) moral comfort level is (necessarily) nullified inasmuch as another human life (fetus) is equally entitled to the same legal rights and privileges that that woman claims for herself. Men and women are free to engage in intimate (sex) as it relates to Choice. Either may choose to (mutually) enter into a relationship with another man or woman or partner of choice. Each is at liberty to marry the other provided both parties consent to the marriage. They are (otherwise) free to choose single or (promiscuous) lifestyles or employ precautionary measures against pregnancy...although conservative theologians would properly disagree. Once a child has been conceived as a result of that women's private decisions, however, all bets are off. These women are (now) duty bound to uphold the (legal) rights of the child, at whatever stage of his or her development, that that woman otherwise feels entitled to.

• • •

An individual of questionable character, whether conditioned by environmental factors or informed by natural impulses, who commits

a crime, must be held accountable for that crime whatever the (underlying) reason, considered apart, as it relates to the commission of a crime. Although causal factors may properly explain the reasons or motives behind some wanton or criminal action, they do not exonerate the consequences of that action, however. It may be correctly argued that although unusual circumstances often give vent to (our) latent tendencies, Reason must necessarily assert itself as the final authority that correctly informs our (potential) actions. Many of us have, at one time or another, faced critical crossroads in our lives; moments of indecision or doubt that

challenges the good or the bad in all of us. These defining moments are what ultimately determine our character....or ability to rise above ourselves!

• • •

Although I remain a staunch proponent of the Rule of law, I hold fast to my belief that the Sanctity of Life is more precious than our legal system has properly envisioned. I find it quite troubling whenever an (activist) judge eagerly concedes the legal “rights” of a terrorist (at the risk of endangering the lives of law-abiding citizens) who would otherwise nullify, without pause, the very laws that he or she conveniently utilizes for his or her own (legal) advantage.

• • •

Christ admonished “judge not lest ye be judged.” He meant that we must not condemn the perceived failings of other people because we too are flawed in our own manner. Therefore, we should never set ourselves up as the final arbiters of other people’s actions for there is one Judge (only) who will ultimately judge us all! Although I am generally regarded as “opinionated”, (Who, Me?) unless otherwise called upon to defend my position on some “important” matter, I am generally inclined to keep my thoughts and opinions to myself; especially as they relate to character assumptions that I may otherwise find (morally) objectionable or indecorous. I would never publicly ridicule or disparage a person’s character or reputation regardless of my own private opinions about that person. I would not even go so far as to consider that person “sinful” because I too am a sinner! I confess this with “qualified” humility.

• • •

An increasing number of college graduates are gradually filling entry level (corporate) positions traditionally reserved for high school graduates. This is the inevitable outcome of expanding global economies and the pursuit of cheaper labor abroad that has raised domestic competition to a fevered pitch. The dramatic decline in manufacturing and factory jobs has created a tighter domestic labor market that is increasingly finding expression within the corporate mainstream. What has happened, in effect, is that a college education has devolved into a cross-generational equivalent of a high school diploma; that is to say, a contemporary college education has superseded anachronistic (academic) standards of a generation ago. Therefore, erstwhile high school students are presently residing on college campuses that were once reserved for scholastically minded individuals who formerly claimed a higher academic standing. Allowing for exceptions, however, that’s the way it is!

• • •

The Liberal Establishment has invested a great deal of financial and emotional capital on cultivating the African American voter over the last half century that nothing less than 100 percent party loyalty is deemed acceptable by Democratic Party standards. Woe to the “Uncle Toms,” “Aunt Jemimmas” or “House Servants,” ingrates, all, who dare to stray off the “plantation”!

• • •

Presidential Pardons, I believe, should be rare. They should be extended on the basis of (overriding) circumstantial evidence that otherwise creates (plausible) doubt as to the merits of the conviction. Otherwise, such (political) pardons constitute a circumventing of law enforcement efforts and judicial due process. A terrorist, for example, (read: William Jefferson Clinton) should never be pardoned based upon incontrovertible evidence that led to that conviction to begin with.

• • •

Efforts at enlightening someone are analogous to planting a seed and watching it take root. Too much water, especially where the ground (mind) is otherwise impervious to moisture, however, is unresponsive to the best of intentions!

• • •

A conspicuous (or conscious) awareness of our (own) “Goodness”; of being “good” or performing “good” deeds, underscores (the) critical self-assessment of our (own) perceived “goodness” measured by (the) internalized standards of our (own) invention confirming our (own) “goodness” however contradicted (at times) by our (own) decided thoughts or actions; that is to say, the perception of the quality of our (own) thoughts or actions are (oftentimes) self-fulfilling appraisals that either inform or condition such “charitable” or “kindly” actions in a manner that (otherwise) belie the “underlying” authority that should otherwise serve as a catalyst for promoting “good.” Goodness is grounded in a disinterested “awareness” of Goodness or an “indifference” to doing “good” works. In this manner an individual does not necessarily feel that he or she is doing “good” but needs to do good, rather, without pause to his or her considered “goodness.” Goodness lies in Humility of Purpose; without intended purpose, however; that is to say, undetermined and without motive; an impartial or uncertain “Will” to Goodness that internally defines the Self; a Goodness that does not issue from the Conscious Self but the Hidden Self, rather, that must necessarily refute its own “apparent goodness” or the self-sustaining content of its (own) intentions. Goodness, therefore, is “ignorant” of its (own) inherent, however “unknowing” Goodness; that is to say, Goodness is necessarily “uninformed” of its (own) essential Goodness lest it stain itself with Pride. In other words, Goodness is a

spiritual quality inbred within the Heart rather than the Mind. Goodness is the “willful” denial of self-determined values seeking self-approval. Goodness is not a qualified by-product of causal/effects but an end in itself. Goodness seeks consistency with God’s (own) Will directed by God’s (own) Grace. In this manner Goodness “seeks” to win for others rather than itself!

• • •

Addendum to the above: The greatest human failing is our (own) self-centered tendency of measuring our (own) self-worth by confidential standards that reinforce a sense of our (own) predetermined goodness.

• • •

The New York State Republican Party has completely gone to seed. New York has never been what is commonly referred to as a “Red” or Conservative State as opposed to a “Blue” or Liberal State unlike an Idaho or Wyoming, for example, that are considered traditionally conservative, especially on social issues. New York’s political tradition, especially New York City, has been historically progressive. Nevertheless, these widely disparate (regional) traditions have never precluded the advancement of common interests. Setting aside divisive issues like Abortion, Gay Marriages and the Death Penalty, most voters generally agree on the need for a balanced budget, economic growth, safer streets and better schools. Achieving these goals is more often than not a question of method or procedure rather than purpose. This is where Republican (alternative) policies came into play. New York State’s political traditions did not prevent Conservatives like Ronald Reagan and other National Republicans from (occasionally) carrying the State during their run for the presidency or statewide office. Neither did these candidates feel a need to abandon their conservative credentials as have a number of recent statewide Republican office holders of late. That many ran as Conservative Republicans on the campaign trail only to govern as Liberal Republicans or Democrats, which I suppose is one and the same, once they were elected, may partly explain the reason for the party’s declining popularity. The reverberations resounding within the party have been earth-shattering. I expect that the worst is yet to come. The (overriding) question remains: why have Republican Candidates, politically successful on a number of statewide levels in past years, suddenly chosen to alienate its conservative base and potential (moderate) swing voters. New York City has always voted predominately Democratic. The most any Conservative/Moderate Republican Candidate could reasonably hope to achieve is perhaps 35 percent of the citywide vote. This does not explain, however, the Republican Party’s lackluster support among the more traditionally moderate to conservative suburban communities located outside the city’s outlining areas, not to mention upper New York State whose population has overwhelmingly voted Republican over the years. Its citizens are typically blue collar types, conservative on social issues and moderate on economic issues. Many are homeowners and investors naturally inclined toward (economic) policies that favor investment. This trend has assumed even greater importance as it relates to the growing number of blue collar families that have recently joined the “Investment Class.” Nevertheless the Republican Party continues losing ground. The party must somehow recover its political identity as a viable alternative to New York’s traditional tax and spend approach to running government. It will need to embrace and retain its core base by focusing on conservative principles rather than embracing political strategies that have alienated its natural supporters. In other words, it will need to reduce spending, promote economic growth and stop its political pandering to special interest groups!

• • •

Addendum to the above: Allow me clarify. Not every (mind) is receptive to Experience or Novel Ideas!

• • •

Whenever I find myself walking inside a hospital pavilion, I oftentimes run across a plaque inscribed with the name of a wealthy benefactor who has lent financial support to that institution. How note worthier were such memorials dedicated in memory of selfless physicians who contributed their time and efforts to the advancement of Science and Medicine? The vulgar employment of wealth to fulfill a legacy forever enshrined in our memories!

• • •

(Economic) benefits derived by term limits neutralizing the (political) intrigues of Special Interest Groups!

• • •

Starbucks has become a gathering place for the Nouveau Elite who fancy themselves cosmopolites extraordinaire; sipping their self-contented cups of café latte seated in an imaginary Parisian Sidewalk Café.

• • •

Secularism’s determined efforts to drive Christianity underground resemble, in some manner, the brutish practices of the ancient Romans with this one (minor) exception: the movement’s more avid supporters are not quite ready to feed Christians to the lions, although such an event might be right around the corner!

• • •

David Horowitz’s “Unholy Alliance” refers to a remark made by a federal court judge as it relates to First Amendment Rights and I quote, “which prohibited personal and technical assistance to designated terrorist organizations... would violate the First Amendment.” This judge was referring, of course, to efforts aimed at prosecuting individuals (or fifth columnists) working behind the scenes to undermine our nation’s security. This insane interpretation is somewhat analogous to someone planning a bank robbery who, although not actually participating in the robbery, provides strategic assistance or financial support vital to its success. That the individual

masterminding the crime should not be held liable as an accessory before the fact constitutes a gross miscarriage of justice. That he or she should not be held accountable in some manner begs the question: What has become of good old fashioned common sense? A society bent on destroying itself must properly take leave of its senses!

• • •

Although not every citizen, for whatever reason(s), is predisposed to defend his or her nation during a time of war, each should properly support the nation's war effort in some (other) manner by lending either moral or financial support to American troops who have selflessly placed themselves in harm's way so that others on the home front might live in peace.

• • •

It is virtually impossible for a motorist to maintain the "ten mile per hour / one car length behind" ratio mandated by law lest it opportune a degree of separation (space) that will enable another (vehicle) to occupy it!

• • •

...portends a Crisis of Conscience for the obvious reason that were an individual evil, in which case Conscience would no longer factor into that individual's evil intentions or designs, or complicit in some activity considered evil (in the conventional sense) or (otherwise) cognizant of loftier moral arguments that should properly inform his or her actions, who has chosen, however, to promote expediency and self-interest over principle and the (rightful) concerns of others, that individual has willfully and knowingly side-stepped the boundaries that separate Good and Evil or, at the very least, its milder derivative, Right from Wrong, (thereby) waiving all rights for (personal) redemption whereas Amoralism, on the other hand, suggests a gross indifference to moral clarity; an "intellectual" vacuum that, neither accepting nor refuting any notion of Good or Evil or Right and Wrong, has subjected (itself) to utter despair or (consequential) incertitude, or so it would seem...

• • •

Addendum to the above: The former's transgression is (arguably) attributable to a weakened or deformed character, the latter, intellectual arrogance.

• • •

As a rule, pre-programmed, rhetorical or "talking point" types are glibber than thoughtful individuals naturally inclined to provide full measure to complex matters rather than providing formatted or pre-assigned answers to critical questions.

• • •

Certain aesthetic forms like "Beauty," for example, are "self-evident" (in the conventional manner) to the senses, whereas abstract concepts like "Justice" or "Piety", possess a more subtle or uncertain nature whose essence exceeds the sum of its (notable) parts that (otherwise) requires creative thought and/or imagination deficient among those lacking insight into Things Hidden.

• • •

Modern Liberalism is partly informed by Rousseauian fantasies that persist in its mistaken, quixotic assumptions of a "Noble Savage" whose natural or primitive condition, independent of good and evil, has been tainted by the harmful effects of a corruptive "society" that silences any notion(s) of wrongdoing.

• • •

God allots to each of us in proportion to our needs; if our Faith is strong enough; a reawakening of our spiritual relationship with God that makes all things possible or durable or hopeful, rather than satisfying our own (material) "requirements" or what we believe is needed.

• • •

"Oh God, stay with me; let no word cross my lips that is not your word, no thoughts enter my mind that are not your thoughts, no deed ever be done or entertained by me that is not your deed. Amen" (Malcolm Muggeridge).

• • •

I suppose it all comes down to one's point of view although I generally prefer the "obnoxious" bantering of (certain) Conservative radio talk show hosts, whenever I am inclined to "tune in," rather than the sanctimonious railings of liberal elites given to promoting left-wing causes under the implausible guise of "objective" reporting.

• • •

It is axiomatic that we are all conditioned to some degree to expect or anticipate or solicit (different) responses or reactions or feelings from (different) people. These prevailing attitudes give rise to distinctions that define (the) underlying designs forged by circumstantial currents that formalize our judgments of another person's willingness or capacity to support or defend our stated requirements.

• • •

A “Fool” isn’t someone who asks a lot of “foolish” questions but someone, rather, who fails to heed the counsels of the Wise.

• • •

Paganism was/remains the (effeminate) precursor of (manly) Christianity.

• • •

If the book you are reading no longer makes any sense; that is to say, should you find it confusing, tedious or perhaps impersonal or irrelevant to your needs, (then) lay it aside and move on to another!

• • •

Things “exist” or are “apparent” to the senses in the manner revealed by “nature;” that is to say, in the manner they are received, that, unless conditioned by higher aspirations for their “essential” meanings or truths, cannot (otherwise) be perceived any more or any less than in the manner they are either inferred or imagined from an ordinary point of view. Therefore, what are commonly understood as points of “fact,” should be properly regarded with suspicion by discerning minds. Because of its perishability, “nature” is not (the) Ultimate Reality. The true Nature of Things is perceived by “eternal eyes” (only) that sees what lies hidden or beyond what our limited senses (may) otherwise speculate at best. Reason allows an individual to consider things rationally and to draw abstract conclusions about “things.” It provides the framework that governs our motives, informs our decisions and provides legitimacy to our beliefs. It provides food for rational thought grounded in Experience that, whenever properly applied, without prejudice or bias, grasps the Intuitive, as well. Reason, unless informed by Faith, however, merely “apprehends” thoughts and ideas proceeding from plausible assumptions designed to inspire confidence in questionable impressions that may appear, but are not necessarily, real.

• • •

Becoming one with God implies sharing His Glory, not becoming a “god” that seeks to determine the scope of its own limits!

• • •

A liberal acquaintance recently suggested that Social Security should be subject to means testing whereby the “Rich,” however defined, would be excluded from receiving SS benefits regardless of much these individuals have contributed to the system over the years. This is tantamount to saying that because a family has the financial resources to send its children to private schools, that public schools should be off-limits. What is conveniently overlooked, however, is that such families would still be required to provide financial assistance through payroll deductions and property taxes to either institution.

• • •

Determinism is a philosophical proposition that basically affirms that every human motive or design or action, for that matter, is “the inevitable consequence of antecedents that are independent of human will.” This “unbroken chain of events,” that finds ostensible expression in future behavior, is irreconcilable, it would seem, with causal/effects partially achieved in conjunction with problematical outcomes, that, in any event, could neither shape nor influence an uncertain future unless its “collective actions” were uniformly mapped out, absent the intervention of Accident or Chance or other contaminating elements occasioned by voluntary actions not in keeping with “programmed” designs that would (otherwise) render such a scenario, unthinkable; that is to say, there are far too many contending variables that need to be factored into the equation. Deterministic thinking is consistent, on some level, with Marxist theories advancing the Inevitability of History. In some ways Determinism has advanced a milder or “softer” expression common to modern liberal doctrine(s) that seeks to explain and systematize human behavior. The problem lies in reconciling the manner an individual is said to behave rather than react (a subtle, yet very important distinction) to pre-conditioning designs exclusive of free will.

This defective reasoning, of course, does not admit a (conflicting) Higher Moral Authority that otherwise “informs” a society whose members have (supposedly) been reduced to the lowest common denominator; material beings or high grade machines lacking moral and spiritual substance; guided solely by pre-determined dynamics subject to their (own) unitary laws. Such opinions do not admit the possibility of rational thinking human beings capable of achieving a higher order of spiritual and intellectual awareness consonant with their (own) determined designs. Neither does it consider Humankind’s obstinate, however pliant nature that pursues its (own) calling and seeks its (own) rewards in its (own) self-appointed manner. The belief in a Divine Being must necessarily engender conflicting loyalties between God and the self-appointed guardians of Historical Determinism whose (moral) authority must go unchallenged. Therefore, it is formulated that Humankind is instructed by antecedent events that direct its every movement and guide its every “thought,” if individuals are said to (properly) think, along its pre-determined course. To this purpose, God must be expunged from the public consciousness lest His presence confound the prescribed arrangements of mechanical processes where two plus two may not necessarily add up to four nor does it have to provided such dubious calculations preserve the implausible standards of an unthinking individual who has been summarily reduced to rote. The challenges confronting any free society lie in the unshakable confidence invested in its citizens as free-thinking individuals capable of making the right choices and exercising proper judgment rather than perceived as sophisticated machines guided by neural impulses connected to some highly developed nerve center. In other words, to consider them material, however quasi/spiritual “beings” possessing Free Will.

• • •

I do not harbor any doubts that America will one day devolve into a “second-rate” nation; thereby relinquishing its preeminent

standing as the greatest nation on earth. It may very well retain, however, its superiority among a sorrier lot of (other) second-rate nations (my apologies to Europe) that previously succumbed to their own insuperable challenges decades ago. This is small consolation, however, in an era were (erstwhile) great nations have been reduced to historical footnotes. Perhaps the twentieth century will someday be remembered for its irrational contempt for Western Civilization's remarkable accomplishments that gave rise to a number of great nations over the years. Notwithstanding its (own) relative decline, however, America may arguably remain the world's foremost military power although its comparative advantage over other developing nations will be sorely tested by hostile upstarts. I would like to qualify what I mean by second-rate. I am referring to a lowering of moral, cultural and intellectual standards in relation to material ones and casual rejection of the religious, social and cultural traditions that made America (remarkably) unique. (Russia and China, for example, were/are military powers but not great nations by any means.) Many of the reasons for this pending event have already been outlined above. They do not require further elaboration. Suffice it to say, however, that this is a Death Wish waiting to happen!

• • •

Addendum to the above: The question remains, however, does Mankind conduct (itself) as free thinkers guided by a higher authority residing within (itself) or react, rather, to spontaneous impulses requiring neither thought nor conscience thereby nullifying guilt or self-reproach?

• • •

There are many individuals who I (instinctively) like or would like to like for the simple reason that they are likeable. Separating an individual who is likeable from that individual's personal viewpoints, otherwise perceived objectionable or contrary to my (own) regarded opinions, requires an open, if not "generous" mind. Such differences oftentimes present a number of imposing challenges to individuals wedded to firmly held beliefs who, in every other respect, are genuinely committed to friendship. Complete or unqualified compatibility with another individual; that is to say, a relationship mutually committed to achieving the highest levels of esteem without bias or prejudice (however unlikely from the standpoint of our respective natures and conditioning) would require a severing of the subject (individual) of our interest from the thematic elements that typically structure the character of (that) subject/individual thereby separating (that) "Individual" from the "Ideas" that properly qualify and provide moral and intellectual sustenance to (that) Individual. An attachment to any individual divested of his or her essential qualities, however problematical, is equivalent to embracing an empty suit, thereby frustrating our intended purpose inasmuch as the inseparable idea(s) forming the character of that individual of our liking and the manner such (ideas) are properly received represent the fundamental components internalized by that individual who we (ironically) find so appealing to begin with. Therefore, a commitment to (true) friendship, setting aside such differences for the moment, requires that our differences produce (a) plausible effect, that does not (necessarily) imply acceptance, however, without compromising either individual's prevailing sentiments. Such friendships achieve their fullest potential or meaning in an environment mindful of each individual's guarded values and opinions.

• • •

Addendum to the above: This proposition does not hold, however, for someone we understand to be (objectively) immoral and whose "friendship" would cause us irreparable (spiritual) harm.

• • •

There is much to be said about "eyes being the windows of the soul" or that someone has "intelligent eyes." There resides in each of us, a spiritual prism that seems to radiate a stately radiance like sunshine emanating its essence through a pane of glass.

• • •

Our interactions with other people (oftentimes) lack uniformity however consistent they may (otherwise) appear on the surface within the operating framework of "artificial" expressions that retrieve from its private stock of impressions a particular role best suited for (the) "occasion." Such role-playing is neither cynical nor disingenuous however a conforming agency that seeks to manage or regulate a variety relationships among individuals having different values and interests that would otherwise alienate most.

• • •

Ethnic neighborhoods have historically generated a systematic inflow/outflow of diverse cultures that settled into self-contained communities that remained self-sufficient through its schools, churches, community and political organizations and local businesses until more favorable (economic) opportunities beckoned. Modern versions, however, are "self-containing" in the manner an increasing number of these communities are (typically) devolving into quasi-permanent arrangements partly (determined) by choice rather than (conditioned) by necessity. (That few of us are fortunate enough to choose where we live does not necessarily prevent us from improving our station in life if we are so inclined.) Although many of these communities retained a measure of ethnic authenticity, its members gradually sought to adopt, by assimilating, the customs and practices of (the) mainstream society. What we are witnessing today, however, especially in the more wretched urban environments, is a conspicuous absence of purposeful "genius" attributable less to inherent factors than the prevailing influence of a McDonald's-like mentality that seems to promote the lowest forms of culture that baser designs have to offer. Lacking are the traditional principle standards and values that encouraged young people to hope, to aspire, to rise above the lowest common denominator of their immediate environment. These (morally) languishing and (personally) demeaning attitudes are extending transition periods well beyond traditional standards, finding broader expression in greater numbers of individuals who are either unable or unwilling to improve their present social and economic standing because it is no longer

convenient to do so or perhaps many have simply lost the desire.

• • •

A question that is sometimes raised by members of the African American Community and by other People(s) of Color is why do many Christian Churches seldom depict “Black” Angels or other biblical figures, for that matter, on murals and statues. That’s a fair question to ask, although a more appropriate argument might center on the absence of “swarthier” Semitic types consistent with Christianity’s Middle Eastern origin. Such characterizations are merely a matter of convenient expression within the social and cultural context of a particular group. After all, what did Christ and his Apostles really look like? Has anyone ever encountered an Angel? Such (abstract) personifications remain open to interpretation; a (worldly) convenience to meet its own special requirements rather than an unqualified expression grounded on historical accuracy. It may be correctly argued, however, that there are no Black Angels. Neither are there White Angels, for that matter. The Supernatural comprehends neither (material) form nor color nor race. We are all one with the (incomprehensible) Spirit in whatever manner envisioned!

• • •

The vulgarization of language has undermined artistic (verbal) expression; that is to say, language has lost a certain sense of proportion relating to humor, irony, nuance and wit that typically shape our thoughts and ideas. Correctly expressed, words provide character and meaning to our thoughts. They allow an individual to link rational thoughts, analyze and properly communicate them. Many of us have become utterly conditioned by visual and phonetic effects, however, that we seem to have lost a proper feeling for what lies beneath or beyond the spoken word, leaving it essentially barren, without substance or meaning. In other words, we have devolved into “scripted” elocutionary talking-points and conditioned sound bites!

• • •

The ancient Greeks correctly estimated Man’s relationship with Nature. City Planning, for example, was neither pretentious nor overpowering in its designs but simplistically proportionate in a stately manner. Greek architectural designs did not seek to overwhelm but promote, rather, a harmonious relationship with Nature. (One might correctly infer a “mutual” regard, keeping in mind that the Greeks were Pantheists.) It is axiomatic that inanimate objects are neither spiritual nor capable of reason. I raise this point for the benefit of anthropomorphists (sic) who (inexplicably) ascribe (human) qualities to Nature. Nevertheless, an individual should “respect” Nature as a gift offered to us by God for our own mutual enjoyment; shared in community with others rather than for our own private amusement. To treat kindly inasmuch as Humankind is the custodian of Nature’s bounty. The Greeks understood this although from an entirely different perspective.

• • •

Eastern Religious/Philosophical traditions do not carry the burden of 15th–19th Century Western Philosophies that sought to undermine or discredit altogether Christian Belief Systems. From the smoldering ashes will arise a Christian Phoenix in the East (the source of its origin) that will refute Christianity’s pending demise.

• • •

The Book of Genesis reveals that, by having partaken of the “Forbidden Fruit” from the “Tree of Knowledge,” Adam and Eve (Humanity) exposed themselves to a new Order of “Things;” subject to spiritual and moral confusion and more importantly, an (underlying) awareness of Good and Evil. Although the word Bad has superseded (in part) Evil in today’s lexicon, it is worth mentioning the very fine line separating the two. It may be reasonably argued that an unsavory substance leaves a disagreeable or “bad” taste in one’s mouth or that a parent is setting an improper or “bad” example for his or her children or that an individual has behaved uncharitably or “badly” towards someone or that individual may feel unfavorably disposed or harbor ill or “bad” feelings towards that person. The (point) being that although Evil is the purest expression of Bad; that is to say, its ultimate corruption, none of the examples cited above are proper examples of Evil but examples of human failings that, carried to an extreme, however, may devolve to Evil if not properly tended to.

• • •

There’s an appealing quality associated with (character) flaws or (material) imperfections unlike impressions “perfectly” pleasing to the senses; that is to say, an aesthetic flawlessness whose highest claims, however, are seldom achievable in Nature. For this reason, we may oftentimes find ourselves “attracted” to defects or blemishes that commonly define our own rather ordinary, imperfect condition characterized, in part, by the object of our affections who appears (ordinarily) real and removed, perhaps, from fanciful standards or perfected ideals. In other words, imperfections make that (object) genuinely real and more approachable.

• • •

Addendum to the above: Our (natural) imperfections are what make us “real”, tangible human beings. A perfect world must inevitably lack a sense of proportion as we understand it.

• • •

Our pressing requirements, occasioned by the infinite complexities (or trials) of our daily lives, are a test of our moral and intellectual resources that provides measure to our character, endurance and ingenuity. Whenever an individual is troubled by some physical ailment, he or she seeks a medical remedy. If that individual is cold, he or she seeks warmer quarters. In a similar fashion, the manner

that individual copes with anxiety or stress or other (personal) matters determines that individual's spiritual capacity to "know itself."

• • •

Homes are populated by "ghosts" who are not specters in any ordinary sense of the word however haunting impressions firmly rooted in our memories.

• • •

Some people are natural born fools; others occasionally make foolish mistakes.

• • •

There was a defining moment in our nation's history when the laboring classes (en masse) went from resenting the rich to emulating their lifestyles...or trying to, at least. These (changing) attitudes gave rise to unprecedented consumer debt that (subsequently) skyrocketed through the ceiling; not to mention a "misery" index that gauges our material insecurity. One may only hope for a return to simpler, happier times when enough was sufficient for our needs!

• • •

Whether or not our "decided" actions are informed by "non-causal" factors (Free Will) or guided by the Determinate Laws of Nature (circumstantial or accidental events) or whether such actions represent a combination of both, Behaviorists are likely to agree that the latter argument is (the) more plausible of the two. Human "motives" are therefore held as determinant or conclusive responses to antecedent events independent of Free Will; that is to say, infer a mindset pre-conditioned by prior events governing present decisions rather than governed by independent designs capable of responding rationally to unexpected events. These arguments would seemingly render Free Will problematical once (the) events informing "rational" behavior have been properly considered. This line of reasoning must necessarily marginalize the influence of the Primary Will correctly understood as God, the Primary Mover and Architect of Necessity and "Moral Compulsion." What is not properly understood, however, is that Necessity initiates its own causes, occasions its own results; subject to "consequences" proceeding from both; that is to say, constitutes natural causations operating independently in accordance with its own laws; paradoxically limited, however, by its own restrictive/free condition. Free Will is not absolute in any worldly manner because it is oftentimes influenced by internal conditions that remain vague and uncertain; that is to say, lacking absolute (consensual) authority; subject to an individual's moral, intellectual and material orientation that (nevertheless) seeks to follow God's purposeful intentions. This in no manner implies a nullification of Free Will that (inevitably) continues operating within the (singular) guidelines defining one's existence however guided by its fundamental designs.

• • •

The components of Absolute Truth consist of a collection of partial truths woven together to form a completed truth, much in the manner of working out the solution to a geometry problem consisting of postulates, theorems and axioms, each a mathematical law (or truth) in itself however an (incomplete truth) as each relates to a (higher truth) that having been brought together, however, provides the solution (Absolute Truth) to the problem.

• • •

The Victors oftentimes look to consolidate their fortunes for their own sake rather than taking a chance that the spoils of victory might spill over to the Vanquished.

• • •

Sentimentality is the childish offspring of Sentiment and soft sensuality!

• • •

The distance separating Humankind from God is so vast as to preclude measurement. How humbling, therefore, that He, of inestimable Greatness and Goodness, should present Himself as "Man" so that He might reveal Himself.

• • •

If Humankind evolved from the Ape, at what stage of its development did it suddenly acquire a soul or has it always been present however hidden; eventually making its presence known in proportion to its increasing self-awareness or (higher level of consciousness) that properly informed it of its (own) existence? Carried to an extreme, one must therefore assume that a single-celled microscopic organism like the paramecium, for example, also possesses a soul that is unrecognizable until it too eventually achieves its own highest standard of moral, spiritual and intellectual development. If so, at what juncture does the synthesis of Body and Soul begin?

• • •

With the emergence of hard-boiled, butt-kicking women commonly portrayed on television nowadays, frontier women who helped settle the frontier seem (relatively) mild in comparison.

• • •

Well-Organized Minorities enjoy a decided political advantage over a Complacent Majority!

• • •

First generation immigrants hope to acquire what other people enjoy. Their second and third generation descendents, on the other hand, hope to retain what they have already acquired. The former are likely Democrats, the latter, Republicans.

• • •

Perhaps it's only me but doesn't it seem somewhat ironic that President Andrew Jackson, who sought to dissolve the Second Bank of the United States, should have his portrait portrayed on a twenty dollar bill!

• • •

Materialism has reduced our society, in the Hobbesian sense, to a collection of nondescript (social) atoms lacking substance and form, without character, existing without being aware of its (spiritual) existence, feeling without tangible rhythm, without essence, material bodies (merely) existing for the sake its (own)

insatiable consumption!

• • •

A Democratic Senator from Louisiana has recently introduced an anti lynching bill initially proposed in the Senate in 1938. Why not introduce legislation making it illegal to shoot someone in the head or shove that person off a cliff, for that matter? Isn't it any wonder that a political party that hasn't produced a cogent idea in nearly fifty years continues to marginalize itself?

• • •

A Doer seeks solutions; a Whiner finds excuses!

• • •

There are very few underdogs nowadays, only manufactured victims!

• • •

Leisure time, whenever constructively employed, provides an excellent opportunity for self-improvement. Instead, far too many of us fail to make proper use of our free time, wasting it, instead, on trivial matters rather than cultivating loftier designs. Such has given rise to a Tyranny of Leisure devoid of spiritual and intellectual substance sadly diminished by the burden of time.

• • •

Old Warhorses of the caliber of a Douglas MacArthur or a George Patton, oftentimes portrayed by liberals as saber-brandishing warmongers, would offer little sympathy for a society that has seemingly lost its stomach for waging the "good fight" whenever called upon. Both men were actually well educated, highly intelligent and accomplished individuals whose historical insights qualified them as military visionaries. Each understood the perils facing any free and open society that failed to preserve (the) democratic imperative; that sought "peace" through (reckless) appeasement and accommodation by lending itself to self-deceptions in the manner of "goodwill" that encouraged every (implausible) excuse for the aggressive actions of its ideological enemies that, in the final analysis, (merely) served to strengthen their resolve. In the final analysis, these effeminate attitudes have occasioned greater evils that might have otherwise been avoided.

• • •

Christ did not forgive us our sins because we were/are worthy of forgiveness but quite the opposite, because we are/were unworthy of forgiveness!

• • •

President Bush has been a bitter disappointment to Conservatives. Conservative influence within the Republican Party, despite liberal protestations, is clearly waning. How else does one explain his abysmal record on Immigration, lack of Social Security and Energy reform, reckless spending, expanding deficits (despite enjoying majorities in both Houses of Congress) while engaging the nation in a politically correct war that has clearly lost its momentum?

• • •

Aesthetic Decorum, because I like the expression!

• • •

A thought for Islamic/Fascist apologists: Scapegoating (read: Israel) is the refuge of scoundrels...and cowards!

• • •

Partial Truths are encountered in every Belief System:

Pride envelopes Truth in a Fortress of Ignorance:

Truth is incorruptible unless it losses its Wisdom:

Truth must be challenged on every front lest it becomes complacent and unable to properly defend itself:

Truths that are taken for granted are quickly forgotten:

Truth must stand on its own merits:

Truth in the absence of adversity grows flaccid, less manly:

The absence of Truth encourages Ignorance and Falsehood:

Truth is tempered by Trial and Suffering:

Truth must never serve Evil:

Truth and Meaning are not synonymous:

Truth provides sustenance to Meaning:

A mind seeking perfection is receptive to Truth:

God's Wisdom is the Highest Truth.

• • •

It seems that although families are becoming smaller, automobiles are becoming bigger!

• • •

When I was I young man, I would occasionally pour over a copy of a Playboy Magazine, not for the articles, mind you, but for the pictures!

• • •

Justice, in the mind of a Cynic, is that which promotes Self-Interest!

• • •

Personal Computers (PC's) are delaying the development of Social Skills!

• • •

America's growing dependence on OPEC is gradually promoting its own (economic) destruction!

• • •

An African American baseball player recently remarked that A.A's were under represented (9 percent) in the major leagues although these statistics closely approximate the national average. His comments failed to factor into account the massive influx of Caribbean and South American ball players, many of whom are people of color although not properly African "American." That many A.A's have chosen other athletic venues like basketball and football is a question of choice rather than exclusionary practices. I wonder where this obsessive preoccupation with race is destined to lead our society. I would remind this young man that whatever franchise in whatever sport, team owners are looking to recruit the most talented athletes available on the open market that offers its club the best opportunity to win regardless of color or ethnicity.

• • •

An opinion is as good as any another unless grounded on questionable assumptions, faulty reasoning, uncertain knowledge and arbitrary viewpoints.

• • •

The Socratic Method improperly applied may engender Moral Relativism!

• • •

Although Miracles (may) cast away Doubt, Faith provides its (own) internal rewards for its (own) sake.

• • •

Principles grounded in mistaken assumptions are misleading deceptions!

• • •

Although crime may be conditioned by poverty, it does not necessarily follow that poverty pre-conditions crime.

• • •

Familiarity not only breeds Contempt but complacency, which is almost as bad!

• • •

Having a serious “talk” with someone is not necessarily the same thing as having a serious “conversation” with that person.

• • •

Moral Issues are “complex” to those lacking a moral compass; otherwise, such issues should not (normally) present a problem.

• • •

Harriet Miers, (erstwhile) nominee for the Supreme Court, recently withdrew her nomination in response to widespread criticisms emerging from the president’s rapidly receding conservative base. I suppose the president had few options other than to accept “her” decision given that his recent approval ratings have fallen somewhere in the neighborhood of the “Mendoza” line. The war in Iraq, burgeoning budget deficits, escalating energy prices, the Katrina fumble, immigration and controversies surrounding his chief political advisor have contributed to the president’s growing unpopularity among Liberals and Conservatives, alike, thereby exhausting whatever remaining political capital he might have had in advancing the judicial career of a long time friend. I find it somewhat amusing, however, if not disingenuous, that some liberals consider her rescission a “victory” for the Democratic Party.

An acquaintance of mine recently expressed some concern over the (potential) appointment of a practicing Baptist likely to influence the ideological composition of the Court, thereby overturning hard-fought legal battles like the (omnipresent) *Roe v. Wade*, as a (poster) example. He could not understand how any thoughtful individual (referring to the president) could conceivably support someone “likely” to undermine a judicial process that has served the nation well for so many years. I must confess that I never considered the fact that Ms. Miers possessed such extraordinary talents and inestimable influence that could conceivably unravel fifty years of Supreme Court decisions! (Unquestionably some laws should be repealed although that is merely my own point of view.) Perhaps this individual might have considered reading up on Ms. Miers (historical) lower-court opinions relating to Abortion (“right of self-determination”) and other social issues of immediate concern to most Conservatives before rushing to judgment. These opinions were not lost, however, on savvier Liberals who (privately) regarded her withdrawal as a lost opportunity in pushing the Court further to the left. That her nomination and subsequent rescission proved embarrassing to the president took some of the “sting” out of it, I suppose. I could have correctly reminded this gentleman that former president James Earl Carter, who as president, influenced the ideological composition of our nation’s federal courts, was a professed “born-again Christian”, a Baptist, but why trouble ourselves with such “minor” details. Besides, his record on Abortion speaks for itself! I suppose my real concern, however, centers on prevailing liberal/secularist sentiments portraying Christians as unsuitable candidates for the Supreme Court, or any other higher court for that matter, lest their religious viewpoints should otherwise color an (objective) interpretation of the law. Such (bigoted) thinking strikes at the very heart of the Separation of Church and State. That judicial nominees are being routinely challenged on private matters of Faith is setting a troubling precedence in our nation. What kind of a message does such inquisitorial posturing convey to people of Faith that they need not apply?

• • •

God does not exist “within” Nature; that is to say, God is not a constituent (or component part) of Nature. As the Creator of all Things, God must (necessarily) stand “apart” from His (own) creative designs. It does not follow that (the) creator and the (created) object of his or her creation are united as resident parts of (that) (created) whole. That is to say, a creator cannot be a (component) part of his or her own creation because Creator and (the) Created are necessarily restricted by the circumstantial dynamics of practical invention that (otherwise) sets them apart. Perhaps it might be more appropriate to say that God’s underlying “presence” is properly reflected in His Works and therefore “exists” within the spiritual context of His Creation.

• • •

Addendum to the above: It is certain, however, that the product of one’s (own) imagination (or its descriptive designs) retains its own internal or conscious impressions that unite Thinker and Thought in a manner that reveals or expresses the inner “being” of the Thinker.

• • •

Knowledge is incomplete unless conditioned by Faith, or until the whys and the whats are understood as well as the hows in a manner that, understood in their entirety, synthesizes Knowledge and Faith.

• • •

The consequences of Free Will extend beyond the Present. Because Humankind’s (natural) designs are oftentimes restricted by its limited, (worldly) conceptions, understood in terms of its (temporal) dimensions, it (necessarily) follows that the outcome of its intended actions must remain (largely) unknown until they have been (formally) determined. I have written elsewhere that God “extends” backward and forward in (constant) time; that is to say, God is Time Eternal. God sees all that was, is and will become because “time,” correctly understood, is an invariant component of Eternity. What may appear “timely” within our limited perceptions of time and space is “timeless” to One who lies beyond the boundaries of “arbitrary” measures. These (human) restrictions, however, do not preclude the exercising of Free Will (or an individual’s inherent capacity to make informed or independent decisions) that remain (the) necessary requirements for self-sufficiency and determination; whose absence would reduce Humankind to scripted characters in a play lacking moral and intellectual substance (or spiritual awareness) that otherwise elevates an individual beyond ceremonial customs to aspired spiritual ideals. Therefore, choices that are made reflect personal decisions that, whether for good or ill, every individual must ultimately be held accountable. God sees or will see because He already sees final results and where such

outcomes must (“inevitably”) lead, although not necessarily so, provided that the correct decisions are made.

• • •

An extremist is an individual who never allows facts to get in the way of whatever he or she believes.

• • •

“Complex,” in the political arena, is a term commonly employed by politicians and their supporters trying to defend indefensible positions!

• • •

It has been oftentimes argued in some environmental circles that the extinction of any species, whether animal or plant, would trigger an ecological chain of events endangering Nature’s ”precarious” equilibrium. I find such arguments implausible to say the least. After all, our planet has witnessed the extinction of a variety of species over the centuries whether insect, reptile or mammal replaced by others through the processes of Biological Evolution and Natural Selection. Perhaps ecological subsystems would be compromised although its universal impact appears problematical. Natural environments are not constant however constantly changing in a manner “consistently” adaptive to change. “Populations split into different species which are related because they are descended from a common ancestor” (Darwinism). Even the most rapid, cataclysmic changes in any environment must ultimately pave the way for competitive forces where the more dominant strains outlast the weaker, eventually staking their own exceptional claims on Nature (Survival of the Fittest).

• • •

The Metropolis is not a natural (social) arrangement but an artificial one, rather, conditioned by Necessity. This partially explains, perhaps, why many of us oftentimes seek our “natural” calling in (more) peaceful environments.

• • •

While driving through Wyoming, my wife (Rose) made an offhanded remark that Satan (Prince of Darkness) has used the Twentieth Century as his base of operations, or words to that effect, to discredit Christianity. No sooner had she completed her thought, when gazing down at her odometer, she observed the number 666.0! (I place special emphasis on the 0.) After having driven no more than a quarter of a mile from that point, we passed an exit sign that read “Devils Tower.” I will leave it up to the reader to decide whether or not this was merely owing to Chance!

• • •

Primitive cultures possessed a spiritual intuitiveness common among all peoples throughout history, (however) uncultivated or uncivilized, in a manner suggesting a higher spiritual presence (however) unknowing to unformed minds not given to critical thinking (however) inspired by the notion of “god” or gods that every society, high or low, has understood and worshiped in its own peculiar manner; ordered by superstitious and tribal expressions until (more) refining influences and a (more) favorable ordering of the mind otherwise seasoned such thinking by providing substantive form to its beliefs.

• • •

It has oftentimes been said that the American Worker is the most “productive” in the world. As an American, who am I to contest such arguments, although having the right tools certainly helps!

• • •

A quick thought about Wal-Mart and the vitriolic attacks directed against the retail chain in recent years by the liberal community. It is easy enough, I suppose, for café latte types earning above average salaries to criticize the company from the vantage point of high-rise corporate towers and sprawling industrial parks where office workers, comfortably ensconced in the privacy of their cubicles, routinely shop on their Internets or indulge in a casual game of solitaire while pretending to look busy. My modest travels have enabled me achieve a (peripheral) understanding of just how vital these chain stores (Wal-Mart among others) are to “average” working men and women residing in “backwater” towns where, if someone isn’t plowing shares, punching cattle or a time card or driving a truck, informs the traveler of other (diminishing) opportunities in quasi-depressed areas receptive to the well connected or talented few. I would encourage any cosmopolitan, upscale type to venture a trip across our nation’s rural heartlands before rendering smug judgments. If they have and still aren’t convinced of chain stores’ economic importance to people who are barely making ends meet, then so much the worse for them!

Being an old-fashion type myself, it troubles me to observe how the “face” of America, its smaller communities (once) commonly referred to as “Americana,” is gradually transforming itself before my (very) eyes. Perhaps its many (erstwhile) faces would provide a more accurate description of what has (now) given way to a troubling sense of “sameness” that seems to typify a number of towns and cities across the nation. Missing are the notable, home like qualities and atmosphere of mom-and-pop stores, common in my youth, that are being routinely superseded by uniform shopping centers. It is sad to say that all things must eventually come to an end. On the other hand, does any right-thinking individual believe that employees of small businesses a half century or more ago enjoyed the security of reasonable wages and extensive benefits, including health insurance, that most workers typically enjoy in today’s

standardized working environments? When measured in constant dollars, is he or she properly convinced that the average worker employed in comparable positions is relatively worse off today? It seems that the (fictitious) contempt for Wal-Mart and to a lesser extent, their competitors who are being given a free pass for not performing quite as well, perhaps, has less to do with the negative impact on traditional (small) businesses and changing landscapes than their (Democrats') obligatory pandering to their union base whose conflicting interests, properly understood, need not be elaborated here.

• • •

I believe that the two watershed presidential elections of the twentieth century occurred in 1964 and again in 1972. Both elections ended in resounding defeats for the Republican (Conservative) candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964 and the Democratic (Liberal) candidate, George McGovern in 1972, respectively. Nevertheless, it is not without irony that from the smoldering ashes of defeat emerged off-centered platforms that would quickly come to define both party's sociopolitical ideologies in the coming years. America's political landscape has never been quite the same; that is to say, the nation has never recovered its nautical bearings. Lost, would be a common center that, with few exceptions, sought to achieve workable/practical compromises on issues of national importance. That both respective parties now seek to advance a quixotic, political ideal has occasioned irreparable divisions that must inevitably rend the social fabric of our nation.

• • •

While walking to the post office in the Woodlawn section of the Bronx the other day, I was struck by the quaintness of an old, working class neighborhood where generations of blue collar men and women married, raised (large) families in unpretentious homes, worked and played, lived and died. How ironic, it seems, that as American families continue to grow smaller, that many are moving into larger homes in upscale, "sanitized" suburban "neighborhoods" possessing less character and more property than most know what to do with for the sake of "Quality of Life."

• • •

The Motion Picture industry has enjoyed a long running fetish with strong, physically intimidating women routinely beating up on or otherwise skillfully out-maneuvering the obnoxious designs of pretentious, self-centered males filled with a heightened sense of their (own) self-importance; convenient foils portrayed as anachronistic, insensitive, chauvinistic types deserving an occasional thrashing every so often from women scorned or in response to inopportune or unsolicited (sexual) banterings or harmless wisecracks intended to make a definitive statement about strong women coming of age. My "favorite" staple is the one where a cloddish, brawny type is properly set down and summarily vanquished with relative ease by an unassuming "cutie" ready, willing and able of taking on all comers who step out of line. This scenario has become all too formulaic and predictable. I believe that what we are witnessing represents the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Seldom seen, for example, are White Women beating the stuffing's out of Black Men. Such may still be considered taboo or perhaps implausible, even by Hollywood standards. Be that what it may, dumb, oafish White Males have become easier (political) targets for game women, whether they be Black or White.

That "manly" specimens have seemingly fallen out in favor of "strong," sensitive Beta Types (where's John Wayne when you really need him?) is sending the wrong message to impressionable young women who easily buy into the notion that women are more than capable of holding their own against full-grown men twice their size. Neither does it improve matters by exposing the modern viewer to imaginary, trumped-up "reality" survival programs pitting women, who are just as likely to cop the coveted prize, against men in feats requiring athleticism and strength. In the real world, it is men, if they may be properly called men, who are stalking and routinely beating up on defenseless spouses and girlfriends at an alarming rate. That these events are becoming more common in our increasingly dysfunctional society should serve as a wake-up call to un-discerning types who should otherwise reject Hollywood's kinky penchant for tough-ass, butt-kicking women that conveys nothing less than an improbable, transparent attempt at vicariously compensating "emotionally" battered women by portraying them as super heroines. Such wishful thinking is merely a gratuitous bone tossed to distempered feminists to nourish their "manly" aspirations.

• • •

I ran across a bumper sticker the other day that read: "Testing does not equal Education." This may be true. It may also be argued, however, that everything else being "equal," Testing is a fairly accurate measure of Learning.

• • •

Dignity is a human virtue that an individual is born with. It can not be manufactured or conditioned inasmuch as it is indigenous to individuals who naturally possess it. One does not properly refer to the Dignity of the Masses, other than in some abstract sense, because collective designs are unable to achieve loftier goals that are uniquely individualistic. This does not necessarily preclude, however, the potential for every individual to attain appropriate levels of honor and (self) esteem that sets the proper standards for others to follow; that is to say, lends character and dignity to that whole.

• • •

The Feminist Movement, as it started to evolve in European and American circles in the Nineteenth Century, unless I am misinterpreting historical events, did not seek the annihilation of traditional (gender) arrangements per se, but sought to establish a leveler playing field that accorded full social and political rights to women; that is to say, that allowed women to enjoy the same opportunities and privileges historically restricted to men; requesting neither more nor less than what was rightly considered their

proper due. Women did not seek to exceed, however, what nature intended. Women sought, instead, an equal partnership with men without undermining the essential characteristics that typically separate men from women; each exceptional in his or her own peculiar manner. These women, with few exceptions, were not motivated by a universal agenda (extending beyond the immediate requirements for Equal Rights) that has subsequently evolved in modern times into a feminization of the male ego, leaving in its wake something that can best be described as a masculine identity that is less than manly, giving subsequent rise to artificial relationships lacking fixed points of (gender) reference.

• • •

Homosexuality, I believe, is the product of a diseased or troubled mind although not necessarily a depraved one, unless of course, an individual chooses to engage in sexual practices contrary to his or her “natural” calling, in which case, such behavior should be considered properly deviant!

• • •

No individual is above the law but equal before the law, rather; that is to say, laws are not enacted for the private benefit of any one individual or group but conceived in a manner that seeks to promote equal protection for every citizen. Whenever laws are considered separately rather than collectively, however, each individual would be a law unto themselves.

• • •

One man’s curse is another man’s blessing!

• • •

Dear John-(John Melle)April 20th 2006

You posed a question during dinner the other evening that I found rather disturbing from a Christian point of view. I would like to take this opportunity to elaborate further on some of the questions that were raised. You inquired whether I believed animals possessed souls and went to heaven. I believe that you are incorrectly assuming that possessing a soul provides an automatic passport to heaven. Let’s assume, for argument sake, that having a soul is a (necessary) requirement for any individual/animal to go to heaven. That same individual or animal could just as easily end up in hell (like my beloved “Mitch,” for example) depending on how each has lived their lives in accordance with their own “free will” that, in the case of animals, is a rather daunting proposition! In this context, everything being equal, both possibilities should be properly considered. I am speaking here of Rewards and Punishments.

I think we can both agree that a system of justice that exclusively applies rewards without pause for punishment cannot be properly referred to as a system of justice. It cannot even be considered arbitrary justice for that matter, inasmuch as it disclaims all notions of right and wrong or good and evil to begin with. This indifference to personal conduct places “justice” in a moral vacuum. But enough of that. Moving on to the question of animals and heaven, I guess my question to you would be, whether an animal, having behaved “wickedly” throughout his or her lifetime and having died without remorse for his or her dastardly misdeeds, should be considered a viable candidate for hell damnation? I raise this question for consistency sake. (I shudder at the very thought of an unrepentant Mitch, despite his innumerable failings, spending eternity in Hell.) However unpleasant the thought, I must allow that possibility as a counterpoise to heavenly rewards. That such arguments exceed the scope of my knowledge, I must leave such questions for theologians and religious scholars to decide. Let’s allow for simplicity’s sake, however, that heaven is a place that rewards “good” behavior and hell a place reserved for “evil.” Beyond that, far be it for me to judge who is good and who is evil.

Repentance and Remorse inform a troubled Conscience that seeks forgiveness. Conscience, I believe is the offspring of the Soul. It is arguably the most important faculty we possess as human beings in the manner it controls or directs behavior by giving pause to questions relating to right and wrong and good and evil, even when such distinctions are oftentimes unclear. I cannot properly imagine any animal, however, carried away by such distractions or driven to shame over some indecorous display like copulating in a public area, for example or urinating in someone’s back yard. Any reasonable individual might properly argue that an animal, uninhibited by conventional customs, oftentimes does what comes naturally without regard to ceremony unlike higher orders of beings compelled by (religious) or social reasons that temper their (natural) inclinations. Animals are less inhibited than humans for good reason. They are unable to discount the probable effects of “inconsequential” actions; that is to say, they do not “think” in terms of right and wrong or good and evil. They simply “behave” in a manner that comes natural to them. I am confident that animals do not go to heaven because they do not, cannot aspire for heaven. It is small consolation, however, for those of us emotionally attached to our pets, that although we may never be re-united with them in heaven, they will be spared an eternity in Hell.

It goes without saying that some of the most important decisions we make in our lives seldom rise above the level of the mundane, such as what clothes to wear, what to eat for dinner, what movie to watch and that our ultimate destinies are inevitably decided by loftier decisions. It may actually be a good thing that animals are unencumbered by such concerns, if indeed we, ourselves, properly worry as we should! We are “divine” beings (as opposed to Divine), by virtue of our relationship with God whose greatest gift to Humankind is the prospect of eternal salvation. This sets us apart from the animal. An animal merely lives, rather than exists. (There is a real important distinction here!) An animal relies on instinct which should not be confused, however, with reasoning. Instinct is guided by self-preservation. Instinct is not self-guiding, however. Humankind is guided from within, that is to say, its actions are understood from within. It enjoys the capacity to “Know Itself” which is the highest precept of Wisdom. An animal can never hope to aspire to Wisdom because such efforts imply a certain insight into the underpinnings of conscious designs, not merely their outward expressions but all that lies hidden and beyond. An animal “learns” by Experience as do humans. Where they part company, however,

is in an animal's inability to properly apply Logic and Reason to what has been learned or to adapt itself to the social, moral and ethical requirements of learning. For an animal, "learning" is an exercise in involuntary repetition. An animal is conditioned by rote to "understand" the hows and whats but not the whys.

Your follow-up question, why do animals suffer in vain; that is to say, without heavenly hope, may be answered in this manner: 1) an animal does not hope because it lacks higher purpose and meaning. It may desire food to appease its hunger or shelter to protect it from the elements. It does not hope for such things, however, because it cannot think in terms of possibilities in the manner that hope necessarily implies Potential and Faith that keep us "alive." 2) An animal suffers for the same reason that humans suffer, because suffering is a part of life. It suffers in vain because, for reasons mentioned above, it is unable to aspire for hope. Suffering, properly understood, is a necessary requirement for Salvation. A proper distinction should be made between physical and spiritual suffering, the latter being the greater burden of the two. Why are we oftentimes inclined to assign blame to God for all our misfortunes yet seldom offer Him proper thanks for all His blessings?

I would like to conclude by saying that the mistreatment of any (defenseless) creature under our guardianship is a violation of God's sacred trust. We are all stewards of God's Creation; to treat kindly and with discretion, charity and compassion for our own useful purposes, without extracting any more or less than what is needed to secure our own material comfort. Such arrangements, however, need to be placed in their proper perspective. Investing both Man and Beast with (spiritual) qualities must necessarily elevate the "moral" nature of the Beast while diminishing that of Man. In the proper ordering of things, God gave Man dominion over the Beast; that is to say, they are not co-partners in Nature. That Man was created in God's Image necessarily places Man on a spiritual plane unknown to Beast. Man is a contemplative being searching for Meaning and Redemption with the hope of bringing an individual closer to God. For this reason every individual must be held accountable for the choices that he or she makes. Man's immortality, I believe, is conditioned by thought. That Humankind enjoys a certain capacity to contemplate eternal designs represents (the) cornerstone of its (potential) immortality. Be wary of anthropomorphic designs, my friend.

With sincerity and affection,

Your friend,

Alipio

Saint Barnabas Church June 5th 2006

409 East 241 Street

Bronx, New York 10704

Monsignor Edward M. Barry

Dear Monsignor-

I thought we should share with you a comment made to my wife by a neighbor whose son attends Saint Barnabas elementary school. One afternoon this week, the boy conveyed to his mother what was foremost on his mind regarding a subject brought up by his teacher in class; that this teacher, we did not ask her name, stated that anyone killing an animal would "go to Hell." Now we take a position second to none when it comes to mistreating animals. It is a good thing that such lessons relating to animal cruelty are taught at an early age. The subject of Hell, however, is a very serious matter that should be addressed with caution, especially when these "lessons" are being conveyed to impressionable children who have yet to form creditable (religious) opinions regarding such matters. Is killing an animal found anywhere in the Ten Commandments? (We know that Killing is expressly forbidden.) Does the wanton killing of an animal for its own sake, however, rise to the level of killing another human being? Killing a defenseless creature for sheer enjoyment proceeds from thoughtless stupidity or a certain (inherent) wickedness, perhaps. It is not the purpose of this letter to argue such points. Our immediate question to you is whether or not this teacher is correctly expressing a belief in keeping with Church teachings or is she merely expressing her own private opinions in a manner that has become increasingly troubling to parents with young children in school? Many of our teachers, it seems, are oftentimes inclined to take liberty with their students in a manner exceeding the scope or limits of their profession. I would expect our Catholic Schools and their agents to conform to the standards of Church teachings, which is why most parents enroll their children in these schools to begin with. My neighbor was properly concerned and interested in our own reaction to this dilemma as was her son when he initially raised the question. We are concerned as well about this teacher's gratuitous viewpoints and would like to hear what your own position is.

Sincerely

Alipio & Rose Baldi

The First Testament refers to a "Jealous" God. God, however, does not express jealousy in the conventional sense. Jealousy is a limiting (human) emotion. God is limitless in His Perfection and is therefore impervious to violent emotions or any other emotion for that matter. What is understood as jealousy or any other emotion incorrectly attributed to God should not be applied within the context of underlying human emotions or desires. A righteous God expects righteous attitudes. In this manner, perhaps, God oftentimes displays "jealousy" or "anger" toward those who fail to keep his commandments or who worship false idols. Substituting watchful vigilance, perhaps?

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A “right-minded” Atheist is an oxymoron!

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“Preemptive” Diplomacy is a rather odd, if not redundant expression. Diplomacy, by definition, is the art of engaging other nations, of negotiating alliances, treaties and agreements; that is to say, avoiding or preempting, by open dialogue, persuasion and tact; potential conflicts between nations before they reach a fevered pitch. This term, applicable, perhaps, to “gunboat” diplomacy, was recently employed by United States Senator Diane Feinstein, inspired, no doubt, by a heightened sense of her (own) exceptional capacity for splendid expressions and superfluity!

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Humankind has more discriminate “needs,” (exceeding the primitive requirements of lower life-forms [Beasts] lacking imagination), that inform its “desires” of something or something requiring more or less of that something or perhaps some other something. Needs common to (the) Beast are specific and self-containing; existing from moment to moment. The superfluity of imagined needs, indigenous to higher life forms, (however), is a two-edged sword that oftentimes deceives or corrupts an individual’s perceptual requirements by confusing real or actual needs with questionable ones. Humankind is never completely satisfied because, unlike (the) Beast, it is (oftentimes) unable to correctly distinguish between the two.

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Christianity is a higher intellectual order; its teachings subtle and elusive to non-critical thinkers. There is no “Christianity for Idiots,” no shortcuts or paths of least resistance. Christ’s “simple” teachings were not intended as road maps for the simple-minded. Nevertheless, their “apparent” simplicity continues to sow confusion among those accustomed to receiving them at their face value.

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Whenever I give pause to Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economic hardships, of the many missed opportunities occasioned by stubborn (unionized) attitudes that rendered the region a barren (economic) wasteland, I see a society of working class people frozen in time. I reflect on how little has changed since the turn of the last century when President (Theodore) Roosevelt traveled to Wilkes Barre in 1902 to meet with United Mine Workers (UMW) President John Mitchell to help settle a coal miner’s strike by union workers that nearly crippled the nation. I am further reminded of a quote from Milton’s Paradise Lost that states, “’Tis better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven” or put in another way, “’Tis better to reign in the valley of vast underemployment and nominal wages (30,000 workers in the region subsist on the minimum wage) rather than serve in an open (market) environment that offers a broader range of economic opportunities for its citizens.”

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Thought and Imagination should not be confused with one another. The former, unless given to critical reflection, is (oftentimes) spontaneous; giving rise to whatever pops into one’s head; the latter generally follows creative impulses and subsequent effects that require additional time to develop.

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What is it about rising gasoline prices that sends the American Consumer into a tizzy? Perhaps, unlike other (vital) commodities, gasoline prices are (oftentimes) subject to dramatic increases provoking (consumer) reactions that require some getting used to; that is to say, a period of (emotional) adjustment. This is especially true in a nation accustomed to paying relatively low prices at the pump. When measured against the cost of other goods and services, however, the increase in the price of a gallon of gas, adjusted for inflation over the past half century, compares quite favorably with the rising costs associated with Healthcare or Education or the cost of purchasing a (new) home or automobile or a variety of consumer products for that matter. Everything else being equal, three dollars a gallon is still a pretty good bargain compared with prices overseas. Nevertheless, it would seem that price increases should be effected gradually in order to allow the consumer sufficient time to adapt without causing unnecessary excitement, thereby minimizing its “shocking” effects.

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Atheism/Agnosticism: Wherein lays the difference? The former is perhaps the more intellectually honest of the two in the manner an Atheist categorically denies the existence of God, unlike Agnostics, who, unwilling to incur the (potential) wrath of an “improbable” god choose, instead, to hedge their bets by suspending judgment until creditable evidence should otherwise support God’s existence. This constitutes “believing” in light of incontrovertible evidence that requires neither Faith nor bold assumptions inasmuch as (even) the most skeptical among us must inevitably concede certifiable proofs whenever (objectively) presented to them.

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A thought concerning insatiable consumerism: Many of us need to return to the basics; that is to say, curb our appetites and rediscover our (natural) mettle; so long have our latent potentials been properly tested. Perhaps another Depression might do the trick!

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Bill O'Reilly, playing the role of Devil's Advocate the other evening on The Factor, raised the argument on one of his segments that adopted children raised in a warm and loving environment by (numinous) Gay/Lesbian couples would be a preferable alternative to a violent, dysfunctional household, however traditional. My response to this trumped-up scenario is yes, those children might (perhaps) be better off. A plausible counterargument can be made that a child could just as easily be abused or mistreated in an unconventional "family" environment, Human Nature being what it is. Therefore, everything being equal, traditional parenting receives the nod.

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The ineffectiveness of the "United" Nations in brokering "the peace" could be traced to some undefined moment in history when the United States and its European Allies—there was such a time!—abdicated their leadership positions that had become too unwieldy, or perhaps they simply grew weary or complacent or both and decided to observe geo-political events from the sidelines, passing the torch to inept, incipiently corrupt Third World nations lacking the proven capacity to govern by example.

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European Elites are (oftentimes) quick to label President Bush a "cowboy"; this coming from a continent that has produced the likes of Alexander (the Great), (Julius) Caesar, (Oliver) Cromwell, (Napoleon) Bonaparte, Bismarck, Peter (the Great) (Adolph) Hitler, (Benito) Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin, to name a few!

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In order to obtain an idea of just how politically correct my company (Name Withheld) is, one need only log on to our Web site that features seven (7) individuals: 1 White Male, 1 Asian Male, 2 African Americans (Male and Female), and 3 White Women. That puts it in a nutshell!

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If pleasure is understood as something "good" or something that produces something good like good feelings, perhaps, and its excess, a corruption of what is properly considered good, however seems good, it stands to reason that pleasure is impartial to "goodness."

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"For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" (Newton). Lower wages, for example, produce higher corporate profits which promote higher stock prices which in turn increase the value of our 401(k)s.

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A variety of cultures broadly applied runs the risk of creating a Cultural Vacuum!

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Since colonial times up to the present, America has maintained local militias properly referred to today as The National Guard, a joint reserve military reserve component of the United States Army. Militias were once considered our nation's front line of national defense against foreign and domestic aggression. The evolution of uniform military standards, however, subsequently rendered militias, in the traditional sense, obsolete until the events of 9/11 raised important questions about our nation's seemingly impregnable borders that have subsequently lent legitimacy to the efforts of "Minutemen" who routinely patrol our porous Southwestern borders with this one notable exception: most are likely to employ binoculars rather than muskets.

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Most rational thinking individuals will agree that war is never a "good" thing. Some wars, however, are justified. It therefore follows that what is just is not necessarily good although the "non-good" must oftentimes be pursued for the sake of just causes. Goodness and Justice, understood within a temporal framework, represent conventional ideas based upon (plausible) principle abstractions consensually agreed upon by majority opinion in order to promote a proper ordering of things within a society or between nations. Each is an arbitrary construct that receives its conventional authority from harmonic designs proceeding from the eternal wisdom of Divine Issues whose origin remains partially hidden from problematical designs.

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Friendships growing stale and (mutual) interests wearing thin ...or fading or drifting apart...nothing personal...older formulae no longer seem to work!

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Despair is a catharsis of the soul that, on some level, provides meaning to the spiritually challenged. Despair is not a revolt against God, per se, but rather a healing process that attempts to reconcile an awakening Conscience with a trust in God's Mercy. Despair is an underlying source of anger and confusion that gives vent to our Humanity. Despair is a uniquely human condition that seeks to elevate an individual beyond the limits of physical and emotional endurance to "some thing" sublimely higher. To be Human is to be (irrevocably) linked with the Spirit, the former plotting its own self-chartered, oftentimes self-destructive course, the latter seeking an aggressively "passive" unanimity with God. Despair, properly understood, helps an individual overcome self-defeating attitudes by placing that individual on the road to spiritual recovery where at some uncertain crossroad that individual must (inevitably) come to terms with his or her undiscovered or inner-self, uniting the Material with the Spiritual, however apart. Despair is a crisis of the

unknown however not unknowing or unknowable. Despair, when properly channeled, is a pathway leading to God. As beings created in God's (own) Image, our spiritual potential essentially exceeds the material composites of our "self-containing" selves. Giving in to Despair, however, must necessarily undermine these potential possibilities or hidden effects that make us truly Spiritual and Human.

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Addendum to the above: By despair, I am not referring to spiritual annihilation as understood in the Christian context.

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That a Christian may behave in an Unchristian-like manner is not a mark against Christianity but that individual!

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The ability to economize words provides oral structure and meaning to scattered thoughts and opinions without having to navigate the mudding waters of unintelligible speech.

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Faith oftentimes requires accepting ideas and (other) "things" at their face value!

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Every argument may contain some kernel of truth although not necessarily the essential or completed truth!

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Sophisticated Americans, or those who fancy themselves as such, may oftentimes try to imitate or adopt European manners without quite succeeding in pulling it off; much in the manner of a saloon girl vested in all the gaudy trimmings feigning respectability at the opera house!

• • •

Although it isn't my place to argue whether or not Roman Catholicism represents the "one true religion", no religious teaching(s), in my opinion, has been systematically railed against over the centuries yet (somehow) managed to land on its own two feet without compromising its principle doctrines.

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Disillusioned African Americans, persuaded that the Christian Community has fallen short of its intended promises of a color-blind society; that is to say, that the Christian Community has tacitly supported racist designs over the years while doing little to improve social conditions, have therefore decided to exchange their Christian identities (including their names) in favor of a religion perceived (more) receptive to their social and spiritual needs. Many have (recently) adopted Islam as the religion of choice, which is rather ironic considering Islam's historical (and present) treatment of Africans in general. On a more radical plane, however, members of the Nation of Islam seem united in large measure by a common hatred of American ("White") Institutions with "religion" merely serving as a convenient prop that seeks to lend legitimacy to a separatist/nationalist agenda.

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It is not volume however content that matters!

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Ireland: A nation gradually re-embracing its pagan traditions. (Where have all the priests gone?)

Spain: A once proud Catholic Nation that has formally taken leave of its senses. Legislators have recently introduced a bill seeking to extend primatial citizenship rights to apes. What next, adoption?

France: A nation in dire need of a monarch. I mean it!

England: Not unlike America, a nation straddling the fence.

Italy: A nation that has never completely understood its own mind.

Germany: Guilt Complex. Not much hope for this nation, either.

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What condition constitutes the greater of two evils: Ignorance stemming from an utter (lack) of knowledge or the uncertain designs proceeding from the Ignorance of (presumed) Knowledge?

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Believing in God is not sufficient. After all, Satan, too, is a believer!

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Pleasure binds us to ourselves by seeking that which is less demanding of ourselves!

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How do you spell job insecurity? Re-engineering, Re-locating, Re-organization, Re-structuring. Choose your poison!

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The more we believe we know, the more we don't know, the more we pretend to know. It would seem that the solution to this quandary lies in striving to know all that we could hope to know although not completely knowing while qualifying our need to know.

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Humankind has an uncanny knack of sensing what it needs to know when it needs to know it!

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Doubting is not the same as Denying!

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Faith is wedded to Reason by Reason of Faith!

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Faith constitutes a belief in uncontested "truths" whose demands are sufficient "proofs" in themselves!

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Performing "good" deeds for their own sake because it is good to do so does not address the question: by what conventional standards are such acts of goodness, good to begin with; and assuming that they are, whether the "Will to Goodness" is driven by some inherent factor; that is to say, an (essential) moral goodness that resides within the doer of good deeds or conditioned, rather, by rewards and punishment, reciprocity or perhaps, fear, in which case, such acts of "goodness", sullied by questionable (intent), are motivated, in part, by self-serving designs that are not (inherently) good in themselves. The answer, it would seem, is self-evident. It still does not answer the question, however, what is the good and why it is good?

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Similar motives do not (necessarily) provoke similar responses. That two or more individuals may respond differently to "identical" impulses (or motives) may be understood in terms of that individual's essential designs or a product of (social) conditioning that in some manner informs that individual of the potential consequences (or effects) of his or her response. For this reason, a timid individual, for example, may be more unlikely than another individual, who is more daring, to confront pressing challenges unless the underlying motives are superseded by other, more compelling reasons or competing factors connected in some manner with the primary motive, in which case, although the (initial), underlying motive remains constant, its operations may "necessarily" vary. Any number of examples may be cited such as a public servant who compromises core principle values (or motivating factors), that would normally prompt that individual to act or behave differently, for (political) expediency or an individual, feeble in mind or body, who involuntarily acts contrary to how that individual might otherwise behave if he or she were not under emotional or physical duress or a "patriotic" individual who dodges the draft because that individual's private understanding of patriotism assumes a different meaning apart from traditional or conventional standards.

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Death is the shortest (Body) and longest (Soul) of journeys!

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A common argument against the existence of an afterlife is that no one has ever returned from the dead to confirm it. My response would be, who would want to if it's all that it's cracked up to be?

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A state of happiness is elusive to those desiring it the most. Happiness is unpredictable, coming and going as it oftentimes does in its own good time.

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Alexander Hamilton once wrote that "a government must be fitted to a nation as much as a coat to an individual...what may be good in Philadelphia may be bad in Paris and ridiculous in Petersburg." Such efforts at nation building in Iraq remains this Administration's most egregious mistake.

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...a strong central government that promotes the welfare of the nation without needlessly interfering with the private affairs of its citizens...

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Although (certain) traditions and liturgical customs may attract (certain) people to (certain) churches; the common denominator remains non-exclusionary practices welcoming all individuals from whatever walks of life, otherwise such churches should not be properly called “Houses of Worship.”

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Duty and Devotion are not one and the same however tied together in some manner. The former is (sometimes) thrust upon an individual (willy nilly) while the latter genuinely proceeds from the heart.

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Our Savior’s “Death on the Cross” constituted a voluntary “human” sacrifice although not in the ordinary sense of the word in the manner Christ was/is God made Man who “died” for our sake so that our sins would be destroyed. His “death” was/is an act of redemption and not self-destruction proceeding from despair!

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Being in love or believing to be in “love” can oftentimes produce the same troubling effects, I suppose.

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“Protect our Freedoms” by defending them when called upon!

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Men are rather dull and uninteresting as a whole. Women, on the other hand, are fascinating creatures, much like cats possessing their own unique character and personality.

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“People Skills” cannot be acquired; they are inborn!

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Intentions are (oftentimes) incidental to their effects, or the absence thereof!

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Ours is a generation that harbors an irrational fear of growing old. It attempts to mask its inevitability by hiding behind youthful façades that make it appear incongruous beside younger styles and fashions. Young as one “feels” contrary to how one really feels, holding fast to youthful designs and illusory impressions, has undermined our human dignity by its failure to properly complete itself in a manner welcoming every changing phase in our lives as a life (maturing) process injecting vitality and new meaning as it passes through each successive stage offering its own unique rewards while preparing it for the uncertain road that lie ahead.

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Reason to strengthen our minds; to understand what is knowable, Faith to fortify what is unknowable!

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It may be correctly argued that Existentialism, understood as a liberating force extolling the efforts of an individual seeking to liberate that individual from the hostile influence(s) of “indifferent” universal covenants that otherwise restrict that individual’s freedom in the manner they seek to condition or influence his or her manner of thinking or behaving is not entirely incompatible with certain religious teachings concerned with the question of human “existence” and how it relates to our (“own”) moral authority or free will. Where both part company, however, is best described by the great philosophical historian Frederick Copleston who stated “ The rejection of the idea that the world has been created by God for a purpose or that it is the self-manifestation of the absolute idea or Spirit sets man free to give life to the meaning which he wills to give it. And it has no other meaning”

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... oftentimes expressed as moral struggles that are not necessarily incompatible with the doctrine of free will that encourages a personal relationship with God unrestricted by neo-conventional articles or theological propositions that (otherwise) refute orthodox thoughts and opinions.....

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The “Battle of the Sexes, or the hunt-fest between pursuer and “pursued,” features, among its (traditional) combatants, the female species the conspicuously “passive” (Venus) flytrap!

Most relationships are oftentimes forged by chance encounters or events confined to time and space falling within an individual’s immediate sphere of influence. The closest friendships, perhaps, are those that never materialized or were never known or that

quicken too early or too late!

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I believe that a major reason why many of us are unhappy or even neurotic, for that matter, is because (material) abundance has provided incalculable options that (generally) divert our attention away from the (spiritual) pursuit of the “Happy Life.”

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Reality oftentimes puts our thoughts and actions to the test that explains, perhaps, why few of us are seekers of truth that openly declares an unhappy, although normal (human) condition.

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Addendum to the above: Blessed are the unthinking, for they will (merely) go on “living”!

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THE BEGINNING

Chapter 4

Letters

I would like to express my gratitude to The Journal News of Westchester and Rockland Counties for its interest in the many letters I have submitted to its editorial department over the years and for allowing me an opportunity to express my viewpoints. What follows is a collection of those letters.

September 25th, 1995

To the Editor:

I found Mr. Greenberg’s column (“Poll-istically Incorrect”) criticizing the unsportsmanlike manner of some college football coaches who perennially run up scores against weaker opponents in order to impress pollsters, (and thereby secure higher national rankings), inconsistent with previous viewpoints expressed in earlier columns addressing the same issue. No less thought provoking was his (ironic) reference to Penn State coach Joe Paterno, a gentleman whose regard for opposing coaches and players has precluded his running up scores in a manner that may have arguably cost his program a national championship or two over the years. In a column written a while ago, Mr. Greenberg defended his selection of Nebraska.....a team whose coach (Tom Osborne) understands a thing or two about running up scores..... as NCAA National Football Champions for “sentimental” reasons following a number of untimely losses and near misses depriving Osborne of the coveted title. It bears mentioning that although boasting an impressive regular season won-loss record, Osborne’s bowl record against ranked opponents was 9 (wins) and 13 (loses) including 7 loses in a row prior to winning his first national championship. Mr. Greenburg’s column, as I recall, underscored the Penn State-Indiana game that saw the Nitany Lions surrender two fourth quarter touchdowns in the waning moments of a game whose outcome was never (seriously) in doubt. Indiana’s late heroics, however, was reason enough for switching his vote to Nebraska. Now, one year later, he considers such scores “meaningless”. Not at the time Mr. Greenberg was filling out his ballot, however!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 18th, 1996

To the Editor:

Mr. Delnagro’s troubling column (“Anthem gets attention”) questioning why players and fans attending professional sporting events should be required to stand during the playing of our National Anthem, despite conflicting ideological viewpoints, instead of being allowed to “sit it out in peace”, if that is their desire, underscores a disturbing tendency among a number of Americans who routinely take peace for granted. The “peace” that our society (presently) enjoys neither came cheap nor without personal sacrifice. It was ransomed by the lives of the many brave young men and women who stood in defense of freedom, which our flag remains the overriding symbol. Americans typically enjoy freedom(s) that for many people around the world, including those living in our own backyard, is unimaginable. How regrettable, therefore, the uneasiness of certain individuals inconvenienced by an “involuntary” acknowledgment of the very symbol that provides expression to their own respective designs to begin with! This growing indifference to our flag does not bode well for a society whose patriotic attitudes have become remarkably complacent. Should we choose to remain non-participants in this “Great Experiment”, however, let’s at least allow ourselves a brief moment (of silence) acknowledging the selfless sacrifices that made (even) this letter possible. Perhaps Mr. Delnagro should rethink his position.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 18th 1996

To the Editor:

Mr. Cowl's letter questioning the effectiveness of a recent (fact finding) gathering of state governors and business men and women seeking workable solutions to declining performance trends in our urban public schools smacked somewhat of the "father knows best" syndrome that he unfairly projected on these well-meaning professionals. An individual needn't be a product of an inner city school education in order to recognize the system's apparent shortcomings. That it is "problematical" that any of those attending the conference has ever "successfully" taught in an urban public school environment places each in an unenviable position alongside public school teachers who unsuccessfully have, notwithstanding the latter's extensive experience. Mr. Cowl is piqued over the idea of lay people interacting in matters exceeding the limits of their professional expertise. I must respectfully disagree with his parochial viewpoint. Although teaching and training methods oftentimes vary by profession, their underlying principles generally remain the same. The overriding concern for all interested parties should be the dismal track record of our inner city schools in recent years and the practical measures needed to improve it. The glaring academic and (civic) deficiencies of a growing number of students render it neither feasible nor desirable that any thoughtful individual should whitewash the negative impact that under-performing schools are having on our economy, not to mention the rise in anti-social behavior in general. We need simply refer to the vast financial outlays (Corporate Welfare) being allocated for "retraining" (reeducating!) purposes, as well as the dramatic rise in "social costs" in order to appreciate the consequence(s) of our failing schools.

Many (young) adults are failing to measure up to the basic reading, writing and number skills required for ordinary jobs, not to mention the highly specialized skills required by more challenging working environments. Corporations footing the bill should be allowed (some) input into areas directly affecting a company's performance; for example, suggested coursework compatible with a company's business requirements or communicating effectively. Many of our public schools are performing a disservice to students entrusted to their care; many of whom, having "graduated", are oftentimes ill equipped to meet the basic day-to-day challenges that lie ahead. Teachers have seemingly lost the will and the desire to properly engage their students, that is to say, creating a highly motivated environment conducive to learning. Unfortunately, companies and other professional organizations and ultimately the taxpayer, are usually the ones left "holding the bag".

This brings me to another discussion point that I found quite troubling. Public Schools, according to Mr. Cowl, have never (traditionally) "cherry picked" its students. Fair enough. This may partially explain why most parents choose public schools for their children to begin with. In the not so distant past, however, the decision to attend public schools did not prevent children from receiving a quality education consistent with their natural talents and abilities. Academic standards are not necessarily established because they are considered achievable but because they represent objective performance measures perceived worthy of achievement, notwithstanding (the) student's ability to achieve them. Although the highest grade isn't always achievable, its aim, however, should be encouraged. Such attitudes require raising the proverbial bar to its highest level in order to provide every student an opportunity to recognize, if not otherwise achieve the highest limit of his or her natural potential. This is something that Mr. Cowl appears reluctant to endorse because of "cultural differences" that have (historically) precluded a level playing field.

This brings me to (yet) another point? America is a uniquely diverse nation. Its cultural diversity (and social mobility), for that matter, has never prevented children from every walk of life from learning and achieving success. Quite the contrary! Our society has provided opportunities for many individuals or groups to move up the social and economic ladders proportionate to their (inherent) talents (and desires). I am bewildered by the latent overtones implied in Mr. Cowl's remarks. I am referring to his allusion to dunking basketballs and running one hundred yard dashes that seemed rather transparent if not racist. Implying that their children's underlying talents lay predominately in sports is demeaning to Black Americans. Sports should serve as adjuncts to academics however not the student's primary focus.

The real problem in my estimation stems from the rise of relativist attitudes dominating our school environments. Traditional course work no longer seems appropriate in these modern times; superseded, in large measure, by quixotic designs for "meaning", "self-esteem" and "self-worth" ...and "relevancy" rather than unconditional learning for learning sake. It is especially troubling how many teachers have encouraged such hazy attitudes. What seem to be missing are the correlative assumptions uniting the practical requirements of a well-rounded education with the essentials of sound citizenship required for financial and social success. Immature grievances commonly expressed nowadays by students toiling over "useless" Algebra and "dated" languages like Latin and Greek considered unnecessary or incompatible with a student's career objective(s) misses the point entirely; that is to say, their functional "utility" is not necessarily the overriding factor but rather how such subject matter encourages a mind to think or to reason clearly by compelling it to operate on a higher intellectual plane. In any event, there are any number of vocational and/or general studies programs available to students who are neither endowed by nature nor temperament to pursue higher learning (that is not necessarily a bad thing inasmuch it fills a vital need)). Perhaps the question we should all be asking ourselves is what is it that determines relevancy in school environments where most traditional subject matter seems to have lost its potency? At the present rate, unless higher academic standards (and discipline) are restored in the classroom, many schools may very well become irrelevant in their own right, if not already so!

Our public schools need to restore balance and common sense in the classroom. They need to (intellectually) challenge rather than indulge or humor its students. The overriding issue isn't whether or not a student is proficient in ancient languages or higher mathematics, although the latter would be certainly commendable, but whether or not that student has at least mastered the basic requirements of reading, writing and calculating sums. Mr. Cowl concludes his argument by stating that the "real world" of inner city

schools is best described as a casualty of diminishing public resources, inadequate staffing, and obsolete textbooks ad nauseum. I would argue that spending inefficiencies rather than insufficient resources are the real culprits masking the (underlying) reasons why many of our public schools are failing; that along with disinterested teachers and a gradual departure from traditional values at home and in the classroom that money can not buy. Vast waves of under-privileged children from needy environments have achieved success over the years because of (conditioning) values targeting education (and learning) as the means to success. It also helped having teachers who shared the same values and interests as their parents; who taught without recourse (to excuses). A tolerance for increasingly lazy study habits has a way of assuming a life of its own, however. What is needed is a return to the old-fashioned teacher/student compact that was less compromising and more demanding of its students. Mr. Cowl should seriously consider returning to the basics!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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May 1st 1996

To the Editor:

I would like to make some casual observations regarding Mr. Cerbini's critique of the Educational System, the Media and Immorality and the manner they have indirectly contributed to rather egregious jury verdicts of late. 1) His first point is well taken. I agree with his assessment that a number of our public schools and (other) seats of higher "learning" have, on some level, transformed themselves into institutionalized breeding grounds for racial/class agitation and social victimization. This may partially explain the student "wave" at Howard University following the "not guilty" verdict rendered by a predominantly Black Jury during the O.J. Simpson trial. Jury Nullification, precipitated by perceived historical injustices, rejects or makes void rules or articles of evidence and their proper application as instructed by law because of pre-conceived biases unwilling to concede the legitimacy of such statutes or official practices of the court. Prevailing attitudes of this sort have become increasingly common in an age where "organic relationships" (Reinhold Niebuhr) render it undesirable for certain groups to extend legal rights to members of other groups that "necessity" may otherwise claim for themselves". Such viewpoints are oftentimes engendered by the perception of "partial justice" as it seems to apply to a particular racial or ethnic group, influencing the (collective) mindset of that group seeking justice within narrower limits that typically define that group's self interests rather than the interests of society. Intra-Societal conflicts must inevitably produce unintended consequences respecting legal precedents affirming that no one individual or group of individuals is above the law. That having been said, racial attitudes, I believe, are oftentimes reinforced although not necessarily formed in the classroom. 2) Mr. Cerbini's assessment of the Media was right on target. The "mainstream" media has devolved into a homogenous collection of single-minded, self-righteous, glorified gossip columnists entertaining pretentious claims to serious journalism; its members, the artificially contrived off springs of an increasingly illiterate, ill-informed public that has become less discerning and more dependent upon television sound bites and talking points to do their "critical" thinking for them. The news media is motivated by nothing more or nothing less than sensationalism and for what sells. Few, if any of its members, possess any meaningful (core) values. 3) Finally, it is debatable, as indicated in Mr. Cerbini's closing remarks, whether or not moral instruction should be a function of the classroom. Although I believe that schools have a civic obligation to reinforce principles and values essential to sound citizenship, the preliminary work should begin at home, however. It all begins with conditioning and a child's (natural) impulses.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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May 16th 1996

To the Editor:

To what extent is any free society willing to surrender a portion of its civil liberties in exchange for a safer, more secure environment? The rising costs associated with our society's War on Drugs, for example, have succored qualifying arguments favoring its legalization. Changing attitudes towards drug abuse are motivated in part by 1) the growing perception among many Americans that our nation is losing the war, 2) diminishing results that do not seem to justify increasing public expenditures earmarked for its prevention, 3) tendencies to treat the symptom(s) rather than the disease and 4) society's unwillingness to support "extra-legal" methods considered unconstitutional.

Regarding the latter, our society has faced a number of critical crossroads in its history that resulted in curtailing, if not suspending altogether, its civil liberties and other privileges in times of (national) crisis. Such examples exceeding the scope of this letter, should properly inform and caution the sensibilities of thoughtful individuals wary of the potential (long-term) effects such draconian measures might otherwise impose on the American People. Our nation's political institutions have provided meaning to free and open societies that ultimately define us as a people (given to ideas). Extra-Legal activities designed to pre-empt Rule of Law, in whatever manner they may (otherwise) produce some "desired" effect, should be properly treated with caution. In view of our nation's collective uncertainty, its jealous attachment to liberty oftentimes renders the disease preferable to its (potential) cure. Changing

perceptions may sometimes warrant, however, a critical reassessment of existing (societal) assumptions based on practical matters rather than legal considerations. The social costs resulting in injury to property and person, not to mention the demoralizing effect on social amenities, however inestimable, are “intuitively” understood.

Substance Abuse has been characterized in some circles a “victimless” crime whose illegality is the result of questionable laws. Its legalization and subsequent dispensation under the auspices of trained professionals operating in a controlled environment, provides a plausible counter-argument to costly efforts aimed at apprehending and bringing drug dealers to task; not to mention promoting cleaner, safer and healthier communities by eliminating criminal incentives and (profits) associated with its unlawful procurement. I am reminded, however, of similar arguments related to legalized gambling and prostitution that never quite achieved their desired results. The potential risk associated with legalizing drugs is understood as a possible endorsement (perhaps) of other forms of aberrant or anti-social behavior under the specious argument of an individual’s right to choose; however detrimental to the moral and spiritual well-being of that individual or society, for that matter. Neither does legalizing drugs promote the health of an individual otherwise under the influence of mind altering, physically debilitating drugs, in whatever manner or conditions such drugs are administered. I also believe that legalization sends a clear message to (potential) law-breakers that whenever law enforcement is perceived as ineffectual, its legalization, whatever the social consequences, is right around the corner. A civilized society reflects the courage and wisdom needed to challenge mistaken assumptions that otherwise degrade us as human beings; that quickly encourage proper forms of behavior not only for their own sake but also because of the positive examples they set for other people. This rather dim view of convention is never mindful of the perils of excessive tolerance that must inevitably find expression in an environment where unlimited freedom will eventually be unable to sustain itself. Such is fated for a society that is neither willing to uphold its legal traditions nor unable to estimate the consequences of its purposeful actions.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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August 28th 1996

To the Editor:

Dark omens sounding the death knell of our Republic’s “pending” demise have been prophesied by doomsayers since its founding. Nevertheless, despite the growing pains attending this “Grand Experiment”, (whose underlying assumptions are still being tested), our great nation has always managed to land on its feet; its Character and Purpose evolving or transforming themselves into something “entirely” new yet essentially the same. This, despite the many domestic and foreign challenges it has encountered over the years. That Americans are slow to embrace change is due in part to modifying values or customs embodied within the (broader) culture that (ironically) “encourages” such values to begin with. America was uniquely conceived in the principle manner it has been able to embrace and assimilate a variety of cultures forming unqualified or hybrid expressions symbolizing the normative elasticity of its people; of “old world” customs and manners that gradually introduced themselves to the American Mainstream over the years. Where problems may sometimes arise lie in shorter-term progressions resistant to (social) changes perceived counter to or incompatible with accustomed traditions. Experience has shown, however, that such “anomalies”, are the touchstones of a free and open-society. America is a great, tolerant nation for the simple reason that it is adaptable and self-correcting. Such characteristics precede a universal fellowship that, however vaguely uncertain, exceeds the salient features that normally sustains the Whole in a manner that seeks to promote natural rather than artificial solutions to its social commitments. Such efforts should be pursued, however, from both sides of the aisle. Where separate roads are taken or where a nation’s people become strangers to one another, may very well spell that society’s potential undoing.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 17th 1997

To the Editor:

Militant factions (gradually) emerging within the African American Community seeking monetary reparations compensating “descendants” of slaves for loss of (retroactive) income could be setting a rather precarious precedent by encouraging other groups or individuals, for that matter, to seek financial restitution for (historical) privations or other (imagined) grievances precipitated by the perception of racial, ethnic or gender bias. This scenario is not as far-fetched as it may appear given our society’s misplaced sympathy, at times, for its perceived “victims” and unqualified support for underdogs in general that oftentimes checkers its thinking. Compulsory reminder(s) (by contentious groups) of our nation’s historical transgressions, that are neither politically nor socially relevant to present times, oftentimes serve to obstruct rather than facilitate racial dialogue.

America’s traditional performance(s) in some areas, especially on racial matters, have been arguably inconsistent with or lagging behind its constitutional intentions. Nevertheless, our nation has managed to overcome a number of myopic shortcomings because of

the inherent elasticity of its conceptual designs; perhaps even more so because of the latent (moral) character of its people. America is a progressive nation because it is self-correcting. Therein lies its (political) genius; a remarkable capacity to adapt to the (conscientious) requirements of a morally (evolving) society. What I find particularly troubling about this scheme, however, is rooted in our nation's Civil War that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of brave young men, mostly White, who gave their lives for the cause of freedom.

Could an equally plausible argument be made that their lineal descendents should also be compensated (in kind) for their heroic efforts on the battlefield? Critics may argue that I am comparing apples with oranges. I don't believe so. I am merely bringing an implausible assumption to its illogical conclusion. As a society, we are all, to some degree, inextricably woven by the fortunes of other individuals. A compelling argument could be made that this inevitable war mutually united, on some level, at least, the social and political destinies of both races. Whether the war was triggered by events unrelated to slavery, as some historians have argued, is not the overriding question. Its "unintended" result(s) that inevitably enhanced the moral character of our nation is what concerns us here. Be that as it may, how long will it remain (politically) expedient for our nation to continue exhuming its dead rather than letting them rest in peace!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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July 20th 1997

To the Editor:

Multi-Culturalism, as it continues to inform Immigration, is gradually transforming America into a geographical entity comprised of distinct cultural units rather than a national body combining, among other things, common language and loyalty (to the "host" nation) and a proper appreciation of its social and political institutions. A nation is properly understood by its historical heritage, political and social ideologies, customs and practices, legal institutions, its borders, sovereign traditions and perhaps most importantly, its language. These defining aspects typically characterize a nation by keeping it Whole. Without question, the intimacy of language is the lowest common denominator that "unifies" a nation. Multi-Culturalism should not be confused with Inter-Culturalism that otherwise suggests a mutual exchanging and/or assimilating of the higher (Arts & Sciences, Music, Literature and Architecture) and lower (Cuisine, Fashions and Sports) cultures whose synthesis finds its ultimate expression within an overlapping culture that oftentimes acquires its own unique standing over time. Understood in this manner, diversity does not seek to diminish the collective value of other cultures considered separately, however as a whole. A variety of cultures operating within the framework of any (pluralistic) society should neither tolerate nor encourage, however, the discriminate non-participation of any of its members. Present tendencies, however, seem to be running counter to traditional practices that sought to integrate diverse cultures (E Pluribus Unum). The aim of every immigrant was, above all else, to become an American; not the preservation of separate identities in a "foreign" environment. Can the cultural balkanization of America be right around the corner?

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 1st 1997

To the Editor:

This is a letter that has been long overdue as it pertains to a comic strip that was printed in your newspaper on September 14th. The title was "For Better or for Worse" by Lynn Johnson. I don't generally read the comics as I once did many years ago but this day I wanted to read them and see how they had changed over the years and was disappointed after reading the first strip by Ms. Johnson. It's about kids returning to school after summer vacation and finding a "newness" about the place i.e. new floors, replaced cracked windows, clean walls etc. The big laugh or punch line was that "it's gonna take a while to get this place lookin' good again!" What came across to me was Ms. Johnson's tastelessness in what she finds humorous. It is this kind of message that graffiti and destruction should not be considered a serious matter that has contributed to the absence of polite and civilized manners in today's society. Her relaxed message and "shrugged" commitment to society can only encourage indifference. (I wonder whether Ms. Johnson would enjoy living in a community or working in an environment that had graffiti, broken windows and uncleaned floors. I am certain that people who do not would gladly trade places with her). We have our freedoms, yes, but not to vandalize property. Humor is a spice of life. We all have a basic need to laugh once in a while. But humor shouldn't be used to sow further confusion in an already troubled society. I was disappointed because I found her attitude unacceptable. My failure to write sooner shows how getting caught up in everyday life overshadows the responsibility we all have in voicing our objections against mixed-messages that fail to instill proper meaning to words like Character.

Sincerely

Rose Baldi

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February 18th 1998

To the editor:

Richard W. Dwyer's letter was well-meaning although it raises a very important question: To what extent should the American People be willing to compromise the "Character Issue" as it relates to the Office of the Presidency, or any other political office for that matter? Americans are a forgiving people. But even our nation's inherent capacity to forgive a public or private misdeed has its (defined) limits, however. Forgiveness follows where personal accountability for one's (own) actions begins. We are all flawed in one manner or another. We all make mistakes; intentional or otherwise. Our imperfect nature(s), given all its multiple complexities, provides unlimited possibilities for such transgressions whose absence would otherwise belie our human condition. Notwithstanding our human shortcomings, however, how far should any society be expected to tolerate, for "unity's sake", irreconcilable moral and ethical misconduct that is quickly gaining momentum within political circles? Who remains accountable for the unseemly actions of our public officials who seem unwilling or unable to reform themselves, if not the Conscience of the American People? In what manner does that society continue supporting notions of unity in view of prevailing (double) standards that falsely qualify appearances as uncharacteristic or unimportant? In what manner does that society achieve consistency between public and private matters where "vital national interests" are at stake? In a word, where does society draw the line on inappropriate conduct? America is a great nation because its institutions are recoverable. It has achieved singular greatness by placing its political and social ideologies above the interests of any single individual. Such defined the wisdom of our first president (George Washington) who, properly aware of the (inherent) temptations of political power, limited himself to two terms in office. Each of us is fragile or flawed in our own unique or peculiar way. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to temper and control our passions and emotions that oftentimes occasion questionable ambitions incompatible with the interests and welfare of other people entrusted to our care. This responsibility assumes far greater importance for our public officials who many of us otherwise expect to lead by example. "To whom much is given, much is expected"; even among those of us possessing "feet of clay".

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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July 12th 1998

To the Editor:

The "remedial" course of action initiated by state and local governments at curbing or eliminating smoking altogether, especially among young teens, by imposing additional excise taxes on cigarettes that would make such purchases cost-prohibitive, are cynical deceptions on the part of politicians on both sides of the political aisle designed to increase revenue for (social) spending programs under the pretext of concern for under-age smoking. The price inelasticity of tobacco products, however, excludes the likelihood that prohibitory pricing measures will either condition or limit consumption; which is what most of our politicians are relying on! Were our political leaders genuinely committed to eliminating this (proven) toxin from the marketplace, cigarettes and other tobacco products, like other potentially harmful drugs, would have been de-legalized years ago. Since our prescriptive freedoms oftentimes support, within the boundaries of "reasonable" limits(s), an individual's right to choose his or her own poison, why shouldn't government have it both ways by advancing concurrent strategies that seek to raise revenue through sin taxes for purposes of promoting "health"? Perhaps even more troubling is the recent outbreak of class action suits by enterprising litigants who, properly informed of the potential risks associated with cigarette smoking, beforehand, are presently seeking financial restitution against tobacco companies compensating them for smoking related diseases brought about by their own pre-determined actions. Such questionable lawsuits underscore our government's willingness to condone destructive forms of behavior if the price is right! The levying of regressive taxes, while failing to achieve its "desired" effect, continues to inflict financial hardship on consumers least able to afford it. Specious ideals, as such, are destined to "go up in smoke", giving rise, instead, to Black (Internet) Markets.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 22nd 1998

To the Editor:

I find it rather puzzling that as America quickly approaches the twenty first century as the world's (undisputed) leader in industrial and commercial technologies and other scientific advancements that have increased the material comfort and well-being of its citizens, that transportation remains trapped in a (mobile) time-warp hampered by dated toll collections (that impede travel), rapidly deteriorating highways and roads and a public conveyance network out of step with (modern) commuter (and environmental) requirements. It seems to me that, in a day and age were the increasing demands of commuter and commercial travel are beckoning innovative methods of reducing congestion by streamlining our nation's transportation system, while meeting the concurrent requirements of a beleaguered environment that is slowly reaching a breaking-point, our government must find a suitable solution that reconciles both requirements in a manner that will facilitate the flow of traffic without endangering the environment by investing in sophisticated technologies and creative designs that are cost, time and energy efficient. This comprehensive program will (inevitably) assume (far)

greater importance in the foreseeable future as population growth and expanding suburbs will further strain commuter travel as well as our environment in the coming years. Such initiatives, which should eventually pay for themselves, if managed properly, will not be achieved without considerable (initial) cost to the taxpayer. I will leave such (“minor”) details, however, to our resourceful politicians who are rather adept at raising money for public works. The key, however, lies in public and private investment in alternative, more cost efficient (non-fossil) sources of energy presently available in the marketplace that require research, refining, sensible planning and extensive implementation. In other words, modernize travel that has seemingly regressed to the horse and buggy era while investing in transportational and environmental technologies designed to hasten travel and promote cleaner air.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 6th 1999

To the Editor:

Reagan Democrats, a vital voting bloc that spear-headed his unexpected victory over presidential incumbent James Earl Carter, should not be casually dismissed as an electoral anomaly lest we forget Richard M. Nixon, who did surprising well among blue-collar voters in his (own) run for the presidency. These (latent) voters, understood as the “Silent Majority”, had been posed since the late sixties to launch a pre-emptive strike against their own (Democratic) party in favor of Conservative candidates perceived as sympathetic to populist viewpoints that made many of them feel like outcasts in their own party. Reagan, himself a political apostate, was a practical ideologue, a New Deal Democrat, who switched party lines and became a Republican once the Democratic Party started losing sight of its traditional commitments. That there is little (practical) difference separating both major political parties isn’t lost, however, on clear-headed individuals seeking an alternative to divisive symmetries; whatever their political origins might be.

The Republican Establishment, hampered over the years by its high-brow demeanor and perceived indifference to common causes, has squandered an exceptional opportunity to set the political tone over the coming generation; assisted in large measure by the (self) destructive tendencies of Democrats who continue steering further away from popular mainstream opinion(s). Republican Party elites oftentimes remain indifferent, except during the primary season, to blue collar voters seeking a viable alternative to a party that has abandoned its customary standards in favor of secular viewpoints (seemingly) at odds with “working class” values. Should the Republican Party hope to retain its House and Senate majorities, however, it will need to provide a proper forum for Social Conservatives who are likely to place traditional customs and practices ahead of economic enticements.

Democrats, to their enviable credit, know how to play up to their core base, including independents straddling the fence. They have consistently demonstrated an uncanny, some might call it cynical, capacity of imitating the structure and style of popular issues that oftentimes falls short of their stated intentions. Republicans, on the other hand, generally appear awkward and ill at ease with a constituency that many party leaders privately consider, an embarrassment...however a necessary annoyance. After all, Me-Tooism hasn’t really changed much since the Eisenhower years. Republican Party promises oftentimes ring hollow with the “common” man because they are seldom stated with (genuine) conviction. Democrats, at least, partially-believe what they don’t really believe at all! To them, political power is a zero-sum game where power and influence is not merely a means to an end but rather an end in itself. That Conservatives have remained loyal to the Republican Party is a question of the lesser of two evils. For this reasons, it may well behoove Social Conservatives, never at ease with the Republican Party’s country club mentality, to begin with, to pitch camp and establish a home that they could properly call their own.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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May 25th 1999

To the Editor:

There exists a very fine line that separates divisive or “offensive” from (genuinely) hateful forms of speech. For this reason, conventional wisdom is oftentimes likely to avoid controversial subjects considered incompatible with the customary and accepted practices of an increasingly sensitive, overly cautious society; preferring to play it safe, instead, by providing pat answers or formulaic responses to difficult questions rather than expressing a “truthful” opinion. Therefore, intellectual integrity is being compromised on a number of very important levels that should otherwise require a thorough examination of an individual’s (own) critical thoughts and feelings. Our society, however, has grown increasingly wary over the authenticity of its judgments; its citizens seeking sheepish approval rather than a manly reputation for candor. The avoidance of controversial themes and other subject matter has become one of the modern “virtues” that has gradually come to define our collective mindset. It is no longer appropriate, or so it would appear, to properly agree to disagree or to draw-out the essential components vital to any argument. It has become socially fashionable, instead, to label disagreeable viewpoints as either racist, bigoted, homophobic, xenophobic or some (reasonable) apprehension or concern as mean-spirited. Political Correctness has accelerated this admonitory process by its simplistic characterization of individuals or groups; by not only disregarding the complexity of singular viewpoints but by challenging the moral and intellectual foundation of the individuals expressing them. Consequently, the contemptuous ease that certain opinions are casually dismissed or (unceremoniously)

discredited whenever the manner or tone underlining such assumptions are considered either incongruous with conditioned viewpoints or worse, socially expedient requirements. The politics of victimization and expediency are the binary forces that (inevitably) enfeebled formal dialogue by promoting moral and intellectual fatigue hastened by pavlovian reactions designed to preempt critical analysis or judgment.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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July 12th 1999

To the Editor:

Random shootings in suburban schools, that have left a number of children either dead or wounded, have “triggered” yet another round of liberal hysteria calling for tighter gun control laws or eliminating them altogether. Why not simply enforce existing gun laws (already) on the books rather than proposing newer ones whose questionable impact on reducing gun related crimes are likely to produce diminishing results? Such political grandstanding, I suppose, plays well among certain audiences given to theoretical assumptions to critical questions that otherwise require practical solutions. Predictably, these events have prompted knee-jerked reactions underlining “root causes” which isn’t so surprising inasmuch every effect (or outcome) ultimately proceeds from some determined or unexpected cause. Of greater importance, however, is the extent an individual, with very few exceptions, should be held legally (or morally) liable for his or her decided actions however uncertain their underlying motives. We seem to be moving in a society where Cause has assumed a peculiar life of its own; that is to say, has become a rule or standard in its own right “guiding” the actions of individuals without proper measure or regard to consequence. It is perhaps this “devil made me do” approach to behavior that has occasioned compassionate attitudes that oftentimes beckon for Mercy rather than Justice!

Isn’t it any wonder that guns have devolved into a convenient scapegoat in a society seeking justification for its own freely determined actions? This disturbing pattern of rejecting personal responsibility is attributable, in part, to adopting Deterministic attitudes superseding the notion of Free Will; that is to say, absolving “inevitable” outcomes independent of Choice that seeks to excuse or exonerate inappropriate or violent behavior. Although guns, in the present context, have superseded “society” as the metaphorical fall guy, the remaining constant is that of limited accountability that seeks to pardon or explain away violent or erratic behavior. Therefore, we are witnessing a disturbing tendency of ascribing unseemly behavior to phantom designs irrationally impervious to experience, evidence and final proofs that should (otherwise) correctly inform our actions. Instead, many individuals are finding themselves subject to unqualified productions unsupported by facts! Returning to the topic of guns, it is believed in some (political) circles that eliminating guns would promote a corresponding decrease in (gun related) crimes. Such simplistic thinking, however, liberates shallow viewpoints from the otherwise difficult task of exploring the darker socio/pathetic dynamics that continue to trouble polite society. Guns are merely the disinterested implements of latent or pre-existing conditions that need to be dealt with openly and honestly rather than holding inanimate objects up to the standards that our society should otherwise be holding its citizens up to. In a word, guns don’t kill, people do!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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August 25th 1999

To the Editor:

As a graying sixties generation quickly approaches middle age, sustained by a wistful desire for the “good old days” that typified its youthful idealism, many can’t help reflecting on those formative years without forlorn regret over a progeny whose slackening awareness and indifference to social “causes” and other immediate issues that continue to trouble our society has given way to self-gratifying designs, like amassing “huge” fortunes, for example. How soon they forget! Ironically, the seeds of selfish-indulgence and self-righteousness were planted by the very critics equally self-centered in their own manner as young adults. Theirs was a generation that blindly pursued its (own) idealistic assumptions for a “better world” without proper forethought or knowledge that would leave many disillusioned, frustrated and intolerant of subsequent generations unwilling to continue fighting the good fight. This is the inevitable outcome for individuals seeking to promote reform without a clearly defined roadmap of the future.

The radical assumptions that defined that generation did not seek reform in the conventional sense but establish, rather, a new social order out of a vacuum lacking transitional (customary) support or intellectual substance of any sort. That is to say; they strove to supersede conventional customs and practices with quasi-nihilistic manners whose unscrupulous rejection of conscientious values ultimately created a mix of (moral/spiritual) confusion whose legacy has unhappily become a distinguishing characteristic of today’s youth. It does not require a great deal of imagination to discredit traditions. It takes a great deal of thought, however, to replace them with appropriate alternatives vital to the mechanisms of a well-ordered, functional society that continues to evolve. Such upheavals sought to impose impractical standards and designs that many of their offspring have been unable, had they been so inclined, to live up to.

A generation stirred by emotion rather than reason; rejecting all forms of conventional authority for its own sake or that (otherwise) interfered with their simplistic social designs, produced an intolerance, especially among its more radical members, for belief systems and points of view contrary to its imaginary worldview. Such attitudes (otherwise) suggesting caution or restraint were reflexively labeled Fascistic; a term destined to become the precursor to other forms of gratuitous name calling common among members of that generation directed against opposing viewpoints. The pursuit of absolute, unconditional “reform” by a generation spoiled beyond measure was the by-product of “good” intentions that failed to take proper account of Human Nature; that is to say, some people don’t want to be “changed”. Such fancied notions of what the world “should” be like rather than what it “could” be like marked a generation of socio/cultural “engineers” presenting rather odd impressions of the ideal society predicated upon utopian standards rather than practical designs. Today’s youth have been subsequently commissioned with the unenviable task of having to navigate through troubled waters on a rudderless boat without a compass only to criticize them for faulty seamanship for having failed to negotiate the prescribed course. There is a glimmer of hope, however, that lies in our society’s self-correcting resiliency to properly guide it. That proud traditions die-hard; therein lays the hope!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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December 10th 1999

To the Editor:

Opportunities do not (necessarily) produce favorable or desired results; however many of us would hope for a fighting chance, at least. Teeming generations of immigrants from all walks of life, with their bellies full of hunger and a pocketful of dreams, bravely migrated to distant shores hoping to discover a better life for themselves and their families. Many, in some manner or another, would have to contend with and overcome a variety of economic hardships and social/cultural barriers too numerable to mention; however well documented and available to those who may wish to be properly informed of such matters. Such privations, whether real, imagined (or self-inflicted), for that matter, have (otherwise) proven that industry and time have a way of justifying their own rewards. Success, however defined, arrived sooner for some than for others. Their inspired achievements, whether as individuals or groups, was less a function of their (tangible) assets than the ownership of certain (intangible) values common to individuals and proud traditions noted for their remarkable accomplishments. They consist of an array of portable resources commonly referred to as “Human Capital” that includes, but are not limited to Industry, Enterprise, Ambition, Discipline, Motivation and Endurance. Add a pinch of Talent and Good Fortune and therein lies the formula for success. These (inherent) qualities, however, cannot be purchased at any price. Although Character isn’t for sale, it can be conditioned by individuals willing to make uncertain sacrifices. These are the driving forces (or values) that typically define achievement. Achievement, in this manner, is not solely the product of Chance. Life is not as simple as all that.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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February 2nd 2000

To the Sports Editor:

Ian O’Connor, champion of the oppressed and self-styled Stephen Vincent Benet of the Gannett sports pages, might have properly considered a career more in line with the principles of serious journalism rather than (seemingly) wasting his “enormous” literary talents and high-minded idealism as a sports columnist. A sensible man, who has selflessly assumed the “White Man’s Burden”, merits, in my estimation, a forum worthier of his keen insights into the troubling aspects of race relations that continue to trouble modern society. Frankly, Mr. O’Connor’s never ending tirades over racial injustice is starting to wear thin. His dated brand of sixties-styled social activism, aside from having lost much of its relevancy in recent years, only serves to promote anger and resentment, if not violence among the uninformed and other individuals with axes to grind, by re-opening old wounds. His latest “outrage” centers on the paucity of African American head coaches in the National Football League (NFL) when measured against the disproportion of Black/White (70/30) players in the league. His latest column is consistent along a variety of condemning themes that oftentimes center upon, but are not limited to, class and racial conflict, feminism, wicked corporations, the greedy rich and the military industrial complex (thrown in for good measure) that express his excessive, if not obsessive sympathy for allegedly “oppressed” peoples.

Given Mr. O’Connor’s penchant for statistics as useful points of reference, I find it equally appropriate to inquire into the (relative) absence of White Athletes in certain sports or positions, for that matter. I do not buy into the easy arguments that certain racial or ethnic groups are “naturally” attracted to certain sports like African Americans are supposedly drawn to Basketball, for example. The scarcity of African American Quarterbacks has been another (sore) point taken up by a number of (Liberal) Sports Journalists in recent years. Such “concerns”, from an (exclusively) numerical perspective, are legitimate, perhaps. Why aren’t there more Black Quarterbacks manning the helm? This question appears plausible enough considered from the standpoint of numbers alone. Following this line of reasoning, however, explain why there isn’t a (similar) lack of concern or righteous indignation among these so-called champions of social justice over the scarcity of White running backs or wide receivers or cornerbacks, the latter, remnants from the

league's Paleolithic Era. Or explain the "injustice" of the National Basketball Association (NBA) where the ratio of Black/White ballplayers presently stands at (75/25) or Major League Baseball where the rise of African Americans and other people of color are gradually according minority status to White Ballplayers?

While on the subject of numbers, please explain how African Americans, who comprise approximately 12% of America's population, are over-whelming represented in most major sports? Do they possess genetic traits indigenous to their (own) race or is desire the key motivating factor? I will readily allow that sports have traditionally provided many under-privileged people, from all walks of life, a viable means of escaping poverty. I am not convinced, however, that poverty is the (main) qualifier in today's society, although notable exceptions exist. As a sports fan who came of age in the sixties, I often ask myself, what have become of the Larry Czonka's or the Bill Riggins' or the Jerry West's or Rick Barry's, White Athletes who once dominated their respected sports? Is it conceivable that, in a day and age when the financial rewards are exceptionally high, (White's) have suddenly lost their competitive spark? Or could it be that many have fallen victim, in their own right, to stereotypical standards that seem to favor skill specific attributes like speed or vertical aptitude above other, less "remarkable" qualities equally essential for performing on a higher level? Will such patterns eventually mandate the same type of protective status for Whites that are presently afforded to African Americans and other racial minorities competing in the public and private sectors? The latter is a stretch, granted. I am simply exaggerating to make a point, which is this: where or at what point along the evolutionary dominance of African American Athletes become completely taken for granted that aspiring White Athletes need no longer apply?

It is not without irony that I find myself (partially) agreeing in part with an African American sociologist, who recently suggested that Sports have superseded the Plantation. This, in my view, is not an appropriate analogy. Most Athletes, especially African Americans, are well paid for their services. Nevertheless, this gentleman's remark underscores what appears to have devolved into a Bread and Circus' mindset in sports, where African American Athletes, in particular, are handsomely rewarded to "amuse" their White Audience. Opposing arguments might reasonably counter that White "Athletes" dominating "Pro-Wrestling" provide similar entertainment value. However, I digress. I would like to conclude by saying that I wish Mr. O'Conner would put an end to his incessant ravings that are over-done and oftentimes misleading. Were he truly committed to rectifying social "injustices", perhaps he might consider resigning from the newspaper, thereby enabling an equally qualified journalist of color, otherwise prevented from engaging in his or her chosen profession because of "institutionalized racism", to assume his present position as sports writer.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 1st 2000

To the Editor:

Whenever the subject of (violent) crime is mentioned, rely on the liberal establishment and other interested parties to inject gun ownership (legal or otherwise) into the mix. It is axiomatic, perhaps, that most (reasonable) people should favor "means testing" and thorough background checks to ensure, inasmuch as possible, that hand guns and other firearms don't end up in the wrong hands. I'm not certain, however, that adding new laws to re-enforce an over-whelming body of existing laws would necessarily achieve this desired result. Guns will always be accessible to criminal elements who want to obtain them. I believe that many of us are losing sight of the bigger picture by focusing our attention exclusively on inanimate objects while paying scant attention to the causal factors that have contributed to higher crime rates in our nation as compared, for example, with other industrialized nations that enforce stricter gun-control laws. (More on that later)

Guns, however an easy target for anti Second Amendment activists, are merely instruments of choice, although a convenient one to be sure. A handgun, or any other firearm for that matter, is not (the) underlying motive that incites some violent action. For that, we must turn our attention elsewhere; to the individual! Restricting the sale of firearms on the open market would not significantly reduce violent crime for the reason indicated above. Further legal restrictions would (merely) impose stricter licensing requirements on law-abiding individuals who would purchase them through normal, legal channels, to begin with. Ironically, laws on top of laws, that seek to reduce the (legal) possession of firearms, may actually produce unintended results by creating an imbalance between criminal elements procuring them through alternative (illegal) sources and law-abiding citizens denied or restricted legal access. Admittedly, although stricter law enforcement may marginally reduce accidents involving guns in the home or crimes of passion, its overall impact on violent crime would be, in my judgment, problematical.

As indicated above, anti-gun proponents are (oftentimes) likely to define violence in American Society in terms of gun ownership by comparing its own (violent) crime rate(s) with that of other Western Industrialized Nations (including Japan) that have lower (violent) crime rates than we. Statistics are sometimes misleading, however; that is to say, they do not necessarily place what is being measured in perspective. They oftentimes explain the what, however not the how and the why. A more thorough investigation would correctly reveal that were violent crimes committed by African Americans, especially younger A. A's, factored out of the equation, America's (violent) crime rate(s) would be among the lowest of all industrialized nations! That's a heavy burden to place on one segment of the (American) population. Facts, are facts, however. They can neither be whitewashed nor ignored if our society hopes to address and resolve such disparities and its "root causes". Unfortunately many of our political leaders, from both sides of the political aisle, have (conveniently) chosen the path of least resistance for the very simple reason that it is politically expedient for them to do so; that is to say, because many are unwilling to address such matters that might otherwise provoke ill-feelings among certain groups or

individuals. That a comparatively small minority is committing a disproportionate share of violent crimes should be raising a red-flag, however. Wherein lay the causal factors that have produced such troubling anomalies; on accident or chance, (implausible) biological designs, (racist) , sociological factors (conditioning) or poverty (perhaps)?

Whatever the reason(s), any thoughtful society is compelled, if not by Conscience alone, then for its own personal safety and well-being, to critically examine the “root causes” characteristic among certain groups whose children are oftentimes the off-spring of single parent families, illegitimacy, illiteracy, drugs and, in some cases, lack of moral instruction; when combined, promote pathological, self-destructive attitudes that underscores a (moral) vulnerability and potential for criminal and anti-social behavior. Be that what it may, I believe it is fair to argue that no single individual, unless morally diseased, is naturally pre-disposed to crime. Samuel P. Huntington once stated that “The more man wages war against “his ancient enemies: poverty, disease, ignorance”, the more he wages war against himself” This statement is useful to those looking to establish a causal relationship between poverty and crime. It is even more plausible, however, were such relationships considered in terms of movement and change, as well; that is to say; considered in light of the “transitional” components that unite both forces.

Transitional elements, as emerging possibilities present themselves, are oftentimes prone to violence because of rising expectations; unlike a society’s wealthier segments who, lacking little in the way of material comfort, are “stable”, as a rule, or (ironically), the abject poor who, (temporarily) resigned to their wretched living conditions, are equally “at ease” in a dormant stage of transition waiting for such an opportunity when there will be reason enough for hope or “change”. Therefore, it may be properly argued that the relationship between poverty and (violent) crime is better understood as a potential for movement in association with (uncertain) prospects for economic improvement; each operating in an environment where results oftentimes fall short of what many had expected or hoped for. Our society should be addressing such issues in a straight-forward manner, instead of (indirectly) subsidizing such behavior on the chance that the problem(s) will magically disappear on their own accord or by making feeble excuses that may score political points in some circles; whose implausible assumptions, however, are likely to enflame passions. These include the usual suspects like institutionalized racism, cultural biases and exclusionary practices in general. What is required is a clearer understanding of the composite designs that condition certain individuals or groups of individuals to behave in one manner or another. This involves engaging in meaningful dialogue without fear of censorship. What is required are healthy living environments that promote family, character, endurance, and (economic) opportunity allowing proper nurturing.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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June 20th 2000

To the Sports Editor:

I am uncertain whether or not professional athletes, have at any time been the historical role models that nostalgics (sic) would have us believe. I have no doubt that a number of famous athletes, past and present, comported themselves in a manner consistent with their own inestimable standards of proper conduct; that is to say, with “class”, while others oftentimes donned the mask of conventional behavior for propriety’s sake. (The latter might properly be considered role playing as opposed to role modeling) Whether or not such role modeling was or is tangential to its purpose or intent is perhaps irrelevant. Either way, its designs, however natural or artificial, must inevitably lend themselves to impressions that shape formative (young) minds. For this reason, its potential influence, as it helps to promote character, whether intended to or not, should not be regarded lightly. Although it is axiomatic that not everyone was born to be a sports hero, someone has to assume that unenviable task and along with it, the urgent requirements of role modeling. Unless I too have fallen victim to the imaginary ideals of youth, I believe that, on some level at least, many of the athletes of my generation were properly aware of the underlying aspects that defined their “relationship” with their fans; notwithstanding (obvious) concern over their own public persona. Even those who simply went through the motions, however, did so in a manner that was unlikely to tarnish either their own good name or the dignity of their sport. It is unfortunate that as modern society, of which sports is a microcosm, routinely over-steps the boundaries of polite manners and good taste, that it is increasingly encouraging an “in your face”, self-centered generation of athletes who are setting the wrong examples for our youth. The apparent absence of shame and self-respect has provided cover for a number of athletes otherwise impervious to the principles of proper decorum. For these reasons many athletes are given free passes to showcase their (baser) impulses, (reflecting their own true nature, perhaps,) by flaunting such boorish attitudes that seeks to provide “entertainment” value to the lowest elements of our society while enthusiastically dancing to the beat of their own drums without regard to proper style and form.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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February 24th 2001

To the Editor:

I wish to respond to a letter submitted by one of your subscribers by prefacing it with an observation by the noted political historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. who compared President Woodrow Wilson, a man he deeply admired, to John the Baptist, precursor to

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Political Christ. The intervening period or metaphorical “wilderness” (my description) was, in his view, punctuated by sixteen years of Republican mediocrity and corruption. This mis-characterization of history by left-leaning intellectuals begs the question: what is it about Republican Administrations that seems to bring out the worse in Democratic partisans? Be that as it may, the letter’s rabid denunciation of the Reagan Presidency, that took particular exception to Mr. Reagan’s massive tax cuts and exceptionally high “peace time”, (I guess he forgot about the Cold War), defense spending, needs to be placed in its proper perspective. Supply Side Economics or “trickle down” economics, as it is commonly referred to by Reagan detractors, not only generated the longest domestic (economic) recovery in recent history (I guess he also forgot about Stagflation and the Misery Index) but also, in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, restored free and open markets in Eastern Europe and other parts of the globe formerly under the sphere of Soviet dominance. So much for tax-cuts and “reckless” defense spending!

Such were the remarkable accomplishments of the Reagan Administration, both foreign and domestic. I am bewildered by stubborn attitudes that refuse to acknowledge the correlation between his economic program(s) and a revitalized economy that dramatically reduced inflation and unemployment. To imply that Reagan’s economic reforms only benefited the “rich” is disingenuous to a fault. That certain elements in our society consider tax-relief counter productive to the interests and material well-being of every citizen would be advised to sign up for an introductory course in Economics 101! (If in fact our college professors understand its basic premises) It was not owing to chance that Mr. Reagan carried forty nine (49) States when he ran for re-election. I would also like to briefly explore the writer’s charges of exorbitant defense spending in time of “peace”. Perhaps he has forgotten about Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central America, the Caribbean and Africa and so much for containment and the peace dividend! Any liberal that is intellectual honest, should properly acknowledge that President Clinton was, in fact, the first president in nearly fifty years unencumbered by Cold War anxieties. It is axiomatic that wars are costly. The Cold War was no exception to the rule. Money spent in the defense of freedom, however, is money well spent. The pursuit of freedom, as history has oftentimes shown, necessarily trumps budget deficits. This fact is often overlooked by complacent individuals who have been (naturally) conditioned by freedom; that is to say, never had to fight for it. It is unfortunate that many liberals, prone to accepting freedom at its face value, oftentimes fail to appreciate its actual, if not historical significance as well as America’s necessary involvement in any war that promotes the cause of freedom.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 21st 2001

To the Editor:

I would like to briefly respond to a letter published in your newspaper about a group of Larchmont residents, led by David Hechler, opposed to policies seeking to ban homosexuals from participating as Boy Scout Masters. While Mr. Hechler and others sharing his opinion(s) have every right to express their (own) private viewpoints, such does not extend, however, to overriding the policies and standards of a privately run organization. The Boy Scouts of America have traditionally adhered to and instilled principles and values in keeping with its (own) stated mission. I consider it unfortunate that today’s society does not properly consider the traditional aspects of morality that I would like to see preserved. From my point of view, it is refreshing to see an entity like the Boy Scouts and an individual, Paul Nardone, (Westchester-Putnam Council Executive), joining forces and standing up for what they believe. The central point of my argument is not fear of pedophilia, which is always a possibility, however, but rather leadership and (manly) role modeling. I take my hat off to Mr. Nardone who correctly states that “values are not for sale” and that people who may otherwise consider such values disagreeable or offensive, are free to join other (youth) groups that reflect their own value system. After all, isn’t this what America is all about.....Diversity?

Sincerely

Rose Baldi

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June 18th 2001

To the Editor:

The recent surge in energy costs has once again “fueled” public debate over the need for a comprehensive energy program that will gradually reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil. While the cost of a barrel of oil may vary, the one remaining constant is the fluctuation of public anxiety that varies in proportion to rising or declining prices. Our nation’s short-term memory and its unwillingness to address this (very) important matter will prove troubling for future generations of Americans in the coming years unless we somehow manage to get a firm handle on this thing. What America needs is a wake up call, even if it means reducing consumption and other conservation initiatives mandated by the government. Such measures are not easily reconciled by one who considers himself a Free Market Conservative. Facts are facts, however. How much longer is our nation expected to fill the coffers of rogue nations that routinely utilize its (oil) revenues to finance our destruction! One can only hope that once public concern supersedes its off-handed complacency by making its presence felt in Washington, that its (collective) impact will hopefully override the perennial lip service that oftentimes passes itself off as a genuine commitment to solving this dilemma. Perhaps our political leaders

will consider our nation's unlikely dependence on foreign bodies, given its vast resources and remarkable technologies, unacceptable. Perhaps they will properly consider the absurdity of our nation's reliance on quasi-dated sources of energy whose time, by present standards, has passed. Perhaps those possessing vision and integrity will properly assess the under-utilization of potential sources of energy that are being marginally explored, at best. Finally, perhaps the growing demand for energy will encourage public/private investment for the future by emphasizing cleaner, safer and more fuel/cost efficient forms of energy rather than caving in to special interests groups who have their own immediate interests in mind.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 22nd 2001

To the Sports Editor:

An individual's religious convictions are subject to private interpretation. A person should never be judged by the content of his or her religious beliefs but by the quality of his or her (own) actions. Tolerance and a mutual regard for one another's opinions, in spite of our own hardened viewpoints, preserve the social fabric of polite society by keeping it whole in spite of our differences. Had I been a Jew, (referring to Barry Stanton) I should have felt "naked, mortified and outraged" over the insensitive comments made by an individual lacking cultural refinement. I would remind Charles Ward (New York Knickerbocker basketball player) what Christ Himself admonished: "Judge not lest ye be judged". As a Roman Catholic, I too am oftentimes offended by gratuitous Christian bashing that has become commonplace in the Motion Picture Industry, for example, and among second rate, dysfunctional "artists", (subsidized at tax-payer expense), whose Christian points of view are intentionally designed to (publicly) offend not only their primary target (Christians) but other religiously minded individuals who take religious matters seriously. I must take further exception to columnist Ian O'Connor's revisionist account of Pontius Pilate's role in the crucifixion of Christ; that it was he (Pilate) who "actually ordered the execution of Christ". I am certain that the good sisters of Saint Cecilia's properly explained to young Ian that Pilate was never convinced, "I find no guilt in him", of Christ's guilt and that the trumped-up charges of Treason and Sedition leveled against Him by the High Priests were unfounded and unsupported by so-called "witnesses" brought to bear testimony against Him; but manufactured, however, by religious leaders who considered Him (Christ) a threat to their ecclesiastical authority. In this manner Pilate addressed the angry crowd; "I am innocent of the blood of this just person". In many ways Pilate was not unlike many contemporary politicians conditioned by the fine art of political expediency rather than motivated by the callings of Truth and Justice. Such are most politicians; Men (and Women) for all Seasons.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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September 13th 2001

To the Sports Editor:

Ian O'Connor's column, "Tragedy reminds us why we need sports", published the day after Islamic Terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners; ramming two into the World Trade Center, (bringing both towers down and leaving thousands of people dead in its wake), one into the Pentagon, (that fortunately incurred far less damage) and another that crashed in rural Pennsylvania before reaching its final destination after passengers heroically seized control of the airliner from the hijackers; leaving everyone dead on board. This/these remarkable event(s) quickly brought to mind the Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) waged ten years earlier by coalition forces led by the United States against Iraq who, having invaded Kuwait and seizing possession of its oil wells, was making veiled threats against its Saudi (Arabian) neighbor. I remember receiving an "urgent" call one evening from a friend of mine prompting me to turn on one of the cable news channels. Following his request, I soon learned that America was indeed at war. This was pretty heavy stuff! I went to work the following morning anticipating some rather lively discussions. With few notable exceptions among my contemporary co-workers, however, most of my younger colleagues, young men in their twenties, were more inclined to talk about a ball game that had been played the night before. Such (casual) indifference to this important (historical) event reminded me of a remark made by the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, and I quote, "Give the people sports"; (the soccer matches ostensibly intended to provide cover for his considerable misdeeds). Now I enjoy sports as much as the next person. It's a necessary diversion that draws our attention away from the stressful anxieties associated with our everyday lives. In a word, sports place Reality in a state of (suspended) animation while we seek to restore a peaceful balance between our minds and bodies. In this manner, sports should be placed in its proper context. It seems that far too many of us, however, have become over-exposed to sports. Our society's insatiable demand for sports has given rise to 24/7 sports channels with up to the minute sports updates on every conceivable sport imaginable. I believe that we are setting a disturbing precedent by allowing our obsession with sports to (otherwise) run interference for social and political matters of critical importance in our daily lives. Instead, far too many of us have allowed sports to take center stage. How many of us are able to quickly recite statistics such as which Quarterback has thrown the most touchdown passes or which Pitcher owns the best won/loss record or lowest earned run average however must give pause in naming the vice-presidential candidate in the upcoming presidential election? Bread and Circus' are coming full circle. I am reminded that great nations having forgotten the lessons of History must inevitably succumb to the complacency of its (own) designs. Let's distract the people. Let the games begin!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 19th 2001

To the Sports Editor:

Ian “John Brown” O’Connor’s column, “Stars need to answer Stewart’s call to action”, another in a long line of racial hyperboles consistent with his obsessive railings against the White Community; White Males in particular, resonates with the temper of nineteenth century Abolitionism. Mr. O’Connor’s morbid fascination with Race, while making for “good” copy, is something any sober-minded individual should consider troubling if not offensive to Whites and Blacks alike. His thoughtless indifference to the momentous progress made in this area (race relations) over the past forty years or more, extemporaneously betrays an intellectual dishonesty steeped in naiveté and misplaced idealism that has lost much of its (historical) relevance in modern society; aside from the rantings of racial factions that stand to profit by re-opening old wounds which Mr. O’Connor, for his own personal self-interest, has been happy to accommodate. Although I am not totally convinced that Mr. O’Connor (privately) subscribes to the archaic notions oftentimes conveyed to his readers, his transparent agendum however, apparent to those properly schooled in divisive matters, must continue to sow confusion and reap resentment among the uninitiated and other individuals who are otherwise straddling the fence; whose (own) imbedded impressions about Race continue to color their thinking. In Mr. O’Connor’s “distorted” world view, Race is the social hemophiliac and he the annoying prick that needles our collective “conscience”. His (own) twisted sense of self-righteousness has stunted the Evolution of Character that is normally required to promote healing on all levels. Mr. O’Connor is not interested in all that, however, because racial healing would not play to his advantage. On the other hand, perhaps I have mis-read his motives. Writing on a variety of subject matters is a difficult, if not daunting task for any journalist of limited scope and talent. To Mr. O’Connor’s credit, however, single-dimensional as he has oftentimes proven himself to be, what he cooks, he cooks fairly well.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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December 9th 2001

To the Editor:

A couple of months ago, a college professor addressing an anti-war rally at Brown University, attended by a student gathering of budding left-wingers, expressed his approval over the terrorist assault (September 11th 2001) on the Pentagon Building calling it an appropriate response to “American Imperialism” while gratuitously ridiculing the American Flag as a symbol of “fascistic oppression” best suited for “toilette paper”. His caustic remarks provoked a number of (unformed) thoughts in my mind including but not limited to 1) the boundaries separating treasonous statements from free speech 2) plausible grounds calling for his immediate dismissal 3) the appalling lack of character and common sense conspicuously absent among (so-called) Intellectuals and (dis-engaging) parents (refer to John Walker Lindh) who casually dismiss the questionable attitudes and positions adopted by their children while routinely footing the bill for their college tuitions and 4) more recently, a former relief pitcher for the Atlanta Braves (John Rocker) who was sentenced by the court of public opinion to perform community service after making unsavory remarks to a newspaper reporter about Gays and African Americans inconsistent with the (civic) requirements of social and politically correct conventions. Mr. Rocker was summarily taken to task by the mainstream media and unceremoniously given his unconditional release. This (tenured) professor, I understand, is still “teaching” at the university. There is no longer any doubt in my mind that treason, as it was once (properly) understood, is on the verge of extinction; elasticized out of the American Constitution by the penumbral dynamics governing free speech in whatever form that may otherwise antagonize the well-bred standards of decency and good taste; depending, of course, on the topic and the person doing the talking!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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February 22nd 2002

To the Editor:

In his “Death of the West”, Patrick J. Buchanan recalls the Republican Party’s national electoral achievements; winning presidential elections in 1968, 1972 (Landslide), 1980, 1984 (Landslide) and 1988 (Landslide) however losing ground in the Cultural War. I am not convinced, however, that the party’s (so-called) failure was due entirely to an absence of Will, although some Republicans have arguably abandoned the good fight over “divisive” issues that many perceive might otherwise jeopardize their political standing among moderate or left-leaning voters, but rather to a concentration of judicial/political power vested in our nation’s courts and among its political supporters who, until quite recently, enjoyed large majorities in both Houses of Congress. What I find surprising, however, is that many were/are routinely elected from traditionally conservative districts and states. Prevailing wisdom, I suppose, informed the

party that it would perhaps be more expedient to go along to get along; an adopted attitude commonly referred to as me-tooism. (Perhaps an absence of Principle would be more appropriate)

The Democratic Party seized control of (the) socio/cultural debate by “default”; that is to say, by controlling the economic purse strings that ran interference for an (increasingly) left-winged agenda out of step with mainstream opinion. It didn’t seem to matter much provided everyone was receiving his or her fair share of the pie. In a word, local tribute silenced the critics while Big Government went along its merry way advancing a socialist agenda designed to undermine traditional social values while gradually de-legitimizing the standing principles of Western Culture. In retrospect, this was an astonishing accomplishment considering the many congressmen and senators far too numerous to mention, George McGovern (South Dakota) and Frank Church (Idaho) quickly come to mind, who emerged from the American Heartland. No matter as long as everyone was being properly taken care of!

In another manner, consistent with their socialistic agenda, America’s growing entitlement mentality impressed by soaring economic expectations (Material Status) and artificially contrived victimhood (Historical “Grievances”) provided further “cause” for government spending that ultimately achieved a remarkably high social rate of return on its “investment”. The greater irony was/is the failure of otherwise clear-thinking individuals to recognize that such spending, on a number of levels, was/is oftentimes a break-even proposition with no clear-cut winners however a high number of discernable losers. I speak not of material losses but spiritual losses, as well. This in addition to liberal judges who have routinely used the bench to advance their own private prejudices without the formal consent of the governed; by judicial fiat and questionable constitutional interpretations conforming to their world views. In this manner our oligarchical courts have evolved into ideological breeding grounds for “progressive” reforms and social engineering where voter expression(s) are routinely overturned.

One final point, I am not in complete agreement with Mr. Buchanan’s global assessment and its role in all this. That he believes Globalization will hasten economic disparities and further class and racial conflicts thereby drawing attention from matters of cultural importance to more pressing needs like food, clothing and shelter will be determined in its own good time. The Industrial Revolution produced similar anxieties calling for a more compassionate economic reforms (Socialism) to replace a disinterested system (Capitalism) insensitive to the increasing requirements of working men and women. The genius behind Capitalism, however, is that it is self-correcting whenever left to its own market devices. This was proven after twelve years of government tinkering failed to get our nation out of the Great Depression. Mr. Buchanan may have a point however by arguing that Globalization is likely to undermine loyalty to national culture once “natural” boundaries begin overlapping and new frontiers are formed. It would not be the first time, however, that evolving cultures have compromised traditional arrangements. Such events are oftentimes consequential rather than intentional. Great nations and civilizations have been defining and re-fining themselves for centuries. None are or ever have been exempt from the inevitable dynamics of movement and change. Such are historical certainties. The question we should be asking ourselves is how long will it take for the world community to evolve into something new? My hunch is, in today’s fast paced, mobilized environments, sooner than one might expect!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 24th 2002

To the Editor:

Emerging accusations of pedophilia directed against the Catholic Church have promoted a groundswell of opportunity for the political left, that for years has sought every means to discredit an institution that arguably remains the final bastion of traditional religious and moral values in modern times. Therefore, it is not surprising that its opponents are unlikely to redeem that which they ultimately seek to destroy. The Church has been subject to a variety of attacks by non-believers, secularists and “reformers” over the centuries. That it has managed to contest and repel any number of assaults by its detractors says less about the resiliency of its defenders, perhaps, than its principle appeal, that all things considered, has superseded the sporadic misplacement of confidence and questionable examples of those (otherwise) entrusted to its care. That having been said, I neither seek to “forgive”, in the manner that such transgressions must be quickly taken to task, nor explain away improper conduct upsetting to thoughtful Christians who have been raised to unconditionally accept church teachings without misgivings. I find troubling, however, the egregious assailing of a favored political target. More disturbing is the sudden indignation of professed Catholics, who, however “well-meaning”, are unwittingly supporting the political machinations that are using pedophilia as a catalyst to advance a broader agenda aimed at undermining the traditional foundations of the Church.

Recent events embarrassing to the Church should be properly understood as microcosms of the moral failings of an increasingly dysfunctional society that has given free rein to the inherent short-comings of individuals of weak or questionable character rather than the regarded failings of the Church (qua) Church. I agree that such inappropriate behavior should be quickly censored and prosecuted before further harm is done. Whether it is appropriate to seek mercy rather than justice, I will leave for others to decide. In what manner am I qualified to arbitrate the collective shortcomings of diseased individuals who have promoted spiritual hardship on so many young children on so many emotional levels?

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 28th 2002

To the Editor:

Recent events following, what seems like an eternity, the national catastrophe of September 11th 2001; I am referring specifically to the emergence of mass demonstrations orchestrated by political activists from the Jewish and Arab Communities and other groups mutually sympathetic to their anti-war agenda, that effectively amounts to bringing the war to our shores, runs counter with how, until (relatively) recent times, most Americans historically responded during time(s) of national crisis. This is not Vietnam. America did not precipitate the events leading up to those unprovoked attack(s) on its own Soil! So where's the dis-connect? The duties of citizenship are not always conditioned by choice. Every citizen, in one way or another, is expected to participate in a constructive manner that accrues to the mutual benefit of every citizen living in a free and open society; that each individual is obligated to lend his or her unqualified, excepting such conditions were that society has spiritually and morally corrupted itself, support in the cause of freedom; and that the general welfare of that society should take precedence over the private belief system of any individual who continues reaping the benefits of living in that society . In a word, every citizen has a reciprocal civic responsibility for every other citizen to ensure their mutual safety; but not to secure a "peace" at any price. Such (lofty) ideals neither profess nor encourage the overriding of critical or independent thinking provided such expressions neither conflict with nor seek to negate another individual's right to equally express his or her own private opinions or place that individual in HARM'S WAY. A well-order society requires the cooperation of all its citizens; that they work at resolving their differences in manner bounded by common goals, apart from common ideology, if that society hopes to flourish and sustain itself.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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July 13th 2002

To the Editor:

The Supreme Court, by a six to three margin, recently ruled that the mentally retarded could not be subject to the Death Penalty on the basis of "evolving standards of decency", whatever that means. The majority were no doubt moved by questions of competency. Fair enough. Nevertheless, this remarkable decision should demand closer scrutiny by reasonable men and women over the question of competency as such vaguely defined standards may apply to certain individuals of "limited" intelligence or stunted emotional development that (supposedly) renders their ability to make sound judgment problematical; yet for all intent and purposes, however, seem sufficiently capable of leading normal, productive lives; and whose marginal "deficiencies" are not considered in any manner an impediment to the legal requirements respective of property and person. Such thinking, lost on society's more "progressive" elements, implies a foundation of correct thinking that should otherwise enable a person of limited capacity to make reasonably sound decisions. Arguably, most of us, however limited in other respects, possess an intuitive grasp of right and wrong.

This ruling quickly called to mind Civil Rights arguments presented before the Court by the A.C.L.U. a few years earlier raising constitutional questions whether or not an individual could be kept in a psychiatric institution against his or her own free will even if that individual had undergone a thorough psychiatric evaluation and had been evaluated incompetent to make decisions on his or her own behalf. That the unconditional discharge of an individual in dire need of medical attention who might otherwise pose a threat to society if not that individual, for that matter, was not the overriding factor in their decision. The court, in its infinite wisdom, determined that such practices, (confinement) without first obtaining the consent of that individual.....yes, by all means, confine me!..... constituted an infringement of that individual's Civil Liberties. What nonsense! Well, the rest is, as they say, history. Tragically, those in serious need of treatment and proper medical supervision were summarily discharged and ushered into the streets to fend for themselves. (Such compassion by the liberal community is truly heart-warming) It should not be surprising to anyone that some had prior histories of violence. This egregious decision by our legal men and women in hallowed garbs was applauded by liberals and civil libertarians alike who reasoned tis better to err on the side of Liberty rather than Public Safety. One may only conjecture whether the mis-guided designs of our justices and their ideological supporters would find such individuals competent enough to stand trial after committing some unlawful act or competent in whatever manner, for that matter, to serve time in prison if they were found guilty in a court of law.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 23rd 2002

To the Editor:

Recent accusations have re-surfaced from the political-left suggesting that the United States Government was in some manner (indirectly) responsible for Saddam Huessin's systematic annihilation of targeted political and cultural groups by arming his government with conventional weapons as well as (purportedly) providing it with the technology needed to develop his nation's

chemical, biological and nuclear programs in the early 1980's. Such accusations are transparent ploys aimed at 1) discrediting Republican Administrations 2) diverting attention from Mr. Huessin's criminally inhumane treatment of his (own) people 3) placing the events of September 11th 2001 squarely on our (America's) shoulders. These partisan ruses, designed to confuse and mislead the American People, constitute articles of specious reasoning that, carried to its illogical conclusion, might (otherwise) seek to shift part of the blame for the Japanese "surprise" attack on Pearl Harbor on America for selling Japan the raw materials, including steel, used to develop its military complex including the very planes that bombed our harbor! Such fingering pointing and posturing designed to score political points at the expense of our nation's national security is perhaps even more troubling than the wholesaling of destructive weapons.

Balance of Power seldom aligns itself with Duty and Honor; more so, perhaps, with the (incidental) prospect(s) for economic gain. Such "side effects" were properly observed during America's Civil War. A number of multi-national arms/munitions concerns sold war material to both sides of the conflict without regard for winners or losers or cause, for that matter. I am not attempting to strike definitive comparisons but state, rather, that the profit motive's natural course is oftentimes that of least resistance, unencumbered by matters of Conscience best left to moralists and serious thinkers to reason out. Its overriding mission, putting it quite simply, is to make a buck. The political opponents of the present administration might choose to carefully weigh the (uncertain) consequences that are (certain) to arise by lending legitimacy to world leaders whose questionable character and destabilizing military designs should provide thoughtful pause. Such thinking should equally apply to both sides of the political aisle. The "see no evil", "speak no evil" denials adopted by industrialized nations, (there is plenty of blame to go around), is setting the stage where the prospect for economic gain must inevitably engender our mutual destruction. It is hopeful that reasonable nations will soon come to appreciate the consequences of their (seemingly) indifference to world peace. Although recent events should raise questions about our collective wisdom, those pushing the buttons must ultimately be held accountable for their (own) decided actions.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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February 26th 2003

To the Editor:

I don't believe that America has ever fully recovered from the Vietnam War. Such arguments that divided our nation over the years, and until quite recently, seemed to lapse into remission, have once again re-surfaced; although historical events and characters have changed. In retrospect, the Vietnam Syndrome is no more or no less a symptom rooted in an ideological disease that has gradually blended into the American mindset. That (certain) scars never completely heal is evidenced by recent demonstrations protesting America's pending war with Iraq. Iraq, it seems, has re-opened old wounds; or given life new meaning, rather, to hard-boiled sixties/seventies activists. It has superseded Vietnam as the metaphoric symbol of American "Hegemony". (After all, was Saddam Huessin responsible in any manner for the events of September 11th 2001? Isn't this really all about Oil?) Such notions are easily ascertainable by the emergence of racial/ethnic coalitions that have teamed-up with (mainstreamed) traditional ones coaching them from the side-lines. They further explain the phenomenon of multi-culturalism and its balkanize agenda calling for a new social order replacing homogenous ones. Once again we are hearing the familiar rallying cries of racism, inequality, poverty and injustice that have no clear meaning to the war itself other than it is being waged against a "darker" race. As was the case in Vietnam, we note a troubling embracing of our nation's enemies. The who, what or why's are of no particular importance inasmuch whomsoever is an enemy of America is a friend of ours! We are once again reminded that America's foreign and domestic policies are the seminal ingredients that have engendered everything that is wicked in the world today. There is no question that the advent of recent hostilities, now elevated to a higher level, has re-awakened the dormant passions of tired old leftists (and their younger converts) who view this war as an opportunity to re-enact their most singularly egregious achievement; the discrediting of American Institutions. That the war in Afghanistan was dealt with swiftly and with minimal losses is not so much a blessing for those who privately hope for our defeat; thereby belying the underlying assumptions that have defined our great nation for so many years. We are in the throes of Western Civilization's greatest crisis; the challenge for its own (immediate) survival! What makes the times we live so unlike others is an emerging death-wish that, assisted by socially "passive" dynamics, "conscience" and self-hate, is unconsciously seeking its own destruction. America and other Western Nations needs to overcome their own neuroses before History quickly passes them by.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 12th 2003

To the Editor:

A friend and I were recently engaged in an after dinner conversation concerning the potential economic fallout that the war in Iraq would likely impose on France. My friend, an ardent opponent of the war and therefore sympathetic with France's decision not to support it, suggested that it would be minimal, given that nation's strategic economic presence in the United States and European Marketplace(s) relative to its "negligible" Middle Eastern interests. How was I to argue? I am neither an economist nor a clairvoyant

and therefore not in any position to predict, with any degree of accuracy, how the French economy would likely be affected. My hunch, however, is that its short-term outlook won't be a pleasant one considering the formidable loss of revenue ("flowing") from its oil contracts and other capital investments in the region. Let's propose for a moment, and this is purely hypothetical, some arbitrary number: a decrease in GDP of, let's say 5%, that on the surface doesn't seem like a significant number. In what manner would this "nominal" decline in revenue impact, assuming that it does, the French economy? It wouldn't take much imagination to predict the "multiple" effect such a reduction would have on social services, for example, in a nation already reeling from chronically high (12%) unemployment rates.

Let's imagine the impact it would have on America's fine-tuned economy, for that matter, if its unemployment rate were to suddenly increase a couple of percentage points because of "marginal" declines in productivity and subsequent revenue (and profits). Imagine the rippling effect on a number of industries that are tightly inter-woven, nor to mention its own impact on the nation's ability to adequately fund its own entitlement programs that, in turn, would subsequently trigger higher inflation resulting from higher (consumer) prices precipitated by lower productivity levels that would (likely) lead to higher taxes that would (more than likely) discourage investment that would (most likely) generate even lower revenues than before. Be that what it may, France's troubling economy can ill-afford a diminishing role in the Middle East which arguably explains its reluctance to upset the status quo, if I'm permitted to put it so bluntly. Such an event would inevitably upset the macro-economic balance vital to the inflow/outflow of monies. Such may explain its sudden angst over its future role in the "rehabilitating" of Iraq. Sacre Bleu!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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August 12th 2003

To the Editor:

Perhaps nothing best illustrates government ingenuity than Class Action Suits. Many were filed a few years ago by a number of State Attorney Generals against the Tobacco Industry to (ostensibly) defray the rising costs of Health Care. The companies collectively settled the historic suit for a staggering \$200 Billion amortized over a twenty five (25) year period. Increasing municipal and state government budget deficits, occasioned by reckless spending by both political parties at a time most could actually boast a budget surplus, (no saving money for a rainy day) has government officials marking time exploring imaginative ways of speeding up the process so they might obtain the money faster. To this purpose many, including the State of New York, have enlisted the services of investment bankers to front settlement monies subject to repayment to the bondholders by the tobacco companies as a means of expediting proceeds from the suit. This quasi vicarious arrangement had been working out quite nicely until a slower than expected (economic) recovery further weakened the industry's already shaky (financial) condition. That the uncertainty of cash flow is likely to render the payment of these obligations problematical is starting to give investors the jitters. Bondholders, in particular, wary about the likelihood of default, have become increasingly reluctant to fund tobacco backed bonds. In light of this erratic (economic) climate, and at a time some of the smaller (tobacco) companies are contemplating bankruptcy, many sober-minded individuals must question the severity of certain measures that are being taken by N.Y. State Governor George Pataki and N.Y.C. Mayor Michael Bloomberg, supported by state and local law-makers, aimed at impeding efforts by tobacco companies to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products, that would otherwise enable them to meet their installments, by making their products cost prohibitive, while banning smoking from most public areas including traditional smoking havens like bars, racetracks and gambling casinos. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you. You can't make this stuff up!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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December 28th 2003

To the Editor:

I found your recent editorial regarding Governor George Pataki's pardon of Lenny Bruce, the "Thinking-Person's" comedian, disturbing. Mr. Pataki's posthumous "pardon" was merely a formality. It goes without saying that our Society's de-facto pardon of this crass, mean-spirited individual of low character has been well chronicled over the years as witnessed by its increasing tolerance for low-brow humor that continues to undermine the customs of polite society. Mr. Bruce has long been exonerated by the Court of Public Opinion whose increasing complacency for gross stupidity and thoughtless expression(s) has provided a forum for the likes of self-centered "comedians" who routinely project anger, hate and a genuine contempt for conventional manners under comedic pretexts. So much for his legacy!

Freedom of Speech is a precious resource. Ask anyone living in the Middle East or other parts "unknown" that the average citizen would be hard-pressed to find on a map. Every sober-thinking individual (intuitively) understands that Freedom is a perishable commodity that should be handled with care. Such implies managing it in a responsible manner. Our society's casual disregard for standards of decency has gradually given way to dysfunctional attitudes that have (seemingly) assumed a life of their own. In the final analysis, it takes a lot more talent and imagination by clean-cut comedians to provoke laughter rather than appealing to an audience's

baser instincts.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 14th 2004

To the Editor:

Former N.Y.C. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani ran on an anti-crime platform. Following his election into office, zero-tolerance law enforcement guidelines were immediately established; much to the chagrin of liberals and civil libertarians, alike. For starters, such measures meant cracking down on squeegee windshield “washers”, turnstile jumpers and (unlicensed) street merchants. Defining criminal activities from the bottom-up did not sit well with “populist” tendencies that sought to discredit such efforts designed to curb illegal activities that did not seem to rise to the level of “serious” crime. The liberal party establishment and its political supporters were particularly vocal in their denunciation of tactics supposedly intended to either “harass” or make improper examples of working men and women simply trying to eke-out a living. I am not concerned, however, with means/ends but rather a record whose remarkable accomplishments speaks for itself. NYC has become a safer place to live and work. That’s the bottom line!

Enter Martha Stewart, poor little rich girl and media sensation from Nutley NJ. Many of her supporters consider her recent indictment a witch-hunt aimed at an ambitious, enterprising career woman who achieved enormous financial success in her field. That Ms. Stewart has a number of political connections, notably among liberals, has given rise to crafty arguments that this indictment is somehow all about her being a woman. Such posturing falsely portrays her as a victim, which she clearly is not. That she knowingly broke the rules banning insider trading needs to be properly dealt with lest her illegal investment activities encourage a pattern among other investors who may otherwise place themselves above the law. Recent events scrutinizing her private life, are not about humbling the inordinately proud inasmuch as putting things in their proper perspective. I harbor no reservation that some individuals welcome her public embarrassment for their own peculiar reasons; jealousy perhaps. But that is a side issue that has no legal bearing on her pending trial, should ever her case goes to trial. There is something Nixonesque, however, about an individual who flaunts federal subpoenas. Such arrogance is unlikely to marshal much public support on her behalf. Nevertheless, she enjoys the continued support of a corps of hard-core admirers who seem willing to offer her a free-pass regardless of any wrong-doing. That, I find even more troubling.

I feel that the reason for her unqualified support is that this attractive figure’s rags to riches story has keenly affected the (starved) imaginations of individuals who have come to know her “intimately”; unlike the nameless, faceless individuals routinely hatching plots inside corporate board rooms. While I agree that her crime does not rise to the level of Enron, Worldcom and Adelphia, whose executive officers, in my opinion, should be swiftly prosecuted and given extensive jail sentences, Ms. Stewart’s breach of investor confidence, however, deserves its own punishment. I can’t help wondering had such improprieties involved the likes of Leona Helmsley and other unsympathetic media types, whether impressionable individuals might not summarily be calling for their heads!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 11th 2004

To the Sports Editor:

Ian O’Connor’s demeaning characterization of Tiger Woods, referring to him as a “chump” in “denial”, once again constitutes a piece of mean-spirited journalism that typifies his columns. This unwarranted (personal) attack should not be surprising given his socio/political world view that oftentimes colors his perceptions of other people holding opposing viewpoints. I remember not so long ago when Mr. O’Connor routinely groveled before the altar of Tiger Woods, calling him the greatest golfer in the annals of the sport destined to shatter every significant record in the book. How quickly impressions change!

If the truth be known, however, Mr. Woods suffered a falling out of sorts with Mr. O’Connor for failing to live up to his (O’Connor’s) politically correct standards of how an African American sports celebrity ought to behave; that is to say, by setting a proper “example” for other members of the Black Community. Such expectancies, subject to interpretation, are par for the course (no pun intended) for someone whose every opinion, every thought, it seems, is consumed by Race. This incredibly rude and self-centered individual’s (sanctimonious) assault against another human being, who has chosen to live his life in accordance with his own designs, irregardless of race, is impervious to the rules governing good taste as further evidenced by his indirect dissing (“post-marriage”) of Mr. Wood’s wife, a White Women, no less. (Starting to see what’s wrong with this picture?)

While I don’t necessarily question the possibility that Mr. Wood’s enormous talents have “suffered” a recent set back, his “denial” is merely defensive posturing common among many successful athletes whose skills have diminished and are no longer able to perform on a level many have grown accustomed or who simply find themselves in the throes of a protracted slump. A valid argument can be made that far too many athletes, especially the great ones, hung around longer than they should have. Such personal decisions, however, are beyond the scope of this letter. Be that as it may, the manner any (proudly) competitive athlete, or any competitive

individual for that matter, is expected to respond to the same old, nagging questions calling for a personal assessment of that athlete's or individual's recent performances oftentimes finds many of them taking the path of least resistance by providing pat answers to tiresome questions. No one expects them to throw in the towel, however. I found Mr. O'Connor's sporting obituary rather pre-mature considering that Tiger Woods is only in his late twenties. He arguably has many years of great golf ahead of him once he figures things out, which I suspect he will. Whether or not he will continue to maintain his record-breaking pace, however, is another matter that only time will determine. Nevertheless, I have to wonder whether or not a five (5) time winner on the tour in 2003 followed up with another in 2004 should be considered washed-up simply because he failed to win a Major Golf Tournament last year. I am certain that less wishful-thinking, perhaps, will soon place Tiger Woods back on the road to "recovery"

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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August 25th 2004

To the Editor:

A friend and I were recently discussing the (practical) merits of stem-celled research; an area that I am not totally comfortable with because of moral and ethical objections that continue to trouble me. How wonderful it would be, we both agreed, were medical science able to discover remedies for "incurable" diseases like Alzheimer's, ALS, Paralysis and inscrutable forms of Cancer that continue to confound medical authorities. DNA modification through genetic engineering is considered by many a virtual "fountain of youth". It has the potential to treat diseases and other illnesses that could conceivably extend the average human life span to, perhaps, 120-130 years or more through genetic reengineering (or somatic modification) that would delay the aging process (or bio-degeneration). Such prospects for a longer, healthier life are no longer considered wishful thinking but a real possibility that may one day bear fruition in the not so distant future. Would any of us object if our physical and intellectual capacities at seventy (70) years of age were to one day equal or exceed that of a normal forty (40) year old today? Why shouldn't we believe that genetic research may one day extend human life to 150 years or more, for that matter? Who would ever have thought a few centuries ago that humankind would one day be sending satellites to probe the far corners of our solar system? The possibilities ensuing from this "Brave New World" populated by "demi-gods", if I may use the term, are (seemingly) endless.

Herein lays the rub, however. A more sobering analysis of this Huxlian scenario may suggest consequences that have not been properly considered. How, for example, are future generations expected to balance diminishing global resources and job opportunities between "ageless" populations and its younger claimants? How would arithmetic market growth manage to keep pace with the exponential demands of a growing workforce? What would the "social/welfare costs" associated with an expanding under-class (we will always have the poor among us) entail? Where would the money come from? At what point would euthanasia (my friend is a faithful liberal) be considered an appropriate remedy for the unproductive /aging/sickly elements of our population? (even demi-gods aren't immortal). My friend's utilitarian suggestion that "hard" decisions would have to be made in order to accommodate the young (aren't we doing that already?) raises the question by what standards and under what conditions or by whose authority would such decisions be made? Would a "suitable" candidate have reached the ripe old age of 120 or would age be considered among any number of factors including the individual's state of health, (or lack of) wealth (or lack of) political connections, (or lack of) utility (or lack of) so on and so forth. After knocking it around for a while, I could not help wondering how some of the more pressingly/complex issues facing any modern society eventually comes full circle by seeking its solution in the Culture of Death. Anyhow, Mauthus' theory was correct. It was his timing that was off!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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October 23rd 2004

To the Editor:

I was reading in one of your columns recently that the Board of Regents is once again exploring creative ways of further diminishing the relevancy of S.A.T.'s by focusing (more) on "performance" standards in the classroom rather than relying on objective, more traditional measures commonly employed to assess a student's (native) aptitude. It is not my intention to marginalize the importance of classroom instruction and the vital role it plays in promoting academic achievement but to point out, rather, that the many decisions these students will eventually make in their professional careers will oftentimes override the limits of classroom instruction. The manner an individual responds to a situation at the office, for example, will more often than not rely on thinking rationally (or natural aptitude) rather than learning (or vocational training).

The extent any individual is able to correctly think "outside the box" is what traditional testing attempts to determine. Such methods constitute a composite measure of native aptitude in conjunction with learned behavior. This new format, if I understand it correctly, consists of a reading section followed by written responses to questions related to the reading material. It isn't difficult to imagine where the subjective components of such "testing" might otherwise lead. The importance of comprehensive reading and writing skills are self-evident. Such skills can be improved through discipline however subject to diminishing returns. Neither skill is a necessary

component of (innate) intelligence, per se, although as a rule, most intelligent individuals read and communicate well. Would it seem plausible that, with few exceptions, a student scoring 700 on his or her Verbal S.A.T. would find expressing a coherent thought particularly challenging? Although each of us has the potential to exceed the somewhat (flexible) limits imposed by natural designs, no substitute exists for natural intelligence. For the sake of the student as well as the community, our schools need to place less emphasis on subjective (or feel good) “requirements” while placing greater emphasis on what should be their most provocative challenge; quickening every child’s underlying talents and developing them to their fullest potential. Trying to create a level playing field by lowering academic standards is unfair to every student, however average or bright. This is especially true for the truly gifted who must oftentimes share their hard earned rewards with lesser talents. Russell Kirk was right on target in stating that “all other attempts at leveling must lead at best, to social stagnation.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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January 24th 2005

To the Editor:

There has been a great deal of anxiety and political unrest emerging from both sides of the political aisle recently that, in spite of the record breaking voter turnout this last presidential election, appears to be devolving into a state of utter confusion if not outright cynicism and despair. To everyone, I say keep your chins up! What makes our system of government so unique, despite its historical trials and set-backs, is an inherent, self-correcting capacity proportionate to our nation’s collective determination to return social and political balance to the equation. Although in some instances our government has failed to fulfill its stated promises or delayed its intended designs, the slavery issue quickly comes to mind, our Constitution has proven itself an instrument worthy of our considered opinion(s); a potential source of unrecognized events whose material and spiritual prospects, properly regarded, are possible. Never has any nation experienced the breadth of political influence concentrated among so many regardless of wealth, condition or status. It is true that there have always existed (the) opportunist’s among us; so-called public servants who routinely violated their sacred oath by placing self-interest above the interests of the people; who viewed their respective offices as so many conduits for attaining power and prestige. Such individuals will always be tempted, as some of us are, by the underlying current(s) vested in political power. Nevertheless, we are all (inevitably) summoned to fulfill our roles as citizens with a “simplistic” belief in the Power of Ideas; shedding the vestiges of rancor and hate which has slowly consumed us as a nation. Only then will each of us come to realize that ideas have purpose and meaning and that each of us can make a difference in our own way.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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March 22nd 2005

To the Editor:

The Supreme Court’s recent decision rendering it unconstitutional mandating death sentences for juvenile offenders found guilty of murder to the Death Penalty, on the grounds that such draconian measures, especially as they relate to minors, should be considered offensive to a “progressive” society’s “evolving standards of decency”, has me puzzled. I have seen little to convince me over the years (quite the contrary) that the “Modern World” has (morally) evolved in any manner that would plausibly support this remarkable decision. What I have observed, however, is a procession of global wars, famine, pestilence and disease, a decline in civility and (polite) manners, greed and rabid materialism, a diminution of moral and spiritual values, corporate and political corruption, consumer gluttony, disinterested parents and teachers, dysfunctional households, racism, steroids, offensive rap-music, pedophilia, teenage pregnancies and abortion, social unrest, selfishness and indifference, self-centeredness and conceit, the flaunting of immodest and indecent behavior and the glorification of stupidity in general.

The utopic assumptions implied by the Court’s consenting majority are by-products of wishful thinking unsupported in any manner by our society’s underlying currents. The most any society can reasonably hope for is the edifying moral and principle examples of honest and forthright individuals whose unimpeachable conduct might otherwise influence our own standards of behavior. This may prove a difficult undertaking, however, for a society that has seemingly lost its moral bearing! In the final analysis, it is people and not (abstract) societies that evolve. Until such a time Science invents a time machine capable of transporting vast populations to the Wellsian corners of time and space, our Justices would be well-advised to correctly consider the direction our society has taken and the incomparable nature of crime in today’s environment marked by an unprecedented increase in youthful offenders whose increasingly socio/pathic, not to be confused with anti-social, behavior has (otherwise) lost much of its traditional relevance. We should begin by questioning the (oftentimes) misguided compassion of our legal justice system populated by activist judges quick to confirm the rights of the criminal rather than provide support and encouragement to victims and their families.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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April 19th 2005

To the Editor:

I was watching a movie recently on Turner Classic Movies entitled “The Sign of the Cross” (1932) featuring Fredric March and Claudette Colbert in the starring roles. Ms. Colbert plays a femme fatale, the wife of the Emperor Nero, bizarrely portrayed by the great, incomparable Charles Laughton. Among the film’s more striking (alluring) scenes displays Ms. Colbert lavishing bathing in a pool of donkey’s milk. Leaving little to the imagination, (or perhaps too much depending on one’s point of view) the rippling effect produced by her coquettishly wavelike movement provided (Pre-Hays) audiences with a faint glimpse of her cleavage, pacifier and all! In a scene that otherwise requires keen perception and extraordinary brain/eye coordination, the viewer needs to remain watchful for the emergence of the subliminal “dark” spot that quickly appears and disappears just as quickly. Needless to say, I was mortified. Say it isn’t so, Claudette! The remnants of my childhood fantasies shattered beyond repair, reluctantly drew me to the unhappy conclusion that no society (however) frozen in time or space will ever occupy the moral high ground. This is not to imply that morality is a relative phenomenon, however. Morality, correctly understood, is a conventional construct; that is to say, of a nature predicated on many subjects providing a broader frame of reference extending beyond (the) individual. In this manner, morality is a constant that neither evolves nor recedes however remaining subject to (social) formalities or customs that inspire the (moral) standards of a particular society at a particular point in time. At the risk of sounding judgmental, I can’t help feeling that, absent a moral imperative, however, many of my favorite’s would have been prancing around in their birthday suits had they been given the opportunity to do so. It would seem that decorum and good taste are (oftentimes) responses to collective attitudes that, for ill or good, condition our behavior.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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September 24th 2005

To the Editor:

How long will it take for Republicans to wise up to the fact that (all) the entitlement and discretionary spending in (all) the world will never earn them the gratitude of Democrats and that every spending initiative that they (Democrats) would have otherwise supported, were they in power, further invites criticism? President Bush, the man who would be loved by all, continues to set himself up as an easy target by his political opponents looking for every plausible excuse to discredit him. (To what purpose, then, does Mr. Bush continue alienating his conservative base?) All of which brings me to New Orleans (Katrina). Democrats have been shamefully exploiting this unhappy event for political reasons; unyielding in their persistence that poverty and racism are (somehow) the underlying factors responsible for this (“avoidable”) tragedy when, in fact, it was the result of “unintended” consequences precipitated by decades of political cynicism, cronyism, mis-management, fiscal incompetence and (local) corruption at every conceivable level; this despite the forewarnings of field experts (Army Corps of Engineers) citing potential or probably breaches in drainage canal levees since the Johnson Administration. Katrina was not the “fault” of the Federal Government although I would agree that coordinated evacuation and subsequent relief efforts, especially at the state and local level, could have been conducted more efficiently. Neither was it the indirect result of benign neglect. It was an “accident” waiting to happen! Now President Bush is allowing himself to be (further) manipulated by his political opponents into revitalizing the area through spending initiatives and designs modeled on the wasteful, economically improvident urban programs of the sixties instead of providing relief and (financial) assistance on a needs basis. There is a huge difference between restoring someone’s life and manufacturing an entirely new individual, if such is at all possible. Political opportunism, it seems, is seeking to overlap two entirely separate issues.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 13th 2005

To the Editor;

It wouldn’t be very sporting on my part were I to gloat over the recent rioting in France’s Muslim Communities. This is a serious matter, really! That for years the French have been rubbing accusations of racism and social violence in our (collective) noses, I will simply respond by saying, welcome to the real world mon ami! America has waged its own historic battles against poverty, racism and unemployment over the years. Although racism, however, was the product of our nation’s ill-conceived designs, poverty and unemployment, on the other hand, were/are the inevitable outcome common to nascent nations facing the challenges of pluralist assimilation. (America, in many ways, is still a becoming nation). All things considered, however, I believe that our nation has acquitted itself quite well. America, after all, is a nation of settlers and immigrants. America continues to be a nation comprised of diverse groups and cultures brought together to form a cohesive whole (E Pluribus Unum). America was a nation of “multiculturalists” long before the expression became fashionable. France, as is oftentimes the case with many Western European nations had, until quite

recently, been socially and culturally homogenous. Aside from having to send troops to the colonies every so often to restore the peace, such (colonial) uprisings never quite hit home. The French, not unlike other (relatively) uniform cultures, lack the traditional foundations and temperament to support the social, political and economic requirements of burgeoning multi-ethnic societies. That many of these groups reside on the periphery of Western European traditions, adds another dimension to the equation. What was it that Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said about results not rising up to the level of expectations? He was referring, of course, to the Black Community. Such experiences are new to the French. The triggering device behind these uprisings has been, among other things, a growing perception of (native) French complacency, indifference and (perhaps) bigotry by a (weary) nation that has grown accustomed to its creature comforts; supported by emerging working classes who feel deprived of its social and political rights as well as uncertain of their own proper role in French society. The question the French should be asking themselves is how do they plan to address it?

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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June 12th 2006

To the Editor:

With far more weightier matters worthy of your newspaper's attention, it seems almost trivial submitting a letter to your office in reaction to a parking summons my wife received the other night at 12:30 AM while many of the hard-working citizens of Sterling Avenue were fast asleep. She received this summons for violating a city ordinance prohibiting parked vehicles within 30 feet from a corner stop sign or approximately four (4) car lengths from that corner. Just recently, a neighbor of ours received a summons after lights were out, (of course), for parking his car within fifteen (15) feet of a fire hydrant. Now, you have to be joking, right? After all, isn't this stretching the limits of the law to an extreme? I have lived in this residential neighborhood since my folks purchased their home in 1964 and cannot (ever) recall, in all that time, such strict parking enforcement carried to the letter of the law. "Midnight" ticketing, however, has become commonplace in our neighborhood in recent years. I am giving seriously thought about purchasing a slide ruler to ensure that my tires are in compliance with the twelve (12) inches from the curb ordinance lest I too risk receiving a summons. (I can visualize our police surreptitiously glancing along our sidewalks at night with tape measures of their own!) Why does it always seem to fall on the shoulders of hard working, over taxed (law-abiding) citizens to defray the costs of profligate spending by our municipalities that, despite increasing revenue, are invariably under-funded. (Was that a rhetorical question?)

With Yonker's already beleaguered tax-base under siege, city officials have now taken to dispatching sorties at all hours of the night..... to avoid confrontation or embarrassment, perhaps..... and underhandedly issuing (costly) summons under the flimsiest pretexts in order to shore our town's diminishing (financial) resources. How much longer will unsuspecting, hard working men and women be saddled with additional monetary burdens associated with living in Westchester County that are already cost-prohibitive for homeowners to begin with.....especially those of us without garages? How much longer must each citizen remain subject to Orwellian scrutiny; or to cops turned (defacto) revenue collectors? Not to change the subject, I was reading recently in your editorial page where school teachers with eleven years (11) of service and possessing a Master's Degree (gee, what a remarkable achievement!) are earninggasp!upwards to ninety seven thousand dollars a year, not to mention generous benefits and three months off during the summer for good behavior. These are the same individuals who routinely go on strike and hold our children's future hostage until the city raises the ante. I suppose the money has to come from somewhere!

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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November 2nd 2006

To the Editor:

The Republican Party will likely suffer key political setbacks following Tuesday's upcoming mid-term elections. I expect the party will lose its House majority as well as (effective) control of the Senate. This probable event should not be interpreted as a resounding endorsement of the Democratic Party that, apart from its constant harangues and vituperative criticisms of the present Administration, has provided the electorate little by way of (practical) assurances to hang their hats on. Republicans have only themselves to blame, however. Conceding the argument that the war in Iraq, which I support by the way, has shifted momentum from the administration's domestic agenda, its reluctance to advance meaningful Immigration Reform in the wake of 9/11 has Conservatives and "Moderates", alike, shaking their heads in disbelief. While I believe that the president's tax-cuts have produced a healthy effect on the economy, (who's to argue against 4.6% unemployment, low interest rates and the Dow Jones Industrial Average hovering around 12,000?), I must confess some disappointment, however, over this Administration's failure to encourage a ("friendly") Republican Congress to follow its tax cuts with concomitant reductions in federal spending. On the contrary, discretionary spending by this Republican Administration would make L.B.J.'s blush in comparison! By degree, Republicans have abandoned their "Contract with America". Its leadership has (conveniently) sidestepped the promises that restored the party to power following forty (40) years in the (political) wilderness. Lip service rendered to social/cultural issues has all but been conceded to the Democratic Party. Its (supposed) attempts to

reduce spending are understood within the framework of broadened parameters designed to “limit” growth rates but not spending, per se. The outlook doesn’t look promising for Social and Economic Conservatives, alike, who time and again continue casting their lot with the lesser of two “evils”

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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June 3rd 2007

To the Editor:

In a pathetic attempt to secure a third-tier legacy, President George Bush has formerly petitioned the Congress for a \$30 Billion increase in discretionary Aids spending for African Nations. This “compassionate” proposal is nothing less than a cynical counterpoise to an egregiously flawed Immigration “Reform” bill that continues raising a number creditable objections among thoughtful Americans on both sides of the political aisle who simply regard this bill as a transparent attempt at extending blanket amnesty to millions of “undocumented” aliens who routinely flaunt our nation’s laws without apparent consequence. As Mr. Bush’ presidency (mercifully) winds down, I am reminded of the wasted opportunities squandered by this Administration over the years including Social Security and Healthcare reform and advancing a Comprehensive Energy Program design to reduce our nation’s (habitual) dependency on foreign oil. Mr. Bush had a wonderful opportunity to present such arguments before the American People while (still) enjoying the majority support of both Houses of Congress, notwithstanding his (own) overriding “mandate” following the 2004 elections. Instead, he transformed himself, by his own ineptitude, into a political caricature of himself reduced to spending his remaining political capital on ceremonial issues while making obscene concessions to Big Business whose inexhaustible demand for cheap(er) labor at the expense of (native) low income wage earners, many of whom are younger African Americans living on the fringe, are morally and providentially unconscionable on every conceivable level. Mr. Bush’ calculated sop to his Mexican “friends” across the border and to Hispanic Voters, in general, must have Big Government Democrats (BGD) wringing their hands in anticipation of the second coming of the War on Poverty whose (inestimable) financial outlays will make the first edition pale by comparison. I need not further elaborate on the political fall-out that will marginalize the Republican Party for years to come.

Respectfully

Al Baldi

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December 25th 2007

To the Editor:

There exists a hidden, yet certain bias in America’s corporate environment directed at workers over the age of fifty. Competitive global economies and (outsourcing) designs for cheaper labor have rendered this demographic group an endangered species. We are living in a day and age when the gradual elimination of company pensions, uncertain 401K’s and a social security system badly in need of reform are compelling most workers to manage their (own) retirement plans more carefully which, for many, implies working until the age of sixty five or older until (S.S.) starts kicking in. Unfortunately, the modern corporate environment is making such arrangements increasing difficult for average working men and women. Many well-educated professionals and other blue-collar workers, who have lost their jobs, are oftentimes “directed” towards lower paying positions with other companies at a significant reduction in salary in order to make ends meet. For those quickly approaching retirement age with minimal household expenses, many can oftentimes stay the course without unduly straining their financial sources. For middle age couples that are still raising families, who have children in college or carrying home mortgages, on the other hand, such reductions in salary can be devastating; especially for those who have grown accustomed to certain lifestyles. This market phenomenon will assume special importance in the future for late marrying couples who will be raising families well into their forties or early to middle fifties. Another (unintended) factor contributing to worker anxiety is low savings/investment to spending ratios. America is a debt-ridden nation that needs to rein its consumer habits on a “needs basis”. Alas, we have all grown accustomed to our toys! They come with a price, however, that will have to be paid for sooner or later in one manner or another. Doesn’t anyone save for a “rainy day” anymore? There is no question that many of us need a wake-up call on the critical importance of managing money before diminishing incomes leave us with little money to manage. For young people especially, fifty is right around the corner!

Respectfully

Alipio Baldi

All letters subject to revision at the author’s discretion.

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