

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LIBERTY

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LIBERTY

by

WES BERTRAND

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Library of Congress Number:		00-192166
ISBN #:	Hardcover	0-7388-3739-3
	Softcover	0-7388-3740-7

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IN THE MEMORY OF ROBERT E. BERTRAND, A MAN WHO LOVED
GREAT MUSIC——ESPECIALLY THAT OF BEETHOVEN.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Uncle, Steve Platzer, for his conscientious review of the preliminary manuscript and his astute comments during parts of the editing process. I also extend a great deal of appreciation to my editor, Debbie Jeppson, who helped make this book more concise and articulate (although I of course take full responsibility for the nature of the final product). I am also grateful for the helpful remarks of my friend Larry Fullmer in the latter stages of the editing process. Lastly, thanks go to my friend Joe Nededog for his thoughtful critique of the manuscript as a whole and to my friend Chuck Kieffer for his valued opinions and steadfast enthusiasm, as well as to my family for their encouragement throughout the entire process.

Preface

Essentially, this book seeks to portray the ideal political system, one that has never before existed—but one that will exist at some point in the future. Discovering the fundamental ties between psychology and political philosophy is a necessary part of this portrayal. Psychology is inextricably tied to philosophy and vice versa. They both involve study of the mind, mental processes, and subsequent behavior. Both disciplines enable us to make our life and society more comprehensible and thus enable us to change ourselves and our society for the better. Philosophy is an indispensable tool for coming to grips with where we are, who we are, and what we should do as a consequence—the major life issues. And psychology specifically allows us to make human motivation and behavior explicable.

Political liberty of course involves economic systems, environments where people interact with numerous values, goods, and services. Capitalism necessarily is the system of economics most referred to when discussing liberty. However, the sort of capitalism that is witnessed today bares only a slight resemblance to the truly free market we will discover. “Capitalism” in the context of this book represents a novel political/economic system.

Of course, we will have to venture far from the inaccurate, inadequate, or vague social and political interpretations prominent in our culture. We will distance ourselves somewhat from popular political debates too, which can leave one lost in a jungle of nonessentials. To become adept at avoiding this jungle, in the words of nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, “One

must be skilled in living on mountains—seeing the wretched babble of politics and national self-seeking *beneath* oneself.”

Since what follows is an integration of science, psychology, and philosophy, the topics covered may at times seem far from political and psychological theory. Science (evolution, biology, and physics), psychology (in all its complexities—and yet, essential simplicity), and philosophy (its four main branches: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics), were all needed to convey a vision of the political system of liberty.

Like every literary work, this one was not created in an intellectual vacuum. The main intellectual debts I owe are to the late novelist/philosopher Ayn Rand and to psychologist/psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden for their extraordinary identifications in the realms of philosophy and psychology, respectively. Ayn Rand was the person who declared finally, with the moral certainty it requires, that a human being has the right to exist on this planet for his or her own sake—and that a person’s highest moral purpose is happiness. She went on to devise a philosophy based on reason and objectivity, which mostly opposes every other mainstream philosophy. Nathaniel Branden has helped move this philosophical system of individualism from an abstraction sometimes difficult to actualize (primarily due to entrenched patterns of prior mental functioning and negative environmental influences) to a beautifully tangible reality of what is possible for people through perseverance and effort. A proper formulation and understanding of the value and dynamics of self-esteem reside at the core of his achievements. The works of both individuals offer unprecedented value to the humanities, which is a field of study that has been dominated by all sorts of calamitous ideologies.

Since so few individuals are familiar with Rand’s philosophy (called Objectivism), this book will aid in illuminating Objectivism’s prominent points. It will also clarify and remedy a troublesome area of conflict in the philosophy’s political branch.

Ultimately, in order to get moving in the right direction, we need to know our final destination. As a society and as individuals,

we need to know our main political and cultural goals, no matter how difficult to achieve they may seem to be at times.

Actually, we are closer than ever before to achieving the ideal society. Essentially, we need to bring the spirituality of the human race up to date with its material and technological progress. This of course entails realizing more of our psychological and political potentials.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

Characteristics Of Evolution

Our journey starts with the nature of evolution. To begin primarily a political and psychological book from a biological standpoint may be unusual. One might ask what evolution has to do with present day socioeconomic and legal ideologies. Yet, we will discover that the study of evolution is quite relevant for comprehension of our current state of affairs—both societal and individual. In order to put political theories into proper perspective, we need to understand them in the context of human evolution; it remains the interminable background from which we have come to understand all the issues presented to us.

In this chapter, we will examine the basics of evolution. We will also see how our species has formed and progressed over time. Moreover, we shall focus on our distinguishing characteristics (i.e., what sets us apart from other species). This developmental tack will provide the proper frame of reference by which to judge, among many other things, our present political situation.

Evolution is the awesome, silent benefactor of every organism that has ever existed or will ever exist. Evolution relates to the gradual alteration and refinement of a species throughout a given period of time. Charles Darwin made renowned groundbreaking discoveries in this area of biology. He was one of the first main theorists to approach the formation and alteration of life itself from

a scientific standpoint—instead of a theological, mystical, or plain commonsensical one.

Natural selection was the phenomenon Darwin identified that happens to species (and characteristics of species) as they are perpetuated or became extinct. He reflected on this:

It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, *whenever and wherever opportunity offers*, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.²⁰(p.92)

Natural selection, then, is the process that screens out the maladaptive from the adaptive biological functions and variations over time. Capability for surviving in the environment determines what is ultimately useful and what is not.

The general conditions on Earth are such that a given level of action (both internal and external) is required for particular organisms to survive. For example, the bird must gather brush and other material to build its nest so that it can have shelter and a safe place for its young. The maple tree must move nutrients and water from the soil by its roots upward to its highest branches. Even the single-cell amoeba must ooze its way through its surrounding medium by jutting its pseudopodia forward to engulf food in its path. As we breathe, the cells of our heart are performing tremendously complex respiratory functions; their honorable task of sustaining our other systems, organs, tissues, and cells thus continues. Such processes continue endlessly in myriad organisms in countless ways.

Through its screening process, natural selection grants every living creature a built-in set of features or capacities that direct it on a proper course of action. This ensures success, the ability to function and live in reality. The particular outcomes of genetic mutations that did not provide for success were extinguished.

The fate of a species becomes sealed when its members do not survive long enough to reproduce, or it cannot sustain an adequate population over time due to its members' inherent disadvantages. Thus, natural selection guarantees that only the biologically appropriate and adaptively functional organisms survive for any extended period, from the single-celled bacteria to the multicelled mule deer. But a fascinating question still remains about how organisms "got here" in the first place.

The time involved in the origin and evolution of life is, to say the least, immense. Geologists have determined that our planet is approximately 4.6 billion years old, which is still only about a quarter of the age of the galaxies in the observable universe—some 15 to 20 billion years.

Conditions on Earth during the first billion or so years were such that the constituent elements necessary for life to begin were either not yet available or not arranged properly. For roughly the next 2 billion years, this planet did not have an environment hospitable enough to promote anything other than very primitive life forms. Yet, a primitive life form, such as blue-green algae, is indeed life—one of the most astonishing natural milestones.

In order for us to grasp the essence of life, we need to inspect the properties of these first primitive life forms. Microscopic beings originated out of the primordial soup eons ago. In addition to still being around today, they also share certain properties with all other advanced forms of life.

All life forms, no matter how primitive, consist of cells (except viruses, which are basically cell protein fragments). Each cell has the characteristic property of being a more or less self-contained unit; it performs all kinds of very complex self-maintenance functions. Cells must also utilize their surroundings in order to thrive. In addition, they must play their particular roles within any given organism.

The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins has written extensively and articulately about the processes whereby life begins and evolves, and to what life can be attributed. This entails

inspection of the various “organs” of these cells, specifically the chromosomes. In addition to inorganic chemistry and the physical elements, essentially all life relies on genes—or DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)—in order to begin and continue (with of course the help of RNA).

To be precise, life hinges on the successful replication of DNA molecules. Parts of DNA molecules known as nucleotides hold the specific cellular instructions for utilizing nutrients and substances to produce any given plant or animal. These characteristic DNA can be viewed as rivers of genetic material flowing through time, branching off in myriad tributaries. They are isolated into species of animals by the “banks” of each particular genetic stream (i.e., by their genetic dissimilarities and reproductive incompatibilities).²⁴

So, for any life form to arise, it must first be made of the proper molecules. In turn these molecules must combine in such a way that they can make more of themselves. In other words, they must be configured into cells in order to become replicating, multiplying, and self-maintaining systems. Once these conditions are satisfied, time and random (and non-random) mutations provide the key ingredients for natural selection to yield the fascinating kinds of life found on this planet.²⁵

Scientists are still studying how the first DNA molecules, and their precursors, came to exist. The possible ways that some molecules differentiated from other combinations of molecules, formed cells, and began their chemical journeys through time, are still under investigation. Since such events occurred billions of years ago, the exact conditions and factors involved can be extremely challenging to identify. Nevertheless, some quite intriguing ideas are being offered. Scientist Stuart Kauffman had this to say:

Life, at its root, lies in the property of *catalytic closure* among a collection of molecular species. Alone, each molecular species is dead. Jointly, once catalytic closure among them is achieved, the collective system of molecules is alive. (p.50)

... Life is the natural accomplishment of catalysts in sufficiently complex nonequilibrium chemical systems. ... (p.51)

The striking possibility is that the very diversity of molecules in the biosphere causes its own explosion! The diversity feeds on itself, driving itself forward. Cells interacting with one another and with the environment create new kinds of molecules that beget yet other kinds of molecules in a rush of creativity. (p.114)⁴⁵

As mentioned, DNA contains a series of instructions, one of which is to make more of itself. Slight alterations in replication of the genetic sequence of DNA provide new possibilities for new phenotypes to occur (phenotypes being the organisms themselves—the overt, physical consequences and functional characteristics of genes).²² This is why we see such things as wolves, dandelions, sea urchins, and ourselves.

New phenotypic characteristics may be more or less favorable than preceding ones, which determines whether they are selected by nature. It should be noted that “selected” implies no deliberate or conscious choice. It is merely a convenient way to convey how some organisms are born fit for their environment and others are not—at least from the standpoint of being able to reproduce and continue the flow of genetic material through time.

All that genes actually “care” about is whether they are transmitted to the next generation. If they are successful in this process, then they will continue in the life forms in which they reside. The complex biological sequences and processes involved do not immediately concern us here. What is important for us is the realization about how we have come to exist on this planet. As will be noted frequently throughout this book, nothing is more important than understanding the nature of ourselves and of life itself. Once this understanding begins to occur, new possibilities can arise in all areas of our life—much like beneficial alterations in the genetic blueprint.

In the evolution of life, primitive forms emerged when the chemical and environmental conditions favorably changed. Once in motion, life forms started to take shape that were different from ones previous. There were many niches ready to be filled on the highly varied geography of this planet. This was especially the case during “the Cambrian explosion,” which started the Paleozoic era.

Up until the Paleozoic era (about 570 million years ago), however, the life on our planet consisted only of one-celled organisms, such as protists, bacteria, and blue-green algae. Untold generations of these basic life forms finally led to alterations whereby different types of cells became compatible with one another and functioned in synergy. Over the course of a few hundred million years (during the Precambrian/Cambrian boundary), many multicelled organisms came onto the scene, which were the precursors to even more complex designs.

With such an enormous quantity of time, the genetic configurations that led to dysfunctional phenotypes were continually eliminated by natural selection. Hence, the rates and the courses of genetic mutation were selected by nature according to their viability in surroundings of varying stability.⁴⁴

Eventually, new animals arose with cells that formed various complex organs. Organ systems, then, could function efficiently as whole entities. The genes of these organisms of course resided in different types of cells that all had been selected over great stretches of time to successfully function in unison. Cells were now structured into tissues and organs, in which each performed their tasks as nature had outlined.

Usually such processes of evolutionary change are hardly perceptible. One can accelerate them, however, through artificial selection. For example, by repeatedly breeding the offspring of wolf species that have certain appealing characteristics, people were able to rapidly produce the hundreds of diverse breeds of dogs known today—terriers, dachshunds, bulldogs, poodles, Labrador retrievers, and so on. Apart from selective breeding, the constantly pro-

gressing field of genetic engineering employs many methods to yield quick phenotypic effects.

Large mutations—of a highly refined internal organ, for instance—in most cases lead assuredly to death of the organism. Some minor alterations may be neutral. But most alterations must either beneficially contribute to or successfully replace biological structures that have already proven to be viable. Natural selection only favors successful alterations, so genes with grossly inaccurate mutations are mostly eliminated.

As Dawkins has noted, there are many more ways to perish, genetically speaking, than to survive. He discusses a figurative multidimensional place (of space and time) called genetic hyperspace. It contains all the possible points of DNA configuration that lead to similar or dissimilar organisms.²³ For instance, human DNA in genetic hyperspace is in closer proximity to feline DNA than to the DNA of mollusks, insects, or plants. Since genetic hyperspace constitutes every conceivable genetic formulation, it contains all the organisms that have ever existed as well as all those that *could* exist, for however brief a time. It also contains all the distorted sizes and shapes that would be incapable of functioning.

So, genes and their phenotypic counterparts, the organisms in which they reside, follow two very divergent paths: one that leads to the evolutionary dust heap, and another that leads to more changes or simple continuation due to their initial successes.⁴³ Although only relatively stable replications of genes remain viable, they still must have enough inaccuracy in their countless duplications to allow for slight phenotypic differences; these differences are favored or disfavored by reality accordingly. For example, with geographical separation of species' members, new species may emerge as a result.

Numerous members within each viable species either never make it to maturity or simply never reproduce. Yet the survival of genes demands the survival of the species. So enough members must sustain themselves and reproduce. Every healthy living organism is in a constant process of maintaining its individual survival, regardless

of how many members of its species are doing the same. Only independent entities survive and transfer genetic material and, hence, can form a group.⁶

For most organisms, death is a necessary part of sustaining the species. As long as aging is a factor, death is the price organisms must pay for genes to move down their rivers in time. Since the cells in which genes reside usually perform their life-sustaining processes less well over time, genes must jump from their “sinking ship” to the next, new healthy organism. Of course, they are not the exact same genes this time, but rather fresh replications of them.

Members of a species face death either biologically or by their environment (which includes predators, competitors, overpopulation, and forces of nature). Species able to discover ways of dealing with these situations—and specifically those able to stop the aging process itself—could conceivably forestall death with no ill-effects on genes, organisms, or the species. Humans are the only known species potentially capable of such a feat (although a few organisms, such as some species of trees, are extremely slow aging). Modern medicine has already slowed or even prevented many processes of natural selection. The fields of genetics and bioengineering, for example, will continue to make further advancements.

If members of a species do not reproduce, and aging is still a factor, the species obviously would only last a lifetime—all genes would march to the evolutionary dust heap. This situation is clearly hypothetical of course, because the replication of genes via reproduction is necessary for the species to form and endure in the first place; they would have reached a level of viability that ensured their perpetuation.

Taxonomists divide the diversity of life on this planet into five generally accepted kingdoms: Monera, Protista, Plantae, Fungi, and Animalia. This classification system includes, in descending order of generality: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species.

Organisms are categorized not only by differences in their visible characteristics and functions (both internal and external) but also by the types of cells that constitute them. For example, Protista are single-celled organisms or colonies of cells that are eukaryotic (i.e., they have a nucleus and other membranous organelles). Monera—bacteria and cyanobacteria—are also single-celled but are instead prokaryotic (i.e., they lack a nucleus and other membrane-bound organelles). Plantae and Fungi are eukaryotic, but unlike the other three kingdoms, they have a cell wall (not just a cell membrane); this contributes to their noticeable differences with other organisms. Members of the kingdom Animalia are multicellular (as are Plantae and Fungi) and eukaryotic. Animals acquire energy and nutrients from ingesting external food sources.

The great diversity of the animal kingdom alone testifies to the tremendous capability of DNA. The animal phylum Arthropoda is extremely diverse and numerous; it in fact comprises millions of species, with astronomical numbers of members in many of them (e.g., the insects). They are characterized by such things as paired, jointed appendages and a tough exoskeleton.

Phylum Chordata contains the subphylum Vertebrata, of which our particular class—Mammalia—is part. Other vertebrate classes include Osteichthyes (the bony fishes), Amphibia, Reptilia, and Aves (the birds).

Over time, many organisms (most notably the arthropods and chordates), arose with more advanced and refined faculties of perception. Although the range and scope of awareness and capacity for learning varied greatly among these life forms, they provided new ways to deal with reality. Now certain organisms could interact with their surroundings with senses that provided a quite varied quantity and quality of data. We commonly ascribe higher levels of awareness to animals that have more than just tactile senses or rudimentary biochemical feedback processes. The senses of sight, smell, and hearing all contribute to new levels of perception of the world.

As the various senses become even more refined and the brain

of the animal develops further, relatively more unpredictable and unprogrammed behaviors arise. Learning from experience becomes a more noticeable form of dealing with reality. This form of consciousness we easily see in higher mammals.

The vertebrates developed the potential for complex nervous systems. Nature found that a brain and spinal cord would do well to be encased in a protective structure of bone; a spinal column also allows a place of attachment for more muscles. Mammals—the higher mammals especially—have greatly utilized a skull and vertebral column to form the most advanced nervous systems.

Again, the time frame required for appearance of these complex designs is staggering, practically beyond comprehension. Yet, after billions of years and multitudes of paths taken through genetic hyperspace—after subtly dramatic falters, abrupt errors, tragic extinctions, life-giving renewals, outgrowths, transformations, and evolutionary spurts—the successive mutations in a *specific* genetic pathway produced a wondrous organism. It was an organism possessing not only awareness, but also self-awareness: a human being. The species *Homo sapiens* arose and evidenced characteristics far different than others.

Self-awareness embodies all sorts of facets and features that make our species unique. Psychologist Nathaniel Branden wrote about the uniqueness of our species and about the implications of having self-awareness:

No other animal is capable of monitoring and reflecting on its own mental operations, of critically evaluating its own mental activity, of deciding that a given process of mental activity is irrational or illogical—inappropriate to the task of apprehending reality—and of altering its subsequent mental operations accordingly. . . .

No other animal is explicitly aware of the issue of life or death that confronts all organisms. No other animal is aware of its own mortality—or has the power to extend its longevity through the acquisition of knowledge. No other animal

has the ability—and the responsibility—to weigh its actions in terms of the long-range consequences for its own life. No other animal has the ability—and the responsibility—to think and plan in terms of a life span. No other animal has the ability—and the responsibility—to continually work at extending its knowledge, thereby raising the level of its existence.

No other animal faces such questions as: Who am I? How should I seek to live? By what principles should I be guided in my actions? What goals ought I to pursue? What is to be the meaning of my life? What should I seek to make of my own person?(p.35)¹⁰

To grasp how great these observations are, it helps to put them into the context of evolution. Knowledge of the developmental process enables us to better appreciate our identity. A fascinating complexity resides in our own reflective capacity, and in living organisms in general. The scientific explanations for the tremendously intricate and complicated design seen in ourselves (and in hundreds of thousands of other species) reveal nature's awesome capabilities—given enough time within a fertile environment.

What we see, then, is the end result. Eons of time have shaped the manner in which organisms are structured anatomically and function physiologically. Many levels of symbiotic relationships of species foster elaborate balances and specific utilizations of surroundings. Such is the nature of ecosystems.

Science is our guide for comprehending nature. Science obviously cannot postulate anything “supernatural” to explain nature. It must deal with what can be observed and investigated. While a postulation of supernatural factors may be easier, it can cause scientific understanding to regress and inquiry to cease (or be forbidden). Thus more problems would be created than purportedly solved in such an activity.

Obviously, science is unable to explain evolution through unreserved acceptance of the religious teachings of creationism. It

would have to eschew its methodology, which enables it to separate fact from fiction. Nonetheless, the issue of evolution versus creationism is far from resolved in our culture. Numerous polls have shown that the majority of people in the United States would favor the teaching of creationism in schools. Additionally, upwards of 90 percent of the American public believe in God, even though interpretations of the Creator's attributes (e.g., power, presence, and actions) vary considerably.

A common interpretation, however, represents a deistic approach: God created the physical universe and then allowed evolution to take its own course. Because the huge amount of evidence for evolution is very hard to deny upon critical examination, creationism then becomes simply an origin theory of the universe.

As science has rapidly progressed over the last 300 years—especially during the last century—direct references to the supernatural have become less popular and more esoteric. Mostly, supernatural explanations have receded to the realm of metaphysics, which is the branch of philosophy that deals with the underlying nature of things and the meaning of reality itself.

Since these ideas involve a foundational branch of philosophy, metaphysics—the very nature of reality—they are far from trivial. Some may say that they are merely differences of opinion. Others may say that they are of life and death importance. Ultimately, as individuals, we need to understand the significance of what we know—and how we have come to know it.

Homo Sapiens: *The Rational Animal*

The idea of evolution sometimes arises in political argument, but usually from a wrong perspective. Conceptions such as “survival of the fittest” may apply to herds of animals and predators, but in the realm of politics such notions typically just inflame strong emotions. Evolution may also be used erroneously to explain human behavior. Some theories of evolutionary psychology, for instance, hold that our behavior is an inexorable out-

come of natural selection—that is, humans have no choice and are thusly impelled by a variety of “tendencies.” In other words, most behavior, at least in the long run, supposedly has an adaptive function; otherwise, the particular behavior would not have been selected.

Ironically, many who take an evolutionary perspective on society and psychology overlook essential evolutionary attributes of humans. Up to the point of explaining human behavior, many of their theories have clear validity; they can be effectively applied to species such as salmon, alligators, doves, and hamsters. But their arguments begin to fall apart with their own kind. Insufficient or even false explanations begin to surface. The reason for this will be covered in the coming pages.

Before we delve directly into this reason, we must place it into a context. We must go back and consider our species as it has evolved, or rather arisen, over the last few million years. We must go back to a point where it would be difficult to say that we were fully human—back to a time of watchful, hungry days of foraging and scavenging and dark, often insecure nights.

When we examine *Homo sapiens*’ evolution, we see that we are a relatively young species. Primates started to branch off on their separate evolutionary courses about 8 to 10 million years ago. Though a relatively short time geologically speaking, those 8 to 10 million years have led to drastic differences between humans and other primates.

Primates encompass roughly 200 species consisting of monkeys, lesser apes, and the great apes (the chimpanzee, gorilla, and orangutan), and of course *Homo sapiens*. Certain apes, especially the chimpanzee, are most often compared and contrasted with humans. In fact chimps are our genetically closest relatives. They have approximately 99% of the same genetic makeup (i.e., DNA configuration) as humans. Surprisingly, this is the same minute disparity that exists between horse and donkey, water buffalo and cape buffalo, and house cat and lion.¹⁰⁰

Since this is the case, why are humans and chimps so remarkably

different? What is it that distinguishes us from all other primates? Answers such as “our different social order,” “our culture,” “our unique language use,” or “our instinctive tool-making ability” all fall short of the fundamentals of this topic.

A brief sketch of our “family tree” is in order. A degree of controversy exists about when—and from what former species (or subspecies)—humans branched off from earlier hominids. Even though this has generated various “branch” theories, the following stands as a general approximation of our evolution.

Our most distant ancestor, *Australopithecus*, lived approximately 3 to 4 million years ago. This species had more human-like qualities than any of its predecessors. It had a brain roughly one third the size of modern day humans. Judging by such things as spinal column and hip/femur configuration, it appears to be the first primate species that was an upright biped. While it shared with other primates a particularly unique anatomic characteristic in the animal world—an opposable thumb—its thumb was more usable, on account of being longer and more divergent. Undoubtedly this allowed for greater inspection and manipulation of objects, which enhanced the possibilities for greater intelligence to emerge as a viable trait.¹⁷

Australopithecus was followed by *Homo habilis* about 1.5 to 2 million years ago. This species was somewhat larger by current fossil records. Most scientists infer that *habilis* was a scavenger. It made use of round tools to do such things as break apart bones of dead animals to access calorie-rich marrow.

Homo habilis was then followed by *Homo erectus*, a considerably larger creature (5 to 7 feet tall) that existed approximately 1 to 1.5 million years ago. *Erectus* had a brain much closer in size to modern humans (about two-thirds the size)—which it put to use by making sharp tools for hunting, not just scavenging. This species was also the first to use fire, and fire was advantageous for traveling out of Africa (a direction of migration currently considered the most plausible).

The characteristic ability to walk on two feet freed the hands

to carry and transport all sorts of necessities and instruments. Presumably, this allowed *erectus* and its descendants to venture into previously unknown areas. Now a creature had evolved that was more independent of its immediate surroundings. For example, it did not have to stay close to a watering hole; it could transport water to wherever desired. Similar advantages were apparent with food.⁵³

From *Homo erectus* emerged varieties such as Peking Man and Java Man, as well as Neanderthal Man. Most speculate that the Neanderthals either died out or were wiped out by competition with *sapiens*. The other hominid types further evolved into *Homo sapiens*.

Our species has changed little physically during the last 100,000 years (or maybe even the last quarter million years). Yet it began to evidence behavior resembling modern day humans about 30,000 years ago—for example with the art drawings created by Cro Magnon Man. From that period, Primitive Man emerged, which brings us to present day humans.

Hominid brain size has basically tripled within the last few million years—from Australopithecus to us. This has been mostly in the frontal cortex area, providing new levels of thinking and decision-making. We can also note the corresponding evolution of wider hips in females (yet not so wide as to impede mobility), which enabled the birth of infants with larger craniums.

The enlargement of the hominid brain is a genetic mutation beyond comparison. In fact, the mutation *allows one to make statements such as these*. Quantitative brain changes led to qualitative shifts in cognitive capability. The increases in brain size (and accordingly, the new integration of nerve cells) were not merely additive in nature. Instead of yielding just more of the same, they generated entirely different qualities.⁸⁵ Scientist James Trefil explained it elegantly this way:

I will take as a working hypothesis, then, that as we add neurons to our nascent brain, we will see the same sort of

behavior that we see in any other complex system. When we reach a certain level of complexity, new kinds of phenomena will manifest themselves.

Given the level of complexity of a single neuron and the degree of connectedness of the brain, it also seems to be reasonable to suppose that there would be more than one kind of emergent property that characterizes the system, and that these properties will appear at different levels of complexity. The result will be a sort of cascade of emergent properties as more and more neurons are added to the system.¹⁰¹ (p.201)

The immense brain alteration in hominids gave rise to a form of consciousness like no other in the known universe: the capacity to reason, or conceptualize. To say that this change definitely benefited the species is the understatement of all understatements. Without such a change, words like “benefit”—in addition to having no meaning for us—would not exist. But what exactly is the ability to reason?

The philosopher Ayn Rand eloquently defined reason as *the faculty and process that identifies and integrates the material or data provided by one's sensory/perceptual mechanism*.⁷⁶ Abstract identifications are made by means of concept-formation. Rand defined a concept as “a mental integration of two or more units which are isolated according to their distinguishing characteristic(s) and united by a specific definition.”⁸¹(p.10) She expanded on this:

The units involved may be any aspect of reality: entities, attributes, actions, qualities, relationships, etc.; they may be perceptual concretes or other, earlier-formed concepts. The act of isolation involved is a process of *abstraction*: i.e., a selective mental focus that *takes out* or separates a certain aspect of reality from all others (e.g., isolates a certain attribute from the entities possessing it, or a certain action from the entities performing it, etc.). The uniting involved

is not a mere sum, but an *integration*, i.e., a blending of the units into a *single*, new *mental* entity which is used thereafter as a single unit of thought (but which can be broken into its component units whenever required).⁸¹(p.10)

Concepts are a completely new level of awareness that allow an organism—now a rational organism—to function in highly creative ways. Reason allows an organism to alter behavior consciously (or volitionally).

In order to be fully formed and utilized, concepts need to have labels to represent them in a concrete fashion (for instance, the words on this page). Be they actual words or signs (such as in American Sign Language), these concrete labels become the repertoire of a language.

To be comprehensible, all words or signs in a language must have specific meanings. They must be defined according to their most distinguishing aspects. Without definitions, we could never differentiate one word or sign from another; language would be a mess of inarticulate concretes (or emotional cues not dissimilar to other primate squeals, grunts, and groans).

Concepts must be defined distinctly in order to be comprehensible. As Rand so wisely said, “*The truth or falsehood of all of man’s conclusions, inferences, thought and knowledge rests on the truth or falsehood of his definitions.*”⁸¹(p.49)

So, our ability to conceptualize is what *fundamentally* distinguishes us from other animals that possess consciousness. While it can be said that higher mammals such as chimpanzees are extraordinarily intelligent in their own right, they lack the ability to abstract and form concepts.

Though seldom mentioned, being intelligent and being able to conceptualize are two entirely different characteristics. Intelligence is a contextually related phenomenon that depends on a specified standard by which to judge it. For example, a dog that fetches a ball or walks at heel could be considered more intelligent than a cat that is quite apathetic to these activities (no offense to

cat owners). A horse that runs the barrels or poles in a rodeo could be considered more intelligent than a cow whose usual destiny is to be pastured, eat, grow, and be turned into steaks and burgers. One standard of intelligence for these animals would be the extent to which they respond keenly to training. Other standards could be their degree of alertness or the manner in which they interact with each other or with us (presumably a cat could gain points in this regard).

Brain size has a bearing on whether an organism can reason. This observation is based on study of the brains of other primates, and dolphins, which lack a rational faculty. Their brains, albeit relatively large in their own right, are still quite less developed than humans'. The general amount of folds, or convolutions, and thus total area of cortex is much less, and the frontal cortex in particular is significantly smaller.

Large brain size in relation to body-size appears to be a necessary condition for rationality, but not a sufficient one. A certain amount of cortex is required for reasoning capability to emerge. The natural path on which *Homo sapiens* advanced genetically, and therefore physiologically, resulted in the unique acquisition of reason.

Chimpanzees may be at a stage of development that immediately preceded the emergence of language in hominids. But the australopithecines were already on a different evolutionary track. They had the necessary genetic makeup to eventually evolve into *Homo sapiens*. Chimpanzees, on the other hand, as well as the rest of the species of apes and monkeys, did not. Apparently their adaptations were suitable to their environments. And for some genetic or environmental reason, no mutations were either proper or sufficiently adaptive enough to put them on a course to reasoning ability.

Unique hominid features probably all contributed to the emergence and utilization of a rational faculty. The ability to walk on two feet freed the development of highly specialized hands. Remarkable visual/hand coordination facilitated complex

tasks. The mouth and throat were configured to allow precise speech, which enabled language. These and other distinguishing physical characteristics opened a new world for a new species.

Although humans evidently are the only reasoning creatures in this solar system, reasoning ability can evolve in other solar systems as well. Actually, it is quite probable that our planet is merely one of thousands (if not millions) capable of sustaining life of an advanced form.⁹¹ To hold the view that we are the only fortunate ones, naturally denies recognition of the enormity of the universe and the statistics of the situation. As far as astronomers can see, there are tens of billions of galaxies. Each contains hundreds of billions of stars. Thus, perhaps billions of planetary systems have allowed intelligent life to flourish in galaxies throughout the universe. Multitudes of extraterrestrial life forms probably have either acquired reasoning ability or will acquire it. Although, for many to acquire it simultaneously is less likely, because the window of time in which we have acquired it is a mere fleeting instant, geologically speaking.

While the rational faculty can be seen as a unique model of life—which we will further explore and validate—many levels or dimensions within this model could definitely arise. For example, other reasoning creatures could have greater memory power than us (for instance, better encoding, storage, and retrieval). With a more potent memory, a reasoning creature could deal more efficiently with concepts and possibly work with many different cognitive sequences concurrently. But we will leave these types of transformations open to speculation. For now, we need to explore the complex nature of our own particular faculty.

One could surmise that the evolution towards conceptualization (and hence language) began with primitive hand gesturing. *Australopithecus* had at least the cognitive capacity of present apes. Like apes, it lacked speech. Specifically, it did not have the proper configuration of the supralaryngeal vocal tract, which allows for rapid transmission of phonetic segments.

Speech arose during the last phases of hominid evolution—

within the last few hundred thousand years. Presupposed in this trait are brain mechanisms that facilitate voluntary vocal control.⁵⁹ (This, of course, is in contradistinction to the mimicking and vocalizing of a parrot, which to us can be heard and understood, but to the parrot are conceptually meaningless. As human as it sounds, “Polly want a cracker” enunciated by a bird is simply a learned utterance.)

The new human anatomy allowing speech did make it harder to efficiently chew food and easier to choke on it. But we gained the inestimable advantage of being able to convey our thoughts efficiently and communicate with ease—a small trade-off indeed.

The transition to conceptualization enabled humans to pull themselves out of a world laden with a constant array of particulars or concrete-bound perceptions. We began to see relationships, form generalizations, and formulate categories and classifications of things. Without the ability to deal with reality conceptually—as opposed to merely perceptually—we would be like our fellow primates, living in an austere environment, sustaining ourselves by a combination of learned and innate, repetitive operations. Fishing out termites from mounds with sticks, traversing the open savanna in search of a watering hole, running or hiding from numerous predators with slashing claws and puncturing fangs, would all be part of our world.

Scientists and laymen alike frequently note that humans and other primates possess intelligent behavior, but just in different degrees. Few appear to stand firm on the statement that only humans can reason and therefore utilize language. A question might remain about whether primates possess any ability to conceptualize. Naturally, research with primates has tried to ascertain their cognitive capabilities.

To be sure, the debate over whether other animals such as primates can “communicate with language” is a long-standing one. However, communication can be interpreted in many ways, and it should not be equated with the ability to reason. If we equate the two, we hinder epistemological clarity. Epistemology is basically

the study of knowledge—specifically conceptual knowledge. Thus it is a foundational branch of philosophy (like metaphysics). Epistemology must ask questions such as: What is knowledge? What type of being can acquire it, and why? How is it acquired? How is it validated?

Many studies have been done to see exactly what other primates, namely chimpanzees, can do with gesturing techniques—in response to the fact that chimps, like our early ancestors, cannot vocalize proficiently. Hence, signing systems have been regarded as most conducive to training chimps because such systems do not place impossible physical demands on them. From an evolutionary perspective signing seems to be the next plausible step for creatures that resemble humans but are unable to vocalize an assortment of phonemes that is a prerequisite to utilizing speech.

One effective type of sign language, American Sign Language (ASL), was originally developed for people who were deaf or hearing impaired. ASL has emerged as an entirely self-contained language. In fact, it contains a rich complexity of semantics that rivals any verbal language, even though for efficiency reasons it lacks the larger vocabulary of languages like English. Syntax and meaning in sign language are often compacted in unison and contemporaneous, rather than being presented in a consecutive and progressive fashion as with verbal words.⁹⁰ A person who is proficient in ASL can articulate any sort of concept he or she desires.

When chimps are trained in ASL from a young age, they sometimes respond in a fashion similar to children about the age of two. Although the range and diversity of symbol use is less than children, chimps can generate rudimentary associations and make various requests. They can also recognize classes of objects such as dogs, flowers, and so on.⁵⁸

Certainly, we should see this as highly intelligent behavior. The chimps' capacity for discrimination among all sorts of things reflects greater cognitive processing than many other animals. Their operations are somewhat more refined than, for example, a dog that barks to be let outside, or playfully brings one a rope to play

tug-of-war. The fact that they can utilize signs to make simplistic observations and requests tells us that they are at a more refined stage of cognitive functioning—and, perhaps, at the start of conceptual functioning.

One could make a solid case, though, that trained chimps do not fully understand—in a conceptual manner—what they are doing (much like talking birds). Yet this also calls into question whether small children around the age of two understand what *they* are doing. Many researchers have searched for comparisons and contrasts between young children and chimps.

Some quite ingenious “theory of mind” experiments have been devised. They reveal, for example, that chimps (stationed as helpers) are typically unable to form an idea of what another person (or chimp) knows or does not know based on the shared experimental experience. Children, however, are able to form a mental theory as they observe and assist uninformed subjects in the experiment. Children form a theory, while chimps proceed through the usual trial and error process.¹⁰¹

Children between the ages of one and two may not explicitly reflect on thought and behavior in the complex ways older children do. Nonetheless, they do comprehend the nature of their experiences. They are constantly making judgments and sometimes pondering them. In contrast to chimps, young children around the age of two also follow numerous rules of grammar and syntax (and with a high degree of precision). Moreover, they learn hundreds of words automatically, while chimps have to be taught—often painstakingly—to assimilate a small fraction of the average child’s vocabulary.⁷²

Also, small children who have reached the stage known as the “language explosion” (which normally begins when they approach the age of two), evidence a thirst for knowledge, unlike chimps. The human ability to acquire and deal with knowledge, in the conceptual sense, not merely learned behavior, therefore makes them different than other primates—even the most impressively intelligent ones, such as chimps. We are active processors of information in our

environment. Eventually we gain knowledge of more and more complex abstractions.

By being inquisitive, focused, and thoughtful, children are constantly trying to make sense of their environment in an abstract way. Question-asking and discriminating among a continuous flow of particulars are orders of the day for young children. Even though science demands that grown humans resolutely attempt to teach chimpanzees language, we must keep in mind our differences. Grown chimpanzees never earnestly try to teach their youngsters (or us) a language, although they show the signs they have learned and youngsters may pick up some symbols and signs vicariously. In any event, we must comprehend the nature of both final products: a mature human and a mature chimpanzee.

To do this, we must conceptualize. We must grasp reality in a our own unique way, a way impossible to other creatures, no matter how many signs or symbols they are taught to use. After all, no matter how hard we try, we will never be agile enough to climb and swing from trees like chimps. We will never be able to take off into the sky like Canadian geese. We will never be able to swim like dolphins or gallop like horses. Why, then, should we request that these other animals perform our unique feats?

Related to the topic of conceptualization are cases of persons who are congenitally deaf. Some unfortunate babies are not recognized as hearing impaired until a number of years after birth. Hence, they are not taught a language appropriate to them; when spoken to, all they see are lip movements and rudimentary gestures. When their exposure to language is delayed on account of this, their conceptual ability is negatively affected. Oliver Sacks investigated these consequences, and commented on an 11 year-old boy he came to know, named Joseph. Joseph was finally diagnosed deaf after living four years in silence:

Joseph saw, distinguished, categorized, used; he had

no problems with *perceptual* categorization or generalization, but he could not, it seemed, go much beyond this, hold abstract ideas in mind, reflect, play, plan. He seemed completely literal—unable to juggle images or hypotheses or possibilities, unable to enter an imaginative or figurative realm. And yet, one still felt, he was of normal intelligence, despite these manifest limitations of intellectual functioning. It was not that he lacked a mind, but that he was not *using his mind fully*.⁹⁰(p.40)

Other persons, such as the widely known Helen Keller, have neither hearing nor sight. One might think that being stripped of the two most prominent senses would totally debilitate one's capacity to function in a conceptual manner. Helen Keller was able to reflect on this issue later, after she had acquired—astoundingly—the ability to read and write.

When she was without language for a large part of her childhood, her world consisted of all the sensations of smell, touch, and taste that gave her countless varieties of perceptual experiences—to which she could ascribe different meanings and value-judgments. Up to the poignant episode when she acquired her first word, “water” (which was when her conceptual world opened before her), she was relegated to highly diverse perceptual experiences that could only be related to in a simplistic manner.⁴⁷ One could say that before she learned language, she could not make her concepts *explicit*. She had neither concrete names for various concepts nor definitions to differentiate them. So the acquisition of regular knowledge was an impossibility for her; she could not expand her mental world through precise linguistic thought.

The point of all this is that, for a human being with a physically healthy brain, the capacity to conceptualize is always intact. Under extreme and harsh developmental conditions, such as early childhood isolation from language (for instance, the inferred condition of the “wild boy” of Aveyron), this capacity may never be fully activated.⁵² But it still exists as a potentiality.

As mentioned, language is a necessary extension of our ability to conceptualize. One could suspect that primitive humans without language might have been able to form elementary concepts about aspects of their surroundings. But, similar to those of the young Helen Keller, they were all implicit. Without a language by which to make concepts explicit, perhaps only a fleeting abstract grasp of particulars mixed with more or less vivid emotions could be experienced. What pre-language, primitive humans lacked was a method of filing concepts by means of words and definitions.

Over time, hominids began to see reality in a new way. In conformance to the laws of evolution, the original genetic alterations that facilitated this were probably minute (thereby allowing greater chance for viability). And perhaps the gradual physiological changes were just as small, taking into account the time scales involved. But again, with DNA, small quantitative changes can yield substantial qualitative differences. Amazingly, what was created from this DNA alteration was a mind and psychology ready for acquiring knowledge and, accordingly, for experiencing a whole new world through thoughts and emotions.

But for thousands of years, multitudes of people have lived and died never quite understanding the internal power they possessed. If there is one thing besides their own existence that people have taken for granted, it is their ability to reason. But then, only a reasoning mind can take something for granted. And, only for a reasoning mind is psychology an issue. Only for a reasoning mind is politics an issue as well. Only humans can think in terms of issues.

The Crucial Faculty Of Choice

The necessary aspect of our ability to conceptualize is free will, or volition. To identify and integrate, we select from a plethora of perceptions and conceptions. From our experiences, we choose to isolate. As we develop during childhood, we become better at this task. Eventually, much of everyday functioning becomes automa-

tized (such as walking or reading). Nonetheless, at almost any point, we can choose an alternative path of thought or behavior; we can direct our focus to something else (either in mind or surroundings). Consequently, we are not bound by yesterday's functioning.

Our conceptual, volitional awareness grants us a powerful ability. On any topic open to inspection, we can decide to increase or decrease our level of awareness; we can expand our attentiveness or shrink our world down to the everyday. Or, we can remain content with our present level of awareness.

Evolution has provided us with the biological adaptiveness needed to reproduce and survive as a species. Yet, we are advanced beyond any conceivable notion of being "programmed" for success. We have a choice of what to think about and what to do, what to concentrate on and what to disregard.

As we form and relate various concepts, as well as take actions, we quickly learn that these processes are susceptible to mistakes. The very concept *mistake* indicates that a better way was not foreseen or was not included in the decision-making process. Thus, we can choose to alter the course of our life—even to our disadvantage.

So, our range of awareness enables us to do more than take spontaneous, conditioned, or simply learned actions. We have the responsibility to consider the repercussions of and possible alternatives to behaviors as well as ideas. In this way, other animals just act, while human beings decide upon a course of action (or type of thought).

This necessarily means that we are not guided by innate knowledge or skills; human beings do not possess instincts. We must choose to acquire and utilize particular abilities—which takes concerted effort.⁸²

Unlike the beaver, we possess no intrinsic ability to build a dam. Unlike the salmon, we cannot navigate to a particular birthplace hundreds of miles upstream based on an internal drive. Actually, to say something possesses an instinct *explains* little. It

is merely a convenient, superficial account of an organism's behavior; it does not tell us what is really inducing the behavior.¹⁰

Even though some of our actions may appear instinctual, we make choices based on knowledge. Of course, infants and even small children have elementary drives or built-in responses—such as to be aware and conscious of one's environment, to smile at caregivers in physical proximity, or to seek pleasurable and life-sustaining activities. (Later, we may develop keen intuition based on our experiences as well.) However, as we mature to fully volitional beings, the decision to *pursue values* arises. This is key to understanding human behavior as well as motivation.⁷⁶

The ability to shift awareness to whatever or wherever appropriate by choice follows from having the ability to reason. To focus and integrate is a basic property of a conceptual organism.⁷⁶ Additionally, choice cannot be reduced to any other principle, because to do so would be contradictory: one would have to choose to deny one's capacity to choose. So, in the epistemological sense, free will is its own cause and does not need to be proven.⁷

Since free will is a phenomenon of the human brain, no mind/body dichotomy can exist. Volition has certain biological and physiological causes and concomitants. However, because choices are different than particular brain processes, the two phenomena cannot be equated.

Our perceptions are basically automatic. They are the given. They have been finely tuned by natural selection to correspond to and recognize objects and events. In certain circumstances, though, they may prove inadequate, or evidence illusions. Conceptually we can reflect on our perceptions. We can recognize their amazing intricacy and efficacy, as well as their various flaws and shortcomings.

Yet many philosophers throughout history have entertained the idea that our perceptual mechanism is somehow flawed in principle—that it represents reality in a tainted fashion, instead of “as it *really* is.” Perhaps this notion's formal origin is with Plato (another version was forwarded later by Immanuel Kant). Plato

wrote about Ideas or Forms, which he described as being perfect concepts or absolute truths of things (i.e., the *real* nature of things). Although they are part of reality, supposedly they are not fully attainable because our perceptions get in the way. Plato contended that we usually see only metaphorical shadows or appearances of Ideas or Forms—which are provided by our allegedly untrustworthy senses.

In order to formulate concepts such as “tainted,” “distorted,” or “reality as it *really* is,” however, one must rely on the senses to reach a correct conclusion. In order to discover that one has *not* been experiencing reality properly, one has to first experience it properly. Hence, only *specific* aspects of reality can yield distorted perceptions or illusions. The whole of reality cannot be an aberration, since an aberration is a deviation from normal reality.

In fact, if it were otherwise, one could not *prove* anything—for proof presupposes truth, and truth must invariably begin with what one perceives in reality. We necessarily rely on the truths (i.e., facts) of reality during the process of logic by which we differentiate the correct from the incorrect. If our perceptions were actually flawed *in principle*, we could never accomplish this epistemological task. So, nothing we contended would have any meaning.

Clearly, the sort of creature proposed by many philosophers and psychologists throughout the ages—a hypothetical creature whose very senses cannot be trusted—would never have been allowed to exist by natural selection. Our senses, in concert with our rational faculty, allow us—by virtue of being well adapted to perceiving reality—the capacity to doubt and question in the first place, and therefore arrive at the truth.

Incidentally, only a *conceptual* organism is able to doubt its method of perception—and further think that it drew a *correct* conclusion. Only a person can claim to correctly perceive an allegedly flawed perceptual mechanism and go on to devise the idea of unreliable senses.

Doubting one’s senses goes hand in hand with repudiating

one's method of functioning, which results in repudiating reality. This was a practice during a long period of history known as the Dark Ages. Ironically, many who doubted their perceptions of reality adamantly claimed to know of another reality—one that could not be perceived. They claimed to know of a reality that was ineffable and beyond the senses (heaven or hell). How they “knew” this was always beyond inquiry.

Another troublesome perspective with regard to epistemology concerns the traditionally debated theories of “rationalism” and “empiricism.” The former holds that knowledge and truth are derived from the thinking mind, from higher reasoning. The latter holds that knowledge and truth are derived from experiences and observations via the senses. These two views plainly create a split between two very natural and interconnected aspects of consciousness—its dealings with thoughts and its dealings with external reality. To devise a more arbitrary dichotomy with regard to the functions of a volitional mind would be difficult.

In truth, we all choose to look at reality, to observe and understand our experiences, *and* we utilize concepts to make sense of them. We all choose to think about our own (or some one else's) ideas, *and* we need input from our experiences and our observations (or at least someone else's) to validate them. These ought to be integrated processes. Only when the definition of reason is muddled or insufficient do we see debates over which process is preferable; concepts then are treated as floating abstractions cut off from their referents in reality and concretes are not integrated fully into principles.

Yet another doctrine found in philosophy and psychology university departments today is known as “constructivism.” This takes issue with the idea that we perceive, know, and act in response to an objective reality. Rather, we construct our own personal views of the world, and our subjective perceptions of things (instead of things as they really are) influence our psychology and behavior. Here we see an oddly unilateral stance.

Constructivism tends to deny the other critical aspect of our experiences—the objective one.

Even though we can have perceptions of a subjective reality, we need to acknowledge the objective reality that is distinct from consciousness. Subjectivity would have no meaning if objectivity were a fantasy. While we will take up this issue again, no reason exists to lend credence to a theory that divides individuals and their experiences into countless separate little worlds, each of their own design. We must account for the objective material from which perceptions are organized (and to which people respond in their own personal ways).

Ideas that disregard our capacities of reason and volition must rely on these very same capacities. Thus, such ideas are self-defeating. They indulge in what Rand called “the fallacy of stolen concept”: To question the human ability to think or choose (or to perceive), one must utilize these very abilities; so, one denies the basic conceptual roots, or preconditions, involved in one’s attempted refutation of them (concept-stealing).⁸¹ The stolen concept fallacy resides noticeably in the psychological theory of determinism, the doctrine stating that humans have no fundamental capacity of choice.

Determinism mostly originates from the classical scientific observation that we live in a so-called mechanistic universe. To many, this means that everything has been set out on a predestined course from the “beginning” to the “end” of time (including our choices), like a bunch of billiard balls that collide on a table, their trajectories set after impact. Thus, everything is “determined.”

The term *mechanistic* implies that every effect has an antecedent cause—or more accurately, antecedent causes. This much is certainly true. Such a term, however, is not a sufficient description for all the entities and events of nature. We must also account for the causal properties inherent in the identity of various entities. Entities in existence have properties and, hence, do things that affect each other—and that affect themselves. Our task is to discover these relationships and conceptualize the nature of them by means of hypotheses, principles, theories, laws, and so forth.

Scientists have noted that particularly complex sequences of events contain numerous causal factors, and that they happen everywhere in countless ways. For example, cloud formations or avalanches cannot be accurately calculated beforehand even with the best knowledge and most refined methods of measurement of the initial conditions. The inevitably small errors in (or impossibilities of) measurement and various uncertainties of knowledge multiply into larger ones when a complex sequence of events and interaction of factors are set in motion.³⁶

In actuality, many of the events in nature are of such a complexity that long-term, precise prediction of their future outcomes becomes unworkable. So many interconnected and interacting factors (i.e., multiple causal agents) are involved that calculating accurate end results can be quite difficult.

The more data and information we acquire about phenomena, the better we can understand and thus predict them (at least for the short term). Primarily over the last three centuries (starting, say, with Sir Isaac Newton), science has discovered many of nature's principles and laws. The identity of all sorts of things can be ascertained based on their causal properties. By finding out what something is and what it does, we can deal with it effectively. (We will discuss identity and causality specifically in a later section.)

In regard to volition, we have the following facts: the attribute of free will is an intrinsic aspect of a reasoning mind; a reasoning mind is an attribute of a specific organ known as the brain; the brain functions by means of cellular actions involving biochemical and bioelectrical processes; these actions stem from certain combinations of molecular elements; and, these elements behave according to the laws of physics. Finally, this neural system interacts with and responds to its environment, both internal and external.

From this set of facts, determinism draws the erroneous conclusion that free will must be reduced to the laws of physics. That is, we do not really make choices; we only conform to the laws of physics. Clearly at this point the metaphor of a mechanistic universe begins to fall apart. Reducing characteristics of

mind to characteristics of atoms confuses rather than clarifies. (Incidentally, quantum theory, not Newtonian physics, applies at the subatomic level. And, while not acausal, it is not seen as adhering to a strictly mechanistic model.)

Attempts to reduce complex phenomena to more basic levels of explanation tend to deny the meaning and significance of the currently perceivable level. For instance, the behavior of living creatures in general is best explained by biology. An organism's physiology and characteristic ways of functioning in its environment are more informative than the various molecules of which it is composed. Clearly, tissues, organs, organ systems, and the complete organisms themselves all take on attributes and properties—and therefore functions and behaviors—quite different from their more basic internal parts. Emergent properties with new causal factors must be taken into account.

Scientist Paul Davies noted “. . . that each new level of organization and complexity in nature demands its own laws and principles.”²¹(p.191) On the issue of physical matter in relation to the phenomenon of consciousness, he stated:

A major problem is to understand how these *mental events* are consistent with the laws and principles of the physical universe that produces them.

The reductionist is here presented with a severe difficulty. If neural processes are nothing but the motions of atoms and electrons slavishly obeying the laws of physics, then mental events must be denied any distinctive reality altogether, for the reductionist draws no fundamental distinction between the physics of atoms and electrons in the brain and the physics of atoms and electrons elsewhere. This certainly solves the problem of the consistency between the mental and physical world.

However, one problem is solved only to create another. If mental events are denied reality, reducing humans to mere automata, then the very reasoning processes whereby the

reductionist's position is expounded are also denied reality. The argument therefore collapses amid its own self-reference.²¹(p.189)

Let us just suppose that scientists could (and they probably will) decipher the exact brain processes involved in—or correlated with—any isolated choice. Next, let us suppose that neuroscientists will then discover the biochemical and molecular (or atomic) reasons for this occurrence. Though research on brain functioning is still a far cry from this scenario, holistic principles of organization must be taken into account for thorough understanding. As Davies noted:

The mystery of life, then, lies not so much in the nature of the forces that act on the individual molecules that make up an organism, but in how the whole assemblage operates collectively in a coherent and cooperative fashion. Biology will never be reconciled with physics until it is recognized that each new level in the hierarchical organization of matter brings into existence new qualities that are simply irrelevant at the atomistic level.²¹(p.101)

One could say that the whole of free will is more than the sum of the brain's parts. The molecules that compose brain cells surely allow human consciousness to arise; they cause its existence. But unless the brain is damaged or impaired in some significant way, they cannot impede free will or “determine” one's choices. This is because free will is the *resultant attribute* of these combinations of molecules (or more holistically, combinations of cells and neural circuits of the brain).

Despite all the great scientific discoveries about the brain and mind that are in store for us, volition has its own unique model of explanation. Even if we knew all the brain factors in a particular choice, prediction of free will is hampered by lack of knowledge of the *mental* factors. Any physiological explanations (in cellular or

molecular terms) of a volitional organism's conscious decisions could only be real-time correlates of those particular decisions.

Conscious decisions reveal a model of consciousness as an irreducible primary.⁸¹ While inspection of the brain through the lens of physics or chemistry gives us one model of explanation, the lens of psychology gives us quite another. Mental factors (cognition and evaluation) and choices are the domain of psychology. As stated earlier, free will in the epistemological sense is its own cause.

If we were to reduce free will to something that does not involve the basic exercise of choice, then the very concepts "chosen" and "determined" would have no *meaning*. They would not be formulated through the mental—volitional—process of abstract selection. This would imply that humans are incapable of conceptualization, which would mean that this present exposition as well as all human activity is inherently meaningless (which would include this statement). Obviously, certain concepts are being stolen here.

Determinism contends that no one makes choices; choices are an illusion. Ideas are espoused solely because people are determined or fated to espouse them. Well then, are people then determined to either accept or reject them? If so, then people are incapable of being persuaded, because they are incapable of deciding to learn anything. What is one's *goal* or *motivation* in espousing a theory if some people are *destined* to be persuaded and others are not? Actually, there can be no goals or motivations or intentions here, because everything is determined one way or another.

Persuasion involves an appeal to free will. In order to assert a theory of determinism that negates free will, one has to select (choose) among an assortment of theories. This is the whole idea of a theory; if one is *destined* to advocate (or be persuaded by) a theory without any choice in the matter, its meaning is nullified. The reason why there are notions of being "determined," "destined," and "fated" is that there is behavior to contrast them with—that is, volitional behavior. Choosing is the opposite of being determined.

The main consequence (intentional or not) of such a contradictory theory is this: Minimization of the idea of human consciousness as an essentially *conceptual faculty*. Determinism can also be used to rationalize behavior that would otherwise be considered deficient or irresponsible—"because we have no choice in the matter." Ultimately, the price we pay for volition is the freedom to use concepts and capabilities that are denied in order to perpetuate misleading notions.

The Early Human Condition

Life would have been much more difficult if we had been reared without any words for concepts, that is, without a language. And this would have been even further the case if we faced a seemingly unforgiving and harsh world like primitive hominids did. Most likely, it would have been harder to relate and work with others to ensure a successful life. One can imagine how disputes and disagreements were normally settled. Subhumanly is the word that comes to mind.

Words need to accompany the concepts they depict. Otherwise, very little can be grasped and dealt with cognitively; one's mental range becomes constricted. Without the ability to speak our thoughts and feelings, our life most likely would embody a world in which many events remained frightening and inexplicable.

Language grants new possibilities. As our distant ancestors acquired the ability to form concepts, they acquired the ability to change their natural fate, the typical course of their lives on Earth. Thereafter, the more discoveries that were made, the better life could be for people, physically and psychologically. The formation of language, however rudimentary, was an indispensable achievement in terms of progress for early humans. With the ability to use words to name concepts came the ability to think in long chains of abstractions and, as a consequence, communicate effectively and efficiently with others. Now a system was in place to relate ideas and modify behaviors.

Though our species was able to develop more advanced tools and refine its language abilities, little else was accomplished other than sheer survival. Until just a few thousand years ago, humans had developed the technology to make weapons and build shelters, for example, but not much else was done. They had not made the types of discoveries that we take for granted today. Basically, their mental frame of reference was geared primarily to perpetuating the modest knowledge they had. Their main concern was probably how to find nourishment, protect themselves from predators, and survive through the next season.

Because we are no longer in their context, we may fail to comprehend how difficult and disorienting this time likely was for people. Large numbers of individuals, if they survived birth, died in their youth because of diseases and harsh environmental conditions. If they did manage to live past childhood, they were still faced with a relatively brief period of life; the average lifespan was a half or a third of ours today.

Imagine yourself born into an environment stricken by a prevalence of death, disease, and famine, and ask yourself how much you could progress mentally or contemplate in these desperate conditions. How many original ideas would occur to you while learning the basic necessities of hunting and gathering?

Currently, similar conditions exist on an even greater scale throughout most of the so-called third-world countries. The amount of misery in these areas remains unequaled. Millions of people starve to death yearly, and hundreds of millions (possibly billions) are stricken by the “hidden hunger”—mineral deficiencies. Multitudes of children experience so much horror in their formative years that little can shock them afterwards concerning their insecure predicament. So many live and die, never knowing what life was about—and what it could have been. A sense of normalcy has enveloped their plight, and few can see things otherwise. For many, a toleration of pain seems to be the standard, rather than an achievement of joy. Due to the nature of our physical pleasure/pain mechanism, extended and heightened

pain can make life truly insufferable. Such pain can seem worse than death itself.

One may wonder why all the humanitarian aid does not significantly alter the situations found widely in developing (and sometimes even in developed) countries. Even though many plea for more funding of these programs, this type of aid is merely a temporary fix. It avoids the fundamental political and psychological causes. To correct these causes requires, as we shall see, even more compassion and courage—and more thought.

At this point we can develop a sense for how miserable our life could have been or can be. For those whose lives really are miserable, reading a book is neither useful nor possible. One just does not focus on intellectual matters when one's next meal is at stake or the next week's survival is not certain. We and every other living thing in the universe have only a certain amount of time and resources to dedicate to certain tasks. And these certain tasks are determined by our particular conditions.

We might be reminded here of the psychological theorist Abraham Maslow and his outline of people's "hierarchy of needs." Maslow stated that we have an escalating scale of needs. Each need in the hierarchy must be satisfied (at least partially) in order to best move on to the next higher need (e.g., food and water, shelter and clothing, social needs, and so on, with self-actualization at the top).

Once our basic needs are met, though, the psychological motivations of humans can become complex and at times may not fully conform to the need hierarchy. Nonetheless, the most basic physiological and safety needs must be met before we can endeavor to fulfill other higher needs. Intellectual pursuits thus require the basic needs to be met.

Most of *Homo sapiens* history was a continuous process of satisfying the most basic and ultimately essential of needs—survival. The demands of the physical environment were enough to deter early humans from expanding their awareness of what was actually possible to them. They were people just trying to survive on a seemingly harsh planet.

While this seems to be a pretty grim picture of the plight of primitive humans, not all was bad. Many individual lives flourished, and periods of pleasure assured them that life was still worth living. By inspecting tribes that have lived recently, we can get an idea of what life was like for so many thousands of years. For the Kalahari Bushmen in Africa, for example, normally half their week is spent hunting and/or gathering; the rest is spent resting, gaming, and socializing.⁷²

Actually, a life of day in and day out toil to ward off the constant threat of deprivation would have been unacceptable for primitive tribes. Most sought to establish a way of life that involved an adoration and appreciation of nature as well as merriment with others.⁷⁴

The internal mechanism or capacity to experience pleasure is a key factor in human survival. Life needs to be worth living in order for people to accomplish the task. A mere absence of pain is usually not enough to strengthen one's will to live; although, it may be encouraging if one has been constantly suffering either physically or emotionally.

Yet, the will to live should include not only the drive to continue one's existence but also a psychological state whereby one considers new alternatives and makes new choices. Again, as conceptual creatures, every moment of our existence is related to choices. The choice for most humans throughout history was to basically repeat what was normal for that timeframe. A man who lived 50,000 years ago assuredly chose to perform actions that seemed perfectly appropriate for his life, as he saw it—and as his tribe saw it. Correspondingly, a man living in present day New York City also chooses to perform actions that have become perfectly acceptable routine to him, as he sees it—and as his culture sees it.

Pressures from the age may be such that it becomes increasingly difficult to make new choices concerning one's own path and outlook. Ultimately, ideas about how to live and function are accepted and advocated for various reasons—some physical, some psychological, some economic, and so on.

When we examine the psychological context of most of human history, the factors that influenced behavior become more apparent. The physical aspects of human history are accompanied by social and psychological aspects. For us, psychology is the key that opens the door to genuine understanding of behavior and mental experience (which, of course, includes political systems).

Understanding the psychology of our ancestors might lead us to conclusions that prevent a repeat of history. As a nineteenth century political theorist, Michael Bakunin, stated poignantly:

If it is justifiable, and even useful and necessary, to turn back to study our past, it is only in order to establish what we have been and what we must no longer be, what we have believed and thought and what we must no longer believe or think, what we have done and what we must do nevermore.³(p.21)

Human beings have been called social animals. They tend to live and interact in groups. Since most creatures can be classified similarly, this really does not tell us much about who we have been and who we are.

Rather than observe the mostly beneficial aspects of life among others that we are all familiar with, we must go further and address the problematic aspects. We must discuss the hazardous ways that humans have lived and interacted in groups.

For a human, to live in a group is different than for any other creature. Our ability to reason is the main explanation for this. Within groups of people, the rational process of making compromises and reaching agreements maintains social tranquility and prevents disruption among individuals. Unfortunately, people in any era may not completely value this process.

Although comprehension of the process of reason was especially important for people centuries ago, it was commonly overlooked. The group's or particular individual's guidelines often took precedence over such mental considerations. To voice opinions that

opposed the general rules concerning “how things are going to be” was met often with strong disapproval.

Within primitive societies there were mostly customs instead of laws. Customs were wrapped in ritual and reinforced by tradition. They yielded an atmosphere of social unity in which reliance on organizations such as the “joint family” was primary.²⁶ To speak out against the group or to disagree with an “authority” was often equivalent to disobeying the appropriate norms established. Early on, children were told and shown what could or could not be done, should or should not be said. Just a few frustrating encounters with the group (and its accepted guidelines) were normally enough to stop psychological growth.

Customs offered individuals something reassuring, though. Because so little was known about reality (and thus about life’s possibilities), routines that could be followed granted feelings of security and belongingness. Eventually in such a context, the subtle psychology of the group and its practices became accepted as the authority, and it was not questioned. Anthropologist Paul Radin wrote of the group’s customs:

There is no compulsive submission to them. They are not followed because the weight of tradition overwhelms a man. . . . A custom is obeyed there because it is intimately intertwined with the vast living network of interrelations, arranged in a meticulous and ordered manner.⁷⁴(p.223)

As a result, an intolerant, collective mentality tends to develop. Radin stated further:

Where tribal consciousness has become completely dominant, as in so many parts of Africa, any self-assertion of an individual against the community is, theoretically, sin. Where a theocracy prevails, as among the Zuni of New Mexico, any self-assertion of the individual against the priesthood is witchcraft and punishable by death.⁷⁴(p.245)

Of course, early humans knew that life in a group better ensured their health and survival. The phrase “strength in numbers” made definite sense. In a tribal milieu, to be physically strong and healthy helped also, since hunting and gathering at times required as much power as a person could muster. Not surprisingly, the strongest men were able to provide many things that others simply could not. Depending on their personalities, this might have granted them an authority to control others in the group.

Power cannot be described in mere physical terms, however, because it is a psychological concept too. How a person perceives power in other individuals (or groups) will invariably affect how he or she behaves toward them; it will affect the range of options seen as appropriate in dealing with them. This is one reason why people can allow themselves to be intimidated by others of all sizes and types. The ability to convey and utilize one’s psychological power (and be influenced by another’s psychological power) depends on one’s attitude towards power itself.

Yet, being more powerful physically might have been a major factor in people’s perceptions of who was psychologically powerful. Intimidation and fear tactics are common ways to enforce rules. Various incentives and rewards for belonging and conforming to the group’s standards are other ways. The goal of the group’s leaders was typically to shape its members’ ideas and behavior to fit their needs and the needs of the group.

Those who challenged the given atmosphere of authority (for whatever reason) were usually confronted by the main evil to a reasoning mind: physical force. The use of force basically violates the capacity for identification, integration, evaluation, and subsequent action.⁷⁵ Even the threat of such aggression is sufficient to snuff out the assertion of independence and autonomy—key traits necessary for an individual member of a thinking species.

As noted, in terms of human evolution violent behavior can be classified as the subhuman. As *Homo sapiens* acquired the capacity to reason, the initiation of physical force in human relations was

invalidated. Human beings were now able to make choices and identify aspects of reality, including disagreements with others, and then communicate them through the invaluable tool of language. This necessarily meant that conflict resolution could only occur between *reasoning* people—be it adult to child, child to child, or adult to adult.

Since only reason allows us to understand and comprehend differences of opinion, only reason can resolve them. Any other process or action is self-refuting. The instigation of force can never be effective for anyone in terms of reaching an agreement or achieving proper resolution. If force is used to deal with peaceful others, communication and language become irrelevant; barbarism is the only avenue of existence.

The age-old idea that force is needed because people cannot be reasoned with, in the words of philosopher Leonard Peikoff, “amounts to the claim that brutality is the antidote to irrationality. It is the same as telling a person: ‘I’m going to bash your brains in to assist you in using them.’”⁷⁰(p.322) Such an attitude only engenders more brutality.

In this coercive setting, man becomes no longer a social animal but, rather, an anti-social animal capable of limitless destruction and disintegration (including his own). Such circumstances certainly cannot treat life as the ultimate standard of value by which all other values are chosen. Aggressive actions are the exact opposite: anti-reason and anti-life. They are contrary to a physically and psychologically nourishing environment in which human life can flourish.

But, for centuries human beings resorted to and sanctioned inherently anti-life methods to deal with one another—typically on the basis of unexplained feelings and a rationale that no other alternative is desirable or useful. These destructive social and psychological elements definitely impacted people.

Important ideas and emotions were habitually relegated to a lower status of awareness. Habits developed in which focus on new things was shunned. Throughout much of human history,

the mentality might have been this: We function as a group in order to survive, and we must think as a group in order to survive; dissenters are to be chided or punished because they disrupt the group; consequently, stability must be maintained. In 1894 an expeditionist wrote about the Australian Aborigines he encountered:

[They] . . . exhibit in extreme form the strengths and weaknesses of conservatism as a way of adapting. For them everything had a completed quality; everything was accounted for, once and for all.

The memorizing of songs and myths and dance sequences was a way of preserving the *status quo*. So were the mutilations, pain and bloodlettings of rituals dramatizing the desperate seriousness of doing things as they have always been done. Everything was spelled out in detail so that there would be no questioning. No one thought of modifying ideas about dreamtime tracks [images of heroes, mighty accomplishments, plentiful goods, effortless acquisition of game] and sacred places, much less of inventing new ideas, because every feature of the desert had long since become part of a time-honored and firmly established legend. The landscape was effectively 'used up.'⁷²(p.330)

For centuries, the psychology of the group reigned supreme and its norms and routines were performed mostly unthinkingly. This made it difficult for people to see beyond their particular view of relationships and environment. Similar to many areas of our world today, most people throughout history saw few alternatives to the kind of existence they were living.

In order to discover what the various alternatives for us might be, we need to turn to the topic of individual enlightenment. To do this, we first need to comprehend the nature of emotions.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE IDEA OF INDIVIDUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

Understanding Emotions

Most humans throughout history probably thought relatively little about emotions. They were more concerned about the outside world. Objects are self-evident, while emotions very often are not. To identify exactly what an emotion is (and how it can influence behavior) requires a degree of effort that often does not come easily. Additionally, to ignore an emotion may be easier (and more desirable) than to ignore external reality. The external world is what one has to perceive if one wants to survive and function. As a consequence, reason may be applied more to external reality than to internal reality. Unfortunately, one's internal reality may become increasingly difficult to understand the more one avoids awareness of it.

Though emotions are an enormous part of every human being, they can seem intangible or vague at times. From our present context, let us examine the nature of our emotional mechanism. An emotion is a psycho-physical reaction to, and reflection of, an assessment of some aspect of reality (internal or external) being beneficial or harmful to oneself and/or one's values.¹⁰ Emotions are signals or indicators of what we consider good and what we consider bad for us—in much the same way as *physical* pain and pleasure. I use the term “consider” to underscore that we are capable of making

false assessments—unlike, for the most part, our physical pain/pleasure mechanism (at least for a healthy neural system).

Emotions really entail two components, each of which may be a larger or smaller part of the experience. On one end are subconscious (or conscious) evaluations, thoughts that indicate and assess one's particular predicament. On the other end are physiological responses, such as fluctuations in blood pressure, breathing and heart rate, tactile and visceral sensations, and so on (which can also be called feelings).

The evaluative component of an emotion may occur so fast and be so vague and seemingly ungraspable that it may go undetected. All that sometimes seems to be experienced are the feelings, the physiological responses. In turn, these physiological responses may linger for a time after the evaluative aspect has come and gone.

For example, suppose we experience and assess an event as dangerous or frightening. Anxious responses can be the result of many different specific evaluations, which usually can be identified after one reflects on the experience. With performance anxiety, for instance, thoughts such as "I can't do this," "What will others think of me?" "What if I make a mistake?" "I'm not good at this," "People will laugh at me," "I'm going to look 'stupid,'" may come to mind quickly. One might also find, after some introspection, that more existential evaluations are driving these misgivings. The two most potent ones are "I'm not good enough" and "I'm unfit to exist."

Of course in correlation with this feeling of anxiety (in truth giving rise to it) the approximate *physiological* sequence can also be roughly outlined. In terms of the brain pathways, the visual association cortex reports to the temporal cortex, then to the amygdala and thalamus, and then to the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus immediately activates the sympathetic component of the autonomic nervous system, and signals the pituitary gland. The pituitary gland stimulates the release of hormones (e.g., epinephrine and norepinephrine) that travel through the circulatory system. These hormones augment (in a matter of a few minutes) such

sympathetic nervous system symptoms as rapid heart beat, perspiration, and so on. The orbitofrontal cortex and the hippocampal formation are also probably involved, because the information of this event is interacting with these regions of thought (as well as other more specific brain regions).

Physiological explanations are important in various scientific contexts. Subconscious activity in general and emotional super-rapid appraisals in particular result from extremely complex brain activity. Brain activity is responsible for subconscious functioning (which is an aspect of mind we will address shortly).

But, we can easily lose the meaning of an emotion if we rely on physiological explanations for psychological understanding. We are never aware of the amazingly integrated neural synapses occurring in our brains at any given moment of awareness, let alone when we are experiencing emotions. Therefore, we will avoid the physiological perspective in this discussion and focus on our mental experiences in the holistic (rather than neurological) manner we experience them. This is the most pertinent model for us.

A feeling such as anxiety is triggered by a sum of evaluations that indicate something wrong or dangerous. Cognitive therapy holds a similar view about the emotional mechanism: the positive aspects of an anxiety-provoking experience fade into the background while the negatives are blown out of proportion to what is reasonable.¹⁶

Although as a rule anxiety is not rationally founded, once produced it cannot be successfully fought against. Resisting stressful emotions usually just exacerbates them. Thus, we need to *accept* feelings of this sort, instead of reject them. They are, after all, an important part of how one presently judges a situation. With self-acceptance comes self-understanding, which thereby facilitates emotional changes.⁹

Psychiatrists have prescribed medication for years to diminish uncomfortable emotional responses—to help individuals feel less anxious, less depressed, and so forth. Many studies have revealed the efficacy of such drugs (in alleviating depression, for instance). Yet in the long run such efforts can be greatly misguided. They

attempt to alleviate only one side of the problem—the feelings, which are the result of our evaluations.

Because of the nature of human evaluation, strong placebo effects can occur from psychotropic drug use. Real changes in thought, mental outlook, and behavior that have nothing to do with the actions of the drugs themselves—but rather with the *belief* that they are helping—happen frequently. The human brain is so multifaceted in the way it gives rise to thoughts and evaluations that the creation of a “magic mood pill” is enormously doubtful. And a drug to change personality and the way we think about ourselves is still more unlikely.

Ultimately, our volitional mechanism is most responsible for changes in our character structure, personality, and the thoughts that drive emotional and physical responses. Although at times our particular moods may seem out of our control, we are also ultimately responsible for even these transitory feelings (e.g., irritability, laziness, apathy, and the like). Acknowledgment of this bolsters our capacity to deal with and change our moods, if need be.

In order to promote authentic change, we need the inestimable psychological benefit of making changes ourselves. This is an inherently emotionally fulfilling and self-esteem-enhancing process. Again, the primary way a rational organism can alter the contents of its mind is through volitional processes, those that involve all the limitless choices offered to us every day of our life.

The truly important aspect of any emotion is the appraisal, not the physical response. This can be evidenced by noticing the differences in feeling between two similar physiological events: the physical effects of extreme anxiety, and the effects of physical exercise. Both induce similar responses, such as rapid breathing, rapid heartbeat, and perspiration. But, we do not feel anxious when we exercise, only when we have anxious emotions. Without a negative evaluation of the event, the physiological response itself has little cognitive meaning or significance (other than what we ascribe to it). The only thing that matters is what we tell ourselves about the situation concerning such things as our capability, worth, and value.

In technical terms, emotions emanate from the subconscious. The subconscious, as the word implies, is the contents of mind not in direct, conscious awareness.¹⁰ One main aspect of the subconscious serves as a repository, and the other main aspect serves as a function. As a repository, the subconscious is the sum of all experiences (sensations, perceptions, and conceptions), which includes all memories, assessments, thoughts (both verbal and sensory images, such as visual and auditory). As a function, or process, subconscious material constantly projects either into direct awareness or into the periphery of awareness.

At any given moment the conscious mind interacts with the subconscious. Conscious mental awareness contains primary focal material, such as whatever one is directly thinking, speaking, experiencing, interpreting, or reflecting on. It also contains, depending on the type and intensity of focus, peripheral (subconscious) material that one can choose to make more or less noticeable.

Of course, what is in the periphery of awareness often remains in a lower state of awareness, because a human mind—being a finite entity—can only attend to so much material at any given time. That which is in conscious focus necessarily limits the amount of all other possible mental experiences. However, we are still capable of shifting and spanning the mental depths of peripheral mental contents with amazing speed and efficiency with practice—especially when we perceive it beneficial to do so. Much of creative thinking, for example, involves this rapid utilization of subconscious assumptions and thoughts.

We can also access the part of our subconscious that produces particular emotions. The fact that we are having feelings means that we are evaluating something subconsciously, and this can be focused on and brought into conscious awareness.

This explanation of the subconscious is different than Sigmund Freud's (and, generally, psychoanalytic theory's) notion of the "unconscious." Freud's idea of the unconscious pertains to mental material that is forever outside awareness. Hence, the laborious (and often inefficient) task of psychoanalysis is to formulate hy-

potheses (usually by a therapist) about certain feelings and behaviors. Since alleged unconscious processes are unknown and nongraspable, they can only be interpreted indirectly through signs and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and so on. This in turn leads to all sorts of extravagant (and frequently unwarranted) inferences about “fixations,” “Oedipus complexes,” and so forth, which supposedly stem from early blocked or thwarted desires and needs.

Because the unconscious is unknown, it implies that one can never grasp part of one’s mental world. This means that it is not just unknown, but unknowable—which basically means that one has selective amnesia. Yet interestingly, only those parts of mind that are most emotionally threatening and disruptive are cut off from awareness. They are labeled the “Id,” one of psychoanalytic theory’s areas of self that contains all of one’s so-called drives and impulses (the other two areas are the Ego and Superego).

The main contradiction with this view of “the unconscious” involves the belief that one cannot access—with one’s conscious mind—experiences and assessments that have been placed into one’s mind. In actuality, since our experiences were all experienced consciously (barring dreams, which are quasi-conscious experiences), they can be accessed consciously. This assumes, of course, that we can remember them.

If experiences were not properly focused on and placed in memory effectively, then they may be lost. And, depending on how we evaluated them, we may have strong interests in keeping certain remembered experiences out of conscious awareness. Ingrained habits of evasion, repression, and rationalization (three defense mechanisms insightfully identified by Freud) are sometimes difficult to overcome. The person has utilized them to essentially disown parts of his or her experiences, evaluations, and self-assessments. So, the choice to recognize and own these parts may have become unthinkable.⁹

For humans, any kind of assessment made of reality—any kind of emotion in the broad sense—is derived from a process of identi-

fication and evaluation. We first need to conceive what something is before we can accurately judge it to be either good or bad for us. The ability to reason provides the invaluable advantage of understanding what is felt to be good or bad, and why. For other animals, such a process cannot occur. Other animals react to present experiences in relation to past experiences, thus evidencing learned behavior. Many of the responses they elicit are due mainly to their hereditary predispositions, which are structured to avoid certain things and be attracted to others.

Although it can be correctly argued that other animals have emotional responses, or feelings, these are non-conceptualized reactions. The kinds of emotions humans experience are intricately connected to their conceptual faculty. The enormous complexity and range of human emotion is a result of conscious and subconscious conceptual value-judgments (assessments of things being beneficial or harmful). The feelings of other animals (and even human infants) can be explained as reactions and responses to what is sensed good or bad according to their biological structures.

Inevitably, what distinguishes the emotions of a developed human being from other animals is both our ability to evaluate in the abstract sense and our capability to be cognizant of particular emotional states and to examine—all by means of concepts—what has caused them. A reasoning mind can identify value-judgments, make them explicit and, therefore, link emotions with the ideas that underlie and color them.

Yet evaluations that we form about certain situations (or people) may be ingrained strongly in our subconscious. At times, these feelings may feel like conditioned reflexes. We may wonder about whether we have any choice as to how we can respond to particular circumstances, especially unpleasant ones. Fortunately though, we are capable of gaining insights into the reasons for these feelings. We are also able to take mental and physical action to change them, when deemed necessary. This is, in fact, part of the technology of psychotherapy.

Further emotional differences between us and other animals

can be demonstrated. Time spent with animals allows us to draw some important conclusions. For example, a cat that purrs after climbing onto one's lap to nestle and be petted, or a dog that eagerly awaits a toy to be thrown so that it can fetch it and repeat the same episode, or a horse that cheerfully gallops away and tosses its head and kicks when released after a long day's ride, all show us that animals experience positive feelings. We can certainly relate to such feelings of arousal and excitement. And it is the main reason why we can become so endeared to animals. Animals can also show us a degree of emotional spontaneity that is absent in many people.

But these sorts of behaviors are salient in our mind because they are so positive. Much of the time, most animals are in a neutral emotional state. From our conceptual standpoint, a great deal of their lives is completely filled with boredom. To spend a life alongside an animal—or to live an animal's life—if this were at all possible, would soon lead a conceptual being to severe depression or utter madness. Our emotional mechanism differs from other animals in that we must choose and pursue conscious values to make life worth living.

A value is defined as that which one acts to gain and/or keep. Virtues are the ways in which one acts to gain and/or keep values.⁷⁶ For humans—in fact for any organism—the fundamental issue is survival. Logically then, primary values relate to our dealings with reality and ourselves; they must ensure mental and physical benefit and health.

Values such as reason, logic, genuine self-esteem, enlightened self-concept, active mind, brilliant sense of life, and purpose can be considered crucial to our lives as rational beings. Other essential values, such as happiness, romantic love, and friendship, can be viewed as the outcomes of holding and striving for primary values; they can also be seen as their compliments.

Virtues represent how we sustain and improve our values. Rationality, integrity, independence, responsibility, honesty, productivity, and so on, are key virtues. Other virtues pertain especially to how we deal with others, for instance kindness, generosity, be-

nevolence, empathy, goodwill, and understanding. In addition to all these mental (or spiritual) values and virtues, an endless variety of material values promote happiness and help make life safer and more pleasurable.

However, a brief description cannot describe the complexity and variation in how our values are to be sought and upheld. All reality-oriented values and virtues mesh and interact as the sum total of what a human being deems essential about his or her life. Nonetheless, clarity about essentials is important. In the field of ethics, the field that deals with values and virtues, clarity is desperately needed. (Ethics will be addressed more in later sections.)

In addition to conscious valuing, another unique aspect of our emotional mechanism is that we can experience positive emotions virtually anytime we desire—although this may require some practice. We do not need the experience of positive external stimuli. We can have, or eventually develop, a state of mind in which we make ourselves happy. Others or other things do not have to create this feeling in us. The greatest example is perhaps when we ponder the awesome fact *that we are alive*; it should elate us. Our everyday experiences, achievements, and hopes for the future can also uplift us as we reflect on them.

Evolution has granted us a reasoning capacity, but not the ability to automatically utilize it in the most beneficial way. Evolution also has granted us an emotional capacity, but, again, not the ability to automatically utilize it beneficially. Essentially, we are born with a biologically adaptive function (a volitional, reasoning mind) that can take maladaptive actions.⁶ This unique model of consciousness, as explained earlier, confounds many of the theories of modern psychologists and evolutionists. Free will can throw a wrench in their mechanistic models. Many theories neglect the fact that we are capable of choosing the exact opposite of what they predict. The human mind is capable of choosing to act based on *principles*, instead of responding unthinkingly to stimuli.

Obviously, we take many more adaptive actions than maladapt-

tive; otherwise, the volitional function itself would not be adaptive and selected by nature. The reason for this phenomenon is relatively simple, and it does not imply that our capacity to choose is tainted, diminished, or biased in the direction of acting solely for our well-being: Adaptive actions typically yield positive physical and emotional results, for either the short-term or long-term. Emotions are tied to our physiology, so we are geared to choose actions that benefit us at least in physical ways (i.e., that produce good feelings). However, at any time we can choose otherwise based on *other* emotional factors, which reflect the values we have accepted or rejected. This can produce harmful, if not fatal, results (such as suicide).

Our emotions are no better or worse than the evaluations we have made. And, our evaluations are no better or worse than our identifications, which yield these evaluations. This, of course, is part of our greatness as human beings. Our emotional capacity gives us the ability to experience joy. And, our reasoning capacity provides limitless possibilities for this experience by making accurate identifications and evaluations.

With the ability to reason comes the acquisition of knowledge that advances an organism beyond the common restrictions of evolutionary adaptations. These restrictions typically allow an organism to function only in an environment suitable for that particular adaptation. Because of this, organisms are confined by the particular limits or parameters of their adaptations. They are most fitted for the particular environment in which they were formed. When their environment changes significantly, their behavior may appear useless, unnecessary, or detrimental. For example, an animal being domesticated may continually try to run away or bite its caretaker; it has trouble adapting to its new environment. Another familiar example is a herd of deer caught, mesmerized, in the headlights of an oncoming automobile, or a rabbit running desperately down the road in front of a car instead of moving to the side. Their

adaptive functions carry them only so far (they were not designed for highways and automobiles).

Still another case in point is the species of dinosaurs that became extinct when their environment changed, be it geographically, as a result of new viruses, or otherwise. The most compelling evidence tells of an asteroid or comet roughly 10 kilometers in diameter that struck Earth at the Yucatan Peninsula. The impact drastically altered the climate and life for dinosaurs and other creatures. Interestingly, if this episode had not occurred, our species might not have arisen. Higher mammals did not evolve until after dinosaurs left the scene. Such adept and ferocious predators as dinosaurs made it difficult for most mammals except small rodents to survive.

To be like all other forms of life, to be endowed with just automatic or "built in" traits, would limit our functioning. An adaptation with a set mode of functioning lacks the flexibility required for surviving when environmental conditions change significantly. Human thoughts and emotions cannot, at the outset, be automatically suited to a particular environment or situation. They do not automatically guide us along the most beneficial and proper courses of thought, feeling, or action. To desire them to do so is to misunderstand the glory of our own unique faculty.

The faculty of reason and its corresponding ally, emotion, rely on the automatic faculties of sensation and perception. From there we can identify, integrate, and evaluate, but no sooner. In order for the wishes of automatic knowledge, innate ideas, and desirable emotions (i.e., automatic happiness) to become reality, they would first have to circumvent a great contradiction: perception and conceptual integration would have had to occur before birth. Obviously, choices cannot be made in the womb.

Regardless of when one actually has perceptions, we know that conceptualization can only occur when a mind can cognitively shift its focus of awareness to identify and integrate units in reality. One has to be in reality to do this. Although many professional (as well as armchair) philosophers have dreamt otherwise,

without anything to experience, no choices can be made and no emotions can be formed.

Furthermore, a rational being is a finite being (this term is actually a redundancy; any being must be finite to exist). We are necessarily limited to what we can focus on. Therefore, we are susceptible to all sorts of errors in the integration and selection process. This leads to the next topic, which concerns the method by which we can avoid such pitfalls.

Logic For Understanding Emotions And Ideas

One of the most important tasks at hand for our species is to correctly understand the faculties of reason and emotion. By doing so, we can resolve problems that have beleaguered humans for centuries. Since reason is our distinctive tool of survival, a process or method is needed to discover when reason is being utilized properly or improperly. Logic provides for this. It is the central process and method of all proper reasoning.

Ayn Rand defined logic as “the art of non-contradictory identification.”⁸¹ (p.112) Few, if any, logic courses will assert it so simply and correctly. Unfortunately, this “art” has at times been absent throughout history. Because of a basic lack of understanding of logic, coupled with various emotional disincentives to pursue this understanding, our species has avoided fully addressing various problematic issues.

Logic enables a rational being to arrive at the right conclusions. These conclusions stem from prior identifications and assessments. Reason as a capacity can take place on numerous levels; it can encompass a broad range and depth of identifications. Simple identifications, such as recognizing that one is awake, alive, and not dreaming, or that one is hungry, or that one is reading a book, rest on a whole foundation of concepts acquired from childhood. First-level identifications must be made before more advanced concepts can be formulated and understood.⁸¹

By, say, age ten, most of us have integrated the vast majority of

concepts needed to sustain ourselves and function on a regular basis. But many issues and ideas arise that get us sidetracked in our reasoning. We can end up—and have vested interests in—avoiding logical clarity in these areas.

A major factor in this avoidance involves unwanted and undesirable feelings. Rather than face various feelings associated with certain issues, we can disown them through denial and repression. The defense mechanism of repression entails the initial denial of a feeling—and the importance of the evaluation attached to it. Denial develops into repression when the habit of eschewing emotional awareness becomes automatized (when it becomes a subconscious response). Yet, since the subconscious is interconnected, many different emotions become repressed—not just the unwanted ones.

Not surprisingly, chronic avoidance of feelings adversely affects the self. The faculty that normally inspects and remedies emotional troubles becomes denigrated. Harmful psychological structures are built around a doubt of one's ability to address and resolve emotional issues. For instance, one may attend only to issues that do not negatively impact one's emotional state. Or, one may embrace or strongly defend issues that insulate oneself emotionally—and evade or denounce issues and ideas that seem threatening. Thus, one avoids important aspects of personality and environment that cause feelings of anxiety, fear, guilt, pain, and so forth. Yet the defense mechanism of repression does not work completely: one still experiences the feelings; one is still partially aware of them. Partial awareness of feelings just precludes understanding and rectification of them.

Psychological policies of this nature are usually how the process of logic gets subverted. Such policies can prevent us from realizing our own capability to use reason beneficially. Our own joy can be stifled in the process too.

A minimal awareness of and lack of concern for one's emotional world is evident in most irrational behavior throughout history. As stated, to identify a feeling is oftentimes a more chal-

lenging task than to identify something physical. For primitive people especially, the whole realm of thoughts, images, dreams, and feelings seemed to have a mystical aura. The physically unseen nature (and oftentimes ambiguous properties) of these psychological states contributed to this. Rather than see the mind in a scientific manner, early humans indulged in beliefs about omnipresent spirits and unseen powers; they were oblivious to both logic and contradictions.⁵⁵ Less knowledge and less inquisitiveness basically inured them to the status quo. Habits of psychological avoidance were almost inevitable, given their conditions.

Psychological practices seem to push us in certain directions. Sometimes, they can be hard to fight against—even though doing so may be in our best interests. We can remain in contexts that do injury to our ability to be aware and to reason logically. We may act and feel with little reflection.

Organisms tend to gravitate towards pleasant (or at least nonpainful) experiences. After all, those that did not respond in this way might soon perish. These experiences provide strong incentives to further the processes of life. The survival benefits of this are obvious, at least for other animals. For humans, this is only a part of the process of achieving happiness.

As mentioned, a pleasant or nonpainful emotional world is not something that is built into our system. We can seek pleasurable experiences in order to escape from those that are emotionally unpleasant, but nonetheless important. By not examining the areas of conflict that evidence themselves emotionally, we can retard the growth of our faculty of awareness and our capacity to experience joyful emotions. In a sense, we are the only organisms capable of creating or destroying our own happiness; we are the only living things in charge of how we feel.

Because our emotional world is tied to our rational faculty, we need to discover this world—to identify it. As Ayn Rand ingeniously stated, “Existence is Identity, Consciousness is Identification.”⁷⁵(p.125) For other animals, consciousness is basically perception. To be sure, they may recognize and learn all kinds

of things, but not in the abstract sense. We, as humans, must go an immeasurable step further if we are to actualize the full potential of our minds. This is our responsibility.

If we were emotionally similar to other animals, we could save ourselves the tasks of rational identification and integration. Though that may sound comfortable, our life should be less about comfort and contentment and more about challenge and discovery. Every step forward in human thought is a challenge in its own right. Historically, the emotional world of the typical human was a signal for it to look inside, to inspect.

We are confronted with a series of facts, one being that we have important emotions and feelings tied to how we think. These emotions and feelings may drive us away from ourselves, or they may draw us toward greater self-discovery and self-enjoyment. The choice is ultimately our own. The questions, "Why do we have unwanted and undesirable emotions, and what is their possible survival value?" have been answered by showing that we can evaluate and assess aspects of reality mistakenly. Our rational faculty tells us that we may have done so—thereby enabling us to correct ourselves and fix problem areas.

Instead of running from or ignoring our emotional world, we can decide to stop and inspect it, just like we would do with anything that arouses our curiosity. But we may have trouble being curious about something that is uncomfortable or even painful. So, we can divert our attention. We can slip into a routine or engage in an activity that never demands emotional inquiry.

Repressing feelings and evading conflicts nonetheless diminishes our self-respect. Such a policy puts our humanity and respect for others in jeopardy as well. Much of the brutal and barbaric history of humans attests to this. People kept repeating the same behavior, making mistakes over and over, never discovering how emotions were driving them.

Actions taken solely based on one's feelings sometimes do not yield a good outcome. Of course, the type of feelings and the context have a major bearing. For instance, if we feel ecstatic about

some event in our life, we may do exciting or salutary things. On the other hand, if we are angry about something, we may proceed to act on that anger without asking ourselves if it is right to do so. Or, if we feel anxious about doing something (e.g., asserting ourselves appropriately) we may learn to avoid such anxiety-provoking situations, instead of challenging our evaluations of them. Or, we may be irritated and unnerved by another's argument that contests our belief system and, instead of asking why we feel so upset, we proceed to dismiss the argument and maybe even disrespect the person.

Emotions are tied to our sense of self. By examining and working to remedy a sometimes-confusing emotional world, we discover more of who we are. But, to act on certain unexamined emotions is to avoid knowledge of self. To cover up what one is truly feeling leads to further self-estrangement. This sort of concealment can influence thoughts and actions in many ways. Nathaniel Branden made note of this:

Few of the irrationalities people commit—the destructive behavior they unleash against themselves and against others—would be possible to them if they did not first cut themselves off from their own deepest feelings. Paradoxically, the person we sometimes describe as ‘ruled by his feelings’—the irresponsible, impulsive ‘whim-worshipper’—is as dissociated from his inner emotional life as the most inhibited ‘intellectualizer.’ The difference in personality is more of form than of essence.⁹(p.24)

Recognition of emotions and regulation of action accordingly are tasks for a volitional consciousness. These practices are best undertaken with the method of logic. Logic is the only method that can tell us if our feelings and actions are based on contradictions.

Logic reveals that contradictions cannot exist in objective reality.⁸¹ Therefore, when certain emotions defy reasonable justifica-

tion, they expose contradictions *within oneself*—that is, self-created and self-maintained contradictions.

As astonishing as it may sound, a man who wrote comprehensibly about logic and contradictions lived over two millennia ago. Aristotle astutely stated what “the starting point of all the other axioms” is: “It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation;” (IV.iii.9) This was basically his formulation of the *Law of Non-Contradiction*. He continued this line of thinking as follows:

And if it is impossible for contrary attributes to belong at the same time to the same subject . . . and an opinion which contradicts another is contrary to it, then clearly it is impossible for the same man to suppose at the same time that the same thing is and is not; for the man who made this error would entertain two contrary opinions at the same time. . . . (IV.iii.11)

[If contradictory statements are] predicated at the same time. . . . the result is the dictum of Anaxagoras, ‘all things mixed together’; so that nothing truly exists. It seems, then, that they are speaking of the Indeterminate. . . . (IV.iv.27)²

So a contradiction is mistaken reasoning, reasoning that involves premises or assumptions that are untrue. Therefore, such premises or assumptions are in opposition to the facts of reality (or, derivatively, to prior valid reasoning based on such facts). The facts of reality are determined from demonstrable or observable phenomena. Logically, valid reasoning involves identifications that follow from proof and evidence, which follow from the three fundamental axioms.

Axiomatic concepts include existence, consciousness, and identity. In the words of Ayn Rand:

An axiomatic concept is the identification of a primary fact of reality, which cannot be analyzed, i.e., reduced to other facts or broken into component parts. It is implicit in all facts and in all knowledge. It is the fundamentally given and directly perceived or experienced, which requires no proof or explanation, but on which all proofs and explanations rest.⁸¹(p.55)

Rand made an additional series of central points:

Since axiomatic concepts refer to facts of reality and are not a matter of 'faith' or of man's arbitrary choice, there is a way to ascertain whether a given concept is axiomatic or not: one ascertains it by observing the fact that an axiomatic concept cannot be escaped, that it is implicit in all knowledge, that it has to be accepted and used even in the process of any attempt to deny it.

For instance, when modern philosophers declare that axioms are a matter of arbitrary choice, and proceed to choose complex, derivative concepts as the alleged axioms of their alleged reasoning, one can observe that their statements imply and depend on 'existence,' 'consciousness,' 'identity,' which they profess to negate, but which are smuggled into their arguments in the form of unacknowledged, 'stolen' concepts.⁸¹(p.59)

Any line of reasoning that involves stolen concepts is necessarily invalid and therefore contradictory. Mistaken reasoning can have all sorts of forms. Usually it is based on other mistaken reasoning, that is, reasoning which contradicts itself. As mentioned, contradictory reasoning is based on falsehood; it does not follow from the facts of reality (or prior valid reasoning).

The Latin term *non sequitur* describes a line of reasoning that does not follow from the stated premises or evidence provided. Notice that a non sequitur may or may not imply valid premises.

For instance, one could hold a certain ideological position (either logical or illogical) and make statements supposedly in support of this position but which actually are not.

Yet, an untrue argument that has an “internal logic” (i.e., one in opposition to facts, but that has a certain conceptual consistency to it) is still a contradictory argument. Logic must be used as a fact/axiom-based method of understanding reality conceptually—not to relate floating abstractions or fantasy concepts to each other in a however consistent fashion.

Contradictions are revealed when we take statements and ideas to their eventual, necessary, conceptual outcomes. We must form connections between concepts and their referents in reality—in order to see how they relate to the facts of reality and to other concepts. These processes require us to make further identifications and distinctions, which normally entail the processes of induction and deduction. We reason from particulars to a general principles and from general principles to particular instances. By applying the method of logic, noncontradictory identification, we leave no relevant epistemological stones unturned.

Logic enables us to effectively prove, to ourselves or others, the veracity of any identification or evaluation. It is the only way for a conceptual organism to reach the truth on any issue—in order to know what one knows, and be certain of it. Otherwise, one perpetuates two bad conditions for a rational consciousness: confusion and incomprehensibility. As Aristotle stated many, many centuries ago:

And if all men are equally right and wrong, an exponent of this view can neither speak nor mean anything, since at the same time he says both ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ And if he forms no judgment, but ‘thinks’ and ‘thinks not’ indifferently, what difference will there be between him and the vegetables?²(IV.iv.39)

Impediments To Self-Understanding And Attaining Abstract Knowledge

Disincentives from outside ourselves to examine our emotional world (and our mental world in general) may be large. We saw this was the case for past groups of people. We can easily do what those around us are doing, regardless of whether it is the most beneficial and appropriate policy. We can look around us and see most things readily noticeable, and yet miss many important observations, miss many things others will discover later.

The undesirable in a future age can be the perversely desirable in the current one. In this way, the status quo can be viewed as normal and elevated above any sort of revolutionary change. What we know about aspects of the world and universe is just a fraction of what others will know about it hundreds of years from now. Context of knowledge has a major effect on the type and scope of our thinking and actions. This can be an impediment to seeing other possibilities—or it can be a great motivator for us.

Throughout the centuries of human history that were comparatively unproductive from an innovation and technology standpoint, most people probably thought that there was nothing else to really learn (or at least nothing to learn of great importance). Most were not concerned about changing the future. Keeping everything under control and in the tribal order was of greater concern; as noted, little independent thought was encouraged. How one could help the group and what the plans were for the day, week, or season, were sizable concerns as well. The tendency to get mired in everyday tasks without reflecting on them becomes strongest when the common mentality believes that most original thinking has been done—either that all important answers have been found, or that none are possible.

In fact, the harder survival is, the more tenaciously people cling to whatever immediate values they possess. Particular habits and cultural norms may seem to demarcate all the opportunities of life. The harder survival is, the more people rely on these norms

for protection from the unknown and the undiscovered. Of course, this soon becomes a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies, because as humans our choices determine our fates. And when these choices are shortsighted, they make the possibility for change seem harder (or even frightening).

Native people in third-world countries, for example, live much like people hundreds or even thousands of years ago. They endure their conditions. But contrary to the cliché, what they do not know is indeed hurting them. In addition to entrenched psychological attitudes about the merits of uncreative routines, more sinister factors contribute to their given state of affairs. Terribly flawed political systems promote pathetic situations. They also cause stark contrasts in societal conditions among countries. Such systems are usually aided by the doctrine of cultural relativism, which shows more concern for particular customs and traditions than human health and personal growth.

Many periods in human history have showed a preference for contentment. This is why some individuals are inspiring historical figures; they seemed not to fit exactly into their era's general outlook; they transcended day-to-day happenings and reflected on life and reality. Sometimes even entire societies embraced change and challenge during certain periods. These were times when humans rose above the everyday and started to ask unique questions about their existence.

One salient period was in Ionia and Greece about 2,500 years ago (following initial intellectual progress in Egypt and Babylon). A more rational view of the world arose in thinkers of natural philosophy and science such as Thales, Xenophanes, and Anaxamander. They shared a new outlook on nature as *intelligible*. Physical inquiry into phenomena that had gone basically unquestioned for countless centuries became encouraged.⁴²

Such novel exploration happened at this time for various reasons. In part, a political climate permitted rational criticism and debate for various people. Economies had also developed

that allowed some (a minority however) the luxury to engage in thinking for its own sake.

To these philosophers, the supernatural was an unsatisfactory explanation for many things. The relatively permissive social context fostered curiosity and a desire for knowledge of physical processes. Unfortunately, two important practices taken from this small group of early scientists—the application of mathematics to understand natural phenomena, and the undertaking of empirical research—were not rediscovered until many hundreds of years later, during the Renaissance.⁵⁶

In his description of the mentality of some of the ancient Greeks, historian William Heidel stated, “The Hippocratic Law puts the matter succinctly: ‘Science and opinion are two distinct things; the former leads to knowledge, the latter to ignorance.’”(Hippocrates, Lex IV.642L.) Heidel continued:

It was a common saying of the ancients, and it is worth repeating, that philosophy, like science, originated in the desire to rid the world of confusion. They rest ultimately on the assumption of a certain fundamental unity in things, perhaps, in strictness, a moral postulate, which as it comes progressively more clearly to consciousness ramifies in many directions and constitutes the frame that supports the entire structure of man’s making.³⁸(p.17)

Aristotle was another great example of those who appreciated this type of thinking. He went against many of the teachings of prominent philosophers before him, such as Plato and Socrates. In an age much different from our own, he was still tremendously dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. In fact, as we saw with his ideas about logic, many of his observations about human beings and the nature of reality are invaluable. They have certainly contributed to the progress of our species; for instance, they helped to pull Western civilization out of the Dark Ages (via such thinkers as Thomas Aquinas).

Ideas are timeless—especially philosophical ones. As long as they are consistent with the facts of reality and life-sustaining, their period of formulation matters little. Of course, they matter a great deal to those who are able to benefit from them. Aristotle made note of the trait of inquisitiveness that generates new ideas:

It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe.²(I.ii.9)

Aristotle probably could not have achieved so much had he lived a thousand years earlier. Since knowledge is contextual, one needs a certain base to from which to start. To reach levels much beyond that base would be too great a cognitive leap for even a mind of genius. But usually great thinkers are able to give us glimpses of the next stage in our ideological evolution.

These observations pertain not only to scientific and technological discovery but also to philosophical and psychological discovery. Though the latter two seem to rely on a base that is constant in any age, they still require certain contextual components for fostering enlightenment. With the fields of philosophy and psychology, we face a different set of difficulties. They can be even more of a challenge to overcome than in overtly scientific areas.

For instance, the law of gravity formulated by Isaac Newton was discovered through directly perceivable means. He noticed the pervasive characteristic in nature that objects are drawn to each other, for instance smaller objects to enormous ones such as the Earth (an apple from a tree to the ground). He then proceeded to outline the properties of gravity stemming from the masses of entities and the distances between them.

Yet the discovery of emotions and mental processes, for instance, involves looking *inward*. What makes discovery of mind

and related ideas sometimes more difficult is, of course, the ideational and emotional world of that same mind under study. Certain emotions and conceptual connections may prevent taking new perspectives. They can prevent the application of logic and thus can deter us from grasping what will be quite obvious to people in the future.

Psychological and philosophical discoveries are surely not beyond our logical capability. Since we are presented with the task of discovering things about the discoverer, we need to be as objective as possible. At times, parts of our subconscious may divert us from inspection of particular ideas. We may arrive unwittingly at conclusions that may be inaccurate in the light of total objectivity.

Unfortunately, many philosophers (and their various spokespersons) have maintained that objectivity does not exist. Of course, such a notion is self-refuting. We might recall the discussion of constructivism here. Any sort of claim, no matter how fantastic, must necessarily take place in *objective* reality. Objective reality (existence) is an axiomatic concept.

Subjectivity is a term that specifies a particular relationship to the objective. Typically, “subjective” is taken to mean an experience from a particular person’s isolated perspective. Such an experience is distinguished from the wider context in which it is taking place—that is, the objective context.

If a person attempts to dispute the idea of objectivity, he or she must do so from an *objective* standpoint. Otherwise, the attempted disputation would only be subjective—hence, it would have no meaning in terms of objective knowledge. Because subjectivity is purportedly a place where there are no absolutes, the denial of objectivity (like the notion of determinism) can be used to promote less than healthy ideas and behavior.

In any era, a particular base or foundation of objective knowledge exists (i.e., knowledge is contextual). With this base, we can make more identifications about ourselves and about the world. These identifications, if they are logical, should be consistent with the major framework of knowledge. In other words, they should

be objective. If inconsistencies arise, then our interpretations (either past or present) need to be refined.

Ultimately, knowledge keeps building on itself. For the individual and for society, knowledge is hierarchical.⁷⁰ Claims to new knowledge must be scrutinized according to the Law of Non-Contradiction. As mentioned, our psychology can play a larger role than we sometimes realize in how we recognize and apply this law.

At times, forces in our psyche may tend to block clear thinking and a striving for enlightenment. Nevertheless, the striving for enlightenment—even if only from an emotional perspective—is evidenced throughout the world. It normally forms the essence of every major philosophy and religion. In the next section the ideas of personal enlightenment found in some of the world's major religions will be inspected. By understanding what they essentially present to people, we can better decide which path or paths to take on our enlightened journey.

Historical/Religious Views Of Enlightenment

To see life from an emotionally enlightened perspective seems to be a driving force in most religions. Religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, or Judaism portray either some ideal or set of ideals to be strived for. These ideals are meant to bring about such things as happiness, personal fulfillment, and social benefit.

Each religion contains a rich history of how each arose and the processes by which each was refined. This is usually accompanied by an immensely diverse set of customs, practices, and rituals. These activities provide structure and organization that help unify people. Religious practices, such as going to church, enable like-minded persons to share experiences and participate in events that cater to desires of togetherness and belongingness. Social needs are thus met and a deeper feeling of relatedness and sense of community can be fostered.

To concentrate on the various teachings of religious belief systems (i.e., the values and virtues they propagate) would of course lead to a book in itself. However, it is important to consider the psychological essentials they convey. These essentials are the building blocks for an “enlightened” state that billions of people strive to embrace. Seen as giving hope to people, these essentials can be viewed as a form of layman’s psychology. They try to explain and even rectify dilemmas about reality, mental processes, emotions, and social relationships in commonsensical or intuitive ways.

Children far and wide are encouraged to study religious teachings. When trying to make sense of the world, some kind of stable set of beliefs about how to live one’s life has immense appeal. Much of what a person learns about ideas and emotions comes from people immediately around him or her. Often, children absorb the values and beliefs most readily available; adults provide a specific context for them. Hence, it is not surprising to find Taoists in China, Hindus in India, Christians in the Western world, and so forth.

Children yearn to make sense of things. They also yearn for someone or something to help them figure out themselves and others. As they grow up, young persons can begin to deliberate the values and beliefs they have been offered, or they can simply accept them (for better or worse). Inevitably, though, people end up with thoughts and feelings about who they are and what is possible to them.

Regardless of the particular beliefs they acquire, people everywhere have at least a general feeling of what enlightenment is, or should be. This feeling is generally formed as one seeks to understand life in childhood. Children typically struggle constantly to make things intellectually and emotionally comprehensible (or at least secure). In fact, it is highly unusual for a child to not ask questions about the nature of people, things, and the universe in general.

Yet those who desire others to adopt a particular belief system may want to spare newcomers the task of thinking independently and figuring out one’s emotional world for oneself. They

may want to make it seem as if all one's questions have been miraculously answered—as if one's internal troubles have been swiftly alleviated—as if one's quest for understanding has been greatly shortened.

Unfortunately logic is not normally applied to many of the messages sent by religious doctrines and practices. As a result, contradictory answers to a variety of life's questions can overwhelm the logical ones. Parents and other adults can make it easy or difficult for a child to continue questioning what enlightenment means. When they give a child truthful (i.e., noncontradictory) answers, or when they at least admit to not knowing the correct answers, they allow a child to make sense of things. Pretense is thus avoided. However, contradictory answers (whether or not fully recognized as such) typically must be wrapped in enticing or powerful emotional packages. They often target the child's feelings of self-worth through external validation and various rewards and punishments.

By taking these potential problems into account, we are able to objectively examine various religions for logical clarity. Again, each religion has some sort of idea of what it means to be emotionally fulfilled, so let us review a few. Although, we must keep in mind that many aspects of a particular religion can be viewed in the literal sense or in the metaphorical sense. Even those individuals who subscribe to the same religion can have quite different interpretations of it.

Essentially for the Hindu, enlightenment is called nirvana. It is a state of feeling in harmony with one's task to be fulfilled. Although, traditionally, complete nirvana is supposed to be reached after death, it can also be understood to occur primarily when one has renounced the things in life that trouble one's self—such as desires. One thereby becomes somewhat “unattached” to self and the world.

Nirvana, as a state of enlightenment (achieved, in this sense, during one's life), relates to a generalized description of who one should be, regardless of what one actually does. Irrespective of one's particular “dharma,” or duty, it points to a longing to be

content with one's life. One is free from senseless desires, frustrations, and conflicts. This longing can be realized in any number of ways and practices (Yogas). Here is a passage of what it means to be divine from a book of Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

A man who is born with tendencies toward the Divine, is fearless and pure in heart. He perseveres in that path to union with Brahman [the Godhead, essence of the universe], which the scriptures and his teacher have taught him. He is charitable. He can control his passions. He studies the scriptures regularly, and obeys their directions. He practises spiritual disciplines. He is straightforward, truthful, and of an even temper. He harms no one. He renounces the things of this world. He has a tranquil mind and an unmalicious tongue. He is compassionate toward all. He is not greedy. He is gentle and modest. He abstains from useless activity. He has faith in the strength of his higher nature. He can forgive and endure. He is clean in thought and act. He is free from hatred and from pride. Such qualities are his birthright.

When a man is born with demonic tendencies, his birthright is hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, cruelty and ignorance.⁷³(p.114)

Clearly, these statements outline many favorable virtues for individuals to practice. Yet simultaneously a few statements need explanation and justification, such as renouncing the things of this world and being free from pride. Even the idea of obeying the directions of scripture can be problematic. It makes one immediately wonder whether the scripture is always right, and how such a practice can accommodate personal autonomy and independent thought.

Of course, the first and last sentences from the above quote must be dismissed as contradictory if they are not judged metaphorically. The notion of "divine" or "demonic" tendencies in a

volitional being is untenable. Nevertheless, such statements are what make Hinduism a religion believed and practiced in all its forms and facets by hundreds of millions of people. Selection of the good in writings like this definitely points to trying to find and maintain a certain degree of psychological awareness.

Yet in the search for the good, one can learn to tolerate the bad by overlooking or disregarding it. When people do exactly this on a regular basis, they may never critically inspect popular ideas and practices for contradictions. Maybe, then, the bad becomes the not-so-bad, and eventually the acceptable.

One can find various ideas and directives about self-renunciation, submission, endurance, and self-effacement in Hindu works. These naturally may be used to make dire social and political conditions seem more tolerable. After all, the pervasive religious ideas of sacrifice, selflessness, and renouncement of earthly things have been used for centuries in this endeavor.

But Hinduism is definitely not alone when it comes to ideas about surrender of self and worship of the various symbols in scripture. One can find overt statements about this in the ancient Chinese literature of Taoism. It is readily apparent in one of the Taoist scriptures, the *Tao Te Ching*. The following statements represent admonishments to any ruler of people:

It is just because one has no use for life that one is wiser
than the man who values life.(p.137)

Do that which consists in taking no action; pursue that
which is not meddlesome; savour that which has no flavour.
Make the small big and the few many; do good to him who
has done you an injury.(p.124)

Exterminate the sage, discard the wise, And the people will
benefit a hundredfold; Exterminate benevolence, discard
rectitude, And the people will again be filial; Exterminate

ingenuity, discard profit, And there will be no more thieves and bandits.

These three, being false adornments, are not enough And the people must have something to which they can attach themselves: Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the uncarved block, Have little thought of self and as few desires as possible.(p.75)

Not to honour men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.

Therefore in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthens their bones. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.

Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.¹⁰²(p.59)

Naturally, the beliefs involved in these statements can foster quite terrible social and political situations. In fact they may be instrumental in relegating hundreds of millions of people to conditions of poverty, disease, and famine. Although singled out from the full context of Taoism, these statements have a definite influence—no matter how much they are embellished or minimized. As in all religions, many notable exceptions do exist. But the bad tends to drive out the good; contradictions tend to drive out truths. No matter how they are interpreted, statements such as the above run counter to what we have discussed so far about the nature of living organisms.

Life for human beings is a process of self-generated and self-sustained action.⁷⁵ For an organism to stop taking the actions that its nature requires assuredly means death. For humans, to fail to act, to fail to assert one's needs, desires, goals, and ambitions is, at

best, to remain in a state of half-life/half-death—to lose much of one's dignity. At worst, it is to take steps backward in development, to regress to the point of dissolution of consciousness and being.

The state of half-life/half-death can be furthered with the common religious (and secular) conception of contentment. People can settle for a set mode of living and endure this condition to the end. Instead of realize one's full potential, one can dispense with happiness and believe that desires frequently lead to frustration or wrongdoing. Consequently, people should be content with, among other things, the despots who rule over them as well as the existence these rulers helped create.

When a person cannot make sense of his or her inner (and outer) world, the self becomes fragmented. It may become something mysterious that seems to be influenced by strange forces. Conflicts between emotions, clashes among thoughts, and inconsistencies among values become regular troubles. During this process, a person may come to view the self as the root of all that is bad. He or she may think that the self is to blame for all the anger, hatred, resentment, contempt, and evil found in the world. Since problems with the self cause such things as fear, anxiety, and torment, the self should be scorned, repudiated, disowned.

However, problems will not begin to vanish when one has renounced the self. Life will not suddenly become more wholesome, serene, and beautiful. To believe that these things will occur is to default on understanding the nature of human consciousness and the nature of reality. Ultimately, we have two basic choices: conclude that what one has been offered for enlightenment is either wrong or insufficient and continue looking for a better way—or settle for whatever is most emotionally appealing at a particular time.

Buddhism is another religion that stresses becoming selfless and meshing with the totality of existence. Yet it does have sometimes a different emotional tone about enlightenment. One focuses on a personal grasp of one's being in reality. An emphasis is

placed on the proper mindset to act in the most enlightened way, and an increase in one's present moment awareness is key in this process. Along with such things as meditation and concentration exercises (which can be found in other religions as well), many paradoxical statements are provided for a person to untangle.

Aspects of Zen Buddhism, for example, help one achieve a heightened sense of awareness and a state of relaxation in tasks, in which one does not try too hard. Zen assists one to integrate mind and body, which enables a person to function precisely and gracefully without being hindered by unwanted mental conflicts or distractions. Not surprisingly, Zen-like teachings are commonly used for practice of the martial arts. They aid the body and mind to act as a unified whole. The following is a list of thoughts from a collection of Zen writings:

Consider your essence as light rays rising from center to center up the vertebrae, and so rises *livingness* in you.(p.162)

Consider any area of your present form as *limitlessly spacious*.(p.164)

Feel your substance, bones, flesh, blood, saturated with *cosmic essence*.(ibid.)

Abide in some place *endlessly spacious*, clear of trees, hills, habitations. Thence comes the end of mind pressures.(p.166)

Feel cosmos as *translucent ever-living presence*.(ibid.)

With utmost devotion, center on the two junctions of breath and know the *knower*.(ibid.)

On joyously seeing a long-absent friend, *permeate this joy*.(p.167)

Wherever satisfaction is found, in whatever act, *actualize this*.(ibid.)

In summer when you see the entire sky endlessly clear, *enter such clarity*.(ibid.)

See as if for the first time a beautiful person or an ordinary object.(p.168)

Each thing is perceived through knowing. The self shines in space through knowing. *Perceive one being* as knower and known.⁸⁶(p.174)

As one ponders over these, one might feel more at peace with oneself and the world. Being at peace is one of the main goals of most religions, Zen in particular. Certainly this idea points directly to psychological enlightenment.

But the idea of losing the self can readily be found in the writings and teachings of Buddhism too (it appears to be a general theme in Eastern philosophy). Part of this idea may involve striving to not be self-conscious in a way that inhibits spontaneous functioning; we all may be familiar with our capacity for unnecessary self-censorship. Yet the notion of losing the self most probably originates—as mentioned before—from the idea that self-conflict and self-torment are the main factors in all the disdain and problems with people.

Still, we can never fix a problematic self by running away from it. To become enlightened in the genuine intellectual and emotional sense we have to examine, understand, and remedy troublesome emotional conflicts. Only after we have accomplished this can we begin to live freely.

To finish the spectrum of orthodox religions, we turn to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Even though Islam differs more in its historical origin and scripture, it nonetheless presents its doctrines

in the same kind of format as the other two. Enlightenment for the Christian, Hebrew, and Moslem entails study of structured moral teachings and doctrines. Many stories and examples (morals) are given to provide an overall picture of how one should live one's life. Diligent reading of scriptures enables one to become more knowledgeable about this. Religious stories typically are interpreted to be passed on by God (e.g., Yahweh, or Allah), by an incarnation of God (e.g., Jesus), and by one or more prophets (e.g., Muhammad).

The various morals to be followed are well known in our culture—for example, the Ten Commandments of the *Old Testament*. “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” “Thou shalt not kill,” and numerous other moral edicts are heeded in order to be pious and virtuous.

The ways in which the *Old Testament*, the *Koran*, and the *New Testament* can be interpreted are probably as numerous and multifaceted as the people studying them. With so much complexity and so many dimensions of thinking and literary emotional expression, a plethora of understandings and insights are bound to arise. Nonetheless, the yearnings for enlightenment and a psychology free of conflict are addressed by the many denominations of these religions. As one studies and practices their teachings, one strives to be a more fulfilled person.

For instance, Jesus Christ represents what enlightenment is or should be in Christianity. His words and actions are of paramount importance in determining how one should live. He was on Earth to spread the word of God to humankind (similar to the prophet Muhammad). For the Christian, emphasis is placed on being a virtuous person who does not indulge in immoral acts (as the religion interprets them). Trying to be free from sin, coupled with repenting and seeking atonement for one's sins, are often seen as the practices that bring enlightenment.

These brief descriptions of aspects of the world's major religions are useful in showing that people everywhere may be in search

of essentially the same things: personal fulfillment and happiness. Many people accept and practice certain religious teachings in order to derive psychological health and moral guidance. And children around the world either willingly or somewhat reluctantly adopt various religions and philosophies that are believed to be helpful by their parents, teachers, and contemporaries.

However, we must not overlook the main difficulty with religions in general. Many accept the notion that having faith in the realm of philosophical views is preferable to actually having coherent, fact-based knowledge. Hence, unfounded assertions from ancient texts and beliefs in events that allegedly require no demonstration or validation replace logical integration. In addition, many religious doctrines preclude the attainment of enlightenment because their context of understanding is based heavily on inarticulate feeling, instead of rational understanding. Such an imbalance soon loses respect for logical thought and objectivity.

Religions involve many philosophical issues of course. Yet in the midst of myriad sensible statements, one also finds a variety of illogical notions. Insurmountable contradictions can be found in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, as well as politics. In religious teachings, important words—for example, truth, honesty, and life—can be rendered meaningless because they are not taken epistemologically seriously.

In order to advocate truth, one must know (i.e., define) what words mean in logical terms. This goes back to Rand's statement that the truth or falsehood of a person's convictions rests on the truth or falsehood of his or her definitions. When a concept is vaguely or illogically defined, it can become an anti-concept, that is, a concept that obfuscates or denies logical interpretation of the term.⁸¹ Thus, "truth" in reference to believing in the supernatural is quite different than scientific or logical truth. "Honesty" in reference to preaching life after death is quite different than acknowledgement of the facts of reality; necessarily, the meaning of "life" changes too.

Despite the emotional tasks, values, and goals of various religions, in order to free ourselves from psychological conflict we must use logic. If we ignore logic, we ignore the significance of contradictions. Rectifying contradictions must be done by the self-directed focus of an independent mind—a mind that is not compelled by others (or perhaps more ominously or mysteriously for a child, by an omnipresent God). This is why so many morals, commandments, admonishments, rules, guidelines, and emotional appeals are of so little help. And this exposes another detrimental aspect of most religious teachings.

Regardless of the rationality or irrationality of their values and virtues, many religions are authoritarian in nature. What they espouse is thought to come from a higher or more powerful authority than one's own mind. Consequently, religious doctrines and rituals tend to maintain an unchallengeable nature. Self-surrender and obedience to the teachings are required to properly live and learn by them; questioning the doctrines in any fundamental way is forbidden. Certainly this can wreak havoc. For instance, it can hamper the fostering of trust in oneself to be an authentically thinking and feeling individual.⁵⁰ We must be able to question authority as well as search for logical answers.

To begin the quest for enlightenment with unidentified or vague feelings is to potentially create major disappointments and difficulties. To use such feelings to accept any doctrine that hints of bringing enlightenment (or at least a doctrine that calms possible fears and insecurities), is to not honor one's rational faculty. *Hoping* to achieve happiness (or enlightenment, or a clear state of mind) will usually not get us there.

Blind belief based primarily on feelings undercuts the only faculty we have to distinguish truth from falsehood, good from bad, real from unreal, and objective knowledge from mere arbitrary assertion. To use our mind to deny our mind is definitely contradictory.

Enlightenment entails not only the utilization of logic, but also psychological awareness, which leads to mental health. To

grasp our philosophical and scientific base of understanding in these areas, we need to know what discoveries have been made about the mind. We need to know what emotions and feelings are, and how they relate to thoughts. We need the knowledge to enable us to accomplish the objectives being sought. Taking this approach puts the horse in front of the cart, so that logical analysis is possible.

The Condition Of Modern Psychology

When we look to the profession of psychology for knowledge and answers about ourselves, finding clarity can sometimes be as challenging as in religion. Yet psychology is a scientific profession. It seeks to validate its assertions, hypotheses, and theories, as well as its practices. It does this primarily through empirical investigation and experimentation. However, as we shall see, the use of logic (and philosophy in general) as a tool for validation is not typical.

Modern psychology originates mostly in mainstream academics. While it concerns primarily the study of the human mind, it also includes study of the brain and behavior (including that of other animals). For instance, fields such as neuropsychology or physiological psychology focus on biochemical processes and physiological aspects of the brain and nervous system. Because the brain is the organ that directly gives rise to consciousness, many researchers believe that studying brain processes can provide answers about human psychology.

The study of the brain is definitely a fascinating and extremely important subject. However, we cannot reduce thought, language, and behavior to brain processes without missing many essentials of psychology. The only way a human being can *understand* or *comprehend* anything is to use his or her mind (i.e., conceptual faculty). Of course, without a healthy functioning brain one's mental faculties may suffer. One might not be able to read or write any words, for example.

Indeed, our intricate anatomy and physiology necessarily allows us to function and thus, as humans, to conceptualize. But knowing the exact way the brain works in order to deal with concepts tells us nothing about *the truth or falsehood of them*. Nor does it inform us about the correctness of particular evaluations. Simply put, it does not help us to understand why we act and think and feel the way we do—especially our reasons for choosing certain values. These things are appropriately explained by mental psychology and philosophy. The epistemological essentials of reason, volition, and the Law of Non-Contradiction are needed to understand ourselves. They are also advantageous in understanding the physiological processes within the brain.

As noted, consciousness is an axiomatic concept; so long as we exist, it is an ever-present feature of reality. And the subconscious is a significant aspect of consciousness. So, for psychology to be scientific, it needs a firm comprehension of the subconscious—as well as how the conscious mind interacts with the subconscious. Presently, much of the psychology profession is deficient in these respects. Because most of philosophy throughout history failed to provide human beings with a fully logical and coherent system of principles for living, the psychology profession was—and still is—affected by this.

Historically, until about 100 years ago, psychology was virtually indistinguishable from philosophy; it had yet to differentiate itself as a separate discipline. As psychology became a discipline unto itself, some focus initially was on introspective methods. While psychologists sought to scientifically document the contents of mind, they made only modest progress. Exceptions were primarily in the realm of perceptual psychology and psychophysics, in which psychological qualities and intensities could be observed and recorded.

In general, however, psychology's endeavors were restricted both by psychology's split from philosophy and the very nature of the discipline. Given that only the individual can know what occurs in his or her own mind, each person is his or her own best subject.

Yet the methodology of introspection was eventually called into question. It was thought to preclude scientific observation and measurement of the mind by those external to it. Apparently, the actual possessors of mind were thought to be biased; it was considered non-objective to be simultaneously a subject and an observer.

Psychologists and researchers saw the study of others' *behavior* as the best way for psychology to progress as a genuine science. After all, the natural sciences demanded quantification of entities and events. Human behavior could be quantified, and so it came to be viewed as primary.

In concert with this shift in focus to behavior, particular learning theories became predominant, especially those of Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner. They provided specific explanations for animal behavior, including that of humans. Pavlov's Classical and Skinner's Instrumental (or Operant) conditioning theories became the mainstay of researchers.

Emphasis on cognitive processes and various functions of mind has since arisen to supplement strict Behaviorist interpretations. Yet mainstream academic psychology still lacks the necessary philosophical foundation that could make its goals (and therefore its accomplishments) fully comprehensible. Detached from explicit philosophy, modern psychology has trouble outlining logical essentials. Therefore, like its related disciplines (e.g., sociology and anthropology), it can unwittingly present false notions, give vague interpretations, and create copious amounts of jargon and nonintegrated particulars. In various ways, pop psychology can be just as informed and helpful as academic professional psychology (which, in various ways, can be just as misinformed and unhelpful as pop psychology).

The methodology of Behaviorism focuses on quantification and measurement of behavior. On account of this, the scientific experiment is generally used to derive psychological knowledge about human beings. Experiments seek to foster explanations—and therefore predictions—of behavior. Quantifiable evidence is gathered for countless hypotheses—in clinical, experimental, social, industrial and organizational, school, counseling, and developmental psychology.

But without logical ideas about human nature (i.e., about consciousness and its method of correctly dealing with reality), psychological hypotheses cannot be properly validated; one can only give piles upon piles of evidence for (or against) them. Rather than understanding individuals through philosophy and their own specific personality dynamics, emphasis is often placed on the overall behavior of groups of people. Such an approach results in a variety of interpretations. For instance, persons may be considered “more likely” to do such and such, or “at higher risk” of developing a particular problem, based on relative averages (and on what is considered normal). On the neuropsychological side, we often here statements about a person or group of people being “biochemically influenced,” “genetically predisposed,” or having a “genetic propensity” to be a certain way or do certain things.

Multitudinous controlled and uncontrolled studies use complex statistical designs with mostly probabilities as guides. After a lot of analysis, the causes of human behavior are typically attributed to biological-genetic and/or environmental-response processes (hence, the “nature versus nurture” controversy). The direct implication is that one is a product of one’s surroundings and/or one’s brain chemistry. Seldom are persons thought to be conscious valuers and decision-makers.

Clearly, the acquisition of empirical evidence is needed in science. To isolate phenomena—to control for extraneous factors or intervening variables—is in fact a scientific imperative. But to apply the strict experimental method of science to a rational, volitional being is to utilize an inadequate model. It is somewhat like trying to make a square peg fit properly into a round hole. For all practical purposes, such a model removes the mind from humans. It oddly tries to transform conceptual *Homo sapiens*’ into a perceptual creature. To treat individuals akin to pigeons, rats, dogs, or even monkeys may be simpler, but it certainly detracts from psychological understanding.

The failure to observe and identify all the causal factors of

human behavior—for example, thought, principles, value-judgments, and volition)—calls into question the scientific nature of much of the work in modern psychology. A medical doctor does not cure her patient by focusing solely on the symptoms, each individually without connections or causes. An astronomer does not study stars and planets without acknowledging their identity and basic attributes. Neither profession proceeds to accumulate information without taking into account the *nature* of the things under investigation.

Psychology is a discipline—like philosophy—that should be accessible to laypersons. It should not be so complex and technical that only psychologists can understand it and devise remedies to personal and social problems. Psychology is a tool for understanding self and others. Unfortunately, those who seek degrees in psychology are presented theories that do not provide the necessary knowledge. Seldom discussed are the achievement of philosophical understanding and the cultivation of happiness and dignity. At best, one finds sparse islands of clarity and bits of rational insight in a context that pays little attention to essentials.

Following from this context, we find that authentic self-esteem has been relegated to a simplistic afterthought. Yet, self-esteem is the core aspect of human psychology. It is properly defined as the conviction that one's mind is competent to think, judge, and deal with the facts of reality, *and* the feeling that one's person is worthy of happiness.¹⁰ The first component of self-esteem presupposes knowing the nature of one's mind and the nature of reality, while the second component presupposes the remedying of subconscious conflicts that restrict healthy thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Ironically, many who study and teach psychology are unaware of these ideas, and so they cannot convey them. Most of their time is spent in other areas. Professors and students focus explicitly on many topics—for instance, theories, statistics, experimental methods, results of studies, and so forth. But rarely do they explicitly

focus on their own psychologies, and rarely on their own emotions. Needless to say, this situation does not bode well. If modern psychology (and much of the psychotherapy profession) were to focus on self-esteem as a central value, conscious contradictions and conflicts of the subconscious could not be so easily overlooked.

Despite this overall situation, though, the fields of clinical and counseling psychology offer many theories of psychotherapy that can be beneficial. They apply techniques conducive to self-understanding and self-awareness. Many emphasize the workings of the subconscious and the nature of thoughts and emotions.

Adlerian therapy focuses on self-responsibility of thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Carl Rogers' Person-Centered therapy deals with experiencing ourselves in a holistic way and developing a respectful awareness of our internal states. Aaron Beck's and others' (such as David Burns) Cognitive Therapy deals with cognitions and automatic thoughts (or "silent assumptions") of the subconscious; "inference chaining" is one of its effective methods of subconscious discovery.

Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) also solidly attempts to grasp subconscious processes. REBT was the precursor to Cognitive Therapy and, in addition to being one of the most well-recognized and multifaceted therapies, it emphasizes philosophical thinking (though it holds a mistaken assumption that humans, by nature, think irrationally). Also, Arnold Lazarus' Multimodal Therapy, William Glasser's Reality Therapy, and Existential Psychotherapy all emphasize that problems and conflicts reside in particular choices and values. Therefore, they grant that humans have the capacity to change thoughts, emotions, and behavior, which is inherently self-empowering.

Even Behavior Therapy, in its own straightforward way, attempts to motivate persons to challenge their problematic behaviors and feelings. Certain exercises get individuals to venture into new possibilities for living and being. This helps bring one's subconscious habits into conscious light (and therefore under more conscious control).

Additionally, various “systems” theories and therapies attempt to break dysfunctional patterns of interactions, particularly among family members. Many approaches of Family Therapy, for instance, help persons become more aware of and better able to deal with the emotional and skills problems that foster dysfunctional relationships.

Finally, Gestalt therapy, attempts to foster self-awareness through paying attention to one’s own actions and interactions with others. Greater awareness of various defenses, and of how the body “armors” itself, are all part of the psychological discovery process.

Most of the abovementioned therapies utilize strategies that are particularly effective. Role-playing, psychodrama, guided imagery, and so on, are designed to break through inner emotional blocks and problematic behaviors. Another, perhaps more effective psychotherapeutic type and technique—that of Nathaniel Branden—will be covered in a later chapter, on account of the following explanation.

Many of the above-mentioned therapies touch on aspects of the subconscious, and many are useful in a variety of contexts. However, they do not always recognize reason, volition, and logic as absolutes. These absolutes allow the creation of an objective value system—a system that promotes the life and happiness of the individual.

After inspection of the psychology profession in general, we realize once more that no one can do our logical thinking for us. People in groups, be they members of a religion or members of the American Psychological Association, can rely heavily on the doctrines and status of their particular organizations. Depending on the type of psychological dynamics in operation, this can discourage self-responsibility and independent thinking.

While we can look to groups to acquire knowledge about self, only independent thinking can ascertain whether others have something noteworthy to say about enlightenment. A group of people

is a collection of individuals of course. It is as logical as the individual minds in the group who happen to value the utilization of logic.

By discarding certain doctrines that violate the Law of Non-Contradiction, and therefore reality, we prevent becoming prisoners to faulty reasoning. We can then acknowledge what is real and what is not—instead of having to defend the arbitrary assertions of a particular doctrine for enlightenment.

The human organism has survived hundreds of thousands of years because it was able to observe reality relatively undistorted. To the degree that it was distorted by different psychological operations, it was kept from advancing to a higher level of survival and functioning. Correspondingly, to the degree that a human being thought or acted based primarily on unrecognized feelings, he or she might fail to make the correct identifications and appropriate choices. This of course leads to all the forms and facets of maladaptive behavior so damaging to the life and well-being of a rational organism.

Again, emotions represent evaluations that a mind has made of aspects of reality that appear for or against it. Correct evaluations need to be accompanied by rational cognition; before we can say for sure if something is good or bad for us, we have to identify exactly what we are evaluating. It turns out that feelings based on inaccurate evaluations have just as much power to influence thoughts and behavior as feelings that are warranted and based on facts.

Enlightenment is sought by many different people in cultures throughout the world. Yet this does not mean that it will be achieved, or even realistically understood. After all, enlightenment is not some fanciful notion of effortless knowledge or eternal bliss. With psychology, as in all sciences, we must start with (noncontradictory) facts and build from there. Our base must be philosophically solid and real, not vague and illusory. So, we now proceed to the final section of this chapter—before we move on to the idea of political enlightenment.

The Pursuit Of Happiness

Emotions are intertwined in our mental fabric. They can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from thoughts. In fact, on one end of their spectrum, emotions *are* thoughts (in the form of evaluations)—usually extremely fast ones that are not explicit and clear. More noticeable evaluations generally take center stage in consciousness. Still, every emotion also shows some sign to us—however fleeting, obscure, or slight—in the physical form of a feeling. Even when we are engaged in intense problem solving, a certain feeling state is present. An aspect of one's mind is always thinking and assessing behind one's conscious mental activities.

Our ever-present emotional world can be viewed on a continuum. At one end are positive emotions that signify joy, elation, and so forth. Towards the middle are emotions that tell us of general normalcy, that nothing is troubling us. At the other end of the continuum are negative emotions that signify bad or aversive states, that something is wrong, disturbing, or threatening.

Much of life can be filled with emotions in the middle of the continuum. We may feel well, but nothing is really exciting or disturbing us. This could be called emotional comfort or stability. Depending on the type of values a person maintains or pursues, and the significance he or she ascribes to them, a person may be more excitable or have a higher degree of energy. How he or she assesses various situations is an important factor in moods and personality in general.

At most times in our life, we experience a whole range of emotional responses. Of course, most of us favor feelings that reflect happiness. Rarely do we want to experience negative emotions for extended periods. Prolonged feelings of anger and depression, for example, certainly have their own payoffs; they can aid in avoiding the responsibility to resolve conflicts and live optimally. However, feelings such as pain, sadness, and disappointment are normal responses to particular life experiences. They are necessary parts of the healing process as well. At the very least, though, a healthy

person strives for emotional comfort. He or she will try to behave and think in ways that will bring this about and make it last.

Those who have their most basic needs met usually want to be happy. Surveys done in poor, undeveloped countries indicate that most people there do not ponder the idea of happiness. As in primitive societies, their lives have been relegated to week-to-week, month-to-month subsistence. Endurance, instead of happiness, is the condition of these hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Apparently, only within the last few hundred years have people (mostly in developed countries) considered it possible for joy to be their natural state. Most are now aware of the popular phrase coined by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, “. . . the pursuit of happiness.”

Of course, the meaning of happiness can indeed vary among individuals. Some may call extended or momentary feelings of comfort happiness. In their desires to be happy, many individuals may settle for contentment. They become complacent with their given circumstances and consider happiness to mean being mildly satisfied. Absent the knowledge of what happiness requires, a person can even pretend that he or she has everything needed and wanted—at least until a significant other or event upsets him or her. Ultimately, comfort, contentment, and complacency may be a foundation for happiness, but they are not happiness.

In our everyday experiences we may have lasting and fulfilling episodes of joy. In fact the more of these delightful times we have, the closer we are to happiness; pleasure becomes the overriding emotion coloring our behavior. One could say that bliss becomes our state of consciousness. Yet, a relatively complete condition of happiness is definitely tied to enlightenment. We have to examine the full context of our life, values, and emotions. Periods of joy are only one judge of enlightenment. Such feelings can be the consequences of an enlightened state, but not the causes of it (which of course are many). One cause of enlightenment resides in the proper subconscious and conscious evaluations of what is good and bad

for us. Another cause entails the active use of our mind to remedy contradictions.

Happiness must adequately describe what a life can, should, and ought to be for a person. This implies being free from needless psychological conflicts, free from unnecessary uncertainties and insecurities. Happiness entails the achievement of values such as self-esteem, which involves the development of self and an appreciation of reality. As we achieve more of these values, our state of happiness may expand or be intensified. For example, gaining the value of romantic love broadens the context of happiness; we are able to fulfill more aspects and possibilities of ourselves.

We tend to develop psychological structures that can stay with us. The way in which the conscious mind relates to the subconscious (and vice versa) is a large part of one's personality. The subconscious is a complex mixture of memories, images, experiences, conclusions, inferences, evaluations, and so forth. And much of this mixture is tied directly to one's emotional world.

If we are unsatisfied with our psychology—for instance, due to undesirable behavior and unwanted feelings—then we can decide to examine it. We can choose to alter mistaken premises shaped either recently or early on. Unfortunately, the majority of the human race rarely gives their inner world this much attention. Additionally, perhaps billions of people face existential conditions that are not conducive to in depth self-examination.

Only through rational thought can we understand anything extrospectively or introspectively. And our feelings often indicate where we should begin this thinking process. Such a process reveals to us that feelings should be treated neither as objects of guilt, shame, and torment nor as things of minor importance. Rather, they should be treated and approached in a respectful fashion.

Yet our emotional world may have become fragmented in childhood. We may have been recipients of practices that neglected our feelings. Since most parents treat their children as they themselves had been treated when young, cycles continue. Branden wrote about the varieties of unfavorable treatment:

For the majority of children, the early years of life contain many frightening and painful experiences. Perhaps a child has parents who never respond to his need to be touched, held and caressed; or who constantly scream at him or at each other; or who deliberately invoke fear and guilt in him as a means of exercising control; or who swing between over-solicitude and callous remoteness; or who subject him to lies and mockery; or who are neglectful and indifferent; or who continually criticize and rebuke him; or who overwhelm him with bewildering and contradictory injunctions; or who present him with expectations and demands that take no cognizance of his knowledge, needs or interests; or who subject him to physical violence; or who consistently discourage his efforts at spontaneity and self-assertiveness.⁹(p.8)

These influences may be subtle or not so subtle. Either way, they can encourage a child to repress and disown his or her emotional world. Such influences, not surprisingly, can also be noticed in people we encounter in our daily adult life, although the forms may be different. Repressing and disowning major parts of ourselves necessarily affects our behavior, self-assessment, and treatment of others. How we deal with and think about ourselves ultimately influences how we deal with and think about others.

We can, at times, have pretenses of happiness, pretenses of normalcy, and pretenses of genuine self-esteem. These types of rationalizations may help assuage the feeling of having betrayed something—usually one's deepest sense of self. The self from childhood that initially demanded rationality and sanity to our psychological and physical worlds makes betrayals of this sort known.

As young children, we normally do not have pretenses. The main concern of children is to observe and identify the world. Because they are not interested in hiding their feelings, they are not adept at devising (and defending) rationalizations. Until we

develop a sense of our own individuality and self-worth, hardly any questions arise about our self-esteem and happiness.

Whether we like it or not, our capacity for self-delusion, distortion, and evasion is as limitless as our capacity for self-focus, concentration, and awareness. This capacity is a fundamental nature of reason; everything entails choice at this most basic level—to think and reflect, or not. Identification and evaluation are required in every choice and subsequent action.

In addition to the conclusions about self that we eventually form, others may have repeatedly showed and told us that they doubted our effectiveness or worth. Thus, we may have accumulated some rather unpleasant subconscious material; and, it may have never been properly scrutinized. For example, one's subconscious may express such assessments as, "You're not good enough," "Who are you to judge?" "Who are you to expect—and demand—happiness?" and so on. To accept these kinds of evaluations as the "not to be inspected and questioned" areas of self, is to effortlessly settle for a deficient state of being; it is to settle for a lower level of self-esteem. Branden stated the following on this issue:

The tragedy of many people's lives is that in accepting the verdict that they are not enough, they may spend their years exhausting themselves in pursuit of the Holy Grail of enoughness. If I make a successful marriage, then I will be enough. If I make so many thousand dollars a year, then I will be enough. One more promotion, and I will be enough. One more sexual conquest, one more doubling of my assets, one more person telling me that I am lovable—then I will be enough. But I can never win the battle for enoughness on these terms. The battle was lost on the day I conceded there was anything that needed to be proved. I can free myself from the negative verdict that burdens my existence only by rejecting this very premise.¹²(p.26)

Self-esteem involves the convictions that one is effective, competent, and naturally possesses self-worth. One can draw many different assessments about oneself in this area as one encounters new ideas, new skills, new challenges, and new people. Yet, the essential point to remember is that one must *trust one's capability and worth in principle*.

Especially in childhood, we often look to others for an understanding of the world around us and the world inside us. This is a natural and necessary part of gaining knowledge—and of reassuring ourselves that we are competent to think, judge, and act. The main problem occurs when others do not give us proper answers to some of life's deepest questions. Instead of admit their lack of knowledge, they give us answers that can harm our sense of reality as well as discourage our self-esteem. Their pretenses are usually not completely noticed by us until later, when we start to notice them in ourselves.

We can all pretend we know things about ourselves and about the people around us, but it will never be coherent knowledge. We can rationalize the behavior of others and ourselves, but it will never be right. We can pretend the idea of self-worth is not an important—in fact a greatly important—issue for us to consider, but doing so will never make the issue go away. We can dismiss subtle feelings, but doing so will never resolve internal conflicts. We can also say that enlightenment is fleeting and can never be fully attained, and that we can only experience small islands of clarity in our life.

Irrespective of the number of enlightened people around us, enlightenment and happiness must begin with each individual turning his or her awareness inward. How one evaluates one's fundamental competence and worth stems from what one has integrated conceptually. This includes an idea of who one is and what one thinks is possible for oneself—one's self-concept. Typically, the subconscious did most of the processing. Formulation and evaluation of one's self-value may come effortlessly. So it may be just as

easy to not take over the helm of subconscious activity with conscious thought, choice, and deliberation.

With the subconscious, evolution has given us the ability to run on emotional/cognitive autopilot. We can perform more or less automatized routines with little conscious effort. We can get by, for a time, without making sense of life events and internal signals. Obviously, in regard to being aware of contradictions and resolving them, autopilot is terribly inadequate. As beings of volitional consciousness, how much conscious controlling and monitoring we do is ultimately our own choice, and the consequences are in store for us accordingly.

As a unique species, our task is to broaden our horizons. One of our most vital psychological values is happiness. In fact, it is our highest moral purpose.⁷⁶ But we must understand the self to attain it.

We need not be stuck on a deficient level of psychological development—and correspondingly a deficient level of political development. This level of development is not something social, genetic, hereditary, or hormonal; rather, it is within our power of free will to change and alter. Further, the decision to alter ourselves does not pertain to the future evolution of our species. It pertains to the here and now, and it is readily reachable.

Individual development has been our primary concern thus far because it lays the foundation for the development of an enlightened society. Individual enlightenment and happiness brings about societal enlightenment. This of course entails new ways of looking at political systems and social relationships.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE IDEA OF POLITICAL ENLIGHTENMENT

The Historical Societal Problem

Different political systems have been espoused and enacted far into human history. Most constructed societies that benefited a few at the expense of many, but some tried to be beneficial and generous to everyone. A study of history books reveals that the former was often sought under the guise of the latter. Many political systems were proposed and propagated with ulterior motives, by members of the populace as well as the typical component of these systems: the State. By inspecting the origins of formalized political systems, we can begin to understand the intentions of them in psychological terms (hence the inexorable effects of psychology on politics). To do this, however, we must first turn to explanations of how civilizations arose and developed.

Material progress of the human race through innovation is scattered throughout history, over the course of thousands of years. Often an innovation made in one place did not take hold elsewhere for hundreds or even thousands of years (if it took hold at all). So, for the individual, very little change was observed, unless one happened to live during a time and in a place of a remarkable invention—for instance, the creation of the wheel in the Middle East some 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Compared to what we in developed countries witness today, it was certainly progress at a snail's pace.

Of course, philosophical and psychological innovation was another matter; it had an even slower pace.

Toward the end of the Neolithic period (the late Stone Age), about 10,000 years ago, human beings used more refined stone tools and pottery. Most importantly, they also began to use animals to do work and provide sustenance. In certain geographical regions, people made a key transition from a hunting and gathering way of life to a food-producing way of life. The breeding of livestock and the growing of varieties of plants yielded many advantages over the former way of life. In addition to the obvious utilitarian benefits, the extended seasonal nature of ranching and agriculture broadened people's outlook. They gradually developed greater understanding of the importance of time because their scope of mental focus now involved long range planning.¹⁸

Initially, nomads and farmers in small camps undertook these activities. They harvested wild grains and utilized domesticated animals such as dogs and sheep. The actual sowing of seeds along with the use of other animals, such as goats and pigs, gradually followed. The use of irrigation and more permanent dwellings arose also. Finally, the first civilization was formed (by some accounts) approximately 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia.⁵¹

Such marked progressions allowed for the unparalleled production and storage of mass surpluses of goods. This ensured survival and well-being much farther into the future. The formation of communities that stored and exchanged vital supplies created large marketplaces for goods and services.

In addition, communication (and innovation) accelerated especially with written language. Prior to the creation of an alphabet, the oldest known writing occurred about 5,500 years ago. It consisted of pictures and impressions that could stand for whole trains of thought and that could represent all sorts of concepts. This was eventually supplanted by cuneiform script, which was somewhat more precise but still lacked the communication capability of a language with a written alphabet.

An alphabet was first created roughly 3,500 years ago by people

in the Middle East (present-day Syria and Palestine) with outside influences by peoples of Egypt, Babylon, and others. The novel idea was to have one sound for each sign, facilitating efficient use of phonemes.²⁷ (As we can see with the English alphabet, the possible combinations of vowels and consonants yield thousands of words. Nevertheless, humans had to wait until roughly 500 years ago for mass transfer of knowledge to take place, which was when the printing press was invented.⁸⁵ Yet even then, the vast majority of humankind did not (and still do not) have access to the materials by which to learn to read and write.)

While the advantages of the new ways of life in civilization were many, some unfortunately led to potentially greater social problems—ones more destructive than those previous. Surpluses of goods and increasing populations invited a new form of barbarity. With the end of the Stone Age, the Bronze and Iron ages arose, yielding more effective implements for agricultural, domestic and commercial use—and also for war. What followed for millennia up to present day was a variety of dynasties, dominions, reigns, and conquests too numerous to mention.

Formerly with bands, tribes, and to a lesser extent chiefdoms (which were more structured and hierarchical in social order), much of the fighting had been smaller feuds. Though hostility and revengeful tactics and raids of reprisal were widespread, large-scale wars could not be sustained in primitive economies. Further, the actual conquest of other domains was not usually practiced because societies were relatively unproductive (thus having little to offer the conquerors).⁹⁵ However, larger resource-rich communities offered greater reasons for violence. As Historian J.H. Plumb put it:

Loot was no longer merely women and hunting-grounds, but citadels, treasure and, above all, the labour of peasants. Since the very dawn of civilization, war—with its concomitants—plague, famine, and devastation—has been woven closely into the fabric of human society. And this,

too, has influenced the growth of societies in remarkable ways. Societies bent on war need not only specialized, or partly specialized, castes or classes to wage it, but also a heightened consciousness of their social group, a self-identification with a cause or a God, to strengthen resolve for the final personal sacrifice. Ideologies are contemporaneous with the sickle and the sword. Courage is easier with belief and so is labour. And so religion was needed not only to explain and sanctify by ritual the mysteries of fertility but also to provide both social discipline, social consciousness and social aggression. From this time war and belief were linked for humanity's torment.¹⁸(p.24)

It is ironic that beneficial economic changes have generated such terrible societal outgrowths. Wars and their "concomitants" have basically destroyed the very structures and practices that give people life and well-being.

Yet to say that people are naturally driven by such things as greed, hatred, and power over others—a variation of Freud's "aggressive instinct"—is to overlook the crucial factors. Having outlined the nature of *Homo sapiens* thus far alerts us to the contradictions in such cynical attributions. Ultimately, they assist in rationalizing past (and present) behavior. In many parts of the world today, conditions are not much different (as the news media often vividly reveals). Only the weapons and technologies changed much—which, coupled with population increases, enabled the slaughter of tens of millions during the last century alone.

The plain fact is that humans are animals quite capable of making life far more difficult than it ought to be. With the capacity to make life wonderfully positive comes the capacity to make life an incredibly torturous hell. Our species has frequently succeeded in cultivating the latter.

With the formation of civilization came the formation of the State, a ruling body of persons that presided over and controlled the affairs of the people. Since civilizations had more people and

surpluses of goods, some individuals thought it convenient and in their interests to govern these new enterprises. This governing was often in exchange for services such as the construction and maintenance of “public works” and the formation of a military. The State protected the people from foreigners who possibly wanted to conquer civilizations for the wealth they provided.¹⁹

Branches of the obedient military could now be used to enforce the laws and edicts of the rulers to accomplish various ends. Rulers often kept the military loyal by providing them particular benefits and maintaining collectivistic ideologies. Political theorist Albert Jay Nock wrote of the obedient military attitude:

An army on the march has no philosophy; it views itself as a creature of the moment. It does not rationalize conduct except in terms of an immediate end. As Tennyson observed, there is a pretty strict official understanding against its doing so; ‘theirs not to reason why.’ Emotionalizing conduct is another matter, and the more of it the better; it is encouraged by a whole elaborate paraphernalia of showy etiquette, flags, music, uniforms, decorations, and careful cultivation of a very special sort of comradery. In every relation to ‘the reason of the thing,’ however—in the ability and eagerness, as Plato puts it, ‘to see things as they are’—the mentality of an army on the march is merely so much delayed adolescence; it remains persistently, incorrigibly and notoriously infantile.⁶⁸(p.27)

The formation of the State required more than an unthinking military. The creation of conflicts, and at the same time unified beliefs and goals, were necessary to form governing bodies—for example, different classes, different castes, different enemies, promised safety and protection, sense of community, desire for someone to lead, and the like. High concentrations of people augmented threats of (or desires for) external conquest and, accordingly, the need for internal development and cohesiveness.

On account of States arising from many complex societal conditions, they have taken many forms. As scholar on the subject Lawrence Krader stated, “There have been and are city-states, empire-states, theocratic-states, tribal-consanguineal states, nation-states, centralized states, and decentralized states; autocratic, oligarchic, and democratic states; states stratified by class, caste, and social estate.”⁴⁹(p.4)

Although primitive humans often squelched autonomy and discouraged new thinking, more “civilized” humans in positions of power used others as expendable parts for evil schemes. Slavery became a way to get various projects accomplished and needs met. Thus, the desires of some were fulfilled at the expense of the dignity of others. Others were treated as means to particular ends (i.e., as sacrificial animals).

Those not enslaved were still relegated to a subordinate role, now to the “interests of the community”—meaning interests of the State. Many lived as peasants under the influence of various empires, kingdoms, fiefdoms, and manorial systems. In exchange for “protection,” they paid their “dues” by providing goods and services.⁹⁶

Obviously, many aspects of these new societies were no step forward in psychological and political progress. Even though such societies assisted in the promotion of more trade-based and industrial methods, which facilitated economic progress, often the scale of massacre and misery was a hundredfold. Political theorist Murray Rothbard commented on the “black and unprecedented record of the State through history:

no combination of private marauders can possibly begin to match the state’s unremitting record of theft, confiscation, oppression, and mass murder. No collection of Mafia or private bank robbers can begin to compare with all the Hiroshimas, Dresdens, and Lidices and their analogues through the history of mankind.⁶²(p.55)

As mentioned, with the advent of civilization, new orthodox

religions formed. They were often utilized by states, monarchs, and emperors to advance destruction. Now enemies were to be crushed, states were to be conquered, lands were to be seized, communities were to be obliterated, and individuals were to be snuffed-out, with the supposed moral backing of the “Will of God” (hence during Medieval Christendom, the notion of the “Holy Wars”).

One could paint romantic pictures about the cultural diversity and so-called interesting ways of life of various peoples throughout the history of civilization. But this would miss the essential characteristic of these societies: rule by the force of the State. As Bakunin wrote:

... all the history of ancient and modern States is nothing more than a series of revolting crimes; why present and past kings and ministers of all times and of all countries—statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, and warriors—if judged from the point of view of simple morality and human justice, deserve a thousand times the gallows or penal servitude.⁶³(p.141)

The primary crime that constitutes the very nature of the State consists of using force to attain certain ends. The State’s constant plundering of other countries, communities, and civilizations went hand in hand and was funded by the plundering of *its own people*. The idea that people belonged to the State was more actual than figurative. While individuals were typically not allowed to use physical force against others in their communities, the State thought nothing of it. “Crime” was a term ascribed by the State only to actions of individual citizens who did such things as murder, rape, and steal. Bakunin pointed out this longstanding legal inconsistency:

What is permitted to the State is forbidden to the individual. Such is the maxim of all governments. Machiavelli said it, and history as well as the practice of all contemporary governments bear him out on that point. Crime is the nec-

essary condition of the very existence of the State, and it therefore constitutes its exclusive monopoly, from which it follows that the individual who dares commit a crime is guilty in a two-fold sense: first, he is guilty against human conscience, and, above all, he is guilty against the State in arrogating to himself one of its most precious privileges.⁶³(p.141)

We might recall an earlier section that discussed the use of force as being an inherently anti-social act. Whether it is used in a primitive tribe or in an advanced civilization, aggression is still inimical to human life and to social interactions. Even though the State disregards the truth of the matter, aggression is no less destructive when declared “legal.” Nock noted of the workings of the State as follows: “The State is not . . . a social institution administered in an anti-social way. It is an anti-social institution, administered in the only way an anti-social institution can be administered, and by the kind of person who, in the nature of things, is best adapted to such service.”⁶⁸(p.183)

Yet for various psychological and physical reasons people tolerated such harmful forms of government. Many throughout history grew up not knowing (and not learning) any differently; they matured not knowing the value of their individual minds and persons. A few probably had some vision of how things could be, of what possibilities could be open to them—if only they could rid their lives of tyranny.

By inspecting the developmental side of social organization, we can see why society has been the way it has; we can see how the mentality that drives social dependence is formed. Indeed, the factors that contribute to the genesis and function of both the tribal mentality (collectivism) and of statism are still very active in civilization.

How The Will Gets Weakened

Since ancient times, in exchange for living in the group, people regularly had to abide by the rules of the group. One rule, of course, was to show deference to powerful authority figures. If one disobeyed this rule, one was either punished or ostracized.

A similar situation exists in dictatorial family environments. Parents sometimes enact their substantial ability to foster authoritarian relationships. Many children in unhealthy families must show unwavering deference to their seemingly omnipotent, omniscient, and infallible parents. There are not many good alternatives for those of inferior rank who disagree with this living arrangement. Educational theorist and teacher Maria Montessori had a great deal to say about this kind of psychological milieu. She wrote about parental practices of ruling over the child:

Tyranny defies discussion. It surrounds the individual with the impenetrable walls of recognized authority. Adults dominate children by virtue of a recognized natural right. To question this right would be the same as attacking a kind of consecrated sovereignty. If in a primitive community a tyrant represents God, an adult to a child is divinity itself. He is simply beyond discussion. Rather than disobey, a child must keep silent and adjust himself to everything.

If he does show some resistance, this will rarely be a direct, or even intended reply to an adult's action. It will rather be a vital defense of his own psychic integrity or an unconscious reaction to oppression. . . .

Only with time does a child learn how to react directly against this tyranny. But by then an adult will have learned how to overcome a child by subtler means, convincing him that this tyranny is all for his own good.

A child owes respect to his elders, but adults claim the right to judge and even offend a child. At their own conve-

nience they direct or even suppress a child's needs, and his protests are regarded as a dangerous and intolerable lack of submission.

Adults here adopt the attitude of primitive rulers who exact tribute from their subjects without any right of appeal. Children who believe that they owe everything to adults are like those peoples who think that everything they possess is a gracious gift from their king. But are not adults responsible for this attitude? They have adopted the role of a creator and in their pride have maintained that they are responsible for everything that pertains to a child. They make him good, pious, and intelligent, and enable him to come into contact with his environment, with men, and with God. And to make the picture more complete, they refuse to admit that they are exercising any tyranny. And yet has there ever been a tyrant who has ever admitted that he has preyed upon his subjects?⁶⁶(p.152)

Such a childhood situation can oftentimes be inescapable. Whether it occurs in blatant or in subtle ways, the general themes concerning misuse of power usually remain. Naturally, to realize the later societal manifestations of such practices requires no great psychological leap. The whole process is self-perpetuating: the child learns from parents' behavior (as well as from others). Parents teach the child the specific ways of dealing with self and others. The child learns what is expected from others and then passes this on (i.e., if he or she fully accepts it).

Social demands on individuals to conform can be sizeable, both within the family and society in general. The inherent imbalances of power in adult/child as well as State/citizen relationships can both invite exploitation. The key distinction, however, is that the State/citizen relationship is always a corrupt one. Due to the aggressive policies of the State, it cannot be made right (a conclusion explored further in subsequent sections). The adult/child relation-

ship, in contrast, simply requires fulfillment of certain obligations to maintain its appropriateness and health.

Nonetheless, people who accept the position of ruler—be it of the family, tribe, or State—are not commonly known for encouraging individuality and pursuit of one's enlightened self-interest. Typically, they uphold the welfare of the group more than that of any particular person (except, of course, the person ruling the group). In this way individuals can easily come to view themselves, albeit falsely, as naturally dependent beings rather than independent beings.

An independent being must use its own faculties to live and maintain itself. A dependent being just has to follow others and rely on their offerings. Dependent minds encourage obedience and submission, and discourage self-assertion. The assertion of personal values in line with reason and reality is the opposite of the demand for obedience; it never entails destroying the autonomy of others with the threat of force. The tactics of force and intimidation are merely the irrational values of every tyrannical attitude that has ever existed.

Cast in authoritarian predicaments for many centuries, most people tended to overlook the con game of power-lust that was partly responsible for destroying their happiness, their self-esteem, and their lives. They told themselves (as children sometimes do with their parents) that leaders of the tribe or State really "mean well"—and that the welfare of the group should come first.

They concluded that their personal desires, values, and interests were just one person's among many. To demand that they be treated with respect and dignity—to assert that their lives were at least as important as any in the group—would be terribly selfish.

But, in truth, what gives the group importance is the importance of the individuals within it. Rationalizations are not reasons, of course. They are ways for people to make the conditions around them, and the decisions they have made, seem tolerable; they make certain behavior seem appropriate. Because they are false justifica-

tions, they attempt to make the wrong seem right. Naturally, rationalizations gradually wreck one's self-confidence and self-respect.

To say that the conditions of one's life are intolerable puts one in a precarious position—a position that demands action. The outcome of such action may be unknown, and taking it may even be dangerous. To disobey the irrational rules of the group may actually jeopardize one's life and well-being. Even though less and less benefit can be obtained from living in an environment that increasingly exercises coercion, the desired outcome must be worth the risk both physically and psychologically.

For those who lived (and are living) in very cruel social contexts, a life half-lived was thought to be better than no life at all. Historically, many citizens were faced with enormously antagonistic leaders and their compliant followers. Implementation of a better way of life was a colossal project that bordered on the impossible—considering the close-mindedness, disapproval, and hostile attitudes of the people involved. Autonomy can be viewed as a severe threat to those who do not advocate it. Often, nothing can persuade them to strive for a better way of living.

In the past, some tried vigorously and valiantly to change the outlook and behavior of the group. Some had a different vision of human relationships. Usually, only modest strides were made primarily because of the contextual nature of their efforts. The time for psychological steps forward was problematic. The current level of knowledge was minimal and the patterns of compliant behavior were solidified; the pressures to conform to the group were too massive to be altered. Early on, people unquestioningly submitted to their fears of independence.

No doubt, tolerating grave circumstances is a common way to deal with them. In the long run, however, such a practice sabotages the struggle for individuation as well as autonomy—two traits necessary for the mental health of volitional beings. Merely suffering through social injustices also keeps dormant the invaluable political concept of liberty. One can only guess, for example, what form the United States would have taken had the American colo-

nists tolerated the “Injuries and Usurpations” inflicted by Great-Britain. Ultimately, the ideas people have about themselves and about others will establish their way of living, both psychologically and politically.

The tribal or collectivistic mentality has been rooted in the individual psyche for centuries. If context and level of knowledge mean anything, then we can at least understand—though not justify—this phenomenon. This mentality provides safety in exchange for conformity, security in exchange for obedience. In addition, it provides comfort in exchange for emotional denial. Finally, it seeks to make independent thought appear unnecessary. Again, there are near limitless rationalizations to defend such trade-offs, but none of them lead to self-esteem.

Flawed Political Systems From A Psychological Perspective

With the dominance of the State in the affairs of civilization, specific methods of governing the populace arose. Political systems solidified, and economies were influenced by the structure of government and its dealings with citizens.

Every political structure yields a definite psychological context in which ideas are developed and transmitted. To better understand our current ideological and psychological environments, let us inspect some of the basic premises involved in various political structures. This will put the main issues into perspective and provide a clearer picture about why certain forms of government have been propagated so vigorously. Of course, the use of physical force remains a constant throughout these societies. The submission to the will of the State in one way or another predominates all of them.

Monarchies and dictatorships are more formal examples of the tribal mentality. They place control of land and people in the hands of one or a few persons. The rulers that lust for power over others

are thus granted their wishes; they may gain a spurious sense of mastery and false sense of self-worth as a result.

Many people under such rule may actually agree with the idea of having a ruler—though they may not agree with their particular political plight and the particular person ruling over them. Many accept being connected to a territory of rule because it reassures them that at least someone is in control of reality in some grand way; someone can make important decisions for them. They also may view an oppressive political system as comfortable and safe in its own twisted way. Forced togetherness and mutual suffering may allay worries about having to go against the system. Such circumstances can distract people from the task of having to think and judge on their own.

Under monarchies and dictatorships people surrender—and are forced to surrender—many freedoms in exchange for purported safety and security; at least this is the idea. No matter how much is provided for them by greatly revered royalty or leaders, most still live in dismal conditions.

For the individual, giving up freedom not only means less opportunities. It also means giving up a piece of self. For every rule that restricts rational behavior, a human mind is held back from whatever it could have experienced and accomplished.

Yet most have been indoctrinated with the idea that the rights of Dictator, King (or God) and country precede rights of the individual—always, of course, “for your own good.” Nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche perhaps referred to this sort of mentality in his literary work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

Some of them will, but most of them are only willed. Some of them are genuine, but most of them are bad actors. There are unconscious actors among them and involuntary actors; the genuine are always rare, especially genuine actors.

And this hypocrisy I found to be the worst among them, that even those who command, hypocritically feign the virtues of those who serve. ‘I serve, you serve, we serve’—

thus prays even the hypocrisy of the rulers; and woe, if the first lord is *merely* the first servant!⁴⁶(p.281)

People may come to accept this environment when they start to believe that what matters in life is the good of society and service to everything except one's own self. To do this, they have to distrust their judgments of the obvious. The obvious entails such things as witnessing: all the brutality in the name of King, Dictator, and country; the daily level of unhappiness in people whose routine is to perform duties for the sake of the common good; the excessive reverence and tribute paid to rulers who "protect" people from the "the enemies," but who really keep nations of people locked in antagonism; the general avoidance of the deeper meaning of one's emotional state; and finally, the fervent denouncement of any logical ideas that run counter to what everyone is taught.

Every attempt of a human mind to understand its environment is an attempt to live with a proper state of awareness. When these attempts are foiled—for instance, due to threats of rebuke or castigation—individuals may decide to just concentrate on daily activities, and hope for the best; they may choose to put little conscious thought into anything else. Soon, it becomes easier not to look, not to inspect, and not to identify, than to be conscious of one's predicament. And it becomes harder and harder to live up to one's capacity of conceptual awareness.

People under monarchies and dictatorships form rationalizations to ease the feeling that something is deadly wrong with their state of affairs. Without rationalizations people would see their societies for what they truly are: more structured formulations of the tribal mentality that deny and destroy many aspects of the individual.

Only the individual is capable of feeling happiness and acquiring self-esteem. To say that society is more important than these values is to say that society is more important than oneself,

which is to say that others are more important than oneself—which is to say that *no one's self* is important.

The self is the only entity capable of making statements and therefore the only entity capable of denying itself of primary importance. Yet if the self is declared to be not that important, why are the individual selves of *others* (i.e., society) more important? Clearly, no logical answer can be given, although a rationale exists: Since any particular self is relatively unimportant, it supposedly cannot be an independent entity capable of keeping itself alive; so, it must depend on other (also ineffective) selves to maintain its existence.

Caste systems (such as in traditional India) are a deplorable phenomenon in the realm of dictatorial social and political systems. Essentially, each person is born into a certain level of economic and social status and is supposed to remain there for the rest of his or her life. In so doing, a person pursues his or her “dharma” (duty), which enables the achievement of an enlightened state (traditionally after death). “Karma” is the result of the good or bad deeds that are passed on to the next reincarnation. Depending on the deeds, one either reaches a state of nirvana or perpetuates the cycle of duty.

On the condition that people repeat the same work, free of any passions or distracting desires, they will be repaid fully when they go out of existence. However symbolic of stagnation such a doctrine may be, it can still have widespread appeal. It says, in effect, “You don’t have to be concerned about your future or your happiness. Just stay where you are and perform your daily routines dutifully. You will have found it all worthwhile when you cash in your chips at the end of your life.”

The most disconcerting phrase, of course, is “at the end of your life.” But people may think that *anything* has to be better than a life of pain, suffering, and excruciating work. When one’s life is not how one wishes it to be and one seeks relief from all troubles, nonexistence might be deemed acceptable. Since wishing is unlimited, death can be trivialized and made to seem like

something other than a blank. It is no secret that many societies have preached that *real* life and happiness occur after death. Aside from calming people's nerves about death, such doctrines work to numb realizations that social and political situations are of great consequence.

Other political systems offer conditions said to bring happiness and enlightenment, or at least social tranquility, *during* people's lifetimes. Three prominent ones are Communism, Socialism, and Fascism. These are the political systems that many people say are inherently good and desirable *in theory*; the problem is how to implement them effectively, so that they do not become corrupt. Implementation of supposedly ideal political theories has been a chronic problem. The results always end up being different than what people intended, decaying oftentimes into poverty, barbarism, and misery. The reason for this becomes apparent as one inspects these situations: They all implement coercion in one form or another as a way of life.

One may question the nature of doctrines that promote the use of force (whatever the amount) on others as an ideal way to exist in society. Incidentally, this kind of force is not retaliatory force, that is, force used to thwart force that was initiated. Retaliatory force is life-ensuring self-defense. Any force not used in self-defense—that is, any initiation of force—is necessarily an act of unjustified aggression.

Communism advocates total government ownership of the economy and, therefore, control of all property and trade. Ultimately, this means control of all people. Socialism has often been viewed as interchangeable with Communism, but in most cases it represents a watered-down or less totalitarian system of ownership and control; only parts of the economy have been declared governmental property and domain. Fascism is a third variation of statism in which most aspects of the economy are controlled, regulated, or monitored by government; private ownership of businesses is allowed, but only by the permission and direction of government.

These three systems supposedly free people from particular troubles. Unfairness, risky decisions, and even the burden of making profits are allegedly diminished, if not extinguished. Yet survival in an advanced civilization (through making profits) has to be accomplished by someone. The question then becomes: who is going to work to sustain whom and at whose expense? A main psychological motive of these three systems is quite clear. It consists of wanting to be taken care of by others through forcible means, and declaring this form of parasitism a “right.” The ablest means for a society to accomplish this desire is by the authority of the State. Rand wrote about the main premise of Socialism:

They extolled the State as the ‘Form of the Good,’ with man as its abject servant, and they proposed as many variants of the socialist state as there had been of the altruist morality. But, in both cases, the variations merely played with the surface, while the cannibal essence remained the same: socialism is the doctrine that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that his life and his work do not belong to *him*, but belong to society, that the only justification for his existence is his service to society, and that society may dispose of him in any way it pleases for the sake of whatever it deems to be its own tribal, collective good.⁷⁵(p.43)

Socialistic systems try to erase the logical idea of private property. They deny that individuals have an absolute legal and moral right to themselves and material acquired or created. Instead, these systems uphold the idea of community (or public) property. One’s self becomes part of this “property.” Rather than existing for one’s own sake, one exists for the sake of the State and the common good.

Under Communism and many aspects of Socialism (and to a lesser degree, any welfare system), goods and trade are put into the State’s community chest, from which the needs of the people will be attended to in order of necessity. Hence, no one will have to compete against others for “selfish” profits, and no one will have to

pay out of his or her own pocket. Instead, all people work directly for each other's benefit. People work, and government deals with the distribution of money. Greed, which is commonly attributed to capitalism, will supposedly be a thing of the past. Now the only competition concerns who receives what from the community chest (and when).

Basically, society has become a collective whole whereby it fulfills needs by exploiting the individuals who comprise it. Government consequently faces the impossible and immoral job of determining who should be sacrificed to whom. Another impossible task is determining how to allocate workers and resources most effectively and efficiently so that people can live comfortably. The notion of centralized planning has been the unattainable dream of despots everywhere.

Need can be a very relative and subjective experience. It depends on the personal context of each individual, the circumstances of which often have been chosen by that individual. Since need is the supreme factor in distribution in all the variations of Socialism, individuals are enticed to create needs out of nowhere. Government then rations goods and services and has people stand in line. Naturally, this brings about a dramatic state of unfulfillment. Because one person's productive work goes to someone in allegedly greater need, there is fundamentally no incentive to improve one's work, or life.

Since one is not allowed to provide for oneself, one must be provided for by someone else—in principle. Such a dependence-oriented economics can only fashion a society of dependence-oriented psychologies. Abdication of self-responsibility and independence can occur when people are forced to meet each other's material needs. More productive members of society then choose to bear the extra burden, slack off, or completely withdraw their participation.⁸² (For a brilliantly thorough anecdote of this whole situation, see the Twentieth Century Motor Company exposition in Rand's novel, *Atlas Shrugged*.)

People would not advocate a socialistic system if they believed

it harmed their self-confidence and self-respect. Instead, they commonly see it as a way to help them cope with uncertainties. Most of these uncertainties, however, were created by this political system in the first place. Inevitably, such a system propels individuals into upholding a harmful cycle of unreality—one that negates the fact that people are independent entities who can think, judge, and work to sustain their own lives.

Some might contend that, since humans are social animals, they must depend on each other in order to live; a socialistic system just implements this fact. But this overlooks that the only moral (and hence the only beneficial and respectful) way to deal with others is *voluntarily*—since the use of force is the negation of mind and life. Treating human beings as *human beings* is the only conceivable way to bring about understanding and goodwill, and thus prosperity.

Yet the retort might be made that some people are incapable of thinking, judging, and working to sustain themselves; so, we ought to have a society that caters to this fact. But the amount of grown people incapable of living independently is very small. Moreover, the only way individuals should be helped is by others *voluntarily* helping them. To coerce people to provide their time, labor, and money for so-called moral reasons makes no sense. Naturally it fosters resentment and cruelty.

Not only is any welfare State an utter perversion of generosity and goodwill, but also it is an inversion of cause and effect for the actions of volitional beings. Individuals are helped because others *decide* it is appropriate to lend assistance—not because individuals forcibly demand to be helped. Private charities are quite adept at persuading people to help individuals. Naturally this fosters genuine compassion and generosity.

To be directly dependent economically on the group for survival hardly encourages independent thought, judgment, and a work ethic (let alone enlightenment and happiness). In fact, just the opposite typically occurs: institutionalized laziness, psychological stagnation, and in Nietzsche's words, "poverty, filth, and

wretched contentment.” Inspection of communistic nations vividly reveals this.

In response to the manifest coercion and tyranny of the State, a more refined version of Communism was also idealized—true or pure communism, as Karl Marx saw it. Marxism would forcibly turn the ownership of business enterprises from their proprietors over to labor. Marx held that employees should own the fruits of their labors. He thought that simple monetary compensation is insufficient and even exploitative.

Marxism also holds that true communism has no need for authoritarian government. Government is seen as the main cause of Communist downfall; it simply corrupts the whole ideological system. The wealth and power (from the community chest) go to the politicians and bureaucrats, rather than to the people who really deserve it. In this respect, advocates of Marxism are right: Authoritarian government does essentially rob people of their personal resources and goals.

However, one primary idea of Marxism (and of any other collectivistic doctrine) is that of altruism. Altruism holds that to provide for and give to *others*, rather than oneself, is better and more desirable. By extension, others are supposed to sacrifice in return. As mentioned, this creates many forms of dependency and expectations among perfectly capable individuals.

The idea of expected and even required sharing of goods and services has been a central theme in most political philosophies. It tells a person that he or she does not have an exclusive right to his or her own life. People are encouraged to adhere to a morality that is not designed for the life and happiness of the individual.

When an individual's life is not held as the central determinant of morality and standard of value, anything outside the self (such as the family, the group, the community, the society, or the country) becomes the standard of deciding good and bad, right and wrong. Consequently, millions of individuals are treated as means to other people's ends, fodder for other people's "grand" projects, sacrificial animals for the common good, general welfare,

public interest, and so on. Surrender of self and surrender of rational values are unlimited in an ethical system that believes the individual must concentrate on living for the sake of others—who also have no right to exist for their own sake but must exist for the sake of still others—who have no right to live for their own sake either but must exist for . . . *ad infinitum*.

As noted, Marxism and the other socialistic doctrines do not identify the idea of private property in the absolute sense. Property is a concept millennia old. It was discussed, for instance, by Aristotle and Plato. The ancient Romans made more formal connections between people and their environments. Their legal interpretations helped to make property an established political concept. From that point through the Middle Ages, however, property was not taken to mean anything inviolable (unless one was a king or emperor).⁹⁴

To this day, neither statist nor Marxist theories treat property as an absolute concept. They do not resolve the contradictions in their interpretations of it. They fail to realize that any type of property necessarily belongs to an individual or a group of consenting individuals, not to the State or some desired goal of others. Nineteenth century Anarchist Max Stirner recognized the implications of Marxism:

By abolishing all private property communism makes me even more dependent on others, on the generality or totality [of society], and, in spite of its attacks on the State, it intends to establish its own State, . . . a state of affairs which paralyzes my freedom to act and exerts sovereign authority over me. Communism is rightly indignant about the wrongs which I suffer at the hands of individual proprietors, but the power which it will put into the hand of the total society is even more terrible.³⁷(p.21)

With Marxism we see the effects of a collectivistic mentality overriding genuine human identification of what is true and what

is false. Individuals are not just parts of society to be utilized however others think is required to benefit the common good. Each person is an individual, and society is the sum of these individuals. Since persons own themselves, necessarily they should be able to utilize themselves as they see fit. The same applies to their property. All other property is basically an extension of the individual, the most personal property.

The right to have property but not the right to use and/or dispose of it (such as in Fascism) plainly makes a mockery of property rights. If a person owns something, it is his or hers to utilize free of any interferences; only laws of justice enforcing individual rights can intervene. If a person does not own it, then either someone else does—whereby the same rules of ownership apply—or it has not been claimed as property by any human being.

Marxism that is not coercively implemented and maintained basically represents a commune. This assumes one is allowed to leave and move to a place that upholds property rights. Individuals voluntarily enter such an environment and consent to the idea of “communal” property, in which everyone has a share in everything. Communes operate according to the specified rules of the group. No delineation is made about final and official possession of property to specific individuals. Because such an arrangement accepts basically a tribal premise, it can be both legally cumbersome as well as morally problematic. For understandable reasons, communes have not flourished. The situation of communal property tends to create economic stagnation, and it certainly deters self-interested achievement.

Rationalizations for the variants of Socialism are smoke screens for underlying psychological processes. They attempt to deny the fact that, as human beings, we all possess a rational, volitional consciousness. Each of us has the task of finding out exactly who we are and what we should do about it. This thinking process cannot be circumvented with impunity, because to deny a fact of reality is to place oneself against reality. Such a policy inevitably

leads to rationalizations that temporarily diminish the anxiety evoked by defaults on genuine thought and judgment.

Thus a chronic policy of choosing not to focus on facts can become ingrained. Individuals may learn to serve all interests but their own, that is, their own *rational* interests. Various national, religious, or community causes may even ask individuals to sacrifice not only their time and money, but also their own lives. The amount of human immolation in most wars throughout history illustrates the enormity of this psychological pattern.

A fundamental shift in the beneficiary of action from self to others (or State or leader or country) occurs when a human consciousness accepts a doctrine that obviates personal responsibility, negates property rights, and destroys individuality—all in the name of the good of the people. When a person accepts the idea that the group is primary—not the individual—the importance of self is likely forgotten.

Societal Structures Posturing As Proper: Democracies And Republics

The problems that collectivistic governmental systems cause for people both existentially and psychologically are indeed numerous. Yet, the inherent problems in another political system, Democracy, need to be illuminated. Democratic systems of rule exist throughout the world and are typically considered the most desirable form of government.

Governmental Democracy and the nature of a Republic should be distinguished from various voting procedures and small-scale elections in business enterprises and in personal affairs. These latter activities obviously have benefits as well as drawbacks. In these situations one always has the option either to stay in or to bow out of the process. One is not forced to participate and endure potentially unfavorable outcomes. Unlike governmental Democracy, one enters such arrangements in a voluntary manner.

Especially in America, Democracy may conjure thoughts of rug-

ged individualism, personal achievement, and fairness. Democracy denotes representation of each individual in the Republic—"of the people, by the people, for the people." The idea of "one person one vote" may convince a person that he or she has a definite influence in politics. People are able to voice their opinions and make a difference in the laws and aspects of government; primarily, they can use the ballot box or they can lobby their agendas.

However, throughout the world, voting has had some dire consequences: Many people vote themselves into Socialism or dictatorships, and nearly everyone votes to keep their freedoms curtailed.

Undeterred by this, proponents of Democracy contend that the voting system is truly valuable for the individual. This is true in only one respect: Individuals can vote themselves to freedom; they can vote themselves into a society of liberty. But as we shall see, this requires some philosophical and psychological changes (changes that may make voting an obsolete issue anyway).

Presently only about half the people in the United States think voting is worth the effort. Why do they not vote? To say that tens of millions of people are just wrong, or lazy, or not know what is good for them, would be inaccurate. Actually, most people do not vote because Democracy is a system in which "might makes right" and the majority rules. Thus, it has little to do with the life of the individual (other than the ability to derogate this life).

Individuals have personal values. They seek personal fulfillment. As a consequence, many see little need to include themselves in activities that apparently have little bearing on their own lives. Most people do not vote because they sense a degree of pointlessness in the process. Or, they may think that such matters are better left to those "who keep up with politics," which is probably the same thought that many politically-minded others have.

Nonetheless, of all the governmental systems on Earth, Democracy is thought by many to be the *fairest* (although one might hear favorable opinions about "benevolent dictatorships" too). Democracy is alleged to be fair because it still gives people a choice

through voting procedures. As noted, this ignores the potentially detrimental impact of this process. Montessori made note of the problems with this sort of thinking: “They seek, as their greatest good, what they call Democracy, i.e., that the people may give their opinion as to how they are to be ruled—that they may cast their votes at elections. What irony! To choose one’s rulers! But those who rule cannot free anybody from the chains which bind all, which render all activity and initiative futile and render them helpless to save themselves.”⁶⁷(p.16)

That individuals should be elected to offices where they allegedly serve the interests of the public merely confuses the real issues. Even though a Republic has laws and governors representing “the will of the people,” this “will” is basically imposed by force. To allow the majority of people (or representatives) to decide what is right for everyone ought not be called fair.

Clearly, ideas about fairness often turn into rationalizations. These rationalizations are designed to overlook the central flaws in a political system that allows the majority to dictate irrational guidelines for everyone, *many of whom disagree*.

Democracy essentially formulates and upholds laws that infringe on the *rights of the individual* (which we will address shortly). Policies of fairness then arise as ways to obtain influence, entitlements, and special favors from government at the expense of others. Yet many citizens continue to view Democracy as that which protects rights. Nock judged this idea in the United States in the following way:

We have already seen that nothing remotely resembling democracy has ever existed here; nor yet has anything resembling free competition, for the existence of free competition is obviously incompatible with any exercise of the political means [i.e., force], even the feeblest. For the same reason, no policy of rugged individualism has ever existed; the most that rugged individualism has done to distinguish itself has been by way of running to the State for some form

of economic advantage. If the reader has any curiosity about this, let him look up the number of American business enterprises that have made a success unaided by the political means, or the number of fortunes accumulated without such aid.⁶⁸(p.182)

Some people may find it burdensome and difficult to persuade others to “give them a fair shake.” Democracy can enable them to resort to physical means for settling differences of opinion and obtaining particular goals. Of course, many times this is not done in an overt fashion. That would appear too violent and too real. Such governmental activities are often performed discreetly. Because few people name exactly what is being perpetrated, rights continue to be violated. Nineteenth century advocate of freedom Benjamin Tucker noted the real problem with Democracy:

Rule is evil, and it is none the better for being majority rule. . . . What is the ballot? It is neither more nor less than a paper representative of the bayonet, the billy, and the bullet. It is a labor saving device for ascertaining on which side force lies and bowing to the inevitable. The voice of the majority saves bloodshed, but it is no less the arbitrament of force than is the decree of the most absolute of despots backed by the most powerful of armies.³⁰(p.129)

Ideas about law, politics, and government should never be a numbers game, where to the victors lie the spoils. Political systems that use votes instead of logical thought to determine their structure and operations will simply reflect the values of the majority of those casting votes. When the political values chosen or accepted by the majority are irrational, a system of irrationality results. Such a system exposes the fact that people have compromised on a fundamental political principle: rights.

Rights—The Preeminent Political Principle

If one of our main social/political goals is to live together harmoniously and interact in a benevolent fashion, then we must address the idea of rights—human rights. Actually, the term *right* solely pertains to human beings because only a human consciousness can formulate the concept. To ascribe rights to anything other than humans is rather to name what is of high value to an individual, not something that possesses rights. As in the other key term, *property*, rights can only mean rights of an individual—not rights of any derivative group.

The idea of rights was formally established by the seventeenth century philosopher John Locke. It was taken to new heights of understanding and implementation by the Founding Fathers, especially Thomas Jefferson. Historically speaking, the idea of rights was facilitated by numerous events in Europe. The following identifies some (by no means all) of these events: the shift from a feudal-state to a merchant/trade-state; the Protestant Reformation, which led to greater emphasis on the primacy of the individual; the blending of natural science with political thought, which marked the decline of the importance of the ecclesiastical past; the development of more formal business contracts, which led Locke to apply the notion of contract to the individual's relationship with government; and, Locke's ideas of natural rights and property, which were aided by his further establishment of the ideas of free will and of knowledge acquisition from the senses (Locke held that the mind is *tabula rasa* at birth—in contrast to the notion of innate ideas). Most of these progressions coalesced in the eighteenth century. Political historian Mulford Sibley wrote:

We may epitomize this climate by saying that it had confidence in the emancipating power of reason; tended to reject the past, and particularly the Middle Ages; thought of religion in deistic terms—Locke's God of nature; conceived the universe largely as a mechanism, after the model of Sir

Isaac Newton, of Hobbes, and of Locke; and thought of intellect as somehow separated from the emotions. These characteristics were true of literature as well as political thought.⁹⁶(p.386)

In precise terminology, *right* delimits a moral code of behavior that implies a certain freedom of action in relation to others.⁷⁶ The Founders ascribed to humans (although not to all humans) the freedom of action necessary for people to exist and prosper as individuals. Freedom of action presupposes choices. So, rights are tied to volition, which is of course part of reason.

By stating for the first time in history that humans possess certain inalienable rights, the Founders identified a profound fact. This identification was to dramatically change the course of political development. People could recognize openly without shame, fear, or guilt, that their lives—and therefore property—belonged to them. They could throw off the shackles of oppressive governmental rule and the dependent psychologies that often go with it. Happiness was now an attainable goal.

The concept of rights could be seen as the first realization that all people are truly individuals. This was an enormous psychological step forward, considering especially the context of all prior history. If we owe any great debt to these scholars, it is to their identification of rights. Even though the Founders did not (or were not able to) take the concept of rights to its full logical outcome, they nonetheless ought to be commended for getting the idea “out there,” into objective reality, for people to see and integrate. This is a crucial step in the realm of new ideas: to make them known. From there, it is up to people’s honesty, confidence, and courage to take further steps.

Taking the concept of rights to its logical outcome entails implementing its full meaning. One must apply it politically to every person, irrespective of race, color, gender, ethnicity, or any other superficial description or inane prejudice. In addition, one has to

consider the concept's devastating implications for the process of Democracy, in which "might makes right."

As stated, rights pertain to freedom of action. Like other organisms, we sustain our life by action. All organisms need to act in accordance with their nature and distinctive methods of survival. To fail to do so would be detrimental, if not fatal, to their lives and well-being. Since we possess the faculty of reason (and concomitantly volition), our behavior is quite different from other animals.

We are able to constantly shape and reorganize our surroundings to fit our needs creatively, not merely instinctually. Rather than passively adapt and react to our environment, we can change our conditions in innumerable ways. The human mind utilizes opportunities for further satisfaction and achievement, and it can create many values in the material realm from substances in the environment. This is the way we use our distinctive capacities and, therefore, survive on this planet.

In order to fully accomplish our tasks, we need to be free to act and make choices. A conceptual mind requires freedom to think, judge, discriminate, feel, and enjoy things. To see to it that we do not interfere with others and that others do not interfere with us, we have rights. Rights enable expression of values without censorship by others.

Since we possess rights on account of what we are, they are an inseparable, integrated sum. In politics today, though, governments try to divide rights up piecemeal. Governments ignore the fact that rights are the integration of body and spirit; actions of the body are inseparable from actions of the mind. Yet, since most of us were taught that rights are things given to us by the Constitution, the idea of rights is more easily treated as open for amendment rather than an unalterable fact of reality.

One does not have the right to grant rights to others, only to recognize and respect them. Rights can never be given to us by favor or by permission from a government (or any other entity posturing as an authority). The failure to acknowledge this has been the fatal contradiction in political and legal thinking for count-

less centuries. It has allowed the most depraved and unjust acts to be perpetrated against innocent persons—persons who probably did not recognize their own importance and internal greatness.

Amending rights means negating them. It can lead to benefiting some at the expense of others. Yet the State regularly enables people to obtain various goods and services from others without their consent. Clearly, to claim that the recipients have “rights” to these goods and services is contradictory. Referring to a Democratic Party platform of alleged rights, Rand wrote:

Jobs, food, clothing, recreation (!), homes, medical care, education, etc., do not grow in nature. These are man-made values—goods and services produced by men. Who is to provide them?

If some men are entitled *by right* to the products of the work of others, it means that those others are deprived of rights and condemned to slave labor.

Any alleged ‘right’ of one man, which necessitates the violation of the rights of another, is not and cannot be a right.

No man can have a right to impose an unchosen obligation, an unrewarded duty or an involuntary servitude on another man. There can be no such thing as ‘*the right to enslave*.’⁷⁶(p.96)

All the desirable possessions and experiences for humans must be acquired through their own efforts and at their own expenses (or through *voluntary* reception). For instance, we have a right to exchange goods with others. We do not (nor does any government) have a right to destroy or seize another’s property (i.e., in violation of laws of justice). We have a right to the fruits of our labors in the way they have been negotiated, for example, with our employers. We do not have a right to take others’ earnings for our own uses or uses of “the country.” We have a right to pursue a course of action that betters our life on Earth. We do not have a right to sacrifice

others in the process. We have a right to defend ourselves and our property from another's aggression (and to seek reparation for damages). We do not have the right to be the aggressor.

Rights imply that we are free so long as we do not inhibit the freedom of others. By doing this, everyone's life is enriched instead of depleted. In the words of nineteenth century advocate of freedom Lysander Spooner:

In short, every man's natural rights are, first, the right to do, with himself and his property, everything that he pleases to do, and that justice towards others does not forbid him to do; and, secondly, to be free from all compulsion, by others, to do anything whatever, except what justice to others requires him to do.⁹⁸(p.97)

Infringing and interfering with others' freedom to live is equivalent to denying the distinctively human method of survival. Without the ability to make choices to guide our life and ensure survival, we are impotent. We may want to pursue a course of action, but are compelled to do otherwise. Coercion is a primary method of interaction for many kinds of other animals because they lack the ability to reason and make choices and, hence, control their actions. We, however, are guided by our capacity of decision-making—not merely a sensory-perceptual mechanism. Personal choice and conceptual knowledge guide us.

Of course, to deny these truths is to be guilty of a huge contradiction, precisely because one must choose to deny them. To say that reason—and thus voluntary, consensual, agreements—should not be the sole means for humans to deal with each other is, plainly, to exempt oneself from the realm of reason.

Initiatory force—that is, force not used in self-defense and not used to exact justice from an aggressor—is inherently anti-rights. It directly seeks to nullify the capacity for identification, evaluation, and subsequent action (i.e., one's capacity for living). One

can never claim the right to incapacitate the source and creator of rights—the human mind.⁸²

Again, we possess rights innately by virtue of being reasoning creatures. Rights can never be limited, altered, or taken away from us metaphysically—that is, no one can change the nature of human beings. Our rights can, however, be lessened (and are lessened) *existentially* through political means. Yet, to limit, alter, and take away rights from people politically denies what is real. Since it denies the key facet of the human method of survival, it denies an aspect of reality. And the denial of an aspect of reality is capable to humans through rationalization: In order to distort what is metaphysically, one must distort one's interpretations and identifications of reality through a variety of contradictions.

The Psychological Side Of The Negation Of Rights

The process of logic is typically ignored by a person who holds incorrect ideas and who acts on them. Without the primary vehicle of rational thought, conflicting emotions are fostered; inaccurate assessments of reality arise naturally from inaccurate identifications.

In such a psychological context, action can become destructive. However, one who initiates force—for example, overt physical violence—does not consider these consequences. While the person acts from an emotional state, he or she simultaneously avoids rational understanding of it. Feelings such as anger, malice, resentment, contempt, superiority, righteousness, inferiority, and fear can be instrumental in the act.

A person might want to act against the facts of reality in this way for a variety of reasons: to achieve purportedly moral ends impossible or improbable through voluntary means; to show supposedly that one is more powerful than others; to create the illusion that one can control the minds of people; to fulfill twisted fantasies of dealing with people like insentient matter or lower life forms; and finally, to act out a subconscious assessment of oneself

that evidences a lack of self-respect and self-confidence. In fact, these motivations are interrelated. They all point to a fundamental sense of inadequacy and insecurity about asserting oneself in a coherent and rational fashion.

Instead of being sacrificed or being “inferior” to others, the person who resorts to violence promotes the other side of sacrifice. He or she becomes the one who sacrifices others. In doing so, the person engages in the impossible task of trying to prove wrong his or her feelings of inadequacy. Though evaluations can be right or wrong, feelings just are. Trying to prove feelings right or wrong is just another way to disown or deny them.

Rationalizations are used during this process to make actions seem reasonable. Rationalizations may stave off discomfiting self-images and an uncomfortable self-concept for a time. They may allow one to temporarily protect oneself and possibly deceive others. But, ultimately, one can never deceive the innermost self; one knows somewhere the game that is being played, and one pays a psychological price. Part of the psychological price is diminished self-respect and self-trust.

Additionally, a destructive cycle arises in which one distances oneself from important issues in the psyche. To differentiate right from wrong, truth from falsehood, the real from the unreal, becomes increasingly difficult. One has now made oneself ignorant of a large part of the self.

Pretensions and defensive attitudes are characteristics of people who find the use and examination of aspects of their mind burdensome, unimportant, and/or frightening. Typically, they choose not to stop in the midst of upsetting emotions to examine them. If they did, then behavior would likely not be so harmful to self and others.

As noted, force is the antithesis of rationality. Our rights are violated through the initiation of force. This conclusion is drawn from a long chain of logical abstractions. Without the identification that we possess the survival faculties of reason and volition, we

could never fully grasp the concept of rights. We could not arrive at a sound principle, and apply it properly to any circumstance.

Because survival for us means living as rational beings, initiating force against others for survival's sake is plainly a contradiction in terms. Therefore, it is not a practical way to survive. Yet some may believe that if one can accomplish actions of evil, then one "wins," like a bank robber who pulls off his escapade and never gets caught.

Certainly from a *physical* standpoint, a person might benefit from such actions. But what actually gives physical things meaningful value? In order to authentically appreciate and enjoy one's material values (or any value for that matter), they must be accompanied by the recognition that one has earned them and that one deserves them. Following from one's accomplishments should be the belief that one has made the right choices—that one has acted appropriately, in mind and in action (which directly involves the virtue of integrity). To not feel that this has occurred puts one in a pathetic condition. Though this condition can sometimes happen to any person with distorted self-worth (irrespective of his or her correct actions), it exists largely for those who decide to get something for nothing at the expense of others.

Of course, one can have certain subjective views about earning and deserving. Such views allow one to tolerate living with oneself by making contradictory actions somehow *seem* reasonable. This policy undoubtedly has injurious psychological consequences that merely add to previous mental torment. Although some might say, for instance, that a criminal enjoys what he obtains, this perverted joy has little to do with mental health; his subconscious slowly gnaws away at him through guilt, anger, or anxiety.

Survival for humans must include psychological survival, which entails genuinely seeing oneself as being worthy of happiness. Clearly, this entails a high level of mental health. And few would argue that a high level of mental health means being mostly free of debilitating emotional repression and rationalization.

Lastly, since initiatory force is an action based on the premise

of death, retaliation against it is an action based on the premise of life. Self-defense involves fighting for one's life, if the circumstances arise. The person who infringes on another's rights ought to expect justice to be served.

To allow acts of unprovoked force to be perpetrated without any response is basically to endorse them. Rand called this phenomenon *sanction of the victim*.⁸² Many atrocities in history as well as corrupt social and political philosophies have depended on it. Even in today's vast context of knowledge, in which human rights are mentioned commonly in political discussions, people still permit their rights to be infringed in many ways. One may even get the impression that some people do not want to understand the concept of rights. In fact, the term is used so loosely in current media and politics that a clear definition for it is apparently considered passé. Clear definitions are usually preempted by hopeless debates over derivative issues—for example, over violations of amendments contained in the Bill of Rights.

In a society where everyone realized the importance and inalienability of their rights, very few initiators of force would view their acts as practical for their survival and for achieving their goals. In such a society, these subhuman acts would be extinguished—and the perpetrators would instead have their own rights and freedoms diminished. Irrationality stays alive only by feeding off irrationality. When confronted with reason, the denial of reality is seen for what it is, and it is dealt with accordingly.

CHAPTER FOUR:

IMPLICATIONS OF LOGIC FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Cognitive Factors In Reasoning

The preceding section about rights involved application of the Law of Non-Contradiction. This law will enable us to tackle other sizable topics, such as the determination of the ideal, enlightened society. In the next couple sections, we will explore further how we can understand and utilize our mind so that our conclusions will be correct.

Mental processes, be they problem-solving, reflecting on thoughts, or understanding emotions, require observations. From these observations we make inferences, form connections and integrations, draw conclusions. At any moment, however, we can drift away from full mental clarity; we can lose focus on the nature of specific mental events.

Sometimes we may find it difficult to fully concentrate on a particular issue. Or we may have conflicting signals regarding how to approach it. Moreover, we may have emotions tied to certain conclusions that affect how we examine it. Particular experiences can also play a role in our conclusions and assumptions.

Aspects of consciousness speak to us in many different ways, after all. As mentioned, the subconscious is an important part of our psychology. Much of who one is and has been is contained in

the subconscious. The mind consists of all assimilated experiences and the interpretations, evaluations, and extrapolations made from them (including countless imaginary creations). To grasp much of this at any given moment is simply impossible. So, the conscious mind acts as a selective filter. It utilizes and relates aspects of the rest of the mind that are relevant at any specific time.

To be precise, we do not always *consciously* filter and utilize parts of the subconscious. The process may happen mostly automatically, without our direction. In fact, often we may lose track of where our conscious thoughts end and our subconscious input starts. This is most noticeable when performing tasks that do not involve step by step, explicit deliberation—such as driving a car, an athletic performance, playing a musical instrument, or even casual conversation. The skills we have automatized, or infused subconsciously, are allowed to operate.

Yet, subconscious input may be tied to specific emotions. This can further influence how we analyze particular situations or ideas. As we direct our conscious thought processes, then, we need to recognize the factors that can affect our thoughts and decisions. By choosing to do so, we can develop a greater awareness of our emotions. And, we are more likely to notice when we are using feelings to distort our thought processes. We are also more likely to notice when we are repressing certain feelings.

Interestingly, the cognitive mechanism that we use to repress feelings is also the one we use to keep out presently useless information. Information such as facts, figures, names, and memories of skills and procedures that could detract from the performance of particular mental and physical tasks is kept out of awareness. But, since we can repress material that is actually very important—such as significant experiences, feelings, and evaluations—the subconscious can be used also in maladaptive ways.

When failure and inefficacy are deemed unacceptable, we can also repress various thoughts and feelings that reflect badly on our abilities. Additionally, we may channel behavior away from activities that were initially thwarted, punished, or at which we simply

faltered. A person might declare things such as “I don’t have the talent,” or “I’m not good at doing that.” As a consequence, one may avoid mind/life-expanding activities that seemingly pose large risks of failing. One may restrict behavior to only those activities at which one is proficient, and rely on this circumscribed ability for feelings of self-worth and self-esteem in general.

The many types of cognitive difficulties we can have are not simply innate mental deficiencies (contrary to what standardized intelligence tests would have people believe). Volitional organisms need to focus on the proper conceptual relationships required to gain knowledge and acquire skills. This must be done among a plethora of other, improper conceptual routes. At any time a person may get sidetracked on the wrong cognitive path. This says little about a person’s innate intelligence. It just points to where he or she (hopefully beginning in childhood) needs the proper information, practice, or encouragement. A more global type of self-confidence and self-esteem can be fostered as a result. (We will deal with these issues more in the next chapter.)

From birth onward, our mind collects data and turns it into information to store subconsciously. Early on as young children, awareness of the environment is our number-one priority. Far before we were conscious of it, our mind performed adaptive actions of integration by way of our sensory and perceptual faculties. Information was transformed into knowledge and arranged according to its apparent importance and relevance. With the indispensable help of language, we were able to name and hold concepts in memory as well as evaluate every event in our life by means of these concepts. Of course, much of this arranging and evaluating occurred subconsciously.

As our brains matured in the many months after we were born (forming more neural networks), our consciousness matured to a point at which we could keenly differentiate ourselves from everything else; we developed a refined sense of self-awareness. We then had the task of determining what *our* thoughts and feelings were (versus *others*), and what was part of the outside world—thereby

developing a sense of objective reality. We also had the task of understanding ourselves and discovering our capabilities and limitations. As a result, we had the task of sorting out what we were responsible for, and what was not in our powers and outside of us. The people we encountered early in our life up to present day could either help or hinder these tasks. More importantly, they could show us how to best (or worst) approach the job of making sense of things.

Naturally, self-awareness poses a whole new set of challenges. It involves more than just observing the outside world and acting accordingly. Humans are literally self-generators and self-regulators. We are also self-evaluators, which presents a new array of psychological tasks.

We are not born with any ideas about these challenges. We have to acquire knowledge about how our mind functions and, hence, who we truly are as human beings. Sometimes, we can become frustrated, confused, or even bewildered by certain mental processes (as well as by the behavior or ideas of others). It can be easy to get lost in a daydream, distracted by a wandering imagination, upset by a feeling, and so on. Moreover, to explain one's mental contents at any given moment can sometimes be complicated. We normally grasp whatever is in our conscious focus, while the rest remains in the periphery of awareness, subtly fading in and out, affecting our conscious focus in different ways and to varying degrees.

But ultimately we need to proceed with what we know. Logic helps us to know that we are correct. After all, the belief that we cannot discern the correct from the incorrect cannot be a correct belief (the fallacy of self-exclusion). Without understanding of the concept *correct*, we of course could not grasp the meaning of *incorrect*.

By realizing the process of noncontradictory identification, we can discover truth and determine what is valid and what is invalid. Logic is the great cleanser of all the possible confusion about our

ideas, our assessments, and our feelings. In the following section, this most valuable asset will be explored further.

Identity And Causality, And The Use Of Logic

As stated earlier, the most basic concepts are axiomatic concepts. *Consciousness*, *identity*, and *existence* are implicit in everything we experience. Since we have dealt with the properties and aspects of consciousness extensively, we now turn to identity and existence. Doing so allows us to gain the broadest understanding of objective reality. Objective reality implies that consciousness is distinct from external reality. Thus, consciousness perceives objective reality; consciousness does not create it.⁸⁰

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the fundamental or underlying nature of entities or existence in general. Entities (as well as the energy derived from them) comprise the entire universe, which makes the term “universe” all-encompassing. Hence, the question “What is outside the universe?” is a nonsensical one, because the universe is everything.

Because logic is the method by which we identify reality in a noncontradictory fashion, we can apply it to whatever aspect of reality we want to scrutinize. In order to make logic fully understandable, though, we need to grasp the two most basic laws of reality involved in its use. These laws are tied directly to the Law of Non-Contradiction; essentially, the Law of Non-Contradiction follows from them.

The two fundamental laws of the universe are the Law of Identity and the Law of Causality. The Law of Identity was formalized by Aristotle and was clarified by Ayn Rand over 2,300 years later. In condensed form it means that A is A; A is not non-A.⁸² An entity can never be different than what it is, by virtue of what it is; it can never be itself and not itself. Entities are what they are—in accordance with their inherent actions, properties, attributes, and structure.

Every entity in the universe, including the innumerable re-

lationships of these entities, has a certain identity. From its certain identity, an entity will act accordingly—which is the Law of Causality. An entity will behave only in ways consistent with its nature (its identity). Nothing will ever act in contradiction to its particular identity. For something to act in opposition to its nature is—metaphysically—impossible.

The laws of Identity and Causality obviously require each other: By determining what something is, we can determine what it will do; by observing what something does in relation to other entities, we can begin to grasp what it is. So, the two Laws are inseparable. One is always involved in the other. Necessarily, any attempt to deny or undermine either of these two fundamental laws is contradictory—it does not follow from valid reasoning, and it is an impossibility given the facts of reality.

All this may seem simplistic, somewhat like ordinary common sense. But applying and utilizing these laws in the realm of complex abstractions and psychological processes can be demanding. Logical epistemology, which involves the noncontradictory identification of concepts (especially in philosophical knowledge), depends on the two Laws. The laws of reality enable us to determine what can and cannot be validly claimed as fact, truth, and knowledge. Therefore, they enable us to attain certainty—which is important for scientific knowledge.

On account of this, we need to make a slight digression to address the state of modern science. Science today regularly endorses philosophical skepticism, not certainty. To be skeptical is to subject claims about human beings or nature to the scrutiny of scientific methods; before one can accept such claims, demonstration and empirical investigation are needed for validation. However, skepticism maintains that all scientific knowledge must be accepted on a *provisional* basis—because what is known about reality now may be overturned by future discoveries.

Granted, discoveries in science at times invalidate past hypotheses and theories. Sometimes our interpretations of reality may be flawed on account of various oversights, or our present conclu-

sions may be tentative on account of limited available evidence. Yet this should imply nothing about objective reality. We can know for certain that objective reality will be the same in the future: it cannot contradict itself. Skepticism errs by confusing interpretations of reality (i.e., contextual scientific knowledge) with reality itself.

As a consequence, rather than recognizing logical metaphysics and epistemology, skepticism results in having to investigate every sort of postulate people make—in spite of what we already know about reality. Of course, science needs to investigate events of nature. A task of science is to discover things. When someone postulates an event concerning entities—also called existents—based on verifiable evidence or proof, it is definitely worthy of inspection. However, when someone claims an occurrence that *defies the nature of the existents involved*, a logical (and metaphysically untenable) problem arises.

Naturally, what is to be discovered by science must be in the realm of what is possible, given the identity and the causal relationships of the entities involved. Investigation of allegations of *impossible* phenomena is therefore unnecessary.

As an example in this matter, let us analyze claimed instances of the parapsychological (e.g., telepathy, clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, out-of-body experiences, precognition, psychokinesis, etc.) and the paranormal (e.g., spirits, ghosts, goblins, witches, warlocks, etc., including “miracles”). Scientists need to point out that these are overt denials of the laws of Identity and Causality.

The parapsychological and the paranormal are *metaphysically* impossible. They are not just physically improbable, or impossible “so far as we currently know.” Scientists need not continually endeavor to disprove all the various claims about these phenomena as they arise. The list of falsifiers and charlatans is far too long (although many sincere people make claims too).

In these matters, science must consult two absolutes: reality is what it is (i.e., things are what they are, act in accordance with

this, and do not change on an ineffable whim); and, every concept must have a definite meaning in order to be valid (i.e., a logical definition specifying its distinguishing characteristic(s) from all other concepts). Reality is solid and knowable, and science's goal is to show us that everything is explicable in some form or fashion.

Here, we will not pursue in detail the debate about atomic theory and some of the quantum theoretical views about the nature of matter (and the universe) being postulated today. Plainly, Newtonian physics is unable to explain subatomic events, and quantum mechanics is required for precise models. Yet, real existents and energy forces are involved. Since no contradictions can exist in reality, any apparent metaphysical conflicts in quantum theory are necessarily contradictions in conceptualizations, that is, problems in understanding the nature of the existents and processes involved.

With logic, let us briefly refute parapsychological phenomena, starting with mental telepathy. Being telepathic purportedly means that one can communicate without one's senses. With a little inspection, the stolen concepts in this idea stand out. *Communication* in this context is defined as the transmission of meaning (be it perceptual or conceptual) to another living entity. This can only occur by some kind of sign or movement of the organism in such a way as to convey something. Necessarily, the only way a communication can be received is through the senses. Reception entails detection. And detection is the registering of an event by means of a sensory apparatus; the opposite of detection is to remain concealed, to not be registered.

This method of clarification emphasizes that concepts must be clearly defined and noncontradictory in order to be properly understood. Also, their proper referents in reality must be explained. To claim that thoughts can travel from one person to another without some form of sensory communication (note that the phrase "sensory communication" is redundant) is to reject the fact that *thought* is an attribute and process of the human brain. Thoughts arise from neural synapses via bioelectrical/chemical transfers among

brain cells. By what means do telepathists proclaim that thoughts can travel through air molecules and enter the mind of another if they are not first transformed into language (elicited and received either by visual, auditory, tactile, or bodily, means)? Their answer is usually a quite mystical one: Blank out.

ESP (alleged perception without one's senses) and clairvoyance (alleged perception of things beyond one's senses) are just variations of such concept-stealing. They deny that the senses are the only means of acquiring percepts and then knowledge about reality—while they simultaneously rely on the senses to make the denial. ESP and clairvoyance dismiss reason as the process that identifies and integrates sensory and perceptual material.

So, given their definitions, both phenomena are invalid. We cannot sense things without our senses. As beings with finite and hence limited sensory mechanisms, we cannot *directly* sense many things (e.g., subatomic particles, infrared light, radio waves, microwaves, etc.). But we know that such things exist by virtue of the fact that we can sense them through indirect methods. People design instruments for indirect perception using their conceptual faculty in concert with their sensory-perceptual mechanisms.

Precognition (alleged perception of future experiences)—in the vernacular, being “psychic”—is yet another contradictory concept. In essence, it ignores the nature of *time*. Time is fundamentally the measurement of motion (of entities).⁸¹ Such measurement presupposes a standard of motion. A few specific standards of motion have been commonly used in civilization: two astronomical time scales—the orbit of Earth around the sun (ephemeris and solar time) and the apparent motion of a distant star (sidereal time); and, two more modern and accurate time-calculating inventions—the quartz crystal oscillator and the atomic clock (which is based on the microwave resonance of certain atoms in a magnetic field). Thus by these standards, we have microseconds, milliseconds, seconds, minutes, hours, etc.

The *present* is the current position things, and the *past* is the former position of things. The *future* is where all existents will be

after a specified time (depending on their particular identities). Knowledge of the future position of existents can only be achieved through scientific prediction (based on analyses of past and present motions). One needs an understanding of the characteristics of the particular existents involved. Knowledge of the future thoughts and experiences of volitional beings, however, is incalculably more difficult. In most instances it is impossible. We cannot move ahead of time (in time) to acquire such knowledge of people's futures. For the same reason, we cannot go back in time (in time) to acquire knowledge of the past (e.g., via a "time machine"). Both are illogical: either going backward in motion that has already happened, or going forward in motion that has yet to happen.

These conclusions may raise a few questions about the space-time continuum related to Einstein's theory of relativity. Some scientists contend that "worm holes" connect black holes in space. From this, they postulate that one could theoretically travel through one and emerge in a *former* time. Assuming that such things as worm holes can and do exist and that alleged black holes give rise to them—and that one could remain physically intact during a journey through one—the idea of going "back in time" is of course metaphysically impossible.

Regardless of the standard of motion and one's relative velocity, time always moves "forward" at some speed, which is to say that things are always in motion; time is merely the measurement of entities moving. If nothing moved anywhere in the universe, there would be no time (and perhaps, for that matter, no universe). Scientist Eric Lerner related his physics perspective on this subject:

So temporal irreversibility derives from system instability. But all real systems evolve so slowly that we can treat them as stable, but *only* abstract systems, isolated in our imagination from all other influences, can be absolutely stable. The problem of 'reversible time,' then, arises because scientists improperly abstract reality and believe their highly

accurate equations to be absolutely, infinitely precise. *It is reversible time that is subjective*, an illusion, *not* irreversible time. The real world is continually coming into existence, created by an infinitely complex web of instabilities and interactions. As Prigogine [a Nobel prize-winning theorist] puts it, 'Time is creation. The future is just not *there*.'⁵⁴(p.321))

Probably only a small number of psychics have sufficiently studied the nature of their subject. An understanding of the concept of time might cause a few to rethink the credibility of their activities. Nonetheless, people continue to pay millions of dollars annually for psychic services. While some patrons may see psychic readings as just amusing fun (like horoscopes), many people are consciously or subconsciously looking for someone to give them answers. And, they are willing to believe a variety of outlandish claims in the process.

Psychokinesis (alleged movement of objects with only one's mind) represents another variation of the idea that wishing will make it so. When we are unsatisfied with the limits nature places on us (due to our identity), we may long for this power. Just as thoughts themselves do not travel through air molecules, neither can they move external matter. Thoughts have certain causal properties that make them thoughts. That is why they are not cars, or elevators, or excavators, or dump trucks.

Out-of-body experiences and the large variety of alleged paranormal phenomena are further creations of individuals' imaginations. Even though some experiences may be personally compelling, they still defy the Law of Identity and the Law of Causality. Again, the mind is the attribute of the brain, which is integrated with the body. It can only do certain things that its nature allows. Having an unbridled imagination is definitely one of these things. Angels, spirits, ghosts, goblins, witches, and warlocks may be important and interesting characters in fantasy or horror genre of films and books, but they have no place in

reality as such. Alleging the actual existence of such things conflicts with what is real.

If such claims have a purpose, it does not involve clarity and scientific discovery. Rather, it involves obfuscation and disintegration of conceptualization. Whoever lends credence to these arbitrarily postulated phenomena is faced with the huge intellectual problem of incomprehensibility. These claims portray reality to be different than it is—something mysterious and unexplainable—especially at one's whim.

A million dollars has been offered as a prize for those who can prove their allegations to James "The Amazing" Randi and his associates. Randi is a former magician who scientifically debunks alleged parapsychological and paranormal phenomena. The prize money will continue to collect interest, because such phenomena are impossible. And potential participants will continue to say that their powers cannot be subjected to Randi's experimental biases (i.e., the rigors of the scientific method).

Entities cannot perform feats that defy reality. Future advances in nanotechnology notwithstanding, a boulder cannot turn into a tablecloth. A dog cannot sprout wings and fly. A television cannot turn into a pillow. A cow cannot jump over the moon.

Yet, skepticism holds that such events are astronomically improbable, but not impossible. It sometimes considers reality to be merely an amorphous, statistical flux of molecules—that is, a place where entities have no definite identity. A version of quantum theory following from the Heisenburg Uncertainty Principle, for instance, entertains the possibility (albeit a very remote one) that a person could dissolve and reappear somewhere else, or walk through a concrete wall. After all, a person is basically a conglomeration of atoms.

Ultimately, modern science needs to promote the fact that some things are an impossibility. Clearly if everything were possible, then the concept itself would make no sense. Possible is simply that which is not impossible.

Scientist Carl Sagan had some important words on the topic

of strange claims and the proper stance of science with regard to reality:

If I dream of being reunited with a dead parent or child, who is to tell me that it didn't *really* happen? If I have a vision of myself floating in space looking down on the Earth, maybe I was really there; who are some scientists, who didn't even share the experience, to tell me that it's all in my head? If my religion teaches that it is the inalterable and inerrant word of God that the Universe is a few thousand years old, then scientists are being offensive and impious, as well as mistaken, when they claim it's a few billion.

Irritatingly, science claims to set limits on what we can do, even in principle. Who says we can't travel faster than light? They used to say that about sound, didn't they? Who's going to stop us, if we have really powerful instruments, from measuring the position and the momentum of an electron simultaneously? Why can't we, if we're very clever, build a perpetual motion machine 'of the first kind' (one that generates more energy than is supplied to it), or a perpetual motion machine 'of the second kind' (one that never runs down)? Who dares to set limits on human ingenuity?

In fact, Nature does. In fact, a fairly comprehensive and very brief statement of the laws of Nature, of how the Universe works, is contained in just such a list of prohibited acts. Tellingly, pseudoscience and superstition tend to recognize no constraints in Nature. Instead, 'all things are possible.' They promise a limitless production budget, however often their adherents have been disappointed and betrayed.⁹²(p.270)

The metaphysical idea of Primacy of Consciousness resides in most parapsychological claims. This idea is basically the philosophical counterpart to the psychological theory of constructivism.

It holds that consciousness creates reality; in a sense, “perception is creation.”

Granted, things are created in the mind by perception. But Primacy of Consciousness takes this observation an irreconcilable step further by claiming that all of reality is perception. This view therefore places no limitations on the mind, while disavowing the mind’s specific traits and attributes. As a consequence, those who conjure all sorts of incredible claims stand by them with a stubborn indifference to the facts. The “facts” are something they have designed to their own liking.

By understanding the laws of Identity and Causality, we can apply them to claims that should have been dismissed long ago. By trusting our judgment and heeding our own rational perceptions of reality, we can stop such claims from overtaking civilization like a mind-crippling plague. Exactly when a claim should be dismissed is determined both by the acquisition of broad philosophical concepts (e.g., Identity and Causality) and by specific scientific knowledge (e.g., knowledge of brain physiology or elementary physics). As scientific knowledge continues to expand, we will gain more insights about the entities under inspection. This will further augment our ability to determine what is in the realm of the possible (and impossible).

Philosophical thinking must determine the limits and validity of scientific endeavors, because only it can outline a logical epistemology. We all must clearly grasp the awesome fact that we live in a *real* reality (if one will excuse the tautology)—from which we will one day vanish forever. Fears about this vanishing need to be confronted. Otherwise, they can impel one to make reality incomprehensible, distort truth, and wish for mysterious dimensions to “other realities”—that is, to make the unreal real and the real unreal.

A main way to use the method of noncontradictory identification is to begin by examining one’s conscious ideas. From there, one can see how they are affecting feelings and actions. The fact

always remains that contradictions are inherently anti-life both in thought and in action, to the extent that they are perpetuated and not corrected. Anti-life does not mean that a single contradiction, or even many, will kill a person. It simply means that contradictions tend to work against an individual's well-being and psychological health when they are not examined and learned from. Since contradictions are misrepresentations of reality—be they introspective or extrospective, conscious or subconscious—they cannot enable us to survive. Instead of open more possibilities for our existence by making things comprehensible, they unavoidably work to narrow our view of things. They can create a situation in which undefined terms and unresolved conflicts are considered “the way life is.”

Of course, to have held no contradictory thoughts is impossible, because it would defy the nature of volition. Since we are born without any ideas about the world, many logical thoughts will not come automatically for us, especially those that are more complex (abstractions from abstractions, from still other abstractions). Unfortunately, our current culture of ideas and behavior does much to thwart the method of logic (e.g., by lending credence to parapsychological and paranormal phenomena).

Conceptualization is a hierarchical and expansive process. Life can be viewed as a gigantic learning process with various phases and stages, in which conceptual mistakes must come as naturally as correcting them. This by no means trivializes the nature of contradictions. Though the process of correcting them provides us benefit, if contradictions are held to be more important than the search for truth, then the mind begins to languish.

All contradictions start out as incorrect identifications or evaluations. For any number of reasons (cognitive, emotional, or experiential), a person can reach an incorrect conclusion. This is simple enough. As a normal part of the process of abstraction, one has to properly differentiate and relate units among a very large array of particulars and conceptual possibilities. Yet a crucial turning point is reached when one halts the logical process after a false conclu-

sion has been reached, or proceeds without examining the error (building errors on top of errors). Soon, what began as simple mental mistakes can metamorphose into willful evasions or rationalizations to defend certain contradictory chains of thought.

This leads us back to the choice to concentrate on thoughts immediately recognized as implausible, in order to promote the practice of resolving contradictions. Yet this choice can be affected by how one feels about the situation—how one feels about changing ideas that seem to help or comfort, but have obviously deterred one from truth and new possibilities.

The comprehension of tens of thousands of words indicates that an individual has already done an extraordinary amount of logical thinking. Actually, we use logic on a daily basis. Identification of facts either at work or at leisure is virtually inescapable. Solving a mathematics problem, viewing an educational program, and even ordinary interaction with others, all involve noncontradictory identification. In this regard logic is somewhat all-encompassing. Many of these activities involve simple or basic abstractions. Logic can tend lose its power, however, when concepts become more complex, and especially when ideas begin to take on a personal tone that touches on deeper parts of one's self-concept. After this happens, emotions and the belief systems connected to them can start to short-circuit the logical process.

At any time we can decide to value truth, and therefore reality and our own life, enough to override our sometimes uncomfortable feelings about doing this. We can let rational thoughts annul mostly irrational subconscious thoughts. The degree to which we strive for self-respect, honesty, and courage will determine how far we go. As noted, because the mind is such a vast continent, aspects of one part of it may be easier to reflect on than others. Nevertheless, resolution of subconscious contradictions about who we think we are, what we think is possible to us, and what we think we are capable of, can definitely alter how we approach this internal continent.

Has the chosen persistence of contradictions been the key fac-

tor in retarding human development personally and socially? Or is this too simple? Should we say that complex psychological factors and processes within any person might encourage him or her to form and hold contradictions, which in turn can impede his or her development? Further, does the fundamental choice to use logic lead to a pattern that encourages enlightenment personally and politically? All of these questions ask us to use logic to sort out the correct from the incorrect. Ultimately logic empowers us to draw definite conclusions about the ideal and proper society.

Since we cannot logically identify and integrate reality automatically like a fictitious robot or Mr. Spock (or Commander Data) from *Star Trek*, we have to rely on our ability to focus diligently. By the way, the *Star Trek* character Spock (or his counterparts in the present *Star Trek* serials), displayed an inconsistent trait: If he were to logically and objectively integrate the meaning of his existence, he would have to evidence a pure joy in being alive (the sort of sense of life discussed in a later chapter).

As mentioned, a conceptual being must experience life as good for it physically. Emotions are tied to sensual experiences. A person must be capable of pleasurable feelings of some sort to encourage survival and maintain optimal psychological health. To portray the use of logic as an emotionally neutral, passionless, or impersonal practice is to overlook the value and purpose of this faculty—which is illogical. Contrary to typical dogma, the use of logic allows one to align oneself with reality and, thus, to experience uplifting emotions. In other words great emotions can be direct effects of the utilization of logic.

What happens when we relate the knowledge of the previous chapters to society at large—politically? How can we apply logic to human rights and form a political philosophy? As we employ the principles that *Homo sapiens* is the only species in the world that possesses rights, and the only way to violate these rights is by initiating force against them, we necessarily have to examine more closely the ever-present legal institution known as government.

The Nature Of Present Government

A prevalent idea in our culture is that governmental and political issues are more complex than issues on the individual level. Yet as we deal with society as a whole, the topics need not become more difficult and the opinions more obscure. Politics is not a realm for only the so-called experts to discuss. We each need a clear understanding of our social context. So at this point, we have to inquire about the nature of government.

In essential terms, any present form of government is a group of individuals that acts as an unsolicited agent of the people in a specific geographic area. This agent performs the duties assigned to it, usually by a constitution and various democratic processes. Typically, government's duties are derived from a hodgepodge of traditional beliefs that include many unscrutinized philosophical assumptions (which will be explored shortly). Both common and statutory laws provide a formal basis for government's functioning.

Any government (totalitarian or democratic) postures as the final legal authority in human relationships. Governments determine essentially what people residing within their geographic borders can and cannot do. They attempt to establish certain ethical and legal guidelines for the behavior of their citizens. Yet they often render themselves unable to differentiate ethical issues from legal issues. Oftentimes, they pass and enforce laws that try to restrict or direct behavior—irrespective of whether or not such behavior is, by objective standards, rights-respecting. This is supposedly done in order to keep society “under control” and cater to particular needs.

Actions involve (if only implicitly) moral decisions, that is, decisions that affect or have implications for one's mental and/or physical well-being. A law that infringes on the rights of the individual is necessarily an attempt to run the life of the individual (i.e., an attempt to direct morality). Thus, criminal acts and governmental laws that infringe on individual rights can be logically viewed as controlling the inherent freedoms of the individual. In

contrast, the invaluable activity of exacting justice represents the defense of individual rights. It upholds moral freedoms by preventing injustices.

Governmental control has regularly been viewed as the best way to ensure a civil society. Yet this tends to engender both compliant and rebellious attitudes. As a result, such attitudes lead typically to more regulatory measures, which come to be viewed as appropriate. Fostering a society of enlightened people is quite another matter. Primarily it involves treating human beings with respect (i.e., as their nature demands). Bakunin stated the following about the nature of government:

Its essence consists not in persuasion, but in command and compulsion. . . . [Government] . . . cannot conceal the fact that it is the legal maimer of our will, the constant negation of our liberty. Even when it commands the good, it makes valueless by commanding it; for every command slaps liberty in the face; as soon as the good is commanded, it is transformed into the evil in the eyes of the true (that is, human, by no means divine) morality, of the dignity of man, of liberty; for man's liberty, morality, and dignity consist precisely in doing the good not because he is commanded to but because he recognizes it, wills it, and loves it.³⁰(p.83)

Since childhood, we have been taught political ideas that defy logic in many respects. Possibly these ideas carry with them a secret hope by their disseminators that none will question the system, the system purportedly designed for everyone's benefit. But we are not "everyone" and neither is anyone else. Regardless of the type of government or country, this is a reliable way to create intellectual dependency. Perfection of collectivistic thinking occurs when we do not desire to realize the nature of our dependency. Lesser perfection occurs when we argue and quibble about political nonessentials and minutiae, while overlooking the main ideas that have contributed to our predicament.

All of us were probably taught to take for granted that coercive government is necessary and proper for people to live together—and to overlook the coercive aspect. Because large populations and advanced economies have so many interactions and business activities, the potential for greater social problems and legal disagreements is augmented. However, we ought not draw the conclusion that we need even more government for things to operate smoothly.

Also, we need to question the idea that a governing body, which supposedly represents the people and their interests, is the best prescription for any society desiring to be civil. As in the book *Lord of the Flies*, we need to reflect on the nature of humans in relation to government. Briefly, this book is a story about a group of children who get stranded on a deserted island. In order to survive, they deem it necessary to form a kind of government with a designated hierarchy of leadership. Soon the system formed to protect the interests of the group becomes the children's worst enemy. Horrible cruelty and vicious brutality eventually envelop their social system, until it becomes "every man for himself" and "survival of the fittest."

Many draw the conclusion from this that somehow, in some way, human nature is flawed, and that the only way order can ever be maintained is by creating a better way of governing people. In this story, as in numerous others, the blame falls on human nature rather than on contradictory ideas. Where did the children get their ideas about devising a system of government? Obviously, they obtained them from the society from which they had been separated, the same social system that their parents and teachers had told them was required for tranquility and peaceful relations. The typical response in defense of "the system" is that *in theory* it works; we just have to be careful about applying it wrong. But a theory that produces bad results ought to be rejected. Naturally, a contradictory theory will yield bad results.

The popular assumption that a government should preside over civilization arises mainly from the idea that law and order would not exist without government. The underlying premise is

that government has the right to determine the fate of people within its boundaries (i.e., to rule over those in a certain geographical area). Let us examine the salient implications of the law and order idea and see how much law and order government provides.

Government is a group of individuals designed by themselves, the people at large (the majority), or both, for the purpose of passing and enforcing laws of the country, state, county, or city. The services provided by government vary from country to country, but at a bare minimum usually include (in concert with headquarters and branch offices) police forces, law courts, and a military. Since government is the sole provider of these services, government holds a legalized monopoly on them.⁸⁹ So, plainly, government acts as the involuntary agent of the populace. Governments are explicitly designed to deny any competition within their arbitrarily designated political and geographical boundaries. Those who disagree with this state of affairs have no alternative in their particular governed region.

Present and past governments share another key problem. Many of their laws are non-objective—that is, they are not validated by the process of logic and do not follow from the principles that ensure human survival. Since non-objective laws are not based on the method of determining truth, they cannot possibly uphold the fundamental principle of rights. Non-objective laws by definition violate people's rights.

Every form of government must initiate force to maintain its non-objective laws. Force is permitted not to ordinary criminals (at least in principle), but instead to government itself. One can see what sort of double-standard this sets up in civilization: Governmentally declared criminals—a group consisting of violators of others' rights as well as nonviolators of others' rights (declared so by non-objective laws)—are to be penalized for their acts, while government is able to commit similar crimes (albeit on a far greater scale) without a question. Usually if there are any questions, they have little to do with the fundamental contradictions involved.

Probably no political contradiction is worse than the idea that aggression towards others is wrong for criminals but somehow moral and just for government. The foremost enactment of this is the method by which every government is currently able to function: taxation. If taxation were actually voluntary, it would not be a crime to prevent government from taking one's property (viz., money).

Essentially, government provides services that have not been chosen by the recipients. *Chosen* services imply voluntary, contractual payment for them. Taxation does not involve voluntary, contractual payment for services rendered. Rather, it involves the imposition of governmental activities on individuals and the requirement of compensation for those activities.

A concrete example is in order. Suppose some people whom you neither know nor have solicited come to your house one day and begin repainting it, say in a different color. In spite of your initial questions about their actions and then your protests and demands for them to stop, they continue until the job is finished. (On the other hand, you could have tried to force them to stop and tried to make them leave. If you had done so, they would likely have responded—if you did not thwart them—by arresting you and locking you in a prison.)

Upon completion, the painters demand payment for their services. Actually, the cost does not really matter—it could even be “free”—because it still involves trespassing and meddling with your property. Nonetheless, they will not leave you alone until they have extracted payment from you. You rightly state that what they have done as well as what they are demanding is preposterous, and it is in violation of your inalienable rights (viz., to property).

Since you refuse to pay, they require you to go to court and face numerous fines and incarceration—on the grounds that you are in violation of *their* “rights” to *your* money. After attempting to explain the nature of your case in court and stating intransigently that you will not pay for (or accept) services for which you did not contract, the painters and their loyal subordinates proceed to take

some of your possessions or seize your bank account and/or incarcerate you. What is their main explanation? The taking of your property—not to mention your time spent in this episode—is necessary for the common good.

Interestingly, the only “painters” who get by with this sort of theft are those called government. Of course, this means that some individuals are permitted to initiate force against others solely by virtue of the title they hold. Tucker put it this way many decades ago:

In the first place, all the acts of governments are indirectly invasive, because dependent upon the primary invasion called taxation. . . . The very first act of the State, the compulsory assessment and collection of taxes, is itself an aggression, a violation of equal liberty, and, as such, vitiates every subsequent act, even those acts which would be purely defensive if paid for out of a treasury filled by voluntary contributions. How is it possible to sanction, under the law of equal liberty, the confiscation of a man's earnings to pay for protection which he has not sought and does not desire? . . . To force a man to pay for the violation of his own liberty is indeed an addition of insult to injury.³⁰(p.129)

Yet to keep its power, government endeavors to remain immune from accusations of criminal activities in a fundamental philosophical sense (not merely in terms of violating current statutes). Government seeks to retain an unfounded connotation of law and order. Of course, no rational justification can ever be made for this disregard of the facts of reality and human beings' basic tools of survival.

Imagine the confusion created in the minds of children when they are taught that it is normal to accept contradictions of this magnitude. Soon, to not question the morality and function of government becomes a matter of psychological habit. The role of government is continually thrust into the “not to be questioned”

realm of ideas. The terms “morality” and “justice” acquire such tenuous and vague meanings that eventually most minds give up the search for a clear sense of them. Usually what remains is the inarticulate and sometimes overwhelming feeling that something is wrong with society and strange about human relationships.

The words of anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon describe in detail what government has the power to do (depending on the laws it does or does not uphold and enforce). Although Proudhon held some highly contradictory political beliefs himself, his description here is rather timeless. It informs us of our responsibility to never misunderstand the ominous nature of coercive government:

To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commended; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor wisdom, nor virtue. . . . To be governed means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is noted, registered, entered into a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorized, recommended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected. Government means to be subjected to tribute, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, extorted, pressured, mystified, robbed; all in the name of the public utility and the general good. Then, at the first sign of resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garroted, imprisoned, shot, machine-gunned, judged, sentenced, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to cap it all, ridiculed, mocked, outraged, and dishonored. *That* is government, *that* is its justice and its morality! . . . O human personality! How can it be that you have cowered in such subjection for sixty centuries?³⁷(p.15)

Probably most people believe that the United States

government's policies should not be included in the majority of these depictions. After all, the United States was the first country ever to devise a bill of individual rights and a constitution of checks and balances. These documents were devised to ensure that government serves and protects people, rather than oppresses them.

As mentioned, the authors of these documents deserve enormous respect for what has been, so far, the greatest political achievement in the history of the human race: the Bill of Rights—even though it has been continually misconstrued and thus depreciated since its implementation.

However, the sort of government that exists presently is far different than the initial U.S. government. As noted by many present advocates of governmental reform, the degree of government's encroachment on its citizens has greatly escalated over the last 200 years. Men such as Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Paine would likely be appalled about the present condition of politics. Perhaps they would be stunned to see how their ideas have been twisted, manipulated, and misinterpreted by all the power-hungry bureaucrats who have held political office and lobbyists who have pandered to them.

So, the all-important question arises: Where did it all go so wrong? Logical examination of the Constitution and related political documents enlightens us about the crack in the foundation of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

In addition to its immediate authorization of taxation on the public, the Constitution grants to government powers that no individual could ever legally possess—on account of their rights-infringing nature. Since aggression in human relationships destroys a rational being's ability to function, the creation of laws that uphold this subhuman act are inherently flawed, regardless of their intent. Contrary to the Machiavellian principle "The end justifies the means," the illogical initiation of force nullifies any end sought because it is a self-refuting means.

Again, Democracy, in which the majority rules and imple-

ments laws, represents a futile attempt to circumvent the immutable laws of nature. It says, in effect, "Might makes right." The same applies to a democratically elected Republic such as the United States. Even though it seeks to create "a nation of laws, not of men," law must be objective in order to uphold individual rights and prevent corruption.

Sanctioned aggression was the crack in the foundation of the Constitution. Once created, the task of securing individual rights became hopeless. "Rights" that were open for amendment to satisfy anyone's contradictory vision of the just, moral, or needed replaced the absolutism of rights. Because of this, it was only a matter of time for the political system to erode and erase the however benevolent intentions of the Framers.

For the most part, the system of "checks and balances" was, at best, a weak inhibitor of tyranny. However, it did slow the process of decay. The creation of inherent functional inefficiencies and cumbersome decision-making abilities, coupled with usage of common law, restrained the power of the State. Corrupt power was not allowed to run rampant, as in dictatorships. Additionally, valuable policies and various good ideas were able to surface on a large and complex forum of debate. But this system also hindered people's ability to see the roots of political problems and, hence, discover basic solutions.

Most of the thousands of intricate laws passed from one part of Congress to another, from one legislature to another, from one committee to another, from one debate to the next, from one vote to the next vote, have been merely variations on the same theme—treating human beings in an involuntary manner. Since such laws were non-objective from the start, they would be non-objective at the end when they were enforced. Even when brought to the judiciary system, their objectivity was not typically questioned. Mainly the "legality" of their essence or applications was interpreted (validated or invalidated, upheld or reformed) throughout the considerable array of state and federal courts. A few were given the final stamp of approval or disap-

proval by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, although popularly held in high regard, has a long record of expedient and arbitrary rulings (majority as well as unanimous) over state laws. Many vague and inconsistent interpretations of constitutional amendments have also been bequeathed to the justice system and to the American public.

All these troubles merely reflect the contradictory nature of non-objective law. Instead of interpreting laws from a logical perspective, the courts typically have judged whether or not they conform to the Constitution. Yet something declared “constitutional” may not necessarily be logical, and something declared “unconstitutional” may not necessarily be illogical. The Constitution has been used as a replacement for logical thinking involving adjudication of rights. It was problematic precisely because it did not (nor will it) fully respect the concept of rights. Since the government and its law courts have been, and still are, the largest violators of rights, their authority to make rulings concerning rights should have been held suspect from the beginning.

Although many view it as a contractual agreement between the populace and government, the Constitution of course cannot be considered a valid legal and binding contract. Only a handful of individuals signed the document a couple centuries ago. It certainly cannot have contractual validity for hundreds of millions presently. Yet a trust is placed in the Constitution to be an upholder of rights. After all, a populace does need to outline and concretize its laws.

To have objective laws codified and written for people to embrace is helpful as well as necessary. The fundamental question concerns how such laws are established, and by whom. Since only *individuals*—not a coercive government—can *own* anything in the strict sense, only they can ensure peace and tranquility in their environment. The property that people own constitutes the domain on which they can enforce whatever personal rules they think are appropriate. Since infringement of the rights of others in this process

would be contradictory, rules must involve informed consent; contractual relationships (both implicit and explicit) become the norm.

Property owners and those with whom they contract can therefore maintain law and order. They can devise a system of justice to uphold and protect individual rights—for ultimately, only each individual who understands the meaning of and reasons for rights can uphold them.

Nonetheless, many fervent and passive advocates of the Constitution overlook these observations. In *No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority*, Spooner scornfully distinguished three types of constitutional supporters. During his lifetime though, the nineteenth century, the scale of corruption was obviously much smaller:

The ostensible supporters of the Constitution, like the ostensible supporters of most other governments, are made up of three classes, viz.: 1. Knaves, a numerous and active class, who see in the government an instrument which they can use for their own aggrandizement or wealth. 2. Dupes—a large class, no doubt—each of whom, because he is allowed one voice out of millions in deciding what he may do with his own person and his own property, and because he is permitted to have the same voice in robbing, enslaving, and murdering others, that others have in robbing, enslaving, and murdering himself, is stupid enough to imagine that he is a ‘free man,’ a ‘sovereign’; that this is ‘a free government’; ‘a government of equal rights,’ ‘the best government on earth,’ and such like absurdities. 3. A class who have some appreciation of the evils of government, but either do not see how to get rid of them or do not choose to so far sacrifice their private interests as to give themselves seriously and earnestly to the work of making a change.⁹⁸(p.16)

The rejoinder might be made, however, about the good intentions and effects of many laws that have been passed and enacted in society. One could say that many laws resulting from

the Bill of Rights are both effective and beneficial. Could not, for instance, involuntary servitude laws, free speech laws, gun ownership laws, self-defense laws, and so forth, be viewed as ensuring rights and creating a society of fairness? But this is really epistemological stealing of the concepts of law and rights. Laws are designed to protect rights that we already possess by virtue of being human. Laws cannot create rights. Again, rights cannot be given to us as a privilege or favor, even though all governments that disregard them pretend to.

Since government-provided “rights” are likely to be undermined or even erased as time goes on, they usually are written down and established in law. Of course, such rights are also susceptible to a lot of misinterpretation. The framers of the Constitution were well aware of this dilemma, so they created the Ninth Amendment. It states: “The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” Yet, the system supposedly designed to prevent rights from being erased is the same non-objective system that erases them (the image of the fox guarding the chicken coop comes to mind). Moreover, the various “rights” enacted by government are often granted to some at the expense of others.

Law and order are terms associated with government because it has chronically had a monopoly on the particular services catering to law and order. Government has normally been the sole agent for people in matters concerning their liberties. However, the idea of *agency* implies that one *chooses* another individual (or group of individuals) to act on one’s behalf and in one’s best interests. Government, being a coercive monopoly of select individuals (placed there by voting procedures), for all practical purposes nullifies the concept of agency.

The individuals in government are not voluntarily selected. Many gain positions through secret ballot (and others are, in turn, hired by them). Basically, an unseen majority selects agents for *everyone*, and it disregards what the minority desires. Such a pro-

cess clearly denies the idea of personal contracts. Spooner assessed these practices in the following way:

This is the kind of government we have [speaking of a system of secrecy]; and it is the only one we are likely to have, until men are ready to say: We will consent to no Constitution, except such an one as we are neither ashamed nor afraid to sign; and we will authorize no government to do anything in our name which we are not willing to be personally responsible for.(p.30)

If any number of men, many or few, claim the right to govern the people of this country, let them make and sign an open compact with each other to do so. Let them thus make themselves individually known to those whom they propose to govern. And let them thus openly take the legitimate responsibility of their acts.⁹⁸(ibid.)

Such statements appeal to the self-respect and responsibility of individuals. Most individuals in their private lives generally take responsibility for their actions. For instance, most would wince at the thought of breaking into someone's home (or bank account) and taking a percentage of his or her possessions. Most would also be repulsed at the thought of clubbing a peaceful person over the head and holding him or her captive on account of not doing what was demanded.

On the other hand, most people do not seriously examine the propriety of various forms of taxation and coercive rules and regulations. In fact, most people steadfastly advocate such actions. Yet ironically, often much time and effort is spent "cheating" on taxes, for instance. This, of course, is where moral uncertainty generates irresponsibility.

For those in government, the matter of self-responsibility is just as vital. Government is by far the largest employer in the United States (not to mention in other countries). It has progres-

sively increased its share of the job market, which definitely makes self-responsibility in the economic realm difficult. Many appealing financial opportunities and employment positions are connected to government, with which the so-called private sector cannot compare or compete. Even so, governmental employees need to be aware of the political contradictions that entail infringement of others' rights—as well as the deleterious consequences of such contradictions. This would enable them to consider the real alternatives to the present system. To take full responsibility for one's actions is to pass judgment when and where it is needed.

Self-responsibility relies on the conviction that one is both the voluntary creator and voluntary inhibitor of one's actions. The *correctness of one's premises* should determine whether or not one takes an action. Ultimately, one is responsible for one's own actions, no matter what another person requests or offers. For instance, to act on a request to commit a crime makes one responsible for it—regardless of the intent or consequences. (Of course, this assumes that one is not brain damaged or mentally crippled in a way that diminishes or incapacitates volitional functioning.) In a trial, however, the level of intent (*mens rea*) determines the nature of *criminal* accountability. The perpetrator's knowledge of the consequences of his or her action and the degree of recklessness or carelessness tied to that knowledge are factors to be considered in a court of law.

The military has provided numerous examples of what can happen when individuals shirk responsibility. Some of the worst improprieties and unspeakable atrocities known to the human race have resulted from following unquestioned “orders from above.” The factors involved in soldiers carrying out their ordered duties are certainly complex. Soldiers rely on contracts of trust in superiors to make competent and legal decisions. Yet such decisions often demand logical justification.

In any job, a person assumes responsibility for the activities performed. Part of one's job is to become informed, instead of acting blindly. Thus, military soldiers need to be just as knowledgeable about the ramifications of their actions as military lead-

ers. The nature of justice demands it. This is all the more true in our world's currently depraved socio-political context. Holding "war machines" accountable for heinousness is nonsensical, because those who take the actions are responsible—as are the persons who give the orders.

In general, government can be used by some as a shield that protects wrong actions. The anonymity of collective force directly diminishes both self-responsibility and personal accountability. Yet wrongdoing is often rationalized. Be it individual or political, it is typically painted in the best light possible—in order to seem either right or unintentional. Persons may try to make themselves oblivious to internal and external signals warning them of contradictory activities.

Those in government are no less human than the rest of our species. They are just involved in the destructive nature of a coercive system. Government really offers a mixed bag of services; some are logical, while some are contradictory. Still, many of the services they offer use retaliatory force to defend individual rights.

Rights-respecting services must be in the range of choice for the individual. But choice is not a concept to which government by nature is friendly. Real and whole people welcome choice. Independent and sovereign minds can think and judge for themselves. Indeed, to consider ourselves capable of making choices on this fundamental level is to resolve many contradictions and internal problems. Such an attitude can only broaden our horizons and expand our possibilities.

Let us explore further what acceptance of coercive government entails. Government decides for citizens what is right or wrong, legal or illegal, through the Constitution and laws of the rulers. Citizens are supposed to be placated by being allowed to vote for these rulers, who in turn appoint their own servants. The implication is that people outside the governmental group are incapable of making important decisions to provide for their well-being—incapable of choosing what is right for them. Most laws will be decided arbitrarily by the governmental group and enforced by them, be-

cause only they are capable or good enough to devise such laws. The implication is that people outside the group cannot think for themselves on such matters and draw sound conclusions.

The governmental group then contends that they must deal with people by force in order to achieve ends sought by themselves or by the majority. In other words, people are to be treated as means to other people's ends, as sacrificial animals—not as human beings. The implication is that people outside the governmental group are not capable of beneficial self-regulation and are unable to function properly in reality—unless they are continually beaten over the head with a club (both figuratively and actually).

Ironically, the Constitution requires governmental officials to include themselves in the system designed for everyone else—the supposed society of incompetents. If all of the above were true, why would those in government contradict their ideas by allowing themselves to also be governed by government? By admitting that they are the same as everyone else, the following query arises: If people need to be governed in principle, then who governs the governors?

Caring about contradictions is not likely to be on the governmental system's agenda. Spooner stated the following about one of *Homo sapiens'* greatest contradictions:

The truth was that the government was in peril, *solely because it was not fit to exist*. It, and the State governments—all but parts of one and the same system—were rotten with tyranny and crime.(p.72)

. . . It is clearly time for the people of this country to inquire what constitutions and governments are good for, and whether they (the people) have any natural right, as human beings, to live for themselves, or only for a few conspirators, swindlers, usurpers, robbers, and tyrants, who employ lawmakers, judges, etc., to do their villainous work upon their fellow-men.⁹⁸(p.80)

Since human beings cannot change their nature, all are fundamentally the same (regardless of how they look, think, or behave); they all possess a rational faculty. What they choose to do with this faculty might make them quite different from each other, but that does not change their fundamental nature.

Fundamentally then, do people need other people to govern them? Do people need to be forced to accept the choices of others concerning their rights? Do people need to be forced to do things “for their own good,” or “for the common good”? Do people need to be treated in an involuntary manner? Do people need to be taken care of, no matter at whose expense? To be sure, the issues here are metaphysical, moral, and psychological, not merely political.

Regardless of our circumstances and of all the possible ways we can be impaired, the principle remains. Forcing peaceful individuals to behave in desired ways is contradictory. Even if we are in a condition that requires physical or mental assistance in order to survive (which incidentally happens to be the case of every child), we have no right to use force. In reality, all the preceding about fundamental human incompetence, weakness, and iniquity becomes self-fulfilling prophecy for those who agree with it, whatever their motivations. Certainly, to treat people essentially as unreasoning animals does not encourage moral behavior. We have already noted that contradictions by nature do not work. They will always be psychologically and existentially destructive.

Capitalism And Current Political Views

Now that we have examined government in greater detail, we can scrutinize dominant themes and political viewpoints tied to it. All of these ideologies take place in a market of human interaction of course—an economic system. While most believe that the United States has a capitalistic economic system, the term “capitalism” requires a good deal of clarification.

Capitalism is briefly defined in the *Oxford American Dictio-*

nary as an economy in which trade and industry are controlled by private owners. In regard to property, the term “private owners” is basically a redundancy, on account of the fact that public property is basically a contradiction in terms. In order to own anything, one must have an identity—that is, be a specific person. The term “public” deceptively means “everyone”—without any specific identity allowing one to use and/or dispose of property as the owner(s) sees fit. Again, ownership is an individual affair, however large the group of contracted individuals. This thereby facilitates absolute rights to the property at hand.

“Trade and industry” are meant to encompass the actions between human beings. Trade involves material as well as spiritual values. Exchanging and offering things of value, such as ideas, physical products, or services—all lie in the realm of trade. Industry depicts the modern technological era in which complex productivity that involves specialization and division of labor is the norm.

Notice that the above definition for capitalism makes no mention of the type, or even the existence, of government. However, it does *imply* that economic situations exist in which private owners do not control trade and industry. In actuality, nowhere in *Homo sapiens*’ past or present can one find an example of *real* capitalism.

Classical Liberalism of the nineteenth century in America is the closest human beings have come to unchaining themselves from coercive government. Even then, however, government ran its enterprises on extorted wealth (i.e., taxation). And, in addition to many personal infringements during this period, larger businesses were already gaining from government more aid and regulations biased in their favor.⁶¹ Though the U.S. government subsequently grew too large and intrusive to be considered a Classical Liberal system, a revival in Classical Liberal ideas is now occurring in America.

The main section of the Libertarian Party has an agenda that upholds the essential principles of Classical Liberalism. Its presidential candidate, Harry Browne, promotes a well-outlined set of policies that would reduce government to its real Constitu-

tional limits (as intended by the Framers). Additionally, many current Libertarian “think tanks,” such as the Cato Institute, can be classified as advocates of limited government and more individual liberty—definitely vast improvements over status quo policy institutes.

The Libertarian agenda provides a strategic interim base from which to achieve a noncontradictory political system. At this point, though, certain philosophical inconsistencies among its proponents remain in the background. Libertarianism’s proponents actually can be divided into three ideological classes: those advocating limited government funded through minimal taxation (i.e., a Classical Liberal system); those advocating limited government funded through voluntary contributions (i.e., a *Laissez-faire* capitalistic system); and lastly, those advocating free market justice services instead of government (i.e., an Anarcho-capitalistic system).

Obviously, these differing viewpoints need to be logically scrutinized. Since the next section will analyze *Laissez-faire* Capitalism in detail, and subsequent sections will analyze Anarcho-capitalism (in this book called Self-Governing Capitalism), we will now further inspect the system designed by the Framers.

As noted, Classical Liberalism contains a fatal flaw—it permits the initiation of force by government (taxation being merely one example). A sample of modern Classical Liberal thought was outlined by political theorist Milton Friedman:

Our principles offer no hard and fast line how far it is appropriate to use government to accomplish jointly what it is difficult or impossible for us to accomplish separately through strictly voluntary exchange. In any particular case of proposed intervention, we must make up a balance sheet, listing separately the advantages and disadvantages.³¹(p.32)

Such reasoning represents philosophical pragmatism, which means doing what “works,” despite possible violation of logical principles (e.g., of morality). Pragmatic thinking permeates many

aspects of our culture. The moral and the practical are sometimes considered to be mutually exclusive. Ethical contradictions aside, fabrication of a balance sheet to determine the pros and cons of using initiatory force is an affront to human dignity—even with the best of intentions or to achieve possibly otherwise unreachable ends.

Rights are simply not at the disposal of a “well-meaning” bureaucrat or the populace. At base, liberty is not open for debate. When government decides to use coercion to help others, it has forgotten the real meaning of human liberty. Another statement by Friedman reveals this:

The need for government in these respects arises because absolute freedom is impossible. However attractive anarchy may be as a philosophy, it is not feasible in a world of imperfect men. Men's freedoms can conflict, and when they do, one man's freedom must be limited to preserve another's—as a Supreme Court Justice once put it, ‘My freedom to move my fist must be limited by the proximity of your chin.’³¹(p.25)

Unfortunately, a world of imperfect men can be immortalized by way of such a view, a world of men who resort to government to cure their ills (and create many more). Here we need a specific definition for “freedom.” Freedom, as a political concept, depends on the concept of rights. By having inalienable rights enacted each human being is free. This necessarily entails not infringing on the rights of others; one can never be “free” to take away the freedom of others. Absolute freedom is ensured not by limiting freedom, but by protecting it. Therefore, absolute freedom means having absolute rights. They are basically one and the same.

Though Classical Liberalism is, again, a better system than those in existence, it differs only in degree. Governmental intervention and violation of rights still remain. Currently in any part

of the world, one can find social systems that pay lip service to freedom of trade and industry. But with minor inspection, these so-called free systems reveal themselves for what they are: economies ruled by the State. What we have in the United States today is an economy that contains many aspects of Fascism and Socialism—in sum, a Semi-Fascist Welfare-State.

The government allows people to own and run businesses (although not all) while it controls aspects of the profits, spending, investment, supply and distribution, prices, and many other management practices. In addition, thousands of laws against more personal freedoms are enforced on a daily basis. Just as devastating is the fact that government controls the primary medium of exchange in the market system, the standard of value for goods and services traded between individuals—money.

In this country and throughout the world, children as well as adults are taught that capitalism means any kind of market situation in which goods and services are traded. The restrictions present in the market—regulations, levies, tariffs, taxes, duties, directives, subsidies, special favors, and exclusive privileges—are barely mentioned. Clearly, one can begin to understand why the world is in its present condition, at least from a politico-economic perspective.

So embedded do ideas about basic human ineptitude and iniquity become, that most view coercive forms of government as necessary. The monstrous contradictions involved are casually brushed aside. Impositions are commonly defended with the idea that the market simply cannot operate properly without them. While the ideas of total social planning and pervasive welfare systems are running thinner today, they are far from dying out. The ethical behavior of the market—the morality of the market—still remains in question. Overwhelming evidence has shown people the effectiveness and efficiency of the market; the responsive forces of supply and demand are undeniable. Yet such evidence needs to be viewed with logical principles in order to be ethically convincing.

Even though the market is the place in which people voluntarily exchange values, some view it in other terms. Some make remarks about an “evil profit motive,” “selfish greed” of businessmen, “unfair” distribution of wealth, and “immoral” actions of citizens. Flaws in the system are seen as residing with others and rarely with self. Of course, by making it a battle between “my good nature” and “their bad nature,” one never need address more fundamental and personal issues of psychology and philosophy.

The common criticism is that capitalism is practical but not moral; it may work fine in terms of economics, but it fails in the realm of treating people fairly and with compassion. Let us define our terms in this context. “Practical” is defined as that which works, and “moral” is defined as that which is good. As mentioned, individual life is the ultimate standard of value. If *the good* is that which benefits individuals, and *what works* is that which achieves of the good, then something practical should be that which is moral. Accordingly, something moral should be that which is practical. Obviously, those who reject the capitalistic economy on “moral” grounds do not have the welfare of individuals in mind. If they do, then they are entertaining a large ethical contradiction.

As noted, fairness and compassion are not created by the negation of rights. In any discussion, definition of the concepts and types of actions involved is critical. Running on what feels right or simply what one uncritically believes often produces contradictory results. Before one can consider something good or bad, one must determine *what that something is* (i.e., understand the nature of what is being judged). Even though feelings are tremendously useful indicators, one still needs to logically identify their nature. The Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises commented on the arguments for socialistic systems:

... People do not ask for socialism because they *know* that socialism will improve their conditions, and they do not reject capitalism because they *know* that it is a system

prejudicial to their interests. They are socialists because they *believe* that socialism will improve their conditions, and they hate capitalism because they *believe* that it harms them. They are socialists because they are blinded by envy and ignorance.⁶⁴ (p.46)

Mistaken philosophical premises play a large part in these views. Such premises enable the exchange of rational values to be seen as wrong or immoral. They enable denunciation of the only system capable of creating enormous amounts of capital, which raises everyone's standard of living (many times over those in communistic systems). Mistaken philosophical premises also enable criticism of large-scale production of goods and services that conveniently and cheaply take care of most existential needs—beyond the wildest imaginations of primitive people (or even past kings for that matter).

Some of these premises are indeed the result of today's tremendously distorted capitalistic system. The two ever-thriving political parties, Democratic and Republican, create many of the problems with the current system. They are part and parcel of the maintenance of irrational premises. The Democratic Party, often associated with being a "Liberal," advocates more freedom of trade in the mental realm (e.g., more freedom of personal choice and expression); freedom of trade in the material realm, however, should be controlled to a greater degree (e.g., more restrictions, regulations, and taxes on businesses).

In order to obtain a developmental and historical perspective of this attitude, we turn to the words of advocate of freedom R.A. Childs Jr.:

According to the liberal, in the nineteenth century there was an individualistic social system in the United States, which, when left unchecked, led inevitably to the 'strong' using the forces of a free market to smash and subdue the 'weak,' by building gigantic, monopolistic industrial enter-

prises which dominated and controlled the life of the nation. Then, as this centralization proceeded to snowball, the 'public' awoke to its impending subjugation at the hands of these monopolistic businessmen. The public was stirred by the injustice of it all and demanded reform, whereupon altruistic and far-seeing politicians moved quickly to smash the monopolists with antitrust laws and other regulations of the economy, on behalf of the ever-suffering 'little man' who was saved thereby from certain doom. Thus did the American government squash the greedy monopolists and restore competition, equality of opportunity and the like, which was perishing in the unregulated laissez-faire free market economy. Thus did the American state act to save both freedom and capitalism.⁶¹(p.217)

Probably many of us have encountered similar notions more than once in our academic experiences. Such emotional propaganda is taught to millions of adolescents in high schools and colleges. Among other things, it is designed to rationalize the current corrupt state of affairs. Politicians and lobbyists utilize it to continue enhancing their own positions at the expense of justice and rights. Yet such misinformation appeals to those who feel they have little control over their purchases and employment.

The idea that big businesses engage in concerted efforts to chain customers to particular products and services is simply an impossibility under true capitalism—that is, where there is no coercion. Only by virtue of the State can businesses coercively control their markets and disrupt a competitive economy.⁷⁷ Apparently, some would rather blame the voluntary actions of others for society's problems, rather than the forceful actions of governments and their abettors.

Alternatively, the Republican Party, often associated with being a "Conservative," advocates more freedom of trade in the material realm (e.g., less taxation, less regulation of businesses, less bureaucracy—supposedly); freedom of trade in the mental realm,

however, should be controlled to a greater degree (e.g., harsher laws against certain personal choices and “socially unacceptable” behavior).

Since conservatism concedes the same premise as liberalism—permission of initiatory force—it merely differs in the *degree* to which the material realm should be controlled; the same can be said for the spiritual realm. The two ideologies just have different versions of “the good.” This is why Republicans (or Conservatives) sometimes charge Democrats (or Liberals) with stealing their agenda whenever the latter advocate cuts in programs and reductions in bureaucracy. Democrats, in comparison, sometimes accuse Republicans of being less moral, because the latter (at times) may favor less governmental welfare programs and less taxation on wealthy, productive (so-called greedy) members of society.

Nevertheless, in principle both viewpoints are the same political philosophy. Both favor illogical laws and regulation of capitalism, albeit in vaguely different ways. Any distinctions tend to be superficial and illusory. Neither one allows absolute freedom in all realms of trade among consenting individuals.

Democrats tend to see governmental impositions as a way to bring “fairness” to the marketplace. Republicans tend to see governmental impositions as a way to bring “morality” to the marketplace. In either case, they attempt to impose their particular moral and economic values on the marketplace; everyone has to conform to their supposedly proper viewpoints.

No matter what goals one has for people or society, example and persuasion are the *only* ways to espouse values (regardless of their rationality). Forcing people who disagree or are ambivalent is completely wrong. Only when someone’s rights have been violated is force allowable (which, of course, is retaliatory force).

An example of trying to force one’s morality on the marketplace concerns the issue of abortion. Fortunately, the Supreme Court has rightly judged abortion to be legal. Every woman has dominion over her own body and, hence, physiology. Since a fetus is tied to and part of a woman’s body, it is in her domain.

Nonetheless, abortion is controversial for certain reasons. The fetus comes to resemble an actual baby during its development, so some believe that it should have rights of its own, able to be violated. Yet one cannot reverse cause and effect by saying that a fetus has a “right” to a woman’s body and a “right” to life, for rights can only reside in the creator of rights, the woman. The dividing line between rights and non-rights is not fertilization of an ovum. Nor is it any other particular stage in fetal development. A zygote and all its subsequent amazing transformations cannot have rights that supersede the rights of the individual in which it transforms.

Despite claims that abortion is murder, murder by definition can only be done to an actual person, not a fetus. Certainly, doctors who perform abortions are highly aware of the ethical issues. Competent physicians attempt to act in the best interests of those who seek their services. When a woman decides, or a physician recommends, aborting a fetus in the later stages of development, the health of the woman is usually at stake. If the fetus can remain viable outside the womb, anyone is free to take responsibility for it. Viability outside the womb basically determines the right to life. While this issue will undoubtedly become more complex as medical technology progresses (for instance, enabling younger fetuses to remain viable outside the womb), the rights of the woman will always remain.

As some individuals strive to institute rights for the embryo or fetus, they may ignore the existential, developmental, and psychological contexts of potential mothers. To force a woman into motherhood (or into a dangerous black market abortion) is definitely not compassionate, let alone logical or legal. If one’s goals are to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to ensure the birth of healthy babies with physically and psychologically healthy mothers, one must uphold the right of individuals to choose their own destinies. Additionally, one must believe that human beings naturally desire to see life flourish—which must start with their own adult lives.

Force is currently used in the United States in thousands of ways to achieve allegedly otherwise unachievable ends. A promi-

nent and emotionally charged example is discrimination laws, or rather, “anti-discrimination” laws. Government requires property owners (i.e., businesspersons and employers) to cater to all individuals equally (e.g., those with any type of genetic lineage, physical appearance, age, anatomical structure, and so on—the list is practically endless).

Essentially, if one can posture as a victim, one can use the barbaric methods of government to make others (viz., employers) provide for oneself. This appears to be the political version of the parental intimidation technique, “You will do this because *I say* you will do this.” But *victim* is a legal concept requiring a perpetrator who initiates force in some form. Being denied employment has nothing to do with rights infringement.

Anti-discrimination laws disregard that employers have the right to do what they want with their property—in this case, to decide who works with them and for how long, as well as who patronizes their establishments. If employers fail to select individuals based on their particular merit, employers are the ones who lose; people will work and shop elsewhere.

Why would one desire—through legal mandate—to work with someone who entertains particular inane prejudices? Maybe on account of feelings of injured self-worth after being treated unreasonably. Usually this self-worth has been sought in all the wrong places (everywhere but the mind), and so it hangs in the balance of others’ decisions and actions.

Those who seek fair treatment typically do not reflect on the real legal nature of the supposed wrong. They may contend that the whole process of punishing employers and their businesses is carried on in the name of “liberty.” Yet such laws are by nature anti-liberty. They incapacitate a property owner’s sovereign right to choose. Even when others perceive an owner’s choices as unpalatable, rights must still be honored. Again, no other rights are possible when property rights are not upheld.

One who enters a work contract with any particular property owner (i.e., any business enterprise), by definition does so volun-

tarily. Having the sovereign right to choose in this matter plainly does not entail the “right” to work with any employer not agreeing to the relationship. Unless stipulated otherwise in the contract, one does not have the “right” to be treated “fairly,” or even the “right” to have a “non-hostile” work environment. Such situations usually have nothing to do with physical violence or threat of force, but rather with general disrespect. One especially does not have the “right” not to be fired (at any time or for any reason). This corresponds to being able to quit employment (at any time for any reason). People are not slaves.

All these false rights simply represent the desires and wishes of people. Even though many of them are probably well intentioned, one thing is certain: Wishes will not come true by forcing them to come true. This just precludes hope for a better, saner, social environment, because *force is insanity incarnate*.

In the end, both Liberal and Conservative views bypass the distinctively human method of survival and tragically choose the inhuman one, the method that destroys one’s right to decide. One cannot correctly declare a right to one’s actions when they involve violation of the rights of others. To destroy the source of rights—the choosing mind—is not a right.

When force is seen as the most appropriate way to deal with people, liberty quickly becomes an equivocation. Rand noted the hypocrisy in Liberal and Conservative proclamations on behalf of liberty:

We stand for *freedom*, say both groups—and proceed to declare what kind of controls, regulation, coercion, taxes, and ‘sacrifices’ they would impose, what arbitrary powers they would demand, what ‘social gains’ they would hand out to various groups, without specifying from what other groups these ‘gains’ would be expropriated. Neither of them cares to admit that government control of a country’s economy—any kind or degree of such control, by any group, for any purpose whatsoever—rests on the basic principle of

statism, the principle that man's life belongs to the state. A mixed economy is merely a semi-socialized economy—which means: a semi-enslaved society—which means: a country torn by irreconcilable contradictions, in the process of gradual disintegration.⁷⁷(p.192)

When individuals since early childhood continually see people treated as means to other people's ends, they might conclude that this is natural. They might conclude that they do not have a full right to the wealth they have created and the future wealth they seek; instead, they may feel guilty about amassing it and then give it away in the name of philanthropy. They might believe that they do not have a right to their happiness and achievements without thinking they have somehow violated or harmed other people. They might think that "service to the customer" is the main validation for running a business; they might render the idea of productive achievement a lesser value. They might even feel that groveling and pandering are good ways to attract customers. They might conclude that to deny their interests is actually in their best interest. They might routinely focus on the interests of others, while those others perform the same act of self-denial. They might think that they are just one person among many; who are they to assert their personal desires and ideas? Who are they to stand by their judgment and declare that human beings have certain inalienable rights, one of which is to not be sacrificed for the "common good" or the "general welfare"?

When people have grown up constantly seeing fallacies treated as facts, contradictions ignored, and the effects of these practices strewn all over television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet on a daily basis, they might conclude that human nature will always have a wicked and dark side. They might conclude that, for the most part, trusting a stranger with anything personal will always be an impossibility; they might conclude that having to put locks on every possession and alarms in every house and vehicle will always be a necessary part of living among others. They might determine that values are relative

and that one should never question the value systems and beliefs of others. They might think that everyone has a different cultural background, tradition, and different needs; consequently, people will never be united by common truths about the facts of reality (and their subsequent love of life); hence, laws need to be made accordingly to solve the “imbalances” these beliefs present.

They might think that government’s duty is to serve as Robin Hood by stealing from the rich, the not-so-rich, and the poor, in order to give (some of) the money back in a “better” fashion. They might think that to use government as a tool to care for the “needs” of society is proper; they might even feel a bit of righteousness as they complete their tax forms, while still pursuing their more “selfish” interests. They might conclude that the only way people will be generous, benevolent, and have goodwill is by way of coercion; they might conclude that intimidation and fear are the primary methods of “moral persuasion.” They might decide that the only way to get ahead in the world is not by being sacrificed to others but, rather, by sacrificing others to self; they might conclude that in this competitive world (i.e., “the rat race”) the “nice guy” finishes last (for he is frequently the sacrificee caught in this psychological paradigm).

Finally, people might conclude that there are no absolute truths, logical principles, rational codes of morality, and noncontradictory ideas. Thus, they might believe that endeavoring to truly and permanently remedy the current existential situation is both futile and foolish—futile because “human nature” can’t be changed, and foolish because “people” will never allow anything different to develop. They might instead believe that the best we can do is address the currently prevalent issues and problems—such as the homeless, infrastructure deterioration, urban sprawl, low wages among workers (and the “appropriate” legislated minimum wage), various minority “rights,” illegal immigration, corporate downsizing (and “excessive” CEO salaries), teenage pregnancy and abortion, school violence, drug abuse, discrimination and sexual harassment,

the “national” debt, etc., etc.—while specifically disregarding any wider abstractions (i.e., principles) involved.

Accordingly, the news media ritually takes polls and conducts surveys in this climate. But the emotional state of most participants is usually not conducive to intellectual clarity. Feelings of apathy, emptiness, confusion, defensiveness, indignation, contempt, and anxiety, typically affect the forum. Such emotions can perpetuate the whole process and cause debate to degenerate into misguided criticisms of personal, economic, or political vicissitudes.

In these matters, we need to distinguish the essentials from the nonessentials. We need to grasp what beneficial human relationships entail (and why). Capitalism need not become an equivocation, and society need not lose its vision of what is possible.

Laissez-faire, A More Enlightened View Of Capitalism—And Its Contradictions

With knowledge of our present political conditions, we now address the only governmental system that has plausibility: Laissez-faire capitalism. As one might know, the French phrase *laissez-faire* (literally “let do”) means *let people do as they please*, especially in economic matters. Necessarily, the entity that is being told to keep from meddling in the affairs of the people is government.

Laissez-faire capitalism means a free market system that has a totally voluntarily funded government; taxation is ruled out, on account of its coercive nature. Government is instituted to ensure that justice is served and rights are protected from potential violators within the country’s boundaries and from foreigners. Thus, citizens acquire a new right: the “right” to have their rights protected by someone else. In this situation, the guaranteed protector of rights is monopolistic government.

Government would consist essentially of a military, a police force, and law institutions. Selection of employees for these services is not thoroughly outlined. Perhaps it would follow the U.S.

Constitution's procedures; a voting system of majority rules might be used, and then the elected officials would appoint assistants.

Laissez-faire does not firmly establish how the country's boundaries would be determined in the free market area. Since everything would be privately owned, such determination might be left to all the various property owners. Of course if unanimity were not reached, the problem of a severed country and consequently a severed government would present itself. Because this outcome is unacceptable to Laissez-faire, most likely either the majority of property owners would determine the boundaries, or governmental officials would (following the Constitution again).

As stated, government would ask for voluntary donations in order to function and provide its services. One would have the choice to make contributions, but not the choice to seek governmental services elsewhere—unless one moved to a location with a different government, that is, to a different country (where one would still face the same situation). This obviously creates a “free-rider” problem. Some individuals may decide not to pay for the government's services. Although some writers have tried to resolve this problem, it proves irresolvable.

By putting discretionary use of retaliatory force in the possession of one group—government—Laissez-faire capitalism supposedly ensures objective authority. Government is deemed the ultimate arbitrator of disputes. Political theorist Robert Nozick described it this way:

Presumably what drives people to use the state's system of justice is the issue of ultimate enforcement. Only the state can enforce a judgment against the will of one of the parties. For the state does not allow anyone else to enforce another system's judgment. So in any dispute in which both parties cannot agree upon a method of settlement, or in any dispute in which one party does not trust another to abide by the decision . . . the parties who wish their claims put into

effect will have no recourse permitted by the state's legal system other than to use that very legal system. (p.14)

A state claims a monopoly on deciding who may use force when; it says that only it may decide who may use force and under what conditions; it reserves to itself the sole right to pass on the legitimacy and permissibility of any use of force within its boundaries; furthermore it claims the right to punish all those who violate its claimed monopoly.⁶⁹(p.23)

So, citizens would be essentially forced to use the services of this one group regardless of how poor, corrupt, wasteful, inefficient—and hence expensive—they are. Any business student who has done his or her homework knows that a legalized monopoly (i.e., a monopoly in which laws protect it from competition) has serious economic consequences. It will never provide the best service or product at the lowest price possible in a free market. In terms of moral consequences, though, any legalized monopoly will always commit injustice by its use of governmental force to keep others out of the market. When that force is used for its very own perpetuation—that is, when government itself is the monopoly—we witness a double crime.

But Laissez-faire holds that people are not forced to choose this state of affairs. Government is considered not to be in violation of rights because it is devised to protect them. Laissez-faire maintains that government is in a class by itself—the class that protects rights. Further, government offers its services in a voluntary manner—that is, one can choose not to have one's rights protected by this monopoly of protection.

Who could claim the right to choose someone other than the “supreme” adjudicator of rights? Such a choice, according to Laissez-faire, would be equivalent to defying authority—supposed “objective” authority. This form of the State also contends that the term *monopoly* only applies to the market. Because the services of

government are considered in a different class, they are thought to be exempt from market scrutiny.

Ostensibly, this system is for the people's own good, because Laissez-faire maintains that the idea of "competing governments" is incompatible with objective law. Therefore, those who proceed to offer similar services that enforce the fundamentals of human freedom and the inviolateness of individual rights should immediately be declared frauds and criminals. Because the State postures as the final authority on all matters of right and wrong, legal and illegal, only it is allowed to convict people of fraud and criminality. In order to prevent others from encroaching on governmental domain, any newly formed "criminals" must be immediately forced to stop their actions, and their customers must be considered criminals too. Thus Laissez-faire coercively establishes a monopolized court of final appeal.

Necessarily, the Laissez-faire system of politics begins to fall apart in the bright light of logic. Logic is still needed to properly apply the basic political premise of non-initiation of force. Determination of the final, noncontradictory political system for human beings on planet Earth (and wherever else we may venture) demands the use of logic.

Let us examine the meaning of objective law under the Laissez-faire system. Objective law can only occur by examining the facts of existence and making judgments accordingly. Two facts of existence are that human beings have a volitional capacity and a right to exist as they see fit (while respecting the rights of others). Therefore, any individual or group of individuals must be able choose any other individual or group of individuals to serve as a rights-protecting agent—to ensure that the right to exist (and all it entails) is not diminished.

Indisputably, in an advanced civilization individuals would prefer to hire professionals in the service of justice; it would be immensely more convenient and effective for citizens. Citizens could dedicate their time and resources to fields of work that truly interested them, and professional agents would be objective third par-

ties. Such professional third parties could validate and objectify the circumstances of any incident or contract, as well as make a resolution legally binding and publicly known.

The principle here is the freedom to delegate one's right to exact justice—making sure that the facts of reality are not betrayed. While one could personally try to correct whatever wrong had been done based on the right to self-defense and the laws of justice, such an action (depending on the situation) might not be in one's best interests. As mentioned, one could not publicly objectify the conflict. And, one might not be able to prove who was, in fact, innocent or guilty or liable. A professional third party competing in the market of dispute resolution and restitution would be more capable.

Under any system of justice, we have to scrutinize the idea of someone else protecting our rights—and what this demands of such an agent, as well as *this agent's rights*.

No person or government has the right to forcibly act as an agent for another person or persons, for this would be the master/slave relationship. An agent not voluntarily chosen is a contradiction. By claiming a certain geographical area all to its own, government holds sovereign dominion over people—even if it *asks* for payment instead of demands it.

The notion of national boundaries constituting monopolistic governments exposes more of the problems of Laissez-faire. As noted, the borders for various potential Laissez-faire countries would be drawn either by unanimity among property owners, or by government. Of course, contracts among individual property owners are violated when government (through official decree or majority vote of property owners) determines the “country.” The rights of the minority of dissenters are not upheld because an unsolicited government is imposed on them.

If a group of property owners were all to agree about a particular monopoly of force, the size of it would likely be small. Due to the nature of knowledge acquisition and decision-making, widespread agreement concerning such services would be enormously

difficult to achieve. Whenever someone decided against such a monopolistic government, however, he or she would have every right to establish or utilize another professional service of justice.

As a legal concept, what does “country” mean? In the presently confused condition of politics, it means an area in which a distinctive government and its non-objective laws dominate. But, in a Laissez-faire society, a country would represent an area in which logical, objective laws of a single government preside. Consequently, laws in various Laissez-faire societies would be basically the same. They all would reflect the use of logic—at least up to the point of the concept of Laissez-faire itself. No basic difference would exist between governments, for all supposedly act as upholders of justice. Therefore, the idea that no more than one organization (here no more than one government) can properly uphold justice is invalid.

Furthermore, the idea that no more than one organization can uphold justice *in the same area* is called into direct question. That a single government must have sole jurisdiction and must be the final arbiter among a population simply defies logic. Such a notion even defies how the presently corrupt system operates. In any dispute or conflict, for example, *some* court has to take the case. The question is: Which one? In the United States, the judicial branch of government has multitudes of court systems. Each has the task of determining which system should hear certain cases. Although the Supreme Court is commonly thought to be the “final court of appeal,” it judges only a fraction of the particular cases that were screened for review, which were drawn from a larger pile of cases still.

In the United States, residents of the various states are involved in commerce that is governed by differing laws of cities, counties, and other states (as well as other countries). Yet people usually are able to conform to these numerous jurisdictions and abide by the laws of other areas in which they travel and do business. When they encounter conflicts or commit crimes, they may be subject to different police and different courts depending on

the zone of occurrence. And ironically, these laws and organizations are quite far from being either objective or consistent (or accountable to the consumer). Few of the laws in the assorted states have been devised and enforced in accordance with a rational moral code of individual rights (i.e., a proper code of justice).

In spite of these facts, *Laissez-faire* still asserts that “competing governments” within any country will always encounter or provoke irreconcilable conflicts. Of course, this also means that various governments throughout the world (*Laissez-faire* or otherwise) must inexorably conflict—for they are competing too, albeit on a wider scale. In other words, conflict and war are inevitable.

Should we then have a one-world government instead? Or better yet, a one-galaxy government, or best of all, a one-universe government? Such an idea does not deal with the main premise and problem of statism: unsolicited and forced agency. Although disagreements are inevitable under any political system, war and violent conflicts are not. By perpetuating monopolistic government, the statist ideology merely avoids dealing with issues of rights and justice.

Any system of government raises questions about its composition and functions. Since government is simply an institution that coercively claims the sole “right” to govern, it is inherently contradictory. Individuals govern themselves. Individuals have the right to choose whom they want to protect their rights. Their choices cannot be made for them by force—in the case of *Laissez-faire* society, by virtue of their place of residence. Mere geography ought not mandate who provides justice services.

The idea that governmental services are somehow exempt from natural market consequences also needs to be examined. Even though they involve (among many other tasks) the use of retaliatory force, they are still services. Incidentally, the degree of integrity of the individuals working in government is not, in principle, important. Even if they were the most virtuous individuals in the

world, they still would be operating within a contradictory political system.

How people should treat each other is important. Should it be by force or by voluntary means, by authoritarian measures or by freedom of choice? The words of advocate of absolute freedom Jarret B. Wollstein are succinct here:

There is nothing necessary or moral about a limited government. What defines the morality and practicality of any organization of retaliatory force in a free society is not whether its agencies are one or many, but whether they are just and objective. A 'social monopoly of retaliatory force' whose existence depends upon the initiation of force is worse than a contradiction in terms—it is an epistemological absurdity.¹⁰³(p.17)

This leads us to another very important question. Who determines the concept of rights and the corresponding laws of justice in a society? Does the government or do the individuals in the populace? Herein lies the main basis for Laissez-faire government: By legalizing a monopoly on its services, it can keep centralized control and "objectivity" in an arbitrarily selected geographic area. Naturally, this implies that the individuals in the populace are incapable of determining what is proper. Only those with the title "government" (sanctioned by the majority of voters) are proficient enough to interpret the fundamental principle of rights. The general public is considered unqualified to implement the non-initiation of force principle.

Hence, the capitalistic market cannot be relied on or trusted to form the correct legal system. Individuals should not be allowed the foundational choice to entrust their rights to someone they think is reputable. Do not these imperious declarations eerily remind one of all the collectivistic and statist systems that we have studied? All of them result in the subordination the individual mind and judgment to the group and the rulers.

The main psychological premise for monopolistic government apparently is that people cannot be trusted. Yet, even if this were true, those in government would have to be distrusted too. Though some might believe single government keeps untrustworthy people in check and oneself safeguarded, it merely begs the question. The real problem is not with people. It is with the system itself.

Even though human beings can choose to act differently at any time, free will does not make them undependable or untrustworthy. Such a view of human nature would imply that happiness, integrity, and justice are not sought and maintained for greatly beneficial reasons, but rather on a whim.

Since those in government are certainly part of the populace, we can conclude that laws arise from the commonly accepted principles of human conduct—what is thought permissible and impermissible. Obviously, devastating legal repercussions result when humanity lacks knowledge of human nature. Logical explanation of the fundamental characteristics and faculties of human beings is crucial.

The particular form of government is an inescapable consequence of the basic thoughts and mentalities in a culture. It is merely a reflection of the dominant ideas in a society—its political beliefs, its ethics, its psychology, and so forth. Ideas outline the form, role, and existence of government. So, under the weight of logical analysis by an enlightened populace, even the best-intentioned *Laissez-faire* government would eventually fall to pieces. The mistaken ideas about the nature of government and the nature of laws would be recognized.

But some theorists take a backdoor approach to the *Laissez-faire* system. They contend that competing agencies of justice—rather than remaining diverse and in the same area—would eventually form into one unified State agency. This would produce a monopoly in any given area. Though competing agencies are allowed to exist, they nonetheless cannot or will not occupy the same geographical area; a State monopoly is therefore most feasible. Political theorist Tibor Machan wrote about this scenario:

So it appears that *the nature of the service* implies some type of geographical homogeneity among the areas to be serviced by the agent that is hired to protect human rights. The same goes for preserving human rights. In this case the courts which would hear cases of dispute would have to be accessible to those who have employed them. By breaking up the area served by each court and each police unit, the identification of the violation of human rights and the corresponding enforcement of the remedies would be rendered impossible; that is, without violating the rights of those not party to the relationship between citizen and government, the government (Rothbard's defense agency [speaking of Murray Rothbard, a proponent of competing agencies]) could not function for the citizenry. (p.149)

One can call this a defense agency system if one likes, but it would still be true that the only moral means by which people could delegate to others the authority to protect and preserve their human rights is by uniting into homogeneous human communities, with one legal system per community, administered by a given 'firm' or government.⁶⁰(p.150)

Such a system supposedly seeks to do away with challenging issues of different agencies (being in the business of instituting justice) and their various clients (the seekers of justice) potentially not agreeing with each other. Yet, it simply raises more questions. For instance, who devises such a system, and how does one attain unanimous consent of property owners? As Wollstein stated, such agencies must be just and objective. They have no right to exclude other justice agencies from the market. Today's monopolized governments certainly give sufficient indication of the scale of incompetence and corruption that can be foisted on citizens.

One must also take into account the implications of the fact that *everything is privately owned* in a capitalistic market. This includes the services that justice agencies offer. Excluding logically patented property, monopolization can remain viable only in two ways: when government prevents others from entering the market (a coercive monopoly), or when prices are so low and the product or service so good that no one else can gain a competitive foothold (a market monopoly). In the latter instance, if prices rise or the service or product becomes less desirable, other enterprises may offer their products or services; this is one of the basic principles of the law of supply and demand.

The contention that every person in a “homogeneous” area will choose the same justice agency is simply unfounded. It runs counter to a free market. A person seeking a certain agent cannot inhibit another (by virtue of mere geographic proximity) from seeking a different agent. The nature of contracts allows this freedom. And likewise, an agent operating in one area cannot inhibit a different agent from operating in the same area. However, this is commonly done today to property owners through, for example, governmental zoning. Zoning laws clearly are instruments of force. In contrast, voluntary covenants among real estate owners, which sometimes give rise to “gated communities,” are rights-respecting. All community members agree to certain policies and rules. Conceivably, they could also agree to a specific police and court system.

Yet even gated communities cannot insulate themselves from issues of justice. Anyone has the right, based on a rational moral code, to ensure that objective laws remain so. Additionally, other agencies have the right, based on the principles of justice, to pursue alleged criminals (just as government does today). Naturally, disagreements would occur among agencies concerning jurisdiction and enforcement. However, since they would be agencies of *retaliatory* force—not initiatory force—such disagreements would be settled peaceably.

Enlightened people and a free market would encourage com-

petition (or the possibility of it) not so much to foster honesty and scrupulousness (although these tend to be beneficial byproducts). Competition provides a continuous contrast and comparison of business perspectives. Each customer and area is essentially a different business context. Competition also keeps a constant check on prices, so that a business does not isolate itself. A free market presents a wide variety of supply and demand avenues and resources, which affect cost alternatives.

We should keep in mind that businesses are not in the business of “competing.” Rather, businesses create and maintain values. Since the implementation of justice is the paramount political value in a free society, businesses will provide accordingly. The nature of individual rights grants them this capacity.

Yet many Laissez-faire supporters believe that if no final and sole authority is present to uphold rights and enforce laws, individuals would take law into their own hands, or violent inter-agency conflicts would erupt. They believe that society would degenerate into chaos or mass vigilantism reminiscent of stories of the Wild West.⁷⁶ In a sense, to forecast that competing agencies of retaliatory force will do battle with each other is to lack trust in human beings to do what is just. If one cannot be confident about others, one cannot be confident specifically about those in government either. As mentioned, the problem is not with people; it is with the system. A monopolized State, no matter how minimal, does not fully respect individual rights.

Even in today’s political world, *government* is not what keeps most individuals on a daily basis from killing and maiming each other, or from defrauding each other, or from breaking agreements and violating contracts. Rather, *people’s basic premises about human relationships* do. Contrary to statist ideologies, the declared legality or illegality of an act does not determine the conduct of people. Conduct is determined by people’s views of such an act as well as its consequences for self and others. Laws serve to outline and reinforce particular political consequences.

Yet again, some maintain that, instead of being forced on the

people, single government must arise inevitably out of a market of competing agencies. Nozick wrote about this:

Out of anarchy, pressed by spontaneous groupings, mutual-protection associations, division of labor, market pressures, economies of scale, and rational self-interest there arises something very much resembling a minimal state or a group of geographically distinct minimal states. Why is this market different from all other markets? Why would a virtual monopoly arise in this market without the government intervention that elsewhere creates and maintains it? The worth of the product purchased, protection against others, is *relative*: it depends upon how strong the others are. Yet unlike other goods that are comparatively evaluated, maximal competing protective services cannot coexist; the nature of the service brings different agencies not only into competition for customers' patronage, but also into violent conflict with each other. Also, since the worth of the less than maximal product declines disproportionately with the number who purchase the maximal product, customers will not stably settle for the lesser good, and competing companies are caught in a declining spiral.⁶⁹(p.16)

We have already addressed many of these ideas, of course. These agencies provide services that involve the implementation and enforcement of justice. Customers necessarily would judge the proficiency or "strength" of such services, and make decisions accordingly. But it does not follow that businesses that institute justice cannot coexist, and further that they will violently conflict. Under capitalism both customers and businesses would seek justice. To project onto them the behavior of an unprincipled person who seeks to accomplish injustice in his dealings with others is misguided. An enlightened populace would not tolerate such behav-

ior. Defying rational principles is simply too costly—economically and psychologically.

In today's monopolistic systems of force, the scale of corruption and injustice is immense precisely because *no alternative systems of justice exist*. Though greatly effective and beneficial, the widely-used enterprises of private arbitration and mediation function within a contradictory political context. Government is still the final authority with regard to the law.

As a result, unprincipled people readily bribe or make deals with those in government. They try to evade wrongdoing and obtain what they want at the expense of more law-abiding and respectful people. Coercive monopolies will always lead to injustices, and monopolies of retaliatory force will lose sight of justice when they are coercively imposed.

Rather than cause violent conflict, competition enables the most reputable agencies to exist and coexist. To do otherwise is to lose business. Such agencies profit by being fair and reasonable, not irrational. Again, it is not government—or even agencies—that *creates* justice, but rather the premises of individuals desiring it. Other than in the case of a temporary market monopoly, various people in the same city or region would not all do business with the same company forevermore. Such a notion would be contrary to basic knowledge of economics.

Moreover, a temporary market monopoly is unlikely, due to the multifaceted nature of justice services. In fact to monopolize any market in the service industry is nearly impossible. Most temporary market monopolies that have existed have been of products (such as ALCOA aluminum). In market monopolies, initial capital investment for others is too high and the efficiency and prices of the current business cannot be matched (thus yielding little profit for new companies). Still, others usually begin to offer alternatives. Products of different composition or design or with new functions may catch the attention of consumers.

Though many have described Microsoft Corporation as a market monopoly, it is not. The important fact is that Microsoft has

competitors actively seeking to gain market share. If the company becomes less efficient, less customer-oriented, and its products more expensive or less functional, it will lose its strong competitive position (and maybe even fall by the wayside).

Microsoft has by far the most popular operating system for computers. Its OS is coupled with its web browser *Internet Explorer* (as well as other software programs). By refusing to distribute other companies' web browsers with its OS, Microsoft has been accused of monopolizing its market and discouraging competition. "Fair" competition, according to the FTC and some Microsoft competitors, can result only by Bill Gates agreeing to let the government and various web browser competitors dictate how *Microsoft* should contract with computer companies in the selling and packaging of *its own* product. The rights-infringing lawsuits filed by the FTC against Microsoft have sought to deny Microsoft the use of its own property. The latest Department of Justice ruling to split the company has nothing to do with justice. Rather, it is a pure act of Fascism.

Lastly, some advocates of Laissez-faire might say that the notion of competitive justice services is a moral issue, not an economic one, because it involves the use of force. Certainly, they are correct. But no contradiction should exist between the two. To say that these agencies will be fraught with irreconcilable conflicts among each other is to entertain some major fallacies about human nature. This, in short, represents the moral/psychological issue of obedience over autonomy, or subjugation over choice: The omnipotent State demands obedience; hence, there can be no "conflicts," because no one can disagree with the "ultimate" arbiter of disputes. Mindless people who unquestioningly accept the judgment of others are what any State seeks. It does not seek justice.

Justice agencies would arise because psychologically healthy people want to reach agreement and continue stable and fulfilling relationships; such values are in their self-interest. To see strangers as potential enemies not to be trusted and dealt with in a benevo-

lent fashion is the stance of the xenophobe—which incidentally is the kind of person that governments (inadvertently or otherwise) spend much of their energy cultivating throughout the world.

If individuals cannot come to an agreement on their own, their recourse should be any person or institution that will assist them in finding agreement by applying the laws of justice. In such situations, either of the two individual's justice agencies could handle the case. However, if neither individual desired the other's court to have final jurisdiction, then they would either appeal the judgment or refer the case at the outset to an outside court. Either this court would have final say on the matter, or another appeals process would be devised.

Alleged criminals would face the same situation. No individual would be immune from principles of justice. Objective law plainly does not require the consent of an alleged violator of rights in order to be administered. Hence, no individual could prevent immediate or outside courts from administering justice—for that would be a double crime, and dealt with accordingly. Of course, rational due process would ensure that rights are protected—and if violated, restored.

Jurisdiction of objective law courts must stem from contracts to enforce the principles by which people live safely, peacefully, and intelligently. Justice agencies would operate voluntarily with the will of individuals doing business with them. Government courts, in contrast, maintain their jurisdiction by forcing it on the populace—regardless of the rationality of their judgments or the size of the dissenting minority.

Law courts of the future will be concerned with defending and upholding individual rights. This necessarily includes the rights and responsibilities of individuals who have contracted with *other* justice agencies. Anything else would be contradictory.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE FORMATION AND IMPACT OF THE IDEAL SOCIETY

The Logical Political System: Self-Governing Capitalism

Since a free market is one in which individuals and their enterprises operate unimpeded by government, we now see what capitalism really means. We see that it represents the implementation of human nature, a combination of understanding a noncontradictory metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—yielding a noncontradictory politics. The term *capitalism* has been defined as an economic system in which private owners control trade and industry. The only addition to this is that a free market should be *absolutely* free. No coercion should be used to negate human rights.

The only legitimate capitalistic system is one that does not permit anyone to initiate force. Of course, all governments are unfit due to their coercive nature. Government is the only entity intrinsically capable of creating and being a coercive monopoly.⁹⁹ The U.S. Constitution, while being the best document at the time it was fashioned, is now mostly a mechanism that keeps government intrusiveness alive and expanding. Though the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights were intended to put limits on government, they did not outlaw a coercive State.

Many of the exhaustive descriptions and duties of the three

branches of government would not be a part of an objective political system. These branches chiefly have been used as crutches to maintain a government that upholds the use of initiatory force. The original earnest attempt to stabilize and limit a new government stressing human rights failed because of the nature of the task: One can never make a contradiction work, no matter how many safeguards and precautions one takes.

The formal executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the United States government were designed, in part, to foster complex “checks and balances.” They made government inefficient and less capable of allowing a few (or one, such as the President) to dominate its operations. Checks and balances may have prevented totalitarianism, but they could not prevent violation of individual rights. Our present Semi-Fascist Welfare State is quite far from the intentions of the Founders.

In a society of political justice, real checks and balances must be economic ones, in which moral individuals make rational decisions about the services they purchase. The companies from which they purchase services will be concerned with profits and hence with reputation. After all, to not be concerned with reputation is to jeopardize the profit-making ability of one’s business. Only non-objective laws and governmental subsidies are able to grant businesses immunity from free market consequences.

From the essence of liberty found in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, we must fashion a new system that finally frees humanity from unjustifiable coercive control and arbitrary power over others. Reality and the ideas identifying it determine the final, noncontradictory political system for human beings.

The name of this system is rather straightforward: Self-Governing Capitalism. Although Anarcho-capitalism has been used (among others) to name this system, it can obviously carry a detrimental connotation. The term *anarcho* denotes that the single entity, government, does not exist.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, this term can be confused with anarchy, in which no or extremely few laws

(to say nothing of objective laws) are enforced in society and, hence, much chaos and disorder arises—much injustice. Incidentally, anarchy tends to occur both among ungoverned societies and among unstable governments. Both lack a rudimentary understanding and practice of benevolent and beneficial relationships, which involve at least implicit acceptance of customary law. Instead of examining and re-thinking the ideas and psychologies involved in anarchy, people typically bring “order” by implementing coercive government.

By calling the ideal political system “Self-Governing Capitalism,” we also avoid the conceptual difficulty of explaining something by reference to what it is not—which is the case with “Anarcho-capitalism,” that is, capitalism *without* coercive government. *Self-Governing Capitalism* is just that: a capitalistic society that governs itself, in which private enterprise subsumes the services of government.

The freedom to trade values solely on a voluntary basis is the precondition for the ideal society of justice. In such a society, individuals are at liberty to exercise their right to contract or not to contract with others—hence *freedom to contract* and *freedom from contract*.⁴

Of course, even within this political framework, the values sought and traded will reflect the degree of logic people use. Only by thinking critically and conscientiously can we determine what will best benefit us. And the citizens who establish capitalism would honor primarily this method of thinking. Intellectual clarity and psychological health of the populace generate the values that ensure happiness and enlightenment. This is certainly the case in any age.

Many of the uplifting changes and marvelous improvements that will occur with Self-Governing Capitalism have been expounded in other books. e.g., 82, 103, 99, 89, 4, & 5 Some of these books focus mainly on how the system would work (its economic practicality), rather than why it is the only moral political system. Although the stance of this book is primarily a moral/philosophical one, some

old (along with new) economic ground needs to be covered. This will clarify and reinforce some of the key effects (and causes) of the ideal society. The examples are given not simply to persuade or justify the case for Self-Governing Capitalism (i.e., to merely show that it works). They are provided to show once again that what is logical in theory is, by definition, logical in practice—and therefore practical. Again, what is moral is practical. And what works must be moral.

Legal Agencies

With Self-Governing Capitalism, the keenness of the market and the accompanying widely-practiced virtue of logical thought would resolve many problem areas. Most intellectuals would no longer have contradictory answers and bureaucrats would no longer have “agendas.” The formerly governmental services of police, law courts, and military would be replaced by private services. These services would be run by people who have only their honesty, integrity, rationality, and reputation to offer the market and attract customers.

A governmental title could no longer be used for committing, at best, injustices and, at worst, atrocities. There would be no silent or bold usurpations of rights. And no longer would there be vastly unknown, perplexing, and unintelligible laws that allow something to be legal one day, but illegal the next (or vice versa). The voluminous legal texts that currently exhaust the time and effort of myriad lawyers would be things of the past. The legions of new law school graduates desiring to make the system work better would also find their job descriptions changing. Only objective law would flourish, because people would see no value in anything else. Certainly the examples this would set for the entire world would be potent.

Much of common law, or more derivatively, customary law,⁵ would be transferred to and utilized by the new capitalistic legal system. Of course, this would include aspects of the present

judiciary system that have been interpreted and adjudicated objectively—for example, much of contract law, copyright and patent law, and some of the laws dealing with the genuinely wrong acts by real criminals.

Since problematic and unjust law comprises much of the current justice system, it would have to be discarded. No longer would a legal order be imposed on the populace. So, people would no longer have to invent ways to deal with ineffective and inefficient judicial and law enforcement processes. Such a situation has tended to breed both corruption and illegality.⁴

Though a full list of the legal system's injustices would require a book in itself, a few ought to be noted. The amount of lawsuits filed yearly in the United States remains unsurpassed by any other country. No reasonable notion of "loser pays" (for the other party's legal expenses) is present, which definitely fosters such litigiousness. Contrived malpractice laws and lawsuits steadily undermine the essence of contractual agreements, and they drive up the prices of goods and services. Rulings in various tort cases of purported liability and negligence award millions of dollars to supposed victims; the idea of personal responsibility is usually neglected. Enormous fines—in the form of "punitive damages"—are also imposed on companies as reprimands for wrongdoing. This is thought to be a fair practice in personal injury cases; "corporations" are supposedly responsible for harm done, and not those operating them. More generally, scores of arbitrary differences exist between state and federal jurisprudence. The various states maintain appalling inconsistencies in their laws.

Invariably, we witness the gross inefficiencies of a legalized monopoly, which does not adhere to objective law. Spooner (himself a legal scholar) eloquently noted these problems in response to the contention that justice is the goal of the courts. Again, one should keep in mind that only a small fraction of today's laws and corruption existed in his time:

But we have everywhere courts of injustice—open
and avowed injustice—claiming sole jurisdiction of all

cases affecting men's rights of both person and property; and having at their beck brute force enough to compel absolute submission to their decrees, whether just or unjust. . . .

[Next, speaking of the covert nature of the justice system, that is, its "hidden mysteries, and impenetrable secrets"]

I say *secret tribunals*, and *secret instructions*, because, to the great body of the people, whose rights are at stake, they are secret to all practical intents and purposes. They are secret, because their reasons for their decrees are to be found only in great volumes of statutes and supreme court reports, which the mass of the people have neither money to buy, nor time to read; and would not understand, if they were to read them.

These statutes and reports are so far out of reach of the people at large, that the only knowledge a man can ordinarily get of them, when he is summoned before one of the tribunals appointed to execute them, is to be obtained by employing an expert—or so-called lawyer—to enlighten him.

This expert in injustice is one who buys these great volumes of statutes and reports, and spends his life in studying them, and trying to keep himself informed of their contents. But even he can give a client very little information in regard to them; for the statutes and decisions are so voluminous, and are so constantly being made and unmade, and are so destitute of all conformity to those natural principles of justice which men readily and intuitively comprehend; and are moreover capable of so many different interpretations, that he is usually in as great doubt—perhaps in even greater doubt—than his client, as to what will be the result of a suit. . . . (p.106)

A trial in one of these courts of injustice is a trial by battle, almost, if not quite, as really as was a trial by battle, five hundred or a thousand years ago.

Now, as then, the adverse parties choose their champions, to fight their battles for them.

These champions, trained to such contests, and armed, not only with all the weapons their own skill, cunning, and power can supply, but also with all the iniquitous laws, precedents, and technicalities that lawmakers and supreme courts can give them, for defeating justice, and accomplishing injustice, can—if not always, yet none but themselves know how often—offer their clients such chances of victory—independently of the justice of their causes—as to induce the dishonest to go into court to evade justice, or accomplish injustice, not less of ten perhaps than the honest go there in the hope to get justice, or avoid injustice.

We have now, I think, some sixty thousand [now in the many hundreds of thousands] of these champions, who make it the business of their lives to equip themselves for these conflicts, and sell their services for a price.

Is there any one of these men, who studies justice as a science, and regards that alone in all his professional exertions?⁹⁸(p.108)

Studying justice as a science means discovering the fundamental nature of human beings and applying this knowledge to human interactions. In today's legal context, "justice" is seldom clearly defined and especially not taken to its conceptual roots (i.e., related to the concepts upon which it depends). Naturally, those with vested interests in the maintenance of this system proclaim that we have the best legal system, the fairest system, of any country on Earth.

Justice, as a political concept, is derived from the concept of rights. In simple terms justice means honoring, upholding, and enforcing these rights. Without logically validated rights via the correct political philosophy, full justice is unattainable.

If you have ever browsed in a law library, you probably have realized that justice—to say nothing of clarity, comprehensibility,

and economy of thought—is a distant idea for the present legal system. Mostly what one will find are millions upon millions of pages describing and circumscribing what people can and cannot do in every conceivable form and facet of their lives. The texts fill countless bookshelves. To think that these multitudes of statutes and precepts are necessary and proper for the institution of justice is to avoid recognition of legal contradictions. Of course the current system depends on such avoidance; it does not want people to think and ask probing questions about the foundation of the legal order and system. Justice requires that one think critically about the common assumptions of many experts.

As a consequence of our present legal order, the practice of law is frequently treated as an adversarial game (as Spooner noted). Many attorneys, judges, and legal scholars often promote a win-at-all-costs strategy that unabashedly dispenses with the obligation of discovering truth. To be a “zealous advocate” for one’s client is deemed necessary to combat the often zealous plaintiff or prosecuting attorney, each being more partial to their own interests than to justice. One finds that “partiality” and “impartiality” are terms used in the current system as substitutes for rationality and objective law.

Those able to opt out of this antagonistic system and utilize private mediation (for instance, in the case of divorce) and arbitration (for instance, in cases of corporate business and international commerce) are able to save a great deal of time and money. Additionally, mediation and arbitration foster safeguards against future problems with disputes and potential disputants.⁵

Yet the adversarial system imposes final authority, so certain practices remain in spite of their irrationality. Letting criminals go free based on legal technicalities is common. For instance, physical evidence that proves guilt might have been obtained illegally. Or, the offender might not have been read the *Miranda* rights, which were designed to prevent self-incrimination (as provided by the 5th Amendment to the Constitution; hence, the self-responsible-negating phrase “taking the 5th”).

The practice of plea-bargaining is also common. Essentially, offenders (and those coerced by prosecutors into false confessions of offenses) agree to be sentenced on lesser charges. This sometimes occurs in exchange for giving testimony against others (i.e., serving as allegedly trustworthy witnesses for the prosecution). Additionally, offenders' sentences are sometimes shortened through early parole, typically on the grounds of good behavior or on account of a high demand for prison space.

Also, in the present system, the phrase "innocent until proven guilty" can be misinterpreted. For instance, when incontrovertible evidence clearly shows guilt in some criminal cases, the trial still proceeds as if the evidence were not there. Unfortunately, "innocent until proven guilty" can be used as a shield by defense lawyers, since their allegedly immutable obligation is to provide a strong defense for their clients—*even when they are guilty*. One would be hard pressed to find any greater denial of the ideas of honesty and self-responsibility.

Granted, in the matter of due process, the burden of proof (specifically, the burden of persuasion) is on the accuser or plaintiff. He or she has to establish validity to the allegations. But sound evidence (whether *prima facie* or conclusive) must be able to dissipate the presumption of innocence with the accused. In general, the presumption of innocence must be a rebuttable presumption. Due process of law should involve no preconceived notions. They only deter the administration of justice.

The legal situation is worsened by the time-consuming jury selection and judgment process. Basically, individuals are detained from their personal affairs to sit on a panel of peers who usually are not well-versed in the rule of law and principles of justice. They are then informed by a judge and, oddly, prohibited from asking questions and actively participating in the fact-finding mission. This process is made even poorer by peremptory challenges, which are attempts to leave trial courts filled with supposedly unbiased or "fair and impartial" jurors. However, they instead leave trial courts filled with uncomplaining jurors who are willing to sit

through a drawn-out legal process—one that often involves unnecessary showmanship, unsubstantiated allegations, unconvincing arguments, irrelevant emotional pleas, unseemly diatribes, and misrepresented, subjective interpretations of the evidence. Such is the people's "civic duty."

Many cases can be used as examples of the problems just outlined. Probably the most notorious is the criminal and civil trials of O.J. Simpson. Regardless of how many legal experts said it was an exceptional case, that legal saga stood as an indictment of the jury trial system. It also exposed many of the central flaws in the legal system as a whole.

The division between criminal and civil trial proceedings is one case in point. That a criminal trial requires a judgment of guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt" whereas a civil trial judgment is determined "by a preponderance of the evidence" confounds the issue of guilt or innocence.

To confuse matters more, the State has commandeered interest in arresting, convicting, and punishing criminals. This often leaves the accuser or plaintiff to watch on the sidelines or to testify as a mere witness. Crimes committed are considered "crimes against the State." In actuality though, they are crimes (or rather, torts) against the victims—and they should focus primarily on restoring those harmed (as will be discussed shortly). As was the case with customary law, the focus should not be merely on "punishing" the guilty. When no reparations are made, the victim gets victimized again, adding insult to prior injury.

In any crime, including so-called civil wrongs, all of which ought to be designated as torts, the person charged is either innocent or guilty (and thus liable for damages). If the current evidence (and the scientific ability to interpret it) fails to elucidate the truth in the matter, one must treat it as unsettled. If the person accused turns out to be innocent, then he or she should be restored monetarily for the time spent in the process of determining guilt or innocence. This is the only fair way to deal with sus-

pects, and it is in line with the presently unembraced legal precept of loser pays.

Deliveries of verdicts that run counter to the nature of the evidence (as in the Simpson criminal trial) are obviously contradictory to justice. But immunity from final justice is granted by the constitutional provision of “double jeopardy” under the Fifth Amendment; one cannot be tried for the same offense twice. Once again, the Founders wanted to prevent the ill consequences of the State, while keeping the essential framework of the State intact.

The unfortunate legal outcomes of monopolistic government are simply inevitable. Even the genesis of needing lawyers or legal counsel—as well as trial by jury—resulted from the intrusive operations of the State. The State gradually fostered an environment in which the victim or plaintiff and the accused or defendant needed assistance in legal proceedings. Historically, this represented a movement away from customary (mostly objective) law towards corrupt state law.⁵

Questioning the present legal system brings us back to our initial realizations about capitalism and the kind of politics that coincides with it. In a world of Self-Governing Capitalism—which will be called just “capitalism” from now on—police companies and legal institutions would profit by convincing customers of their excellent ability to enforce objective laws. Individuals would be protected from physical force and fraud, as well as restored when wronged. Fraud, breach of contract, and extortion are variations of force;⁶ they involve taking another’s property in an involuntary manner or without informed consent.

Since justice agencies would now have to compete by offering quality services, court systems would value time in relation to money and justice; today’s mockery of the right to a speedy trial would disappear. By having to make profits, justice agencies would have to honor reality, instead of operating in a context of stolen wealth, where certain degrees of lethargy, corruption, waste, and incompetence are considered normal.

Market forces would determine the most helpful and efficient types of protection. Common and customary law principles and precedents would provide indispensable guidance for court systems (as they do even in many cases today). Various businesses—possibly branches of newly unregulated, and therefore much more affordable and reputable, insurance companies—would cater services accordingly.

As in any productive enterprise, if something does not work, it rightly ought to be fixed or replaced. Because the current policies of dealing with crime are both expensive and ineffective, different approaches would be taken to ensure a peaceful society. They would yield a system that functions both morally and practically.

Seldom is it recognized that the current shortage of jail cells in which to “put away” criminals is largely a result of a legal system that infringes on rights. That is, government creates so-called crimes by failing to recognize the absolutism of individual liberty. All the nonviolent “victimless crimes,” which involve interactions between consenting adults, fall into this category.

Under capitalism, police or security forces would be hired to protect property and the people who own it and use it. Consequently, enforcement agencies would be less likely the focus of suspicion and even contempt evidenced today. Many police forces currently view intimidation and punishment as good means of creating trustworthy and respectful citizens. The bulk of society oftentimes faces crime with the mindset that pistols, batons, handcuffs, and jail cells (and, for some, gun control laws) will help reverse criminality. At the expense of human dignity, police follow political orders of constituents to continue “cracking down” on criminals. A “good us” against “bad them” attitude tends to evolve so that “them” can be anyone who disobeys the governmentally established rules of conduct.

Of course, this sort of antagonism is counterproductive to the development of mature, independent people who treat themselves, and hence others, with respect. By failing to see the psychological factors involved in wrongdoing, the present system makes it very

hard to effect positive change. Instead of treating most criminals (particularly nonviolent ones) like individuals who have made seriously wrong choices, our present system often treats them like base creatures incapable of altering their behavior and living a life proper to a human being. Typically, they are just thrown into prisons to sit idly—wasting time, space, and money, as well as dissolving any chances for change and growth. Soon, the incarcerated are contemplating how much they hate the system in general and people in particular.

The alternate approach would entail restoring the victim(s), which usually would involve payment and time expenditure. Aggressors would have to work to earn money for restitution, either within secure environments or on contract with various companies.^{4 & 5} This approach, coupled with crucial broader political/economic changes, would quickly reduce crimes in society. Rather than facing a prison sentence (and accordingly free room and board, as well as the situation of being nonproductive), convicted persons would face a future of work in which most of the fruits of their labor would go to those they had wronged. Instead of being punished, they would be held accountable for their actions and would have to make amends.

Yet today some criminals permanently impair or disable innocent persons. No one who intentionally takes another's physical well-being should be able to do so with impunity. While monetary restitution often cannot repair personal injury, it is nonetheless one of the most reasonable alternatives. Like in the case of theft or destruction of property, the perpetrator must forfeit part of his or her rights. He or she in a sense becomes indentured to the victim until reparation is made.

In cases of rape, in which extreme physical and emotional pain has been inflicted, the perpetrator has conveyed to rights-respecting individuals that he is unfit to live with them—he is an imminent threat to the lives and well-being of others. Such persons would be removed from society as well as made to pay restitution; facilities would be created for this. Exactly how long is necessary

for the threat to be either eradicated or minimized is something the victim and adjudication services must confront.

Murder involves a different model of rectification, though. It is the most severe instance of human brutality, the nadir of human behavior. Deliberately taking the life of an innocent human being must have the gravest consequences. Murder means intentionally extinguishing an invaluable entity—an entity that creates the very concepts of *value* and *rights*. Therefore, any *objectively and unequivocally proven* murderer must face (and should expect to face) an outcome equal to the fate of the victim. By deliberately destroying an embodiment of rights—a human being—a murderer forfeits his or her own rights as a human being. Namely, the right to life is revoked. No victim is present to be restored monetarily or otherwise. Friends and family may desire the murderer to pay them for the loss, but one who murders should have no such luxury. Execution could also be seen as the application of self-defense *ex post facto*: Certainly the innocent victim (barring a pacifist) would have used lethal force to stop his or her own murder, had he or she been able.

Yet, some may feel that human beings sometimes cannot control their actions—on account of deep drives and aggressive impulses (or “brain chemical imbalances”) that mysteriously come and go. Hence, they may espouse a variation of the “not guilty by reason of insanity” plea. Or they may advocate so-called lesser degrees of murder when it is committed, for instance, in the heat of passion or without premeditation. On the other hand, some may explicitly honor a moral code that commands one to forgive murderers, on the grounds that “no one can help it—we are all sinners.”

Some may direct sympathy at a murderer and his or her existential plight. They may conclude that a murderer is somehow not ultimately responsible for his or her acts—instead, society is. Some may even have great plans for rehabilitating murderers and giving them a second chance. This of course overlooks the magnitude of violating the first chance and trivializes the

victim's right to life. It also dismisses the threat murderers pose to others.

Some may even think that executing a murderer is equivalent to murder itself—that it reduces seekers of justice to wretched seekers of vengeance. This simply fails to differentiate someone who murders from someone who kills a murderer.

The option of imprisoning murderers for the rest of their lives—and making them work to provide for the victims' dependents—raises some important issues. Those who currently favor life imprisonment over the death penalty usually do not address the question of who pays for it. If the imprisoned murderers do not (via their wages earned in prison), certainly no one should demand that others, or “society,” or government do so. Moreover, the risk may be significant that murderers will escape and once again pose a threat to members of society, or murder those who keep watch over them and take care of their needs.

However, despite the arguments for (or against) execution of murderers, we need to take into account the present legal situation. Since the State—via all the legal problems previously outlined—has repeatedly convicted, and at times executed, persons who were later found innocent of murder, a moratorium on the death penalty is probably prudent. Correct due process is imperative.

The topic of murder, however, does not address the issue of why people destroy the well-being of others. We, as human beings, should never have to deal with such evil behavior—from individuals who completely disregard the meaning of existence and their own worth and humanity based on this.

Granted, there are many different types of wrongs done to others—as well as many different motives involved—but what concerns us here are the essential factors. The State's present tactics of retribution only continue the process of criminality. Such tactics as unproductive imprisonment reflect the common theme that criminals are to be feared and/or hated—but not understood. Understanding is part of the solution, because it allows one to seek

justice as well as psychological remedies for the development of individuals (i.e., self-development) whose constant or occasional goal is to feed off and prey on other people.

The criminal's psychology—involving as it does a manipulating or conniving mentality—rests on the false premise that others must be fooled, used, or beaten in the game of “life.” For a person who has mostly ignored focus on the meaning of reality and the self, his or her life is not understood fully. It may be perceived as unfair, but it mostly is a life in which values have not been sincerely and logically chosen (and earned). Life, both consciously and subconsciously, becomes basically a world of “others”—their actions, their values, their thoughts, and their feelings—their expectations and rejections especially.

Criminal mentalities often *expect* others to hate them, to ridicule them—in sum, to disrespect them—for this is part of the game. This is often how they try to justify their acts as being responses to a world of fools and hostility. So, many are constantly devising new ways to take advantage of others. This is part of the mind of a criminal, a habitual mode of thinking about how to beat others or “the system,” resulting in conscious choices to do wrong.⁹³

The pattern of criminality is usually the outcome of a developmental sequence. It begins with discouraged childhood attempts at self-confidence and self-respect (and therefore respect for others). Discouragement typically is accompanied by adult hypocrisy and double standards, adult incongruence between beliefs and behavior and thoughts and feelings, and unacknowledged adult fear and pain. This is a world where emotions and many ideas are not clearly identified and understood. Some children, rather than fully conforming to this world and “the system,” decide to take their own twisted form of revenge. They choose to express their ravaged self-esteem in mischievous or destructive ways.

Once an adversarial attitude has formed from innumerable daily choices—in the midst of various undignified and disrespectful familial, school, and cultural encounters—the thought of reformulating one's views of self and others becomes tanta-

mount to giving the enemy one's unconditional surrender. Most may rationalize that being a "good boy" or "good girl" (actually respectful and civil) must entail being exploited by others. Seemingly no doors are open for change. So, finding ways to cheat, control, and fool others (all the while fooling oneself about the nature of the game) becomes the norm.

People can effect change only by understanding these attitudes. They are derived from an ethical and political culture that was not designed for autonomous, rational functioning. The present culture is neither structured nor intended to remedy the current levels of crimes. Nor is it able to effectively deal with the future droves of young, predatory individuals characterized as being impulsive and remorseless—who care little for either person or property (starting with their own).

Instituting more policies of hurting people because they have done wrong does not build respect. Nor does imprisoning them for years and years in a climate that is subhuman and nonproductive. Nor does allowing them to get by with what they have done, out of feelings of sympathy, past history of abuse, and so on. Pain inflicted by others ordinarily fosters resentment and contemptuous submission. Genuine remorse comes from the realization that one has lapsed in self-responsibility and independent judgment. Naturally these latter qualities are very difficult to foster with our society's current types of punishment. A system of restitution, however, would be a large step in the right direction.

Capitalism would help minimize crime by enforcing individual rights, which involves political/economic remedies that offer new and invigorating incentives, both psychological and existential, to be a respectful human being (which will be covered in many of the following sections). In a free society people would soon realize that anything acquired or wished for without effort and achievement (or without being deserving of it) is basically valueless. There is certainly no satisfaction in not accomplishing something productive and not pursuing one's aspirations in an appropriate manner.

A psychological shift would thus take place, and people would

dispense with their antagonisms. Most who took wrongful actions would be treated as human beings capable of understanding the moral and legal consequences, rather than as unreasoning animals that must be put in cages. Justice can only be strengthened by being just.⁹⁹

In a free society, torts would be seen as a serious way to hinder opportunities for achieving genuine values, which would be within every capable person's reach. Objective law would encourage the best ideas and behavior within every person and discourage the worst. To be more precise, bad ideas and action would no longer have the widespread appeal that they do in today's culture. People would finally realize that trying to obtain the unearned and the undeserved benefits no one.

With capitalism, the services provided by the military would also be transformed dramatically. Because a statist system would no longer exist, a wasteful military machine could not stay in operation. Further, the United States of America would no longer have a centralized representative body in Washington D.C. that supposedly speaks for everyone. As a consequence, the U.S. would not be a collective target of resentment that meddles in numerous foreign affairs. Those who disagree with its extensive policies throughout the world would no longer face the ever-present threat of terrorism against anything and anyone American.

A capitalistic society would most likely be seen for what it is: a group of individuals living in a certain geographic area who now realize (among other things) that the only moral way to deal with each other is through free and unobstructed exchange of values. All relations between Americans and people in other parts of the world would be at their own discretion. Any military or humanitarian aid could only be funded and carried out by private methods and represented solely in their interests. No one else would be involved or implicated in such matters.

In addition, the U.S. government could no longer sustain numerous double standards in its dealings with other countries

and their leaders (both democratic and totalitarian). The terrible inconsistencies abound. Countries in the Middle East are just one example. Many of our government's supposed allies perpetrate the same atrocious acts as our supposed enemies. Usually the only difference is the particular country's political, military, or economic suitability to "U.S. interests" at the time. There are leaders who gain leadership with the help of the U.S. government, and later become ruthless enemies. There are "favored" nations where political dissidents are tortured and thrown into prison to waste away for years, just for voicing opinions against the State. There are "friendly" countries where persons are dragged to their deaths by firing squad or beheading, without the faintest hint of a trial, let alone a fair one. Meanwhile, diplomats have their amicable and highly publicized meetings and make deals that impoverish and betray the lives of millions. Unfortunately, the influential reporting press sometimes uses a selective filter concerning the real truths in these matters.

Because no nation fully recognizes the rights of its own citizens (let alone the rights of people elsewhere), most U.S. foreign policy actions are very hard to justify. As an example of present foreign policy, we have the U.S. government's dealings with Iraq. The United States (via the United Nations) has engaged in an economic embargo there since the Persian Gulf War, cutting off shipments of certain goods. The more astute of the news media have revealed that these measures only hurt and kill innocent people (an estimated 500,000 children have died in Iraq). Embargoes also strengthen the resolve of the citizens in the affected country against a perceivably evil enemy. While the powerless citizens starve and barely subsist, those in political power distribute propaganda and funnel the few goods to themselves. The politically powerful are much less affected by the sanctions. (We have also witnessed this in Castro's Cuba.)

Yet the head of UN sanctions and now U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, stated in an interview (with *60 Minutes*, aired May 12, 1996) that the casualties in Iraq on account of the sanc-

tions have been worth it—that is, so long as the embargoes ensure that U.S. troops will never have to fight there again. This of course overlooks the *real* reasons for the Gulf War. It had little to do with the economic (and hence military) strength of the nation of Iraq (which is ostensibly what the embargoes target).

As in most wars, the Persian Gulf War was primarily about tainted politics. The U.S. government simply failed to take the proper actions that would have prevented the invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing disasters. While the U.S. courted his favor initially (against Iran), it now considers Saddam Hussein a despicable enemy. Nonetheless, he remains as viable as ever, irrespective of how many bombs our military forces drop on his country.

With capitalism, the political systems of other countries would be in the light of logic. Most would be seen as systems of human impoverishment and degradation. No country could hide the true nature of its practices, due to the newly-formed shining example of liberty. Intellectual revolution throughout the world would be an almost certain course of events. And, free people seeking to institute absolute individual rights everywhere would be justified in helping to overthrow coercive governments (where it is requested).

Considering the military changes under capitalism, what if the new USA *were* targeted for attack by countries who saw a capitalistic society as detrimental to the maintenance of their societies of coercion? How could a capitalistic society adequately defend itself if it were attacked, since a huge, exorbitant military might have trouble existing through private payment?

In an age of so much ethical and political confusion, we need to keep in mind that only the moral is the practical. Since faith in the collective governmental monopoly is simply unfounded, trust must be developed in private individuals. Undoubtedly, capitalism would consist of complex networks of cities and other communities throughout the entire privately-owned geographic area. These places of businesses, corporations, and residences would

consequently have a vital interest in protecting their personal and economic environment—in maintaining their ability to trade and make profits and have a joyful life.

Those living in a free market would necessarily ensure that any possible threats to their livelihood could be defended against and destroyed in an extremely swift fashion. Contrary to statist propaganda, war does not create wealth and rejuvenate an economy. No values are created by such destruction.

The money formerly expropriated from people through taxation and inefficiently and unproductively utilized by the military could be used privately in the most appropriate and cost-effective manners. Private military organizations would cater to the particular needs of people in cities and the areas between them (as well as in other countries).

The ingenuity and competence of the people in a capitalistic society should never be underestimated. Considering what the United States has achieved militarily with an unjust political system, one can only imagine the effectiveness of an ad hoc military united by the premise of human freedom and individualism. Accordingly, any kind of violent opposition against this premise would be short-lived, and people could move on to the immeasurably preferable matters of achieving values.

Psychology of Ownership

In a capitalistic society everything that can be validly claimed as property (i.e., able to be logically acquired and demarcated) would be owned by human beings. Consequently, what should or should not be done with (and on) “public” land would no longer be debated. For all practical purposes public land is owned by the government. Since, legally, everyone and no one own the property, the use and/or disposal of it is controlled by politicians, with the aid of pressure or interest groups.

Capitalism would turn the concept of property rights into what it should be—an absolute reality. All “government property”—in-

cluding roads, streets, bridges, waterways (oceans, rivers, streams), airways and airspace (including all the highly regulated frequencies along the electromagnetic spectrum), and anything else humans discover in the future that can be objectively defined as property—would finally be recognized for what it is: someone's property.

Existents, or entities in existence, should be owned—or rather *must* be owned—for them to best benefit human beings. Ownership is a method by which an individual can create value in an existent. By claiming something as property, one now has marketable capital which can be utilized in the marketplace with other human beings. If others deem it relatively unsuitable to their needs or desires, it will have little economic value (although it may have much personal value to oneself). If they deem it useful and desirable, it will have more value on the market. Whether one uses this property for one's own interests or shares it with others, or decides to transfer it to another person, it nonetheless has *definite* value—it can be used and traded. As soon as an existent is able to be traded, it can be used for the furtherance of human productivity; it can be improved, utilized, reshaped, and so on, so that it will provide benefits to people.

Presently all the things and places beyond our planet are unclaimed by anyone (not counting satellites in orbit around Earth). And none will be claimed until someone can make use of them to further serve human life (i.e., until they can have value on the marketplace of goods and services). In order to logically acquire and demarcate such distant regions, we must first venture into them. Naturally, our moon is the next realm on the list of places where property acquisition and demarcation are achievable.

Property must be the preeminent legal concept in a capitalistic society. Ownership, rather than being harmful or somehow bad (as one may get the impression from current political/environmental debates), is indispensable for conceptual beings. Ownership allows us to live. Ownership creates economic values. By everyone owning land and resources, human life prospers.

An advanced civilization, one that sees rights for what they

are, would understand that without absolute property rights, absolute human rights are impossible.⁷⁶ Again, rights are an individual affair, no matter how many contracted parties are involved. Since there can be no such thing as collective rights, there can be no such thing as public property. Today, we just witness the effects of mistaken ideas about how humans should deal with each other. Government is used as a crutch in place of proper integration of concepts.

The idea that government should “own” all thoroughfares and waterways, as well as enormous land areas set aside for wilderness preservation or “multiple use,” seems to stem from a fear or mistrust of human nature. But government and interest groups are people too, subject to human nature. Mistrusting people, while not mistrusting a contradictory government run by people, indeed creates additional problems.

The idea that others cannot be trusted to make appropriate decisions is not a minor issue. *It is one of the most dominant ideas in our culture.* People may feel that if “others” owned all the property, they would desire to destroy the very property they had purchased (“to make a fast buck”) and restrict access to their property. The general fear is this: On a wide enough scale, people would destroy the planet and/or make transportation impossible.

Yet, people make profits in a free market by generating values to trade with others. Obviously, prohibiting travel and commerce is not in line with profiting. Nor is it in line with enjoying social interaction. In a free market system people would invest in property in order to make money and gain other values. What someone does with his or her property is largely determined by his or her personal values and by the forces of supply and demand—that is, what will reap the greatest rewards for him or her.

To desire to take action that will benefit us in some way is completely normal. In fact, it is our nature. If it were not, the human species would not exist. Any use and/or disposal of property ultimately ought to have the effect of creating resources that we value and need to sustain us. For it to do otherwise is to truly

miss the point of human life and productivity. Human life and productivity, by the way, logically do not run counter to maintaining the beauty and well-being of this planet.

Nurturing Earth and its ecosystems invariably means nurturing ourselves. There is no contradiction between the survival and progress of humankind and the survival of our planet's natural resources, both living and nonliving. We will always have a definite need for expanses of terrain dedicated to scenic and recreational pleasures. Ultimately the enlightened values of property owners and the market of buyers would determine the final proportion of economic development.

Concerns about the ills of economic progress seem to originate mostly from observations within our presently corrupt moral and political state of affairs (which will be addressed in greater detail shortly). Stories about the way it was, back when property was a spurious concept and people "lived off the land," typically have an appeal because this former way of life did not jeopardize the scenic wonder of the planet and various crucial ecosystems. However, it is *on account* of human progress that we are able to voice our concerns in the first place. Progress has given life to billions of individuals who otherwise would never have taken a breath of air.

It would be ironic for us to disparage the very factors that give us life. Once again, no incongruity should exist between economic progress and living in accordance with the demands of our biosphere. The words of free market economist George Reisman raise some interesting points:

All economic activity has as its sole purpose the improvement of the environment: it aims exclusively at the improvement of the external, material conditions of human life.

In trying to restrict man's freedom to improve his living conditions, the misnamed 'environmental movement' seeks to force man to live in a less favorable environment.

Now because the world is composed entirely of natural

resources and possesses a virtually irreducible and practically infinite supply of energy, the problem of natural resources is simply one of being able to obtain *access* to them, of being able to *obtain command over the resources*, that is, of being in a position to direct them to the service of human well-being. This is strictly a problem of science, technology, and the productivity of labor. Its solution depends merely on learning how to break down and then put together various chemical compounds in ways that are useful to man, and having the equipment available to do it without requiring an inordinate amount of labor. Human intelligence certainly has the potential for discovering all the knowledge that is required, and in a free, rational society, the incentive of profit virtually guarantees that this knowledge will both be discovered and provided with the necessary equipment to be put to use. (p.16)

To men who reason and are free to act, nature gives more and more. To those who turn away from reason or are not free, it gives less and less. Nothing more is involved.⁸⁴(p.19)

The common concern is really not so much about one's *own* property, as it is about the property of others. It involves the effects of someone else's actions, for example with their property, on other people's values. More philosophically, the attitude may be this: What is in someone else's best interests may not be in one's own best interests, or in the interests of others or the country. In other words, one person's self-interest and values might conflict with another person's self-interest and values.

Let us take, for example, an expanse of land that one person (or company) desires to be used for scenic and recreational enjoyment, but another wants to mine. Supposedly this is a conflict of interest. However, what this line of thinking fails to realize is that, either way the property is utilized, *both* uses are of value on the free market. Otherwise, the potential owners obvi-

ously would not invest the money to buy them. There is no reason why the two buyers cannot purchase the kind of property they so desire. The spectacle of two people hassling over one piece of land is somewhat like that of two petulant children fighting over one piece of candy. Respectful people look for alternative solutions.

At this point in human existence, material resources such as minerals are very useful; nearly all people benefit from their extraction from the earth and refinement into products. But this does not mean that scenic areas are less valuable—quite the contrary. Nature is as valuable as people consider it to be. Actually, appreciation of the ecological and esthetic aspects of our surroundings is central to the development of a heightened awareness of reality (and thus of our actions).

Our planet is not so small, and the human population is not so large, that everything has to be subsumed under industrial development. While some advocates for the environment envision this, they tend to overlook the fundamental flaws in the political system (though they astutely note destructive political policies and boondoggles). Only when government distorts and cripples an economy and negates any real semblance of justice, does an economy's well-being suffer.

Most of the pollution, irresponsible destruction, and misuse of property for negligible short-term gains has occurred on public property—where there is essentially free access, but no ownership (and thus no accountability).⁵⁷ Open access to production on governmental land occurs for those groups versed in the tactics of lobbying. Governmental subsidies and special favors for enterprises to operate—usually in areas where free market enterprises either could not operate or would operate differently (due to potential violations of others' property rights)—further contribute to the unnecessary and short-sighted destruction and pollution of land and water and air. This often entails endangerment or extermination of species and devastation of vital ecosystems.

The following cites only a few of the profusion of these in-

stances: in agriculture, government hand-outs create incentives to misuse resources (such as water) and to destroy habitat; in the oceans governmental control and discouragement of property rights has led to "the tragedy of the commons," where fish stocks are continually depleted and politicians scramble to pass more laws limiting catches in order to correct problems with earlier laws; other such "common pool" problems take place in areas of groundwater and oil reserves (common pool problems stem from lack of objective property rights, which lead to miscalculations in utilization and distortions in supply); with one-third of the continental United States directly controlled by the politics of federal government, citizens use land and waters for "free" and some unfortunately disregard the damage or pollution they do; on federal land and waterways, the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers uphold various twisted policies and continue many destructive projects.¹

On a more global scale, the nonstop destruction of rainforests is instigated by the governments of third-world countries and by organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (whose operations also run on stolen money). These institutions, in the name of countries' welfare, encourage—through political and financial means—people to utilize "public" property in ways that have devastating impacts. Commonly, areas are left impoverished when the quick money runs out; most still live in poverty, squalor, and illiteracy.

Political systems that have not the faintest idea of objective law and absolute property rights perpetuate such conditions. In all these cases, be they of global or national concern, little money is set aside for conserving the property or rejuvenating it after use. Few market incentives exist to do so—stemming from lack of ownership. As expected, productive companies usually get blamed for raping the lands of the public.

Objective laws and opportunities to make money in a free society would strongly discourage these practices. To seek irrational values would be seen as equivalent to throwing money away. People who

value their freedom also value the property they own and the planet they inhabit, as well as those who inhabit it with them. All are united in the concept of justice.

An advanced, technological civilization would efficiently utilize natural resources. Necessarily the best and least harmful methods of obtaining materials from the earth would be in everyone's interest. All the devices of pollution that exist today would eventually be replaced by safe and sensible alternatives.

Most importantly, since everything would be privately owned, anyone proven to have polluted someone else's property (which includes one's air, water, and natural resources, both living and nonliving) would be legally liable. He or she would be subject to restitution, repairing the damages, eradicating the health hazard, as well as the effects of public ostracism. Such consequences are also not exactly conducive to high profits.

Currently, we hear certain businesses complain about the high costs of changing to cleaner industrial methods. However, they should never have indulged in government leniencies allowing them to pollute others' property (be it private or "public") in the first place. In fact, the changes may be more costly the longer they wait. More damage will have to be repaired when justice is finally exacted; although, advanced technological methods will certainly help mitigate some of the costs.

In a society that regards life as the absolute standard of value, individuals would never conceive any benefits, either physical or mental, for irresponsibly polluting and degrading their own planet. In the long term, nearly pollution-free industry will prove to be the most efficient method of production, as well as the most beneficial for ensuring human health and prosperity.

In a society that values logic, justice, and long-term investments with rising profits and productivity, no sane person would find quick gains at the expense of destroying his or her investments (and public relations) appealing. All the accusations made about the "evil" of the profit motive and the inexorable destructiveness of unregulated markets stem partly from deliberately unnoticed gov-

ernmental meddling in these so-called free markets to begin with, and partly from people's practice of subjective, or non-objective, values that endanger the physical and mental well-being of individuals. In a society that does not value liberty as an absolute, one can expect the moral and political aftermath.

In a free society, the nature of technological innovation and the inherent conservation characteristics of supply and demand, as well as the proper values of people, would take care of all concerns in these areas. A free market economy is one in which prices (which regulate demand) are a direct reflection of the scarcity or desirability of a good, thus maintaining adequate supply.

Since capitalism would be a society of objective laws, it would also be a society that encourages objective values (i.e., values in accordance with individual well-being)—and, as a result, mental health. An objective value, like property, is a reflection of reality and correct ideas. Accordingly, what is in one's self-interest (i.e., rational self-interest) is determined by objective values. And, since objective values can never conflict, neither can people's objective self-interest. Although disagreements over particulars (such as preferences) may arise, none would over principles—such as the principle that ownership of everything is needed and desirable. Again, no contradictions exist in objective reality.

Trying to get something for nothing, destroying things of obvious value, deceiving and manipulating others in business, treating employees as expendable commodities (which often requires the "sanction of the victim"), and using political pull to achieve ends at others' expense, are the result of non-objective values. Such practices are not normal "human nature." They are consequences of conscious and subconscious contradictions. To project them as being unavoidable aspects of a capitalistic society, and to use them as an argument against capitalism, is to confess a lack of examination of the concepts of objective values, objective laws, enlightened self-interest, and human nature. To hold values that are opposed to the facts of reality is certainly not in anyone's self-inter-

est, if one chooses life and psychological health as standards of value.

In our present society, a lack of examination of these various concepts is made clear by the hundreds (if not thousands) of governmental agencies established to regulate, control, and “police” virtually every area and aspect of human ownership and business. In addition to the plethora of state, county, and city agencies, boards, and commissions, the numerous divisions of the federal Executive Departments are especially intrusive.

There are departments of: Interior, State, Treasury, Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and Labor. There are also Independent Government Establishments (agencies) as well as Government Corporations.

Whether it be the Federal Trade Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Agency, Public Health Service, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Securities and Exchange Commission, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Employment Standards Administration, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Economic Development Administration, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Maritime Commission, or any other of the plentiful governmental organizations, each has either replaced the rights and jurisdiction of property owners outright or significantly throttled their autonomy.

These regulatory agencies seek to diminish the idea of property rights—diminish the idea that people are capable of ownership and decision-making. Under these agencies people are, for the most part, allowed to own property and trade goods. But they are not allowed to make final decisions for themselves concerning

these things. So mixed-up are the rules, requirements, and duties of these agencies that distinguishing their root function is nearly impossible. Many provide services. Others control and regulate business activities and individuals. Though a few perform legitimate activities of justice, they are wrapped in a vastly non-objective legal package. In addition, they are all funded by tax dollars.

Many of these agencies reinforce the belief that people are innately cruel, dishonest, or inept; so, coercive groups must control them. Many perpetuate the notion that more liberty leads to more, instead of fewer, deviant practices in business or personal affairs. Tied to this is the notion that profit-driven companies should not be trusted. In other words, companies or individuals that have an interest in seeing an investment fructify, or in making money on some new product or service, should be deemed suspect or in some way dishonest. Many of these agencies promote the belief that honesty is an exceptional trait in business and guilt should be the norm.

Being simply masters of self-fulfilling prophecies, regulatory agencies require the creation of “guilty” people (as well as moral cowardice) in order to justify and maintain positions of power. They enforce laws that are simply arbitrary. Antitrust laws are one example. For instance, bureaucrats sometimes declare the prices of particular products or services to be too high, too low, or even too similar. “Remedies” are enforced according to subjective bureaucratic standards (usually derived from market competitors’ standards). Naturally, businesspersons find it difficult to steer clear of arbitrary governmental pressures and punishments.

Hypothetically, if human beings cannot make decisions for themselves, what sense does it make to have other ineffective people oversee and control their affairs? If people cannot govern their own affairs, why have other people govern them? Such non sequiturs are never noticed by governmental officials and bureaucrats.

Individuals and companies definitely need to search out and punish fraud in society. But these activities are only part of the

practices of governmental administrations. Regulatory agencies fail to realize that nothing on Earth is so important to the alleged common good (or security of the nation) as respect for human rights. This inextricably includes the right to operate one's business and manage one's property as one sees fit.

The nebulous term "common good" or any of its synonyms has been used throughout history as an excuse to perform iniquitous actions—mostly to achieve ends that would not be achieved otherwise. Regulatory agencies are designed to make sure that everyone is "playing fair" or being "moral." From a developmental standpoint this is similar to the doctrines found in most elementary schools. Regulatory agencies want to make sure that no one, like "naughty" children, commits acts that are assumed *would be* committed in their absence. So, these agencies, or teachers, must be present to make everyone obey their orders.

Free market restrictions rely on the idea that people cannot be trusted and cannot run their own lives fully. The collective entity of government has to be constantly at their side. In a way, government seems to function as a surrogate parent who, in exchange for providing strict "guidance," requires payment in the form of compliance and mind stultification.

Children are taught that they cannot grow up to function independently. They are taught that, as adults, they must be constantly guided, observed, and inspected by others. Not surprisingly, this fosters a society of dependency. The ways adults show children that dependence is a necessary part of maturity are many. In addition to regulatory agencies, examples are to be found in the media, in school systems, in family relationships, and in various other institutions, associations, and organizations. Instead of intellectual independence, they encourage passive acceptance of commonly mistaken beliefs, as well as irrational collectivistic ideologies.

Certain habits are common. For instance, rather than explain the basic injustice and immorality of the tax system, many report how time-consuming and irritating the whole process is; some

declare that a “national sales tax” or a “flat-tax” would be simpler. Rather than note that the educational system is a failure because it is a coercively funded and operated institution, many declare that what schools need is more “discipline.” Rather than assert that property rights are irrevocable, many concede to officials who have seized their land (for whatever reason) by demanding that they be “justly” compensated (as stated in the Constitution concerning “Eminent domain”). Rather than criticize the configuration of government itself, many proclaim that a “line item veto,” “campaign finance reform,” or “term limits” will help solve our political problems. Rather than explain how incorrect ideas affect a culture and outline the causes of psychological problems, many despairingly assert, “It’s a jungle out there.”

Most people are so involved in their daily activities that these issues tend to seem less and less relevant, while the actions of government and its regulatory agencies seem to be more and more needed. Thus, the enforcement of non-objective laws is gradually taken for granted. That the majority of news broadcasting remains fixated on mainstream politics certainly does not help matters.

If people lose trust in themselves and others, dependency may seem to feel like a proper human virtue. But in truth, it is one of humanity’s greatest weaknesses. It serves to cut the mind at its root—never allowing it to grow. Additionally, dependency assists individuals to forget that to think, judge, feel, and act are all virtues of the self, not of “others.”⁷⁸

Rules and regulations in violation of property rights are merely attempts to substitute government’s judgment for the rightful owners. They promote the belief that many people are simply not responsible, cannot think properly, and do not know what to do. Non-objective laws therefore are needed to guide these debilitated people. Of course, to view people as individuals having real value, judgment, and worth has to start with seeing oneself in this manner.

Most illogical laws are outright confessions that people do not believe in themselves, in their capacity to think, judge, choose, and act appropriately. These laws basically imply that if people

were allowed to act on their own judgment (without governmental impositions and threats), they would cause harm to the “welfare of society,” or the “public good.” Yet one cannot substitute another’s judgment for one’s own. People still have to enact and use *their own judgment* in order to follow and obey rules and regulations that violate rights. Additionally, many people will tend not to understand and implement what is in their rational self-interest when their judgment and actions are throttled by non-objective laws and rules of others; such is the price of the destruction of liberty.

If all governmental agencies are to be dissolved with capitalism, then who is in control? And who is responsible for people’s well-being and safety? Who makes sure, for example, that people do not resort to chronic use of mind-altering substances to evade the thought that happiness is a possibility for them? Who makes sure that drug companies offer safe products? Who decides what is the best medical care for whom and who pays for it? Who makes sure that businesses are honest with their employees and shareholders? Who makes sure that fraud is not committed and rights are not violated? Who makes sure that. . . ?—ad infinitum.

The answer is, and always will be, *individuals*—not the force of a collective, legalized monopoly which negates absolute rights. Individuals who act in the marketplace of goods and ideas as wide as their minds are responsible for their own actions and relationships with others. Individuals are responsible for what examples they are to children; they communicate what living a life proper to a human being means.

In a capitalistic society, good reputation and productiveness would be considered the best means of creating wealth. And the quest to discover fraudulent activity would never override the principle of rights. In a free market some would likely do business—as they do now (e.g., *Consumer Reports*)—by studying and testing products and services to determine their quality. As in any enterprise, their profits would come only from people who decide their

job is being done right (i.e., consumers). Certainly, no conscientious consumer would rely on information if it appeared unscientific or slanted.

The market would continually discourage businesses from offering shoddy or harmful products and services. No longer would anyone be able to use minimum standards and regulations (and inspections) imposed by government to produce or provide things that are not as good as they could be or should be. Meeting governmental standards and guidelines would no longer be an aim, because companies would realize that they have nothing to gain by underachieving and conforming, and everything to gain by exercising their sovereign judgment. Moreover, the government's stamp of approval would no longer be available to companies and industries for uses of bribery and manipulation. Too often, governmental stamps of approval enable companies and individuals to profit from people's ignorance. Ignorance is encouraged when people mistakenly believe that government is properly taking care of them and watching out for their interests. Many, many cases have shown that government and corrupt organizations that seek their favor have their own agendas.

The realm of medical care is one example. Medicine is presently one of the most regulated fields. As a result, professionals' rights are violated in the most egregious fashion, and enormous unaccountability to the consumer exists. Non-objective federal and state laws all work to destroy the free enterprise of medicine. They set guidelines, create monopolistic enterprises (e.g., the AMA, one of the largest lobbies in the United States), promote the medical licensing system, and put into effect countless insurance mandates and regulations.

State meddling and impositions make it very difficult for hospitals in general and doctors in particular to practice the most important factors in business: honesty (as opposed to lack of disclosure and dissemination of information to customers); integrity (as opposed to negligence and denial of responsibility); and, reputation (as opposed to stagnation or entrenched, self-righteous incompetence). This is what government brings to the free

market, all in the name of making the situation better and right. However, nothing will ever be remedied by making laws. Only by upholding justice can problems be prevented or solved.

Like in any industry, professionals in health care need to be able to rely on their own judgment. This would not only make their jobs easier, but also far more enjoyable; no longer would they be buried in insurance paperwork or hassled by HMOs. A free market for medicine would also allow consumers to make more informed, intelligent, and independent decisions concerning their own and their loved ones' well-being.

In the end, alleged need for present agencies and non-objective laws fails in the light of logic. With true capitalism, logical minds would be responsible for behavior. They would understand that only persuasion and example can properly promote the well-being of any individual or group of individuals. In today's culture the key difference is that government serves as a replacement for being intellectually responsible. Whatever urgent issues arise, one can be sure that government is looked to and depended on to find and implement solutions. Since government is supposedly taking care of these perplexing problems, no one needs to recognize the real disaster taking place. Little thought is given to the reality that government tries to solve these problems by coercion and always with stolen money.

Once property rights are acknowledged as absolutes, though, the right to one's body would be recognized as absolute too. Just as we have the right to use and dispose of our property so long as we do not infringe on the rights of others, we have the right to do what we want with our own bodies (for better or worse), so long as we do not infringe on the rights of others. Among other things, this would actively encourage each person to take full responsibility for his or her personal actions *and* take his or her own welfare seriously.

Even though many of the terrible abuses people subject themselves to physically (and mentally) are currently illegal, laws cannot prevent such abuses. When government claims power to dictate the

personal welfare of individuals, attempts to legislate morality proliferate. Trust and confidence in one's ability to make good choices, however, cannot be cultivated through legislation.

The message that people are fundamentally incapable of self-regulation is conveyed by the laws that restrict freedom of choice for actions that do not violate other's rights. Drug prohibition is a prime example. For certain arbitrary reasons, some drugs are declared illegal to possess, use, and distribute. (Just as arbitrarily, "prescription drugs" may only be administered by doctors and obtained from pharmacists.)

Specific drugs are declared illicit mainly because those in power perceive their use as bad or immoral—drugs destroy lives and cause societal problems. Supposedly, laws against drug use not only protect individuals from themselves but also "send a message" to the public that government and others disapprove of their use.

Logically, morality pertains to actions of the individual, actions that may be beneficial or harmful in terms of survival and well-being. From a rational standpoint, routine consumption of any mind/body altering substance to the point that it distorts awareness of objective reality is definitely not beneficial (excluding of course necessary medical cases). Such consumption may impair functioning as well as possibly mask psychological troubles. Hence, it is principally immoral from the standpoint of harming oneself, not others (although others may indeed be harmed as a consequence).

Current legislated versions of social morality, however, appear to be concerned more with the welfare of others rather than with the individual's welfare. According to social morality, doing drugs is bad primarily because one may end up committing crimes, enticing others to participate, and injuring others' well-being in general. But this view is the reversal of cause and effect. People desire to use drugs for all kinds of psychological reasons, reasons deeper than statements about "addictive properties" or "cultural environment." And so, many people will begin to use drugs and continue to use them regardless of their effects on society or governmental threats of punishment.

Since morality is primarily an individual matter, only the individual can choose his or her course of action—not others. Legislating morality is futile because it attempts to negate that which enables a person to be moral: a decision. Given the inescapable truth that we are all volitional creatures, there is no rational alternative to the recognition that a human being has rights, a prerequisite of which is the ability to choose a given course of action. To be a self-generating and self-sustaining decision-maker, one has to internalize the practice of determining right from wrong, good from bad; and, one has to discover what is in one's rational self-interest.

Law, in a free society, is necessary only to enforce each person's inalienable right to be a self-determiner of action, in spite of the potential unknown harm to self or others that may result. (Any *known* harm to others, however (i.e., that which is immediately foreseeable), must be categorized as a kind of clear and present danger or threat of force, and it must be dealt with according to what is reasonable to extinguish it.) Law, as the tool of justice, reflects the consequences of infringing on others' rights. In this way individuals realize that they are responsible for what they do. Again, actions have consequences.

Since persons are easily capable (in nearly all cases) of recognizing what does or does not overtly infringe on another's rights, they need not be warned about and even prevented from exercising their judgment. As frequently stated, by making drugs (and countless other things) illegal, one is not protecting the rights of others; one is destroying the rights of the individual.

Though it is a common assumption, drugs are not the cause of crime. People are the cause of crime, which necessarily includes those who legislate against the rights of the individual. Drugs are no more the cause of crime than a car is in a hit-and-run, or a gun is in a shooting. Rather, destructive volitional creatures are the cause of crime. They may have numerous motivations for their acts, which are usually more complex than remarks about gangs, poverty, poor housing, fatherless kids, lack

of opportunities, unemployment, lack of government funding for city and school projects, lack of police officers, and so on.

Any action that intentionally infringes on the rights of others is necessarily a crime. Government and those who favor its schemes do a tremendous disservice to human dignity when they obfuscate the meaning of the term *crime*. Abusing drugs may be damaging to the self, but this problem should be remedied psychologically, never by force and threats. If people would focus on this real remedy (and everything it entails politically), there would be less demand for drugs and, hence, fewer sellers or dealers of drugs.

But where demand is high, there will almost certainly be a supply. This is why the “war on drugs” will never accomplish its goals. The illegality of drugs just drives them from the free market to the black market, where the supply is distorted, astronomically increasing prices. A lucrative business is thereby generated for newly declared criminals to fight for their market share. Soon, waves of violence turn sectors of cities into veritable war-zones and police into combat soldiers focused solely on holding their ground. In the process, both police and DEA agents become skilled at invading people’s privacy and confiscating their possessions.

All this stems from bad ideas about how to treat people—and from evasion of the idea that human beings are volitional creatures. Bad ideas will always yield bad results.

Concerns about the legalization of drugs usually involve more than the rejoinder that it “sends the wrong message.” Many worry about sinister people who would take advantage of children and others who are especially susceptible to drugs’ addictive effects—as if this were not an epidemic today. Logically, we should inspect why sinister people exist, and why they are labeled as such. This involves searching for the political and psychological reasons. Obviously, grade-school children are fully capable of saying “No” when they are offered drugs. Children who have been instilled with objective values and properly nurtured would shun such overtures as ridiculous. Those who do not fully believe in children’s self-regulating ability and capacity for sound judg-

ment usually call for more laws, rather than better values. Additionally, people who may be more chemically susceptible to drugs (however this is scientifically interpreted) can—if they make it a top priority—refrain from injecting foreign substances into their veins, snorting lines of white powder, inhaling various types of smoke, and swallowing an assortment of pills. These are all volitional acts.

When people fail to recognize their volitional capacity they tend to believe such things as, “I couldn’t help it,” or “The drugs were controlling my life.” These beliefs naturally foster a demand for laws that try to remove drugs from society and stop these harmful activities. Thus, a pathetic cultural situation is made even more so. Of course, the main thing this accomplishes is further degradation of human autonomy as well as an increase in rebelliousness and resentment of authority.

In concert with the dramatic changes linked to true personal freedom, the absolutism of property rights would quickly assist in remedying the various problems that plague our cities and suburbs. As was indicated in our discussion of private police agencies, the high crime rates associated with inner cities and other areas could now be dealt with effectively. All streets (and housing projects) would be under private ownership. Such troubles as drive-by shootings certainly do not raise the level of customer satisfaction, let alone the value of one’s business and property. Owners would contract with security forces to maintain the safety of streets and walkways.

Additionally, roadways as well as public utilities would no longer be owned by everyone (and thus no one) and maintained by government. Since they would be designed and operated privately, unnecessary problems would be notably minimized: fewer logistical problems; fewer funding problems; fewer structural or sanitary problems; fewer intolerable man-made health hazards (e.g., city air or drinking water); and, fewer congestion problems (less traffic jams to sit in idly for hours each day).

The enormity of governmental meddling in the market is furthered through myriad arbitrary property rules, codes, and regulations. Legalized monopolies of utilities are responsible for the infrastructure of any town or city. The extent to which these contradictions affect our economic environment ought not be overlooked. No matter how easy it may be to accept them, such contradictions should never be taken lightly.

All the astonishing changes from public to private that would occur in services and infrastructures need to be continually envisioned. Only a capitalistic market can determine the ideal methods of service and transportation in terms of expediency and cost. When this is actualized, the outcomes will be wondrously and proudly seen.

Psychology Of Education

In most societies, school systems are main purveyors of ideas. Schools help determine the direction of cultures and can have a major impact on individual lives. They do this by representing and by presenting major frameworks of human knowledge.

When we examine schools, then, we soon discover another reason why the world is in its current state. We discover why most people have aged without valuing the importance of recognizing contradictions, a primary concern for organisms that survive by conceptual identification, integration, and evaluation. We also discover why so many individuals put so little thought into the ways that their dignity and quality of life are stripped from them on a daily basis.

The overwhelming majority of people who pass through today's school systems tend to uphold and support the ideas they were taught. Most parents and teachers take it for granted that children should be "sociable," "pledge allegiance to the flag," sit quietly in class for several hours at a time, dedicate equal periods to dissimilar interests, move through the grade system and its classes (irrespective of individual desires, skills, and abilities), and diligently master as a group the course work provided to them.

Therefore, to recognize an objectively better education, we have to challenge many assumptions. We have to challenge the ideas we were taught and, as a result, most of what today's authorities recommend. To question the nature of the educational system of course requires us to question the nature of our own education. We need to see how it has influenced, and may still be influencing, our behavior and psychology.

In order to discuss the state of modern education and its logical alternatives, we need to discuss in more detail the nature of childhood. Throughout this book we have noted that children's experiences with parents and others are important factors in both individual and societal enlightenment. However, such factors can never be complete determiners of the lives of volitional organisms. We can always choose to reverse or spurn detrimental influences. The choice to act against these influences is an exceptional achievement, because it may mean standing alone—which, as we have seen, is not strongly encouraged or even accepted in a culture that espouses varieties of political and psychological dependence.

The idea of self-worth is essential for understanding psychology (be it child, adolescent, or adult). It is, after all, a central component of self-esteem. By virtue of being alive, every person has intrinsic worth. Every person deserves to live joyfully. Problems can arise, however, when we (or others) confuse our actions with our basic worth. If the way children merely *behave*, for example, is taken to be an indication of their existential competence and valuableness, then they and those around them may lose awareness of their fundamental self-worth.

Certainly, we can do things that affect our self-respect. This involves the issue of integrity. Simply put, if we do not fully respect ourselves, we may do disrespectful things. While it may initially seem somewhat paradoxical, the more we can distinguish our intrinsic worth from any of our particular actions and feelings at any given moment, the more we are able to appropriately serve our rational self-interest. Our basic self-worth is then no longer at

the constant mercy of our specific feelings and actions. This enables us to trust ourselves to act in our best interests given what we know (and don't know). Undoubtedly, if one lacks this basic self-trust and does not embrace one's fundamental worth, then disrespectful or even destructive patterns of behavior may arise. Essentially, one's behavior conforms to one's expectations of it, given one's view of self.

Of course, we can also do things that others may not value or respect us for. We can annoy others who have "better" or "proper" ideas about how we should express ourselves and live among them. Sometimes our autonomous actions arouse scorn in others. Others' scorn may (if we buy into it) falsely indicate that we are wrong, not just in action, but also *in person*; thus we are seen as bad—as unworthy. In fact, the ridiculing of self-worth has been used habitually by people throughout the ages: the declaration, or more insidiously, the implication, that we are unworthy in principle, unworthy to think and live independently, as our person requires.

Employers, teachers, parents, loved ones, and even strangers can disparage or attack one's worth. It can be an extremely powerful technique by which to manipulate, control, intimidate, or simply incense. Especially with a child, to label him or her with disparaging adjectives like "clumsy," "stupid," "dumb," and so forth, is to invoke, in the words of psychologist Haim Ginott, "... reactions in his body and in his soul. There are resentment and anger and hate. There are fantasies of revenge. There is guilt about the fantasies, and anxiety stemming from the guilt. And there may be undesirable behavior and symptoms. In short, there is a chain of reactions that makes the child and his parents miserable."³³(p.47) All these reactions indicate that self-worth has been attacked, and the easiest—but by no means proper—way to deal with the situation is to attack the worth of the instigator.

If disrespecting others' self-worth solidifies into a habit, then the issue of addressing one's *own* self-worth in a rational and coherent fashion may be practically ruled out. Situations can develop in which grown individuals engage in all sorts of ranting,

quibbling, bickering, hassling, and so on (as well as the more subtle games of deceit and vindictiveness and jealousy and envy, for instance). Like the characters in television soap operas, they conveniently avoid any focus on the source of their general complaints and problems with people; self-worth is neglected. Individuals simply have not nourished the practice of authentically and repeatedly validating their worth internally, *by themselves*.

Children can be significantly influenced by others. Children obviously have less developed cognitive functioning and less knowledge. Additionally, parental practices can promote emotional structures of dependence. Both of these factors may tend to diminish children's internal validations of worth.

Subconscious thoughts concerning, for example, unmet needs and unfulfilled desires can impel a child to cling to others for approval and acceptance (regardless of their responses). The child may have the secret hope that he or she will be deemed "OK," or "good enough." Parents can counteract this situation by appealing to the child's need to acquire intellectual and psychological independence. They can teach the child that, because one is good in principle, one's self-worth need not be at the mercy of other's responses.

Of course, the discouragement of a child's own validation of self-worth has detrimental consequences. As parents or adults, we can choose to interact with children in a variety of ways. Naturally, we are responsible for these interactions. Children are quick to receive the messages we send to them, whether beneficial or harmful. Ginott stressed the issue of delivering sane communication:

What counts most in adult-child communication is the *quality of the process*. A child is entitled to sane messages from an adult. How parents and teachers talk tells a child how they feel about him. Their statements affect his self-esteem and self-worth. To a large extent, their language determines his destiny.

Parents and teachers need to eradicate the insanities so insidiously hidden in their everyday speech, the messages

that tell a child to distrust his perception, disown his feelings, and doubt his worth. The prevalent, so-called “normal,” talk drives children crazy—the blaming and shaming, preaching and moralizing, ordering and bossing, admonishing and accusing, ridiculing and belittling, threatening and bribing, diagnosing and prognosing. These techniques brutalize, vulgarize, and dehumanize children. Sanity depends on trusting one’s inner reality. Such trust is engendered by processes that can be identified and applied.³²(p.81)

When adults gain knowledge of how to treat themselves in an appropriate manner, they are better able to deal with the untar-nished and joyous little beings known as children. The inner reality Ginott mentions is mainly that of the subconscious. Knowing the workings of one’s subconscious mind means becoming aware of integrations and evaluations that may be dysfunctional both for oneself and others. Awareness enables one to cultivate an enlightened state of consciousness for self and others.

By providing children with a healthy psychological model, adults also honor their volitional capacity. The so-called “normal” talk of which Ginott speaks, in contrast, denies children’s volition. Such talk may take the form of orders: “don’t do that”; “come here”; “don’t make me drag you”; “come play with the rest”; “share your toys”; “clean your room”; “be a good boy”; “be a good girl”; “don’t hate your daddy”; “be nice”; “you’d better behave”; “I expect you to . . .”—ad nauseum. These commands indicate a fundamental distrust in the child’s faculty of judgment and disrespect for the child’s ability to have and make choices.

Psychological freedom is acquired by dealing with reality—which includes one’s inner reality—in an independent way. Evolution has already granted children the capacity to focus and relate to the world in a conceptual fashion. And this capacity concerns the intrinsic motivation to be aware and to actively work to understand. As children, our cognitive/emotional mechanisms are structured so that these processes are not only easy, but also extremely enjoyable.

To thwart these processes is to discourage children and place blocks in the way of their self-actualization. If adults constantly impose directives on children, they can hinder the process by which children joyously learn to use their minds. It can interrupt and fragment development of self-discipline and self-mastery.

Children's learning processes may need guidance and encouragement, but these should not be mixed with commands to abide by. Obedience is an inherently destructive trait for a thinking organism, which must guide itself by its own judgment. Demands for obedience can ultimately be traced to a lack of trust in one's own volitional faculty (i.e., trust in making competent decisions). This leads inexorably to mistrusting others, especially children.

The demand for obedience, though, is usually masked in the idea that "It is for your own good," implying that it is both necessary and proper. The rationalizations adults can use to negate the will of the child are nearly endless. For instance, adults may see children as inadequate persons, or as having incomplete personalities; hence, children may seem in need of orders.

Nineteenth century sociologist Herbert Spencer noted the following: "Uncover its roots, and the theory of coercive education will be found to grow not out of man's love of his offspring but out of his love of dominion. Let any one who doubts this listen to that common reprimand—'How *dare* you disobey me?' and then consider what the emphasis means."⁹⁷(p.90)

Self-doubt, guilt, and shame, often mixed with anger, resentment, contempt, arrogance, boastfulness, are the detrimental emotional consequences for children when their volition and worth are not respected. Children can form a variety of inferiority and superiority complexes, from which comparison contests become the conscious or subconscious norms. Naughtiness, unruliness, hostile possessiveness, laziness, futile fantasy play, shyness, and so forth, are the detrimental behavioral consequences.

Much of the irrational behavior that children display is a result of how adults have treated them. Misbehavior usually does not emanate naturally from the child. Children learn a great deal

from adults. By the time the typical child enters school, for instance, he or she may have a plentiful arsenal of psychological games acquired from interactions with adults (and children of these adults).

So, adults need to search deeper into a child's motivations for acting "crazy." Otherwise they risk responding in nonhealing ways. The temper tantrums of children, for instance, which daily try the patience of adults, are direct indicators that important needs have not been, or are not being, met.⁶⁶ More often than not, children do not want to be spiteful and cause problems. Their anger or upset is usually symptomatic of a larger problem that needs respectful nurturing.

Maria Montessori noted that children have a natural desire to independently learn and work.⁶⁵ She questioned the common assumption that being directed or, in contrast, being idle with other idle minds or just engaging in purposeless, unthinking play, should be a natural part of childhood. Montessori took a scientific approach to pedagogy and sought to be an objective observer of children. She noted that pedagogy cannot be properly structured without understanding child psychology.

The exceptional, critically important observation she drew from her work was this: *The child has a teacher within.*⁶⁷ Children, as well as adults, do not need to be "taught" in the strict sense of the term; they do not need to be given lectures in order to learn. This may only hamper an initially eager young mind's quest for knowledge.

Montessori noted that, after being provided the appropriate learning environment, "spontaneous manifestations" of children develop and flourish on their own. Children naturally respond to interesting and unknown things. They seek to learn through their own relentless curiosity. In fact, this is the wonderful life force within all of us.

Montessori's first school for preschool-age children began in Italy in 1907. It was soon able to develop the true humanity in a group of deprived children, many of whom were discouraged and

unruly. After achieving extraordinary success with her new pedagogical ideas and methods, she wrote:

One of the most interesting and unexpected discoveries in our schools was the love and diligence with which children who acted on their own carried out their tasks. A child who is free to act not only seeks to gather sensible impressions from his environment but he also shows a love for exactitude in the carrying out of his actions. His spirit then seems to be suspended between existence and self-realization. A child is a discoverer. He is an amorphous splendid being in search of his own proper form. (p.99)

These poised little children, full of charm and dignity, were always ready to receive visitors. They had lost their former timidity. There was no obstacle lying between their souls and their surroundings. Their lives were unfolding naturally like the lotus that spreads out its white petals to receive the rays of the sun as it sends forth a fragrant odor. The important thing was that the children found no obstacles in the way to their development. They had nothing to hide, nothing to fear, nothing to shun. It was as simple as that. Their self-possession could be attributed to their immediate and perfect adaptation to their environment.⁶⁶(p.128)

The environment these children had adapted to was *reality*. The children could proceed at their own pace, by their own volition; their minds were in their own possession. They did not have to submit to the orders of an authority—to obey teacher.

Notice from the description that the children in Montessori's school displayed neither inhibition nor inappropriateness. Children who have their needs consistently and genuinely met apprehend their world sensibly. As a result of learning in a free, spontaneous, and self-directed fashion—in a mentally and physically invigorating environment (which incidentally is the teacher's task to

provide)—all essentially useless behavior falls by the wayside. No longer do children feel the need to fight against the wills of others, or doubt their own wills; both battles of the wills and surrenders of them disappear. Life and happiness flourish because nothing blocks the way to great, open expanses of knowledge and refreshing, stimulating experiences.

In such environments, children become confident that they can shape their own destinies. They feel that they are in control of their actions. They also realize that the pursuit of objective values is worthwhile and that happiness comes naturally. And, they understand that conflicts with others should be rare and dignified interactions the norm.

However, when the essential psychological and educational needs of children are not provided for, we ought to expect the aftermath. When following authoritarian orders is applied to the classroom, problems only exacerbate. Rather than encouraged to be independent, children are placed in a group of equally confused and misguided peers.

Though socialization may be the educational goal, the outcome is far from socially beneficial. In spite of their psychic needs to grasp reality and to acquire new skills independently, children are required to adjust to the behavior of an irrational group. Rand discussed this in her powerful critique of modern education, *The Comprachicos*:

Adjust to *what*? To anything. To cruelty, to injustice, to blindness, to silliness, to pretentiousness, to snubs, to mockery, to treachery, to lies, to incomprehensible demands, to unwanted favors, to nagging affections, to unprovoked hostilities—and to the overwhelming, overpowering presence of Whim as the ruler of everything. (Why these and nothing better? Because these are the protective devices of helpless, frightened, unformed children who are left without guidance and are ordered to act as a mob. The better kinds of actions require thought.)⁸³(p.198)

Clearly, this educational environment tells us that something is terribly wrong. Yet the feelings of frustration and resentment so typical in today's schools (among students and teachers alike) often go unnoticed as being indicators of flawed methodology. In all the *required* assignments and *required* activities—in all the hints and admonishments to conform to the group and comply with teachers' demands and impositions—we find a significant amount of emotional repression.

Clearly, such feelings need to be treated with respect. Rather than being repressed, they need to be examined. Introspection would no doubt enable educators to question the nature of current pedagogy. But without introspection, certain psychological attitudes will continue. Montessori remarked about the “camouflages” of adults, which help conceal true feelings:

One of the most remarkable camouflages is the hypocrisy with which an adult treats a child. An adult sacrifices a child's needs to his own, but he refuses to recognize the fact, since this would be intolerable. He persuades himself that he is exercising a natural right and acting for the future good of the child. When the child defends himself, the adult does not advert to what is really happening but judges whatever the child does to save himself as disobedience and the result of evil tendencies. The feeble voice of truth and justice within the adult grows weak and is replaced by the false conviction that one is acting prudently, according to one's right and duty, and so forth. The heart is hardened. It becomes like ice and gleams like crystal. Everything is broken against it.⁶⁶(p.176)

One of the many things that break may be the love of learning. When learning is controlled or directed by others, passion for it usually fades. When school becomes a continuous process of following assignments and performing lessons that teachers require

of students, the process of self-motivated integration can be severely debilitated. Teachers now must focus primarily on “classroom management,” trying to keep order and proper behavior among their students.

The schooling process continues like a juggernaut that unapologetically consumes its victims. Its coercive nature is seldom held accountable for the troubling outcomes. Myriad problems are instead attributed to lazy students, lack of discipline, poor teacher pay, dumb administration, insufficient funding, and the like.

At present, nearly all schools—elementary, high school, undergraduate, graduate school—require students to abide by someone else’s notions of what should be learned (and when and how). Such outside directives often take the will out of individuals striving to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities. Additionally, they encourage a dependent learning perspective. In the words of educator Alfie Kohn:

The signs of such dependence are questions such as ‘Do we have to know this?’ or ‘Is this going to be on the test?’ Every educator ought to recognize these questions for what they are: distress calls. The student who offers them is saying, ‘My love of learning has been kicked out of me by well-meaning people who used bribes or threats to get me to do schoolwork. Now all I want to know is whether I have to do it—and what you’ll give me if I do.’ . . . The *teacher’s* distress call—which can sometimes sound more smug than distressed—is the insistence that students won’t bother to learn anything that isn’t going to be graded.⁴⁸ (p. 200)

In concert with the procedure of required learning, modern education “grades” students. Grading is actually implementation of the psychological theory of operant conditioning. In simple terms, this theory holds that behavior can be modified by manipulating rewards and punishments for a person. Needless to say, *another*

person is doing the manipulating and desiring particular behavior. However efficacious rewards and punishments are thought to be for the short-term, they are clearly destructive in the long-term—and they do not say much for believing in competent, self-motivated human functioning.

The present educational system confesses its ineffectiveness by upholding the belief that tests and grades are necessary to keep students studying and mastering the material. “What is even more appalling,” Kohn stated, “many teachers hold out the possibility of more academic work as a punishment (or the possibility of less work as a reward), which drives home the lesson that learning is something a student should want to avoid.”⁴⁸(p. 151)

Certainly many students today would rather skip class and spend time with friends instead of study. In fact this is one of the greatest laments of teachers. Yet we need to realize that the present system has contributed to such student yearnings. Low student motivation for learning is probably the worst of the harmful repercussions of coercive education. Students can hardly be blamed for not wanting to sit for seemingly endless hours in classrooms.

Coercing people to study is really the reversal of cause and effect. People should study because they want to, not because they are forced to. To label students as inherently apathetic or undisciplined is to not question the nature of the coercive system. Such labeling only fulfills prophecies.

Nearly all of us, teachers included, were educated in a coercive educational environment. Thus, to accept the status quo may seem quite natural. Most of us were taught that drudgery and obedience to authority are often intrinsic components to the learning process. Grading and testing, of course, were used as main tools.

Some believe tests challenge the learner and indicate the amount of learning that has occurred. This perhaps is true—in a certain context. The way in which tests are used is key. In the context of modern education, they are normally used for grading. Consequently, students forget most of what they try to memorize for tests in a relatively short amount of time. This is a well-established fact.

Basically, grades and tests misplace the emphasis of education. They make students focus on rote memorization rather than thinking (e.g., making distinctions and integrations). When the exalted end is grades, learning mostly withers. As psychiatrist and educational reformer William Glasser noted: A student can either “concentrate on grades and give up thinking; or concentrate on thinking and give up grades.” Some give up both. They see little joy in doing either in this context. Glasser continued: “If we failed those who did C or D work, the system would be exposed and soon abandoned, but we don’t; we just place them in a position where, correctly sensing our attitude, they feel they are failures.”³⁴(p.63)

Testing and subsequent grading also bolster a teacher’s status as an “authority” in the realm of judging student academic efficacy and worth. This neglects a supreme pedagogical fact: *a student should be the judge of his or her own competence*. Any test a student chooses to take should be a reflection of his or her desire to assess educational progress. “What grades offer,” in the words of Kohn, “is spurious precision, a subjective rating masquerading as an objective assessment.”⁴⁸(p.201) Another writer described grading in the following way: “A grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite amount of material.”²⁸(p.6)

Since tests are regularly administered in opposition to the desires of the learner, they serve poorly as measures of capability. Main examples of this are college entrance examinations (and other standardized tests). These exams tend to view intelligence as primarily an innate, rather than an acquired, trait. Multitudes of statisticians and psychologists (or their hybrid, psychometric psychologists) have intricately designed and meticulously evaluated each type of test for validity and reliability. The tests are constructed to accurately measure what the creators want them to measure—“intelligence,” “achievement,” or “aptitude”—which in this case involves the ability to answer carefully timed question sets. On the

reliability side, scores need to be replicable across time and places; they are usually compared to norms and gauged in percentile ranks of populations.

Though this testing process sounds very scientific, it has little to do with education. Those who do not score high enough on tests such as the SAT, ACT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT, GMAT, may be denied higher levels of study or professional fields of work. These “objective” assessments are thought to spare potential students future hardship, wasted effort, and money.

So, even though students desire to learn and are willing to pay for it, others must judge whether they are capable or worthy of being in certain disciplines. Students cannot pursue their interests unless others—those in positions of authority—say they may proceed. All this is done supposedly for the good of everyone.

However, even if students are admitted to their desired colleges and universities, they are subjected to a very curious process. Educator John Holt related some of his thoughts about students in universities and colleges and their extended transition process into the workforce:

Most of them were on campus to get a piece of paper that (they thought) would enable them to do whatever they were going to do next, when they got out of school. Most of them, if given the piece of paper, would leave immediately and do that next thing. Most of them, if they left right away with paper in hand to do that next thing, would do it about as well as they will do it after many more years on this or some other campus. Others of the students are here because they don't know what to do next, or because they want to put off, for as long as they can, whatever they will do next.

Meanwhile, one might say that all those students are learning something. Perhaps they are. But they will not long remember more than a small part of it, or use or benefit from more than a small part of that. They are learning this stuff to pass exams. Most of them could not pass the same exam

even a year later, to say nothing of ten years later. And, if some of what they learn should someday prove useful, they would probably have learned it ten times faster when they needed to use it and thus had a reason for learning it.³⁹(p.200)

What keeps this system afloat? The educational establishment does, in concert with government. Most of the educational establishment is owned and operated by government; the rest is controlled by it (through grants, accreditation, required curricula and testing, etc.). This coercive system restricts the supply of students for various professional fields (law and medicine are two main examples). Many professionals are subsequently required to become and stay “certified” by state governments via a variety of licensing processes; individuals are declared criminals for “practicing without a license.”

Such rights-infringing regulations are based on the premise that individuals have no right to function for their own sake and in their own interests. University or college job tickets (diplomas) and stamps of approval by the State (licenses) are, by this standard, what makes one a reputable professional—not one’s own effort and achievement. Clearly, little trust exists in people’s capacity for discrimination, judgment, and self-regulation; consequently, the “experts” place scant trust in students to make competent decisions *for themselves*.

Modern education errs in its presupposition that *others*, not individuals themselves, know and can best determine personal ability. One primary statement about a free society (and about reality in general) is this: Every person must stand or fall by his or her own judgment. If one happens to fall, then one will learn from this and know better next time. Essentially, this is part of the learning process. It cannot be circumvented; it can only be unacknowledged.

A society that values respect for truth values honesty as a supreme virtue. Being honest—not only to others but also to

oneself—is best fostered in a society that relies on and trusts the judgment of individuals to make appropriate assessments of themselves. The market of consumers will make their own judgments accordingly.

Even though individuals might want assistance (e.g., in the form of informational feedback) to more accurately assess their skills or accomplishments, the nature of self-assessment does not change. Gaining knowledge, learning skills, and developing understanding are self-regulated processes. They cannot be directed, dictated, or evaluated by others.

A coercive system basically ensures that teachers remain frustrated with the slowness and lethargy of most students, and that most students continue to see every new assignment as a burden. This is the dead end of a bankrupt pedagogy. By doubting the self-directing capability of people in principle, it proceeds to create many of the same unmotivated mentalities it expected from the outset.

And what about the individuals who fall through the cracks? The ones who are deemed not good enough academically somewhere along their anxious, burdensome, and frustrating journey? What happens to them? What conclusions do they draw about life and the power of their mind? How do they go about gaining desired knowledge, and how long does it take for that desire to subside, and then to vanish? How do they go about seeking happiness and enlightenment, when their first few attempts proved futile? Self-respecting educators must address questions of this kind.

In order for the educational system to cultivate enthusiasm for learning, it has to be responsive to the needs of learners. Learning flourishes with a self-directed and independent attitude. Regardless of how enjoyable, helpful, or necessary it may be to learn from and along with others, only single minds can integrate information and deal with it.

Individual students need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning processes. A self-chosen and self-motivated

pursuit of values needs to be fostered. Schools, teachers, tutors, workshops, field trips, and so on, should exist to expand the range of possibilities of student choices—to, in a real sense, open new worlds for learners.

So, the primary job of educators is basically to provide the appropriate facilities, guidance, and feedback for learning. They should offer help when it is wanted, and should cater to the interests of the student.⁴⁰ In doing so, students maintain a desire to discover the new and previously unknown.

Within a benevolent and voluntary educational system, the connotation of the word “student” would likely change. At present, it oftentimes implies a subordinate relationship to another, the so-called expert—the teacher. It may conjure images of being told what to do and what to learn in spite of one’s interests, of being instructed and evaluated by an authority, and of having to sit for long periods and listen to someone lecture. Perhaps worst of all, “student” may imply having not just a lack of knowledge, but strangely, a lack of competence in acquiring it—hence the longstanding rationalization for external direction and control of student learning activities.

Of course primarily coercive education has tended to foster these connotations. Many educational institutes and teachers outside of this context can facilitate respectful relationships with students. They maintain genuine authority because students (of all ages) actively choose their services and both need and want particular amounts of guided instruction.³⁹

Therefore, for clarity’s sake, *student* ought to mean anyone in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills—regardless of any and all authorities who posture as superior. Accordingly, *teacher* ought to mean any individual emotionally secure enough to see him or herself as a student who encourages and facilitates learning.

True reform comes from implementation of new educational methods. A logically integrated philosophical and psychological approach to pedagogy from the beginning would provide the mental tools to reverse present counterproductive practices. Be

it in preschool, elementary, or high school, all would be united in stressing the importance of self-evolution, autonomy, and enlightenment.

Following the lead of genuine Montessori pedagogy, school would not be a place where students are required to learn certain subjects at specified times against their will and interests. Schools in which education is learner-driven would be the norm (in fact, some of these so-called "free schools" already exist presently).

Learning is not a job in which one gets paid for doing certain tasks. It is a self-actualizing process. Learning services should be geared for the benefit of students, not for fulfillment of various preconceived notions of what constitutes proper education. Consequently, students would be able to get what they want from a learning service. This, of course, would be reflected in their record of participation and accompanying portfolio of work and experiences.

Under capitalism, as was implied in the foregoing discussion, government would no longer run the schools. Since no State would exist, there would be no ties between State and education. Aspects of mainstream education that fail at the task of inspiring self-motivation in learning would be abolished. Things that are contradictory and thus impractical are of no use to anyone.

When the education of children as well as adults is left totally to the free market, the best methods, types, and formats of teaching will soon be offered. Not only the best methods but also the best ideas would surface and become predominant. The most effective and uplifting means of education would no longer be restricted by governmental policies (be they city or county, state or federal).

The fact that government now curtails the flow of ideas is an essential part of the collective scheme of things. The use of biased administrators, teachers, and the influence of teacher unions and associations (huge lobbyists who rigorously defend current pedagogy) are main examples. The impositions of laws that regulate, dictate, and create barriers to entry for genuine competition are

other examples. There are always definite motives at work, be they just defending subjective interests in the design of one's profession, or the connected and deeper issues of maintaining power and control. That most private schools mimic the curricula and general structure of public schools is not just coincidence. The reasons are both psychological and political.

Only a free market and logical ideas will show the way to enlightenment. Enlightened psychologies are able to create effective and inspiring learning environments. How well teachers facilitate learning and encourage understanding in all who seek their services is a central part of this. How well students can take notes, memorize (frequently unrelated and ungrounded) material, and recite an arbitrary amount of it on examinations is not. As psychologist Carl Rogers noted, being a *facilitator of learning* is a very different occupation than being a teacher and evaluator. He knew that trust and respect are essential for authentic human relationships, and that the psychology of the facilitator is a crucial element in the success of education.

Here is Rogers' view of what the attitude of education should be: "To free curiosity; to permit individuals to go charging off in new directions dictated by their own interests; to unleash the sense of inquiry; to open everything to questioning and exploration; to recognize that everything is in process of change—here is an experience I can never forget."⁸⁷(p.120)

In future learning environments, the time spent in school could be greatly reduced and left totally to the individual. Undoubtedly, newly transformed businesses and economies would want to incorporate adolescents in educational work environments designed to profit all the participants.

Schools would offer an assortment of learning environments, and they would respect students' decisions and diverse interests. These systems likely would incorporate such things as: interactions with peers of different ages; varied and extensive reading lists; informative and guided group discussions; useful feedback on individual and group projects; detailed reviews of students' writings;

and the continued multifaceted use of computers. General programs and curricula would be chosen by students and tracked by students and teachers. This would result in unique documented lists of experiences and cognitive/emotional accomplishments; such portfolios would ensure objective evidence of participation in particular programs.

Incidentally, the educational idea of creating “well-rounded” students would be reexamined. Schools, in their intention to foster this type of person, typically have disregarded personal interests. Without interest, of course, not much learning occurs. Little is retained, and little is used in contexts outside of school. The educational material tends to go in one ear and out the other, touching few meaningful mental areas.

Concerns about creating inept “one-dimensional” students would fade away. Educators would realize that in depth study of any specific subject typically entails a great deal of tangential material. Because all knowledge is interconnected, a master of one trade will acquire knowledge of others (even inadvertently). Scholars of certain fields become well versed in at least the surface information of other fields.

Ultimately, people become functional and adept because they desire, seek, and use particular knowledge. Learners need to be interested in learning. Information that is imposed on them will usually be shrugged off as personally meaningless.

Educational services basically need to treat students as human beings, instead of inferior beings. Any service that did not cater to the interests of self-respecting individuals would never survive on the free market. Seeing learning services from a business management perspective exposes some relevant psychological issues.

In the formulation of his “Quality Schools,” William Glasser compared students with employees. He noted the differences between the old, traditional management style and the new style. He outlined four basic elements in each style:

[Boss Managing (old style)]

1. The boss sets the task and the standards for what the workers (students) are to do, usually without consulting the workers. Bosses do not compromise; the worker has to adjust to the job as the boss defines it.
2. The boss usually tells, rather than shows, the workers how the work is to be done and rarely asks for their input as to how it might possibly be done better.
3. The boss, or someone the boss designates, inspects (or grades) the work. Because the boss does not involve the workers in this evaluation, they tend to settle for just enough quality to get by.
4. When workers resist, the boss uses coercion (usually punishment) almost exclusively to try to make them do as they are told and, in so doing, creates a workplace in which the workers and manager are adversaries.(p.24)

[Lead Managing (new style)]

1. The leader engages the workers in a discussion of the quality of the work to be done and the time needed to do it so that they have a chance to add their input. The leader makes a constant effort to fit the job to the skills and the needs of the workers.
2. The leader (or worker designated by the leader) shows or models the job so that the worker who is to perform the job can see exactly what the manager expects. At the same time, the workers are continually asked for their input as to what they believe may be a better way.
3. The leader asks the workers to inspect or evaluate their own work for quality, with the understanding that the leader accepts that they know a great deal about how to produce high-quality work and will therefore listen to what they say.
4. The leader is a facilitator in that he shows the workers that he has done everything possible to provide them with

the best tools and workplace as well as a noncoercive, nonadversarial atmosphere in which to do the job.(p.31)³⁵

The new style of managing honors dignity in the workplace. It empowers individuals by allowing them to make crucial decisions. Glasser noted that a large part of the new style of managing stems from the ideas of W. Edwards Deming, a major management consultant and theorist of the twentieth century. Deming's theories and practices of managing have contributed to the tremendous increases in productivity and quality found, for example, in Japanese companies. These companies, unlike many companies in the U.S. (at least initially), embraced the notion that workers know their work best. A free environment in which to make decisions also increases quality, efficiency, and profits.

The boss managing techniques are symbolic of basic mistrust in human ability. Although in today's economy it is utilized less than in previous decades, this management style can still be found. Inherent distrust of workers as well as managers' fears of losing control of operations if they become facilitators instead of commanders permeates many businesses. Like individuals in teaching, individuals in management can reserve the option to tenaciously maintain positions of power. They can refuse to delegate authority to others who require it in order to be autonomous, self-motivated, and quality-oriented.

While some twisted rationalization may make the use of command and control tactics on workers appear reasonable, such tactics can be quite degrading. And they are no less degrading for students. When educators use such tactics on their paying customers, they dispense with any semblance of respectful business relations. From a customer's point of view, it is equivalent to paying someone to rule over oneself. In a free market, no one in his or her right mind would purchase an educational service that worked to destroy the most important aspects of that very purchase—namely, personal fulfillment and self-actualization.

Thus, what we would see in the marketplace of ideas is much needed reform. Rationalizations that once allowed so many institutions to be so powerful would be seen as dreadful wasters of time and destroyers of individual growth. Doubtless a great awakening would occur among those who had been constrained by illogical ideas of the “proper” methods of teaching (and managing).

As in many things in life, change is inevitable. To ignore this obvious fact, or to try to forestall or retard it, is asking for existential and psychological trouble. Discarding the useless and the improper is a natural part of adapting to change and meeting new challenges.

The uninhibited free market would encourage change ideologically and, in doing so, could and would open new avenues for psychological transformation. Free markets foster free and uninhibited minds. And because we are capable of contemplating our whole life and seeing its brevity, nothing could be more invigorating than seeking out change for the better in education—for it can only amplify our quality of life.

Monetary Changes

In the capitalistic economy, rapid innovation would be the normal state of affairs. A constant escalation in productivity would continually send the standard of living upward. Human achievement simply has no boundaries—except those one puts on it.

Contrary to what many economists teach today, in a free market there would be no inflation, no depressions, no backward trends in growth. The primary reason for this is that government would no longer be in charge of printing and controlling the money supply, thereby influencing the economy in terribly dangerous ways. The value of the most popular medium of exchange, the dollar, would no longer be at the mercy of the Federal Reserve System. Additionally, the complex and devious monetary and fiscal policies practiced by this government (and others throughout the world) would no longer be issues of concern.

Governmental fiscal and monetary policies are neither necessary nor desirable. They do not keep the economy “stabilized” or “heading in the right direction.” Any supposedly justifiable reasons for these policies basically represent patchworks and corrections for ill effects of past money supply interventions.

Logic tells us that if one takes an illogical action—regardless of the “reasons”—one has to deny the truth in order to get by with it and take further illogical actions. Yet the piling of illogic on top of illogic and rationalization on top of rationalization sooner or later is exposed as the fraudulent game it is. Such a scenario summarizes the government’s policies of interfering with the money supply, which it has monopolized. The basic mistaken premise of the State’s actions is that people can cheat the facts of reality; they can lie to themselves (and others) with impunity.

Under capitalism, distribution and control of the supreme commodity, money, would no longer reside with government. It would reside instead in the market system. Of course, government obtains most of its power from controlling money, be it through banking or taxation. As Reisman stated:

[A government’s administration] . . . derives an enormous advantage from [its monopoly of paper money] in that—at virtually no cost—it obtains billions of dollars with which to finance programs designed to reelect itself. There is money to meet every ‘emergency’—to combat or prevent a recession (that is always brewing because of previous expansions of money); to bail out companies, banks, cities, even states; to subsidize here, underwrite there; to finance this or rebuild that; to lend; to ‘fund’; to ‘rescue,’ ‘restore,’ ‘revitalize’; there is nothing for which ‘Washington’—i.e., the printing press—cannot be called upon for funds.⁸⁴(p.193)

In order to keep up with payments of interest accumulating from the enormous debt (over six trillion dollars) it has incurred (e.g., via bonds and treasury bills), government repeatedly resorts

to inflating and devaluing the dollar. Simply put, government prints more dollars and deficit spends. These practices can be accomplished primarily because government abandoned the gold standard, which thereafter allowed money to become mere unaccountable paper. With no tangible commodity backing paper bills and metal coins, bureaucrats were free to somewhat surreptitiously perform their economic larceny.

A dollar is—or rather should be—a piece of paper that represents something of value that can be used for exchange. The typical commodities used as mediums of exchange throughout history have been gold and silver. These metals were not chosen arbitrarily. They were mainly chosen because they are *scarce*, *durable*, and *equally divisible*.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, they are also heavy and therefore cumbersome in large quantities. For many transactions they can be difficult to use.

To solve this problem, people naturally decided that printed paper and coins could serve as convenient *representations* for the medium of exchange (e.g., gold). The stipulation was that paper and coins must reflect and honor (in the form of certified bank notes, deposits, receipts, or money substitutes) the value of the true commodity (gold) in the bank. After the United States dispensed with its semblance of a gold standard around the 1920's, the only value that pieces of paper called “dollars” had was simply the faith of the general public in using them for exchange. Such is the case today.⁸⁸

Contrary to statist dogma, an authentic gold standard and, accordingly, a free system of monetary production and exchange has never existed. Many arguments against the gold standard usually stem from historical observations of the flawed gold standard regulated and monitored by government. This frame of reference is certainly an outdated as well as improper one. Historical observations of so-called free market problems need to scrutinize a crucial factor affecting the market's operations: the coercive workings of the State.

A noteworthy example of monetary intervention was the gov-

ernment-initiated practice of fractional reserve banking. It encouraged banks to keep only a part of customers' total gold deposits on hand (investing and lending out the rest). This let banks extend their profit-making ventures beyond their means—at the expense of their depositors' security. Banks could not honor their customers' accounts if they withdrew their deposits all at once (creating a run on the bank).

Of course, government has tried to preclude runs and many other financial problems by, for instance, providing monetary compensation insurance. The FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation), is now used along with multitudes of other devices to supposedly assist banks with their services. But, in actuality, these devices constantly encourage imprudent banking practices (such as the Savings and Loan debacle of the 1980's) by relieving banks of fiscal accountability.

Problems with the State-run gold standard were minute in comparison to today's economy of paper currency. The entire banking industry is a quintessential case study in governmental intervention and control. State meddling primarily contributes to serious economic distortions and banking system dilemmas.

Even though America's present economy (or at least particular sectors of the economy) is often described as "booming" by analysts, such market activity can happen in spite of the governmental problems underlying it. Technological advances and innovations, and increasingly global trade of goods and information, certainly play a significant role in economic growth.

Nonetheless, money has to be produced through productive work, which means it cannot be created out of thin air or on a whim; it must represent something of value.⁸² Deficit spending and the printing of more dollars may make it *appear* that there is more money, but in fact all that is made is more paper and more debt. This means more inflation.

Inflation is an intrinsic part of any coercive State. Only further interference, such as adjusting interest rates, can control the rate of inflation. The deleterious effects of such practices on the general

economy cannot be overstated. In many parts of the world, we see the dramatic effects of inflation unfold. It essentially ruins whole economies.

As inflation continues, people develop apprehension about when or if paper money will stop losing value. Prices rise and, eventually, many people decide to buy goods now instead of later, when they will be considerably more expensive; obviously, real wages and standard of living do not rise with an inflating currency. As people lose trust in the buying power of their inherently valueless medium of exchange, many also discontinue investing. The stock and bond markets (which yield profits through the productive use of venture capital and the time value of money), may lose their appeal. Saving or investing, irrespective of the beneficial economic effects, prevents one from spending.

When the standard of living declines, more and more people accumulate larger and larger amounts of debt, assuming they have the option. Similar to government, many purchase what are considered in a developed economy essential goods and services with money they do not have (i.e., borrowed money). (This is a common occurrence even in America today—witness the huge quantities of credit card debt throughout society.)

Inflation basically creates an economy in which people are encouraged to spend, rather than to save and invest. Government's process of theft on a nationwide scale concludes with hyper-inflation, in which the value of the currency is such that it will buy practically nothing. One has probably heard the horror stories about people using a wheelbarrow full of money to buy a loaf of bread. Recent examples of similar situations exist in numerous impoverished countries. Such an outcome marks the end of the game. Reality finally catches up with the players and the millions they have dragged with them; mass starvation and chaos oftentimes ensue.

Yet this outcome can be ignored by entertaining the notion that human beings can get something for nothing. Contrary to political campaign promises, wealth cannot be expropriated from

individuals in a productive economy, run through a bureaucratic system with a labyrinth of commissions, committees, and departments, and emerge equal to (or even greater than) the sum of money taken. Much wealth is assuredly lost in the process. Because only the distribution of money can be altered, the majority is sacrificed to the minority—to the assorted interest groups, both public and private. This is the welfare State of special favors at the expense of others.

And if there is not enough money to satisfy all of so-called society's needs, more money can be "made" by printing it, or by using expropriated wealth of the future (i.e., getting more loans to pay off loans and interest on loans). By haranguing about "injustices" in society and the requirements of the public welfare, bureaucrats believe they can persuade themselves and the public that poison is really good for them. All the while, many economic and banking specialists seek to justify our economic situation with various statistical manipulations, formulas, charts, and graphs.

Government has the power to turn the land of plenty into the land of despair and desolation. Yet it tries everything possible to make it look like it is not ultimately to blame for economic "downturns." If the process of inflation is slowed so that it is hardly noticeable, then perhaps those responsible can forestall the effects of their policies until they have reaped the rewards. Meanwhile, though, citizens are slowly drained of their livelihoods and buying power.

To view the current economic/monetary situation as some kind of market controlled and created state of affairs only perpetuates crises. The cause for low wages and poor buying power (as well as corporate downsizing and job outsourcing) ought not be directed at "big corporations" and their "unfair" management practices, or even at "big government" and its "wasteful monetary practices." We must scrutinize the political principles that have necessitated current economic conditions. To take economic problems as market givens that need government tweaking may even foster a mentality that demands comfort and stability in an

ever more volatile market. The present market requires even more creativity and flexibility in generating work where it is needed and valued.

Politicians can exploit and intensify misguided attitudes by pitting U.S. workers against “foreign” workers. Pointing to trade imbalances and political double standards, they may advocate protectionist governmental measures. Such measures attempt to isolate international markets whose voluntary operations are allegedly destructive.

Of course, the only things free markets tend to destroy are: high prices of goods and services, high costs of production, poor quality of products and services, general conditions of poverty and squalor, and mentalities of stagnation. Left alone, with the backing of objective law and complete property rights, the free market would make all the appropriate corrections. And this would be done solely by the choices of individuals. All long-standing economic imbalances among countries would eventually reach equilibrium.

The *involuntary* aspects of international markets severely affect those who trade. Governmental impositions of various rights-infringing trade barriers—and the creation of trade exclusivities, as well as pollution leniencies—are truly destructive. To accuse “foreign” businesses and products of causing our economic problems is completely erroneous (although it has been a highly promoted fallacy for decades).

A case in point involves criticizing foreign companies when they engage in “dumping,” that is, when they export large amounts of materials to the U.S. (e.g., steel). Although dumping contributes to declines in sales and profits (and thus jobs) of particular U.S. companies, the basic political reasons must be observed. Most of the distortions and disparities in market sectors of various economies are a direct result of non-objective commerce laws (both domestic and international). Initial statist isolation tactics—first and foremost being governmental monopolization of money supplies throughout the world—are an equally important factor. Statism

and non-objective laws, not markets, have given rise to trade difficulties. Again, some bureaucrats use the emotionally charged economic effects as tools to manipulate and strengthen collectivistic ideologies (e.g., “us against them” attitudes).

In the midst of this confusion, concerned employers and employees need to consider their economic troubles from the standpoint of liberty and justice. Though they may want their personal economic situation to be different, demanding the assistance of government will undoubtedly invite further problems.

Our current economic/monetary situation has a main cause: theft on the grandest scale imaginable. Probably no other economic situation has a more immediate impact on people than the condition of the primary medium of exchange—money. Any change in the value of money directly affects every person’s living standards. It affects every single economic choice, from what types of foods one can buy to what kinds of activities one can afford. The quality and quantity of human action will always be controlled by the amount of wealth in a civilization. People can choose to overlook these basic facts, but every economic choice they make will be determined by what government has done to the money supply.

Of course, none of these facts would be of so much concern if people had an alternative money they could use for exchange, one that was backed by gold—or more accurately, one that was gold. But government, by its nature, will never allow this. An alternative money would immediately expose government’s game and put them out of business. The gigantic debt that government has accumulated would have to be written off as miserable and immoral investments. Americans would never have to sacrifice their time and effort to pay for other people’s foolish money management. Only a capitalistic society would ensure a sound money supply that does not require human sacrifice. This is the prerequisite to an ever-growing, productive economy.

Constant increases in productivity in a free market mean that

most goods and services would, in the long run, become less expensive; more value is gradually added to each dollar. Additionally, the value of money would now be able to fluctuate unimpeded according to the laws of supply and demand (no more fixed currencies or fixed exchange rates). This means that the medium of exchange would be responsive to true economic forces—not artificial and destructive governmental forces. Devaluing of the currency, so that it buys less and less, would be a ridiculous injustice of the past. Savings and investment would now be the norms in society, because money (in the form of gold, or whatever chosen precious metal) would now have *real* value, and trust in it would be solid and certain.

The possibilities this holds for the fields of business and the sciences are tremendous. Since so much more wealth would be available, research and development would skyrocket. Companies would now have the resources they need to endlessly improve and innovate their products and services. Furthermore, individuals would no longer have to adjust their time, money, and effort to obey the maze of governmental edicts concerning their personnel and business transactions. (It is little wonder that the thought of going into or staying in business is sometimes revolting for so many intelligent, self-respecting people.)

Employers could discard their current agonizing about how to allocate their ever-diminishing resources—hoping to possibly make a profit while keeping shareholders and employees satisfied. They would no longer have to decide strictly between reinvestment and employee pay raises or benefits, which can create enormous disputes and problems for so many businesses. To contemplate all the employers and employees who have endured and are still enduring these difficult processes is quite disconcerting. Yet the dreadful uncertainties such processes have created in their business as well as personal lives for so many decades definitely have a root problem. And it can be fixed.

Additionally, to think of all the scientific research and development that has been retarded and reduced to undignified begging for governmental subsidies and grants just to move for-

ward at a snail's pace is especially distressing. The dependency on governmental funds and assistance is part of the insidious racket of the politicians who feed off the desperate "needs" of society. Government has skillfully created an economic umbilical cord—through special privileges and money—that binds people to it and induces them to remain fixated on short-term economic gains and losses. As a result, one commonly hears scientists and researchers declaring that, without governmental funding, they could not continue their operations. They fail to realize that their operations are greatly hindered, not helped, by government subsidies. Far more money would be available in a free market. Clearly, the belief that the end justifies the means is a sign of a morally confused culture—and a politically confused culture. If one cannot acquire capital (or anything else) in a voluntary fashion, one obviously has no right to it. In a free market, such a situation indicates that one should look for more productive work—for only this would be valued and respected in a society of liberty.

As noted, the current conditions of economic hardship have been created by all of the governmental regulations and restrictions of trade, inane monetary policies, and the constant expropriation of wealth from virtually every adult member of society. No calculation will ever be able to inform us of all the projects that had to be scrapped, cutting-edge research that had to be curtailed, and beneficial products that were never produced and brought to market—all because of lack of finances, and proverbial bureaucratic red tape. No one can tell how many people have suffered and died on account of this state of affairs. Nor can anyone assess how many lives could have been saved or enriched.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FREEDOM

A Mental Shift Towards Independence

By now, it is probably apparent that our cultural/economic state of affairs is relatively simple to remedy politically—if one values justice and rights. But it is exceptionally difficult to remedy if one disvalues these (or at least lacks knowledge of their significance). In order to seek valid remedies for the ills of our culture, people must maintain their independence. Various forms of dependence in many facets of life gradually can become the complacent norm when individuals relinquish personal control.

Dependence for adults—be it financial, intellectual, or psychological—should never be considered beneficial. The real dilemma is that people know this, at least on some cognitive/emotional level, and yet they still accept dependence. Hence, the issue becomes one of honesty, integrity, and self-esteem.

Dependence, of course, should not be confused with another relational term, *interdependence*, which implies such things as working together, living together, learning together, enjoying each other's company (through sharing values and getting needs met), and so forth. People in society can be interdependent without being dependent—for interdependence can and should ex-

ist among independent people. Such people respect themselves and respect others.

Acknowledging one's knowledge and knowing one's value are not automatic processes, at least not consciously automatic. If dependency issues are avoided consciously for emotional reasons, then naturally the subconscious deals with them by its own methods. Dependence may become a predominant emotional theme in one's patterns of thought and behavior.

We can always question our ability to be independent entities. As a result, we must appreciate the practice of examining both conscious and subconscious conclusions and interpretations, as well as the emotional evaluations that reflect them. Such appreciation plays a major role in the meaning of independence for us as individuals and for our civilization.

The typical psychology that would arise and flourish in a capitalistic society is one that upholds logical thinking. We have seen that this process is necessary for happiness and enlightenment. Contrary to common dogma, logical thinking is a process that ensures a healthy and exuberant emotional state. The literature portraying that reason and logic constrain and limit emotion and passion sets up a false dichotomy between thought and emotion. Such a stance promotes the belief that our inner world is naturally one of contrary faculties. Of course, for thought and emotion to be actually in opposition, mental integration must be disfavored and logic abandoned.

In a capitalistic society, a new independent psychology would arise on account of a continuous flow of ideas that upheld thinking and subsequent mental health as primaries. The free market, schools in particular, would reveal the radiance of a new era in human intellectual evolution.

Independent psychologies flourish in constant interaction with other minds. Vitality for enjoying values is part of their personalities of confidence, respect, and emotional spontaneity. Consequently, such people naturally express excitement about themselves and their experiences. They know that life is invaluable. They

also understand that ideas are one of the most important aspects of human existence. They realize that facts are a primary concern for a consciousness whose distinctive form of survival relies on the identification and evaluation of facts.

Capitalism is an attainable reality for the human race. Essentially, it will arise when the contradictory ideas that have inhibited society lose their psychological appeal. Of course, the meanings of these contradictory ideas need to be illuminated on a widespread basis. Intransigent people united by fundamental principles ought not expect anything other than an enlightened society. Really, the kinds of psychologies that would arise and flourish in such a society are also needed today to create it.

Financial independence generally promotes healthy relationships. It is typically the culmination of both personal initiative and long range, thoughtful action. Its achievement can be viewed not only as proper, but also as enjoyable. What is sometimes puritanically called "hard work" is really honest effort at achieving cherished values. However, absent true capitalism, this perspective sometimes gets lost.

In today's societies, financial independence at times might feel like a duty or a burden, rather than a meaningful aspect of one's existence. Scorn directed at having to work and make money is often accompanied by a daydream of a paradise where no labor is needed. Clearly, fears of not being able to function competently may foster such attitudes. The idea of fully valuing oneself then becomes significant. Yet countervailing forces can interfere with this idea.

People may not expect greatness or excellence in themselves or others, and individuals may fail to broaden their horizons. Our culture also sometimes outlines unthinking and obedient drudgery (and a narrow job description) as a necessary part of work. Some employers even try to prod employees into better performance with rewards (such as incentive plans) and punishments (such as poor evaluations). They thereby bolster the belief that

most people need to be motivated by others, externally, to perform well and be creative. However, the alleged merit of these tactics of “pop behaviorism,” has (like in education and parenting) been disconfirmed repeatedly by the evidence. Numerous studies indicate that such external control measures diminish creativity, decrease interest, foster dependency, and beget the perceived “need” for their continued use.⁴⁸ Additionally, that they are morally repugnant nearly goes without saying.

When people are unwilling to acknowledge the true import of their existence and their relationships, they can be treated as means to other people’s ends. The toxic nature of contradictions tends to seep into all defenseless areas. Following the unexamined and unquestioned routines set forth by others may even generate a feeling of resentment towards the whole of the market system. Of course, this does *nothing* to change the given psychologies that contribute to this unfortunate atmosphere.

A mixed economy (i.e., one that permits government to initiate force in the market) tends to forward the mindset that most work is unwelcome toil, and that trying to make money is both frustrating and emotionally tiring. Many have the feeling that their work and existence are not about sustained enjoyment; rather, they are about survival—that is, “making ends meet”; basically in the end, death and taxes win.

Because a mixed economy has been coercively throttled, fulfilling jobs and nourishing opportunities may seem scarce, pay may be inadequate, and the future may at times look bleak. Many people decide this to be just a natural part of life. They may proceed to toil in an unscrutinized routine, or they may deny the magnitude of this situation by saying, for instance, “Things are not really as bad as they seem because, overall, life is what you make of it; so cheer up and try to enjoy things.” Clearly, both approaches disregard the possibility that conditions can and will get significantly better. Although both admit that the world could use some major improvements, “politics as usual” will prevent them from happening.

Of course, any of us can escape from the potential immensity of our political situation. For instance, we can involve ourselves in many pleasurable and amusing activities: nights and weekends of relaxation or recreation, and hours spent with numerous treasured avocations. But if our occupations require little thought beyond the immediate environment, we can lose hope of changing our existential predicament. In this issue ignorance is by no means bliss. It obviously cannot alter our social and political context.

Neither depressing pessimism nor unwarranted optimism is the answer to the problems that afflict civilization and affect people's mental outlook and behavior. Only an understanding of the basic flaws in current political philosophy (and modern philosophy in general) together with a high degree of psychological awareness will dramatically change our conditions. In contrast to a common assumption, what most people experience day in and day out is not all there is to life. It certainly does not represent all the possibilities of human psychology and human relationships.

In addition to upholding the virtues of financial independence, a capitalistic society would encourage people to be intellectually independent. The ability to discriminate among the typical assortment of ideas and propositions is essential to achieving inner-peace, confidence, and self-reliance. Instead of just accepting cultural ideas, people would realize the crucial need to go further. They would examine whether or not particular ideas are logical or illogical, and investigate why people readily accept or reject those ideas. Individuals would critically reflect on observable events and theoretical propositions, knowing that at any point one can reach a wrong assessment.

A society that valued correct ideas would value intellectual integrity. People in a capitalistic society would greatly value facts. They would see that their lives and health depended on it. To further confirm this conclusion, they could refer to any history book.

Naturally, people who are aligned with reality are those who

benefit from it, because they can adapt to it proficiently. They do not fear what needs to be faced (internally and externally). They are not reluctant to name what needs to be named. To feel comfortable (and in many cases, delight) with identifying and discussing attributes, experiences, and characteristics of our environment and ourselves both expresses and clarifies who we are. It is a main way of making our life completely real.

A psychological climate of avoidance, evasion, and general ignorance diminishes our life. In contrast, intellectual (and psychological) independence allows us to put the whole spectrum of negative emotions into proper context. Feelings of shame, fear, anxiety, embarrassment, guilt, worry, awkwardness, pain, hostility, and so on, become largely understood and are then dealt with appropriately. Individuals in a free society would understand finally, and would have integrated subconsciously, that the human organism cannot truly gain anything through evasion, repression, and rationalization.

Of course, what is *presupposed* in these predictions is that children are shown the necessities of psychological health, the necessities of self-esteem—such as self-reliance, self-expression, self-assertion, self-responsibility, and self-acceptance. Children would be reared to integrate, for example, the self-esteem enhancing practices formulated, discussed, and illustrated in *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*.¹⁵

Learning how to make sense of one's inner world and rely on personal resources to cope with emotional vicissitudes would be customary in an enlightened era. (Contrast this to the social atmosphere in many junior or senior high schools today, in which inappropriate behavior and recklessness (often inaccurately characterized by adults as being "a part of adolescence") frequently holds sway.)

The social or human sciences would enlighten individuals about thinking in terms of principles, using their minds excellently, and being able to effectively face any hardship, deal with any obstacle, and resolve any conflict—be it internal or external. Hence, the

young would develop of a level of confidence and courage necessary for mental and physical health.

Since the humanities would be grounded in logical epistemology and objective metaphysics, the moral values of authentic self-esteem and happiness would be extolled. A conceptual being plainly cannot move forward intellectually in any significant way by denying its power to make the world comprehensible. Correspondingly, it cannot move forward psychologically in any significant way by undercutting its ability to know and affirm its own value.

Teenage individuals would now have the psychological answers to questions that were implicit in all their searches for a mature sense of identity. Since their intrinsic capability and self-worth would be respected by elders, their minds would now be back in their own possession. They could look ahead to a life of unlimited horizons.

Indeed, philosophical and psychological transformations in junior and senior high school may be the central key to relatively swift societal transformation. To effect major cultural and political change in a generation or two, such a systemic approach in education is perhaps best. Adolescence is the time when opinions are being formed, ideologies are being shaped, and psychologies are being modified and solidified.

Within a culture of high self-esteem and self-awareness, visibility with others would be common. Feeling visible means having one's thoughts and behavior responded to in a fashion similar to how one would *authentically* respond to one's own self; it is basically about feeling understood. People who react consonantly with reality and appropriately to one's context of thoughts, emotional conditions, and actions become unclouded and undistorted mirrors for each other.¹¹ They acknowledge and honor the fact that we all perceive the same reality (i.e., objective reality). Though sometimes our subjective contexts or perspectives may be at odds, the underlying reality is still recognized.

So, with nearly everyone we encountered, we would be pro-

vided more opportunities for personal growth and significant experiences throughout life. This would be a veritable springboard for realizing our potentials. Undoubtedly, great changes in humans' understanding of themselves and the cosmos would take place. Such a spiritual awakening would have advantages for virtually every human achievement. The historic nineteenth century Industrial Revolution—and even our present computer and information age—would be viewed somewhat as child's play.

The ability to be psychologically independent is definitely involved in the preceding description of visibility. Psychological independence entails the realization that each of us is alone in the world, metaphysically speaking. And further, it means that no one from the distant wishes of our childhood is coming to take care of us or fix our problems.¹⁵ Ultimately, each person is responsible for his or her own happiness. Emotions, accordingly, are not to be viewed as incomprehensible, unchangeable absolutes—they are not to be viewed as irreducible primaries.

To be mentally healthy, an individual must be cognizant of what he or she thinks and feels. This self-understanding is, of course, an acquired trait. In order to achieve any high degree of self-awareness, one must concentrate on what is emanating from within. This necessarily requires an examination of one's subconscious premises.

While we have discussed repeatedly the importance of understanding the workings of the subconscious, this can be accomplished only by *first-hand experience*—actively working with the best methods available. This involves utilization of the techniques of psychotherapy, be it alone or with assistance. Much like staying physically fit, knowledge and use of the proper equipment and activities helps immeasurably. Even though mental therapy does not have to be a constant routine for most people, the acquisition of certain skills is vital.

Some techniques of introspection were listed in a previous section with various psychotherapeutic approaches. A couple more approaches deserve brief mention here. Objectivist psychotherapy,

like many other therapies, incorporates useful aspects of various other approaches (Cognitive/Behavioral Therapy being one of them).⁴¹ In addition to *explicitly* viewing one's thoughts as primaries, and one's feelings as outcomes of one's thinking (both conscious and subconscious), this type of therapy addresses the philosophical side of psychology. Belief systems and ethical codes can be examined with the tool of logical reasoning.

Lastly, Nathaniel Branden has devised a powerful technique, remarkable in both its effectiveness and efficiency. Called sentence completion exercises, or sentence stems, they are designed to facilitate self-exploration on a subconscious level.^{e.g.,^{13&14}} These practices (oral or written) enable circumvention of the perennial psychological problem of conscious censorship of subconscious information. In so doing, they allow one to grasp what is definitely happening just beneath explicit conscious activity, however vague or sketchy or fleeting it may be. This consequently makes it possible for one to work to change various root contradictions—instead of dismissing, avoiding, and ignoring them (which incidentally is a battle one cannot win).

Psychotherapeutic exercises do not so much immediately fix contradictory subconscious premises and evaluations, as allow a person to see and apprehend them. What one thinks and interprets barely below the explicitly conscious level of awareness affects feelings and behavior. By drawing subconscious thought out of the periphery of awareness into conscious light (e.g., by putting it on paper), one can begin to “rewire” subconscious habits—that is, if a person deems it worth the effort; one has to decide to be courageous enough to put forth the effort.

Mental rewiring takes the form of redevelopment and transformation of thoughts and evaluations, via heightened awareness of them. With this comes the implementation of newly understood methods of thinking and patterns of behavior. Emotional troubles and behavior patterns that seem deeply entrenched or “institutionalized” (also called conditioned responses) are usually those carried from early childhood. They are typically the most

challenging too, because they have not really been consciously challenged. So, they require continuous at first, then occasional, focus and reworking.

In order to solidify changes and incorporate new psychological knowledge into everyday living, appropriate self-assertion is key—both for causing and maintaining changes. Without self-assertion, it is very difficult to convince oneself that one has indeed changed in any significant way (which is definitely counterproductive to the whole process).

While psychotherapy is still evolving from its infancy, it stands as the practical application of the science of psychology; it is the technology of psychology (its engineering field, if you will). Despite psychotherapy's capabilities, self-examination, like common extrospection and life itself, is a self-initiated and self-maintained process. To be effective, it requires an act of will, a choice, and many subsequent choices.

Self-examination, at times, can be confusing and emotionally difficult. There may be potent disincentives to begin and continue the inner journey, the voyage into the self. A person may have reservations about where this exploration is heading. Many even think it is a waste of time—time that could be spent dealing with more “real” things. And many may wonder whether it will uncover terrifying or disturbing “deep dark secrets” about self. In fact this is how a large part of the self can remain a mystery, why inner secrets can remain so.

As sentient beings, we have an incredible talent for avoiding aversive stimuli, which means that we often quickly avoid what is unpleasant, painful, or frightening. This avoidant behavior itself is reinforcing: It diminishes the need to deal with discomfiting feelings. However, what is painful psychologically must be treated differently than what is painful physically. Rather than avoid what is causing psychological pain, we must move toward and face it. This allows us to deal with it, understand and integrate it, and hopefully work to remedy it.

Introspection asks that we have self-discipline, and that we de-

velop a knack for identifying subconscious activity, the subtleties in our feelings, and the messages in our behavior. It also entails a healthy appetite for the whole process. Sometimes—depending on our particular situation or circumstance—a psychotherapist can aid much in achieving the desired degree of psychological clarity. Similar to a dear friend, he or she can act as a realistic as well as empathetic mirror for us, so that we may better see, understand, and function with others, the world, and ourselves. As an objective third party, he or she can also help us process thoughts and emotions resulting from various experiences or stages in our life. At times, we may be less aware of what others can see more clearly, and they can offer us valuable insights.

Psychological clarity asks that we not take unwanted or debilitating emotions for granted (or succumb to the effects of the sometimes-painful experiences of childhood). We have finally reached an era in which the importance of psychological clarity has emerged as a prominent theme in popular culture. At no other time has there been so much focus on the self and its need for intelligibility or change. Just observe the abundance of self-help books, lectures, and seminars.

Despite this, many may still think that psychotherapeutic aid is either unnecessary or merely for those less fortunate (something just for psychotics, social misfits, and/or mental weaklings). They might reject the notion that *every* human being is in need of this respectful treatment of self. This might be an attempt to justify as normal a less than optimal psychological predicament; it might be a way to deny any therapeutic benefits of assisted (or even unassisted) introspection.

Some may think that to admit to having difficulty with introspection and that assistance could be beneficial is undignified; they may think (or intuitively feel) that it somehow degrades the noble and heroic in them. Presumably, the idea of absolute self-sufficiency in this arena may be more important to them than responsible self-awareness. Some may even be more concerned with the perceived psychological disparity between the therapist and

themselves than concerned with the particular techniques involved. They may feel that the therapist has “mastered” something they have not.

Effective psychotherapy addresses the ideas of being good enough, capable, and worthy in principle. So naturally, self-doubt can foster a variety of attempts to alleviate the potential anxiety it causes. The anxiety about lacking self-esteem can dissuade us from taking psychotherapeutic action. (Of course, a fundamental self-doubting attitude can be furthered if psychotherapists lack an understanding of their task or make it seem, however subtly, like they are treating invalids. I would hazard to guess that many therapists have, at one time or another, used their services to create an air of superiority for themselves; this may have filled voids in their own self-concept. Moreover, if a therapist advocates a contradictory philosophy, basic self-doubt can become much harder to resolve.)

Instead of viewing anxiety solely from the standpoint of self-esteem deficiency, one can objectify this issue in terms of contradictions in one's self-concept. One's concept of self is a vast mental world. One can have a higher level of self-efficacy in some aspects of one's life and yet be deficient in others. To be sure, parts of our subconscious may need some work. But this says nothing disparaging about the person engaged in the quest of resolving contradictions. What is really required, then, is an enlightened perspective on our self-esteem: We must generate confidence in our capability to resolve any and all contradictions that lie before us, no matter how troubling they may be. This is truly the noble and heroic.

We now live in a world in which we are shown and told that our fundamental worthiness and right to exist for our own sake are actually debatable topics. Consequently, many people spend time trying to prove to themselves and others either that these topics are in fact unsettled, or that they are not important. But this self-esteem issue is not erased by avoiding it; this only impedes reflec-

tion on its meaning and disguises the meaning of all the activity that results from its avoidance.

In spite of these potential problems, either assisted or unassisted introspection allows us to concentrate on the psychological processes at work within ourselves—which are bearing on our thoughts and feelings of efficacy and worth. Psychotherapeutic methods can increase our awareness and widen our view of the world and ourselves; hence, they can brighten our future. If we are to advance psychologically in any remarkable way, we must focus on the reality of the situation.

Doubting our worth (or trying to prove that we are “enough”) is intrinsically invalidating and self-refuting. The dilemma we create for ourselves involves self-denial. By virtue of existing, we are enough. By virtue of being parts of the universe, we are worthy of any experience. Any belief to the contrary is contradictory.

To *not* believe in oneself as capable of functioning and worthy of any experience, undercuts one’s very nature as a rational animal. Since the act of doubting presupposes the use of one’s judgment, in effect one *judges* one’s own judgment and efficacy as wrong. This is clearly the supreme cognitive dead-end of self-doubt; it promptly stifles consciousness.

Analogous to the stolen concept fallacy, we can use our mind to deny our own mental efficacy. The rub is that, subconsciously, this process can turn into a vicious cycle: We can end up surrendering our self and thoughts to emotions evoked by our initial surrender of thought. This may also lead to relinquishment of self to others, who then dictate and influence us to their liking—although, they might be performing a variation of the same psychological practice.

To not know oneself more than superficially is to not fully live as one is capable. Anything that is important involves demands. When we focus on that very entity which ascribes importance and creates demands, we are asked to examine that which examines. Psychology, like all sciences, needs to be grasped in plain and clearly

objective terms, so that we can eschew being dishonest with ourselves. Discovering long-kept psychological secrets does a great deal to bring honesty into our life. It promotes alignment with reality, which is the central path to enlightenment.

In an enlightened society that honored the ethics of rational self-interest, feelings of loneliness and alienation—as well as the common reaction to it, a clinging to the group, to others, for support and guidance—would be replaced by authentic sharing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Financial, intellectual, and psychological independence would be attainable conditions, because people would understand that rational thought and proper action are needed for achieving good values of any kind.

From an early age, children would be shown concrete examples of this. They would learn that psychological exercises aimed at understanding one's subconscious and emotional world are for everyone (rather than for "irregular" or "abnormal" people). People would mature knowing that true courage and strength are evidenced by a willingness to feel and think deeply about life—as well as to allow ourselves to be comfortable with expressing our excitement and happiness.

An Issue Of Time

Knowing one's value, trusting one's mind, and striving to have no pretenses are prerequisites for health in an advanced civilization. As discussed, the main aspect in these activities is high self-esteem, or more fundamentally, an enlightened self-concept. In order to value and respect others, we have to value and respect ourselves. This entails consideration of ourselves as worthy of respect and worthy of happiness.

An understanding of the dynamics of self-esteem—what we can do to increase or decrease it and what it requires of us—represents the functioning of a highly evolved state of consciousness. Again, a highly evolved state of consciousness in this sense, like many aspects of intelligence, is not something persons are pro-

vided at birth. It is something they choose to achieve, *because their lives are important to them*. At any point in life, we can decide to throw off the shackles of inertia and cultural norms that prevent us from experiencing more of life's possibilities. And, of course, such experiences necessarily take place *in time*.

Time for individuals is limited. Cultures and civilizations may last for centuries or even millennia, but particular persons arrive and depart from these settings rather quickly. Given this, the basic idea of time needs to be correctly addressed. When people plead their cases about "Our children's future" or "Our grandchildren's future," they offer us a somewhat distorted time frame. Complex debates and arguments can distract us from realizing that *time is of the essence for the individual*.

In terms of our political and social future, crucial changes not only could happen in a few decades, but also must happen for us to benefit from them. (This of course is not taking into account the technologies that conceivably could enable our lifespan to be dramatically increased, such as cryonics and nanobots. For the time being, at least, thinking conservatively is probably wise.)

The ideal political philosophy would be mostly useless to us if it could not be implemented within our lifetime. The meaning it would have for future multitudes of the unborn distracts us from the urgency of our plight. Clearly, what is right for *actual* lives should be right for future lives. When it comes to the creation of a benevolent society of justice, objective law, and objective values, little matters outside the framework of present existence. In fact, to ascribe benefit or meaning outside this framework tends to miss the point. The self is the ultimate creator of all values.

In various people's quests to implement many dubious programs of change, they usually leave this most important beneficiary out of the picture—the self. Only a person in the present can be interested in how society will affect him or her (or the planet, or future generations). What is of value to "society" is actually of value to the individual.

To see no personal value or gain in a change—be it political

or otherwise—is equivalent to advocating self-sacrifice or self-surrender in the name of some “higher” goal. Yet, this is what we typically observe in today’s politics: Everything for others and unknown people in the future is good, while most things for personal gain are either bad or guiltily avoided. The psychological motives really speak for themselves in this matter. Either a hidden agenda is present (in which purported acts of selflessness are being used as a disguise), or a lack of comprehension exists about the fact that all things begin and end with the individual—not with “others.”

Everyone has an interest in taking dramatic political and psychological steps forward. Such progress ought not be delayed until sometime in the indefinite future—or be advocated only by someone else. Excuses about why society cannot effect radical change in the present usually take on the character of rationalizations. Certainly they provide a type of security that cannot be found in taking genuine, logical action. Self-assertion can be challenging sometimes, but the price we pay for not asserting our noble desires and interests is big indeed.

In the name of “It may be a possibility later, but not in our lifetime,” we could trade extraordinarily exciting possibilities of sustained joy and expansion of awareness for their frequent antagonists—supposed comfort, safety, and security. These antagonists turn out to be merely self-defeating illusions. They often lead the human organism down the dismal path of repression and rationalization. As a result, the intense fire of youth for nonstop adventure becomes a hardly recognizable smoldering cinder. So long as one tries to justify such conditions, it cannot be rekindled.

We cannot alter the fact that we are aging. Although aging is a natural factor for all things, it is especially critical for living organisms. For nonliving matter, aging and weathering take place constantly. The arbitrary or structured organization of elements may take different shape and different form. But, in the end, nothing (no matter or energy) is destroyed—although particular identities

may be altered. For billions of years matter of the universe has taken on new positions and constitutions, but it has always been that which comprises the universe. The fundamental elements and molecules that form a living creature will also never be destroyed. They will only change their form and constituency. They will decompose into the random association of matter and energy that comprises any nonliving part of the universe.

The critical trait of living things is that their organization is not just arbitrary or haphazard. Rather, millions of years of selective mutation have molded them into complex designs. As noted before, there is nothing intentional about these designs. They have simply arisen from the laws of Identity and Causality: Due to the nature of combinations of certain elements (forming molecules and then cells, tissues, organs, etc.) in concert with their surroundings, life exists. And due to the nature of the composition of life and its constituent properties, it can only sustain itself for so long. Eventually, it again becomes the same random association of matter and energy. When an animal in the wild dies, for instance, its tissues are consumed by scavengers, ravaged by sun, water, and air, decomposed by bacteria, and eventually transformed to compost—providing sustenance for plants and trees and other life forms. Such cycles are unrelenting within ecosystems.

So, as living organisms, our time on this planet is finite. By our nature, we have a lifespan. In recent centuries the achievements in medical science have helped extend the *average* lifespan enormously; it has more than doubled in the last couple centuries. Yet, our *maximum* lifespan (roughly 100–120 years) has remained basically constant over the last few thousand years. The infant mortality rate in most developed countries is lower than ever before. Many more people are alive now than just a few hundred years, or even decades, ago. These results of medical and industrial achievements are quite remarkable. In fact, if it were not for discoveries of vaccines and other medicinal methods, in addition to labor and time-saving advances in other economic sectors such as agricul-

ture, most of the human race *would not be here*. How intensely fortunate we are to be able to take simple breaths of air.

Our conceptual faculty has endowed us with the ability to think not only in terms of our lifespan but also in terms of geologic time and the great events of the universe. Even though we can acquire fairly exact measurements of such things as the age of Earth or the distance to the nearest star or galaxy, to actually comprehend the enormity of these measurements is difficult. Even the long reign of other species (e.g., alligators or sharks) makes the amount of time that humans have existed appear miniscule.

From all this, we might begin to think that we are just a small part in the grand scheme of things. This opinion can even be found in various scientific writings. Some believe that humans are no more (or even less) significant than other species. Certainly, what we are facing here is an issue of perspective.

The truth is that human beings are as significant as they view themselves to be. Only a human being can formulate such concepts as *significant*. Also, only a human being can minimize the importance of itself—that is, use its own unique tool of language to degrade its own relevance. We are definitely organisms capable of self-repudiation and all its consequences.

Still, time moves onward. Our biological clocks keep ticking. Yet we retain the ability to put knowledge about the universe, geological and biological time scales, into the perspective of our lifespan. This requires that we see this knowledge as a means to an end, an end that tells us that our lifespan is most pertinent. Regardless of past human accomplishments, or projections of future human achievements, the fact that *no other age is as important as this one* continually beckons us.

In an often subconscious effort to deny this fact, we can at times pursue a life of nonessentials. We can lose ourselves in our cultural environment, immerse ourselves in the particular ritual, custom, topic, trivia, or fad of the day. As noted, the tendency to think in terms of a collective group—a religion, business, community, or nation—can invite many social troubles. Finally, the incli-

nation to see us as being just a small part of history can overpower the need to consider new possibilities.

At the same time, we can delude ourselves with the thought that we have all the time in the world. By living day to day and doing routine tasks, we can easily deceive ourselves with the belief that our life is going on forever. Our interactions with our surroundings can be so comfortable and familiar that we may tend to see life as just ordinary. If no one tries to shake us out of our lethargic model of living, “so much the better,” we may think. Yet, *so much* is still waiting to be discovered. Our existence should create wonder, not widespread complacency and acceptability of social norms.

Sometimes rituals, customs, and traditions distract us from seeing the issue of time clearly. They can be easy to maintain and difficult to stop and question. One just repeats the old and follows others. In a way, this bears resemblance to aspects of obsessive/compulsive behavior, in which one allows oneself to remain stuck in a certain mode of functioning. While one’s capabilities are not being stretched or fully actualized, mental inertia can take its repetitive course. To stop and inspect what one is doing may seem impossible or become inconceivable, even though nothing short of this is required to overcome the behavior.

Just as the cessation of obsessive/compulsive behavior creates anxiety—because one thinks one is losing control of a highly controlled activity—the relinquishment of various unnecessary rituals, customs, and traditions (both religious and secular) can generate emotional resistance. Granted, “unnecessary” is sometimes open for interpretation here. Yet certain activities that serve as deficient substitutes for creativity, personal growth, and adventure, clearly reveal their unhealthy nature. In the search for fulfillment, we can find more useful and challenging activities. These are often incompatible with many traditions and practices; they ask us to look to reality, rather than to others (in order to direct or follow).

One thing that we must resist is a propensity to put off what

could be done today until tomorrow—or even for the foreseeable future. The undemanding allure of procrastination may seem to slow things down, but it lets time slip away even faster.

All of these psychological processes involving the issue of time can have calamitous effects on human history and human potential. Perhaps the greatest misfortune is that many do not realize this until it is too late—life is over for them; they have stepped into the void of nonexistence. And then the whole process starts anew, with new people and a new time period, but with many of the same beliefs and psychological disincentives and discouragements. If only the people for whom life is no more could speak their regrets. How persuasive would their words be?

An Issue Of Mortality

Contemplation of the life's brevity can help us appreciate the meaning of every day and year that passes. It can also put the meaning of our political situation into sharp focus. Too often, in vain attempts to deny the finality of our life, we may see political issues as mere differences of opinion and really not paramount—not ultimately matters of life or death (financially, intellectually, and psychologically). But we know that to stall the effort of thought and action will not ameliorate the situation of our life. Such a passive strategy only negates the essentials and promotes the non-essentials. Yet somewhere in the midst of these mental contortions, always remains the fact of our mortality—the fact that, literally, we will someday become nothing. On account of our current cultural condition and, of course, our very existence, we must explore this preeminent metaphysical fact. (Of course, the following exploration is not intended to be morbid. Instead, it is intended to clarify an often evaded or misunderstood topic—and hence to assist us in accurately understanding it and its serious implications.)

The phrase “Someday we will become nothing,” may sound simple, but it implies a lot of observations and quite a bit of logical

reasoning. In essence it means that once we die, we will be no more, identical to any other living thing that perishes. In other words, *death is the total obliteration of a living being*. As in any truth-finding task, we have to understand the definite meanings of the terms.

The concept *nothing* can only be grasped indirectly through the absence of the perception of something. One sees or imagines something disappear, disintegrate, or decompose completely, and one concludes that it is now “nothing” or no longer in existence. (A related example of the idea of nothingness is deep meditation, which can allow us to experience a blank mind or “empty consciousness,” a state of relaxed concentration of just “being.”)

We have all witnessed what happens during a night of dreamless sleep (or of no dream recollection): the time span between consciousness, unconsciousness, and back to consciousness seems like nothing. Though brain activity was present, which indicates one is alive, for all practical purposes one experienced nothing (i.e., a total blank). Barring near death experiences, this is the closest we ever come to the “experience” of nothingness—that of our inevitable obliteration.

Essentially, we end in the same state in which we started: We did not exist before we were born, and we will not exist after we die. Clearly, this observation does not agree with the widespread belief that one will live (in some form or fashion) after one dies. The belief that humans (irrespective of other animals) do not totally die after perishing mainly relies on the belief that life (of some sort) will continue in spite of physical death.

For living creatures, there are two primary absolutes—reality and nothing (or existence and nonexistence). Living organisms are intricate compositions of matter capable of replication and self-maintenance. When they die, all the properties that distinguished them from nonliving matter disintegrate and decompose, so that eventually no trace of life can be noted. Of course, this is a readily observable event throughout the animal and plant kingdoms. We witness numerous organisms live and

die during our own lifetime—pets, ranch or farm animals, wild creatures on television or from hunting and fishing experiences, insects, weeds, and so on.

Accordingly, we observe multitudes of creatures perish that have various perceptual capabilities and degrees of consciousness. In the process, death can be a directly detectable physical event, but not so tangible mental event. We can see an animal die and its body decompose, but the question may arise about what happened to its consciousness. Since inner consciousness is not a directly observable attribute (for others, that is), the finality of its death can sometimes be hard to grasp.

This issue potentially involves the deaths of other animals as well as humans. It involves all those that possess consciousness, but especially those with complex nervous systems and high levels of awareness. Death of consciousness has particular emotional import with creatures we value or cherish. For instance, the loss of a pet that was a wonderful companion is often accompanied by much grief. Naturally, we feel sadness about the loss of emotionally valued living things.

But the death of a fellow human being has special significance. Oftentimes when a person, particularly a loved-one, leaves existence we are nothing short of devastated. We may feel that the loss is beyond our capacity to articulate. The infinite value and complexity encompassed in a person contribute to the immense sense of loss. If the decomposition of the body is tragic, then the disintegration of consciousness is catastrophic. Human consciousness, with all its characteristics and personality, really creates a person. It also plays a great role in making the body so valuable and esthetically attractive; the mind animates the body and gives it meaning.

Inevitably, though, reality confronts everyone. We are a part of nature, and it will have its way with us. While we can understand nature's laws and use them to our advantage, we are never exempt from them. Despite our feelings in these matters, we are not allowed logically to conclude that the mind is omnipotent and ca-

pable of out-living the body. The essential fact of the matter is this: Without the brain and body, no mind could ever exist; the two are inseparable. If the brain is destroyed, consciousness is destroyed.

A human being is a complex integration of mind and body. On account of its physical constituency, the body necessarily has a consciousness. Even though the mind is invisible, it definitely is not detached from the body (which was a belief strongly held in primitive times—e.g., spirits and ghosts). The age-old myth of the soul/body dichotomy still lingers in our culture. It contends that the body is material and thus mortal, and the spirit or soul is immaterial and thus immortal. Many hold dear to the fallacy that mind and body are not biologically integrated aspects of an organism.

Volumes of psychological studies show that lesions to the brain (as well as administration of certain drugs) systematically subtract, destroy, or alter mental structures and processes. Various areas and types of memory and judgment change or disappear, for example. One plainly cannot have mind or consciousness or awareness without the matter that creates these attributes. Thus, reports of the paranormal (for instance, out-of-body experiences, channeling, and life-after-death experiences) are scientifically untenable, regardless of how personally compelling they may seem. And as discussed earlier, such alleged phenomena are overt denials of the metaphysical laws.

Science continues to accumulate information about the brain. The physiological explanation of the mind is still a work in progress, and some interesting theories have been offered.⁷¹ The myriad cellular, biochemical, and bioelectrical processes that generate mental events are exceptionally difficult to untangle. Yet apart from all the questions arising from this fascinating task, we can be certain that death for an organism entails death of consciousness. Beliefs divorced from facts never will amend basic scientific truths.

To differentiate a belief from a fact is important. A fact is an observable and verifiable aspect of reality, and a belief is an idea (or set of ideas) that an individual contends, feels, or “trusts” is factual. A belief, then, may or may not be consistent with the facts of

reality, which depend solely on proof and evidence (i.e., demonstration). For a belief to be true (or have some truth to it), it has to be based on fact.

Since a rational organism's capacity for conceptualization includes imagination, it necessarily can generate beliefs that do not correspond to facts. All the novel and strange things we can imagine consist mostly of alterations or distortions of our experiences with reality. To imagine things in service of one's life and well-being, and to dismiss or erase things that are not, are tasks for a volitional consciousness. Obviously, our imagination can be a heroically useful tool for creativity and productiveness. It can also be a tool for avoidance of reality and denial of experiences (usually only for various emotional reasons).

If no minimum scientific hypothesis or speculation formulated from proof or evidence exists for a belief (which entails observation of objectively plausible phenomena), then it is necessarily arbitrary; it is not grounded in reason or reality. The importance of this point is mainly this: If something is *believed* to exist but in *fact* does not, the belief may directly undercut one's ability to differentiate knowledge from arbitrary anti-knowledge. As we have seen throughout this book, many beliefs—especially on the philosophical level—are not based on facts; some even oppose universally known facts.

Knowledge is the fuel that sustains and improves life. Knowledge is the factor that is necessary for human survival (and consequently for survival of our biosphere). We have seen that concepts are presupposed in human knowledge. Concepts convey identifications that should accurately depict reality, either natural or man-made. Thus, for a person to have knowledge, he or she has to understand and integrate concepts. When individuals communicate either a fact or a belief, they are relying on an enormous amount of concepts.

The logic of any discussion, culminating in the proposed fact or belief, depends on the validity, order, and use of the concepts involved. As previously noted, in order for any concept to

be graspable and valid (i.e., a logical identification), the concept must have a specific definition. Words and definitions serve as labels to distinguish concepts. Without an accurate definition—a fundamental differentiation from all other concepts (with the particular measurements omitted)—a concept could not be isolated properly.

Life is defined by the occurrence of organisms and their maintenance processes. Death is defined by the discontinuance of these processes, and thus of those organisms. Only synonyms can be used interchangeably, and the words *life* and *death* are certainly not synonymous—in fact, they are the greatest antonyms possible.

Reality is defined by all that exists; it is everything. In contrast the term “supernatural,” for instance, has no distinguishing traits by which it can be defined. The idea relies solely on conjectures about unknown, indemonstrable forces outside of nature—a *super-reality*, if you will. However, because nothing is outside of existence (quite literally), any alleged “dimensions” must be part of existence.

Every idea a human being can possibly formulate takes place in reality; every conceivable observation or identification human beings can form presupposes reality, in which they perform it. Consequently, the postulation of a realm or dimension that is not *in reality* is plainly contradictory. If we were to contest this conclusion, we would have to do so *in reality*; the absolutism of it cannot be escaped.

To acquire knowledge of something beyond the basis of knowledge is impossible. We cannot acquire facts not connected with—or further, in defiance of—the facts we do know. Theories can be devised, to be sure. But absent any proof or evidence—i.e., absent any basis for validation—they are just products of a potentially overzealous imagination. Ideas from a book of prescientific writing, or from the contentions of one’s religious contemporaries, or from one’s personal psychological experiences, or even from a scientific journal, simply cannot begin to qualify as objective knowl-

edge until they are related to facts. In terms of logical knowledge, sound facts are indispensable.

Arbitrary postulates, such as “supernatural,” cannot be comprehended even indirectly like the relational concept *nothing*. Such terms have neither referents in reality nor coherent definitions, so they are invalid. Invalid concepts cannot be understood and integrated like factually valid concepts. They mainly are isolated and kept intact by the imagination and embellished with feelings, which gives rise to a variety of vague meanings. Invalid concepts, no matter how acceptable they may appear, act just as insidiously as viruses do; they tend to undermine the mind’s distinctive faculty of survival (reason) and its products (concepts).

Necessarily, such terms as God, heaven, Satan, hell, “other reality”—essentially anything “supernatural”—are invalid. Of course, people interpret the idea of God in many ways. A few meanings are even similar to the definition of the universe—for example, “God is everything.” The term then becomes somewhat superfluous. Needless to say, the essential epistemological issue tends to blur amidst the usually strong feelings about a Creator. Our feelings (as well as the feelings of significant others) about such terms may affect whether logic remains our avenue of credibility and strength.

In order to presume that God created the universe and was the cause of everything, we basically have to deny the metaphysical and epistemological rules of the universe. The Law of Causality states that the universe is its own “cause”—meaning that it has always existed and will always exist. The universe is the eternal constant (existence). Interpretations of the Big Bang theory that contend a literal “beginning of time,” or “birth of the universe,” are merely secular counterparts to the Great Creation myth. Matter and energy can never be created or destroyed (the first law of thermodynamics). The configuration of the universe may change, but it can never be created or destroyed—since it is *all* matter and energy. Naturally, the only alternative to existence is nothing—and nothing can only have meaning in contrast to existence.⁸¹

If God is not considered to be just another name for the universe, then it becomes an impossible concept. Nonetheless, any alleged God would have to exist *within* the universe; God would have to be an existent, or being (of some sort). Yet any *being* that exists must be *finite*, no matter how large or powerful. If a being were “infinite,” it would necessarily be everything (the universe in total); actually, it would have to be endlessly *more* than everything, because it would be infinite—which of course is impossible; it would have no distinguishable properties.

A finite being obviously cannot create everything (which would have to include itself)—for this would be the invalid concept of omnipotence. The creation of things requires matter and energy (which, again, have always existed). Upon inspection, any imaginary “omnipotent being” would have *no need* to create anything. Organisms must fulfill needs in order to ensure their lives; death is the result of continuously unmet needs. Obviously, death is of no concern to an “omnipotent being.” Ultimately, because such a being is conceptually invalid, any speculations about its “needs,” “actions,” or “motives” are logically pointless.

As we study Darwin’s theory of evolution, we discover that it is more than a theory. Indeed, evolution is the supreme fact of organismic nature. One could call it a law in this sense, although many of the tremendously complex processes (especially at the genetic level) have yet to be explained and understood. Still, DNA replication and natural selection are solidly established processes.

The evolutionary process, being the scientific explanation for the existence of living creatures, is as stable as the states of matter, the force of gravity, and the events of life and death. Simply put, there are no logical *metaphysical* alternatives to our existence. Reality is what it is; A is A. To contend otherwise is to advocate a philosophical (and therefore a scientific) contradiction—that things are not what they are.

A popular belief, however, is that some “things” in the universe (e.g., a supernatural being or place) are unknowable; they are

ineffable, mysterious, and mystical. This requires some clarification.

The word “known” describes what has already been grasped and integrated. “Unknowable” describes something impossible to acquire mentally, given the *known characteristics* of the things involved. A couple examples of unknowable phenomena include knowing with certainty what someone else is thinking without any form of communication, and predicting with certainty the exact outcome of an overwhelmingly complex event.

Only reason enables us to acquire knowledge that something is unknowable. Clearly, to declare that something *about which we have no knowledge* is unknowable defies logic; the declaration has no conceptual or factual basis. When a postulate has no basis in present knowledge, it has no basis in reason. Only reason can differentiate the knowable from the unknowable by identifying and integrating the nature of the phenomena involved.

If something exists, it necessarily has identity. With identity, it can be grasped—no matter how indirectly—by a conceptual consciousness (which is in the business of identification). Many, many things—a gargantuan, untold amount—are not known presently about the universe. But this should not imply that any of them are unknowable *in principle*, at any point in time and from any vantage point. Given the fact that the capacity to conceptualize is basically boundless, the acquisition of knowledge is basically boundless.

Science ultimately seeks knowledge of the fundamental nature of matter, energy, entities, and their complex relationships. We can never logically get more basic than dealing with what exists. Otherwise we end up discussing, literally, nothing.

Thus the question “What can we discover about ourselves and all other existents?” opens our world to exploration. Scientist Carl Sagan appreciated the profundity of this discovery process:

The mystic William Blake stared at the Sun and saw angels there, while others, more worldly, ‘perceived only an object

of about the size and colour of a golden guinea.' Did Blake really see angels in the Sun, or was it some perceptual or cognitive error? I know of no photograph of the Sun that shows anything of the sort. Did Blake see what the camera and the telescope cannot? Or does the explanation lie much more inside Blake's head than outside? And is not the truth of the Sun's nature as revealed by modern science far more wonderful: no mere angels or gold coin, but an enormous sphere into which a million Earths could be packed, in the core of which the hidden nuclei of atoms are being jammed together, hydrogen transfigured into helium, the energy latent in hydrogen for billions of years released, the Earth and other planets warmed and lit thereby, and the same process repeated four hundred billion times elsewhere in the Milky Way galaxy?

The blueprints, detailed instructions, and job orders for building you from scratch would fill about 1,000 encyclopedia volumes if written out in English. Yet every cell in your body has a set of these encyclopedias. A quasar is so far away that the light we see from it began its intergalactic voyage before the Earth was formed. Every person on Earth is descended from the same not-quite-human ancestors in East Africa a few million years ago, making us all cousins.

Whenever I think about any of these discoveries, I feel a tingle of exhilaration. My heart races. I can't help it. Science is an astonishment and a delight. Every time a spacecraft flies by a new world, I find myself amazed. Planetary scientists ask themselves: 'Oh, is *that* the way it is? Why didn't we think of that?' But nature is *always* more subtle, more intricate, more elegant than what we are able to imagine. Given our manifest human limitations, what is surprising is that we have been able to penetrate so far into the secrets of Nature.⁹²(p.329)

Whose heart would not race with such knowledge? Elucida-

tion of a topic that is fundamental and crucial to our existence—metaphysics—enables us to see new possibilities. The achievement of metaphysical certainty can be an important element in our outlook on life. And our outlook on life can affect whether we ask the enduring question “How do we create a society that is aligned with existence—with the nature of ourselves and the facts of reality?”

Emotional numbness tends to develop when we disregard the implications of our existence. The complete joy in being alive (that ought to be everyone’s birthright) tends to become degraded or perverted. Comprehension of a *fully real* reality definitely involves the search for spirituality and enlightenment (or even so-called mystical experiences). But this must be done with our tool of knowledge, reason. By relying on rational comprehension of intuition and feelings, we can minimize potential distortions in our search. By choosing to reason deeply, we become able to deal adaptively with the ordinary as well as major concerns in our life.

Grasping the essentials of existence also energizes us. We begin to get the most out of life—for it is, on the grand scale of nature, quite short. By envisioning the interminable contrast between life and death, we encourage ourselves to venture fully into life’s possibilities. Nothing less than this is asked of us when we solemnly reflect on our mortality.

Ultimately, *our happiness in being alive* is the maximum defiance of our eventual annihilation. An ecstatic state of consciousness is an end in itself. A reverence for life and an appreciation of nature is another end. Higher planes of understanding are always ours to reach, and joyful feelings are always ours to experience.

Yet, we live in an age in which the vast majority of people embrace the belief that consciousness is omnipotent—that death of consciousness is not final in certain ambiguous respects. It would be difficult to find an age in which most people believed otherwise. The extensive, complex myths and rituals found in humanity’s dialects and voluminous religious texts assist in solidifying visions

of the supernatural, as well as maintaining a particular meaning to life and values.²⁹

Human beings, in trying to understand the world, have been seduced frequently by the idea that an alternative reality is awaiting them. This seduction can have many sources, of course. The limits that reality sets are typically of little concern in the realm of strong hopes and wishes. People may just wish for more life, especially with loved-ones, albeit detached from biology. Or, they may wish for something different than present life. As one “passes away,” one supposedly enters the supernatural realm of “heaven” (or “hell,” for those less fortunate). This transition may concern notions such as: being able to proceed to heaven through the atonement for humanity’s sins and salvation by a universal savior or messiah; Godly compensation for the ills of earthly life; and, of course, the universal theme of entering into a place of everlasting bliss.⁸

A societal environment containing a sizable amount of immoral and irrational behavior and beliefs certainly makes life more difficult. Bad events and wrong behavior (perhaps attributed to sin and religious notions of evil) tend to take an emotional toll. An unperceivable “other reality”—one that is sane, pleasant, and beautiful—can be an extremely appealing option to a somewhat hellish existence (or even a mediocre one).

A malevolent view of the world and the human race can lead to an expectation of perpetual depravity and problems. People may conclude that treachery, murder, and destruction between human beings are inexorable; the forces of good and evil will always clash, and sin and injustice will always thrive in society. (Witness the violent conflicts portrayed even in futuristic, science fiction books and movies.)

Certainly, we cannot deny what is strewn throughout the pages of history books and in today’s newsprint. But the meaning we ascribe to reality as well as to human nature has a bearing on what *future* history books will reveal. If a person believes that death is not final and in most cases will bring about a better situation, what is the real point in the concepts of justice and human rights?

How seriously will they be taken? The popular notion of supernatural justice, in which final judgment and penalties for evil actions occur *after* death, plainly does not satisfy the demands of individual rights.

If Earth is just a passing point, a temporary stop on the journey to greater heavens, what does life on Earth mean? Further, what meaning should be assigned to death? Many religions preach that we are here to receive an education that will prepare us for everlasting bliss after death. Regardless of what they consider education to be, think of the implication this has for life: life becomes a means to some higher end, not the sacred end in itself. And death becomes merely an unfortunate, albeit mournful, episode here on Earth, which signifies that the dead person can now “live” in heaven. Think also of the effects this can have on the concepts of human rights and justice.

Most cultures have always sought a degree of comfort in the belief that there is more to life than simply life. In a supernatural world, death does not seem so tragic or so final. After all, the deceased person (or disembodied consciousness) goes to a place where he or she can rest in peace and be eternally happy. In such a world, who would not want to join him or her someday? So, when one’s “time to go” has arrived, uncontrollable fate must not be rebuffed; the supernatural world will provide new life.

Joined to the belief in supernatural justice is the idea that, without God and an afterlife, life would be meaningless and people would be immoral (or amoral). Promises of rewards and threats of punishments in an afterlife provide the main incentives to live and be moral. In other words, without these incentives most people would deceive, assault, or kill each other, and/or be mindlessly hedonistic. So, a life of happiness with enlightened psychologies and objective laws is either impossible or unreal. Actual and final death does not make life the ultimate standard of value (and thus worth living). For many centuries, notions such as these have remained a prominent theme in the world’s cultures.

When we become aware of the finality of death, we acknowledge that A is A—that the laws of Identity and Causality are absolutes. The only rational metaphysics is objective reality, in which facts are facts regardless of anyone's contentions, admonishments, wishes, reservations, feelings, and hopes—in which firm and knowable reality exists independently of any consciousness.

By aligning with reality, life can be realized and understood for what it is and should be. However easy it might be in daily life, we should not lose sight of an objective metaphysics. Thought and actions are put into better perspective when we relate them to the essentials of existence, which inform us of the significance of our own mortality. Naturally, focus, reflection, and objectivity are crucial. Most childhoods have frightening and painful events involving issues such as death. Adults need the words and actions that could make the world more comprehensible for children.

In addition, observation tells us that we can advocate logical ideas, but not fully integrate what they imply for our behavior. We can keep our thoughts in an unactualized state by failing to internalize them. We can also compartmentalize our thinking, which entails limiting our conceptual connections and only relating some ideas to behavior in certain respects.

Again, we see the chief volitional task: to constantly strive for a life that works for one's individual well-being and joy, rather than against one in deficient or even destructive ways. This is where aspects of the subconscious may need to be transformed to bring about congruent functioning between thoughts, feelings, and behavior—which results in a new self-concept. Unquestionably, appropriate self-assertion and psychotherapeutic techniques are the primary methods for becoming more congruent.

As explained earlier, reflecting on the absolute wonder of life can be the most enriching and energizing process for growth and self-actualization. At times, life's preciousness can entrance us. When it does, reality becomes stripped of arbitrary social conventions. Myriad experiences invite this kind of clarity: the cold brightness of the stars and moon on a clear night; a beautiful landscape

of austere openness where the warm, fragrant wind can almost be seen; rising mountains with creeks and stark canyons that seem almost too real; a vista overlooking the vast ocean with the magnified red sun setting on its distant tides; the joyous expressions and heartfelt words of a loved one. Contrasting such experiences with the most remarkable fact that they will all be gone one day—or more precisely, we will be gone from them—can evoke a variety of strong feelings.

The realization that the spark of human consciousness will someday be extinguished in each of us should summon the best within us. We might be reminded of phrases we hear on occasion: “You only go around once, so give it your best shot” or “Carpe diem.” In order to do these things, we have to do more than live day-to-day or season-to-season like other animals. We have to see the whole scope of our limited time in existence and calibrate our thoughts and actions accordingly. We have to advocate ideas that are in our best interests—and, thus, in the best interests of society—and quite possibly could even extend our time on Earth.

Progress in the medical sciences is hampered by an enormous regulatory bureaucracy that results in high costs and a relative paucity of funds. Although great discoveries and innovations have been made—and are being made—in spite of these political problems, a capitalistic market would release latent ingenuity. As the shackles and chains of government are discarded, the medical field will have the freedom and wealth necessary to further extend human longevity, not to mention improve health (e.g., regarding blindness, paralysis, and debilitating chronic diseases). Since life is the ultimate standard of value, few goals are as profound as these.

Writers and poets throughout the ages have written eloquently about the world and our experiences. A longing for answers to life’s deepest questions is sometimes the tone in their words. Our knowledge of the universe is small in comparison to what future generations will know. We are, as a unique species, beginning to awaken. Often, we have been in a state of sleepwalking through

our existence. We can perform our daily routines and never make the effort to see what is in store for us—what our life is adding up to. The image of an ostrich trying to escape doom by burying its head in the sand may seem apropos.

We can delude ourselves about the significance of our mortality by thinking that we will become immortal “somehow.” The ways a person can play this game are many. Branden outlined some of these practices and motivations for them:

... clinging to a child's state of consciousness (“I refuse to grow up”), avoiding commitment either to a person or to an occupation (“So long as I do not enter the game, the clock has not begun to tick”), compulsive sexuality (“See how alive I am?”), keeping frenetically busy (“If I run fast enough, death can't catch me”), leaving major tasks undone (“I cannot possibly be taken away before my work is completed”), excessive preoccupation with material acquisitions (“Surrounded as I am by the insignia of power, death would not dare enter”), placing relationships with others above personal development (“If enough people need and are dependent on me, how can I possibly die?”), and taking irresponsible and dangerous risks (“See how invulnerable I am?”).¹²(p.193)

Haplessly, games of this sort are easy to start, and the rules are simple to follow. They let life pass us by. And then the rationalizations follow. As in most games, however, the score has to be tallied. At the end of our years, what would we really have wanted to do with our life? This question needs a genuine answer. So let us be different than the ostrich whose fate is most likely sealed. The challenge for us will always be to live up to our potential by broadening horizons, seeing new dreams, and then actualizing them.

Realizing New Possibilities

Realizing our mortality in the context of an objective meta-physics entails visualizing all of life's possibilities. Life for us should involve limitless experience and discovery of this planet (as well as the rest of the reachable universe). Machines and labor-saving devices serve the purpose of freeing us to do more exciting activities and interesting work. We require new knowledge and activities to be optimally psychologically healthy. Repetition of the same monotonous routine, using only a fraction of one's mental potential, can lead to boredom and frustration. Boredom and frustration can lead to self-estrangement, self-denial, and a lack of respect for one's life. While the patterns of life can be viewed as circular, we travel through time on courses of achievement.

Our childhood visions of a life of constant exploration and adventure should never be betrayed. Life involves the pursuit of values that further the happiness and well-being of individuals. The creation of wealth is a large part of this; it enriches the quality and increases the quantity of human activity. Wealth is basically the mind's application of intelligence to bring more values into reality.

In a capitalistic society, there would be much less frustration over matters of money. As an innocent commodity, money need not be a scapegoat or object of envy and hatred either. Since there would be no real shortages of wealth in a free society, anyone who desired to be productive would reap great benefits. And the generosity and goodwill of people who relished their newly created values and wealth would no doubt overflow into all aspects of the culture. Consequently, few people would sacrifice their honesty, integrity, and dignity to the depravity of institutions or businesses (or bosses) in order to maintain employment; few would see it necessary to sell their souls for the sake of income. Such is the outcome of illogical short-range values.

Life certainly ought to be beautiful for people. Yet we can make

it otherwise by defaulting on thought and judgment. For instance, many believe that political conditions are not as bad as some claim because "We have more rights (given to us) in America than any other country on Earth." This opinion may do as much damage to the idea of freedom as total opposition to freedom. In truth, both opinions oppose "too much" freedom. Freedom permits people to fully utilize their own resources and abilities. Freedom provides individuals the opportunity to create novel values and pursue happiness. Some may perceive this situation as too daunting. In fact, the experience of happiness itself can cause anxiety in a person who feels like he or she does not deserve it, or who feels like he or she is unworthy of maintaining it.¹²

The idea that freedom should be allowed only by permission from others does not say much for the values of inner-peace and self-respect. It seems comparable to the idea that people have to "pay their dues" and toil for much of their lives in misery. That one becomes "experienced" or "wise" after such a process is, of course, contrary to the acquisition of fundamental principles. Yet those who try to put youths "in their place" with their "wisdom" (i.e., intimidate the naive) may feel a sense of superiority. But rather than becoming more joyous and happy with age, they tend to become more cynical, stubborn, and close-minded.

When fears about change, about happiness, and about freedom are not acknowledged, the idea of freedom can seem like a personal threat. Pseudo self-esteem can become entrenched as well: A false sense of efficacy and worth maintains mental barriers that prevent loss of control of a flawed value system. Holt noted the tragic irony about this situation:

The man in chains, seeing another man without them, thinks, is it possible I could have struck these chains off if I had only tried, that I didn't have to wear them all these years? The thought is unbearable. Better get some chains on the other guy.

Only a few slaves talk about getting free. The rest argue

about who has the biggest house, the finest establishment, the richest and strongest master. My team can lick your team!³⁹(p.16)

To belittle or even destroy the vision of a beautiful existence, one needs rationalizations. The vision is lost in the name of “being strong” or “knowing one’s place” or “being mature” or “not rocking the boat.” The often heated and vitriolic rhetoric opposing the idea of pure and absolute capitalism can inevitably be traced to its cause: dislike of the task of psychological awareness and understanding. As a result, many political debates (especially controversial ones) frequently include such things as personal accusations, derisive remarks, character assassinations, and a general atmosphere of disrespect. Such defensive and offensive behavior openly displays people trying to justify unjustifiable ideas. As they hastily attempt to persuade or browbeat, they fail to realize the nature and meaning of the argument. As we know, the nature and meaning of the argument concerns one’s view of self and one’s view of life.

To admit the gigantic significance of one’s view of self and one’s view of life requires a good deal of confidence and courage. And, it requires *an expansion of consciousness*. To see new possibilities and perspectives in life oftentimes (though not always) requires a consciousness that is already emotionally predisposed (through previous choices) to doing this. Regardless of setbacks in life or troubled areas of self, this type of consciousness still desires to see things as they should be.

New planes of growth and happiness become visible when we comprehend that *existence is absolutely amazing!* And yet, on a deeper level, this identification only begins to describe it. The fact that we are an immensely complex product of millions of years of evolution is astounding in its own right. The fact that billions of neurons inside our cranium give rise to the awesome greatness of consciousness, enabling us to know and reflect, is astonishing beyond words. The intricate integration of cells, tissues, and organs

within each of us is exhilarating to contemplate too. The fact that Earth is just one remarkable planet of nine in a system fueled and sustained by a heliosphere is awe-inspiring. Yet, this solar system may be simply one of hundreds of thousands in this galaxy of hundreds of billions of stars.

Our Milky Way galaxy (or as the early Ionians called it, the Backbone of the Night), is just one of tens of *billions* of other galaxies throughout the known universe.⁹¹ Astronomical calculation tells us that it would take 100,000 years traveling at the speed of light (300,000 kilometers per second) to journey across our galaxy. This paints a picture of just how vast the universe is—in many ways, incomprehensibly vast.

Finally, the facts that one day we will die and all of these breathtaking insights can no longer be relished (and constantly refined) leads us to the ultimate truth: One's life is an amazing event. In fact, this event allows us to state this ultimate truth. These statements may seem like truisms, but we live in a culture in which their emotional emphasis can be lost. It is therefore mandatory to repeat them.

Few truths can be as unappreciated as your own existence, your own self in reality. Paradoxically, our existence is *so* amazing that we run the risk of it dulling our senses. Thus, we have to prevent it from seeming commonplace; we have to reformulate our experiences when they begin to have a superficial quality.

This age of pre-logic in the realm of philosophical and psychological issues can be seen in many respects as the denial of the glory and greatness of human existence. The greatest steps forward in life involve evolution of consciousness. Naturally, with evolution of consciousness comes evolution of politics. Thus current issues of politics eventually will become things of the forlorn and unenlightened past.

An Active Mind

The first of two psychological fountainheads necessary for a free society to occur and sustain itself is an *active mind*. This is distinguished from an “open” mind, which sometimes is interpreted as being receptive to nearly any idea or behavior.⁸⁰ Indeed, capitalism would erase most impediments to clear, logical thinking, as well as weaken incentives to pursue irrational values. A whole new social system of active-minded people would uphold truth and rational values. People would search for the answers to questions they could not resolve that were important to them, be they extrospective or introspective. Consequently, they would have developed the invaluable habit of using their minds beneficially through logical identification.

An active mind is a crucial determinant of psychological health because it is the trait that inspires a person to think rather than remain complacent. At any point, a person is free to understand and remedy troublesome issues, or free to turn away and repeat errors. An active method of dealing with reality includes responsible awareness and full use of one's volition. It also entails finding the truth in the face of opposition and conflict. Instead of following the debilitating values and stale thinking of others or one's culture, one finds the strength to stand alone, if need be.

Frequently, we have discussed the need for the application of noncontradictory identification to solve any seemingly insurmountable conflict or unsettling paradox. While the nature of human consciousness does not endow us with an infallible cognitive and hence emotional system, it does bestow the ability to understand our limitations. The answer to the biological question “Why have not humans evolved so that they conceptualize reality always in a noncontradictory fashion?” is quite clear. A correct conclusion relies on many factors, and many conceptual and emotional paths can lead us astray. We are sometimes fortunate to arrive at the truth in certain situations.

As noted previously, the context of present knowledge bears

on the ability to reach the truth. For instance, the search for truth in empirical study entails often meticulous scientific work that involves replication of experimental procedures and outcomes. How much logical knowledge we acquire depends on how much information we can gather (or are given) in the process. Additionally, our emotional disposition can affect the way we look at and approach an issue or situation.

In many cases, though, the decision to not reach the truth—about metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and political issues in particular—occurs when one is sidetracked by a personal context that disvalues the search for truth. Problems may arise when conscious or subconscious beliefs do not correspond to reality. Because beliefs help maintain a sense of control in one's life, they can provide reassurance and security—a sense of normalcy. Sundry evaluations have been tied to thought patterns and actions, and an emotional system quickly detects whether one's belief system is in jeopardy.

At any time, an individual (or someone else) can question his or her beliefs and evaluations. Now comes an ultimate test of self-esteem: to have the self-trust and self-value to actively search for the truth and renounce the false, whatever it may concern—and whatever the effects. Although it may seem natural to fear what we have avoided, only when we face problem areas in our psyche can our fears in any way subside. When we face irrationally-based fears, we discover that we had nothing to fear but our former self-induced blindness.

An active mind is a particular conscious mental activity or attitude. Yet the supremely important characteristic of an active mind is its ability to observe and deal with subconscious processes—namely, feelings. The subconscious naturally serves as a computer-like, albeit fallible, memory for experiences (and the conclusions and interpretations formed about them). It can be resistant to any mental or physical actions not in sync with its embedded structures; too many parts of consciousness can be left to their own devices (or put on auto-pilot) for too long.

Yet, to an active mind, feelings emanating from the subconscious are neither the prime signals of right and wrong nor unchangeable absolutes. Although sometimes we can carelessly allow them to direct our thought processes and actions, feelings do not serve us very well as guideposts of the intellect. They can be useful information, however, in the search for clearness in identifications.

To repudiate feelings is really to repudiate aspects of ourselves. Feelings, particularly ones that are disturbing, need to be felt and understood, not dismissed or willed away. For instance, repeated exhibitions of anger, hostility, abrasiveness, brashness, boastfulness, manipulation, guilt, shame, humility, nervousness, indifference, and so on, have definite significance. By genuinely accepting and owning feelings, we use them advantageously. By repudiating them, we tend to strengthen that which we felt powerless (or maybe powerful) over in the first place. If we superficially view certain emotional aspects of ourselves as "the given," we thereby distract ourselves from integrating them on a deeper level and promoting any needed change.

An active minded person develops a habit of sorting out fact from fiction, the correct from the incorrect. Consequently, he or she does not settle for being mired in emotional turmoil or conflict. In any bad psychological (or physical) situation, he or she desires to ask "Why?" and "How?". Nonetheless, at any point an active mind too can lapse in judgment of particular areas of self and reality. This can happen for a variety of reasons: the nature of free will; the tenacity of past mistaken subconscious assumptions and former psychological inertia; inadequate focus on emotional conflicts; or just plain stubbornness. The task for the active mind, then, is to acknowledge its mistakes and difficulties and move on to new dimensions of mental and emotional evolution.

Ultimately, an active mind provides hope for the human race instead of worn-out cynicism or dismal bromides. It constantly questions happenings in life and seeks fruitful answers. A person with this attitude remains attentive, even amidst an atmosphere of intellectual

stagnation (in which many others have decided that they have thought enough). This attitude is frequently applied in science.

Conscientious pursuit of the truth, as well as flaws in thinking, represents the essence of any scientific work. In broad terms, anyone who discovers something new or develops something innovative can be considered a scientist (and entrepreneur) in his or her own right. A tribute needs to be given to those who have participated in such undertakings—and to any child who dreams of one day including him or herself in this discovery process.

Through science, we can understand and utilize nature in ways that past generations could not even imagine. Science not only provides for us in the present; it outlines and prevents future problems, be they individual or global. Discoveries such as new medical treatments and better, less polluting methods of energy production are ultimately scientific quests.

Yet the diligent work of the scientist might be overlooked or unappreciated at times. Science can sometimes be treated as a cultural side note. Those of us who sleep on an innerspring mattress, store food in a refrigerator, flip on a light switch to read a book, drive a car to work, and so on, are intimately connected to the achievements of science. Yet to take such conveniences for granted can be easy. They have become part of our lifestyle. However, none of our lives would have near the pleasure—or the safety and security—if it were not for the results of the thinking, active mind—the mind that wanted to know *why* and *how* and then proceeded to answer those timeless queries.

Even though science is the great safeguard for human existence, science can be used also for ill purposes (just like most other things). Some scientific achievements invoke warranted criticism: particular advances in industries or technologies that seem to cause more problems than they were designed to solve—or that solve problems for some, only to create difficulties or disasters for others. But science, per se, is assuredly not the villain in these matters. Actually, science and the free market put checks on detrimental ideas and products. Corrupt philosophical systems, namely

political ones (and the individuals who uphold them), are the usual villains. So, it is vital to know what values are required for the beneficial and benevolent utilization of science.

All the plights of our non-objective civilization (e.g., nuclear and chemical weapons of mass destruction) may foster a desire for "the simple life." On occasion, we may hear the remark that science is unnecessary, because people in primitive societies lived harmoniously with nature and were happy to be without science. Life was indeed less complicated. And without philosophically analyzing the so-called civilized world, it can be quite confounding. However, if one were to venture into the wilderness for a few months (with no items from civilization), survival undoubtedly would become the major concern. One might not even be able to escape starvation and death.

Not only do we need interaction with others for complete psychological well-being. But also individuals can achieve more in large groups than alone or in small numbers. Larger populations yield synergistic effects. Even small tribes greatly reduce the time spent on survival through cooperation and division of tasks. However, in the transition from tribal populations to the populations found in civilization, humanity overlooked the need for a civilized code of ethics and a logically advanced politics.

Ayn Rand noted that people have basically two values to offer each other in society: knowledge and trade.⁷⁶ Passage of knowledge from one mind to another is an essential part of human life, and trade of values—be they spiritual or material—is necessary for any degree of happiness. That a person can attain a certain degree of happiness in any context of knowledge is true. But the highest potentials of enjoyment involve constant discovery and relishing its products. It follows that this is only totally attainable in a free society—and, preferably, a highly advanced one.

Even the primitive design of bows and arrows, fishing tackle, long-lasting shelters, cooking utensils, as well as the discovery of herbal remedies, must originate from a thinking mind. The scientific inventor, however, sets no limits upon ingenuity or creativity.

He or she seeks new ideas and easier, more productive methods. Such innovators prior to a few hundred years ago were frequently denounced, spurned, stoned to death, or burned at the stake. Now they and their accomplishments are regularly embraced.

Free markets facilitate such active mindedness. The creation of a liberated environment certainly is the great task ahead for our species. The tremendous wealth of information and communication ability now available, for example, via computers and the Internet, offer definite advantages in this task. Clearly, to sort through the ever-increasing amounts of material and glean the essentials, requires an active mind. People must be able to discriminate fact from fiction, and the important from the not so important.

Life is an event that unfolds before us, forever challenging us to venture forth. The choice for us is whether or not to turn this event into something productive—something that reflects our rational values about what life ought to be. By representing our highest values, we gain both pride and happiness, which includes a passion for this planet and the universe. Since an active mind places supreme value in thought and judgment, this mindset allows all glorious achievements to take place in any age. And since the present period concerns us the most, active-minded individuals are now most needed.

A Brilliant Sense of Life

An active mind is a crucial element of the psyche for many reasons. It primarily reaffirms the conviction that one's mind is efficacious. One's mind is able to think and judge the facts of reality, be they internal or external facts. Another element is interwoven in this topic, though. It involves the other aspect of self-esteem: the feeling of being worthy of happiness.

The second major psychological fountainhead vital for a free society is a brilliant sense of life—characterized by an attitude of interest, enthusiasm, emotional availability, spontaneity, and genu-

iness. This particular sense of life can be viewed as the emotional counterpart to an active mind. Essentially, it represents the development of an affirmative outlook about oneself (and thus others) and reality.

In intellectual terms, one's sense of life is a pre-conceptual equivalent to one's metaphysics (one's view of reality in general). In psychological terms, it is the sum of one's subconscious integrations about one's overall view of self and existence; it conveys what a person deems important about his or her experiences with others and the world, by illustrating it emotionally in words and behavior.⁷⁹

Naturally, how a person sees the world depends on his or her particular sense of life. It can reflect vibrancy and aliveness or, in contrast, a gloomy, negative, or uncertain outlook on life, others, and oneself. Of course, numerous variations exist between these two opposites. Individuals can vacillate emotionally at different periods in life.

Nonetheless, a brilliant sense of life reflects the quest to make our life and, necessarily, our experiences as great as they can be. This means we no longer merely *hope* for happiness (no longer view it as either illusory or transient). Rather we experience happiness.

As noted before, our happiness is our own responsibility. Life is what we make of it, oftentimes regardless of our situations. We can approach challenges and experiences with an uplifting or exuberant attitude, or not. When appropriate, we can exude a playful manner of behavior and expression, or not. If we choose to live with zest, we are very likely to affect others (and be affected by them) positively. A feedback loop is thus created.

It stands to reason that those who do not at least yearn to achieve a brilliant sense of life can have trouble identifying with it. They may perhaps feel irritated or uncomfortable about such an attitude because they have difficulty or feel uneasy expressing their *own* excitement. Or they may be drawn by a desire to discount values, rather than nurture and cherish them. So, they may be

unwilling to consciously admit the existence of a brilliant sense of life. Yet the psychological contrast between themselves and others continues to remind them that they have the choice to change.

Fortunately, most people respond favorably, if not enthusiastically, to those who enjoy life and their interactions with others. Of course, some things might be mistaken at one time or another for a brilliant sense of life: a flippant happy-go-lucky attitude; a transient frivolity (stemming from a temporary relief of persistent psychological conflict); a placating personality; a desire to needlessly entertain, and so on. Knowledge of the character and complete personality of a person will reveal the true identity.

A person with a brilliant sense of life is not, in a personal way, very familiar with despair and boredom. That is to say, he or she considers these depressing human experiences to be mostly inapplicable to life. Over time, this person has realized subconsciously (and consciously) that there is no logical reason to maintain self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy or hopelessness. At some point, he or she correctly discovered that each individual is in control of (and responsible for) his or her own psychological condition in life. He or she embraces the idea that one should make the most of every experience, and relish the invaluable moments one has. This entails being psychologically integrated enough to dismiss various irrelevant and inconsequential things, which also means not being one's own psychological antagonist.

It is not the case that this type of person is completely untouched by psychological ailments—for that would not be human. Rather, he or she is soon able to overcome them and cast them aside; he or she does not allow psychological ailments to define the nature of his or her life and person.

One prerequisite to this process is the courage to allow ourselves to experience and “own” our troublesome feelings when we are having them, to listen to them and treat them with the respect they deserve. From here we can take the necessary psychological steps forward. The term “psychological resilience” is perhaps the most accurate name for this attitude of self-acceptance. It illustrates

the significance of emotional flexibility, which involves not being stuck in a troubled state of mind, and not being emotionally rigid and closed to other evaluative possibilities and habits.¹⁵ Thus, we deal with our experiences in a healthy fashion. On an ordinary level, for instance, we effectively defuse numerous daily potential annoyances instead of becoming “stressed out” about them.

The ability to experience any event or situation, however troublesome, and focus on the essentials of one's existence, plays a large part in a brilliant sense of life. This psychological attitude embraces the fact that we are mortal, rational beings living on an extraordinarily beautiful planet. In other words, he or she seldom loses sight of the idea that *this planet is paradise and that one is an irreplaceable part of this paradise*. And so, he or she realizes that it is basically senseless to spend time fretting and worrying about non-essentials, as well as being dragged down by those who do spend time this way. He or she knows that the world can be shaped into one's greatest values.

Without question, a brilliant sense of life remains the dominant theme for anyone who has integrated the proper evaluations of self and the world. Let us examine the main factors that cultivate this attitude. A rational and self-esteeming childhood is important—for example, having parents and teachers who give the appropriate guidance and education about self, reality, and others. However, a powerful will to view oneself as worthy of happiness, no matter what one's childhood environment was like, is even more important. Since few persons have childhoods free of negative influences (although some childhood environments are much better than others), we must credit an extraordinary will to be happy and self-assured. Although it may not be all-encompassing, this mindset includes the early formation of a strong self-concept and positive self-image.

For example, in the face of a confusing, disorienting, or even frightening incident, one draws the proper conclusions about the strangeness of the situation. The emotional mechanism is used to one's advantage. Instead of mistakenly concluding such things as

"I am to blame" or "Life will always be this way," one learns from the bad experience in a psychologically rewarding way. Potentially harmful situations are put into proper context, and they do not impede participation in new activities. A pattern of this sort encourages further self-assertion and self-mastery, which enables one to cope enthusiastically with innumerable events in life (social, personal, work-related, etc).

The formation of a brilliant sense of life early on—and maintaining it as an adult—is quite an accomplishment. As in any psychological trait, though, it may not be practiced or exhibited continuously. Nonetheless, this mental outlook is *essential* to a life proper to a human being—and to the ideal society. In the end, this mindset is a prerequisite to fully experiencing new possibilities of self—which includes living in the future ideal society. Only this mindset is able to mesh fully with logical ideas about self and existence.

We should realize that all of us have been, at one time or another, our own best examples of this mental outlook. Children are naturally full of a brilliant sense of life. Yet later on, many persons are left with a vague thought—but acute feeling—that things are not really right with themselves, others, and the world. Typically, the glimmer of a bright and fresh possibility from childhood is mixed with the desire to remedy a psychology of occasional turmoil and conflict.

The process of consciously working to change aspects of poor self-concept and self-image as an adolescent or adult can be demanding. It requires fixing mistaken subconscious value-judgments, which everyone must do to some extent (we cannot escape the nature of consciousness and the age we live in). Ignorance and procrastination seem to be the worst adversaries in this procedure. One ends up paying a price for not having formed correct assessments of oneself and one's experiences as they happened. However, the achievement of a brilliant sense of life then becomes the ultimate builder of genuine self-esteem. We amass enough trust in our mind and worth to change in greatly fulfilling ways.

As we understand the psychological attributes of an active mind and a brilliant sense of life, we notice that they are both causes and effects of self-esteem. They involve choices and then actions (either mental or physical) that sustain those choices, which then create further choices; it is a process of reciprocal causation.¹⁵ Logical insight and subsequent action encourage this psychological process to continue. Eventually, we create a new view of ourselves and life in general.

More fundamental than self-esteem is the matter of self-concept. Our view of who we are and what is possible to us may become profoundly fixed in our psyche, for better or worse, at an early age. Our self-concept can influence the ability to see any of these issues with the necessary level of objectivity. The ultimate choice, then, is to save ourselves from becoming our own psychological antagonists, and from the deleterious effects such a position has on our values, if left unrectified.

The political philosophy of liberty basically represents a society of people with genuine self-esteem. People who value themselves will value others. People who respect and trust their own thought and judgment will respect and trust them in others. People who realize the absolute worth of themselves will appreciate it absolutely in others. And people who see existence as paradise will encourage others to do likewise.

We need to remember that no contradictions can be present in objective reality. Contradictions can only be created subjectively by a decidedly unfocused mind. The decision to unfocus our mind is always ours to make, although we can leave this decision mostly to the subconscious. Thus, our beliefs and actions can become the haphazard aftermath of drifting at the mercy of our unexamined conclusions and emotions. Or, they can be the enlightened consequences of a mind in search of truth, regardless of the emotions involved (or the number of others who disapprove). Deep down, we all know the effects each policy has on our ability to enjoy life.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

KEY MORAL AND SOCIAL TRANSITIONS

Freedom—An Intellectual Issue

Historically, markets changed appreciably when knowledge and technology expanded and relatively less coercive political environments emerged. The progression of the sciences also served as an important catalyst in this process. The growth of market economies, and thus the division and specialization of labor, opened a wide variety of areas for people to make a living.

In an advanced market system, individuals did not have to provide for all of their own needs. They could develop expertise in what most interested them (or at least in what they thought was available). So, the trader principle solidified. With the creation of wealth also came the resources and time to dedicate to tasks normally of less concern: academic or intellectual tasks. The intellectual pursuits arose fairly recently as a worldwide dimension of human undertaking. Prior to emergence of advanced economies, neither the wealth nor the demand for a professional group of thinkers existed. Most abstract thinking was done by a select few such as clergymen or members of governmental or aristocratic establishments. Now, however, a great many people are able to make a living by studying, interpreting, and distributing ideas. Fields of work such as the human sciences have been thoroughly established in our culture.

In any age or culture, people hold a given set of ideas about what human relationships entail. For example, they have ideas

about what kinds of behaviors are permissible or expected. These ideas are usually in accordance with the predominant intellectual views. Such ideas are developed—or at least systematized and made explicit—primarily by philosophers. They are then propagated by intellectual centers such as universities. They transmit through society in many ways: literary works and movies; television, print, and Internet media; primary and secondary schools; community institutions and organizations; and the whole political arena. This transmission of ideas influences the trends in society's general ideologies.

Clearly, we live amid the ideas of the culture. As we mature, we can be influenced heavily by these intellectual factors—as well as family factors. Children learn a great deal by watching others act. When we are young, others are the main frame of reference by which to judge what personhood is all about. We form a philosophy from these experiences and influences, a system of ideas that represents our views of life. For instance we develop knowledge about morality and human relationships. However, we may never actually recognize and define this as a philosophy. The level of awareness we bring to it can vary considerably.

Typically, philosophical premises are not understood explicitly by the young. A generalized, vague, and sketchy system is formed in childhood and adolescence; it may or may not be reflected on as one matures to adulthood. Many factors affect whether philosophical premises are made entirely explicit. In general though, the more a person wants to differentiate assorted ideologies, the more he or she will succeed. Discovery and application of beneficial principles has to be kept a priority.

Every person uses some form of philosophy in order to make decisions and exercise judgment. Philosophy assists to guide one throughout life. The opposite of being philosophical is, of course, being lost in particulars, concretes, and derivative issues, unable to relate them to principles, unable to make things comprehensible.

So, either one can make one's philosophy explicit and integrate the terms involved—or one can hope for the best in what one

has absorbed from the culture (and family).⁸⁰ We can accept, implicitly and mostly unwittingly, whatever system is offered in our surroundings. Like the rising and setting of the sun, “cultural osmosis” happens effortlessly.

Yet, if we do not shine the light of logic on a particular philosophy, chances are high that we will not think much about it. Even though we may use it almost reflexively, the philosophy will remain more or less implicit. In this process we can reach many subjective, illogical conclusions. The pitfalls definitely are not small in number.

The explicit integration of logical philosophical premises necessarily fills in the blank spots of cognition and interpretation about the world. As we have seen, logical philosophical premises are needed in order to properly think, judge, and act—that is, in order to live independently and happily. Granted, in a culture of capitalism, implicit acceptance of the dominant ideas would not be as harmful as today. However, only an explicitly defined logical philosophy would enable one to think in terms of principles and, therefore, to use one’s best judgment. Indeed, immersion in the reality of a capitalistic society would make it virtually impossible—outside of being a total recluse—to not have at least a rudimentary understanding of the culture’s philosophy.

The human conceptual faculty attains mental health by seeking logical clarity. And only with a high degree of intellectual independence can human beings maintain a society with objective laws. We are quite fortunate that key logical philosophical premises have already been identified. In the past, humans lacked the incalculable advantage of this philosophical knowledge. Yet, even though mental growth and political progress were more difficult, the striving for logical clarity by active minds continued.

As noted, discovery of philosophical truths depends on the current hierarchy and context of knowledge. In some instances, though, the mind of a genius may discover that which other active minds had difficulty discovering (which is simply the nature of genius and of human discovery). The task for human beings in any

age is to recognize truth when it is discovered and appreciate valid knowledge when it is presented.

Yet, most fields of work usually involve specific tasks and reality-based problem solving—and little philosophical reflection. Since an advanced civilization comprises an extremely complex set of interactions and tasks, individuals plainly can only focus on a particular area of expertise. After all, a specific career represents an embodiment of the fullest use of one's mind and ability. It consists of ever-progressing work and achievement.

Most people attempt to find a balance between routine tasks and more creative ones, depending on their present values or stage in life and their basic intellectual capacities (and oftentimes the current economic and political conditions). One's occupation is naturally a matter of personal context, preference, and values.

Individuals in this country and around the world who realize that nothing will get done without effort must be saluted. They perform tasks that keep civilization alive and prospering. They build high quality products, conduct dignified commerce, offer superb services, and do incredibly demanding tasks. They also establish the pride and piece of mind that come from pushing one's mind and body to the limit on whatever job needing done. A strong work ethic contributes to the accomplishments in so many sectors of the economy. The list is practically endless: the vast service industry, the various construction and repair trades, engineering, agriculture, textiles, natural resource production, high tech fields such as computers or aerospace, and so on.

Obviously, it is impossible for a person to be a complete master of many (or even a few) vocations. We have only a certain amount of time to experience, think, integrate, relate, perform and practice—all the while, never losing sight of two goals: achievement and happiness. Under these circumstances, many may figure that so long as they are productive in their own work environments, everything in society will turn out for the better. As a result, they may conclude that people in other areas of specialization, such as the intellectual pursuits, have their own set of problems and tasks to deal with.

The intellectual fields, indeed, are occupations in which philosophical thinking is more common. However, from the standpoint of a rational human being, in any occupation, philosophy is indispensable. A human being has a need to be a complete organism of thought and action. A man should be both a man of the mind and a man of action. A woman should be both a woman of the mind and a woman of action. A person who acts should do so based on principles made explicit and verified through the process of logic. A person who thinks should do so based on the observable implications of ideas, rationally identified outcomes, and logical deduction and inference. In truth, a society of thinkers should be a society of doers; they should be one and the same.

With capitalism, a minority of people would never think for the majority and determine their ideas. Certainly, the intellectual professions would still exist, but they would strive for more clarity. They would recognize the various contradictions, fallacies, and non sequiturs that are undercutting our civilization and affecting people negatively. The denial of objectivity is the flawed foundation on which our culture rests.

An illogical system can only continue to flourish by appealing to ignorance, apathy, or fundamental self-doubt. That one can think and judge for oneself and that one can act competently in accordance with thought and judgment becomes de-emphasized within such a system. Laypeople may even tell themselves that self-doubt is warranted, because surely groups of professionals in a complex society know more than the individual—surely a panel of “experts” knows best—surely the collective is a better judge of reality and what is good for a person than that person.

Irrational values stem from irrational motivations, both of which prosper in a psychological climate where aspects of pseudo self-esteem replace self-esteem. Of course, the culture or society per se does not maliciously create this situation (i.e., no great plan exists to destroy the beauty of human existence). But adults do have the choice to maintain certain levels of unawareness. They also have the choice to nurture the rationality of the child or to

discourage and short-circuit it (which may echo their own childhood history). If they choose the latter, then in certain respects the child may begin to think that adults (and later as an adult, just other people) understand things that he or she cannot understand, know things that he or she cannot know, perceive things that he or she cannot perceive. In subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways, a child may be led to believe that others will always know more than he or she; others are better equipped to judge aspects of reality.

When nations of productive people quibble over only the effects of various intellectual doctrines (rather than the logic of the doctrines themselves), they fail to break out of a flawed mold of collectivistic thinking. Their social milieu can become one in which any significant form of independence is shunned, and obedience and servility to the group is praised, like in all the tribes of yore. Such social systems encourage millions, actually billions, of people to follow the given context. The performance unhealthy and even life-threatening tasks is considered customary. In all the frantic or anxious productivity, few ask if frustration and unhappiness have to be intrinsic to material progress.

With genuine productiveness, mental progress must occur. Obviously, just pretending to understand the nature of one's predicament does not fulfill the unabated need for clarity. Simply working hard does not satisfy a rational being's need to be aware of its internal and external surroundings—and this noticeably includes the political context in which one is working. Even though our capacity for self-delusion is endless, we can never fool the real inner-self—the one emanating from childhood that initially demanded rationality and comprehension of its surroundings.

Today, those who choose a profession of abstract thinking and contemplation—those who deal with philosophical ideas—bear a great responsibility. They must respectfully consider the moral implications and practical outcomes of their theories. Regularly, they have suffered the same troublesome effects of the ideas that afflict everyone outside their profession. Irrespective of the type,

the mistaken or misguided premises currently in operation have definitely done their damage—more than most people realize.

The best rectification, consequently, would be to start over with the guidance of reason and the method of logic. This, of course, entails contesting very entrenched ideological (and emotional) systems. Nevertheless, such a rectification provides a vision of heroic individuals that hold no higher values than truth, self-esteem, and a concomitant society of blissful and benevolent progress. In the end, nothing in the universe is worth the cost of sacrificing preeminent values.

The interpretation and implementation of ideas by active minds is something we need to see in society. Rather than becoming further distanced from reality and from our true identity, we need a philosophical mindset grounded by reason and rooted in reality. Implicit in such an attitude is a set of ethical premises. These premises foster a better relationship with ourselves and reality—and by extension, with other people. So, the third branch of philosophy, ethics, is the main topic to which we now turn.

Freedom—An Ethical Issue

When psychological processes lead people to a realm in which trials and tribulations of human relationships are the overriding issue in life—rather than life itself—it indicates that we have drifted off ethical course. Ethics is the branch of philosophy dealing with the theoretical aspects of morality and moral codes. While morality has been explained throughout this book as the application of the laws of reality to ensure individual survival, we must delve into the topic further. Since morality has to do with values and virtues, it also has to do with how people should behave toward each other.

Many college ethics classes focus on the forms of morality that deny the importance of the self. Morality can be an emotional topic, and sometimes critical analysis may be lacking. For instance, an ethics class might not elucidate the essential flaws in moral

codes such as John Stuart Mill's (or Jeremy Bentham's) utilitarian ethics or Emmanuel Kant's ethics of duty.

In the classroom, one may even encounter a lack of recognition of what most moral doctrines really ask of the individual. Instead, most of the doctrines might be upheld with somewhat equal plausibility. Because virtually all the doctrines presented are just variations on the same general theme, the theme of self-sacrifice, it is no wonder that few can decide which doctrine is "best." As a result, students normally leave an ethics class bewildered or dissatisfied. This definitely does not bode well. After all, we need to rely on some code of values and virtues to guide our actions, some system of identifications to assist in determining good and bad, right and wrong.

As mentioned much earlier, values are things one acts to gain and/or keep. Virtues are the ways in which one acts to gain and/or keep values.⁷⁶ These definitions are simple enough and not really an issue of dispute for most people when discussing morality. The controversy usually arises when one attempts to discern what these values and virtues should be and who or what they should serve. Do they primarily tell us how we should deal with other people, or do they reveal how we should deal with reality and ourselves and then, secondarily, other people?

Thus a main question for morality is this: Is one's life the ultimate standard of value, or are *other people's* lives? By what standard do we judge one's actions to be good or bad? If one chooses others as the standard, then who are these people, what ideas do they hold, and more importantly, how or by what standard do they judge morality?

Codes of morality are necessarily devised in existence. In fact, no ethics could ever be formulated unless reasoning beings existed and survival was the underlying driving force in their activities (the pursuit of values). The basic choice for anyone, then, is either to honor reality-based survival and well-being or to mostly ignore their significance—and search for something supposedly more important or more essential. This sort of search, of course, is in

vain. Reality is needed to verify the ideas and actions that ensure survival and a healthy mental state. We can only correctly determine right and wrong, good and bad, when we first look to reality and the conditions for life itself. Only after we have done this can we determine how people should treat and deal with each other.

So, to survive healthily and happily we must take reality seriously and as a primary. Only a reality-based ethics abides by the laws of nature, which includes human nature. With an ethical system rooted in and derived from reality, instead of other people, we can determine an objective value system. With an objective value system, we neither encounter nor create any large or irreconcilable conflicts of interest or clashes of behavior.

Since values must relate to dealing with reality so that mental and physical benefit are ensured, logically one's own spiritual and material values take precedence. Values such as reason, logic, authentic self-esteem, enlightened self-concept, active mind, brilliant sense of life, and productive achievement (purpose) can be considered primary. Virtues are the complex ways we sustain and improve these and other values. Thus, rationality, integrity, independence, responsibility, honesty, productiveness, and so on, can be considered primary virtues.

Other values and virtues arise from these primaries. Values such as love (in all its forms) and friendship, and virtues such as empathy, understanding, benevolence, generosity, and goodwill, flow from primary values. Also, many material values promote pleasure and quality of life. Ultimately, all reality-oriented values and virtues mesh and interact as a sum total of what a human being deems essential in life.

In contrast to an objective code of morality, however, a social-based ethics typically admires only *derivative virtues*—such as caring, concern, benevolence, compassion, hospitality, generosity, helpfulness, politeness, friendliness, and kindness. Indeed, these are important and desirable virtues. But a social-based code of morality hampers formulation of the primary values by which these virtues can be maintained.

If the primary values—such as reason, purpose, and self-esteem—are bypassed, a society of lasting kindness and goodwill becomes less likely. We already know what happens in the realm of politics. For people to be genuinely benevolent and respectful of self and others, their minds must not be placed on a sacrificial alter in homage to authority and the collective.

If we treat human relationships as an irreducible primary, we do not do justice to human beings or to reality. Such a practice only adds confusion to ethics, and it can foster neuroses that are overlooked as normal human behaviors. In all its endless variations, a social-based ethics can also be called a morality of dependence; nearly everything about ethics is stated in relation to others.

That morality concerns principally how we should treat other people is a very persistent idea. For instance, some uphold obedience (“discipline”) and socialization as the greatest goods for the child’s development. But these so-called virtues plainly are no replacement for development of a rational mind. The adult yearning for children to be altruistic, empathetic, and caring signifies somewhat flawed interpretations of these terms. Young children usually spontaneously see the alleviation of distress of others as important; they commonly see helping others as the way to make the situation better—so that all can enjoy further activities. In contrast, many adults see helping others as an end in itself; they see it as a means to artificially tie people together—so that the natural helping attitude of children is replaced with insincerity and duty (and guilt from potentially being too selfish). Since these adults obviously were children once, what happened to their initial mindset?

Essentially, adults can lose the confidence they had as small children. Early on, children are not frightened of the unknown and the uncertain. They have yet to become preoccupied with self-doubt (and all the complex ways of avoiding this feeling). If the independent and assertive attitude gets minimized in a culture, demands or requests for sacrifices—as well as desires to be taken care of—become the recurring themes.

A social-based ethics is normally accompanied by the sacrifice of self to others or the sacrifice of others to self. Particular emotions follow from this respectively: shame, guilt, humility, and servility (and corresponding resentment) or anger, avarice, hostility, and disrespect (and corresponding cruel indifference).

No matter how much efficacy one tries to attain, one is never enough with the dependent morality. Being good enough (or having moral certainty, for that matter) becomes hard to establish, both consciously and subconsciously, because this personal judgment has been deferred to others. One's worth depends chiefly on how one deals with others. Because it is tied to others, it must be constantly proven and defended. Thus, one will seldom look to reality—and to the self—for validation and acceptance. Thoughts of one's mortality and objective reality will no longer seem to be of much concern. Additionally, most of one's accomplishments primarily will be gauged in relation to the accomplishments of others.

Since a morality derived from how people should treat each other tends to disconnect itself from reality-oriented values and virtues, it tends to disconnect individuals *from their own lives*. Yet very few in our culture can escape the pressures placed on us to twist our mind and perform this kind of disconnection. No doubt most of us have been affected by social influences to unduly appease, satisfy, impress, please, placate, help, or forgive others.

From childhood onward, most individuals are admonished for being "selfish." Despite their feelings in this matter, most are often instructed to anticipate the expectations and guess the needs of others—so that they can be socially appealing, polite, and acceptable. The rule is not to observe *reality* and act accordingly, but to observe *others* and act accordingly. Sometimes, even adoration is directed at a person who attempts to become selfless. A person must disregard the rational needs of self to fulfill supposedly higher goals—such as the needs of other selves.

Yet, acceptance of the services of a decidedly selfless person is, of course, also being selfish. Apparently, then, there must be only

givers and no receivers. Perhaps if one tries to accept a giver's offerings with total selflessness, then it is not being selfish. Maybe if one discounts personal desires and satisfaction, then one can never be selfish. Clearly, this sort of ethics can turn into a contest that subverts the nature of a human being to experience enjoyment and happiness. After all, to not benefit selfishly from a pleasurable activity is impossible.

In modern usage, selfishness is mostly a pejorative term. It probably has always been one. Selfishness is viewed as an insensitive (or even wicked) attitude only concerned with benefits for oneself. Being selfish entails disregarding others (or not sharing with them) and, especially, not considering the psychological harm done to them.

However, in reality, every individual ought to be exclusively self-interested. His or her own values are primaries. If one practices rational self-interest (or enlightened selfishness), one is naturally considerate of the views and needs of others—that is, when appropriate. Individuals of high self-esteem factor in the interests of others when they are involved. One's self-interest in social contexts is thus furthered. After all, conflict, deception, and thoughtlessness are rarely conducive to getting one's needs met or desires fulfilled.

So upon inspection, we discover that selfishness is an anti-concept; it mixes valid and invalid meanings. It seeks to deny that a person must—by nature—be selfish, or self-interested. The motives for using “selfish” to describe inconsiderate behavior tend to be more unsettling than simple semantics.

A society that continually upholds selfless action as the good and selfish (or self-interested) action as the bad, fosters many expectations or demands or wishes about how people should act and treat others. This can generate a psychology of peevishness when others do not exhibit a sufficient amount of humility, servitude, obsequiousness, or groveling in order satisfy the requisite norms. People perhaps seek the assurance that they are not the only ones participating in a dependant code of morality.

They might conclude that to sacrifice one's true ambitions, interests, and integrity (and resent those who have not), is much easier than to uphold a reality-based system of values with self-esteem as a foremost goal.

Inconsiderate behavior definitely involves disrespect of self and others. It may indicate a lack of self-understanding and self-appreciation (lack of self-respect), which reflects itself in a social context. Moreover, a petty self-absorbed attitude (i.e., narcissism), regardless of whether it offends others or disregards their context, is certainly a phenomenon of the insecure. It exhibits a lack of a fully-formed and confident self.

What is the appropriate response to these kinds of behaviors? If the relationship is important, one attempts to understand the person's psychological context, discover the underlying causes, and help increase his or her awareness. If the relationship is not important, one respectfully asserts one's interests and leaves it at that. To merely label someone's attitude or behavior as being selfish may be easier, but it is neither accurate nor helpful. Incidentally, this applies to any superficial label; labeling is disabling.

Rather than accuse others of being selfish, we need to appreciate and admire genuine acts of self-assertion. Rather than claim that the world seems to be disintegrating because people are not selfless enough, we need to integrate a logical code of ethics—one that remedies value-system deficiencies. A noble civilization must dispense with name-calling and examine the code of morality that encourages it.

A moral code that embraces most things other than independence and that extols "caring" as one of the highest virtues has other dire consequences. Such an ethics induces guilt and teaches people to be altruistic—that is, willing to sacrifice their time, money, and effort for any person or persons desiring to put a claim on them. This is all thought to make the world a better place. Proponents of this moral code rarely ask why individuals seem to always need help from others and what causes unwarranted dependence.

Since *everyone is in need* in one way or another, need is therefore context dependent. But ethics can be turned into a game designed to rationalize deficient behavior. It can be designed to deny two principles: that help given to anyone should be sincere rather than dutiful, and that self-sufficiency is a beneficial virtue. Those who are not able to function completely on their own obviously have a different metaphysical situation. Compassionate individuals and charitable organizations are free to assist them. They are free to determine when (and why) people genuinely need help.

Most current existential assistance (particularly that provided by groups) is inadequate for effecting true change—no matter how beneficial it may be for the short-term. Whether many of the accomplishments of humanitarian organizations throughout the world (for example, the Peace Corps) are all that valuable for the recipients (especially for the long-term) is debatable. Whether those who work on the ground level of these organizations agree with many of the directives given to them to essentially meddle in others' affairs is also open to question.

The problematic, political nature of the business creates these problems. The corrupt systems of government and welfare-States throughout their regions of work contribute substantially to various humanitarian failures and inadequacies. Unfortunately, aid organizations typically concede the same premises about the rule of people. At best, they advocate Democracy, in which non-objective law presides and people remain locked in their impoverished situations.

The real reasons for such desperate and dire conditions as in third-world countries, and even in developed inner cities, have to be directly dealt with. The plight of indigent people can only be remedied by instituting the values of liberty. Capitalism's dramatic changes would empower individuals. Economic growth, rapid innovation, and technological advances would be the real keys to helping those in need (whatever their particular needs might be). And these forms of assistance would never ask for sacrifices.

In contrast to altruism, rational self-interest asks for independence and a world in which people view help as a dignified exception, not as a sanctified right. Herein rests the dependent morality's stranglehold on people's lives: Rather than being kind and compassionate, continual altruistic service verges on plain cruelty. It keeps otherwise competent individuals, albeit in alleged need, relegated to a perceived state of inability, helplessness, and hopelessness. So long as these individuals are encouraged to be dependent rather than self-sufficient (i.e., so long as they are given disincentives to become independent), assisting them ought not be called "moral." To stifle positive psychological and economic change in society is not moral.

What is moral is the promotion of Self-Governing Capitalism, which is the only system beneficial to everyone's rational self-interest and particular level of ability, or inability.

As noted, the general theme of sacrifice can be found in every social-based ethics and dependent code of morality. Not surprisingly, sacrifice is mentioned commonly in political and in religious contexts. In order to comprehend with clarity this widespread doctrine, we must once again define our terms. It is the multifaceted usage and implications of the concept that are of concern.

The following definition—which will be called the objective definition—is immeasurably helpful in understanding the concept. Sacrifice is defined as: the giving up or relinquishing of a higher value in favor of a lower or lesser value, or even no value at all.⁷⁶ Clearly, any rational person would want to avoid such an act.

As one might suspect, the objective definition can conflict with the usual way sacrifice is meant to be interpreted and applied. A common dictionary meaning is "to give up a valued thing for the sake of something more important or worthy." This suggests that sacrifice is something one ought to do. Even though it might entail a loss of something important, one attains something supposedly better.

Yet, because of the various connotations that accompany the common meaning, sacrifice can be used very ambiguously. For example, it can mean merely the abandonment of one value for another, with no distinction made about which value was more important. It can mean the relinquishment of a great value for a supposedly greater value, for instance a "societal" value. It may describe a change or rearrangement of one's hierarchy of values, that is, letting go of past values. It can also describe the acquisition or preservation of genuine values at the expense of time and effort. Lastly, it can describe "selfless" actions done in the name of country, community, group, or family. There simply is no end to the equivocation of the term. It is basically a result of a society that has chosen no objective reference or guide by which to judge virtue.

When it is used indiscriminately for so many types of behavior, "sacrifice" is plainly an anti-concept. It obfuscates rather than clarifies. The objective definition avoids such confusion, since it does not follow that sacrifice entails giving up some lesser value for a greater value. Sacrifice means giving up a higher value for a lower value.

The relinquishment of any value in favor of a lesser value or non-value sets a rational organism against itself and its capability to survive. Sacrifice is a descent along the path of decay, which if left unchecked and not reversed, will lead to debilitation or even death. The complete sacrifice is the annihilation of the self for some purportedly higher value.

However, the anti-concept of sacrifice can be used to connote an image that one is performing a glorified duty that transcends any individual value. The person preaching sacrifice usually gives little recognition to the fact that the only moral values are *individual* values, no matter how many people espouse or practice them. Yet those who ask for sacrifices often know full well what people must give up. To obtain sacrificees, they depend on misguided value systems.

No greater cause exists than the achievement of one's own

values. Any attempt to refute this is self-contradictory—it is attempting to live outside oneself, in the minds and expectations of others. Therefore, striving for rational values is not a sacrifice. Acting in self-defense is not a sacrifice. Participating in a cause that cultivates or protects individualism and human rights is not a sacrifice. Safeguarding and providing for those we love and value is not a sacrifice. Compromising with those who share our principles and standards is not a sacrifice. Assisting those in need on the basis of their struggle to be virtuous (e.g., independent) is not a sacrifice. Following our greatest ambitions is not a sacrifice. Honoring the self is not a sacrifice.

Any value that is worth the struggle to attain ought not involve sacrifices. To contend otherwise implies that one's lesser values are just as important as (or actually more important than) one's greater values; it implies that life is not a progression of achievements, but rather a difficult game of trade-offs that involve losses much of the time. Here, the sense of life sadly speaks for itself. The doctrine of sacrifice reflects an attitude of self-pity—a view that life is an uphill battle.

That we must relinquish formerly important values to pursue newly important ones requires mental flexibility. We have to prioritize what we value. This is a sizable issue in parenting, for example. A prevalent idea is that parents supposedly sacrifice themselves and their desires for their children. If one truly values one's children more than the values one relinquished to have them, one happily accepts the responsibilities of parenthood. Logically, one does not make sacrifices to do this. Any *actual* sacrifices, however, reveal a different story. Parents might then search for a scapegoat for their own choices.

Some parents may say that their goal in life is to give their children a better life than they. And so, sacrifices need to be made. To squelch a part of one's self is supposedly all right because one benefits others in the process. The effects of this viewpoint tend to be twofold. First, it allows parental life to become stale, mundane, or even awful. Parents do whatever work, not

because they personally desire it, but mostly for the benefit of their children. They make the age-old sacrifices that substitute for achieving self-esteem, realizing ambitions, and attaining happiness. Second, it creates a neurotic psychological tool (in line with the dependent morality) known as unearned guilt. Parents may seek to have their children feel guilty about their reliance on parents for sustenance. Often they expect their children to make sacrifices in turn. In addition, parents may have hopes (or demands) of achievement for their children despite their sons' or daughters' interests.

Normally, children find this whole situation perplexing and frustrating. They may form antagonistic relationships with their parents. They might rebel against the demands placed on their time and labor (and not live up to parental expectations). Or, they might spend a good deal of time trying to be the perfect child. Being perfect may entail making payment on the debt one incurred with one's supposedly selfless parents.

The greatest contradiction here is the belief that sacrifice—either espousing it or indulging in it—is beneficial for anyone. In terms of personal evolution, sacrifice is nothing but a side-road leading to a dead-end. And it demands further sacrifices from others to avoid recognition of this. Eventually, no one has a real self; just selfless thoughts and actions for others remain (who also have no real selves). Not surprisingly, feelings of resentment, contempt, envy, jealousy, and guilt become predominant, which are the ancient masks for insecurity and diminished self-worth.

To constantly show examples of self-sacrifice—and claim the good in it—will rarely engender authentic respect and admiration. Only by pursuing our highest values will we encourage children to pursue their highest values. In the process, we will be able to provide for them greatly.

An ethics devised solely from human relationships has no direct reference to reality. Judgment of what is good and what is bad—and also what is right and what is wrong—becomes mere

opinion. Morality becomes subjective and relative. As a result, people may take actions that could never be objectively deemed life-generating and life-sustaining.

In addition, various types of short-range hedonism that are destructive of long-range values are sometimes considered to be self-interested actions: Life is about indiscriminate pleasure, some say—irrespective of its mental and physical consequences. Predictably, the life and well-being of the individual are viewed at times to be expendable. A mixed bag of contradictions, fallacies, and non sequiturs tends to reinforce unhealthy attitudes and actions.

What also keeps this deterioration of logic intact are rationalizations. One rationalization (which is taught to students frequently) declares that objectivity does not exist; only the subjective and the relative exist. Those who have habitually upheld contradictions fail to inspect whether this declaration is an objective one. They typically proceed to claim that there are no absolute truths. Whether this is an absolutely true claim apparently makes no difference either. The fallacies of self-exclusion and stolen concept simply go unnoticed.

Rationalizations of this sort permeate our culture implicitly too. They exist as the untold and unstated agreements between those who believe that contradictions are okay, mainly because they make them feel better. Some may find it disturbing to see behavior and thoughts objectively, because objectivity protects no one from his or her pretenses or possible shortcomings. Instead, objectivity illuminates proper values and acts of virtue and restores well-being.

A psychology that rationalizes its unhealthy practices is in a precarious position. Defensiveness and techniques of intimidation may be used as support. Conversely, guilt, shame, and humility help to maintain deficient practices. Since issues concerning self-concept are not confronted, such behavior reinforces itself and solidifies.

Various psychological patterns can take their toll on a person's will to understand: chronic mistaken evaluation of situations; large reliance on emotions for cognitive guidance; and submission to particular influences to disown the self and renounce moral certainty.

Such practices usually commence in childhood. With pressures to conform to adult expectations and the prescribed manner of dealing with people, a child sooner or later can become quite distanced from reality. Losing sight that reality can be one's closest friend and safeguard is part of the process of fearing the judgment of others and doubting one's mind to interpret facts.

Reality can be comforting when one's relationships with others have become disorienting and unpredictable. A certitude and strength is gained by accurately identifying and interpreting reality. Apart from all the lunacy, inanity, and senselessness that may occur among people, physical reality will always have its own stability and certain properties: Reality will never uphold or enforce contradictions.

But fears of parental rebuke and rejection can lead a child to doubt his or her own assessment of the world (that may oppose theirs). The fateful step is taken when the child places faith in others judgment and rulings, rather than continues to question the propriety of their values and behavior.

Conformity to a flawed ethical system is furthered by praise and rewards, both emotional and physical, for appeasing significant others. This can be appealing. The child may succumb to a secure feeling that he or she will be taken care of by others—others will provide the necessary interpretations of reality. All that is required of the child is agreement (even if only subconsciously) with this state of affairs.

As a consequence, autonomous characteristics may come to be seen as anomalous or even unappealing. Some may even believe that there is little to gain from and offer to others (in an emotional way) who either do not display obedience or do not project an air of superiority. Additionally, a repressed fear of upsetting others can lead to a hatred of them. Such a fear can turn the child or adult into someone who wants to control the consciousness of others. In a vain attempt to be emotionally satisfied, manipulative or tyrannical behavior can be part of the psychology also. The dependent or social-based ethics renders its twisted forms pseudo self-esteem.

As one matures, such instances of dependence are supported by the culture. One can find a plethora of advice-givers, counselors, decision-advisors, leaders, commentators, pundits, holy men/preachers, gurus, and even psychics, who want to filter and interpret reality for others and guide their way. However unwittingly, many of these various filterers fail to honor the nature of human consciousness. Individuals are fully capable of making sense of the world on their own. They need no one to stand between them and reality. This only diverts the task of independent thought and judgment.

In order to have invigorating and healthy relationships we must take reality and our own well-being as primaries. Doing so provides us a sound standard of judgment by which to determine good and bad, beneficial and harmful. Objectivity in ethics allows us to see the light of day and, if need be, adjust our values accordingly. A rational moral code is definitely a dramatic step forward for our species, whose members have tended to deny or misinterpret their individual worth and greatness.

In Our Own Image And Likeness

Implicit in the preceding sections has been the idea that Self-Governing Capitalism will mark one of the greatest evolutionary transformations since humans developed the capacity to reason (which made them human). This transformation will occur not by direct, natural selection through factors in mutation. Rather, it will occur by the effective use of a naturally selected, adaptive function: volition.

History reveals the occasional failure of this adaptive function in its capacity to benefit the human organism. Accordingly, illogical thought (and subsequent improper action) could be termed maladaptive. More often than not, it is detrimental to survival, despite being an effect of a beneficial capacity. With volition comes some degree of maladaptiveness—due to its nature of learning from mistakes and the sometimes complicated process of grasping reality correctly.

For any reasoning being, choice will always be a primary, although a great deal of refinement of this capacity (along with the mind in general) is certainly possible. For instance, a reasoning mind could evolve to make faster integrations of knowledge or assimilations of information. It might even be able to entertain multiple thought processes at multiple levels of abstraction simultaneously. Or, it could have more capability to recognize and interpret subtle emotions and heed internal signals (i.e., more emotional intelligence). Or it could form a greater capability to concentrate and focus on all perceived information. Or it could have greatly enhanced memory capability and utilization. (Indeed, at least some of these attributes may be the destiny of computer-based robots, as well as human brains with computer interfaces, in the not-too-distant future.)

While all these changes add up to more intelligence and more capability, they would never produce a totally infallible mental mechanism. Much of what we know about the nature of intelligence points to the acquired ability to correct errors, learn from them, and expand into previously unknown areas of discovery.

With choice, risks will always be involved. By choosing one course of action we immediately eliminate others. Only with the epistemological (and hence, physical) impossibility of knowing everything could an organism not risk making a mistake or not risk taking a less than optimal course of action. Oftentimes, the "optimal" course of action depends on one's particular situation and context of knowledge. Hindsight may enable us to notice whether our specific choices were less than optimal. But there is nothing we can do to reverse our choices; we can only learn from them.

Yet, in concert with exposure to non-objective value systems, children may be encouraged to see parents and significant others as omniscient, infallible, and omnipotent. From a child's point of view, adults seem to know almost everything, appear to hardly ever make mistakes, and seem to control and do just about anything. Clearly, if adults do not inform and show children that

none of these three mystical properties are possible, many psychological problems can be created. Specifically, individuals may spend much of their time trying to live up to unrealistic expectations (both of others and themselves).

Omniscience, infallibility, and omnipotence are invalid as well as anti-concepts. They cannot be applied in reality and are impossible attributes that attempt to undermine the meaning of rational cognition and human ability. Irrespective of what entity or nonentity is accredited with having these special powers, they can affect one's sense of confidence in one's mental and physical abilities.

Concepts of this sort probably have arisen out of a general discomfort or uncertainty with mental and physical effort, as well as a misunderstanding of reason. Instead of accepting the metaphysically given—that humans are finite and have definite limitations—some proceeded to wish of defying their own identity. They envisioned a life without restrictions or limitations, a life without the laws of reality. Since their wishes could not come true, they simply gave them to supernatural beings they could never equal.

The idea of knowing everything is certainly a fanciful dream. If one *could* be omniscient, then there would be no need to discuss or reflect on anything; it would already be known. Every problem and task would be solved and remedied, and knowledge would be total and all-encompassing. In a sense one would be like the mythical couple in “paradise,” Adam and Eve, who had nothing to do and no real reason to engage in any activity (at least before “The Fall”). In addition, communication and concepts themselves would not be necessary, because everything would already be understood and explained. We could go on and on attempting to imagine an omniscient consciousness. But, plainly, it is contradictory for any *finite being* to know *everything*. Moreover, the age-old idea that an “infinite being” can know everything is beyond logical discussion.

Yet we can still be significantly affected by the concept of omniscience. For instance, many people still expect individuals to somehow feel guilty about being uninformed or lacking knowledge.

Though our level of knowledge normally has a bearing on our abilities and skills, the ideas of omniscience and infallibility can only detract from the cultivation of confidence and competence. Parents (and other children), for example, may be quick to disgrace a child for not knowing something or not doing something correctly.

Clearly, this type of ridicule can promote self-doubt and separation from reality-oriented thinking. For an adult, it can generate uneasiness, frustration, and even hatred in all sorts of environments. In fact, capitulation to the demands of impossible concepts such as omniscience and infallibility can make the processes of learning and working quite hellish. It can make one's activities seem difficult, anxious, and dreary.

Whatever the profession, some individuals may desire to play the role of omniscient instructor, boss, leader, manager, worker, and so forth. Those who lack the necessary knowledge to perform a task need to understand the meaning of such role-playing. To act guiltily or anxiously or angrily is to support the mentality of the "authority figure." The situation oftentimes could be much different if those involved were to see the posturing or the demanding of omniscience for what it is. This, of course, requires an understanding and acceptance of the nature of one's consciousness.

The human mind needs conditions to function and expand its abilities. Sometimes a lack of knowledge may lead to the false belief that someone knows something one *cannot* know. Sadly, some may even conclude that a more knowledgeable person has more worth or value on account of this. (The morality of sacrifice has relied on this sort of notion for centuries.)

Grasping and dealing with reality, whatever one's level of knowledge, should never entail a question of our worthiness. Once again, our self-worth need not be an issue for debate (consciously or subconsciously). A person represents values and virtues, and these are rightly determined by focusing on reality and the requirements of life. Thus, our culture's near obsession with comparison and competitiveness between individuals is unwarranted.

Yet this is not the way some may see the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and deal with others who have more. They may feel as though their lives depended on striving for some sort of omniscience. This may be partially due to their anxiety about those who seem bent on inhibiting people instead of inspiring them. Those who belittle the value of others and exploit fears are certainly in a troubled psychological state. Frequently, in fact, their world also revolves around how others assess them and how they size up against them. In other words, their subconscious is overridden by social concerns. Perceived threats and insults tend to take center stage in their mind. By having distanced themselves from objective reality to such a degree (perhaps due to initial fears of not being good enough or fit for existence in the eyes of significant others), they seek a tenuous amelioration by trying to control others through emotional exploitation.

Control of others can serve as a substitute for self-esteem. One can be a master, not of reality, but of others. Oftentimes the person seen as an intimidator directly relies on others' insecurities about omniscience, infallibility, and omnipotence. Again, because the participants usually do not focus on the underlying nature of their predicament (and the nature of their self-sacrifice), they often do not deal with the situation appropriately. Intimidators are stopped in their tracks, psychologically, when they no longer have others' perceived inadequacies and negative emotions to feed on.

In order to create healthy conditions for personal growth and psychological progress we have to see the nature of our consciousness and our value clearly. What makes us most equipped for life is not how much we know, but the way in which we obtain new knowledge and use the knowledge we do have. Do we use our knowledge to (however subconsciously) intimidate, manipulate, and control others? Or do we use it to deal proficiently with reality and appropriately with others—and encourage and respect them along the way? It is obvious which of the two methods reflects the morality of reason and rational self-interest. To reiterate, by virtue of existing in the universe we are fit for life and worthy of

it. Others may help or hinder recognition of this irrefutable observation. But how we react to their practices (that evidence their own strengths or shortcomings) is our decision.

The idea of infallibility has the potential for generating as much guilt and worry as the idea of omniscience. In fact the two ideas are linked. As we discussed earlier, for a rational organism to never make an error, it would have to know every possible alternative; it would have to be omniscient. Nevertheless, we can continue to feel guilty or worried about making mistakes—even though we know we are going to make them. One can clearly see how these two anti-concepts utilize each other to ruin genuinely spontaneous and effective functioning.

As an anti-concept, infallibility is something we are told exists only for supernatural “entities,” but not for human beings. We are told that perfection is simply impossible for lesser beings, such as people. Based on this view we sometimes hear the phrase, “But we are only human.” Of course this can be taken to mean that we should recognize our capabilities. However, such a phrase often implies that a human being is somehow inadequate or less than optimal; it will never live up to the imagined ideal. The ideal represents some vague mystical thing that will forever be superior to us.

While “perfect” can describe something that is flawless according to a specific standard, the idea of being perfect according to an impossible standard is nonsensical. Perfection (reflecting infallibility) in this context is therefore another anti-concept.

Perfection for us should have a rational standard that incorporates fallibility. It should mean the ability to function in accordance with our nature. The rational standard is the nature of human consciousness—its normal attributes, properties, processes, and so on. This necessarily includes making mistakes and regulating our thoughts and behavior appropriately. In other words, a perfect person is an authentically thinking and feeling person.

The nature of human consciousness is fallible in respect to acquiring knowledge, and it is fallible and limited at times in utilizing memory to embellish and refine this knowledge. The

mental connections we can make are made possible fundamentally by factors in our biological structure and, as a result, volition (i.e., by the physical and metaphysical aspects of human consciousness).

We all experience times when we cannot recall something, but we know it is stored in memory (the “tip of the tongue” phenomenon). We all experience times when we have trouble with a problem or have difficulty comprehending what we are reading; we may have to work on the problem longer, or reread the information. We all experience times when we could have done something better, had we concentrated more or been more aware; we may have to ask ourselves what we can do to improve. Still, none of these situations suggests that we should feel guilty or like failures—for that would be to deny or reject who we are as rational beings—to not fully accept our methods of dealing with reality.

Important moments for us psychologically are times when we are keenly aware of the nature of our consciousness to make mistakes and falter. At such times, we need to dismiss anti-concepts and invalid concepts for their destructiveness and their irrelevance. We should take pride in our ability to see our mistakes, understand our limitations, and proceed to accomplish that which only a human being can accomplish. Doubtless, these activities are as much a subconscious issue as they are a conscious one (perhaps even more of a subconscious issue). Nonetheless, the right conscious assessment can certainly facilitate subconscious exploration and improvement.

Those who become preoccupied with their weaknesses and limitations may never stop to think about their uniquely human strengths and abilities. We should be thoroughly excited about all the joy we can experience, all the infinite discoveries possible to us, and all the inventions that increase our capabilities. This is tantamount to forming a realistic conception of ourselves.

We need not despair over what we are not. We need not fret over what we cannot do. Those who engage in self-degradation

tend to become their own enemies. Some may even reduce their lives to nihilism.

We cannot expect to have total control over reality either—to be omnipotent—because we have, like everything else in the universe, a specific identity and a definite way of functioning. Nothing can act in opposition to its identity or different from its composition or beyond its limitations. Sure, we can try to vainly imagine making all the right decisions and being all powerful, but wishing will certainly not make it so. A task for a volitional consciousness, then, is to identify and integrate these conclusions.

Yet children may be reared in environments where it seems people have forgotten or never realized that making mistakes is a necessary process. Many face humiliation when they “screw up” or make a “stupid” mistake. Parents who experienced similar humiliation in their younger years may treat error-making as the object of teasing, sarcasm, and degradation. This reflects their own discomfort and anxiety, of course; they are actually concerned about the use of their own faculty of judgment.

Some religions even teach that to make an error marks one’s soul with a flaw. These flaws, or “sins,” and can be devised for the sole purpose of stockpiling unearned guilt. To admit that some so-called sins are actually good for a person, that is, actually within one’s rational self-interest, is normally in violation of religious dogma.

Psychologically, the notion of sin can have its own pay-off: “perfection” is unattainable because the battle was lost either when we were born (Original Sin), or as we matured and succumbed to variety of sinful temptations. As a result, to strive for a better world or to fully believe in human dignity or to take responsibility for one’s happiness all might be viewed as misguided efforts. Human beings will always be inherently flawed, some religions say. Tied directly to this viewpoint is the idea of being forgiven for one’s sins.

In regard to erring, forgiveness can be a completely justifiable and useful idea. It can reassure a person that one does not expect

omniscience or infallibility, and that one understands a person's psychological context. Additionally, since at times we can be harsh judges of ourselves, the idea of self-forgiveness can be extremely valuable. It can help free us from prior unfavorable habits, past errors, and poor judgment. It thereby rejuvenates us and increases our capacity for enjoyment and living in the present.

However, conspicuous problems arise when forgiveness is misinterpreted. Many contend that any wrong or harmful act against others must be taken as an automatic effect of human nature. In other words, since people either have no choice in their behavior or they cannot always make the correct choices in dealing with others, they should be forgiven. Obviously, forgiveness then becomes a way to avoid the root psychological causes of particular actions. This misinterpretation of human fallibility can spawn a desire not to be held accountable for one's actions.

That every individual makes mistakes is incontrovertible. Mistakes are natural human occurrences. However, this fact of human nature does not excuse wrongful acts. When forgiveness is used to absolve acts of misconduct or iniquity, it becomes another anti-concept. Adding to this ethical confusion are the institutions that relate to others in less than respectful and benevolent ways (e.g., government). The widespread acceptance of this behavior further contributes to misunderstandings about the idea of forgiveness.

The subtle (and not so subtle) ways that declared "mistakes" are used to nullify personal accountability have become commonplace in our culture. In a morality not grounded in reality, such practices become merely the consequences of the doctrine of sacrifice. The doctrine of sacrifice seeks to pardon those who do wrong.

Non-objective morality simply muddles the distinction between right and wrong and good and bad. This not only diminishes self-responsibility, but also mocks one's power to understand and correct mistakes. Personal accountability presupposes being able to understand a deliberate action or an error—especially what caused it (i.e., what motivated it)—and just as importantly, experience the consequences.

When a mistake or error in judgment concerns others (or implies thoughts of them), analysis of the motivations and emotions involved is important. One's moral code (one's values and virtues) may be an issue on which to reflect—in order to discover the reasons for the behavior. This enables one to learn from the incident and to take responsibility for it.

Most actions we take contain a constant correction of errors and removal of possibilities for further errors. Mistakes contribute to our comprehension of what it takes to live well and ensure a healthy mental state. Our incorrect or undesirable actions, either physical or mental, ultimately help guide us onto the proper life course.

Learning from mistakes happens during and after the process of making them. Our honesty and courage enable us to alter our thoughts and behaviors when they are not in our best interests. As we appreciate our faculty of reason, we come to understand why it is all right to make mistakes, take responsibility for them guiltlessly, and learn from them. When we embrace mistake-making as a natural process, we decrease the likelihood of making mistakes. However paradoxical this may seem, acceptance of our fallibility strengthens our reasoning capability—we no longer doubt our ability or regret our nature. We allow ourselves the freedom to change in many ways. This leads us to our final chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

THE MENTAL ESSENTIALS OF CHANGE

Throughout this book we have discovered that there is more to liberty than a logical political philosophy; there is more to politics than just politics. Emotional barriers to truth in issues such as ethics are indeed important factors concerning freedom. A failure to identify and face various feelings shows the impact that evaluations can have on mental clarity.

If a person were to feel uncomfortable with the earlier discussion about selfishness, for instance, he or she might reject the whole argument based on a subconscious signal that it does not feel right. In order to avoid inner disruption, he or she might conclude that the problem lies with the other's argument (or even person). After all, to dismiss another person's ideas as wrong requires less effort than to find exactly what the truth is. Additionally, such a maneuver does not upset one's view of things, which one might interpret as a challenge to one's ability to deal with reality effectively (which one knows is imperative to live). So safety may mean adjusting many things to one's feelings and at the same time ignoring the real causes of those feelings, taking them as absolutes.

As we have seen, estrangement from one's inner world represents a pattern of disowning any feeling that is not consistent with one's belief system. Feelings often are not completely experienced, understood, and respected by the person. Hence, they are not seen as indicators of certain value-judgments that reveal aspects of self. This policy of course makes it difficult to utilize feelings to

one's advantage—to allow one's subconscious to convey what it actually thinks and feels. A numbing of feelings runs in accordance with denying the truth about some aspect of reality.

The methods by which a human being is able to protect itself from internal turmoil are quite numerous. Most can be reduced to the idea that defense of one's beliefs and subjective view of self is more important than identification and integration of the truth. Yet for well-being to be ensured and potentialities realized, people's beliefs should always be validated by logic. Reality determines what our beliefs should be. This is essential to objectivity and, accordingly, to life itself.

Seeing Who We Really Are

Each of us is a complex integration of cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems. And in essential philosophical terms, in concert with our memories, we are the particular values and virtues we seek to actualize. The healthy values and virtues for human beings are those that maintain and benefit each person. Values can be considered the ends and virtues the means, and their suitability depends on how well we integrate reality.

As rational organisms with a mind that perceives reality in order to sustain ourselves, we all need to discover who we really are. We need to see why questioning aspects of who we think we are at times (like our beliefs) is extremely important to believing in ourselves; again, we are entities that perceive.

If we doubt our ability to perceive and, further, to conceptualize aspects of reality correctly (be they internal or external), we can end up doubting the very faculty that is doing the doubting. The contradiction here needs little elucidation: It is the dead end of self-doubt.

We ought to question what we believe when sound evidence or sensible arguments are contrary to those beliefs—that is, we ought to disagree with our past opinions when they prove incorrect. Strong feelings about ideas that run counter to our views are important indicators. In order to discover where the problems lie,

we must scrutinize the issue. If we are opposed to these practices (or just apply them selectively), we are putting more trust in *who we have been* than in *who we are*. Yet we rely on our faculty *in the present* (i.e., who we are now) to distrust its own ability to formulate new opinions and beliefs. This is definitely the dead-end of self-distrust.

As individuals, we have to learn how to listen to our internal signals. They have much to tell us about ourselves, about others, and about the world. In order to understand we have to inspect. Since at any waking moment we are (among many other things) that which perceives, how we treat our ability to perceive will influence how far we excel in the process of conceptualization. How we deal with our past observations and conclusions (and feelings based on them) reflects a part of who we are and who we think we should be—our self-concept. The beliefs supported by our self-concept can be questioned at any point in our existence.

Life should not entail defenses of pretenses. Contradictions are definitely not worth guarding at the expense of happiness, an enlightened self-concept, and a brilliant future. Because that which thinks, feels, acts, and judges in the present is the part of self in control of our life, we are constantly open to change and evolution. We change by letting go of that which resists change.

When we are seemingly overwhelmed by an emotional conflict, our assessments and evaluations of reality should be at the center of our attention. To allow emotions to dictate how we examine ideas is to basically negate the importance of that which perceives and thinks.

One can, for example, define and label oneself by the negative or unwanted emotions one experiences. To believe that bad feelings are “who one is” is an effective prescription for depression. But such a belief is certainly not accurate. Although feelings are a vital part of who one is, they certainly are not a person in total. Yet one can lock one’s self-concept into a narrow view. One may even think that any outlook not consistent with this narrow view should be avoided or rejected.

So, we have the ability to cheat ourselves out of an optimal life. We can in a sense sell ourselves to others who really are clueless about how to live optimally. We can give this dreadful process all sorts of misleading names, such as: fitting in, being accepted, getting along, not hurting other people's feelings, being considerate, caring for others, and so on. But some part of us will always make the betrayal known. The vision we glimpsed in childhood of what life could be is often too strong a force in our soul to be lost.

Seeing beyond our surface physical appearance and into our complex anatomy as an organism can help us to objectify the meaning of who we are. Looking further into the cells we are composed of can give us another perspective—by showing all the amazingly diverse and complicated chemical processes occurring in each of us every second, keeping us alive. Inevitably though, we are that which exists, perceiving and thinking and feeling, having infinite worth based on this.

Our real self beckons to be exposed. It is past unwarranted fears and debilitating feelings, because it has understood and integrated the obvious: It is not afraid of the Law of Identity. One could call this part of self the sage self.¹⁴

By comprehending that ideas matter, we realize that life is not a transient game. Rather, life is that which creates all possibilities; it is the ultimate end in itself for each individual.

Since happiness is our highest moral purpose, we need to know what generates happiness.⁸² We have seen that an important task is to perceive and conceptualize reality in a noncontradictory fashion. This includes being in touch with our feelings, grasping and accepting their meanings. The positive emotional benefits of such introspection are commensurate with the eventual positive political effects that we have explored.

Developing A New Outlook

As addressed, a dominant theme in our culture involves taking “human nature” for granted. Many do not take the time to really

question the culture, and many consider the given set of circumstances to be normal. Many, in a more or less frenetic and unthinking effort, simply follow the lead of others, who follow the lead of still others.

We have a definite choice whether to fall into the trap of a subjective cultural outlook that dissolves any meaningful hope of positive change. We can choose against settling into a semi-tolerable life that represents the dominant “lifestyle” of the age. However, some may find comfort in the belief that so many people certainly cannot be so wrong. Some may even seek refuge in majority opinions, such as public polls.

To put blinders on and perform our work and play, forgetful of new possibilities for ourselves and the world, can be both easy and enticing. After all, development of an exciting vision of life can sometimes be tough in a society that sometimes favors security over challenge, avoidance over inspection, dogmatic beliefs over facts. Any step forward in attaining this vision is a heroic achievement; it demands that one focus on the *essentials* of existence, instead of the endless particulars of the day or week or year.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday living, surrounded by a myriad of artificial conveniences, we can also lose sight that we are mortal beings on a magnificent planet, a planet that spins through space within a spiral arm of a colossal galaxy. A powerful feeling of wonder remains about these common and yet often trivialized facts. They stand in stark contrast to all that is inconsequential and insignificant in our life.

A change in the current conditions means a transformation in human psychology. To see ourselves mainly as members of a particular organization, race, religion, or country oftentimes invites trouble. It can lead to distinguishing and judging ourselves based on superficial standards—such as how we look (our gender, our color, our size, the clothes we wear), where or how we live (our class or status), who our ancestors were (our heritage), or our community’s beliefs, language, and rituals (our ethnicity). These collective notions tend to identify us by nonessentials.

They basically diminish what it means to be an individual—which denies of the Law of Identity.

The United States has been called “The Great Melting Pot” precisely because of its great diversity of people, most of whom are able to live in harmony. A society that has a relative degree of free trade eventually acknowledges that all sorts of people are individuals seeking to improve and enjoy their conditions on Earth, regardless of their physical appearances or backgrounds. Our essential similarity is our reasoning mind.

Currently in America we are witnessing a general reversal of this enlightened viewpoint. As the size of government continues to grow, more “rights” (in the form of unjust laws, regulations, benefits, etc.) are granted to groups of people. To be a recipient of governmental special favors and privileges, one must identify oneself as a member of a group. Hence, insignificant group distinctions are claimed to be personally and politically significant—in order to obtain what one wants and make people “play fair” (usually by force).

Notice that many individuals lobby for various “minority rights” instead of individual rights. Some prefer to coerce people to accept particular goals with the force of law, than to persuade them with ideas and examples. Yet psychological changes for the better do not happen at the threat of a rights-infringing lawsuit, fine, or jail cell. Psychological changes must happen within each person.

A life and a society of mediocrity cannot be considered an honest aspiration. It is the result of people denying their value and lacking trust in their mind. Actualization of our potential, no matter what our present level of knowledge, skills, and abilities, demands that we question what we feel we cannot do and be. To strive for greatness, irrespective of the outcome, does not mean to settle for less. Since we do in fact have only one invaluable life to live, we should stand by our own judgment with the conviction that nothing else is fully human and fully right.

The willingness to pull ourselves out of everyday consciousness and everyday reality is key. We have to see beyond the minor

details and the daily happenings in our life. Yet to depart from the status quo can demand every possible resource from us. Many may think that any type of shining new society is just the wish of “idealists” and “dreamers.” Such pessimism upholds the status quo—and avoids the realization that one has settled for less, psychologically and politically.

Those who resolutely say that true capitalism would not “work” are exposing not only a flawed sense of life but also an inaccurate conception of themselves in particular and human beings in general. The rationalizations persist about why force is preferable to persuasion, why coercion is better than trade. But one theme is common: the fear of freedom.

Often, fear of freedom translates into fear of fully actualizing one’s potentials. And sometimes, a fear of self translates into a fear of people not being able to control themselves and “obey the law.” In truth, a fundamental lack of confidence in self-regulation promotes many irrational mentalities and unlawful actions (as well as the corresponding ineffectual responses to them).

Acceptance of the fact that we are in control of our future can help us believe in ourselves, and in others, to make the right decisions. What is entailed in this acceptance is the achievement of genuine self-esteem—which entails psychological awareness and self-examination, as well as mental and behavioral alterations.

Thus, self-concept is connected to the idea of liberty. Yet, like many other philosophical ideas, liberty can be championed with various levels of self-esteem; full integration is not an automatic process. The task for us is to establish a congruence between the ideal society and the psychologies that should reflect it. In order to be psychologically convincing to ourselves and others, we must learn to practice what we preach; we must learn to believe in ourselves.

Believing in ourselves and the right to be free may sound simple, but like any acquisition of knowledge and skills, it requires effort. Because what is in question is the person who acquires knowledge and exerts effort, it can be one of the most demanding integrations. People sometimes elude this topic in a vain attempt to

convince themselves and others that they have somehow mastered it. However, we all know that mastery does not come with evasion. Similar to athletics, one needs to concentrate on the fundamentals and practice thoroughly so that one can perform successfully. We have to prepare ourselves for what correct apprehension of reality entails.

Just as the Law of Causality cannot be bypassed, we do not acquire genuine self-esteem all at once. We may have strong feelings of efficacy in many areas of our life, which generate a high level of competency and proficiency. We need to begin with where we are psychologically. Using our various competencies (such as at work or with people) for support assists in making further global changes. Of course, to admit and accept all aspects of our present self-concept affects these actions. Choices can involve emotional factors that help or hinder. The choice to focus or not sometimes depends on our emotional disposition. So, an act of sheer will can be courageous.

The more often we choose to take necessary actions, the more we can enjoy the process of self-discovery (and vice versa). We can reach a point where healthy and adaptive choices become automatic. When our self-concept is aligned with reality so that we can listen to and interpret our internal signals properly, then we have attained a very important and realistic aspect of enlightenment.

Conclusion

Throughout this book we have seen how ideas and feelings shape the life and psychology of every human being. In effect, for human beings, ideas rule the world. They are involved in virtually any mental process, and serve as the means for further understanding. Actions are typically generated and accompanied by a set of ideas and images about the necessity and outcomes of those actions. Even actions that have become automatized were initially in conscious focus; only gradually did they become integrated and performed subconsciously.

As seen in other animals, simple perception will take an organism only so far. The sensory-perceptual mechanism is the foundation for all animals and is the precursor to the conceptual mechanism for humans. If perceptions are the stepping stones to all that is specifically human, then ideas are our bridge to the land of infinite possibilities. If our bridge is to be stable and trustworthy, and if it is to lead us to lands of delight, it needs to be inspected logically for flaws.

A system of the broadest ideas concerning human beings and reality, a philosophy, acts as the most profound guide for us. The effectiveness of this guide depends on how explicit—and, therefore, how well thought-out—it is. However, its usefulness and beneficialness depends on how logical and objective it is. Those who shun a large part of the intellectual realm rarely make their philosophy explicit. Nevertheless, like those who do, they can usually articulate some of the key points. Articulation of the key points in one's own philosophy (or another's) can be done with calmness and clarity, or with authoritarian belligerence; with a respectful tone, or with hostile defensiveness; with a persuasive assurance, or with an unconvincing meekness; with a brilliant sense of life, or with a cold or mocking attitude; with a hopeful enthusiasm, or with a depressing cheerlessness. All of these presentations are, of course, effects of one's personal psychology.

The certain illogic of a particular philosophy may also directly hamper or support some of these presentations. For instance, explicit false premises about the nature of knowledge (such as, "No one can be absolutely certain of anything") or of human beings and society (such as, "The individual is just a cog in the whole system") or of morality (such as, "Being selfless is a virtue") can affect the emotional state of the person overtly. Unsure premises about the meaning of reality can influence emotional states too (such as, "Things will be better in the next life"). Of course, various feelings tend to influence the formulation of such premises too.

In actuality, emotional effects and causes rely on how the premises are utilized by the person in his or her psychological context.

Each person has an enormous network of identifications and evaluations about countless aspects of reality. In order to make relevant connections, he or she must view the process as beneficial, and therefore be motivated to do so. Personal context largely determines the meaning of parts and/or the whole of a person's philosophy. How one interprets the significance of one's fundamental ideas typically affects the degree to which one's psychology, and thus behavior, will be influenced in any particular context.

Philosophy's primary role in psychology is mainly one of validation, justification, and explanation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. One's view of self and reality is thereby outlined. Obviously, the political branch of philosophy could not be discussed coherently without attention given to the branches upon which it depends—metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and even esthetics (the fifth and final branch). By ascertaining where we are, how we know it, and what we should do as a consequence (and what is beautiful about life), we can learn how we should live together; we can understand the best ways to interact harmoniously on this planet.

As we have noticed, acceptance and integration of the logical political philosophy can be challenging; many obstacles can impede clarity. Philosophies with much divergent views of self, knowledge, and reality can be used for the exact opposite of what philosophy was properly intended. The purpose of philosophy is mainly to offer an integrated, comprehensible system of ideas to facilitate mental growth and happiness. Instead, philosophies oftentimes are used to uphold and reinforce unhealthy psychological states as well as inappropriate or harmful behavior. In other words, they are used as systems of rationalization.⁸⁰ Philosophies of this sort do not truly benefit the individual. Implicitly (or explicitly) they are designed to deny aspects of reality and the nature (and therefore, the requirements) of a rational organism. This leads us directly to psychology's role in philosophy.

Since psychology comprises all the processes of the mind, it necessarily encompasses the study of how (and why) an idea or

system of ideas is used by a rational organism. The way in which ideas affect emotions and emotions affect ideas has been one of the central issues in previous chapters. We have seen how fallacies and mistaken premises can lead a person to minimizing the meaning of logical identification. We have also seen how an initial lack of knowledge can lead to acceptance of various fallacies and mistaken premises. Accordingly, emotions such as anger, fear, or anxiety can impel an individual to accept and advocate mistaken ideas that seem to diminish (or to strengthen) those particular emotional states. Of course, contradictory ideas can never remedy the root causes of the emotions. Contradictions only prevent inspection of the root causes. But beneath all the complex debate or exhaustive excuses is a certain psychology with a definite view of life and view of itself.

At times, we can try to protect ourselves from the real psychological issues. In a variety of ways, we can attempt to allay our reservations about asking and then answering certain questions: Do I (or should I) believe in myself? Am I a truly independent being? Do I have a right to exist for my own sake and my own happiness? Am I an end in myself (as opposed to the means to someone else's end)? Is reality solid and real—and knowable? Is my life finite and therefore of the highest importance? Can I know things for certain? Are there ultimate truths? Are there absolutes, such as life and death? Can I trust my mind? Can I rely on my own judgment? In the end, these are the *real* topics, the essentials, of any political or philosophical discussion.

Numerous defense mechanisms can be exercised to disregard mistaken identifications and evaluations. If one has preexisting doubts about one's worth, the realization that one has not been functioning optimally can be agonizing. Consequently, one may replace the search for truth with avoidance of truth or pretense, which is clearly the dead-end of the denial of self-worth. A rational organism can only gain and prosper from honesty, because falsehood is the antithesis of mental integration and reality.

We have observed that in order to make sense of our ideas, we

need to understand how emotions are created and how they can influence us. Learning how to deal with our feelings concerning any experience (especially in the realm of our beliefs) marks a kind of evolution in psychology that has been mostly absent throughout human history. The denial and disowning of feelings and being controlled and driven by them depict two sides of the same problematic behavior; both avoid comprehension of human evaluation. Without a doubt this behavior has been most responsible for the retardation of societal progress (both psychological and political).

The best, most logical ideas in the universe are often useless to a person who is out of touch with his or her inner self and emotional world. Deep (often unadmitted) feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and self-doubt are costly. Yet I dispute that anyone in this age can mature without experiencing at least some aspects of these feelings. First, they can arise from the nature of a volitional consciousness and, second, others can provide quite negative influences (especially for children) in regard to reaching the right conclusions. Accordingly, we all need to learn what to do about them, which requires us to admit to ourselves that they exist. This simple activity is the first step in aligning ourselves with reality—and therefore with the truth.

Enlightenment hinges on the quantity and quality of identifications (both emotional and intellectual) that we make. Ultimately the *quest* for enlightenment becomes the real crux of the idea, because human conceptualization is limitless. We will never have thought or envisioned enough in our life. The mindset for this quest can only be acquired by much thought—both introspective and extrospective thought. Such thought is necessary for any great achievement an individual or the human race makes.

The ideal society is basically one of liberated and enlightened people. Self-Governing Capitalism will arise because it is an ideal that is attainable. It is a vision—and integration—of the proper and the practical.

So this is the psychology of liberty: to find the best within us

and direct it into reality, project it onto a society. A turning point in humanity will occur as a result. So many things can be said about this occurrence and about what can cause it, but what matters are the basics. One of the basics is that we have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Another basic is that drifting along in a mental fog will definitely not bring any of us enlightenment. Nor will it help us to survive and prosper in a society of justice. Yet another is that mental and political transformation in our society can only happen through an intellectual and psychological revolution—through active education of ourselves and others.

The Age of Logic is within our grasp. It should happen in our lifetime, because we deserve it. No lives are more precious and no other time matters for us. As with any kind of change, it must start with the individual. And this always involves that which is distinctively human: a choice.

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