

The Political Thoughts of a Non-Politician

by Stephen Mooney

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Introduction

The current cultural and political turmoil in the United States has caused me to examine my own cultural and political beliefs and opinions. I could not align myself with any of the factions involved in the controversies. I found much to agree with in most of the factions, but also much to dislike in those same factions. I found several authors of published books and essays I could largely agree with, but they had no factional affiliation. Why? Was I an outlier in my opinions? Or were there many others who shared them? If so, why was there no faction to represent them?

Much of the public "debate" is emotional and vitriolic, to me a sign that the logical arguments are weak. There seems to be a clash of differing fundamental beliefs.

I decided to figure out just what my political beliefs and opinions are. The only way to know what you think is to write it down. What follows is divided into four parts:

1. **Thoughts on human nature, culture, economics, and government.** Politics rests on the fundamentals of human nature. Human nature determines what is possible, likely, or unlikely to happen in the realms of culture, economics, and government. This section describes my beliefs concerning the relevant facts of human nature, and how this shapes the development of government and politics.
2. **Thoughts on facts, theories, ideologies and debate.** Political thought and debate concerns itself with facts, theories, and ideologies. This section describes my beliefs on what these are, how political debate uses them, and how political debate can be thwarted.
3. **Political thoughts.** This section describes some of the political opinions I arrived at, based on the first two sections.
4. **Conclusion.** This contains a summary, a brief look at what the future might look like, and some final thoughts on our society.

The main motivation for writing this essay was to focus my thoughts and see just what my beliefs and opinions are. Another motivation was to create an essay that could be used as a starting point for a rational debate on current political topics. To avoid emotions, I tried hard to avoid using the words and phrases commonly used in the current controversies.

Almost none of the ideas that follow are original with me. I do not recall where I found most of these ideas. Some I arrived at by myself first, then encountered later in some book. In any case, I have expressed these ideas in my own words according to my understanding of them.

Thoughts on human nature, culture, economics, and government

Politics is the means by which groups of people agree on and implement joint actions. The way institutions and politics work is determined by a common human nature present in all individuals.

Individuals

Moods and emotions play a large role in the way people perceive the world, as well as the thoughts they have. Moods and emotions also influence the way people behave towards others. People have an innate ability to sense the moods and emotions of others, and this empathy for other individuals allows people to give and receive respect, favors, comfort, and emotional support. Favors have a large role in influencing behavior. Exchanging favors acts like a force that binds people together.

Language plays a large role in the way people perceive the world, as well as the thoughts they have. People have an innate facility for language. Language can communicate and affect the emotions of others. Stylized language such as poetry and song are especially good at this. Language also enables rational thought, which opens up the possibility of analysis of the past and present, and predictions of the future. It allows an individual to make promises. Unfortunately, rational thought is subordinate to emotions. Using reason to justify decisions already made on the basis of emotions is much more common than using reason to mold or suppress emotions.

Explanations play a large role in the way people perceive the world, as well as the thoughts they have. People naturally think in terms of cause and effect. Rational thought combined with a person's innate desire to have an explanation for everything results in the easy acceptance of all sorts of explanations for all sorts of phenomena. Different individuals can accept different explanations for the same phenomenon, and thus form different opinions. A quirk of human nature causes people to look for and remember "facts" that bolster their own opinions and beliefs. Different people can look at the same phenomenon and see different facts on display.

New experience, or debate with another, can change an individual's opinion depending on how emotionally attached they are to it. A very tightly held opinion can be called a belief. A person's opinions are much easier to change than their beliefs. People often say their beliefs are based on "faith". This means that there is not necessarily any rational basis for the belief, thus no debates based on reason can alter such a belief.

People have an innate conception of ownership, worth, trade, favors, and fairness. If a person works for something, it is only fair that they own it. People can trade what they own for another thing. If the relative worth of the two items is similar, the trade is judged fair. If a person does you a favor, it is only fair that you owe them a favor of comparable worth in return.

Fairness allows people to judge another's actions or thoughts as "right" or "wrong". This leads individuals to judge others as "good" or "bad". These judgments are a form of opinion. Differences in experiences and personality can cause people to have a difference of opinion regarding the same action or person.

An individual trusts another person if they believe the other will keep their promises, and not knowingly deceive. You can trust someone you do not like. Trust grows slowly between individuals during many interactions which show that trust is warranted. On the other hand, trust can be lost quickly if an individual's actions show that the trust is not justified. Over time an individual can develop a reputation for trustworthiness. One person can then vouch for the trustworthiness of another.

People become friends when they trust each other, have a high opinion of each other, and like each other's personality. Friends share favors and a sense of loyalty to each other.

Groups

Human nature encourages people to form groups, often many different groups at the same time. Although individuals may come and go, the group itself can span many lifetimes. Working in groups allows people to be more safe and prosperous than any individual could otherwise be.

A basic part of human nature causes members of a group to be biased towards fellow group members, and against members of other groups, especially if they compete with each other in any way. This tendency can easily be amplified by appeals to the emotions of group members. There is also an innate urge to attribute the attitudes and actions of one group member to all members of their group.

It is human nature for the members of a tribe, group, or larger society to keep a mental score card on the net contributions of each other member towards the group's welfare. Factors of illness, disability, age, and personality factor into this score card. People are prone to giving higher scores to their loved ones, and lower scores to strangers or people they dislike. But in general, loafers get low scores. One problem with capitalism is that the net contribution to society by people who do not obviously "labor" (e.g. "capitalists") is often difficult or impossible to judge, except in retrospect. These score cards become more and more relevant when economic times are hard.

Culture and Society

Culture

Cultures form within groups of all sizes. Culture is similar to language, to which it is related. It emerges in a place when a group of people interact with

each other over a span of time. It consists of the shared subconscious attitudes and beliefs that make most intragroup behavior habitual, which allows people to anticipate how others will behave and think. It greatly lowers the stress of repeated close interactions. Although individuals may not like some of the cultural norms, most obey them because it makes life easier for themselves and others.

If one group of people starts limiting their interactions with people in another group then, like language, a culture can slowly split into fragments similar to "dialects" or "accents". Examples of this are: rural vs. city, different corporations.

Like language, culture cannot be quickly changed by a manifesto or laws, but it can be quickly changed by such things as mass immigration, conquest or even a corporate buy-out. This is a common and constant occurrence throughout all of human history. Even without a catastrophe, a culture slowly evolves due to changing political, economic, or technical conditions within a group.

Race is often linked to large scale cultures because historically people at a certain time and place were usually of the same race. But there are multi-racial cultures and multi-cultural races. Culture is not the same as race.

Culture is the backdrop on which politics is played. Politics is shaped by such cultural norms as: how well people trust strangers, the general attitude towards corruption and bribes, respect for authority, or to what extent an individual should conform to the group.

People from different cultures living in the same place find it more of a chore to interact with those from a culture different from their own. This creates a tendency for people to avoid other people from another culture.

When most people feel secure economically, they easily coexist with people of other cultures, especially in the economic and other public realms. When there is a lot of economic insecurity in a society, people become anxious and readily accept solutions from confident sounding people, such as political leaders. Human nature is such that political leaders can easily gain followers and power by blaming people of another culture for problems. This is a common historical theme, and is playing out now all around the world.

Society

Society is a large group of people who share a common culture to some extent. Initially people in a society share a common language, government, and religion, as well as myths, stories, opinions. This works for small societies.

A society that pushes out people with unorthodox beliefs will necessarily be limited in size and diversity of thought. This limits the size and efficiency of such things as its economy, as well as the society's ability to cope with external changes and threats. Such a society is at a disadvantage compared to larger societies which harbor a wider diversity of thought and talent. This creates a

tendency for successful societies to grow. A society can grow by recognizing areas where divergent beliefs are not relevant to the functioning of its economy and its responses to changes or threats. A successful large society therefore tolerates such divergent opinions and beliefs. Another big advance in the size and power of a society comes when people realize that government can function even if people hold differing religious beliefs.

A large successful society necessarily develops a stratification of cultures. At the top level, the society no longer embraces a common religion, or even language. The top level is concerned with such things as a common defense, economic system, and body of laws. This top level culture is characterized by more abstract, secular beliefs relevant to governance. This common abstract culture is accepted by a large majority of a successful society's members.

Some example tenets of this abstract culture are:

- Government rule is based on a body of laws, not on the arbitrary edicts of any government office.
- There are fundamental rules that restrict what actions and laws any government can take or make. These restrictions grant the individual freedom from government interference in many areas of life.
- All laws are applicable to all individuals equally regardless of their wealth, culture, or memberships in various groups or institutions. Anything else is perceived as unfair.
- A person is not guilty of the sins or crimes of their parents or ancestors.
- An individual can profess any religion.
- A government may not detain an individual without a public accusation of some infraction of a law. Such accusations are resolved by a public trial.
- An individual's thoughts and communications may not be suppressed by government, except in very narrow criminal contexts.

Many smaller traditional sub-cultures still exist within this abstract framework, but they all subordinate themselves to it. This arrangement allows a society to grow very large.

A very large society can develop and maintain such things as a reliable power grid, water and food distribution networks, sophisticated communication networks, advanced manufacturing and distribution supply chains, as well as a large and powerful defense force. All of this enables tremendous prosperity, opportunity, and security for hundreds of millions of people. Unfortunately, if peaceful and prosperous conditions extend over a long period of time, human nature causes these large benefits to be taken for granted and somewhat devalued.

Institutions

An institution is a group that is devoted to a purpose or goal. Examples of purposes are: security from nature or other people, security of food supply, promotion of an enterprise, gathering and preservation of knowledge, political action, proselytization, charity. etc. etc. An individual is typically a member of several institutions and deals with, and is subject to, many more. Most people find meaning in their lives by being members of, and contributing to the prosperity of, institutions.

In most institutions people join voluntarily, but people can be born into an institution (e.g. family, tribe, and nation). In a very few institutions, members can be conscripted (e.g. Army). An institution can be as small as a homeowner's association, or as large as a national government. It can be as organized as an army, or as disorganized as a small book review club that meets monthly.

The members of an institution are bound together by a shared belief that the institution's goal or purpose is worthy. Members may have varying levels of support for the goal, but all will at least accept it and support it to outsiders. An institution may dissolve or split if its members diverge in their beliefs regarding the institution's purpose. An institution is concerned with ways and means to achieve its goals. This may entail the use of such things as force, economic activity, the creation, gathering, and preservation of knowledge and technology, or the creation and dissemination of news, ideas, opinions, and beliefs.

In large institutions it is inevitable that members will have opinions and beliefs on many topics that are not directly concerned with the institution's business. In this case it is important that members tolerate such opinions and beliefs held by each other. Toleration allows institutions to grow in size by including members with many different opinions and beliefs. The increased benefits of the larger diversity and group size towards achieving the goals make it worthwhile for members to agree to disagree on topics irrelevant to achieving the goals. In the absence of this toleration, factions will form, which will weaken an institution's effectiveness. Larger institutions place constraints and obligations on their members by means of reporting structures, rules, and expectations.

Every institution has some form of culture. The culture defines the norms of: language; personal behavior; attitudes towards the shared goals; attitudes towards the rules; the level of loyalty expected towards the institution; and the level of tolerance expected towards other members. An institution's culture is heavily influenced by the character, opinions, and beliefs of its prominent individuals.

Institutional and Societal Sclerosis

Successful institutions of any sort have a life-cycle much like successful humans. They are created and grow. The opportunity for this is often due to changes in the technical, economic, cultural, or political environment. As an institution grows it learns, adapts and exploits these new environments. It becomes more and more competent and powerful. It takes on more responsibilities, and contributes more to society. After a certain point, an institution becomes less and less able to adapt and be effective as the environment in which it operates continues to change.

This is largely due to the fact that members of an institution begin to lose the optimistic perspective and flexibility that enables the institution's initial growth and development. Members start taking a more short term procedural perspective on their position within the institution. They begin to think of their role in the institution as primarily a means of personal livelihood and satisfaction. They take more interest in their own personal prosperity and less interest in their role in the long term health of the institution. This process accelerates as the initial members leave the institution and new people unfamiliar with its history take over.

A successful society itself is subject to this sclerosis. The citizens and institutions in such a society become more vested in their role in the society as purely a means to their own livelihood and satisfaction, and less concerned about the long term health of the society itself. Especially if that means any short term costs to them personally.

Personal Power

A person's political power resides in their ability to get other people to act on their behalf. This ability is rooted in favors. If one person is able to do very useful favors for another, then that second person owes the first person a favor in return. The favor may not be immediately called in, and thus banked. The more favors a person has banked, the more power they have, and thus the more useful favors they in turn can do for others. Their favor bank will thus grow larger and larger in a cycle. Very powerful people have many other powerful people under personal obligation. A useful word for those people who are under a large personal obligation is "minion". Note that threats and fear can play a role similar to favor in the above scenarios.

Power and wealth are correlated. Wealth is useful, but not necessary, in starting the accumulation of personal power. Contrariwise, a person with political power can easily use it to obtain wealth. Of course another route to political power is to have enough wealth to simply pay others to do what you want. In some situations this is technically illegal (e.g. bribes), but that has never stopped the practice.

Societal Governance

An early common form of governance was the armed gang. A gang used force to take, control, and defend an area of land and all people in it. The gang leader effectively owned all of the land and all of the people by right of might. The gang was a type of institution, and everyone else was a "subject". As a gang took over larger and larger areas, the leader became a king, the gang an army. The king turned sections of the land over to their most trusted minions, who became dukes with armies of their own. The king and dukes needed wealth to maintain their armies, so they took it from their subjects as a tax. Successful kings and dukes learned to treat their subjects well and help them succeed, so that the tax take, and pool of army conscripts, was reliable and large. The subjects of such a kingdom received protection from foreigners and justice for any disputes with their neighbors.

There was often a common alliance between the religious powers and the king. The priests said that God gave the king the right to rule, and the king gave the priests protection and influence over the people. These early forms of governance normalized a society based on aristocrats, who owned the means of production (land), and commoners who were slaves, serfs, or tenant farmers. As long as the king, dukes, and priests provided security and were fair in their rule and dispensation of justice, the subject people were usually content.

As a king or duke's domains grew, they needed assistance governing beyond what an army could provide. At first, a king or duke was assisted by their family and household retainers. This arrangement quickly grew to become an institution called "the court", controlled by the king.

Institutional Governance

The word "organization" is more apt when discussing the internal workings of an institution. Both words are used in what follows.

Any organization needs some sort of structure in order to make effective use of its members. Large organizations need a more elaborate structure. Typically the leaders comprise only a small portion of all members. These leaders manage the organization. That is, they decide on the work to be done, how it should be done, who should do it, and what rules and obligations apply to all members. If the organization is large enough, a hierarchy of paid cadre must be employed to assist in managing the work of others under the direction of the leadership. In any case the number of leaders and managers is small compared to the total number of members.

If the organization is small enough, one person can lead it. Often the choice of leader is obvious (e.g. the king, the owner of the business, or a benefactor of the institution), but if not, an election can decide. This leader typically has a number of formal or informal advisors and agents. These are usually friends or minions who either give advice to the leader, or act as their agent to manage

others in carrying out the needed work. Many small institutions work this way. Some very large institutions, especially privately held businesses and some states also work this way. This type of leader is called an autocrat.

Governance is done by the autocrat (or their minions) issuing edicts that define what people must, can, and must not do. Edicts are enforced by agents of the autocrat. There is nothing to hinder the autocrat from enforcing edicts in arbitrary, inconsistent ways based on a specific situation or the specific people involved.

In some larger organizations it is difficult for any one person to amass enough minions to manage all aspects of the institution effectively. In this case a small group of peers with a complementary set of expertise and political power can often succeed. These are called oligarchs. If the oligarchs can agree on spheres of influence, and agree to support each other, they can more effectively lead a very large organization in a manner similar to an autocrat.

Even given these simple modes of governance, the relationships among all of the leaders, minions, hired managers, and regular members of an institution can evolve into a complex web of friendships, obligations, loyalties, plots, and feuds that complicate the institution's functionality.

Power to the People

If an institution has power over a large number of people who are not members, these subjects often insist on a more sophisticated form of government to insure that the institution's power is exercised in a congenial way. Historically, this insistence almost always entailed bloody conflict, as the institution's leaders had a large vested interest in the old ways, and a large web of minions who owed their fealty and livelihoods to the leaders personally.

One sophisticated governing technique is democracy. In this case all people with high enough status (electorate) jointly share top responsibility and authority. Although a final decision is in the hands of the electorate, it is common for the electorate to appoint a few people to various committees to make recommendations. This form of governance is vulnerable to demagogues, and does not work very well. Because of the normal friend / favors / minion dynamic still operating among the electorate, democracy is very prone to devolve into an oligarchy or autocracy. (See: ancient history)

A more sophisticated form of democracy is a republic. In a republic the electorate selects individuals to three categories of office: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Top authority is dispersed so that each office has limited responsibility and authority, as defined by a fundamental legal document (called a constitution). This constitution tries to arrange the role of each office to limit the likelihood of any office holder amassing too much power.

Governance is done by the promulgation of laws by the legislative office, and enforcement of those laws by the executive office. These laws delineate what all

people must, can, and must not do. The constitution places constraints on what types of laws can be enacted, and on how the laws are enforced. One important constraint on law enforcement is that laws must be applied to all individuals on an equal basis regardless of any group or institution they may be a member of.

The office holders of a republic must debate and compromise with each other in public to make laws and take important decisions. The executive's actions and the legislature's laws are a source of constant contention. The judicial office acts to resolve these disputes according to the constitution. The judicial office also settles ordinary disputes among the electorate according to the laws.

This complexity gives rise to a class of institutions called political parties. These political parties have the goal of having their members elected to, or appointed to, as many offices of the republic as they can. Once in office they govern according to the dictates of their party. The party simplifies debate and compromise by attracting like minded people who already agree on many fundamental issues. The result of this is that most leaders in the governing organization have conflicting loyalties: to the electorate, and to their political party.

The normal friend / favors / minion dynamic still operates among the office holders, political parties, and the electorate. Although republics are much less vulnerable to demagogues and would-be autocrats, the tendency is still there, and the electorate must be willing to recognize and counter it.

Demands on the Electorate

To be effective, office holders must be able to understand the conflicting loyalties and personal obligations of their peers. They must have the wisdom to know when and how to compromise with people who have different beliefs and agendas.

Political parties are typically not governed by complex rules. By their nature their members all have similar beliefs on many topics. This can result in their leadership being populated by people holding more extreme views. This environment makes parties more vulnerable to oligarchic or autocratic rule. Almost all candidates for office in a republic belong to one of a very few political parties.

For a republic to function well, its electorate must understand that they are choosing members of a party to be their representative. They must not only vet the candidate as a person, they must vet the party itself. The electorate must carefully consider a candidate's loyalty to the party versus their loyalty to the republic. If this is not done, the offices of government are easily captured by extremists more loyal to their party than to the electorate.

The simple forms of government do not require much in the way of input from the governed. There are few individuals involved in making decisions, and their

relationships often do not allow for a serious peer to peer discussion. The range of solutions to the problems of state is limited to those capabilities, morals, and goals of the oligarchs and their personal counselors.

Republics on the other hand place a premium on persuasion, negotiation, and compromise. By their nature all important decisions must be agreed to (or at least tolerated by) a large number of people. If allowed to function as intended, the mechanisms of a republic invariably result in better solutions to the inevitable problems of state. For the republic to function as intended, the electorate must make the effort to select representatives of good will and character who can be effective in such an environment.

Pathologies

A republic is a complex institution, and so liable to break down in several ways.

A political party can develop a culture that demands its members be more loyal to it than to the republic. If a sufficient number of government offices of the right sort are occupied by members of such a party, then that party becomes the effective government. The party members can then work in concert using their government offices to change the laws and rules enough so that their party gains effective control over all aspects of the republic. Such a party wields the power of the state, and either is already, or soon becomes an autocracy or oligarchy. All legal forms and offices of the republic remain, but the real government is an autocratic political party. Once this happens, there is no going back, because the full power of the state can be used to intimidate or remove those individuals who advocate for any change.

A less catastrophic, but more common failure of government is for an office holder to be more loyal to themselves and their friends than to the office. They use the office to amass power and wealth for themselves and their friends.

The only counters to these pathologies can come from the electorate. They must evaluate and take into account the personal character of all candidates. They must be on guard to detect and counter emotional demagogic appeals to fear and hate targeted at the public, as well as detect and punish malfeasance among their representatives in office. This can sometimes demand personal commitment and courage. A common touchstone for the electorate is to never elect a person of bad character to any office. Unfortunately, when most needed, there often is no such candidate on offer.

Change

The world's environment is always changing. Technology is always changing. People are always migrating. The people who make up an institution are always changing. Changes like these create pressures that in turn act to change such social things as culture, the economy, occupations, power hierarchies, and politics. Formerly abundant resources can become scarce. Some forms of

wealth can be devalued. Occupational skills can become obsolete. A person's place in society can be lost.

People resist all change somewhat, even beneficial change, because it forces them to adapt new habits, thoughts, and opinions. People resist some changes strongly if it places them, or one of their groups, at a disadvantage economically or socially.

Change can be sudden and large. In this case people tend to pull together and adapt. This type of change is a crisis that brings out the best in people. The crisis requires immediate action, which clarifies and limits the debate on ways and means.

Change can be slow and incremental. In this case people tend to resist the pressures that the change places on society. This can cause cultural and political divisiveness because with no crisis, the small pressures over long timeframes allow for extended debate over what is really happening and what to do about it.

Sometimes an analysis of a slow change can reveal its timeframe and eventual scope. In this case a plan can be formulated to mitigate and adapt to the change. Such a plan is often difficult for a society to agree on and implement because the costs of the plan are immediate and apply to specific people, while the payoff applies to unknown people in an uncertain future.

It is human nature to resist change unless there is a crisis. This principle will be invoked in these essays as the *Crisis Doctrine*.

Economics

People have an innate notion of ownership. If someone works to produce or find something useful, then they own it. Everyone has a notion of a thing's value based on how useful or pretty it is, or how difficult it is to make or find. People also have the concept of a fair trade, and the right to refuse to trade unless both parties agree that the terms are acceptable. Everyone understands what loans and gifts are, and that they create an obligation that needs to be paid back, or reciprocated in the future. Some people are willing to take risks that most do not want to take. Some people are more ambitious than others. If an ambitious risk taker successfully ventures to make a new type of tool, or travels far away to find exotic goods, then most people think a profit is a fair result. Up to a point. The basic foundations of Capitalism are innate within everyone.

Trading causes everyone's standard of living to rise. Some people with useful talents can devote all of their time making high quality tools which farmers or hunters can then use to increase their yields. If they trade those tools for food, all are better off. Or a merchant from far away can trade exotic goods which they exchange for local things.

Government has been involved in this economic activity from the beginning. The private free market was everywhere and always a creature of government. A private free market cannot exist without laws against (among other things) theft, fraud, and breach of contract (including debt repayment). Initially, the economy was based almost entirely on agriculture. Aristocrats owned all of the land, wildlife on the land, and to some extent the labor of the people living on the land. This was justified by the right of might, or the divine right of kings.

As an economy grew to incorporate more merchants and manufacturing, the government retained control by granting patents and licenses to allow the trade, and tax the profits. In some countries the merchant class grew wealthy enough to own means of production as valuable as land. This made them powerful enough to influence the government of these countries to place the merchant class on an equal legal footing with the old aristocracy. A legal tradition covering such matters as: ownership of the means of production, trade, manufacturing, and limited liability corporations grew in the realm. This allowed the economic activity in these countries to expand and grow even more complex.

Initially all economic activity was just a series of private transactions between consenting individuals. Later, institutions based on partnerships were formed to conduct even larger and complex ventures extending beyond the lifetime of any one person. Money evolved to both facilitate trade, and store wealth for longer periods of time. Some successful entrepreneurs became more and more wealthy, and were able to hire employees who were paid a wage. Banks were invented to aggregate idle wealth and loan it out to yet more entrepreneurs (for a fee). This drastically boosted industry and commerce because it allowed ambitious people with an idea but no money to access the idle cash of people with money but no ideas. Some banks became large enough to lend money to kings and other aristocrats. Kings of these countries became more beholden to banks and manufacturers than to the old aristocrats who were limited by their agricultural based wealth.

As the economy became even larger and more complex, how the economy functioned became more and more important to the lives of all people. The richest business tycoons could influence government to the point they could become shadow oligarchs. This pushed the government into the economic arena to protect the interests of the tycoons.

Economics and Government

As mentioned above capitalism is innate in human nature. But there is a problem: Capitalism in its pure form is cruel, and creates large disparities in the wealth of members of any society. Because of human nature, capitalism and the free market operates like the weather. There are slow cycles of good and bad economic times punctuated by sudden severe storms. Technological progress is like global warming in that it amplifies the weather cycles, and intensifies the storms.

One example of this is the vulnerability of the growing class of people who became paid employees of a business venture. Capitalism treats such people as part of a "labor market". The free market allows the forces of supply and demand to determine wage levels irrespective of the cost of living. This is often a good wage, if the business is new, and the economic weather is calm. Inevitably, the weather turns, or the business attracts competitors. Then even large well-run businesses must layoff many of their workers. These layoffs allow the owners of the business to muddle through fairly well off. Most laid off workers are unable to find employment elsewhere due to the same market forces that squeezed the business in the first place. These "factors of production" cannot be melted down and re-cast into the latest tool. They are people with dependents to provide for. Capitalism blithely says: Learn a new skill, or move to where the weather is better. Human nature is such that this is impossible for most people.

In good economic weather people are satisfied with their portion and do not excessively envy the aristocrats. In economic bad times the difficulty in earning a living and the wealth disparity between most people and the new aristocrats generates dissatisfaction and anger. This makes it a problem for the government. In order to insure a well functioning society, political policy must insure a level of power and living standards for labor, while at the same time not interfere with a business owner's ability to innovate.

Communism

Some popular revolutions brought in governments *of the people* that decided that capitalism was inherently a bad system. These governments tried to implement a new economic system (socialism or communism) to address capitalism's inherent flaws. All working people would jointly own the capital (i.e. means of production). The catchy slogan was: *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs*. The institution selected to organize the economy along these lines was the state itself. The state was nominally a republic, and nominally beholden to all people equally.

This system was tried on a large scale several times, and it always failed in the same way. The wealth and power of an entire economy is under the control of one institution, which has the power of the state at its command. This leads to corruption on a large scale. In all cases the nominal form of a republic is kept, but the actual power is vested in a single individual and his network of personally loyal minions. Blood is always shed to achieve this state of affairs. The limited diversity of thought in command of the economy (i.e. the autocrat and their minions) results in inferior economic outcomes.

The slogan *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs* sounds good, but goes against the grain of all of human nature. Some people want to work harder to obtain more than their neighbors. Neighbors disagree on their various levels of need. Thriving entrepreneurial black markets always spring up to grease the rusty gears of the official economy. Most people lie

about their opinions on state or economic matters. Another slogan from inside a communist economy is: *They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work.*

Communism is best practiced on a very, very small scale, viz., a marriage.

Modern Capitalism

Other revolutions brought in governments *of the people* that decided that capitalism would be just fine if a few tweaks were made. Laws were passed that changed some of the nature of capitalism.

Governments have intervened to mitigate some of the more excessive burdens that capitalism places on the individuals in the "labor market". Governments have intervened to limit the power of any one private business from becoming too large a factor in the economy. Governments have intervened in private free markets in order to enhance the power of the state by granting monopolies, land, and funding to private businesses. These modifications to a simple free-market economy create many complex intended and un-intended consequences. Needless to say these interventions are the source of contentious debate. There is currently no agreed on theory to guide a government in these matters.

For an average working class or lower class citizen, the readily apparent problems of capitalism are so apparent, the benefits of free enterprise so taken for granted, and the slogans of socialism so sweet, that governments based on capitalism are always worried about the working class vote. This is one threat that politicians can hold over the head of the tycoons.

Thoughts on facts, theories, ideologies and debate

Any society or institution requires many people with differing opinions to agree with, or at least accept, the actions to be taken. Effective persuasion, debate, and compromise are critical to this end. Effective persuasion depends on an ability to understand and communicate facts, theories, belief, and truth. These are often incorporated into pre-packaged ideologies, opinions, and beliefs by opinion leaders in order to reach the large majority of people who are not experts, and have other things to do. It is important to understand how this is done.

Rational Thought

An individual's rational thoughts about a topic are often shaped by their emotions. Fortunately this can be mitigated by communicating with another individual who has different emotions regarding that topic. If people make a serious effort to understand each other's reasoning, they can often arrive at a better understanding of that topic. A similar mechanism works for facts. People naturally look for facts to explain causes and effects. Their emotions, experience, and prior beliefs shape what they consider to be fact. If people who believe in different facts communicate with each other, they can sometimes arrive at a common set of facts to believe in.

Writing

An individual's memory is unreliable, often without the person even realizing it. Communication with others is one way to correct and strengthen a person's memories. Writing is an even more reliable way to remember thoughts and group agreements. Only one trusted group member need be able to write, and read. That person inevitably gains a lot of power inside and outside a group, as others are constantly asking for an account of past debates and agreements.

Writing serves an even more important role in the realm of rational thought and persuasion. The act of writing is painstaking because it requires a close look at the logic and rationality of what is being communicated. Writing crystallizes thoughts, makes them easier to understand, and more effective tools of persuasion. This further enhances the power of the literate.

Facts, Theories, Belief, and Truth

These words are often used, but they each have very different meanings in different realms of thought. This leads to confusion when using them to persuade another person.

Facts

There are facts in many different realms of thought and study. The facts in each realm differ in their strength or hardness. Hard facts are absolutely true. They are couched in precise language, and there is no scope for flexibility about the meaning of these facts. If even a small part of such a fact is found to be false, then the entire fact is tainted, and its value is limited. Soft facts may be couched in somewhat flexible language. If a small part of this type of fact is found to be false, the other parts of the fact are still close enough to true as to be still useful.

Hard Facts

In the mathematical realm facts are proven theorems. Theorems are proven using other already proven theorems and an agreed process of logic. Once proven, a mathematical fact will always be a fact. Each mathematical fact comes with a pedigree (the proof) that anyone can look at.

The simplest first theorems are based on un-defined terms and axioms. Axioms are facts that are just assumed to be true without proof by a community of mathematicians. The undefined terms and axioms about them are selected so that they are self consistent and yield a rich body of theorems. A proof explicitly or implicitly states the axioms and logical process it assumes to be true. People who disagree about what the axioms are, or the process of logic used, are welcome to do so.

Mathematical theorems are the hardest of all types of facts. They are very sharp and brittle; if one counter example is found, then something was wrong with the proof, the entire theorem is false and dropped.

Mathematical facts and theorems have no direct relation to the real world. No one knows why, but they just so happen to be very useful in the realm of science and engineering, which does deal with the real world.

In the scientific realm, facts are the results of speculations tested by experiments. Each one comes with a pedigree, namely the scientific write-up of the experiment. This write-up contains all of the assumptions made during the experiment, so that anyone else could reproduce the experiment and observe the same outcome.

Scientific facts are woven into theories and laws. These all come with their own pedigree, namely the journal article that describes them and the experiments that support them. No scientific fact, theory, or law can ever be proven true in the mathematical sense, but they can definitely be proven false by some new experiment.

Scientific theories are not as brittle as mathematical theorems. They often have some small flexibility. This is because they have already been used successfully in many real world situations. An example of this is how general relativity

theory replaced Newton's gravity theory. Although Newton's theory was shown to be wrong, it is still used to plot rocket trajectories to the planets. (Because it is much easier to calculate with, and gives results that are good enough for the task at hand). But it is not used in the GPS location system. (Because it is not accurate enough for that purpose).

Scientific facts are objective. If there is a difference of opinion, it is possible to see why, and see what further experiments would choose between them. Despite lack of proof, scientific facts and theories have an excellent record in the real world. Engineering based on science has created vast material wealth and power, and enabled the rise in the standard of living beyond the imagination of people 400 years ago.

Soft Facts

The realms of economics and politics are much much larger than science or mathematics. Larger in the sense of many more unrelated actors each with a larger scope of interaction. In these realms facts cannot be based on experiments, only observations about current and historical events. Historical events cannot be repeated like a scientific experiment, so these types of facts cannot be easily checked. Due to the complexity of social interactions, facts in these realms are much more contingent on the assumptions and biases of the observer.

In these realms a fact's pedigree is a collection of historical records or essays describing observations made in differing circumstances. These records and essays should contain the assumptions and conditions that pertain to the observation, but often do not. Due to the complexity of the subject, there are always unstated assumptions and biases. Facts in these realms are more or less subjective. There can be challenges to assumptions and biases stated or unstated. If there is a difference of opinion, it is usually not possible to perform an experiment to decide the issue.

There are also theories in the economic realm. These attempt to organize economic facts, explain the past, and make economic predictions. Like scientific theories they cannot be proved, but due to their softness they are also harder to refute.

The inability to perform experiments to check out facts and the difficulty in refuting theories gives rise to a phenomenon unique to the non scientific realms called the big lie. This is an assertion presented as an historical or economic fact which is in reality just a fiction, sometimes created with a fictitious pedigree in bad faith to bolster an otherwise weak economic or political theory.

In the religious realm facts are based entirely on belief. Their pedigree comes from oral or written stories, and descriptions of them that are taken on faith alone. They do not operate in the realm of any logic, and may or may not be self

consistent. People who share a faith in the same beliefs and stories have more trust in each other, and can more easily build large institutions together.

Proponents of a religion may not always realize that ultimately many of their facts and theories are based on faith alone. They often attempt to use such facts and theories in debates and arguments with people who do not share the same beliefs. This often causes trouble. People sometimes use the word "religion" for a system of beliefs based on faith alone.

Ideology

People have a strong desire to understand things no matter how complex they are. To this end mathematical and scientific facts and theories are often popularized by using analogies and a simplified formulation. In most cases the audience realizes that things have been simplified, and are content with the level of understanding they get from a popularization.

The same desire to comprehend complex economic and political theories causes the formation of ideologies. Because the assumptions, facts and theories in these realms are softer than those in the scientific realm, they can be sifted or slightly bent to form an ideology that appears more consistent than its foundations really support. An ideology has the same form as a popularization of a scientific theory. It is a simpler version of some economic or political system that explains a set of facts. Like a scientific theory, it is often used to predict the future and plan actions.

Since the realm of economics and politics is much, much larger and more complex than the scientific, any ideology cannot interact with the social realm as simply as a scientific theory acts within the physical world. This has several consequences.

First, an ideology cannot be applicable to too broad a class of situations. There are too many variables, and the cause and effect linkages are too complex.

Second, there is an inherent limit to how detailed and complex an ideology can become. While complex orbital mechanics can be used to hit Pluto from Earth, the popularization can't. Likewise the ideology of "laissez faire capitalism" cannot be used to run an economy, because its foundations are not as strong as a scientific theory.

People who believe that a very detailed ideology can be used to plan economic or political action are dangerous to the extent they are un-willing to look at unintended consequences. Ideologies are nice as a starting point, but there needs to be a constant re-evaluation and a need to constantly alter the rules. Thus ideology is not bad per-se, but overly simple or overly detailed and complex ideologies are suspect.

Opinions and Belief

Most of the time people do not think about economics or politics at all. Economics or politics only comes up when a group of people need to decide on some collective action. Even when a decision is needed, many people do not have an opinion, do not participate, and just accept the decision reached by others. So political decisions are based on the opinions and ideologies of the minority of people who care.

Where do these opinions come from? People form opinions based on the facts and theories that they believe to be true. Where do they get these facts and theories? The short answer is other people.

If you believe that people first arrived in North America 15,000 years ago, you are trusting that some scientist who knew how to do carbon dating looked at the correct old bones and correctly figured out that date. You also believe the theory of carbon dating because reputable scientists say it is true.

In the economic, political, and religious realms many opinions and ideologies are transmitted as a part of growing up. Later on most people are strongly motivated to stick with their opinions and ideologies because changing them is a lot of work. Their opinions are based on beliefs and stories shared with their family and friends. Changing opinions might entail changing friends. Most people do not have the time, interest, or courage to sift through the various conflicting opinions. A person's ideology or opinions can most easily be changed by an appeal to emotions: fear and hate are big ones, but also others like compassion and love.

Opinion Leaders

What motivates someone to be an opinion leader? In mathematics and science where there are fewer followers and all facts and theories can be evaluated by more people, leaders arise because they are especially competent or articulate. Ambition or ego play a role, factors such as charisma or likeability help, but a leader in these realms must be competent and articulate. Leaders in these realms can become famous, a handful can become immortal, but there is not much wealth or power to be had.

In economics and politics there are many followers, facts and ideologies are soft and difficult to evaluate. This downplays the role of competence and opens up the possibility of a bias or agenda. Telling a good myth or story in poetic language is a big advantage. Ambition, ego, charisma, and likeability play large roles. Being able to discern what people want to believe helps a lot. Beyond fame and wealth, an opinion leader in these realms can also obtain actual power.

Marketing the Opinions

The venues for packaged opinions and ideologies are limited. There are only so many newspapers, only so many TV channels, so many books. Even as the quantity of these venues expands, there are only so many hours in the day to devote to the consumption of political opinions. To the extent that people consume political opinions they already agree with, they are even less likely to engage in critical thinking about them.

Given all of this, many opinion leaders have an incentive to hew to the more popular ideas and beliefs. There is also an incentive to only tell the more popular stories. The fringe ideas and complex stories find a smaller audience. As with other mass market phenomena, there are fashions and trends. Marketing an idea against the trend is difficult.

This is how the standard political categories of "Left", "Right", "Liberal", "Progressive", and "Conservative" came to be filled out with detailed opinions on all issues. All of the particular opinions of a few opinion leaders become the basis on which opinions are bound up with which categories. The set of beliefs of these opinion leaders are amplified and become the set of beliefs for many others.

The rise of the internet expands the market for fringe ideas the way cable TV opened the market for 200 stations. Most people still cannot be bothered. What has changed is an expansion in the number of viable fringe groups that can thrive, due to a contraction in the size of the self sustaining critical mass necessary to support a media outlet. A web page or podcast is so much cheaper than a printing press or TV studio, and every copy is free.

Stories and Poetry

Mathematical theorems and scientific theories are not about people, and so do not lend themselves to the creation of stories and myths. There are stories about the scientists who discovered the facts and created the theories, but not about the theories themselves.

Economic and political ideologies are about people and so can be transmitted to a large audience by means of a myth, story, poetry, or song. Stories are even simpler than ideologies, and are much easier to comprehend and remember. Poetry or song adds an emotional component that makes the story and underlying belief system vivid. Indeed in the religious realm often the myth or story came first and the theories came later. Examples of ideologies wrapped in poetry include:

Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness

From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

Often a story is chosen based on how it portrays one appealing fact or ideology. Because the story is self-consistent, there is then a strong tendency to accept the entire combination of facts, assumptions, and ideologies it contains.

Debates, Arguments, and Clashes

There is very little heated argument in the realm of mathematics. Every once in a century a new axiom is invented. There is a genteel debate about the axiom of choice. Otherwise, the facts and theorems are so inflexible there is not much room for opinion or disparate beliefs.

In science the difficulty in performing some experiments allows for some heated arguments and diverging opinions, at least for a while. Sooner or later the experiments in question (or different relevant experiments) become easier to do, and the arguments are resolved. There are many entertaining stories of a scientist who is scorned and outcast for unpopular beliefs that are later proven correct by the advance of experimental technology.

The "ad hominem" argument is widely derided as an invalid debate technique. This is especially true in the mathematical and scientific realms. An argument against a theory or belief based on an ad hominem attack on its creator or advocate is pointless. People who use such arguments discredit themselves, because with some work it is possible for any qualified person to evaluate objective facts. Even so, with highly packaged and simplified scientific arguments pitched to the mass market it is often valid to question who has paid for the advocate.

Economics, politics, and religion are different. Alternative Facts are a possibility in these realms due to differences in beliefs based on faith in different ideologies. There can be no real agreements reached in an argument about issues that cut across differing incompatible ideologies. It ultimately boils down to incompatible beliefs. There can be shouting matches however. These are sometimes staged because of their partisan entertainment value. Sort of like a rowdy sporting event where it all comes down to arguing about the referee's calls.

Political ideologies rest on the evaluation of assumptions and the selection of the facts that go into them. This involves judgments on the part of the creators and proponents of an ideology. An advocate of an ideology selects from facts and theories based on their personal beliefs and faith. There is no easy appeal to scientific type facts. An ad hominem attack on the creator or advocate of an ideology may be very relevant. The motives of these opinion leaders matter a great deal.

A society of people where a large majority all hold similar beliefs can use debate and argument to settle almost all political issues. A society of people who hold different contradictory beliefs can function well in many circumstances if some of the following conditions are met:

People who differ in beliefs not directly relevant to the issue at hand adopt a "don't ask, don't tell" attitude regarding those off-topic beliefs.

People who differ in beliefs that are directly relevant to the issue at hand adopt a willingness to compromise and bargain to obtain an unrelated valuable goal, or for the sake of a beloved institution.

A threat from outside the society provokes a defense reaction common to all members of it.

Sometimes one faction of society pushes to resolve some large issue which cuts across the different beliefs within a society (e.g. abolition). If this type of issue cannot be resolved by compromise, the electorate must realize such a situation poses an existential threat to the society, if not to the individuals.

Tolerance and Intolerance

A good way to approach very difficult negotiations is to realize that it often comes down to faith, belief, and ideology. The fundamental issue is what people believe to be true. Alternative Facts is not an absurdity. People get their facts from places they believe to deal in truth. Even science is never 100% sure about many things, and is based on faith in an underlying Reality that is the same everywhere.

It is hard not to judge someone that you cannot argue with logically because they believe alternative facts. It is hard not to judge someone where you can plainly see they hold different moral views.

In earlier times we either did not know the details of another person's faith, beliefs or morals; or their behavior allowed us to love or like them anyway. This allowed most folks to be civil in public affairs. Now we have the internet, and we know for a fact we are being judged. We live in a time of demagogues and their willing followers. The best way to look at these times is to think of the crusades, reformation, and religious wars of antiquity and the middle ages. The lesson from that exercise is: toleration.

The best way for a society to function with people of conflicting beliefs and ideologies is for a mixture of tolerance and intolerance.

- Do not tolerate any attempt to prevent ideas being articulated and heard. One is not obligated to listen or agree, but one must allow a speaker to speak. It is often worthwhile to listen to opposing arguments if only to clarify the disagreement in your own mind, and thus be able to bolster your own arguments.
- Do not tolerate bad manners and incivility in the public sphere. Seek out those who are advocating for the same idea, but are civil.
- Do not tolerate demagogues who trade in hatred or fear. They are after personal power, and want to cram their beliefs down the throats of others.

- Tolerate compromise, even if you lose the negotiation. This bolsters the institution or society you are a part of and benefit from.
- Tolerate the beliefs and ideologies of others as long as they tolerate yours. Stop arguing about facts and ideology where beliefs differ.

The difficulty with this approach is that it must come from within each individual, not from any formal law or regulation. It must be a cultural norm. Cultural norms can be created by a process similar to advertizing, like the "Don't litter", or "No smoking" campaigns. (More stories, slogans, and songs).

Political agreements on issues that involve people with different beliefs can still work if limited to specific short term non ideological goals (e.g. fix the bridges and roads). Seek issues where each side can reach agreement with the other side to attain specific limited practical ends. Allow unrelated pork-barrel side deals to permit face-saving and ease compromise on large important issues. This works because opinions on limited practical issues are so diverse that even among people with different beliefs, it is often possible to find a majority support for such issues.

Pathologies

By its nature, a dialogue or discussion for the purpose of clarifying thoughts, or coming to a common understanding, requires that all participants be willing. No one should be required to speak, and no one should be required to listen to something they do not want to hear. The problems come when someone is prevented from speaking or someone is prevented from listening.

Dialogues and discussions are prone to some common pathologies. They arise when one participant in a discussion has a fundamentally different set of beliefs than their interlocutor. As already noted, no rational debate can resolve a difference of beliefs. Instead of tolerating the difference, a common human response is to escalate the difference into a conflict, or attempt to spread their beliefs to others. The following techniques are also innate human nature, and are a manifestation of intolerance.

Disruption of Speech

In the case of one on one, dialogue disruption is not a problem. If both participants are not willing to both speak and listen, then there is no dialogue to have.

In a public setting a person or group can prevent a discussion by rescinding an invitation to speak, or failing that, they can shout down a person they do not want anyone to hear. The problem is that other people do want to listen (because there was an invitation in the first place). In an attempt to make the disruption palatable, the targeted speaker is often described as a "bigot", "hateful", "racist", or "harmful". These words are the nuclear weapons of discourse. If this is done in a systematic way, a speaker can become ostracized.

The next two pathologies are more polite variants on this theme. Both of these involve a silent or implicit redefinition of common words, or a substitution of new words in place of common words which are then banned. The result is that often the debaters have no real understanding of what the other side is really talking about. That is not a problem because the practitioners of these techniques do not really care to understand another point of view.

Political Correctness

Besides shutting down debate, political correctness contains a component of proselytization.

It starts with a list of forbidden words. There are alternate words that need to be used instead. It extends to embody a set of forbidden ideas as well as a set of approved ideas and theories. The politically incorrect words are layered around the forbidden ideas like a trip wire, or mine field.

One can signal acceptance of the "proper" ideas by using the approved words. Sort of like a secret sign or handshake. Usage of a forbidden word causes the listener to attribute incorrect or un-sound ideas to the speaker. The speaker is then expected to feel shame, apologize, and switch to the approved word as a signal they accept the approved idea. For the speaker to claim that there was no bad intent, and to try to debate the idea in question just escalates the problem. It allows the listener to bring out the nuclear weapons of: "bigot", "racist", or "harmful".

Those ideas that are surrounded by a politically correct minefield are often the ones that are not universally accepted, and most in need of debate. Speech larded with politically correct phrases is an attempt to sell an ideology by assuming it is true. This technique frustrates those who want to debate. A big problem with political correctness is that so many people allow themselves to be intimidated by it. They will feel the shame, apologize, and drop the subject even though they do not agree.

Taking Offence

Claiming to be offended by an idea or set of words is another way to shut down a debate. The expectation is that a speaker must avoid giving offence at all costs, so they must not express certain ideas or opinions. Political correctness says: *You are a bad person if you believe this idea.* This behavior says: *You offend me, stop talking.* In a debate there is no right to not be offended. Being offended is sometimes necessary. Whether someone is offended by an idea or opinion offered in a debate has nothing to do with that idea's validity. Being offended is not an argument.

A variant on this technique is for the listener to claim that certain opinions cause them harm, or make them feel unsafe: *What this person said has harmed me,* or *What this person said makes me feel unsafe.* This escalation allows a

listener to harass a speaker with legal action by implying that they have been threatened.

Anger and Contempt

The consequences of these techniques are that debate over certain opinions and beliefs is shut down. This is different from a debate that resolves into a fundamental difference in beliefs. When these techniques are employed, there is no resolution. This frustrates those who want to explore where the fundamental difference really lies. This frustration leads to anger and contempt. So does imputing bad motives, moral failure, or perceived threats onto those who are good people acting in good faith.

Political thoughts

The following set of political opinions do not all fit into any political party's platform or policy. Some are liberal, some are conservative, and some are neither.

Free Speech

A person exists in two realms: public and private. The public realm consists of actions subject to the government's laws, regulations, and force, which should be directed impartially at all individuals regardless of their class or group identities. The private realm consists of a person's thoughts and opinions, which must not be subject to any government oversight.

In some circumstances the two realms are blurred, such as a person's writings and conversations that are read or heard by others. In general the government must not legislate, regulate, or take action against an individual communicating their thoughts to others. Although no one has an obligation to listen, the government (or people in general) should never prevent a person from speaking.

An exception to this is that some limited, specific forms of speech are properly prohibited, such as incitement to violence, libel, and falsely yelling "fire" in a crowded place. Perhaps the growing power of "social media" in society will justify other limited narrow exceptions to the free speech rule.

Getty Doctrine

There is an old saying attributed to J. Paul Getty:

If you owe the bank \$100 that's your problem. If you owe the bank \$100 million, that's the bank's problem.

The truth behind this saying is applicable to people, economics, and government. One example is: If a small number of people are having trouble thriving in the current economy, that is their problem. If a large enough number of people are having trouble thriving in the current economy, that is the government's problem. The question to ask is: What are the people in trouble supposed to realistically do? If the answer cannot be found in the realm of free markets and human nature, then government must take action of some form to maintain a healthy society

Another example is: If a private tech company creates a social media platform used by one percent of the population, then what happens on that platform is their problem. If a private company has a social media platform used by eighty percent of the population, then what happens on that platform could become detrimental for society. If this happens, government must take action of some form, regardless of free market considerations.

This is the basis by which any government *of the people and by the people* which is chartered to *ensure domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare*, may pass laws and regulate the economy. This principle will be invoked in these essays as the *Getty Doctrine*.

Diversity

A diversity of people in any population, especially a diversity of experience, education, and thought processes, results in better problem solving. Thus toleration of out-of-norm people or of outside influences is a good thing in general. There is a long standing "diversity" movement that started in the academic world that actively advocates for diversity everywhere. Unfortunately, it also advocates for equality of outcome. Also unfortunately, this movement looks at diversity only in terms of markers such as race, sex, and sexual orientation. These attributes sort individuals into a set of canonical groups. While the movement does value a diversity of "lived experience", it makes the false assumption that "lived experience" is equivalent to membership in the aforesaid canonical groups.

Statistics have long been used to calculate such things as where an individual or group of individuals stands in relation to the total population in terms of level of education, test scores, income, wealth, health, etc. etc. This statistical analysis can be done to show how one group of individuals stands in relation to another group of individuals. There are often significant differences in these group outcome levels. The reason for these differences is complex, and involves many different cause and effect factors in the realms of history, individual attitudes, individual talent, cultural norms, economics, and intergroup relations. These disparities in group statistical outcomes are useful in the analysis of the causes of these disparities.

Unfortunately the diversity movement attributes these disparities in group outcomes primarily to bad intergroup relations (e.g. bigotry and racism). This movement advocates for laws that mandate equal statistical outcomes regardless of any cause and effect analysis. One example of such a law is to mandate that a certain statistical outcome based on race and sex be achieved when hiring, firing, or admitting individuals into government or private institution. It is not explicitly stated, but is assumed that quotas will be enforced as part of the process.

Dividing people up into groups based on racial / sexual / victim status and then assigning them special considerations or privileges under the law is a recipe for disaster. A mandate that a person's opportunity at achieving some important goal be based on their group identity instead of on their personal qualifications cuts across the basic human notion that it is only fair that an individual's work, preparation, and competence should be rewarded. It strongly polarizes those people who are, and are not, assigned the privilege.

Equality

In order to take advantage of a diverse population, a culture must embrace equality of opportunity for all individuals. Measuring equality of opportunity is difficult. Some factors such as differences in children's support at home, or the extent of an adult's resources and responsibilities are measurable to some degree. Other factors, such as a person's talent, ambition, and personality exist only in their heads and cannot be directly measured. Statistics can sometimes infer a systemic bias, but cannot attribute it to any specific cause. Nevertheless, equality of opportunity can be enhanced by removing such impediments as can be identified and actually mitigated. A focus on the effective motivation and education of children is a good place to concentrate on.

In a diverse population there will be many different levels of performance in all fields of endeavor. Only a few will be the best, but the best succeed not only for themselves, but for everyone. The most popular and most performed music is created by a small minority of composers and musicians. Over the centuries only a small group of people invented the science, technology, and math that was then used by everyone else to create the modern prosperity. Everyone wants to watch and admire the best athletes play or the best musicians perform.

A society must not pursue equality of outcomes. The causes of inequality of outcomes include other factors than just a group's prevalence in the population or any individual's degree of opportunity. Some of these other factors are: the differences in people's interests and temperaments, the differences in an individual's ambition, or the differences in an individual's talent for a given career. These disparities will show up in the outcome statistics.

Any group of humans, by their very nature, can never achieve equal outcomes in anything. No law or regulation can achieve equal outcomes without resorting to some type of actions that everyone will think is unfair. Any law to achieve equal outcomes will necessarily result in a lower average level of outcome, and employ methods that have large harmful unintended consequences to a society. Insisting on equal outcomes throws away the benefits of diversity.

Anti-Western Movement

In the late 1960's a new movement arose to attack the "Great Books" college curriculum as irrelevant. Part of this movement was to disparage the culture of the West itself. The early complaints seemed to be about the lack of fairness in various western institutions and cultural norms. (Regarding slavery, race, treatment of women, colonialism, economic practices, etc.) Some people dismissed any ideas or norms that could be traced back to "dead white men" as bad. As if the dead men in question had created western culture, rather than just articulated something that had grown organically over thousands of years.

It seemed that the last 3000 years of western thought and culture had totally missed the point, and had nothing to say to modern man.

This anti-western movement entered the cultural war arena when its adherents started attacking cultural heroes such as Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Churchill to name a few. These historical figures are revered for certain of their deeds that exemplify our cultural aspirations. They are a way to teach these aspirations. The new movement attacks them for their other deeds or thoughts that run counter to modern norms, such as owning slaves, or racist remarks in their correspondence. It is childish to ostracize people from the past based on current cultural norms. One does not need to “make allowances” or “forgive” them. They were a product of their times. If they are to be judged, they must be judged by the standards of their own time, not ours. The people of the past were neither better, nor worse than we are as human beings. There is nothing to be gained by rejecting their good deeds based on their other thoughts or deeds that were endemic during their time.

This anti-western movement is incoherent, full of blatant racism and bigotry (towards western cultures and people), not to mention closed minded and ignorant. History reveals how truly awful things can get in any culture. The western world is a big improvement over most past cultures. Due to political and philosophical developments in governance, western societies have set a standard of individual freedom for all people of the world. Due to scientific and industrial developments, western societies have created a large improvement in aggregate material standards of living for all people of the world. On their own moral initiative, western societies long ago started actively correcting historical injustices regarding colonialism, treatment of Native Americans, slavery, and inequality. These corrections included such things as: Britain peacefully ending slavery and the slave trade in 1807, the American Civil War of the 1860's, and the American Civil Rights laws of the 1960's. Real progress continues to be made on all of these fronts. No one is guilty of the sins or crimes of their ancestors. Everyone is entitled to be proud of the accomplishments of their society and culture.

Culture Wars

Both of these (anti-Western, and diversity) movements have become well entrenched in the humanities departments of most colleges. Early on these movements were out of sight and out of mind for most people outside of academia. Inside academia things were different. Colleges started restricting student's speech and thus their thoughts. Some courses teaching the movements' ideologies have become required to graduate. Now, fifty years later, these students have achieved places of influence and power outside academia in education, business, and politics. These students now restrict their professor's speech.

Unfortunately there is no debate over these ideas. Rather than debate their new ideals (e.g. equality of outcomes, Western inferiority), these movements use political correctness or the weaponization of taking offence to end any debate by using accusations of bigotry, racism, or hate. Anyone who publicly disagrees with any of the new ideas is aggressively silenced or ostracized. To the vast majority of people who reject these ideas, it seems that their familiar western culture is being replaced by a new culture of racial rivalry, resentment, and victimology. The inability to debate, and the threat of ostracism, provokes feelings of contempt and anger.

This is the background on which current politics plays out. There is a cold war between two sub-cultures. One embraces the old western "enlightenment" ideas, the other does not. There currently seems to be no way to compromise on these ideals or beliefs.

Education

Any culture is only one generation from extinction may be a variation of a popular maxim, but it is true.

A culture perpetuates itself by teaching its beliefs to the next generation through training and education, and its mental habits by means of rituals or parenting. Children must be educated into their culture, both at home and in a school. This is done by first teaching myths and stories that exemplify the ideals and aspirations of their society. Later on it is necessary to teach the harsher aspects of our history, but always in the context of the even harsher aspects of ancient history in order to show the progress being made since those times.

Parents naturally teach their cultural beliefs with every interaction or conversation they have with their kids. Schools extend this cultural education with exposure to a wider range of people, topics, and ideas. Most parents are very concerned with what their children are learning at school and how it fits into their own idea of a proper set of cultural beliefs.

Public schools are run by administrators, school districts, teacher unions, and others. These are all institutions with their own internal politics and cultures. School teachers and administrators are all graduates of university level colleges of education, with the result that most public school institutional cultures are heavily influenced by the anti-western and diversity movements discussed previously. Because public schools are an effective place to teach culture to the next generation, the teaching and administrative staff of public (and even some private) schools are often the focus of those who want cultural change in the wider society.

If parents do not like the way culture and politics are being taught at their children's school, they must try to change it. One way to do this for parents to send their children to a private school where they agree with what is being

taught. Most parents cannot afford this, and so must send their kids to public schools run by the government. This makes any disagreement about what is being taught at public schools into a political issue. Parents have a right to determine what ideologies and culture their children are exposed to, and to use political means to assure this right. The debates over educational practices are subject to the same pathologies and disruptions as the political cultural debates.

Children have widely different interests in, and aptitudes for, formal education. The parents of these children have widely different attitudes towards, and support for, their children's school career. Most private schools do not tolerate students that disrupt their classmates' learning. Most private schools provide advanced classes for those students that show a desire and aptitude for them. Unfortunately, most parents cannot afford this.

The free private schools must accommodate all students regardless of their classroom behavior, or their parents' involvement. It is in society's interest to insure that public schools prioritize the interests of those students and parents that value an education. This means they must isolate disruptive students, punish bullies, and offer advanced classes for those that show an aptitude and interest. This is not a call for more money, it is a call for a re-prioritization of how money is spent. It is a call to value those who want an education over those who interfere with the learning of others for whatever reasons.

School systems have a role in achieving social justice, but they should not be the main agent of it. The role of schools should be limited to providing each student with the best possible education in the subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, and history that a student's aptitude and interest can achieve. Schools should teach a culture of civility, respect, and achievement to all.

Economics

Capitalism creates the best economic outcomes. It is an avid adopter of the latest technology and techniques, but it has no regard for social justice. It creates a class of people who are able to make a living as employees doing work defined by others. Many of these employees are in turn dependent on specialized knowledge and skills required to do the work. The economic value of such knowledge and skills are subject to the vagaries of future technological, economic, and political developments over which the workers have no control.

In ancient times an individual secured great wealth by ownership of both large tracts of land, and the forced labor of others. This was enabled by society and government enforcing these ownership rights. As a person's wealth became larger and larger, it became more and more vulnerable to someone else just taking it.

In modern times an individual can amass even greater wealth by utilizing technology, capital goods, and the paid labor of others. This is enabled by

societies and governments enforcing an individual's right to own the capital and intellectual property needed for modern businesses. But more importantly, modern societies and governments provide a pre-existing commercial and legal environment consisting of such things as: enforcement of contracts, limited liability corporations, banking and financial markets, a vast store of knowledge and technology, an educated population, cheap effective transportation and other infrastructure, reliable personal security, effective national security, etc. etc. This social environment becomes more and more valuable to individuals and businesses as they become wealthier. It is proper that society asks for some form of payment from those who receive such great benefits. Society, acting through government, is justified in assessing some form of tax on great wealth and great profits.

Regulating the Economy

Events have conclusively shown that a government cannot micro-manage an economy. Events have also shown that unregulated free enterprise eventually creates large corporations that become very similar to governments in their wealth and power. These large corporations and very wealthy individuals can (and do) greatly influence the workings of the actual government, to the benefit of themselves. Corporations are run by autocrats for the benefit of themselves and their investors. Governments are supposed to be run by representatives of the people for the benefit of everyone.

The financial crash and recession of 2008 demonstrate the harm that large corporations can do to the economy, and thus to the general public, as they pursue their own goals with little oversight on the part of government. The recent buildups of very large corporations through mergers and acquisitions demonstrate the power of lobbying to suppress government regulation. Recent history demonstrates that corporations will move large portions of their operations to regions where labor is cheap and rely on low shipping rates (and international peace) to increase their profits regardless of the impact this has for the livelihood of many working class families in a region.

These days the so called "private economy" is such a large factor in the lives of all citizens, that its regulation is properly just as much subject to the government as is the military, or the administration of criminal justice. It is right and proper that governments limit the power of corporations and enforce rules and limits on free enterprise. The Glass-Steagall act and the anti-trust laws were examples of this. Advances in technology and globalization will require increasing government interventions in free enterprise in increasingly novel ways.

Workers Unions

The free market treats paid employees as commodities in a "labor market", where the short term forces of supply and demand set the level of wages. Working conditions are based around what the most desperate employees will tolerate. Most individual "low skilled" workers have no bargaining power over these factors, but they all have long term responsibilities towards their families. Such workers create and join institutions to advocate for their interests with the employer. These unions take an adversarial position towards many of the employer's business interests.

In earlier times, unions had little power against employers due to the reluctance of earlier governments to interfere with the "free market" of labor, or a business owner's property rights. To achieve some level of negotiating power, unions resorted to confrontational tactics such as strikes. The ensuing conflict often involved mass firings of strikers, vandalism and destruction of employer property, physical assaults and murders of replacement employees, and a few riots. As time progressed the government, invoking the Getty Doctrine, and pursuing its mandate to *promote the general welfare*, created legal rights for unions that bolstered their negotiating power with employers.

Over the lifetime of a business there is a very delicate dynamic between a business and its workers' unions. At first the technology used by, or the market served by, the business is new and the wages paid are very good. If the business succeeds it grows, and the union is able to ensure wages grow as well. There is always a pressure from the union to press for more pay and to hire more employees so each worker's job is easier. If the business is doing very well it is easy to grant these requests.

When the economic weather turns, or the business faces more competition, or technology lessens the number of people needed to do the work, or technology changes how the work is done, then the business is motivated to lay off workers or change the nature of the work to be done. Often the current employees are not qualified to do this new work. The resulting business / union conflict is often protracted and brutal.

Depending on the size of a business, what obligation does a business have towards its employees when they must be laid off due to: bad economic weather, falling market share, bankruptcy, technological change, etc? Answers range from none, through generous severance payout, to retraining. What obligation does a society have towards laid off workers due to a business which cannot provide for them? History shows that if hiring an employee creates too large an obligation for a business, then businesses will not hire as many. Instead willing employees (often in another country) will flock to become "second-class" employees who do not impose such obligations upon being hired. Ultimately in a large rich society, the Getty Doctrine makes all of this a problem for government.

In places where unions are weaker, there is a tendency for more innovation, efficiency, choice, and lower prices for the general consumer. More workers lose their jobs, and find that they do not have the skills to get another job at the level of pay they once had. The workers who have become worse off need to be accommodated somehow by the government.

In places where unions are strong, there is a tendency for stagnation, higher business costs, less choice, and higher prices for the general consumer. The workers have job tenure and make a higher wage. Businesses are more prone to being operated to suit the current work force, and not keep up with the latest efficiencies. The longer this goes on, the higher the costs of missed opportunities for businesses and all of society in general.

In either case, the same thing happens. Inevitably, new businesses using newer technology and methods arise and marginalize the older businesses. This is resisted by both the owners and unions of the older businesses. Government may then need act to protect either the establishment and ensure stagnation, or uphold the ideal of "free market" and allow progress. The end result is that in all cases eventually the government must assist the losers resulting from this process.

The goal of government is to set the laws regarding free markets and unions so there is a balance between the share of profits that flows to the owners of a business, and the share that flows to the employees, without interfering with any business's strategy or ability to innovate products or production methods. Some level of employee / union / new technology conflict is a given. This often provides the crisis needed to enable the needed changes. What is to be done for the laid off or unemployed is a separate issue.

Economic and Technological Change

More and more practical math and engineering has become embedded in software packages. It seems that more and more, only a smaller and smaller proportion of people in the world need to be highly competent at math, science, or engineering. A lesser and lesser proportion of the population is needed to keep the software and robots sweet and progress advancing. Computer driven technology seems to be displacing more types of jobs.

Digital computer technology has the ability to capture creativity and spread it at very low cost. This is obvious in the realm of entertainment. Computer programming is the distillation of creativity in solving a problem. Once proven, the software can be cheaply replicated to solve that problem everywhere at any time. Once a computer can reliably respond to voice commands, and beat a human grand master at "Go", the prospects for technology replacing all types of creative and skilled workers is no longer in the realm of science fiction.

Another effect of technological change is the expansion of global trade. Classical economics says this should benefit everyone in the aggregate. But it made no promises about anyone individually. It also makes an assumption of

global peace. Trade can raise the standard of living for a billion people, at the expense of lowering it for millions. This is a great gain for humanity as a whole. But the billions are in Asia and the millions are in the USA.

There are two large trends working to make life for middle class people in the USA difficult, and life for lower class people worse. Technology is reducing the demand for many middle class jobs, and globalization means more and more workers making a decent living are being laid off as their jobs go overseas. Reduced demand converts to lower wages for more people. The number of highly technical jobs is increasing, but not by the same proportion as the population itself. More and more wealth is being created by fewer and fewer people. The establishment's expectation seems to be that newly redundant people can keep their standard of living if they retrain for some technical job. This is very difficult, especially for people over 40. A great many people cannot make, or do not want to make, the transition. Most of the people laid off face a big drop in their income. A larger and larger proportion of people are becoming irrelevant to the economy. Realistically, what are they supposed to do?

Given the current legal, political, and economic setup, this wealth is flowing into large corporations which own the technology. The increases in profits are not being paid out in increased taxes or wages. The vast accumulations of wealth are not being taxed. Owners, executives, and investors are reaping the rewards.

Surplus to Requirements

The case of changing technology rendering workers' skills obsolete is particularly troubling. As technological change accelerates, the skills needed by middle class workers may not last a working lifetime. The idea of a young person acquiring a skill, and using it to support themselves, raise a family, then retire may no longer be possible for more and more people. Certainly some far seeing and ambitious people can cope with this, but most people will not. What should they do? A realistic answer is not likely to be found in the free market or a purely capitalistic economy.

The case of advancing AI and robotic technology being used to design and manufacture more physical goods with fewer and fewer people is a variation on this theme. The result is the same: More and more people will be surplus to economic requirements.

This is beyond the politics and policy of free market / monopoly / union relations. This issue will grow slowly and can only be solved by cultural changes in the nature of capitalism, and the relationship between citizens, the economy, and government. The Crisis Doctrine applies. Politics and government may not be able to lead, but must react.

Retirement

History shows that no long term investment is completely safe. Hard assets (Housing, Gold, Land, etc.) are vulnerable to natural disasters and entropy, as well as cultural, technological, and political change. Financial assets are vulnerable to market fluctuations, fraud, and political change. Cash is vulnerable to theft and inflation. Successful retirement ultimately depends on factors outside of economics. In older times a person could count on their position in an extended family or the tribe to which they belonged.

In these times people count on the economy. Everyone should save for retirement, but most have no idea what is really involved. Many depend on a corporation's retirement program. But in reality defined benefit (i.e. corporate) retirement plans are only as safe as the corporation itself. The more modern IRAs and defined contribution plans (with their 401-Ks) are only as safe as the securities they are invested in. Failing companies and falling security markets play havoc with many people's retirement plans. Even the FDIC government guaranteed bank certificates of deposit are hostage to inflation.

The Getty Doctrine resulted in the creation of a base level retirement program called "Social Security". There are periodic calls for privatizing Social Security, but that misses the main point. Privatizing government benefits such as Social Security would force the individual to assume the investment risks. Most are unprepared. They would rely on private investment management companies, which would charge handsome fees, and could be expected to be just as honest and as competent as the Wall Street firms of 2008. They would also be subject to the fluctuations of the financial markets, just like 401-Ks.

Government has a proper interest and role in insuring at least a minimal level of financial security for all of its retired citizens. Government pensions are ultimately political, not economic. They are a retirement insurance where the government guarantees that a certain level of income is available to all those who paid the (mandatory) premiums (taxes), regardless of the future economic weather.

Mentally Ill - Addicted – Unlucky - Lazy

There will always be some number of people in society who are going through a time where they cannot or will not support themselves. Most such people are mentally ill, addicted to drugs/alcohol, or both. Some have had a misfortune. And some lack all ambition or motivation. In earlier times there was not enough prosperity or wealth to carry people who did not do productive work. In later times there were asylums and poor houses to shelter and feed those who could not rely on the charity of their family or church. There were few resources for these public institutions, and they were harsh places.

As prosperity increased the public institutions became better, but activists representing a minority of people obtained a judicial decision that closed these

places down. People who could not or would not hold a job, or were too poor, and had no other means of support, were left to live on the streets. This was not a negotiated legislative decision, so there was no plan for what these people should do next.

Our current government provides a patchwork support for the working poor, children, the disabled, and those temporarily unemployed. Those mentally ill, addicted, or unwilling to work end up on the streets after they exhaust the resources or patience of their family and friends. The problem of people living on the streets is not primarily a matter of rent money. It is mostly a matter of mental illness and/or addiction.

People do not like to see or encounter people living in the streets. There have always been laws against public intoxication, living out of a car, loitering, begging, harassment, and public defecation. These laws are often contested on the theory they restrict the rights of those living on the streets. But what about the rights of the 99.9% of people who built the streets and want to walk on them? What about the lack of compassion that allows unfortunate people to live in such degrading circumstances?

The mentally ill and/or addicted need intervention and treatment. Laws against public intoxication and camping in city parks or sidewalks should be restored and enforced as a tool to get the mentally ill or addicted off the streets and into treatment and recovery. The facilities to accomplish this must operate in ways that will pass judicial scrutiny. An individual's experience in one of these facilities will vary depending on the level of cooperation exhibited. There are many successful programs in other rich countries to use as examples.

The working poor, children, disabled, and temporarily unemployed are already covered by existing public or private programs.

The number of sane, sober, non-working remainder still on the streets will be very small. As of old, the loitering and camping laws can be enforced in such a way that habitual offenders are out of sight and out of mind.

Health Care

When medicine was non-existent to primitive, most people did not expect too much from it, and did not pay too much for it. An injured or sick person could count on their family to do all that it could to help. As medicine improved expectations grew, and people were willing to pay more. Richer people were able to recover from previously fatal diseases or accidents, while poorer people had to make do with the less effective techniques of the past. This disparity was accepted as just one of many disparities between rich and poor.

When progress put medicine on a scientific basis, and very effective preventative and curative measures were found, the disparity in health outcomes between rich and poor grew to a conscience troubling point. Although people are willing to tolerate different levels of income and wealth as

somehow due to a person's character or work ethic, they are not as accepting of different health outcomes after an accident or disease due to wealth disparities. Health insurance became available that enabled access to effective medical care for people who could not otherwise afford it, and who had the foresight to pay the premiums.

In the U.S.A. historical factors caused health insurance to be available as a "free benefit" of employment by a large business. The health insurance industry grew. Patients were not paying the medical bills directly. The insurance companies were, and businesses were paying the insurance company's premiums. This disconnect between the recipient and payer of medical care caused bureaucracies to proliferate and the costs of the medical / insurance industry to grow. People who were self-employed, unemployed, or worked for a small business had to pay the higher insurance premiums themselves, or pay the medical bills directly. This made it more difficult for an employee to leave a job, or to start a new business, or to work for a small business that did not offer health insurance, or to switch careers, or even to do a protracted job search. The result was a large percentage of people who had no health insurance and who could not afford medical care for serious disease or accidents.

Our society has grown large and rich enough that it does not allow people who cannot pay to be refused medical service. As a society grows richer it tolerates disparity of wealth more easily than it tolerates disparity of healthcare. The free market has a problem with this issue. Currently people who cannot afford needed medical care are treated, but the service provider passes the cost along to their paying clients.

Clearly government needs to formalize a way for all citizens to access needed medical care without prohibiting a free market in medical care for those who can afford it. Society would benefit from a scheme that allows people to forget about the health insurance aspects of: who they work for, or changing jobs, or starting a business, or being laid off. There are several working examples in the world, but so far none are totally satisfactory.

Laws and Courts

Legislating Outcomes

Laws typically mandate or prohibit specific actions by people or institutions. It is fairly clear if a given action is illegal, and who to blame for it. Once blame is assessed, the guilty person can be punished or required to pay damages. A guilty institution can be fined, or required to pay damages.

Making a law that mandates or prohibits specific statistical outcomes is a very different thing. Statistical social outcomes based on group identity are the result of the actions of many people acting in many roles within various institutions. An individual's actions may be due to such things as the person's

expert judgments, their personal bias, the institution's internal politics, or the institution's policies. In any case it is impossible to really know the thoughts of these people, or the reasons for their actions.

Such laws do not seek punishment or even damages from individuals or institutions. They seek specific statistical outcomes regardless of cause. This forces changes in how an institution operates, but does not specify the exact nature of the changes needed. To do this rationally, the lawmakers must understand how the outcomes in question arise, and how they can be changed. Unfortunately the social sciences are not exact, and institutional dynamics are complex. The formulation of such laws leads to endless debate over cause, effect, ways, and means among people with different beliefs about social science.

Such laws ultimately assume a cause, and then mandate a course of action based on beliefs for which there is no consensus. Such laws create consequences for institutions and society that are considered unfair by those who do not share the beliefs on which the laws are based.

Judicial Overreach

In several cases the judicial branch of government took it upon itself to mandate statistical outcomes without the benefit of any legislation. The most notorious case of this was a judicial fiat that school children in a city be bussed between schools to achieve certain statistical outcomes of racial parity among the schools' enrollments.

There was a case before a judge that argued that the statistical proportions of black children varied from one school to another by an excessive amount. The argument was made that the quality of education in those schools with a higher proportion of black children was inferior to that of the schools with a higher proportion of white children. The argument was made that this was unfair to the black children, and was against the tenets of the republic's constitution. These things were true, and the judge so ruled. In most cases involving the constitution, the dispute is over a specific law that should be voided. In this case there was no specific law being challenged, only an unacceptable statistical outcome. After the verdict, what should the judge have done? No law was broken, so there was no prescribed punishment or fine to levy.

The judge decided to act as an executive, and mandate a solution. There was no attempt to discern a cause, or an attempt to engineer a change within the city's educational institutions by legislation. A direct statistical outcome was created by reassigning children to different schools so that the statistics were acceptable. This required busing many children of both races far from their neighborhoods each day. The details of this were mandated and managed from a judge's bench. Judges were making operational executive decisions from which there was no appeal, regardless of what the parents or school district

involved wanted. It was assumed these changes would cure the problem, viz., the disparity in the quality of each school's performance.

Among the unintended consequence of this was a large shift in citizens' attitudes towards the judicial system and large economic consequences for cities where this was carried out. The judicial system lost its somewhat lofty status as an impartial decider of legal conflicts, and became just another part of the partisan political realm. And an autocratic one at that.

No law had been broken. There was no law to be declared unconstitutional. There was an "unconstitutional situation". A law needed to be passed, and executive action needed to be taken. The judiciary should have either refused to take the case, or fined Congress and the President each one dollar. Political action was needed. The judiciary made a mistake in taking it.

People should have protested and agitated for a law to address the situation. Some did. A political debate about causes, effects, ways, and means should have taken place. It began, but was sidetracked by shouts of "racism". A political solution that was accepted or tolerated by most people should have been found and implemented. This process was taking too long to suit some people, so they went to the courts. The judiciary got drawn into the controversy, and lost its lofty status. People started protesting against the busing of their children across town, and were then labeled racists.

Whether by legislation or by judicial fiat, mandated statistical outcomes for one group imply changing statistical outcomes for other groups. This provokes the innate human tendency for group conflict, especially when accusations of racist are thrown around. It is a bad idea to make laws or take actions that benefit one racial group at the expense of another racial group. These sorts of laws should be forbidden by a republic's constitution as detrimental to societal cohesion. The real solutions to these sorts of problems involve identifying causes, finding solutions based on those causes, public advocacy, consensus building, new institution building, and time.

Politicizing the Judiciary

Affirmative action and legalization of abortion were also perceived as another set of no-recourse fiats disdained by half of the population. The courts were also involved in political fights between business and environmental groups over vaguely defined concepts and alternative facts.

One of the most obvious reactions to these sorts of judicial actions was the politicizing of the judiciary in general, and the Supreme Court in particular. If courts were going to act in a political way, or in an executive capacity (as in bussing), it was fair to subject them to whatever political control was available. Confirmation hearings for Supreme Court justices became not unlike election campaigns. The president's power to appoint judges (and the Senate's power to block them) became a major factor in elections.

Business and Government

As a business grows, its relationship with government changes. In the beginning, a business relies on government and society to supply a legal and economic environment in which it can thrive. Government and society create this environment by enforcing contract laws, granting patents, suppressing corruption, providing infrastructure, creating a population of educated employees, policing free markets, and not interfering in how the business operates, etc. Businesses of all sizes often benefit from the results of government funded research.

As a business becomes larger and more successful, it starts having an impact on society. Its payroll supports a larger and larger fraction of the people in a town or region. Its products or services become relied on by more and more people, to the point that they become a necessity or a utility. (e.g. Auto manufacturing, Electric power, Telephone, Internet in their early stages). Such a business often benefits from more tailored government actions. (e.g. highways, land grants, eminent domain, patent grants, grants of monopoly, spectrum auctions).

Some businesses attain immense size, and become part of society. These businesses can greatly enhance the wealth and power of the entire nation. (e.g. Lockheed Martin, General Motors, Bell Labs, Google, Moderna). Such businesses often benefit from very large government actions. (e.g. Access to mineral deposits or part of the radio spectrum, Huge lucrative government contracts, Immunity from lawsuits). The economy of entire towns and regions can become dependent on one private corporation. The economy of the entire nation can become hostage to one workers union operating within a few railroad companies.

A private corporation has a legal identity separate from the individual members of the institution that embodies it. The people running a corporation have a duty to use all possible legal means to insure that the corporation prospers and grows. These people have a vested interest in the health and growth of the corporation. In most cases these vested interests believe that the corporation benefits society, and that the growth of the corporation is a good thing for both society and itself. This mindset is implicit in a famous remark by Charles Wilson, President of General Motors. During his Senate confirmation hearing to be Secretary of Defense In 1953 he said:

for years I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa. The difference did not exist. Our company is too big. It goes with the welfare of the country. Our contribution to the Nation is quite considerable.

In the modern world there are many private corporations with the wealth and power of medium sized nations. In addition to competing for large government contracts, such a corporation is motivated to influence the government to pass

laws or regulations that result in: access to, or lower costs for materials; higher prices for the goods produced; infrastructure; beneficial international treaties or tariffs; discouragement for competitors or newcomers trying to enter the market; etc., etc.

Crony Capitalism

The impact of a business on society and government on a business can grow into a large symbiotic dynamic where many large corporations strongly influence what laws and regulations governmental officials make, and many governmental officials get elected or prosper because of their relationship with the business. All in a legal (albeit convoluted) manner. A somewhat cynical maxim by Will Durant writing in 1968 defines Crony Capitalism:

Most governments have been oligarchies ruled by a minority, chosen either by birth, as in aristocracies, or by a religious organization, as in theocracies, or by wealth, as in democracies.

Unfortunately, the goals of a business, or one of its unions, are often not compatible with the best interests of society at large. When a business is small, this does not matter. When a business gets very large, this matters a lot.

Free Markets

Although the basic foundations of Capitalism are innate within everyone, many of the details are not. Free markets work well for society in the realm of the trade of goods and services. As discussed before, society is not so well served by a pure free market in labor or health care. Other areas where free markets do not serve society well are product safety, workplace safety, and advertizing, to name a few. A truly free market would factor in a certain level of deaths or theft by scam as a cost of doing business. Human nature results in a certain percentage of people not buying insurance; or not worrying enough about the dangers of a job they must do to make their living; or not researching the safety or efficacy of products they see on TV. There will be constant level of deaths, injuries, and financial ruin. If enough people are harmed by these bad outcomes, society will (properly) make these situations a government issue regardless of free market ideals. The argument that those who were harmed were stupid, and thus deserve their fate, merits scorn from most people in this era of prosperity.

Creative Destruction

Another major component of Capitalism is "creative destruction". The "creative" part of capitalism is innate in human nature, but the "destruction" part is definitely not. Vested interests within a business are resistant to changes that would disrupt how it operates. Large corporations can use their influence on the government to resist economic pressures to change. This is often done by creating new rules and regulations that mitigate the pressures. Examples are:

Creating complex regulations and reporting requirements that only the existing corporation has the resources to comply with. Requiring expensive licensing to ply a trade. Making some processes or products illegal. Awarding large government contracts to a favored business due to a finely crafted Request for Proposal.

Regulating Capitalism

Government, with its mandate to *ensure domestic tranquility* and *promote the general welfare* must get involved in the operations of large private businesses.

As discussed previously all aspects of any free market are defined by, and then enforced by government. The political questions are: What form should a specific market have to best benefit society in both the short run and in the long term? What incentives and constraints should be imposed on corporations to best encourage innovation, and limit unintended adverse effects on society? What laws should exist to limit the influence of wealthy individuals and businesses on the officials and offices of government?

Examples of contemporary governmental solutions to these types of issues are: Busting monopolies that are fixing high prices or restraining trade. Protecting the formation of unions, or ending strikes that are crippling the economy. The Glass-Steagall act. Prohibiting the broadcast of incitements to violence. Limitations on political campaign contributions.

Guidelines for future governmental solutions to these questions are: Keep regulation minimal for small companies to promote creativity. Protect small businesses from any vested interests that may want to shut it down. Allow large corporations to fail even though vested interests lobby for assistance to keep it going. If a failing corporation will cause a financial panic, then nationalize the company, and sell it back to the public after the panic has passed. Realize that the founders and early investors of a large powerful corporation have made their fortunes, and that the capitalist incentive for creation has had its intended effect. However, also realize that at some point a huge corporation becomes a facet of society, and that society may best be served if the corporation becomes much more heavily regulated.

Guns

The American constitution guarantees that members of a militia have a right to keep weapons, as follows:

"A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Note that "ownership" was not mentioned. As interpreted by the courts, this became a right for both militia and non-militia members to own as well as keep firearms subject to local laws. As recently interpreted by the courts, it has become a right for anyone to own any number of near military grade guns

regardless of any local laws. Many local jurisdictions allow guns to be carried in public both openly, or concealed. Because there are now more privately owned guns than people in the U.S.A., any future attempt to change this statistic is futile.

There are two narratives that seek to justify this state of affairs. The first (and not often publically discussed) justification is that people need to be able to resist the federal government by force if it gets too out of line. There are many small ad-hoc “militias” that dislike the federal government due to its size and impact on their lives. They essentially do not want to tolerate certain aspects of the society that they think the government is promoting. Events could evolve to the point that this is a valid reason, but the federal government would counter attacking militias with high flying predator drones, helicopter gunships and RPG launchers. Any guns a militia may have are irrelevant.

The second (often publically debated) justification for all of the guns is that they allow civilians to protect themselves from crime. In practice we see untrained civilians panicking and killing innocent people. When anyone can be assumed to be carrying a gun, then an un-trained civilian is forced to make the same fraction-of-a-second decision that cops are: Is this guy a mortal threat? Should I shoot first to avoid being shot?

This has become a huge problem. Local police must now consider the possibility that any interaction with any citizen could rapidly evolve into a mortal threat. The change this has made in police behavior has harmed the relationship between citizens and their police.

We now live in a society where mentally ill or angry people can, and often do, go on murderous sprees, often in schools or shopping malls, and kill as many people as they can. So far, any local governmental attempts to regulate or limit gun ownership have been struck down by the court system. This is insane.

Abortion

Abortion is an uncomfortable and sad topic. It applies to a continuous range of life from a very small growth up to a fully formed human being. Abortion thus ranges from a minor surgery up to premeditated murder. Many countries set a dividing line at three months gestation. In this country various states had their own different laws. The federal legislature was not involved and there were no federal abortion laws, but the federal judiciary allowed itself to become entangled in the states' laws.

There is no mention of abortion in the constitution, but that did not stop the Supreme Court from legalizing abortion in the first trimester throughout the land. The logic of the decision was tortured. This judicial overreach started another culture war that quickly devolved into a shouting match between two extremist camps: one saying all abortion from the moment of conception is murder; the other saying all abortion even up to the moment of birth is a

private matter for the woman carrying the child. Thus another irreconcilable clash of beliefs was launched to stress society.

The recent Supreme Court decision to override the previous decision and return the abortion issue back to the states was correct. Now the abortion wars are playing out in various states in various ways.

Abortion during the first trimester should be legal, but is always a tragedy.

Environment

What exactly does it mean to "protect" the environment by law? It is clear that the "earth" does not care. In the past the earth's environment has been vastly different. In practice, protecting the environment seems to mean keep the environment the same as it is now.

The clean air laws were a big benefit to all. There were lots of complaints from industry, but the air became clean, and all car makers continued to thrive. This was a case of a clear cut health issue that the free market would not address. The laws were clear about what needed to happen in terms of which levels of which pollutants were acceptable.

Other cases are more subjective. Prohibiting the dumping of used tires and oil anywhere is an easy call. Should a new mine for rare-earth elements be allowed to dig up the side of a mountain and destroy the habitat of a certain owl? Should we prevent a new lake from forming? Prevent an old lake from drying up? Who decides what the goals should be? Who decides what corrective actions are needed? Who does the cost / benefit analysis? The questions are economic. The goals are subjective. The laws are necessarily vague. Environmental Impact Statements have become a tool to thwart development projects that some group or another does not like.

This is clearly a situation where the legislature should hold public hearings and craft laws that represent a compromise on the proper cost / benefit tradeoffs that a majority can support. Instead the laws are vague and any details are fleshed out by regulations promulgated by un-elected bureaucrats. The courts should have ruled such laws unenforceable as too vague. Instead the details are decided by court rulings on a case by case basis.

Protests

As the government becomes more beholden to vested interests, and more paralyzed by partisan gridlock, it becomes less responsive to ordinary citizens who attempt to be heard within the official channels.

There have always been agitators. Making large changes to the political status quo in the face of vested interests requires agitators and street demonstrations. Street demonstrations are just that: a peaceful demonstration of support for some political cause or policy. Their effectiveness is based on the number of

people who show up on the street in support. Arson, assault, and looting are not a part of street demonstrations, and must always be suppressed.

Although many protests and demonstrations are misguided and deserve to be ignored, not all are. The process whereby an anti-establishment political cause becomes part of the establishment requires actions on the street. No major political change of any kind can happen without agitators. Knowing which agitators are right and which are wrong is difficult, but they cannot all be dismissed out of hand.

A concrete example is the Vietnam War. This went from a patriotic war to a misguided mistake due to agitators and protests. The release of the pentagon papers documented the many lies knowingly proclaimed by the establishment to support the war and discredit the protestors. Now it is established truth that the Vietnam War was a mistake, and the government at the time was deceitful. Reflect back on what the establishment said at the time, and what is taken as established truth now.

The Press and Whistle Blowers

People are loath to admit mistakes, especially when a mistake can impact their standing within an institution. The mistakes of individuals can be amplified into the mistakes of an institution itself. There is a natural inclination for a person to lie to hide any criminal activity, or their culpability in a mistake. This naturally results in institutions lying to hide criminality or mistakes if possible. For private institutions this is only a problem for the institution's managers or the justice system. In the case where the institution impacts society at large, such as a government or large corporations, such lies are of concern to everyone.

Everyone is entitled to a certain amount of privacy. Similarly, institutions are entitled to a certain level of secrecy, especially in negotiations or proprietary technology or processes. One way to secure this privacy is to refuse to answer questions. Another is to lie. There is a moral difference in lies to cover up criminality or mistakes versus lies to conceal personal, trade, or state secrets.

There are inevitably instances of official lies and cover-ups to hide mistakes or illegal actions on the part of government departments or government officials. One cannot rely entirely on official oversight or official checks and balances to insure that all government departments and officials stay honest. A free press is necessary to the proper functioning of a democratic government because it conducts investigations of government activities, but is not itself a part of the government. The economic and cultural motivations of the press are adversarial to specific government officers and employees, but not to society itself.

Whistle blowers from inside the government who expose criminality or cover-ups of mistakes are necessary to insure good government. People who expose

state secrets are criminals. The distinction can sometimes be difficult to make, especially when a government stamps "state secret" on everything to cover up mistakes or criminality. Ultimately, in a democracy, the people decide what is a mistake or crime versus what is a state secret.

One must take whistle blowers seriously, and realize that the official government reaction to a whistle blower could very well be lies. Again, a concrete example is the Vietnam War. The whistle blower Daniel Ellsberg stole the Pentagon Papers and gave them to the New York Times, which published them. These papers exposed the government's misjudgments, and lies and deceit which covered it up. This eventually convinced most people that the anti-war agitators had a valid point.

Police Killings

The ubiquity of cameras on cell phones has allowed ordinary citizens to capture real life interactions with the police. Many videos of the police murdering unarmed non-threatening people on the streets started circulating. In these cases the police did not know at first that the video existed, so they lied about what happened in their official reports. The cops who witnessed the event also lied in support of their brother cop. Police chiefs lied to the public, and lied in court. After the video was released the cops still lied about it.

Reflect on how many times in the past the police had ever admitted to error, and contrast it with the number of these videos, and factor in how many times a bystander with a camera was not around. It is now obvious that the police lie consistently to avoid admitting error on their part. It is now obvious that the anger by some minority groups towards the police is entirely justified.

This is no doubt due to a minority of "bad cops". And that is bad enough. But the real problem is that the majority of the decent police lie to cover this up. They feel they owe more loyalty to a murderous coworker than to the courts or citizens of their city. The proliferation of guns in the population has made police work much more dangerous than it was. All police are put into situations where they have fractions of seconds to decide if they face a mortal threat.

Honest police are essential to any society. The first step to solve this problem is for police to stop lying. The second step is for quick honest investigations that take into account the difficulty of assessing mortal threat in a fast changing situation. The third step is to exonerate the inevitable honest mistakes, and punish liars and murderers.

Immigration

The U.S.A. was built by immigrants. As a group, immigrants self-select and are ambitious, energetic, and optimistic by nature. It takes drive and self reliance to leave the familiar and go to a strange place. Immigrants typically admire our culture and society and want to be a part of it. They bring diversity into this country.

Immigration has always been a contentious issue. They form an easily identified group. They tend to hang together to assist each other in adapting to a new society. The first generation often does not speak English.

The many millions of illegal immigrants currently here who have not committed violent crimes should be given a legal status and a right to work, but not citizenship. We did not enforce our laws, and there is a moral statute of limitations. We cannot deport many millions of people and keep our self-respect. Those brought here illegally as children and who went through our school system should be given citizenship.

Immigration laws should be debated, passed and enforced. People who arrive here illegally should be treated with respect. Separating children from their families to act as a deterrent to others was a shameful barbaric act of evil. Those who arrive here illegally need to be processed quickly and then quickly deported. The immigration laws must be written in such a way that this process cannot be tied up by lengthy litigation.

Elections

The federal and most state government election laws favor rural areas over urban areas. The election laws select the candidate with the most votes as the winner, even though that might be less than half of the votes cast (due to more than two candidates on the ballot). Currently, it so happens that voters in rural areas are more organized and motivated than urban voters. This results in a minority of people electing a majority of government office holders.

In most states the boundaries of legislative districts are determined by a political process where one party can maximize the number of their candidates that win regardless of the preferences of a majority of voters. (Draw district boundaries that concentrate as large a majority of votes as possible for the opposite party into as few districts as possible. Then create as many districts as possible such that your candidate can win in each one by a small majority.) This essentially wastes votes for the opposition in races they would win regardless. It spreads winning votes for your party into as many districts as possible. Thus most district outcomes are pre-ordained. Few district contests are competitive.

A political party can select any candidate they want to represent them in an election. This used to be done in a "smoke filled room" of powerful party

members who selected candidates they thought best represented their views, and had the best chance to win a general election. Now most candidates selected by a party are the winners of a primary election where all party members can vote. These primary elections have low turnout, where only the most motivated party members vote. The result is that often a more extreme, ideological, and less practical candidate is selected to run in the general election. This enhances the chances of fringe candidates being elected in the general election. The majority of voters with moderate, practical views find there is no candidate of any party they want to vote for. Many then do not vote at all.

Three reforms are urgently needed. First, legislative districts must be drawn by an independent commission where each party has equal representation. They must agree on, and then follow a mathematical plan backed by data on the number of registered voters of each party in each proposed district.

Second, both primary and general elections should use a ranked voting scheme. An example of such a scheme is: Each voter selects a first, second, and third choice for each office. If no candidate for an office winds up with an absolute majority of first choice votes cast, those ballots cast for the least popular candidate are re-counted in favor of the designated second choice candidate on that ballot. This process continues until one candidate wins a majority of the vote for an office. This will weed out fringe candidates, and select the candidate with the most support from the general population. There are worked examples of this in the world that can be copied from.

Third, there must be a major publicity effort to increase voter turnout. The point must be made clear that low voter turnout results in a well motivated minority being able to capture the offices of government and rule against the wishes of the majority.

Political Stability is Priceless

Political stability in the so called first world is sort of like water for a fish. We all live in it and benefit from it, but we do not notice it. The electricity, water, and heating gas flows 99.99% of the time. The grocery shelves are stocked with our favorite food brands 99.00% of the time. The internet streams high quality entertainment and answers our questions 99.99% of the time. We are safe in our homes 99.99% of the time. A large portion of our lives is not devoted to worrying about basic survival. Political stability is priceless. Without political stability there can be no advanced economy, and most people cannot prosper. Although most people want political stability, that fact alone is not enough to achieve it if some minority of people values something else more highly. This is not about street protests, or the race riots of the last few decades. To some extent, these are inevitable given our political system. The kind of political instability to be avoided is that seen in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, Somalia, or the American civil war.

Political stability requires tolerance for other people's differing beliefs. It does not require approval of them. One does not need to like such people. One can limit one's circle of friends and acquaintances to a group of like minded people, but one must be willing to politely interact with anyone in casual social or economic transactions regardless of their beliefs. Religious or other ideological intolerance is a prime disruptor of political stability, and this in turn is the major reason for the modern rule to not allow religious dogma or arguments into any and all political debates or laws. This prohibition should be extended to other intolerant ideological dogmas as well. Making laws that explicitly favor one race or class of people over others are destructive to any society, and should also be prohibited.

A reading of history and recent world events reveal several things about political stability. It is not the natural result of any of the laws of human nature. A minority of people can destroy it for gains only they can appreciate. Most people do not realize the danger until it is too late. By the time a threat is clear, everyone is angry or contemptuous of someone else, and things fall apart. Once stability is lost it is difficult to regain, and generations of people can become impoverished and insecure. If you are tempted to disrupt political stability for some belief, you must deem it important enough to condemn yourself, your children, and grandchildren to lives of poverty and hardship. You must be prepared to pay (and should pay) a very heavy personal price if most other people do not agree with you.

This suggests a slight modification to the rule that one must be tolerant of other's differing beliefs. One must not tolerate those who are corrosive to political stability. They must be called out and marginalized.

Conclusion

Summary

The future political and economic system will be different from the current one in major ways. These types of changes are always difficult and contentious. The needed changes cannot be made under the current political climate, the way politics is currently practiced needs to change.

The following beliefs form a basic world view from which each individual can achieve more rational political debates and decisions.

- Most people are good. But some are not.
- Politicians are not evil. The alternative is Generals and Dictators. Politics in a democracy or republic is necessarily argumentative. Embrace it.
- Political stability is priceless. You should be willing to live in a society where many others have different political, economic, or religious beliefs. These people are not bad. They are not inferior. They are not better. You must be polite and respectful to everyone.
- A family or tribe would do all that it could for a member who was harmed by bad luck. Within its means, a society also needs to look out for its unlucky members.
- All people must be judged by their character and accomplishments, not on their group identity such as race or sex. Official policy or laws that favor an individual on the basis of a group identity create large destructive rifts in a society, and must be avoided.
- Laws and policies that aim at creating an equality of results (outcomes) based on group identity such as race or sex, create large destructive rifts in a society, and must be avoided.
- Do not mix religion and politics. You can form your political beliefs from your religious convictions, but do not use religious arguments when making political points. Do not trust anyone who does.
- Your personal beliefs do not trump the law of the land. If an established custom or law contradicts one of your beliefs, you should generally follow the custom or law. If you cannot, you must be willing to face the consequences.
- You do not have any right to not be offended, especially during a public discussion or debate on politics or philosophy.
- Beware of any speech that invokes fear, hate, or contempt. The speaker may or may not have a valid point, but using fearful, hateful, or contemptuous phrasing should be a red flag. Such a speaker should be avoided (but not silenced). Seek other speakers making the same point

who do not talk that way. If you cannot find them, then that should tell you something. Avoid listening to pundits whose stock in trade is fear, hate or contempt.

- Beware of the "big lie". Many times simple arguments based on simple "facts" are advanced in a debate of what is really a complex issue. One technique is to lie about the "facts" on which the argument is based. The lie is repeated many many times by many many people. This does not make it true.
- It is a complex world, and you will want to evaluate the ready-made beliefs and opinions of others rather than formulate your own. You should be very skeptical of a belief system with these characteristics:
 - It is very simple. The world is complex, and actions based on a few simple beliefs often have unintended consequences. These are usually bad.
 - It is very detailed, complex, and rigid. The world is complex, and no belief system can anticipate all contingencies. A belief system is a guide, not a complete solution to all problems.
 - It is expressed in hateful, fearful, or contemptuous language. Look for someone who will express the belief in neutral language. If you can't find anyone, then it is probably a bad idea.
 - It is expressed in emotional, poetic language. Do not allow emotions to color your thoughts on political or economic matters.
- We do not need to "start more dialogues", we need to stop shutting down the dialogues we already have. In your debates with others, and in any public speech do not use and do not allow "political correctness" to sidetrack or close off the discussion. Be careful about vocabulary choices; try to agree on clear definitions for all terms. Attempt to stick to the point or question under discussion. A conversation that cannot continue along these lines should be respectfully and calmly declined.
- Do not automatically take official government pronouncements as the truth. They may well be truthful, but be willing to listen to someone who says they are not. You owe loyalty to the society, not a specific government department or official. You should always monitor what the government is doing.
- You should vote tactically. No candidate is perfect. Evaluate candidates on their character. Do not evaluate any candidate on the basis of just one issue. If you find a good candidate, vote for them. If you find a candidate you hate, then vote against them by voting for their biggest rival. Since there is no ranked voting nor coalition governments in the USA, do not cast third party or protest votes in a close race. That just allows a disciplined minority to prevail over a disorganized majority.

- Vote even if you know your vote will not decide an issue. It will count in the statistical summary of the election, and be pondered by many.

The Future

The economic and technical changes currently operating are reacting poorly with our current political system. What follows is one idea of what these economic and political trends could bring.

The Economic System is Changing

When machines create a larger and larger percentage of material wealth, and provide more and more services, the old connection between hard work and a station in life is broken.

There is not enough decent paying work to go around. Technology can make a decent standard of living available to all, but the amount of work required to produce it does not scale. Capital is increasingly substituting for labor. The classic law of supply and demand applied to labor mandates lower incomes for many. Classic laws of ownership of capital result in very high incomes and wealth for the few owners of the new technologies. Although all could potentially be living well, current customs and laws prohibit it.

Push this to the extreme in a thought experiment: Assume the technology is so advanced that almost all material goods are created by, and most expert services are delivered by, computer systems and robots (i.e. capital goods). Assume only 0.1 % of the world population is needed to create and maintain these machines. Should this 0.1 % live in fantastic luxury, while the remaining 99.9 % fight each other for sustenance?

The scenario described can only happen under an economical and political system that enables it. It is right and proper that politics should step in and either change the economic system (e.g. rules of ownership, taxation, and wage negotiation), or else institute new ways for wealth to be distributed to all people (e.g. modern programs similar to the New Deal's CCC and WPA of the 1930s, or some form of minimum income).

The basic theory would be that the creators and developers of new forms of wealth would be entitled to huge rewards over their lifetimes, but after some span of time, the knowledge, technology, and infrastructure created within a society becomes the inheritance of everyone. The political stability that allows a society to flourish is the birthright of all of its citizens, who are then all entitled to a portion of the resulting prosperity. Society could then turn the machines loose, and live well on the dividends.

In this future scenario there is a lot of capital in the form of productive machines and intellectual property. There would not be as much productive labor. So the government would need to get most of its revenue from taxes on corporations, productive capital, and wealth, not wages.

The old aristocrats owned the land which produced most of the economy's goods. The new aristocrats would be the owners and managers of a few very large corporations. These corporations would own the intellectual property, the machines, and the resources used to produce most of the economy's goods and services. These corporations would pay almost all of the taxes needed by the government.

Could a modern type of feudalism evolve? Could the modern lower classes learn to be content with their lot? There would be plenty of free time, material comforts, entertainment, and intellectual stimulation to go around. The material side of life could be very good for everyone under such a system.

Unfortunately, although some measure of material wealth is necessary for people to be content with their lives, it is not sufficient. People also need to participate in some form of meaningful productivity. Examples are: working at a job that allows them to support a family, or belonging to some institution they admire and can contribute to meaningfully. A common pathology is for people marginalized by the economy to join institutions (e.g. cults or gangs) that work towards disrupting the larger society.

Final Thoughts

Institutions

As any institution ages, it becomes more and more sclerotic due to internal vested interests. These interests value short term familiar methods (and the concomitant personal rewards) over changes needed for long term prosperity. As an institution grows larger and more prosperous, this resistance to change also grows to the point that change is not possible. The institution must be replaced. Is this inevitable? Is this the reason societies eventually fail?

Our Society

In a republic there is a constant current of public contention over many issues. Economic, cultural, domestic policy or foreign policy. This is inevitable due to constantly changing external conditions such as: migrations, economic weather, real weather, technology, and fads. People resist any short term costs for long term gains. There are always vested interests against any particular short term change. Thus, there is always a need for some level of crisis to make big changes.

An authoritarian society may suppress public contention, and even provide decent living conditions for many people. For a while. When change is forced, the limited and often secret debate invariably results in inferior policy solutions to the problems. Getting people to accept the changes is more difficult because they were not involved in the debates and do not know of the tradeoffs.

In a republic at least everyone should be aware of the alternatives to any new policy and the reasons it was chosen. The new policy is also likely to be better than otherwise, due to the larger number of alternatives publicly discussed.

Any large change in an institution or society inevitably involves some form of crisis. A crisis loosens the grip of vested interests and it tends to pull together all of the people involved. This lowers the resistance to making the change. These public crises are a hallmark of democracy, not something to be ashamed of.

Living in a large advanced well functioning society brings many immense unearned benefits to an individual that are often taken for granted. If lost, these benefits may take generations or a dark age to replace. Although the benefits of any society are unearned by each new generation (and thus not properly valued), they must be recognized and maintained by each new generation. When choosing a policy or action, members of society and their representatives in government must always consider the affect it will have on society as a whole, as well as their narrow self interest. Being a member of society implies a willingness to tolerate a policy or action against self interest if it important to the well being of the society as a whole.

A large society needs a set of myths and beliefs shared by most people to help bind them together. This enables them to tolerate and compromise with others who are from different cultures and speak different languages. This role used to be filled by religion when the vast majority of citizens shared a set of closely related religions. As the practice and belief in religions declines, the secular ideals of the so-called "enlightenment" as embodied by the Constitution and Founding Fathers must fill this unifying role for our society.

Appendix

Here is a collection of books that had a major impact on my political and economic opinions and beliefs over the years. I enjoyed reading these books, but I do not agree with everything contained within them.

The Story of Civilization

The Story of Civilization by Will and Ariel Durant is an eleven volume history of western civilization from 5000 BC to 1815 written in the 1930's through 1970's. These books have a broad scope. They cover the politics, wars, religion, arts, philosophy, science, common culture, myths, and lives of selected famous men and women.

The writing style is conversational with a touch of humor and irony. The approach is a pragmatic one. The only mention of grand ideological principles is to gently mock them. The approach to religion is skeptical, with a touch of cynicism. The authors do not divide any of the particular subjects or examples they cover into "good" or "bad" categories.

The Lessons of History

The Lessons of History by Will and Ariel Durant sums up the lessons learned while writing *The Story of Civilization*. It is "a survey of human experience" in the realms of: geography, biology, race, character, morals, religion, economics, government, war, growth, decay, and progress. It lays out a common sense world view.

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich by William Shirer is a history of the Nazis, but also an account of how many normal, intelligent people can be led to do horrific things. It chronicles how a very few people led by a charismatic leader can use lies and surgical violence to take over a nation. It shows that modern educated people can be swayed by lies and hate speech.

Sapiens (A brief History of Humankind)

Sapiens by Yuval Harari is more than just a history of the human race. The book makes several points relevant to understanding human nature. One of which is his notion of "story". If an idea can be incorporated into a story it can be transmitted to, and believed by, a large number of people. The story does not need to be true; in fact Harari generalizes the notion of "story" to mean fictional constructs that have no grounding in the physical world. Such as religion, money, corporations, and nations.

Saving Capitalism for the Many, Not the Few

Saving Capitalism for the Many, Not the Few by Robert B. Reich is an analysis of modern political economics.

This book takes the common sense viewpoint that capitalism (and the "market") are creations of humans, and realized by governments. It points out that the modern debate is not between "market forces" vs. government intervention, but is centered on who sets the terms under which "the market" is defined and realized.

Capital in the Twenty-First Century

Capital in the Twenty-First Century by Thomas Piketty is a history of economic inequality from pre-history to the 20th century.

This book was a pleasure to read. Piketty is very articulate, and sets his arguments in historical contexts. This book describes intellectual and moral arguments that support the growing popular discontent with crony capitalism. One of the main points is that this discontent is due to the fact that over time the return on accumulated wealth (e.g. interest, stock or land appreciation) grows faster than the wages of labor.

On Politics

On Politics by Alan Ryan is a two volume history of Western political thinking from the ancient Greeks to 20th century.

The book presents the thoughts and arguments of the best Western thinkers of the past 2,500 years. The author first sets each thinker in their historical context, and then goes into their major thoughts and conclusions. What made this book rewarding for me is the realization that all modern political questions and arguments have been well thought out with great subtlety over the ages. The consensus agreements have changed greatly, but the questions are not new.

The Origins of Political Order / Political Order and Political Decay

These two books by Francis Fukuyama should be thought of as a two volume analysis of how governments work.

The scope of these books is government. It encompasses all of human cultures through all of recorded history. It ranges from simple tribes to modern western governments. It has a very lengthy description of Chinese governments from the dawn of history to now.

The author investigates the environmental, religious, and economic factors that influence the types of government. It analyzes such things as where the "judicial" branch of government came from.

The main benefit of these books is the realization that the current way the US government works is accidental, and vulnerable to events. The nature of the world and human nature does not automatically converge on "Good government" as we now know it. The governments of most of humanity for most of the ages were much more authoritarian.

The Civil War - A Narrative (3 volumes)

The Civil War - A Narrative by Shelby Foote is a three volume history of the American Civil War. This is written in a style similar to the Durant's. That is to say: non ideological, pragmatic, and based on an understanding of human nature.

These books tell the story of how an uncompromising idea (abolition) in the North became strong enough to grab control of politics and force an uncompromising reaction from the South that destroyed the economy of the South for generations. The books describe how many high stakes decisions made by people in high authority are made on the same basis of vanity and ego as the decisions made by most people.

The Righteous Mind

The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt describes how the human mind is inherently moral, critical, and judgmental. It describes the several dimensions of morality, and how they cause tribes to form and stay together, as well as why the animosity between different tribes forms. It describes how rationality is a thin layer on top of instincts which are based on the mind's inherent morality.

Cynical Theories

Cynical Theories by Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay is basically a philosophy book. It lays out just what CRT (Critical Race Theory) is. This book has two parts, the first part is a somewhat dry examination of just what the academic philosophy of CRT is, and where it came from historically. The second part is an examination of how CRT is being used in current schools, corporations, and in politics by quoting from current advocates of CRT. The book ends with a comparison of CRT to religion, and suggests a solution to the current fight over it by invoking the old principle of tolerance.

The Constitution of Knowledge

The Constitution of Knowledge by Jonathan Rauch addresses the issue of just where "truth" and "knowledge" come from. Basically from loose dispersed institutions with a certain culture and ideals that allows fallible humans to amass a body of reliable knowledge over time. The current scientific community is an example of such a group of institutions. This book explains this institutional culture, and how knowledge emerges from it.

The New Puritans

The New Puritans by Andrew Doyle tries to assume the best motives to the thought leaders of the new Social Justice and woke ideologies. It recognizes their valid criticisms of modern western society. It stands up for the classical liberal enlightenment ideas. It analyzes how the new ideologies go wrong, for example by redefining words, assuming the result, and refusing to engage in calm debate. The book is easy to read, and full of examples, and credits other books and opinions. It is in no way an academic tome, but it contains 59 pages

of notes to source the author's arguments and facts. This makes it a good book for those who want to explore further and bolster their own arguments.

The Stars My Destination

The Stars My Destination by Alfred Bester is a Science Fiction novella with a plot loosely based on *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The society in which it is set is a futuristic form of Feudalism.

The Last Castle

The Last Castle by Jack Vance is a Science Fiction novella that describes a society of aristocrats supported by many slaves. (Substitute machines for slaves).