

God-Sex-Politics

It's All Relative



GORDON F. BROWN, PhD

Foundation for the Study of Individualism

Author's Update June 2023

Copyright 2021

Foundation for the Study of Individualism

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

HERE IS A BOOK FOR YOU
IF THE FOLLOWING EXPRESSIONS RESONATE

"I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you."

Mary Carolyn Davies

"The tools of the mind become burdens when the environment which made them necessary no longer exists."

Henri Bergson

"If you wish to talk to me, define your terms."

Voltaire

"Have you learn'd lessons only of those who admired you, and were tender with you, and stood aside for you? Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who reject you, and brace themselves against you? Or who treat you with contempt, or dispute the passage with you?"

Walt Whitman, *Stronger Lessons*

"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding."

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

"I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in order to become a child again and begin anew."

Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*—By the River

"And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord."

Jeremiah 31:34; c. 627 B.C.

"All except the shallowest living involves tearing up one rough draft after another."

Msg. John J. Sullivan, *The Leaflet Missal*

Authorship: This is a book of ideas regarding human experience. The real “author” is whoever, or whatever, is ultimately responsible for human experience. Consider the writer of this book more as a compiler and organizer of some rather remarkable ideas put forth during the last 4000 years.

Gordon F. Brown received his BS and MA degrees in psychology from California State University at Los Angeles and a PhD from the University of Southern California in educational psychology. A resident of Southern California, he has traveled to many countries of the world, including several in Europe, the former Soviet Union, South East Asia, and the Middle East. For thirty years, Dr. Brown taught psychology courses at the community college level. During that time, he worked with inner-city youth in Los Angeles for twenty years. He founded the School of Communication, a non-profit organization dedicated to the research and teaching of communication skills. As circumstances changed, the School of Communication was renamed the Foundation for the Study of Individualism.

The forerunner to this book was copyrighted in January 1995 under the title: *Everything's Relative: God, Sex, and Politics*. Research supporting the RAM scale was copyrighted in 1977 in the publication: Brown, G.F. et al., *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1977, 37.

Reading this Book: Some books are written to be read from the first page to the last. Not so much this book. It is suggested that the reader scan the pages looking for a topic of interest. Alternatively, one can do a search for a topic of interest—such as science, language, religion, love, gender, or the U.S. Bill of Rights. Begin by reading a topic of personal interest and continue with related items as you see fit. The book topics are logically integrated so that starting with any one will lead to all the others.

Author's Update June 2023 involved minor grammar-type changes and an expansion of the topics on pages 202 and 217.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

CHAPTER I—Describing Human Experience	1
Three Perspectives: Absolute, Relative, and Mixed	
Contrasting Absolute and Relative Perspectives	
Three Illustrations	
A Brief History of Relative Thought	
CHAPTER II—A Philosophy of Individualism	19
We Did Not Ask to be Born	
It's All About Integrity	
A Triad of Human Experience	
A Theory of Maturity	
Lifestyles	
CHAPTER III—God	51
It's a Convenient Concept	
The RAM Distinction	
Perspectives in Contrast	
The Bible Has All Three Perspectives	

CHAPTER IV—Sex **83**

- Our Absolute Cultural Sex Bias**
- The RAM Distinction**
- An Absolute Theory of Sex**
- A Relative Theory of Sex**
- Three Specific Scenarios**
 - Gender Differences, Homosexuality, and Love**

CHAPTER V—Politics **141**

- The RAM Distinction**
- America’s Beginning**
- America’s Current Drive Toward Socialism**
- Our “No-Win” Conflict**
- The Road to Peace**
- Individualism, What’s God Got to Do with It?**

BOOK SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS **219**

FOREWORD

This is a book for individuals who are already inclined toward the relative perspective—that is, for those holding a belief in the primacy of individual dignity and significance in human experience.

The book's five chapters will present a bird's-eye view of (a) a description of a relative perspective, (b) a relative philosophy of individualism, and (c) three applications of the relative perspective to topics of traditional interest—God, sex, and politics. In every chapter, the relative approach (based on interactive relationships) will be contrasted with an absolute approach (based on truths applicable to everyone) and a mixed approach (a pragmatic response to living that maximizes material benefits). There will be some repetition of key points. One reason has to do with context where similar dynamics may underlie different behaviors; and again, the same behavior may be described using different dynamics. Without question, the relative perspective is presented as the favored approach. Both the absolute and mixed perspectives are characterized as critically flawed and destructive, both personally and socially.

The relative perspective being referred to here reflects the philosophy suggested by the 5th Century BCE historian Heraclitus (“No man ever steps in the same river twice”), and those 16th and 17th Century ideas that came to be known as British Empiricism (including the contributions of philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume).

Whatever one's beliefs, there is an advantage in understanding the relative perspective. It can be seen that throughout the written history of mankind, there have always been those who advocated relativity's common-sense approach. Today, some see the relative perspective as coming of age simply because it is essential to the survival of humanity. Less dramatic is the observation that, as society has matured over the ages from brutal exhibitions of dominance to a more interactive practice of accommodating differences, the direction seems to favor a relative approach to living. Consequently, those familiar with the relative approach will have an increasing advantage over those who do not have such familiarity, regardless of what approach they personally choose to embrace.

This is your invitation to explore the relative perspective on human experience. What follows are this writer's perceptions and commentary regarding the relative perspective. It is the reader's personal experience that will provide the primary basis for validating or modifying the ideas presented.

CHAPTER I

DESCRIBING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

1. THREE PERSPECTIVES	1
1.1 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE	
1.2 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE	
1.3 THE MIXED APPROACH	
2. CONTRASTING ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE PERSPECTIVES	5
2.1 TERMS COMMON TO EACH MODEL	
2.2 SENSE AND NONSENSE	
2.3 THE ISSUE OF CERTAINTY	
2.4 GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS	
3. THREE ILLUSTRATIONS	7
3.1 THE GEIGER COUNTER ANALOGY	
3.2 THAT TREE IN THE FOREST	
3.3 THE QUESTION OF GUILT	
4. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RELATIVE THOUGHT	12
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER I	16

CHAPTER I

DESCRIBING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Throughout written history, we can note two basic perspectives used to describe human experience: absolute and relative. Although any number of terms could be used to identify these two contrasting views, the position here is that the terms *absolute* and *relative* are the ones most commonly used in literature and everyday conversations when these underlying concepts are at issue. However, some people use the term *absolutely* to mean “completely”—as in “I am absolutely certain” to mean that “I am completely certain.” This is an example where the meaning could be either absolute or relative, and requires additional information to clarify whether the speaker is (a) “completely certain” that the statement represents an absolute truth or (b) “completely certain” that the statement represents the way he or she thinks.

It will be useful to remember that the terms *absolute* and *relative* refer to ideas, and their companion terms *Absolutist* and *Relativist* refer to hypothetical people rather than to actual people. A combination of these two perspectives gives rise to a third perspective—the *mixed*.

1. THREE PERSPECTIVES

We will start with the traditional and more familiar absolute perspective.

1.1 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE

The absolute perspective can be described as being built on the belief that we “look out of our eyes.” It’s all very obvious. We simply look out and see the characteristics of an external reality as it exists unto itself. For example, we can speak of that tree in our backyard as having green leaves,

a sturdy trunk, and symmetrical branches. From this perspective, the characteristics of color and shape are thought to exist externally to us and independently of our observation. That is, if we were to close our eyes, those characteristics would continue to exist externally in just about the same way as we perceived them with our eyes open. Those characteristics are absolute—existing unto themselves.

We can diagram the absolute perspective as follows:



In other words, “seeing is believing”—and so it is with every other sense. That is, what can be said of our sense of sight can be said of our other senses, including our senses of hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting. Taken together, such observations are thought to represent a physical reality that is absolute in that they reflect what is real for everyone and exist independently of any perceiver.

1.2 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The relative perspective begins with the same two players—there is a perceiver and there is something *out there* separate from the perceiver. However, the process of perception is reversed! Rather than “looking outward,” the direction of energy flow is inward—and only inward. The eye is a sensory organ that only receives incoming stimulation. While it is reasonable to believe that there is something *out there*, we are not looking “out” at it.

Consider a general description of the visual process: (1) something we describe as light waves bounce off an object, such as that *green tree*; (2) some of those light waves enter our eyes and trigger neurons; and then, (3) neural impulses are sent to the brain. Take note: there is no “green tree” up to this point—neurologists speak of electrochemical activity, but there is no “green tree” to be found in the brain. To find the “green tree,” we add one more player—conscious awareness. We notice that this third player is not of much interest when it is assumed that one is “looking outward”; but, the addition of “conscious awareness” as a critical player

is of particular significance to the relative perspective when describing human experience. It seems as if some of that electrochemical activity of the brain is fed into the realm of an individual's conscious experience. Only at this point of conscious awareness do we have that “green tree” with its sturdy trunk and symmetrical branches! Relatively speaking, human experience always involves an interactional process between an individual's realm of conscious experience and that sensory pickup system typically described as one's “body.”

Here is a frequently asked question: Could the characteristics experienced in conscious awareness also be characteristics of that external world? It is generally conceded by people who study perception that the “green” of the “green tree” is to be found in neither those light waves entering the eye, nor in the electrochemical activity of the brain. Since we are not looking “outward,” the only place we experience “green” is in our conscious awareness. How then shall we describe that external domain? Philosopher-scientist Ludwig Wittgenstein suggested that we just call it “stuff”—and so shall we.

We can diagram the relative perspective:



And again, what can be said of the visual process can be said of every other sensory process as well. For the reason that we cannot “jump out of our skin” to see the universe as it exists unto itself, there is what has been termed an “ultimate barrier” to understanding the characteristics of a universe as it exists apart from human perception. As philosopher George Berkeley put it, when we remove all sensory input, that is what we mean by “nothing.” Perhaps more to the point, it is simply meaningless to speak of the characteristics of an external world as they exist independently of a perceiver. To do so is to speak outside the realm of human experience.

As a matter of practice, we can choose to have relationships, but the characteristics of the participants are inaccessible. It is this all-inclusive contention that raises the principle of relativity to the position of being (a) a primary perspective on human experience and (b) a perspective in direct contrast to the perspective that anything is absolutely knowable. As

Krishnamurti put it: “Life is experience, experience in relationships” (*The First and Last Freedom*, 1954, p. 104).

To summarize the relative perspective, we notice that human experience always relies on interactive relationships that can be seen to involve: (1) some specific external influence; (2) the particular characteristics of one’s sensory nervous system, including the influences of heredity and past experience; and (3) the characteristics of conscious awareness itself, including form, shape, color, and every other characteristic we attribute to our perceptions. As for external influences, even when thinking of ideas or dreaming, it will always require a stable and conducive environment. Cutting off oxygen will significantly affect any rational process. Furthermore, sequence matters: whether we are speaking of that *green tree* or any other perception, the characteristics an individual experiences are always unique to that last domain—that individual’s conscious awareness.

Additionally, consider that there is not one single characteristic we can reasonably say exists externally—save one. We can reasonably believe that, at times, we are in the presence—or not in the presence—of some particular stuff. We can choose to approach or avoid it. Either way, we establish our relationship with it without knowing or needing to know its absolute characteristics.

1.3 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE

Given the *absolute* and *relative* perspectives, a *mixed* perspective can be created by simply alternating between the two—the same person can sometimes use one and sometimes use the other. While most people may use a mixed approach for convenience, there is a downside for doing so.

It can be seen that the mixed perspective lacks rational integrity since the absolute perspective is logically contradictory to the relative perspective. That is, to claim (a) you have access to the characteristics of an external world is logically contrary to claiming (b) you don’t have access to the characteristics of an external world.

Work with me. As a reader, you may find that it takes a little forbearance when coming across “it can be seen” rather than “it is”; however, any inconvenience may be gradually offset by the sheer power of rational integrity.

The primary attraction for choosing the mixed perspective may be the hope that such a perspective will result in physical pleasure. For example, a parent at home wishing to maximize control over children may choose to argue absolutely “do it because I told you so.” However, the same person may argue relatively for “fair and equitable treatment” when wishing to maximize one’s salary on the job. The point is that mixing the absolute and relative approaches may result in physical gain (emotional or material), but the cost is the loss of rational integrity. Given its popularity and lack of rational integrity, the mixed perspective can serve as a unique comparison when contrasting the absolute and relative perspectives.

2. CONTRASTING ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE PERSPECTIVES

2.1 TERMS COMMON TO EACH MODEL

Individuals inclined to an absolute perspective tend to use terms denoting characteristics of a world external to the perceiver such as *true*, *real*, and *objective*; and dichotomies such as right versus wrong, good versus bad. Such use is frequently preceded by phrases like “it is” or “that is,” thereby identifying an external reality to which everyone and everything is subject.

On the other hand, relatively oriented individuals may make it a point to use terms such as *choose*, *prefer*, and *agree* when referring to their personal preferences. Similarly, “I agree with you” replaces “you are right.”

We take note that traditional terms such as *true* and *good* can be seen as simply referring to logical consistency within a given context. That is, $2 + 2 = 4$ is a logically consistent statement, and no claim need be made that these numbers have an external reality independent of the perceiver. Similarly, a *good* movie may simply refer to a movie that was logically

consistent with the preferences of the perceiver.

The language of the mixed perspective can be described as employing the art of ambiguity. When skillfully deployed, inconsistencies in logic can be perceived as exceptional depth by the casual observer. And again, emotions may take precedence over reason under the guise of being caring and sensitive. A mixed message may be very attractive to some listeners, although they may be unable to identify exactly any point with which they agree. In contrast to the mixed perspective, those coming from either an absolute or a relative perspective will strive for clarity and logical consistency—albeit within their own particular perspective.

Arguably, the significance of language can't be overstated [work with me—give that “can't be” a relative spin.] We take notice that language habits are well established prior to the age of critical reasoning. As such, the habits are passed on effortlessly from generation to generation. Specialists in semantics have frequently noted the ubiquitous problem of the “is” of identity. We say “that is a tree” and “that is a good person” as if we were describing an external object. As such, we learn in our early years to speak nonsense without ever thinking about the consequences of doing so. However, just as language can be seen as a primary organizer of developing personal experience, changing one's language can be seen as the first step in changing one's own perceptual world.

2.2 SENSE AND NONSENSE

Absolute statements can be seen as literally not making sense in that they are contrary to the entire human sensory system. We can expand this argument to the extreme. Lacking a single example of any plant, animal, or machine that perceives by looking outward, one can argue reasonably that the very idea of “looking outward” is unintelligible to the experience of being human. In this context, the absolute perspective becomes, literally, both nonsensical and unintelligible with reference to its basic assumption regarding a universe whose characteristics are knowable as they exist independently of the perceiver.

In contrast, relative statements can be seen as literally making sense in that they are consistent with the entire human sensory system; and

therefore, they have a built-in validity. The relative-type statement "I like chocolate ice cream" can raise questions regarding the definition of terms, but it is virtually immune from all challenges of accuracy except one—the person is lying and does not like chocolate ice cream.

2.3 THE ISSUE OF CERTAINTY

Both the Absolutists and the Relativists may talk about their levels of certainty on a given matter; however, it can be noted that they are talking about different things. While the Absolutists may be referring to their certainty that they have the *truth* regarding a given matter, the Relativists would be referring to the clarity of their experience on a given matter. For example, while the Absolutists may say that they are certain chocolate ice cream is really good, the Relativists could say that they are certain they like chocolate ice cream.

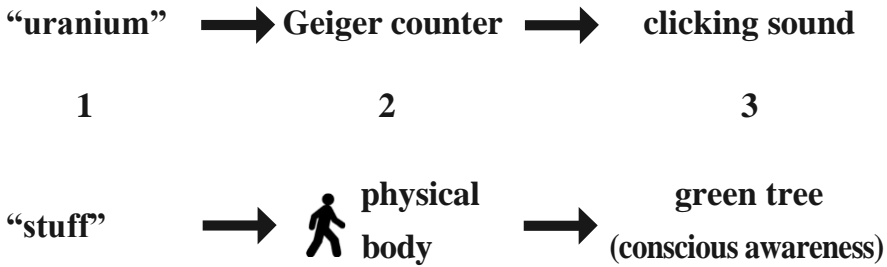
2.4 GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS

Absolutely speaking, we can seek a consensus on the nature of that external reality. While we may acknowledge some degree of error or incompleteness, the best estimate of absolute truth is what the experts or most people say they experience. In contrast, relatively speaking, the building block of human experience is the experience of the individual at a given moment in time. Members of a group can share common perceptions to the degree their sensory systems and past experiences are similar. However, to some degree, conscious experience is always an individual matter. I can't look into your experience and you can't look into mine.

3. THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

3.1 THE GEIGER COUNTER ANALOGY

Comparing ourselves to the physical workings of a Geiger counter may help to clarify the nature of human experience from a relative perspective. Using the three steps of the relative model, we have:



As diagrammed, the Geiger counter makes a clicking sound when in close proximity to uranium. To make the analogy, the uranium parallels the stuff “out there,” the Geiger counter parallels our physical body, and the clicking sound parallels our conscious experience.

If we had access only to the clicking sound and everything else had to be inferred, we could know when we were and were not in the presence of the stuff we call "uranium." Our Geiger counter could then be used to assist in finding or avoiding the stuff we call uranium. However, no amount of studying the nature of the clicking sound will reveal any characteristic of uranium as it exists independently of the Geiger counter. Also, pointing the Geiger counter prod toward the Geiger counter itself will never give us the characteristics of the Geiger counter except in terms of the presence or absence of clicking.

As it is with the Geiger counter sequence, so it is with our physical bodies. Stimuli can be received by our sensory system and neurologically processed, followed by a wide variety of conscious experiences which may include shapes, colors, and sounds. However, no amount of studying these shapes, colors, and sounds will reveal anything about the external characteristics of the stimuli. As California Institute of Technology’s “split-brain” neurophysiologist and Nobel laureate Roger Sperry put it: “Consciousness is not reducible to neural events. The meaning of the message will never be found in the chemistry of the ink” (cited in *Brain/Mind*, April '94).

In the same way, looking at our own bodies with our own sensory system tells us nothing about the actual characteristics of our bodies as they exist independently of our sensory system and conscious experience.

If we cannot know the characteristics of an external world, and we cannot know the characteristics of our own bodies, then it follows that the only world we are trying to understand is the world of our conscious experience. It's the only world we've got! It's the world of human experience from an individual's personal perspective at a particular moment in time.

Accordingly, the primary task for each individual is to learn to live in the world of his or her own conscious experience. As individuals, we are not trying to explain some externally existing world, but only that unique world created by the dynamics of our individual conscious awareness. We can have a relationship with the stuff "out there" in that external world as it interacts with our body without ever knowing anything of its specific characteristics.

Just for fun, the next section analyzes the age-old "Tree in the Forest" question using the absolute and relative perspectives.

3.2 THAT TREE IN THE FOREST

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is present to hear it, does it make a sound? This classic question is occasionally used by college professors to render an inquiring and somewhat combative classroom of introductory philosophy students into an intellectual mass of malleable pulp. The question reached classic status perhaps because it can be interpreted from either an absolute or a relative perspective. Lower-division students have a particular problem as their absolute backgrounds predispose them to look for answers rather than looking at questions. As for our tree in the forest inquiry, resolution can be seen to lie in focusing on the question itself.

Using the absolute-relative distinction to analyze the question, the first step is to establish whether the term "sound" refers (a) absolutely to something *out there* or (b) relatively to someone's conscious experience. This burden of definition would seem to fall on whoever is asking the question. Only the person defining the terms of the question can be said to be asking the question. In the instant case, if "sound" is to be interpreted absolutely as something going on *out there* in the external world, the questioner can then be asked if reference is being made to

"waves of compressed air molecules." If yes, then one can argue that it is reasonable to believe that the tree falling will be followed by what is typically described as waves of compressed air molecules. The presence of a person is not necessary by the definition of the term waves. (Problems of definition arise with any description of something *out there* including "waves of compressed air molecules," but, as just noted, the burden of definition rests with the person asking the question.)

From the relative perspective, in contrast to the absolute, *sound* could refer to the conscious experience of an individual. As illustrated in the three-stage relative model: (1) the falling tree results in waves of compressed air molecules; (2) this wave activity strikes one's ears, followed by eardrum movement, auditory nervous system activity, and our brain's interpretation in the context of our past experience; and only then do we (3) have a conscious experience of a sound which we may recognize being associated with a tree falling. Since this conscious experience of "sound" exists only after it is processed by a human sensory system and fed into an individual's conscious experience, the falling tree makes no "sound" unless there is a person present to hear it. Furthermore, if a person is there to hear a sound, the meaning and significance of that sound would be unique to each listener.

So, the answer of whether a tree makes a sound when it falls can be "yes" or "no" depending on whether the question is interpreted from an absolute or a relative perspective. (Again, there can be slight variations in this dialogue, but the conclusion can be seen as substantially the same if the focus is on defining the terms in the question.) Fortunately, by the time students reach their senior year in college, many of them have at least an intuitive grasp of such dilemmas and have been encouraged to spend more time analyzing the assumptions within questions before looking for answers.

Consider that a person does not have to complete a college education to recognize the importance of identifying the assumptions embedded within questions. It may be that it was the formal schooling that initially cast the assumptions underlying questions in absolute terms, and consequently taught the bias for rushing to find answers. Those with less formal schooling may find it natural to spend more time examining the assumptions hidden within questions.

This “tree and sound” matter is a rational or purely academic exercise about which few, if any, care about. However, the dynamics can be applied to a practical situation about which everyone cares. It’s a matter of finding an accused “guilty” or “not guilty.”

3.3 THE QUESTION OF GUILT

Life involves making physical choices; choices give rise to consequences; and consequences can be judged as desirable or undesirable. Individuals can judge their own choices, and society can judge the choices of an individual. Arguably, the most basic choice an individual or society can make is that of choosing between reliance on an absolute or a relative perspective. Given that they are mutually exclusive, each perspective can be seen as creating its own world of human experience. Can a verdict of “guilty” or “not guilty” rationally be made against a person accused of wrongdoing? As with the “tree and sound” question, the answer depends on whether one chooses to rely on an absolute or a relative perspective.

Consider that the Absolutist would say “yes,” since for them external reality can be accurately discovered. Thus, an absolutely true judgment of “guilty” or “not guilty” can be made.

On the other hand, consider that the Relativist would say “absolutely not”—but “relatively yes.” Absolutely, the truth of the matter is outside the realm of human experience. As with any absolute conjecture, it is critically flawed to attribute to an external reality that which is within one’s own mind. That is, it is not within human experience to look into the mind of another. However, a finding can be made regarding a violation relative to the rules set forth by rule-makers. To say that again, believing another to be “guilty” or “not guilty” does not establish an external reality any more than believing a falling tree makes an external sound. Thus, any finding reflects something about those who are judging rather than absolute Truth.

Krishnamurti put the matter this way: “When the observer is the observed what need is there to interpret, to judge, to evaluate?” (*The Urgency of Change*, 1977, p. 104). We can judge, but only to a standard of our own making. That is, we can become convinced that someone acted contrary to a law, but the law does not reflect an external reality. Rules are relative

to the rule-makers, just as laws are relative to the law-makers. Looking to the next section, we can take comfort in realizing that thinking from a relative perspective does not require blazing a new trail. Historically, many others have preceded us.

4. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RELATIVE THOUGHT

Examples of the relative perspective can be found throughout the written history of mankind. For many of us, our first introduction may have been a quote attributed to Heraclitus (c. 550 BCE), which we cited in the Foreword: “No man ever steps in the same river twice.” About one hundred years after Heraclitus, Greek Sophist Protagoras (c. 450 BCE) was recognized by some historians as the first to put forth a philosophy of cultural relativism. His “Man is the measure of all things” was understood as rejecting any belief in absolutes, and that individual perception is the only world to which anyone has access. Put another way, all anyone can know is the content of his or her own mind, and that experience is necessarily personal and private to each individual. Similar ideas were put forth by the Greek Sophist Gorgias (c. 430 BCE), who said that each individual has access only to his or her own mind, and as such, life is an individual matter. These relatively oriented ideas were in sharp contrast at the time to those Greeks who ordered the death of Socrates (c. 400 BCE) for having dispensed the absolutely wrong ideas.

Whether you begin at the time of the ancient Greeks or before, the recorded history of mankind appears to be moving toward a relative perspective and away from the absolute perspective. Similarly, the relative principles of individual dignity and *free will* are slowly replacing the absolute principles of subordination, force, and determinism. Particularly over the past three hundred years, the relative perspective can be seen as gaining momentum as the philosophy of choice. This is where we will continue the story.

In the early 1700s, a group of philosophers who became known as British Empiricists formalized the argument that human experience was the direct product of our sensory system and did not represent the characteristics of an external world. John Locke is credited with the idea that color is not a characteristic inherent in the object itself but a product created only after

processing by the sensory system of the individual perceiver. This argument was then extended from the experience of color to every human experience. The next step in formalizing the relative perspective has been attributed to George Berkeley, who proposed that an external world, as it exists independently of the perceiver, is unknown and unknowable. Another member of this group, David Hume, can be seen as integrating these ideas as well as anyone. The combined contributions of the British Empiricists (including others, less often cited) can be reasonably described as establishing the principle that the only world a person can know is the world created by an individual's sensory system, and there is no reason to believe that the world so experienced represents any characteristic of an external world.

In the late 1700s, the American experiment in democracy marked the beginning of a trend toward the relatively oriented assumption that citizens have rights as individuals. Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address (1863) reaffirmed the Founders' 1776 principle of having a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Thus, from its founding and afterwards, this role of government replaced the absolutely oriented assumption that political rulers represented some combination of God and Truth.

In the mid-1800s, biologists such as Spencer and Darwin documented the idea that physical life was involved in a process of continual change. This idea of continual change was not lost on the Absolutists that change may be in conflict with the idea of unchanging and all-encompassing Truths (see Clarence Darrow and the *Scopes* trial). Evolutionary thinking can be seen as suggesting a value-free system where the more adaptive survive, but not necessarily representing an absolute ideal. Adaptability may be applicable whether one is talking about an ice age or an overheated planet.

In the early 1900s, physicists such as Max Planck and Albert Einstein argued that the most effective way to describe the physical universe was to speak relatively in terms of interactions, rather than about the characteristics of the particles themselves. In a book validated by Einstein himself, Barnett (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, 1948) characterized relative thought as describing how things behave without ever knowing or needing to know what they are in and of themselves.

In the mid-1900s, three additional contributions in the areas of philosophy, psychology, and general semantics illuminated the path to relative thinking. We will address each separately.

First, in philosophy, existential writers in the 1940s, such as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre portrayed life as that which is created by the choices made by each individual. Their views can be seen as in sharp contrast to the then-traditional idea that the significance of life was to be found in the eternal Truths as recorded in the great classics of literature or in the inspiration of prophets. As the existentialist put it: “existence precedes essence.” Notably, both Camus and Sartre were recipients of the Nobel Prize in Literature—Camus in 1957 and Sartre in 1964.

Second, there was a change in the field of psychology. The traditional and entrenched thinking of the day likened the individual to a telephone switchboard through which incoming stimuli are mechanically processed into outgoing responses. This stimulus-response (S-R) approach was formalized by John B. Watson's behaviorism and popularized by B. F. Skinner's behavioral modification. The assumption was that external factors dominated human experience. Denied or ignored were the ideas of self-determination, free will, and conscious experience.

However, a few theorists began marching to a different tune by focusing on internal events. Experiments designed by the Gestaltists and other studies conducted by Adelbert Ames, Jr. (see his famous account of the distorted room, or the “Ames room”) documented the unique and relative nature of individual perception. The magic industry, with its visual illusions, can be seen as making the same point.

And then there was George Kelly (1955), who put forth his theory of "personal constructs" in which the world perceived by the individual is the focus for understanding, rather than a world prescribed by some alleged system of external Truths. As Pervin (1970) put it: “Kelly discarded the notion of an objective, absolute truth...in favor of the principle from phenomenology—namely that [things] are only meaningful in relation to the ways in which they are construed by the individual.” At this time, social theorist O. J. Harvey (1966) described four conceptual belief systems ranging from a less-mature absolute perspective to a more-mature relative one. Today, researchers having this relative orientation

sometimes refer to themselves as “cognitive psychologists.” On the popular front, a similar emphasis was attributed to the role of individual self-determination by writers such as Erich Fromm (*The Art of Loving*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World, Revisited*), and Ayn Rand (*Anthem*). Theorists and writers such as these provided a respectable shelter for the protection of those advocating a relative perspective.

Third, in the study of general semantics, writers such as Benjamin Whorf and Alfred Ayer documented their observations that language serves as a significant organizer of our perceptual experiences. Whorf’s linguistic relativity principle (1956) argued that a “person’s language builds the house of his consciousness.” The International Society for General Semantics formalized such inquiries, while Marshall McLuhan popularized the notion with his declaration that “the medium is the message.” Similarly, the language of statistics became the language of science and business. Relative terms such as theory, probabilities, correlations, and statistically significant differences rapidly replaced absolutely oriented terms such as truth, certainty, and proven.

Now, in the 21st Century, medical practitioners can be seen as slowly shifting from the old absolute, authoritarian approach of “doctor as god” to a relative orientation of doctor-patient interaction, holistic approaches, and publicly verifiable research. Also, it can be noted that homeopathic approaches (along with chaos and string theories in physics) are encouraging researchers to think of molecules and subatomic matter as simply energy rather than physical entities with discrete geometric boundaries.

Similarly, studies involving epigenetics (turning genes on and off) and stem-cell research can be seen as encouraging a shift from thinking in terms of absolutely fixed genetic characteristics to models of interactive relationships.

Another shift can be seen in the news media as the result of technology. Having captured the public’s imagination as the distillers of unbiased truth in news reporting, members of the news media are increasingly becoming just another voice with a personal opinion (relative)—another blogger. Individual integrity and reputation are increasingly becoming essential ingredients when reporting the news.

Not everyone is rushing to embrace the relative philosophy. Some

pampered spirits are resisting this change to a relative perspective from an absolute one by either holding onto an absolute approach or embracing a mixed approach. Educational systems persist as bastions of the mixed perspective that may change only after they collapse under their own weight. For example, the typical university course in philosophy continues to define philosophy as the absolute-sounding "search for the truth." The inquiries are generally limited to variations of absolute approaches such as those put forth by the traditional schools of Realism, Idealism, and Inspirationalism (Spiritualism). It can be argued that this limited focus has gutted the spirit of the study of philosophy while retaining only the empty symbols of logic and semantics. Arguably, another pampered spirit appears to be surviving in our legal system, which continues to be cast in an iron mask consistent with an absolute perspective. Individuals are judged to be "insane" if they do not know the difference between "right" and "wrong"; and witnesses are required to swear an oath to "tell the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, so help you God"—God can be deleted, but absolute thinking remains. Fortunately, from the relative perspective, the public is increasing the pressure for change in both our educational and legal systems.

CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER I

In summary, we take notice that the absolute perspective is critically flawed. Simply stated, "We do not look out of our eyes." Furthermore, nothing looks outward—neither plant, animal, nor machine. Lacking even one specific example, it is literally nonsense to speak of looking *outward* or sensing *outward*. Any ideas relying on the principle of sensing outward can be said to be unintelligible within the scope of human experience. Said another way, thinking we are looking out of our eyes and seeing an external world is an illusion. Relying on an illusion is delusional.

And again, the absolute perspective can be seen as having a significant downside in that it predisposes one to see life as an all-consuming game of chase. It has to do with mortality. Absolutely speaking, the task in life is to find and embrace as much absolute truth as you can before you die. "Run the good race"—so to speak. This is a formidable task. Absolute truth is all-encompassing. The search for truth in all matters, particularly those pertaining to one's own life, is a full-time task that can be interrupted

by death. Absolutely, life can be likened to an auto race where, at any moment, a car and driver may make contact with a concrete barrier at high speed. Like that driver, we are all in the chase of our lives—at least from the absolute perspective.

In contrast, the relative perspective can be seen as having a significant upside in that it makes sense. Broadly stated, all human experience involves a sequence of interactions. The sequence begins with the assumption of some external stimulus, picked up by an individual's sensory receptors, and finally fed into that individual's realm of conscious experience. It can be reasonably inferred that human experience always reflects the exclusive characteristics of that last realm—conscious awareness. An individual can consciously direct one's attention toward specific stimuli, but the stimuli collected are always experienced in ways unique to consciousness awareness. That is, the only world with which anyone is dealing is that world of personal experience. While I can tell you how I see something, I have no access to the characteristics of anything as it exists independently of my personal experience.

Our conclusion is that the defining characteristic of human experience is conscious awareness. Conscious awareness is not a physical event. It has no weight, dimensions, or mass; it has no chemical breakdown. It is an event that is solely within the domain of an individual's experience. Traditionally, it has been referred to as a spiritual event, in contrast to events described as physical. That is, consciousness is a private event, unique to each individual at a given moment in time.

We ask, for what reason would anyone care about comparing absolute and relative perspectives regarding human experience? It's all about integrity. Virtually all life can be seen as inclined toward seeking integrity. Humans, in particular, seem to feel comfortable when things appear to come together and uncomfortable when things appear as not coming together. Relative approaches to living offer the hope for increasing personal integrity; and our integrity in our relationships with others, including family, community, nation, and the family of nations.

Given that a relative perspective can maximize individual integrity, this brings us to the next chapter—a philosophy of individualism.

CHAPTER II
A PHILOSOPHY OF INDIVIDUALISM

1. WE DID NOT ASK TO BE BORN	19
2. IT'S ALL ABOUT INTEGRITY	20
3. A TRIAD OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE	20
3.1 PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES	
3.2 RATIONAL EXPERIENCES	
3.3 EXPERIENCES INVOLVING CHOICE	
4. A THEORY OF MATURITY	23
4.1 THREE STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT	
4.2 THREE STAGES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT	
4.3 FROM MATURITY TO LIFESTYLES	
5. LIFESTYLES	32
5.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Love of Money)	
5.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Love of Power)	
5.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Love of Authenticity)	
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER II	47

Dedicated to those who would choose to die with their personal integrity intact rather than live without it—consider Socrates of Athens and Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER II

A PHILOSOPHY OF INDIVIDUALISM

A relative perspective provides us with the basis for a philosophy of individualism. Relatively speaking, all we can ever know is our conscious awareness, and that experience is always private and somewhat unique to each individual at a given moment in time. However, we have the conceptual basis for describing a philosophy of individualism to the degree we assume others have similar sensory systems, similar exposure to that *stuff*, and a similar capacity for conscious awareness. Given these assumptions, we can put together an integrated picture or philosophy of human experience, and we can address those traditional questions of "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?"

1. WE DID NOT ASK TO BE BORN

A fully embodied scream may have been our first response to being thrust into life on our own. Our parents may have smiled with satisfaction and described our scream as "healthy." Notably, we had nothing to say about the selection of our parents; and as it turned out, we had very little control over our early environment. However, at some point, we experienced a sense of conscious awareness. This experience of conscious awareness can be characterized as a running sequence of events where the focus was always on the, then, current moment. This initial awareness of being, this first sense that "here I am," can reasonably describe the beginning point for thinking about our human experience and discussing our thoughts with others. Additionally, our primary guidance system can be seen as that of seeking integrity, to which we now turn.

2. IT'S ALL ABOUT INTEGRITY

Our body is a sensory system that is hardwired to (1) seek out stimulation, (2) integrate the incoming stimuli, and (3) return to gathering more stimuli. It's a process. Each day brings new experiences that are integrated, thereby setting the stage for a new tomorrow. As Alice James put it, describing her philosopher brother William James, it is as if we were being "born afresh every morning." Some have likened the process to climbing a spiral staircase. Over time, our rational ideas mature in that they accommodate more experiences. Given that what comes later changes the significance of what came before, life becomes an interactive process where experiences are unique to each individual at each moment in time.

Tumbling down life's pathways, we find ourselves consciously inclined toward establishing and re-establishing a sense of personal integrity in a world of changing personal experience. As Msg. John J. Sullivan put it, "All but the shallowest of living is a matter of tearing up one rough draft after another" (*The Leaflet Missal*).

We can contrast absolute and relative approaches to integrity: the Absolutist is seeking to find integrity in that world appearing to exist *out there* and external to one's self; while the Relativist seeks to find integrity within his or her own world of personal experience. The Mixed finds integrity only in the idea of being happy through physical pleasure.

In our pursuit of integrity, we can distinguish between three distinct types of experiences.

3. A TRIAD OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Historically, we can observe a practice of grouping human experience into some variation of a body-mind-spirit triad. While all three realms generally have been acknowledged, and are considered by many to be self-evident, there has been considerable debate on whether or not one type of experience is primary. We have the Realist arguing for the primacy of physical reality; the Idealist arguing for the primacy of a mental reality; the Dualist arguing for the primacy of some combination of physical and mental experiences; and the Spiritualist arguing for the primacy of

conscious experience. Human history is frequently recorded in terms of the battles between groups advocating the primacy of one view over another.

To describe human experience, we shall use a physical-rational-choice triad. The terms *physical* and *rational* are similar to the traditional conceptions of body and mind—with the relative spin that both are subdivisions of conscious awareness. That is, we are not (1) looking out of our eyes and seeing a physical world *out there*, and we are not (2) experiencing an external world of ideas as they exist independently of us. As noted in Chapter 1, the Greek Sophist Protagoras espoused the view that "Man is the measure of all things." That said, we can be aware of the differences between physical and rational events within our conscious experience. Also, we take notice that *physical* refers to stimulation, while *rational* refers to integration.

As for spirit, the term *choice* can be seen as a better fit with the terms *physical* and *rational* in that choice is just another identifiable conscious experience. Spirit, on the other hand, typically refers to the essence of something rather than to a particular experience. As presented here, my choices reflect acts of asserting my will. The experiences of asserting my will can be seen as distinct from the experiences we call physical and rational. While the terms *choice* and spirit both can be seen to reflect the essence of an individual, the term choice can be seen as less ambiguous and more consistent with a relative perspective.

As for interaction, physical experiences give rise to rational alternatives which, in turn, give rise to the opportunity for making choices and developing a sense of personal identity.

Taken together, the subdivisions of our consciousness, physical-rational-choice experiences can be seen to interact, as with a bola having three balls. The three interact, each influencing the other, resulting in a particular end-experience. As for interaction, physical experiences give rise to rational alternatives which, in turn, give rise to the opportunity for making choices and developing a sense of personal identity. Here is a thought attributed to Ralph Linton: "The last creature in the world to discover water would be the fish, precisely because he is always immersed in it!" Similarly, *conscious awareness* may be the last singular

characteristic defining human nature to be recognized by man.

To recap, relatively speaking, we begin by describing human experience as being circumscribed within the realm of our conscious awareness. We shall look at each of these subdivisions in greater detail—physical, rational, and choice.

3.1 PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES

Here we have what we typically refer to as the physical world—think biology, physiology, chemistry, and physics. The relative spin is to remember two conditions: first, we do not look out of our eyes, or sense anything as it exists external to our sensory system; and second, the characteristics we experience are always unique to consciousness itself.

Distinctive to physical experiences is that these can be reasonably assumed to result from some of that *stuff* striking the body's sensory system, triggering impulses being sent to the brain, and eventually integrated within an individual's conscious awareness.

Emotions will be organized here as a physical experience in that they indicate change in the internal state of one's body. Increasing integrity (physically or rationally) is experienced generally as a physically positive emotion, while decreasing integrity is experienced often as a physically negative emotion.

3.2 RATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Distinctive to rational ideas is that these experiences do not require triggering by any external stimulus; they exist only as mental tools—think of math, logic, and philosophy. Here we have the use of language and symbols. As general semanticists point out, "the word is not the object." And, as in math systems, a number represents an idea having no external existence. The number 2 can be seen to exist exclusively as a product of an individual's mind. Consider that the idea of "average" exists only in the mind. That is, while the average family size may be 2.4 people, there is no family with 2.4 members. We take note that the idea of "nothing" or "0" is a remarkable, rational concept.

3.3 EXPERIENCES INVOLVING CHOICE

We have a sense of choosing from available alternatives. Think of the realm of conscious experience, and what it is to be human. Whatever the basis, we can identify the unique experience of choosing whether it be from a breakfast menu or a list of stockbrokers. Our choice could be based on physical or rational considerations, but it need not be so based. As the words "serendipity" and "capricious" suggest, we can choose without being aware of any physical or rational considerations.

Summarizing our triad, we can see that the three types of experiences interact as a system of checks-and-balances. That is, among our individual choices, we seek integrity that is rationally consistent and physically feasible. As for our relationships with others, we seek integrity among those individuals with whom we see ourselves linked. We may see ourselves linked by heredity, rational ideas, or common choices.

Visualizing that three-balled bola where each ball interacts with each of the other two balls, maturity can be seen as the process where we first establish integrity within each type of experience and then among them. Similarly, two cells can develop into an organ and then into an interactive, multiple-organ body. This process sets the stage for our theory of maturity where integrity is established first within and then between each of the three subdivisions of conscious awareness.

4. A THEORY OF MATURITY

One can imagine any number of stages to describe the maturational process. However, we shall describe three childhood stages where integrity is developed within each part of the triad, and three adulthood stages where integrity is developed among the three. [And, yes, if you are a friend of statistics, the within-between distinction reflects ANOVA.]

Our stages of maturity can be seen as forming a developmental sequence. In childhood, we first have physical experiences, which give rise to rational thought followed by the perception of choosing among alternatives. Marking the beginning of adulthood, we have interaction among the three experiences. Here, a hierarchy of experiences is

developed beginning with the primacy of physical considerations being linked rationally, and culminating with the primacy of choice.

To say that again regarding adult maturity, the physical domain is necessary to get to the rational domain, and both the physical and rational domains are necessary to get to choice. Curiously, once developed, reason can override physical observation as in a magic show where a woman appears to be cut in half. And choice can override both reason and physical considerations as when an individual chooses to put himself or herself at physical risk in the name of freedom—that is, to maintain the rational principle of an individual's freedom to choose.

Given our hierarchy of human experience, we begin with three childhood stages where each type of experience is separately integrated. This is followed by three adult stages where the three stages are integrated among themselves.

4.1 THREE STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Of course, human experience always involves some degree of physical, rational, and choice perspectives. A stage simply marks a time of primary focus.

4.1.1 Child Stage-1: Emphasis on Physical Experiences (Age Profile 0-8 Years)

The primary focus in Child Stage-1 is on developing conscious control over one's physical body. As infants, we learn to roll over and to coordinate our eyes when following objects. Even before this, there is the beginning of hand-eye coordination as seen in grasping. Later, we learn to walk, run, talk, and play. Parents are particularly pleased when the child gains control over bowel and bladder activity. They are less pleased with nail biting or self-stimulation of the genitals. Establishing voice control involves transitioning from babbling to intelligible speech. Generally speaking, one's body is a sensory-integrating system which seeks internal consistency, and integrity between itself and that *stuff* outside itself.

4.1.2 Child Stage-2: Emphasis on Rational Experiences (Age Profile 9-15 Years)

Organization is perhaps the most basic of rational processes and imposes an order, such as in part-whole relationships. A child can find enjoyment both in combining the parts of a puzzle, and disassembling other objects into their separate parts.

Rationally, organizing is a process where parts can be subdivided into subparts so that the initial parts become wholes; and where wholes can become parts as they are combined into broader conceptual wholes. We have the whole of California with a part labeled Hollywood, and Hollywood can become a whole to the part called Hollywood and Vine. Going in reverse, California can be considered a part of the West Coast.

To say that in a different way, part-whole relationships are abstractions and, as such, are simply mental tools created by the mind and existing only in the mind of an individual. Any part can be seen as a whole with subparts, and any whole can be seen as part of a larger whole.

Within this context, distinguishing parts from wholes can be seen as giving rise to mathematics. Traditionally considered the purest form of rational thought, math can be seen as requiring only the mental skills of addition (parts to whole) and subtraction (whole to parts). We take notice that there is any number of ways to add. Vector analysis combines two forces to form a resultant, as with a bow-and-arrow or two trains pulling a ship through the Panama Canal. Also, we can add electro-magnetic waves to get white, or subtract waves to get colors. And again, we have inferential and differential calculus.

Philosopher John Dewey described children as natural experimenters. They learn by doing—constructing parts into wholes, dismantling wholes into parts, and then reconstructing. It's a process leading to the understanding of the relationship between parts and a whole.

Language can be seen as close to math in rational purity given its reliance on addition and subtraction. Words can be combined to form sentences, and sentences can be combined to form paragraphs. Other variations of part-whole relationships have to do with philosophically distinguishing

inductive reasoning (adding) from deductive reasoning (subtracting), and convergent (adding) from divergent (subtracting) cognitive processes. And again, we have generalizing (adding) and discriminating (subtracting).

Regarding both math and language, we can see a variation of part-whole relationships involving perception. Consider the three-dimensional concept of a ball such as a tennis ball. We only experience one side at a time. Mentally we create the concept of a ball by adding our individual experiences. Whether we are talking about a tennis ball or the earth as a ball, we create the concept by adding our individual experiences. And again, that tennis ball can be seen as a dog toy, and the earth can be seen as a part of our solar system. Our current perception of things is a function of our experiences up to the present moment in time. Perhaps it was Croce who expressed the idea that "Every perception is a historical perception."

We take note that *wholes* are always defined by and subordinate to the *parts*. What makes something a whole is the presence of parts. We arrive at a concept of five by first developing a concept of one. Arguably, once you distinguish between parts and wholes, the wholes are always some combination of the parts. Said another way, wholes only have meaning within a context of one's understanding of the parts. As with a book, understanding is always within the context of the reader's interpretation of the words.

It may be helpful to remind ourselves that we do not look out of our eyes, and that rational thoughts may be useful tools of the mind that create experiences existing only in the mind of an individual capable of conscious awareness. Furthermore, such products don't reflect any characteristic of a world external to the perceiver. And again, perhaps helpful is to remember that math is a simplistic way to describe human experience. As Alan Watts put it: "The wiggles of human experience are just too complex to use." A perfectly straight line is easy to conceptualize, but wiggly lines are what we find in Nature.

Also during Child Stage-2 there is the ability to hypothesize as in *what-if* type propositions. The child may be introduced to hypothetical thinking with games of "let's pretend." Such activities introduce the child to see from another's point of view and act out alternative roles. Enjoyment can be found in creating abstract characters, such as a superhero or an action

figure. These begin with the proposition "What if someone had super powers?" The point here is that the child at Stage-2 is engaged in learning some rather abstract, rational activities that later can become the basis for concepts such as the scientific method.

While a person at Child Stage-2 may enjoy a high degree of self-confidence, new experiences may put both Stage-1 and Stage-2 into hibernation as Child Stage-3 emerges.

4.1.3 Child Stage-3: Emphasis on Choice (Age Profile 16-20 Years)

Learning to see from another's point of view gives rise to the awareness of alternatives from which an individual can choose. The young person comes to realize that he or she can choose among perceived alternatives.

Setting one's own goals opens a new vista. In earlier stages, parents would set the child's goals with a directive such as "You must..." or "I need you to...." Typically, the child would be taught to respond unquestioningly to the directives of teachers, religious leaders, and authority figures such as police officers. These directives served as givens or "categorical imperatives" as Emanuel Kant might have put it. Realizing one's own capacity to make choices takes control out of the hands of others and initiates a journey guided by self-determination.

While searching for a sense of self-identity, young people may experiment with several different roles. For sure, there is safety in following the directives of a parent or recognized authority; however, the sense of feeling self-directed can, at times, be both exhilarating and terrifying while providing a heightened sense of being a unique individual.

Emotionally, during this stage, there can be moments dominated by the exhilaration of being free and able to cut loose from restraints, with a mindset of "it's my life and I will live it my way." There is a sense of being all powerful that is supported by the intoxication of an adrenaline rush. Some will find themselves testing limits by succumbing to impulsive behavior or embracing the outrageous regarding dress, grooming, and demeanor. However, they may also experience "freedom's pain"—feeling forced to choose among alternatives with little experience of how to do so. These individuals may be vulnerable to stopping the stress of freedom

by submitting themselves to the structured directives of a cult, be it religious, corporate, academic, or military. If this stage is survived, they may experience what it is to be an adult—to which we now turn.

4.2 THREE STAGES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Going from childhood to adulthood can be likened to the journey from tadpole to frog, or from caterpillar to monarch butterfly. Interactions among one's experiences can be seen as the distinguishing characteristic of adulthood. At first, physical considerations dominate, then rational considerations dominate, and finally considerations involving choice dominate both physical and rational contributions. It's somewhat like that 3-ball bola where one ball exerts a disproportionate influence before coming into balance with the other two. As a mature adult, each of the three variables acts as a "check and balance" on the other two variables. We shall look at each adult stage separately.

4.2.1 Adult Stage-1: When the Physical Dominates (Age Profile 21-35 Years)

At this stage, there is interaction with physical considerations dominating both rational thought and matters of choice. This level of personal maturity also can apply to institutional maturity. As briefly cited in Chapter I, this stage can be seen as reflecting traditional science and dating back to the ancient Greeks. The focus is on carefully reporting physical observations. Discovering the truth refers literally to taking the cover off (dis-cover) reality as it exists unto itself. Those observations of the physical world provide a base of facts that are said to be "proven." Rationally combining such facts, forms an understanding of absolute truth that can be expressed in terms of laws of the universe to which everything and everyone is subordinate. Forces such as that expressed in the law of gravity are thought of as controlling physical actions, as with the observation of a falling apple. Persons thought to be knowledgeable of these laws and their applications were—and are—thought of as authorities or experts. This Adult Stage-1 is consistent with the philosophy of the Realist—what you see physically is what you get.

4.2.2 Adult Stage-2: When Reason Dominates (Age Profile 36-54 Years)

As Madam Curie put it: "Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas." (As of this writing, Marie Curie is the only woman to be the recipient of two Nobel prizes—1903 in physics, and 1911 in chemistry.) And again, regarding the matter of rational dominance, Socrates is said to put forth the idea that "the unexamined life is not worth living."

At this stage, where ideas reign supreme, what's real is not the physical tree but the idea of tree-ness. Ideas are said to be *true or false*. Notably, at this stage, matters of choice are either not addressed or are only relegated to being driven by reason. Everyone should do what reason establishes as the right choice. The significance of physical wealth is to provide us with the free time to develop integrity among our ideas. The world of physical experience becomes a means for arriving at rational understanding. A painting serves as a means for arriving at the idea of beauty. Making reason primary describes the Idealist.

A practical application of *rational and physical interaction* is the concept of time. It begins with the observation of change in the form of a repeated sequence. We come to the idea of the Earth rotating around an axis, and the Earth itself revolving around the Sun. Noticing the sequence gives rise to a 24-hour day and a 365-day year. Adding and subtracting provides us with periods of time. It is a rational idea derived from physical observation.

Another very practical application of rational thinking interacting with physical observation is the scientific method, as distinct from traditional science. The scientific method combines ideas of past thinkers in a dynamic process where the factual parts are added to form theoretical wholes, which in turn guide our attention to new factual parts. It can be seen that this process reflects the essence of relative thinking. Additionally, we notice that the scientific method only addresses rational formulations regarding physical observations. Human experiences relating to choice are not addressed.

Here is a little more about the scientific method. Sometimes referred to

as modern-day science, the historical thinking for the scientific method was philosophically developed by the 1800s, and it was specifically linked to relative thinking in the early 1900s by theorists such as Max Planck (1918 Nobel Prize recipient in physics), and Albert Einstein (1921 Nobel Prize recipient, also in physics). Attributed to Planck: "We have no right to assume that any physical laws exist, or if they have existed up until now, that they will continue to exist in a similar manner in the future."

Stability of method, rather than the notion of fixed facts or laws, became the hallmark of modern-day science. Rather than discovering characteristics of a world existing externally to human experience, all discoveries became a matter of understanding the world of human experience itself. As attributed to Einstein: There is a "basic difficulty derived from man's unwarranted assumption that the geometry of the universe must be the same as that revealed by his senses here on earth" (Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*).

Given that rational thoughts are internal events, given up is the notion of external truths. Also given up is the notion of *cause and effect*. As put forth by Barnett and validated by Einstein, "Quantum physics thus demolishes two pillars of the old science, causality and determinism" (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, only in the 1st edition, while Einstein was still alive).

Looking forward, we take notice that it is human reasoning that has brought us to a point of identifying alternatives from which every individual can and must choose. Arguably, these choices will come to be seen as defining who and what we are at a given moment. We will come to see life as a journey where each person is a work in progress. Such thinking brings us to the next stage of maturity, where choice is primary.

4.2.3 Adult Stage-3: When Choice Dominates (Profile Ages 55+ Years)

An existential realization can be seen as the passport to this theory's highest level of maturity. It's as if one were being born again around a different set of assumptions. The experience may be one or both: a mid-life crisis and an exceptional opportunity. Some friendships may be strengthened, while others may be bitterly torn apart.

It is at this Adult Stage-3 that individual choice becomes primary and can be seen as the singular experience describing the unique nature of being human. Humans are exceptional. If animals were conscious and had the capacity to choose, they would have made man extinct a long time ago. However, humans do have the capacity for making choices. Making choices means choosing from alternatives within a context of what's seen as being rationally and physically available. Unlike in the previous stages, there is now an increasingly rational awareness for managing one's freedom to choose.

Our basic freedom as humans is our ability to focus, and our basic limitation is time.

Perhaps most notable is the change in focus to looking *inward* from looking *outward*. It's what psychological research has described as a shift to an internal locus of control from an external one. As the Chinese proverb points out: "The longest journey is inward." At this stage in our lives, we come to see that our basic freedom as humans is our ability to focus, and our basic limitation is time. The individual comes to see himself or herself as having significant control over his or her life. Within this context, the world we experience is a product of our choices. What is it that we choose to look at and think about? Most basically, where do we choose to spend our time? Our brains will attempt to rationally integrate whatever experiences we choose. Notably, physical and rational abilities can put a man on the moon; however, only choice provides the basis for whether or not one decides to go to the moon.

4.3 FROM MATURITY TO LIFESTYLES

We take notice that the maturational process can cease at any stage of development. History is replete with stories where individuals chose the comfort of having a leader make the choices for them. Emanuel Kant described many people as just too "lazy" or "cowardly" to change.

Here are three additional reasons for the cessation of the maturational process. First, some people are satisfied, or at least comfortable, with their current situation. It's difficult for a rich man to change. It requires giving up the known comfort and stability of one's current sense of integrity, and

striking out into new territory where the benefits and deficits are unknown. Second, change requires time and energy. Some say "I'm too old to change" or "I am set in my ways." And third, previous attempts to advance were met with disappointment. They chose to opt-out and retreat to a previous level of satisfaction. Given these three barriers, it is remarkable that anyone chooses to change. When it does occur, perhaps change reflects the power of a belief in an intelligible universe that can accommodate both the known and unknown.

For whatever the reason, many of us will develop a sustainable lifestyle around one of the three stages of adult development: Adult Stage-1 is paired with the mixed perspective and has a physical emphasis; Adult Stage-2 is paired with an absolute perspective and has a rational emphasis; and Adult Stage-3 is paired with the relative perspective and has an emphasis on individual choice. While each lifestyle will seek internal integrity, integrity will be sought only within one's level of maturity.

5. LIFESTYLES

To begin this section, we notice that any lifestyle will include portions of each factor in our triad of human experience—physical, rational, and choice. The question is one of the proportional contribution each makes to the whole. Different weightings on each of the three factors provide us with an unlimited number of possibilities.

In all of this, we perceive things within the context of our past experiences as organized by our perspective within our level of maturity. The following sections focus on how we describe life from each perspective. For readability, we will look at these lifestyles from the less mature to the more mature—*mixed, absolute, and then relative*.

5.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Love of Money)

Physical considerations are dominant. "If it feels good, do it." Consistent with the Adult Stage-1, both rational integrity and integrity regarding matters of choice are subordinated to maximizing physical benefits. Individuals at this stage embrace whatever ideas and actions bring about the greatest material gain. Reason is used to acquire more physical wealth.

We go to college in order to make more money upon graduation, and we repeat whatever doctrine is required to get high grades leading to scholarships. It's all about getting more money and greater material wealth. As with a scrooge profile, guys can be seen to hoard money as an end in itself. And, we have the material girl with the belief that diamonds are a girl's best friend. Identity is reflected through physical possessions. A sense of self-respect can be achieved upon receiving a gift of flowers or chocolate truffles, or being pampered at a five-star weekend escape. Similarly, when you see my house and car, you see me. The attractiveness of my clothes is more important than the integrity of my ideas. Beauty-queen looks and jock-power physicality are important.

If we never matured beyond this stage, we would continue to be guided by emotional impulses and immediate gratification. Included here would be those who test the limits of their freedom by engaging in high-risk behavior. These adrenaline (epinephrine) junkies can experience an exciting life of their own choosing—until they don't. For these individuals, rational capacities are used primarily to get them out of trouble.

Another mixed lifestyle option can be seen in the profile for "dreamers" or "creative scavengers." As with panhandlers, having no basis for making and maintaining a rational commitment, they are free of commitments but dependent on others for support. There seems to be an extraordinary desire to maintain freedom of choice without using it.

Some mixed lifestyles can appear to be successful. These individuals parasitically link up with an enabler, someone providing unconditional support—a "sugar daddy," matron, parent, trust fund, public assistance, or other host.

For those choosing the mixed lifestyle, we notice the burden of giving the appearance of being happy and expecting the same from others. "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all" and "disagree without being disagreeable" are common mantras. Try to be all things to all people—be all-inclusive. Anger is reserved only for those who violate the rule of making everyone happy. While putting on that smile for another day can become a burden, those who are disruptive can be targeted for shunning and malicious gossip. Drugs can relieve pain, and travel can

provide a distracting variety of experiences, but these too will quickly become a crutch and even an addictive burden.

5.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Love of Power)

To begin, we notice that absolute thinking is primarily a rational system, and would correspond with Adult Stage-2. Through reason, it is argued, we discover truth, and truth guides our choices and prioritizes physical options. The idea is that one's own perceptions represent an external reality; and, as such, represent truth that is applicable to everyone and everything. Choice is subordinate to absolute truth in that we should choose righteousness. Thus, knowledge of absolute truth can be seen to bestow power to the beholder over everyone and everything. When in authority, they can be heard to describe their actions in terms of "It's the right thing to do."

Those who embrace the absolute perspective can be seen as taking one of two approaches. On the one hand, facts (parts) are considered to be proven or true, and they are inductively put together as if in a giant puzzle, forming an increasingly larger picture of reality. On the other hand, an idea (whole) is considered to be true as a matter of holy inspiration. Accordingly, individual observations (parts) are subordinated within the context of this holy-inspired truth. Notable here is that absolute thinking involves keeping the inductive and deductive processes separated. If combined, you have interaction, change, and the relative perspective.

Perhaps ironically, humility can be seen as the distinguishing characteristic of absolute thinking. Living a life of subordination to the truth, the Absolutist can make a sincere public showing of humility. He is also in a position to be an authoritative guide to others—a messenger of truth and salvation, so to speak. With a life of subordination comes the claim to selflessness. He may speak of knowing God's will, or the proven truth of Nature as discovered by science. Either way, he is subordinate. With such humility, others should be grateful and thankful to him, while admiring and praising his selfless service to mankind. Declaring that his ideas reflect an external reality to which everyone is subordinate, he may seek a leadership position of authority in the public domain. In this respect, he can claim to be absolutely and humbly self-righteous, even to martyrdom.

Within this context of absolute thinking, we shall now briefly summarize three focus points regarding the absolute lifestyle.

First, life is a chase. Bluntly put, one's absolute purpose in life is to find and embrace as much truth as possible before death brings the chase to an end. Beyond this, there is the commitment to bring others to an understanding of absolute truth.

While running this absolutely good race, there is the matter of validation. How does anyone know that his or her understanding reflects absolute truth? How does one know if they are "Number 1" and made of the "right stuff"? We can cite several commonly used approaches for establishing validity.

While seeking to be a model of perfection, one can find gratification in being recognized by others as a hero, man-of-the-year, or woman-of-the-year. Another approach, when establishing physical superiority, is to have a contest where "might makes right." Climbing the highest mountain or its sheerest face can demonstrate superiority over nature. Some seek to overcome a personal hurdle, such as when a blind person competes in a skiing competition against others so challenged. Similarly, a deaf person may train to be a trial lawyer. And again, there are contests that use experts to make the determination of winners as in formal debates or dog shows. Perhaps the default standard is to simply say that "more is better." My bigger home validates that I am more successful than you. In all such contests, competing to win can be seen as validating one's self-worth and being made of the right stuff.

Whatever approach is used, competition for the purpose of winning can be seen as grounded in absolute thinking. Emotionally, there can be considerable pleasure in winning over a competitor. Even in a classroom, getting the right answer before the other students can be seen as making you better and thereby contributing to your sense of self-esteem.

A variation on chase is when an individual joins a group and then shares the glory of the group's accomplishments. In all such contests, it's a matter of us-versus-them. A cause-oriented group can do the same with a focus on saving the planet, the rainforest, or the Northwestern speckled owl. As we have seen, nations have competed to put the first orbiting satellite into

space and the first man on the moon.

The litmus test for value-oriented absolute thinking can be seen as whether or not one imposes his or her own perceptions on others. The litmus test for rationally oriented absolute thinking is the claim to know the mind of another—including the mind of God.

Second, unique to an absolute perspective are the absolute judgments of good and evil. Once we have established the absolute truth on a given matter, it can be seen to follow that it is good to act consistent with the truth, and evil to act without consideration of the truth. Notably, judging in terms of good and evil (or right and wrong) maximizes one's authority over others. Choosing is subordinate to truth. The litmus test for *value-oriented* absolute thinking can be seen as whether or not one imposes his or her own perceptions on others. The litmus test for *rationally oriented* absolute thinking is the claim to know the mind of another—including the mind of God. Using physical force or rationally generated guilt are common techniques for achieving compliance.

Tolerance of evil is not a virtue.

Here is a critical point: individuals, such as philosophers and scientists, could just search for and disseminate the truth without imposing compliance. However, value-laden absolutes create the demand for compliance from everyone. This is a big deal. Just as truth covers all there is, there is the basic determination that everything done should reflect good and not evil. As a matter of public policy, everyone has the duty to support goodness and suppress evil. Good acts should receive rewards, and evil acts should be punished. Tolerance of evil is not a virtue.

With knowledge of absolute good and evil, we become as gods, worshipping our own perceptions as truth. While time is of the essence, the chase becomes supercharged if one believes that success is rewarded with an afterlife of pleasure. Similarly, if being unsuccessful is punished with an afterlife of discomfort, the chase can become really serious.

Whether it is wrapped in religious, humanitarian, economic, or rational considerations; the result of value-laden absolutes can justify the use of force over others. Some use the carrot of "Let's get real" followed by the

stick from hell where you burn forever.

Third, absent choice, there is a reliance on rules for guiding one's behavior. The role of the individual is as a follower of rules conveyed by those in positions of authority. There is the absolute expectation that everyone will follow the rules or suffer the consequences. As in driving a car, following the rules avoids chaos. Rules can guide our every step and provide a *Stepford Wives* sense of harmony and stability—think frontal lobotomy.

The primary rule for absolute thinking is to respect rule-making authority. To respect authority is to not question authority. We have gang members saying "my turf, my rules," and we have parents admonishing their children to do something "because I said so." The rule is to do it. It may be seen as disrespectful when an underling questions those in authority. It's not the challenge of a rule that is important; at issue is the challenge to the whole system of rule-making authority. And again, it's the rules that establish who is dominant and who is subordinate. Publicly defined roles include: doctor-patient, employer-employee, officer-enlisted, religious leader-follower, teacher-student, coach-player, attorney-client, and government-citizen.

Arguably, the primary rule of absolutely oriented law enforcement is that of establishing oneself as dominant and in control of the situation. The description to "chase and punish" replaces to "serve and protect." Priority is given to supporting law enforcement officers and their unions (physical), rather than supporting the law itself (rational). And again, the Absolutist sees incarceration as having the objective of punishing or rehabilitating—however, either approach fails to accommodate the matter of human choice.

Regarding incarceration, some individuals are put there for the reason that they were never educated in managing matters of choice. Even in school, they needed teachers or gang members to tell them what to do and think. It can be seen as unfortunate that many children were taught only the language of absolute thinking which erected barriers to learning the language of relationships such as those found in algebra, geometry, and statistics. Consequently, they grew up without learning the skills required for making choices. They now do well only in a highly structured

environment. Prison is one such setting. Other settings can include the local gang, institutions of education, corporate mega-business, organized religion, and the military. At the rational level of development, these individuals may require structure to be provided. Consistent with absolute thinking, rationally arrived at truths to which everyone is subordinate provide a safe harbor requiring little effort and where anyone can drop anchor.

Over time, rules become social customs, and adherence provides stability. Everyone knows what is expected of them and what they can expect from others. The unquestioned obedience to rules provides a sense of harmony and safety for everyone. Bureaucrats become as gods.

As an aside, we take note that the calendar can become a tool providing orderliness that enables us to ritualize our gift-giving and timing for social gatherings. Birthdays, anniversaries, and established holidays will all be dutifully noted on our calendars. There will be a day informing us when we should remember those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom we do not embrace. We will shoot off fireworks and eat hot dogs. All this can be seen as consistent with an external locus of control and absolute thinking.

And again, we notice the importance of giving the appearance of being happy and expecting the same from others. If we are abiding by the Truth, we will all be happy. If we are not happy, it must be that someone is not abiding by the Truth.

If maturation stops here at Adult Stage-2, we have a very rationally focused, authoritarian individual. To survive socially, such a person generally requires guidance from a leader. Adult Stage-2 adults require leaders—and they seek them out; just as Stage-2 leaders require followers—and they seek them out. In exceptional cases, academic centers use and encourage these *beautiful minds* to build rational paradigms that may assist others in achieving practical results. High IQ types and savants can be seen as additional examples where reason has an almost exclusive dominance.

5.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Love of Authenticity)

With maturity comes the relative perspective and the ability to listen to another point of view. We now have the basis for a sense of individual dignity, interaction, and personal identity. At this point of development, we come to realize that we are free to choose. As philosopher William James is said to have declared: "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will." That first experience of freedom to choose may occur when we feel frustrated by two equally attractive alternatives. We are like the proverbial donkey that starved to death when placed exactly half-way between two bales of hay. Personally, we may have had the experience of wanting to buy a pair of shoes, only to find ourselves leaving the store after being unable to choose from among several pairs. As the existentialist may put it, we become aware of our freedom because freedom is agonizing. However, the realization that there are many acceptable alternatives within the realm of physical and rational possibilities can be seen as the beginning of behavior that is uniquely human. To again cite Harvard Professor William James: "There is nothing absolutely ideal: ideals are relative to the lives that entertain them" (*Talks to Teachers*).

And so it is, our seeking integrity among our choices gives rise to a sense of Being. Some refer to a sense of "I am." As the author of one's own world of experience, making personal integrity a top priority can aptly be described as a love of authenticity. As the title lyrics of entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. put it, "I Gotta be Me"; and again, singer Frank Sinatra described it as "I Did it My Way." In an earlier time, the historical record reports that Socrates and Jesus each embraced the principle that they would rather die with their integrity than live without it. It is this personal sense of identity that gives rise to the notion of a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Relativists engage in value-free interactions reflecting each participant's level of maturity, in contrast to the Absolutists who judge everyone from a timeless standard of their perfect ideal. And again, the Relativists are guided by a sense of internal integrity, in contrast to the Absolutists who are guided by an external standard of absolute truth. Once more, the Relativists have an appreciation for the *is-ought* problem (David Hume,

1739). That is, an individual understands the unchartable separation between what is and what *ought* to be. The *ought* is outside the realm of human experience.

Perhaps the first challenge in managing freedom is the task of setting aside all that critically flawed instruction of our past. It's what Emanuel Kant referred to as *negative education*—where the child is taught that there is an authority beyond the self. And then we have Nobel Prize-winning author Hermann Hesse's most famous and influential novel, *Siddhartha*. In it, Siddhartha laments: "I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in order to become a child again and begin anew."

Within this context of the relative living style, here are four focus points unique to this perspective: (1) self-interest, (2) interaction, (3) change, and (4) free will.

5.3.1 Self-interest

Self-interest takes the foreground when absolutes are seen as unintelligible. We have access only to our own interests. Altruism can be seen as fallacious and facetious. Self-interest will always reflect one's level of maturity.

When Relativists say all they have is their own experience, the Absolutists can be heard calling them egocentric, selfish, and arrogant. Where the Relativists say "I believe," the Absolutists say "It is." From one's own perspective comes their own characterization of themselves and others.

Relatively speaking, there is a dark side to those Absolutists who describe themselves as helping, giving, and caring for others. Their gifts can be seen as taking control over the recipients. That is, the gifts create needs that can be met only by the giver. The recipients of the gifts may become hostile if they come to see the gifts as simply a ploy to make them over in the benefactor's own image. For such Absolutists, the greater problem is that this appearance of altruism may be hiding the underlying self-interest. On the other hand, when Relativists care about the outcome of an interaction, they then understand that their participation reflects self-interest. This brings us to our next focus point.

5.3.2 Interaction

Interaction is a logical consequence when absolutes are seen as unintelligible. Arguably, all human experience involves interactions. As stated earlier, we can't jump out of our skins to see how the world looks *out there*. We can know neither our neighbor nor our self, but we can know our interactions. As famously put by the poet Mary Carolyn Davies: "I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you."

First on our list of relationships is that of becoming our own best friend. As Shakespeare put it, "This above all: to thine own self be true...." For many, being true to oneself involves spending time alone, often at the start of the day. In the morning, the demands of external stimuli are minimized as one's focus is turned inward. During sleep, the brain can be seen as seeking to maximize internal integrity. Upon waking, it's as if, from an inner voice, inconsistencies in thoughts and actions consciously come to the surface in a form that can be addressed. With practice, an individual can learn to use a morning period of quiet reflection to exercise considerable control over his or her life, while increasing his or her sense of integrity. In addition to a quiet period of reflection in the morning, some will stop and reflect several times a day, and others will take a day off once a week to review their life situation. Similarly, whether we are speaking of an individual or one's cultivated field, there is the practice of restoration every seventh year. Seeing the consequences of one's choices during times of reflection can give rise to a powerful sense of self-determination.

After becoming our own best friend, we can expand our world of personal experience to include our neighbor, community, country, humanity, and all of Nature. Our friends become those who join with us in our journey toward a personally integrated lifestyle. Each day brings additional experiences and an opportunity to integrate them into models that accommodate an ever-increasing number of experiences.

Perhaps ironically, those who oppose us can significantly contribute to our growth and maturity. We reflect maturity when we say "no," but give thanks to those who oppose us. In *Stronger Lessons*, Walt Whitman put the question to us: "Have you learn'd lessons only of those who admired

you, and were tender with you, and stood aside for you? Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who reject you, and brace themselves against you? Or who treat you with contempt, or dispute the passage with you?" Jean Piaget put forth a widely acclaimed theory of child development where a failure to assimilate an experience leads to accommodation, where conflicting ideas promote personal maturity. From this point of view, those who tell us to avoid negative thinking are giving a prescription for our intellectual demise and loss of personal identity.

As humans, we are in no position to lecture or to be lectured.

A critical characteristic of interactive relationships is that of recognizing jurisdiction. As humans, we are in no position to lecture or to be lectured. All we can do is listen to the experiences of others and share our own. As Nature would have it, I am not subordinate to your preferences and neither are you to mine. Following an ancient guideline, we shall not claim to have knowledge of absolute good and evil for anyone—ourselves included. Indeed, embracing this relatively oriented perspective shall make both of us free.

With such a concept of jurisdiction, the Relativist seeks to provide each individual with maximum control over his or her own body and thus over that place called home. Alas, there is the continuing task of drawing those lines where one person's jurisdiction begins and another's ends. Additionally, we serve each other best when we remain separate. As Kahlil Gibran described the process: "Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf" (*The Prophet*). In contrast, the Absolutist has no concept of jurisdiction. Absolute truth applies to everyone and to every situation—past, present, and future. It is the rule that evil must be offset with good deeds or sacrifice.

Here is another way of looking at the difference between the Absolutist and the Relativist. For the Relativist, "good fit" replaces "good value." While good value reflects an absolute perspective at Adult Stage-2, good fit reflects a relative perspective at Adult Stage-3. Good fit follows from one's choices. Good fit may express itself when individuals buy items having high value; but if not a good fit for them, they give the items to their friends.

Notably, good fit is value free. That is, the individual is free from subservience to any system of absolute values. Good fit has to do with increasing integrity among one's experiences—beginning with matters of choice and extending rationally to what's physically available.

Similarly, there is the matter of timing. Relativists don't wait for external guidance such as that provided by a calendar noting birthdays and holidays. They don't have to wait for Memorial Day. At any time, they can stop and focus their thoughts of appreciation on those who made sacrifices from which they benefited. And Relativists understand that their preferences do not create absolute values to which others are bound, but their thoughts and actions do reflect who they are.

Let's not fail to mention the role of semantics. Language is the medium for much of our interpersonal communications. It provides the tools for any rational discourse. We can ponder how many discussions become fruitless arguments as a result of using words without having a common meaning. As Voltaire is said to have put it: "If you wish to talk to me, define your terms." Socrates put it this way: "The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms." Jesus reportedly was quite pointed: "men will have to give account...for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36).

It may be that we grew up being taught the absolute language of subordination. Some phrases are so common as to become thoughtlessly reflexive. "I must" and "I need you to" connote demand characteristics rather than freedom. They can be seen as declarations of dominance and subordination. Even the terms "please" and "thank you" can be seen as existing in a dominate-subordinate context. Similarly, we have phrases that assume we are looking out of our eyes. Telling someone to "look at the stars" conveys the idea that we are observing an external world.

In contrast, using relative phrases such as "I want" and "I see" can begin the process of thinking from a relative perspective. To avoid being tightly wrapped, common value terms such as "good" and "bad" can be used without assuming that they reflect an external reality. Such value terms simply refer to logical consistency within someone's preferences. That is, a "good" grade simply means scoring high on someone's test. A "good" child simply refers to having a status consistent with the preferences of

the parents or other evaluators.

The point is that our choice of words can promote either an absolute or a relative perspective on human experience.

Just as language may have been the mortar for establishing an absolute perspective, a change in language may also be the first step in shifting from an absolute to a relative perspective. The point is that our choice of words can promote either an absolute or a relative perspective on human experience.

Let's remember the mixed perspective. If someone is looking for self-aggrandizement, mixing absolute and relative perspectives can create the appearance of being a deep thinker. However, it has been said that there are two common reasons for being unable to see the bottom of a lake. One is that the lake is deep, while the other is that the water is muddied. Mixing absolute and relative perspectives always muddies the waters.

5.3.3 Change is a Given

The tide comes in and the tide goes out—what was before is not the same as what is now. With change, we can also see a process of evolving. The child grows to become an adult. In each case, the maturational process can be seen as cyclical, as it is with that spiral staircase. Today replaces yesterday, and tomorrow will replace today. Life's journey is always a work in progress. To repeat the words of Msg. John J. Sullivan: "All except the shallowest living involves tearing up one rough draft after another" (*The Leaflet Missal*).

The relative perspective can be seen as uniquely adapted for accommodating change. In contrast, the absolute concept of unchanging and all-encompassing truths can be seen as incompatible with change of any kind. Similarly, absolute justice would refer to being held accountable for our every act or thought, from birth to death. One's past creates an increasing burden of guilt to a point of freezing up—everyone is guilty. In contrast, from a relative perspective, we find ourselves continuously giving up and letting go as we take a bold step forward and give up the stability provided by our past. There is the sequence of repeatedly "losing one's mind" with the belief that a more mature one is just around the

corner. The process may feel as if, on a foggy day, we step off the dock onto a boat that is undulating with the waves. Courage is required for living life to its fullest.

Without fear of making absolute errors, there is a basis for working through difficulties rather than avoiding them. And there is no reason to say that one is "sorry" for having a thought or taken an action based on yesterday's experience. Saying "I'm sorry" reflects subordination to an ideal and undermines the very strength of character and risk tolerance required to creatively advance along life's journey. Today's experiences provide an opportunity for thoughts and actions that are more mature—accommodating more experiences with greater integrity. We find that we can tame every problem by asking, "What can I learn from this?"

5.3.4 Emotions and Free Will

Before closing this section on the relative-perspective lifestyle, we will put forth an idea regarding an interaction between emotions and free will. We will walk through five steps.

First, consider that we have a natural or reflexive response (without conscious thought) when experiencing emotions. If the emotions are experienced as positive, we relax and are accepting; when negative, we seek to remove ourselves from the situation. As for our interest in free will, our response to negative emotions is of particular interest. When someone is talking and we feel emotionally negative, we seek to get out of the situation either physically, as when shouting and storming out of the room; or mentally, by letting our mind wander off as we dismiss the conversation as tedious or boring. And again, we may redirect the conversation by telling a joke or asking if anyone wants to try our freshly baked cookies. Whatever our response, the purpose is to stop that incoming presentation giving rise to our negative emotions.

Second, the dynamic of interest here is that positive emotions let us know when incoming sensory information is consistent with our current thinking. Negative emotions let us know that the incoming information is inconsistent. It's as if we are physically hardwired to avoid or escape from situations that evoke negative emotions; and conversely, to move toward positive emotional experiences.

Third, curiously, our emotions precede our awareness of the underlying idea. This observation was artfully demonstrated by social scientists Schachter and Singer (1962). Applying their results to the relative perspective, we take note that incoming sensory data are first accessed as being consistent or inconsistent with our current thinking. If inconsistent, the sympathetic nervous system is triggered and there is a negative sensation matching the degree of inconsistency. Notably, all this happens within a millisecond, before any rational assessment of the circumstances. Our response is a reflex, not requiring higher cortical processing. With the sympathetic nervous system triggered, we act before we think. That is, we are equipped to respond to situations based on our immediate emotional reaction, and prior to rational awareness. Think of dodging to avoid a falling object, or the strong desire to escape when listening to a person talking about ideas that make us feel uncomfortable. The point is that we can experience a strong desire to escape prior to rational understanding.

Fourth, notably, it is only at Adult Stage-3 that we realize a critical choice is available to us. We can choose to override our desire to remove ourselves from that negative situation. What follows is that we become aware of an idea that is contrary to our current thinking. Said another way, we will only be exposed to contrary ideas when we consciously choose to override our negative feelings and instead focus attentively on what is giving rise to those negative emotions. Perhaps this choosing to override negative emotions is the most notable characteristic of the Adult Stage-3 lifestyle. It provides for a notion of free will and what can be seen as the essence of being human. Thus, the primary dynamic of the Adult Stage-3 lifestyle is when an individual realizes that he or she is free to choose to override negative emotions and become a different person.

Fifth, the practical application of having one's free will override negative emotions is that no one is able to change our thinking without our permission. No one changes us without our consent. However, the greater the perceived change, the more intense the emotion. And the more change required, the more energy required. Our emotions can serve as a gatekeeper to help us stay within manageable limits. That is, in our world of personal experience, information is admitted only by invitation. "Seek and you will find" along with "Ask and it will be given" can be seen as the central dynamics of human experience. With maturity, there is an

increased ability to let things come apart, while overriding and working through frustration. In the Adult Stage-3 lifestyle, we are able to have our conscious choices determine the stimuli to which we are exposed and at a level of intensity that we are able to manage. These are the stimuli that combine to form our world of personal experience at a given moment in time.

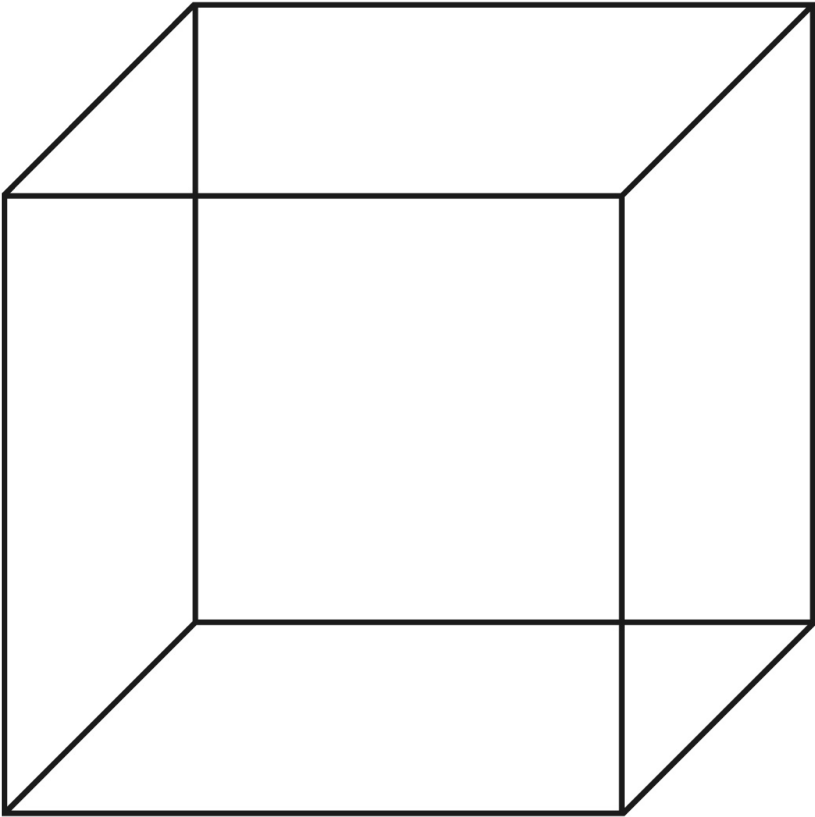
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER II

From the relative perspective, life can be seen as a journey. We take but one step at a time. The information gained from our previous step guides our next step. As Nature would have it, we always walk in the light of our current experience. It's an interactive and dynamic process. Today's experiences give rise to a new outlook. This new outlook provides guidance looking forward and permits discarding some of the burdensome luggage from the past. We are no longer that person. Said another way—in our youth, we strove to survive and flourish in the environment into which we were born; as adults, we strive to survive and flourish in the environment of our own choosing. And again, while the Absolutist is focused on a predetermined destination, the Relativist focuses on his or her constantly changing choice of destination. Once more, for the Absolutist, choice of traveling companions may be "until death do us part"; while for the Relativist, choice of traveling companions is an inescapable step-by-step or day-by-day determination.

Looking forward, we take note that a critical factor for achieving and maintaining integrity within one's personal experience is our choice of a primary referent. It is within a context of a *primary referent* that we are able to set priorities among the physical and rational alternatives available to us, and to distinguish between what is relevant to us from that which is not. Additionally, a primary referent provides coherence to our actions, and therefore a basis for establishing integrity in our relationships with others as well as our own sense of personal identity. Common referents include God, nature, family, country, money, an ideological cause, history, security, or some blend of these.

Arguably, a belief in God is historically the most commonly professed primary referent. Notably, all three lifestyles—the Relative, the Absolute,

and the Mixed (RAM)—can be seen as having their own view of God. For the physically oriented Mixed, God will solve their problems and reward them with physical blessings. For the rationally oriented Absolutists, God will guide them to true knowledge of good and evil; and assist them in achieving that which is good and avoiding or forgiving that which is evil. Additionally, God will direct them to those absolutely true writings and prophets that are "sacred" and "inspired." As for the choice-oriented Relativists, God is a force with which an individual can have a personal, interactive relationship. For them, while neither God nor the individual is knowable, the interactive relationship is knowable. This brings us to our next chapter—God.



The Necker cube illustrates that perception is in the eye of the beholder. By extension, it can be seen that human experience is always relative to the individual perceiver. For some, their personal experiences are embraced as absolute truths to which everyone is subordinate.

CHAPTER III

GOD

1. IT'S A CONVENIENT CONCEPT	52
2. THE RAM DISTINCTION	54
2.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Father-Child Relationship)	
2.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Master-Servant Relationship)	
2.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (An Interactive Relationship)	
** PERSPECTIVES IN CONTRAST (Table)	
3. THE <i>BIBLE</i> HAS ALL THREE PERSPECTIVES	68
3.1 THE GARDEN OF EDEN (Original Sin)	
3.2 CAIN AND ABLE	
3.3 THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	
3.4 1 SAMUEL (Give Us a King)	
3.5 JEREMIAH (One-on-One Relationship)	
3.6 JESUS	
3.7 PAUL	
3.8 THE <i>BIBLE'S</i> INTERPRETATIONS AND VARIATIONS	
3.9 THE KINGDOM OF GOD	
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER III	81

CHAPTER III

GOD

Just about every organized religion has its conception of god, and every individual has his or her own image of god. One's conception of God carries with it a life history of use and personal experience by the holder.

There are those who called out to God: "What shall we call you?" The response was simply to say that "I am" (Exodus 3:14). Now, that's relative! Some early writers used letters without vowels when referring to God, thereby preventing the term from being spoken with implied meaning. More recently, the term "Force" in place of God was popularized in the movie *Star Wars*. When asked the source of "the Force," George Lucas—the creator of *Star Wars*—affirmed that his use of the term in the movie was "an echo" of a phrase from a 1963 abstract film by Arthur Lipsett. Lucas further said that the idea behind it was universal: "Similar phrases have been used extensively by many different people for the last 13,000 years to describe the life force." And again, the idea of a "force" has been used in physics for hundreds of years to describe the controlling influence behind the laws of gravity or motion. As a personal matter, some individuals find the term "Force" to be a better fit when referring to what they believe to be a spiritually dynamic influence in their lives—particularly in contrast to a fixed image of God with unchanging characteristics.

While Absolutists create an image and call it God, the Relativist may prefer making a reference to "the I am" or "the Force." We will use the terms God or Force interchangeably while making a reasonable effort to provide a context for clarifying whether our use is absolute or relative.

1. IT'S A CONVENIENT CONCEPT

It has been said that even if we believed God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him (Voltaire). The idea of God is, in a word, convenient. Some of the following are frequently cited reasons illustrating that convenience.

1.1 IT'S A BEGINNING POINT

We may find it comforting to think of a beginning point to which we can relate. If we see a watch, it seems natural to assume a watchmaker. When we see the interactive parts of Nature from the one-celled protozoa to the trillion-celled human, and from the grains of sand on the beach to the stars in the sky, it seems natural to think of a Maker. Said another way, "intelligent design" suggests a Maker or Creator. Additionally, we have that intriguing evolutionary notion of species that seem to anticipate each other, suggesting a Maker or Creator. Consider that whatever Force we assume gave rise to our experience and our capacity for conscious awareness is what we call God. For some, it makes more sense to think of a Maker than an alternative beginning point such as a "Big Bang" or "random chance interactions of substances from an unknown source." It's not so much that we have an image of God as the creator of Nature, but that our view of Nature gives rise to an image of God.

1.2 INTEGRITY IN THE BIG PICTURE

Our brain will attempt to provide us with an integrated picture of our experiences and our place in that picture. With integrity comes a sense of hope that future experiences can be accommodated into a coherent model. There is therefore no need to fear a new idea. However, old ideas giving way to new ideas frequently involve a painful process. With a God belief, there is hope to endure the pain of change. As Kahlil Gibran put it: "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding" (*The Prophet*). As noted in Chapter 2, only individual choice can override the natural avoidance of pain and permit change. A belief in God can be the trigger that stimulates the process of maturity leading to an integrated perception of human experience. Integrity requires a *primary referent* around which one's experiences can be accommodated—"If not God, then what?"

1.3 WE ARE NOT ALONE

While we can't see into another's conscious experience, our view of God may include a unique opportunity to communicate with a Force that has direct access to our conscious experience. As some would put it, "from spirit to spirit." This can lead to a palpable sense of presence and, therefore, a sense of not being alone. One's own conscious experience could become a sanctuary known only to the individual and God.

1.4 ACCOMMODATING THE DEATH DILEMMA

Life can be a tough slog and has been characterized as pushing a rock up the hill only to have it roll back at the time of physical death. Dealing with death has always been a matter of social focus. While not invoking the idea of God, computer whiz Steven Jobs took notice of the exhilarating sense of freedom after he came to terms with the idea of death (2005 Commencement Speech at Stanford University). Others entertain the idea that their children will continue to push the rock of their parents up the hill. This may provide a personal sense of comfort to the parents, but candor suggests that each of those children will wish to push a rock of their own choosing. To do the bidding of another is to diminish one's own sense of being. As for believing in a spiritual life after physical death, the idea dates back even before the tombs of the Egyptian Pharaohs and the rituals of Viking kings.

It may be a uniquely human experience to think in terms of a beginning and an ending, or birth and death; however, with a God concept, the physical death of one's body only requires that creative Force to provide another sensory input into one's conscious experience. Given that the relationship can be assumed to be between two non-physical spirits from the beginning, this possibility is not difficult to conceptualize. If the fear of losing one's body were minimized, the result could be a greater appreciation for the present moment.

1.5 A SENSE OF AWE

Naturalist John Muir is said to have thought of the wilderness as an expression of God's handiwork. Perhaps implied is the notion that it's not

the mountains and streams that are wondrous, but our capacity to consciously enjoy them. It's our own capacity to experience the spiritual aspect of God's handiwork—its symmetry, design, interconnectedness, and integrity. It's that awe-inspiring, mountain-top experience perceived as being in the presence of the Creator. And again, just as the painting says something about the painter, Nature can be seen as saying something about its Creator.

Closing this section on the convenience of a God concept, we take notice that any belief in God can be seen as reflecting the perspective and the level of maturity of the believer. More specifically, applying the RAM profiles, our sequence shall begin with the mixed, proceed to the absolute, and followed by the relative perspective.

2. THE RAM DISTINCTION

2.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Father-Child Relationship)

Viewing one's relationship with God from a mixed perspective provides us with three focus points: (1) God is good; (2) the role of the church; and (3) guidelines for living.

2.1.1 God is Good

For the Mixed, the threshold for having a relationship with God is believing unconditionally (without rational reservations) that God is all-powerful, and that God only wants good things for His children. The focus is physical: God's desire to provide good things to His children is an expression of love, and so it can be reasonably said that God is love. Furthermore, God wants us to be happy and God's love is unconditional. That is, who or what is going to place limitations on an all-powerful God that wants good things for His children?

Becoming a child of God is simply a matter of declaring one's desire to be a child of God and asking God to accept you as His child, which means to acknowledge one's own deficiencies and therefore one's own reliance on God. God will not refuse you because He is a good God; and like a good father, He is unconditionally accepting of His children. Thus, we

can put our faith in God with positive thinking, focusing only on good thoughts and shunning negative thoughts. Bad thoughts do not come from a good God. Whenever asking to be successful, acknowledge that "to God goes all the glory."

2.1.2 The Role of the Church

The church is a physical structure where people come together to provide unconditional support for each other. Additionally, the church can provide the specific wording for an appeal to become a child of God. This application can be spoken in unison with the entire congregation and repeated every week as a renewed confirmation of one's belief. As with the idea of code words like "open sesame," the emphasis is on publicly and correctly reciting the empowering words. The church leadership can provide both the correct wording and the opportunity for its recitation. A charismatic minister can provide weekly encouragement, with the promise that more blessings are just around the corner for those who joyfully acknowledge that all things good in their lives are from God.

For the Mixed, the ideal church is a happy place where all are welcomed who desire to engage in unconditional support of each other and avoid divisiveness. It's to be a place filled to the brim with happy faces and warm and friendly greetings, that is often situated in a magnificent physical structure—or at least the hope for one. Potluck dinners, upbeat music, and joyful dancing can all contribute to a positive social setting. When the groups are large, as with a mega church, there can be a sense of connectedness that generates considerable excitement. The same dynamic occurs at a Super Bowl football game, or a parade of marching soldiers. The addition of singing, clapping, or shouting in unison can generate an emotional high that is socially unparalleled.

2.1.3 Guidelines for Living

The primary guideline for living is to believe that God is in control and that God's love is unconditional; trust in God as a child would a parent. Sing His praises during both the high and low points of daily living. Attribute to God all the good things that happen to you. In all things, give thanks and praise. Whatever happens is His will because He is in control.

You can trust your emotions. It is unnecessary—and perhaps a bit arrogant—to think that anyone could know the mind of God or understand His thinking. Your emotional feelings reveal God's guidance for achieving success. We know this because we feel it—God speaks to our hearts. We know when we are happy and when we are not happy. Negativity does not come from an all-powerful God. Embrace only positive thoughts.

And perhaps, most importantly, provide unconditional support for each other. The message is one of hope for a better tomorrow. Just as God gives us unconditional support, so should we to others. In particular, just as God wants His children to be happy, so should parents want the same for their children. "I just want you to be happy," says the parent coming from a mixed perspective. Unconditional support for one's children is a parent's expression of love just as God's unconditional support for us is an expression of His love. Similarly, "Do no harm." Avoid doing or saying anything that makes anyone feel uncomfortable or contributes to divisiveness. Always have a happy face. Proclaim the good news that the road to happiness is one of peace and harmony leading to God's material blessings. Those of the mixed perspective are encouraged to associate with others who share this insight.

2.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE

(Master-Servant Relationship)

Viewing one's relationship with God from an absolute perspective provides us with three focus points: (1) God as truth; (2) rules of subordination; and (3) judging good and evil.

2.2.1 God as Truth

We begin with the notion of absolutely known truth. In contrast with the physical emphasis of the Mixed, we have a rational emphasis for the Absolutist. God is the creator of the universe as we experience that universe *out there*.

Looking to Nature, we come to believe in the idea of a Maker, Creator, or God of Nature. As creator, God is all-powerful (omnipotent); and again as creator, God is all-knowing of His creation (omniscient). Through

reason and inspiration, man can search for and find the absolute truth about God. Just as God is one with the Truth, as we come to know the absolute Truth, we come to know the mind of God.

An absolute approach to religion can be seen to characterize traditional, organized religion. Each group is formed around a declaration of its core truths. Generally, those core truths would be linked to sacred writings and prophets, all of which are said to be inspired by God. Group leaders are those who have carefully studied those seminal documents and have come to know the mind of God. Their role is that of instructing the members as to the truth about God. Said another way, church leaders are the mediators between God and Man. The church leaders guide the members in the same way that God guides the leaders. Arguably, members want leaders that can guide them. It can be seen that absolute thinking leads to an absolute view of God.

The building where the group meets may be called a church, and it becomes a symbol of a place dedicated to worshiping God. Giving money and time as directed by church leaders is often seen as giving to God. That is, having a relationship with the church leaders is to have a relationship with God. A prescribed amount, such as a tithe, may be encouraged and sometimes required for membership.

2.2.2 Rules of Subordination

Everyone is *subordinate* to the absolute truth. Each group has its own interpretation of its seminal documents, which typically include guidelines as to how followers of God are to think and behave. Well-established writings include the Hebrew *Bible*, the Christian *Bible*, the *Koran*, and the *Book of Mormon*. Corresponding prophets include Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and Joseph Smith.

Some guidelines are in the form of contracts. If one does what is commanded, there will be rewards such as wealth now and heaven later. If not, there are punishments now and hell later. Group leaders will reference the sacred writings and prophets when instructing the members in the absolute truth. Some leaders will say that they have been personally called by God for the purpose of declaring God's will to everyone.

2.2.3 Judging Good and Evil

It's one thing to say that you know absolute truth. If it stops there, I could just go about my business and ignore you. However, once you add that you know what is absolutely good and evil, you now have a duty to promote good and diminish expressions of evil. That is, worship what one has judged to be good, and hate that which one has judged to be evil. As previously noted in Chapter II, the litmus test for identifying absolute religious doctrines is whether or not they are imposed on others. There are no appeals when the judgments are made in the name of God.

From the absolute perspective, after being saved, everyone's first priority is saving the world from evil and replacing the void with good. With absolute knowledge of good and evil, there are no boundaries. A variation on this point can be attributed to Archimedes: "Give me a place to stand and with a lever, I will move the whole world." Similarly, it can be said "Give me an absolute truth and I can move all knowledge into its proper context." Integrity links everything to the truth. Like a giant puzzle, all truth is interconnected so that, if given one piece of truth, one can logically reconstruct the whole. Truth is unified and assimilates everyone and everything.

Children are taught the difference between good and bad. Over time, a conditioning takes place where one becomes mindful when engaging in good or bad behavior. As the idea matures, it becomes like an internal voice guiding one's choices—what many would call a conscience.

A curious point is raised when knowledge of good and evil is applied to God. If God and Truth are one, and you can arrive at Truth through reason, then God becomes a reflection of your rational thought. Some people go so far as to say that God is subordinate to Truth. That is, a good God can't just forgive and forget man's shortcomings with a wave of His hand. A good God can't rationally associate with bad people. In order to have a relationship with God, it's a rule that evil must be offset by a sacrifice. Accordingly, there must be a sacrifice of something good to offset the bad. A minus must be offset by a plus to sustain rational integrity when reason is primary. Arguably, to say that a good God can't interact with bad people is to make God absolutely subordinate to the rules.

To continue, separating events into categories of good and evil can be seen as giving rise to a divided universe. Good is within the domain of God, and evil is in the domain of the Devil. As logic would have it, good is rewarded with heaven and bad has the consequence of hell. There is an us-versus-them mentality. We are the children of God, and they are the children of the Devil. It's a matter of good versus evil.

Our sense of integrity guides us to support those who believe as we do and to oppose those who differ. For anyone to tolerate evil is to bring into question one's own belief in the truth. Notably, actual disagreement is not required: if something is simply different from the truth, it is evil. It can be seen that the us-versus-them mentality triggers the ultimate game of chase. For the Absolutist, there is comfort in thinking that "God is on my side" or "I am on God's side." Extremism in the defense of God's truth is virtuous whether one is talking about acts of violence against non-believers or a believer contemplating sacrificial martyrdom.

Given that no one is perfect, most organized religions construct a system of sacrifice and penance to offset the believer's shortcomings. It's a rational accommodation. As previously stated, good thoughts and acts can offset evil thoughts and acts, just as a plus can offset a minus in arithmetic. A sacrifice of something good offsets a bad. Repeating good phrases offsets bad behavior. Sacrificing a perfect person would offset any amount of bad people as a matter of logic. For this absolute thinking to work, there must be a perfect person, and that perfect person must be sacrificed.

2.2.4 Facing Absolute Problems

Before addressing the nature of a belief in God from a relative perspective, we will take notice of five problems commonly faced by those who choose an absolute approach to a belief in God. Our primary purpose is to extend a hand to those who are struggling with an absolute approach to a belief in God; and our second purpose is to point out that a relatively oriented approach to a belief in God is a reasonable alternative.

First, when there are several absolutely oriented religions available, how does one decide which to choose? Believing in one's own infallibly in choosing the right one can solve this problem. However, many individuals

resist believing in their own infallibly when selecting the right religion. Such a challenge generally includes choosing which church leader, writings, and interpretations are to be assumed as inspired by God. How does one convince oneself of one's own infallibility in all these matters? It's been described as trying to lift yourself up by your own bootstraps. Arguably, a belief in anyone's infallibility creates a rational problem. Critics of Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld declared that the man who says, "Not I, but God in me" is always in great danger of imagining that he is God (*Markings*). Said another way, claiming to know the mind of God is to make oneself God—for the only mind anyone can know is one's own.

Second, if the assertion is made that the assumed sacred writings are inspired by God, there is the expectation that fulfilling the directives therein will result in eternal blessings from God. However, to be meaningful, any agreement requires a meeting of the minds between the parties.

When it is the individual who selects the written and verbal statements to be relied upon, provides the interpretation of each, and then believes in one's own infallibility; although it may be emotionally comforting to do so, arguably there is no rational basis for believing that the agreement was mutual.

Third, consider the absolute premise that heaven is the eternal reward for those who are good, just as hell is the eternal punishment for those who are evil. Both, heaven as a reward and hell as a punishment, are based on the assumption that an individual infallibly knows the will of God—infalibly knows absolute good from evil. A problem for some people is that claiming such infallibility can be seen as faith in oneself rather than in God.

Some people see describing God in terrorist terms as a problem.

Similarly, some people see describing God in terrorist terms as a problem. If part of the absolute message is to accept salvation or suffer damnation, the offer itself instills terror. Arguably, describing God as a terrorist would seem to reflect the thinking of man rather than God.

Fourth, if one believes that they absolutely and infallibly know God, it follows that he or she could praise God. However, does praising God imply judging God? Can man elevate God by praising Him? Does God desire or need praise from those whom He has threatened with damnation? Without claiming infallibility, we can only praise our image of God. Doing so, raises the problem of idolatry (taking an internal perception and making it an external reality). Our image of anyone or anything will always reflect our own experiences and our own level of maturity. We can only worship an image of our own making.

And again, to say God *did* something is to subordinate God to our perceptions. It's the same when saying God *did not* do something or that He allowed something to happen. We have the same problem when saying that God inspired this person or that book. In all these instances, we can be seen as relying on our own perceptions as infallible.

Fifth, by assuming to know absolute good and evil, we place ourselves in a position to care about others. Caring for others is always, or so it is argued, a matter of trying to make others more like ourselves. We would not choose to help someone rob a bank unless robbing banks was acceptable to us. Helping others embrace our ideals is an expression of self-interest. Complicating things is that when we say we are helping others, it obscures the understanding of our own motives.

We turn now to a belief in God from a relative perspective.

2.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE

(An Interactive Relationship)

Viewing one's relationship with God from a relative perspective provides us with three focus points: (1) a one-on-one relationship; (2) there is free choice; and (3) it's inescapably personal and private at a given moment in time.

2.3.1 One-on-one Relationship

The distinguishing characteristic of a relatively oriented belief in God is that of a one-on-one, interactive relationship between the individual and

God. Religious leaders can be of service to this primary relationship, but never supplant it. While others can be in the role of washing the feet, it is always the role of the individual to walk with God. While some claim to have a belief in a mixed or absolute image of God, there are a few who have a relatively oriented belief in a personal and interactive relationship with God.

Who is the boss? For the Mixed, God would be described as their pilot, and they would be passengers; for the Absolutists, God would be described as their pilot and they are in the role of a subordinate co-pilot; and for the Relativist, the relationship would always be one where the individual is pilot, and God is the co-pilot. After all, it is the individual that chooses to have, or not have, a belief in God.

The dynamics of a personal, interactive relationship with God can be illustrated by a bow and arrow. The string on either side of the arrow creates two separate forces upon the arrow. When first drawn back away from the bow and then released, the arrow is propelled forward. Similarly, you have God as one force and the individual as the other. In human experience, neither God nor the individual can be known. What can be known is the interaction or resultant. Such interactions, over time, come to represent what we call a personal and interactive relationship with God. I can know my experience when I turn my thoughts to God, and that experience is always a function of my past experience and level of maturity.

And then there is the matter of choosing a primary referent. As noted at the end of Chapter II, common referents include God, family, country, money, an ideological cause, history, security, or some blend of these. Using a belief in an interactional relationship with God as a primary referent can be seen as linking an individual to all of Nature, including human nature. As primary referents go, this choice can be seen as the most comprehensive in linking oneself to all of human experience.

An interactive relationship with God has been described as a walk. Sometimes a sense of progress takes only a few minutes or an hour. Other experiences can take a lifetime or are the result of the combined knowledge of several generations. For some, waiting is a challenge. They are the ones who pray: "God grant me patience and I want it right now."

They prefer to talk and act, but have very limited skills at listening and waiting. When they are not talking, it seems to them as if nothing is going on. Only later will it become evident that there was preparation being made for the next step forward. The greater the task, the more preparation required, and the longer the wait. However, through all of this, there can be a continuing sense of a relationship with God—we are not walking alone.

Another point has to do with the matter of God as Creator. For the Absolutists, God as Creator refers to the creator of their image of Nature. Relatively speaking, Creator refers to the creator of the unknowable *stuff* of the universe with which an individual interacts. God is not the creator of one's perception of the physical universe. As in all things, perceptions of the physical universe are personal, unique, and constantly changing with an individual's experience.

Notably, there is the continuing role of language with an interaction between language and experience. An individual may have grown up using an absolute language. However, with maturity in one's relationship with God, a change in the use of language changes experiences, and a change in experience changes language.

2.3.2 There is Free Choice

From a relative perspective, turning one's thoughts to God is by choice. The choice is not in response to the threat of eternal damnation. Describing God as a terrorist reflects the absolute perspective of the perceiver, not God. Only when I am able to freely reject a belief in God am I able to freely choose to believe in God as a primary referent in my life. With such a personal relationship, there is always an interaction to choose and never an absolute truth to worship.

2.3.3 It is Personal and Private

It's been said that man is made in the image of God. Consider that the individual creating an image of God is doing so with his or her own brain. That is, it's the same brain creating both one's own image as well as an image of God. Arguably, any image reflects the maturity of the perceiver.

This distinction can be seen as similar to the statement attributed to Jesus when telling Peter "on this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Physically, one thinks of Peter himself; spiritually, one thinks of the faith in God expressed by Peter. In this example, the physical is aligned absolutely with the external, while the spiritual is relatively aligned with the internal experience of the individual.

Within this context, some individuals report that their experiences while turning their focus to God are so unique to their own situation that they come to believe in a personal relationship with a living God. As Jesus put it: "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Thus, trying to describe the relationship to others does not work. They can only understand your description from their own unique interpretation as founded on their own experiences and level of maturity. Just as it is self-evident to some that an individual's experience is a personal and private matter, so it is self-evident that an individual's relationship with God is a personal and private matter.

Our personal relationship with God can include our relationships with others. When there are two or more individuals—each having a personal relationship with God—God can become an influential, mutual referent. To apply an idea from economist Adam Smith, it is like the effect of an "invisible hand." The lives of many can be seen as if working together. Individuals can observe that their interactions benefit each other without any specific effort or thought of doing so. It's like the interactive relationship between a bee and flower.

Better than forgiveness

Here's another consideration. God does not judge the individual—a relationship, yes; absolute judging, no. And the same can be said when one person is offended by another. Forgiveness is only an issue after you have judged someone. If you have judged someone, then the remedy would be to forgive them—not for their sake but for your own. The burden of hate is indeed a heavy encumbrance, and eventually self-destructive. Hatred does not poison the target, but it is toxic to the beholder. Forgiving means to let go of hating someone. However, from a relative perspective, there is another approach that is better than forgiving those who have

offended us. Better than forgiveness is to not absolutely characterize their actions in the first place. Then, there is no basis for judging them or demanding remorse from them. As when being attacked by a wild animal, we *do* protect ourselves, but we *do not* have to hate the wild animal. Above all, we can respect their right to be themselves. However, without hate, we could put a wild animal or a human to death if our freedom to be ourselves is infringed upon. As folk singer Bob Dylan put it, "you make room in your world for me, and I will make room in my world for you." When individuals have a common belief in God, making room for one another becomes possible.

Closing this section on the RAM perspectives, we make the following summary points: There are perhaps many decision points in an individual's life where he or she chooses to embrace, or not embrace, a belief in God. For those choosing to believe in God, that belief will reflect one's past experiences and level of maturity. For the Mixed, God will be an opportunity for prosperity. For the Absolutists, God will be a force to which everyone is subordinate with rewards for the obedient. For the Relativists, God will be a force with whom one can have an interactive relationship. For everyone, our behavior toward others will be greatly affected by our perspective on God. One's perspective will be a matter of maturity and those experiences upon which one chooses to focus.

Perspectives in Contrast

Here are some brief comments on common issues for the purpose of getting a feel for the RAM distinction. The sequence AMR will serve to go from the more familiar to the less familiar.

ETHICS

ABSOLUTE: Judge everything in terms of good and bad.

MIXED: Judge everything as good.

RELATIVE: Judge nothing in terms of good and bad.

SIN

ABSOLUTE: Sin is morally evil and requires forgiveness; justice requires accountability.

MIXED: "Thou shall not make another feel uncomfortable."
Follow the rules of authorities.

RELATIVE: Our nature from birth. We are born ignorant and miss the mark when first trying.

ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM

ABSOLUTE: Atheism is a matter of knowing absolutely that God does not exist.

MIXED: Whatever makes you happy is a belief in God's goodness—egocentrism.

RELATIVE: Believing is based on faith rather than absolute knowledge—agnosticism.

INTEGRITY

ABSOLUTE: Remaining subordinate to the absolute truth.

MIXED: Loyalty to friends.

RELATIVE: Focus is on the relationship itself with Nature's God as a primary referent.

VALUES v. VALUE FREE

ABSOLUTE: Characterize absolutely; judge good from evil; support good and oppose evil.

MIXED: It is good to do what makes everyone happy, and it is bad to be divisive.

RELATIVE: Focus is on value-free interactions with others; maturation replaces value systems.

HEAVEN AND HELL

ABSOLUTE: An afterlife of reward or punishment for being good or evil, respectively.

MIXED: Focus on God's goodness; bad things do not come from a good God.

RELATIVE: Heaven is now, and refers to those having an interactive relationship with God.

The point in all this is that individuals make a basic choice between two contradictory approaches—absolute or relative. Embracing two contradictory systems doesn't work. Either, one will come to dominate the other, or they will morph into a rationally unintelligible mixed position.

3. THE *BIBLE* HAS ALL THREE PERSPECTIVES

Just about any organized religion has its sacred documents and prophets, either written or in the oral tradition. In practice, the documents have been held to reflect absolute truth, and the role of the prophets was to interpret them for the common folk. Whatever absolute approach was used within a society, every individual would be held accountable under pain of punishment. More recent is the advent of organized religions grounded in a mixed perspective where feeling good and helping others to do the same is the primary focus.

Perhaps unique among sacred documents, the Old and New Testaments of the *Bible* can be seen as reflecting all three perspectives (relative, absolute, and mixed), depending on the maturity of the writer and the reader. Our focus will be on the relative perspective for the reason that it can be seen as reflecting the highest degree of rational integrity, but it is the least discussed in the public dialogue. Also, it is our contention that if one acknowledges that relative statements can be found in the *Bible*, the logical burden shifts to the individual for interpretation.

The authors of the various books of the *Bible* are assumed to be individuals who put forth their experiences describing current events within a context of their belief in God. The writers' descriptions always reflect their individual levels of maturity. They describe what they believe to be their interactive relationship with God. Consider the following to be examples of a relative perspective expressed in the *Bible* (Revised Standard Version—RSV).

3.1 THE GARDEN OF EDEN (Original Sin)

This is a story involving a metaphor (Genesis 2:8). The Garden is an individual's world of possible personal experience when walking with God. As it is with one's conscious experience, the individual is alone. Primary to human experience is choice. The basic choice is to organize one's experiences either (a) around a relationship with God or (b) around one's own perceptions. In the latter case, the individual uses his or her own perceptions to establish what is absolutely good or bad. The world thereby created is of one's own making. Alternatively, the individual

chooses a primary relationship with God; the world of one's experience would be a product of that interactive relationship.

The alternatives are mutually exclusive. Either one chooses to make the relationship with God primary, or one chooses to make one's own perceptions primary. As the writer of Genesis 3:5 describes it: An individual's primary choice is either (a) take the universe of human experience as a whole and "freely eat of every tree" or (b) create your own world by eating of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil"—you choose what to include and exclude. In the latter case, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Relatively speaking, the message is that we are free to explore anything we choose. There is one exception. Don't become an Absolutist. Don't claim to know what is good and evil; don't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By embracing what you declare to be good and avoiding those experiences you declare to be bad, you are the author of your own world. Doing so has been described as original sin, or the first example of "missing the mark" from which all other misses originate.

The lesson can be stated as: Do not make absolute characterizations, do not judge those absolute characterizations, and neither love nor hate the objects of your characterizations. Doing so is the one act that will separate you from an interactive relationship with God.

Interestingly, the consequences of rejecting a relationship with God are described as having a lower quality of life, but not a concept of eternal hell. Rather, here we find the idea about death: "...you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

As an aside, let's look at this story within a personal context. Imagine that you plant a garden using those seeds available to you. You have corn, fruit trees, flowers, and much more. A neighbor enters your garden and begins to judge its contents—some he judges good, some bad. He decides to make his own garden, planting what he has judged to be good and excluding what he has judged to be bad. What he has is a garden of his own making. Thinking his garden to be absolutely good, he seeks to destroy what he has judged as bad in your garden. His doing so prevents any interactive relationship between you and your neighbor.

And so it is. Founded on the original sin of claiming knowledge of absolute good and evil, we have created the greatest opportunity for one person to dominate another—in the name of God and Truth. Within this context, heaven and hell create a divided universe. Such a person becomes god, the identifier of good and evil. The great chase of "good versus evil" is created in a battle of win or lose—dominate or submit. Former Pope Benedict XVI (c. 2005), while perhaps advocating an absolute approach, was on target when he held that today's primary issue is one of absolute or relative perspectives.

3.2 CAIN AND ABLE

The lesson of the Cain and Able story is that *individual choice reigns supreme*. While Able represents those who choose a relationship with God, his brother Cain represents those who do not (Genesis 4:15). As this story goes, it's God's will that individuals have a choice as to whether they choose to have a relationship with Him or not. Cain and Able were individuals and made individual choices.

The story can be seen as having implications for public policy. Interesting is the admonition to not pursue and kill Cain for killing Able. On the contrary, anyone pursuing and killing Cain was said to be seven times the villain! As a matter of public policy, Absolutists would kill or incarcerate as a punishment, Relativists would incarcerate simply for the purpose of public safety.

Notably, although Cain and Able were said to be the direct descendants of Adam and Eve, the story makes clear that there were other people living at this time, suggesting the story to be understood as a metaphor. The point of the story is that even though one walks with God, he or she is not protected from being killed by those who do not walk with God. "Am I my brother's keeper" is a question for each person to decide. Such value-free choosing is consistent with a relative perspective, human nature, and the God of the *Bible*. It is necessary to have the option for unbelievers like Cain in order to make meaningful the choice to believe. Having the choice is more fundamental than which option is chosen.

As with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God provides man with

alternatives from which to choose. To establish an interactional relationship between God and man, we already have God choosing man. The option is whether or not an individual chooses God. This mutual choice is illustrated in Michelangelo's depiction of God reaching to the individual and the individual reaching to God (Sistine Chapel). Relatively speaking, credit goes to Pope Julius II, who authorized this depiction of an interactive relationship directly between God and the individual. The point is that God is available but it's up to the individual to choose. It is not a dominate-subordinate relationship. It's one-on-one. God is God, and each individual is made in the spiritual image of God (Genesis 1:27)—each with the capacity of choice. As for human life, one can love it, hate it, or exit from it; but individual choice gives one a status above life itself. This is in contrast to those Absolutists who believe man is to be subordinate to God.

As an aside, we take notice that, arguably, there are at least two things man can do that God cannot. First, man can have faith that there will be a tomorrow—man is temporal. Second, man can choose to act on faith when believing in God; on the other hand, God is generally assumed to be all knowing and therefore only acts with full knowledge—not faith. While God is God and reflects universal integrity, an individual's choices are significant to his or her identity.

3.3 THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The *Bible* has many directives from God to man. As the writer of Deuteronomy 11:1 puts it: Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands. The commandments themselves are said to number over 400. The most well-known commandments are referred to as the Ten Commandments. We have at least 3 versions: Exodus 20:3, 34:28; and Deuteronomy 5:7. There are variations—some minor and others major. One major variation was the reference to these commandments as being delivered directly from God to the assembled leaders, while another describes the commandments as being delivered only to Moses.

Furthermore, rather than fixed, the use of commandments and directives can be seen as a means where guidance is provided from leaders to the

populace, and are relative to the times and circumstances. As for the Ten Commandments, a priority can be seen with the first (have no other Gods) taking priority over those following, such as the tenth, which includes not coveting your neighbor's ox.

As for a relative perspective, we can look at the import of the first two commandments. The first commandment can be seen as a guide for those choosing to have an interactive relationship with God. A relationship with God would be one's primary referent, around which all other experiences would be integrated. This can be seen as an ongoing process between God and the individual, where the individual has a choice—step-by-step.

As for the second of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4), we have the admonition: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." That's another way of saying "Don't be an Absolutist"—don't characterize anything as it exists in heaven or earth, as it exists independently of the individual perceiver.

God is an agnostic

This brings us to the heart of the relative perspective. All we can ever have are relationships. As the God of the *Bible* would have it, we have access to external stuff but not its characteristics as they exist independently of our sensory system. The message is that God is an agnostic and has created human experience as based on faith and always built on interactive relationships without ever knowing the absolute characteristics of anything or anyone.

3.4 1 SAMUEL (Give Us a King)

What is the nature of the relationship between God and Man? Here we have the argument that it is God's preference for a one-on-one, personal, and interactive relationship. However, overriding this preference is God's will that each individual have the freedom to choose whether to "walk" with God or choose anyone or anything else with which to walk. Or, as with the Mixed, there is the option of choosing to walk nowhere in particular.

As this story goes, the people wanted a king—someone to tell them what to believe (1 Samuel 8:1). After being told that such a king was not the will of God, their answer was "Give us a king to lead us" (8:6). They were warned that a king would take what they have and give it to his own officials and attendants. They would become slaves to the king. Their answer was to reject God and again ask for a king. Notably, it was God's will that the people should have freedom of choice. God directed that their will should be done even when contrary to His own. They got their King.

Down through the ages and to current times, people have sought out a leader to guide them in their relationship with God. When the stakes are high (God's favor or disfavor), seeking the expertise of a leader can provide emotional comfort. Some absolutely oriented church leaders profess to have knowledge of good and evil. Interestingly, some of them have been described as tenants who took over the property as if they were the owners (Mark 12:1). Notably, leadership positions have always been good for the leaders. Those who seek leaders will find them, will form groups, and will become dedicated followers. This desire for a leader could be seen at the time of Samuel (about 1000 BCE) and continuing to the present day. Today, as then, we can observe the rules of leadership: To become a leader, tell the people what they want to hear; once you have become a leader, work with other leaders to become a leader of leaders. It's a process where people become disenfranchised and dehumanized as they search to have others do their thinking.

As an aside, we take notice that Jesus is said to have used a hypothetical dialogue to describe "many" church leaders. Jesus said that on judgment day, he would be asked by church leaders, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:22).

As in the days of Samuel, any leader claiming to tell people the absolute truth to which they must submit is rejecting the God of the *Bible*. Perhaps more basic than people being subjected to a king is that people will enter into voluntary servitude—by their own choosing they will demand a leader. And similarly, if there is a nation claiming to be "under God," that God is not the God of the *Bible*—the leaders of a nation are not a substitute for an individual's personal relationship with God.

3.5 JEREMIAH (One-on-One Relationship)

A change in perspective on the relationship between God and man can be seen in Jeremiah's assertion that the time is coming when God will speak to every individual from the least to the greatest. "And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:34; c. 627 BCE). This statement can be seen as consistent with a relative perspective and inconsistent with an absolute perspective. Having a relationship with the God of the *Bible* is to be a one-on-one, interactive relationship. A similar understanding can be seen as made by the writer of Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16: "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Perhaps this writer is referring to the position of Jeremiah. As Jeremiah put it: "Seek with all your heart and soul" (Jeremiah 29:13). The message can be seen as suggesting a personal, interactive relationship between God and the individual. Additional supporting citations include: Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2; 30:6; 30:10; Joshua 22:5; 1 Samuel 12:24; 1 Kings 2:4; Matthew 22:37; and Mark 12:30.

3.6 JESUS (Joshua bar Joseph)

3.6.1 It's a Private and Direct Relationship

Among the teachings of Jesus are many references to a private and direct relationship between God and the individual. Perhaps most notable is the statement attributed to him: "when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen" (Matthew 6:6). Also, we have Jesus reportedly responding to a statement by Simon with "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). It can be seen that Jesus is advocating the idea of a relationship between God and the individual that is personal and private. It involves choosing to make God one's primary referent, as in: "Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30).

Jesus' message can be seen as one where God does not bless groups or

countries, except as individuals are blessed within the country. Similarly, Jesus described himself and those who would follow him to be in a service role: "If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Arguably, this is a service in preparation for one's journey before walking alone in that interactive relationship with God.

Jesus specifically excludes himself as a direct mediator for communicating with God. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). "They will all be taught by God" (John 6:45). God, rather than Jesus, will be available: "I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to Him who sent me; you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come" (John 7:33). Looking to the scriptures will not help: "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life" (John 5:39). The relationship with God is exclusively one-on-one between the spirit of the individual and the spirit of God.

3.6.2 Judge Not

"Judge not, and you will not be judged" (Luke 6:37) was the message of Jesus. It is the thinking of the individual that creates ideas of good and evil, and in so doing (see Garden of Eden story) makes himself God. As Jesus put it: "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matthew 15:11). Similarly, "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him" (Mark 7:15). And, "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21). That is, you are not a victim other than your thinking it so.

In direct contrast to the teachings of Jesus, the judgment of good and evil is at the core of absolute thinking. Jesus even made it a point to exclude himself from being judged as good. When asked "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He responded, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18; Matthew 19:16).

It's the same message as in the Garden of Eden story. There is no absolute good or evil, except as man creates it. And so, we are free to walk anywhere so long as we avoid judging anything to be absolutely good or evil. As for judging, Jesus was first judged *evil* by religious leaders, and

was put to death; afterwards, he was judged *good* by religious leaders, and his message was put to death. That is, religious leaders set themselves up as absolute intermediaries, and thereby placing Jesus' relative message of having a direct, interactive relationship with God beyond the reach of the individual.

3.6.3 Take a Walk with God

A walk with God is a maturational process. Jesus himself was always changing and maturing. As it is written, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). And it's the same for those who would come after him: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12).

A relationship with God has faith at its core—rather than absolute certainty—a faith that grows over time like a mustard seed (Matthew 13:31, 17:20; Mark 4:31). However, as Jesus explains, this walk with God, this spiritual journey, can end at any time: "They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away" as it is for those with "no root" (Luke 8:13). And again, they may hear the message, "but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature" (Luke 8:14). Arguably, Jesus expressed a message that a walk with God is a personal journey taken one step at time. It is a message that is consistent with a relative perspective, and inconsistent with an absolute perspective.

In closing this section on the message of Jesus, we can use the RAM triad to briefly take notice of the differing perspectives regarding Jesus. The Mixed see Jesus as a welcoming display of humility who is willing to wash our feet. He cares for everyone and was willing to die for us. The Absolutists worship Jesus as God and as someone they judge to be absolutely good. As such, Jesus can fulfill the role of the Absolutists' need for a sacrifice to offset their notion of sin. As for the Relativists, Jesus put forth the message that individuals can have a personal and interactive relationship with God, and he described the nature of that relationship. His total commitment to this message was demonstrated when, at the age of 33 and only three years after publicly declaring this message, he paid with his physical life.

3.7 PAUL

Paul, a major contributor to the New Testament, seemed to embrace an exclusively relative perspective. As he put it: "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). And again, "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean" (Romans 14:14). We note that it was a little more than 1500 years later when Shakespeare put forth this same message. In *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (Act 2, Scene 2, about line 251), Prince Hamlet states that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

3.8 THE BIBLE'S INTERPRETATIONS AND VARIATIONS

There are some who see apparent differences and even contradictions in the various versions and interpretations regarding certain portions of the *Bible*. For example, in the sixth commandment we have "thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). In contrast, we have the position that there is a "time to kill" (Ecclesiastes 3:3). Again, we have the fifth commandment to "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). In contrast, we have Jesus saying "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). And again, we have Jesus asking: "And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" Yet Jesus adds: "He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). And we have Paul with a blend of the two: "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:9).

Applying the RAM distinction can be of benefit for those wishing to address apparent differences in the *Bible*. Going from the more familiar to the less familiar, we will use the sequence of absolute-mixed-relative.

3.8.1 Absolute

Having absolute truth is a requirement for embracing absolute thinking. The *Bible* has been used by some as a resource for providing absolute

truth. In a church setting that employs absolute thinking, the *Bible's* ambiguities can be dismissed as "mysteries known only to God." In other words, with our imperfect minds, we are not capable of comprehending the mind of God. There may even be an admonition to avoid questioning God's word as presented by religious leaders.

3.8.2 Mixed

Eliminating rational thought when addressing the *Bible's* apparent contradictions is accomplished by simply choosing to ignore them—even the Mixed are still in control of their focus. When coupled with music, individuals can submerge themselves into a euphoric group experience. Externally generated music can drive out internally generated rational thought. Collective euphoria replaces self-awareness.

In a mixed church setting, when reading the *Bible*, critiquing or engaging in logical analysis is typically shunned as being divisive. The focus is on unity and unconditional support for one another. Attention is directed only to those *Bible* passages and interpretations that inspire and make us feel good. As one Englishman said of Americans: "When confronted with contradictions, they just go to sleep." When selecting a church to attend, charisma is the guiding principle, along with a religious leader that is uplifting and supportive.

One approach for dealing with the possibility of conflicting interpretations in the *Bible* is termed "positive thinking" and is characterized as focusing only on the positive. Negative thinking may be described as the "enemy" and specifically excluded. God is in complete control. As it was in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), the characters hold fast to the belief that prosperity is always just around the corner.

For a group of Mixed worshippers, the larger the crowd, the greater the excitement and sense of power—it's the same with a rock concert or a sporting event. The objective is singular—to get the adrenaline flowing and to become immersed in a unified sense of well-being. Feeding off each other, the question may be asked, "Are we having fun yet?" Once hooked, the dependents will regularly return for their "fix."

Once a sense of group thinking replaces individual awareness, prayers can include benefits for others in need, one's country, and even all of the world's inhabitants. Sometimes a donation is requested in support of such efforts.

3.8.3 Relative

From a relative perspective, differences and contradictions are to be expected. The *Bible* has numerous writers and, at best, each book of the *Bible* reflects the individual writer's level of maturity in his or her relationship with God. Furthermore, the reader's personal experience and maturity would affect the interpretation and understanding of each and every passage. A 15-year-old's reading of the *Bible* would not be the same as that of a 50-year-old. Change would be expected.

3.9 THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Regarding a relationship with God, it has been said to seek first the "Kingdom of God." To accomplish this, many people engage in what they call a "quiet time." They get by themselves (go into your room and close the door). Frequently practiced in the morning, it's when the cares of the world are at their minimum. In contrast, "seeking the Kingdom of God," is not seeking out a leader or group participation, as did those reported in 1 Samuel who chose to reject a personal relationship with God and demanded a leader.

Every individual can be seen as being in the position of either Eve or Adam. As it was with Eve, some will choose to judge in terms of absolute good and evil. And, as it was with Adam, some will choose to follow Eve by also judging in terms of absolute good and evil. Some will even claim to know absolutely the mind of another. As it is said, all of these who judge absolutely will be removed from having a relationship with God, and they will live a life based on their own judgments of good and evil.

For those walking in faith, each day brings experiences that can nurture their personal development and sense of connectedness with God. There are those mountaintop experiences, and those that come from a passing stranger who is seen as lending a helping hand. Life can be described as

a walk in Nature's garden. Consider that within each individual is a similar physical process. Called homeostasis by some, it is a force that maintains balance among several body functions (hormonal, neurological, and muscular), all of this in response to one's environmental influences. Although we are aware of the combined result, we generally are unaware of the specific balancing mechanisms in maintaining salt and temperature regulation, or the process of digestion. Just as we take these unseen but vital processes on faith, so our spiritual life is a walk taken in faith, always one step at a time.

For some individuals, there is a sense of a personally maturing relationship with God. Without knowledge of each other, these individuals can be said to make up the Kingdom of God. They are like the "salt of the earth"; while not recognized by others, they enhance all those with whom they come into contact. In contrast, regarding one's relationship with leaders, when it comes to having a relationship with God, some of those leaders who are first will be last, and some of those leaders who are last will be first in the Kingdom of God.

There is change, for the relationship between God and the individual is always a work in progress that requires time to mature. This faith-centered relationship begins small and grows over time so large as to provide comfort to others.

When God is viewed as the creator of Nature, including human nature, the expectation may be raised that all things work for good for those who know Him [yes, interpret that "good" from a relative perspective]. In contrast, those absolutely oriented leaders—created by the crowd—are required to guide their followers by identifying what is absolutely good and absolutely evil. As with those reported in 1 Samuel, such leaders rejected the notion of every individual primarily having a personal relationship with God. These leaders rejected the idea of self-determination as reported before 627 BCE and prior to the time of the kings: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Similarly, there is the reference where an individual was rejected "because he was righteous in his own eyes" (Job 32:1); and again, as cited above by Paul, "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

Many conflicts can be seen not as a difference between believers in God versus those who do not believe in God. It is a difference between (a) those who believe in a personal relationship between God and the individual and (b) those who believe in an image of God created by the leaders of their own choosing. It is a difference between the messages of Job, Jeremiah, Amos, and Jesus; and the messages of Moses, the Biblical kings, Pharisees, Sadducees, and a variety of other leaders. It's the difference between those who wash the feet of those who travel alone versus those who wash the feet of leaders. As a religious teacher, Jesus can be seen as exceptional: his message was one of encouraging individuals to seek a personal relationship with God. However, as stated earlier, he was physically crucified by the religious leaders (and their followers) who judged him to be evil; and again, his message was spiritually crucified by religious leaders (and their followers) who judged him to be good, and in so doing set themselves up as intermediaries between God and the individual.

CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER III

The relative perspective can be seen as illuminating the terrain with respect to religion. We now turn our attention to seeing how the relative perspective might illuminate the terrain through what is perhaps the most basic and physically intense of human experiences—sexual behavior.

CHAPTER IV

SEX

1. OUR ABSOLUTE CULTURAL SEX BIAS	84
1.1 THE BUSINESS OF SEX	
1.2 THE POLITICS OF SEX	
1.3 THE RELIGION OF SEX	
2. THE RAM DISTINCTION	90
2.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Physical)	
2.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Rational)	
2.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Choice)	
3. AN ABSOLUTE THEORY OF SEX	94
3.1 THE STIMULUS FACTOR	
3.2 THE CHASE FACTOR	
3.3 THE CONQUERING FACTOR	
3.4 TENSION REDUCTION (Letting Go)	
3.5 ADDICTIONS	
3.6 BULLYING AND ABUSE	
4. A RELATIVE THEORY OF SEX	113
4.1 PHYSICAL LIMITS	
4.2 RATIONAL OPTIONS	
4.3 CHOOSING (Low Risk v. High Risk)	
5. THREE SPECIFIC SCENARIOS	127
5.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES	
5.2 HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR	
5.3 LOVE	
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER IV	139

Dedicated to those who have attempted to gain insight into human sexual behavior only to find embarrassment and even tragic consequences at their own hands or at the hands of others.

CHAPTER IV

SEX

After choosing a primary referent, choices regarding sexual behavior can be seen as the next greatest influence affecting human experience. Physically, it's a matter of life and death for the species. And, when our physical emotions are fueled by reason, those sexually oriented emotions can become super-charged and reach a level of highest intensity within human experience. The capacity for choice can be rendered ineffectual as emotions escalate.

Perhaps it's a superfluous diversion and maybe outrageous, but we are going to cite an old story where a male and female decided to play a game of "hide and seek." For both, the excitement was more intense than any other activity. The female would hide. The male was inclined to seek. At some point, while the male was still thinking it was just a game, the female realized she had the power to let the male catch her in return for gifts. More significantly, she realized that she could exert power over the male. That is, she would first entice, and then withdraw. When the momentum of the male carried him into physical contact, the female would claim foul. Today, what had started as a game has become a cultural custom binding both male and female. Let's return to this later.

When it comes to sex, perhaps we can agree that no person is an island. While personal choices can influence outcomes, the culture into which one is born imposes sexual roles and expectations that can be highly resistant to change. Consequently, we will begin our inquiry into sexual behavior by describing some of the cultural influences into which we were born and which formed our character up to the time when we achieved adult reasoning.

In this chapter, we will (1) examine our absolute cultural sex bias; (2) apply the RAM distinction as a pre-organizer providing our initial context; (3) provide a theoretical framework of sexual behavior from an absolute perspective; (4) examine sexual behavior from a relative perspective; and (5) close the chapter with three topics of particular interest to the understanding of sex—gender differences, homosexual behavior, and love.

1. OUR ABSOLUTE CULTURAL SEX BIAS

Arguably, teaching the young to think from an absolute perspective is the prerequisite for absolutely oriented sexual behavior. As we noted earlier, absolute thinking is passed from parent to child during the formative years. The seed of absolutism is nurtured as teachers distinguish between right and wrong answers. When those children become adults, what was accepted by faith is now retained by the fear of punishment—in this life or the next. Consider that most individuals come to embrace absolute thinking without ever questioning it. Whether child or adult, claiming to know absolute truth captivates one with a sense of absolute power!

As always, hiding in plain sight is the role of language. As described earlier, our culture can be seen as passing on to each succeeding generation the assumption that we are looking out of our eyes and seeing an external reality. We say "look out" of the window or "look through" the microscope. We say, "It is cold outside so I will get a warm coat" or "step off the cold tile and onto the warm bath mat." Once more, we speak geocentrically (earth-centered) of the sun rising and setting even though we would probably all acknowledge a heliocentric (sun-centered) solar system. Of course such statements have been silly for hundreds of years. However, language habits are particularly difficult to change.

Here then is a look at our absolutely oriented cultural heritage regarding sexual behavior. We have grouped the influences into three major classes: (1) business, (2) politics, and (3) religion.

1.1 THE BUSINESS OF SEX

As a consequence of believing we are looking out of our eyes, we separate ourselves from *others*. The task of businesses is to sell their products to

those *others*. Sex can be used to facilitate that sale. For some of us, our first car purchase was triggered by an advertisement showing the car with a bikini-clad girl leaning against it. Sex sells.

With a mindset to be noticed, women may use enhancements involving any number of products including cosmetics, lingerie, medical procedures, and Botox. It can even become a competition among females to garner attention to their physical appearance as in seeking to become a contestant in a Miss Universe pageant.

Sex can be seen as a favorite media topic. People are drawn to seeing and reading about sexual escapades. Advertisers will pay big bucks to have their products paired with such images. The private lives of celebrities are invaded by paparazzi seeking sensational snapshots. Supermarket tabloids showcase a constant stream of headlines declaring the sexual coupling and uncoupling of celebrities. Some publish salacious allegations merely for public amusement. Romantic novels involving chase themes can be best sellers. Movies frequently put forth a blend of sexual titillation and narratives of seduction.

1.2 THE POLITICS OF SEX

Beyond protecting one individual from another, such as from sexual assault or child abuse, the politics of sex imposes a vision of morality by those with power over the ordinary citizen. Here are three focus points: (1) laws, (2) public records, and (3) public shaming. Taken together, they can be seen to impose values held by those at the reins of government upon the citizenry.

1.2.1 Laws Relating to Marriage and Morals

Marriage as a state function suggests an exclusive sexual partner. As some would put it, "Wait for marriage before having sex" or "Save sex as a gift for your marriage partner." Public schools may teach a similar connection between sex and marriage. The marriage commitment may be described as a lifelong obligation with financial consequences, including the designation of community property. The link between sex and marriage can be seen as close, involving an enforceable contract

covering the expression of one's sexual behavior. Some groups consider marriage to be consummated by sexual intercourse. When sex is *not* a factor, some couples live together without being registered as married. When sex *is* a factor, husbands and wives can have long-standing relationships ripped asunder by infidelity which is defined almost exclusively in terms of sexual behavior.

Legislating moral standards is a proper government function, according to some. We have regulations regarding nudity in public places that are treated as a criminal matter. Curiously, we can watch someone being torn apart with a chainsaw on prime-time television, but you better not show a female nipple—male nipples are permitted. Furthermore, we are aware of government censors regulating media to protect the public from "dirty words," including those referring to fecal matter or genitalia.

Additionally, we have laws prohibiting public exposure to erotic stimuli. The expectation may be that eliminating such things as pornography and public displays of nudity will help individuals control their sexual impulses. If this worked, society could pass laws prohibiting overeating with severe punishments for violators. As is typical with absolute thinking, punishment is seen as the sole deterrent for those who are missing the mark.

And we must not forget the world's "oldest profession." Prostitution as a criminal offense significantly links state control over sexual expression. If the state links marriage and sex, then it follows that laws would be used to protect the marriage contract. If sex is a benefit assigned exclusively to a marriage contract, it can be seen to follow that competition would be discouraged. As it is with some underpriced foreign products, they are "cheap" and sometimes prohibited by law as "dumping." To say that again, perhaps less offensively, when you have a product from which you make money and get power, you will oppose anyone who gives the product away at noncompetitive rates. As it is in a market economy, prostitution places an unfairly low price on sexual gratification.

1.2.2 Using Public Records to Stigmatize a Person

The fear of having a public record can be seen as creating a continuing incentive for the citizenry to comply with established norms. At the

extreme are those provisions requiring a person to register as a "sex-offender" for life—severe even when compared to paroled murderers and terrorists.

Public records can put forth allegations for public consumption that can be particularly demeaning, such as those described during bitter divorce proceedings or child custody battles.

Those in government and media have the ability to make, remove, leak, and showcase records. That's power!

1.2.3 Shaming

Shaming, or the threat of shaming, can be used by those in power to take down opponents and subject any targeted person to ridicule. We have those widely circulated stories of government agencies taping the private moments of U.S. President John F. Kennedy and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. in order to achieve political ends. Just the allegation of sexual impropriety, whether real or fabricated, can destroy one's reputation and career. Relationships with family and friends can be irreconcilably broken.

When widely circulated, sex-related allegations and revelations can bring down kings, presidents, governors, celebrities, teachers, athletes, and ministers. They all become headline news and vulnerable. This is, perhaps, a unique opportunity for media organizations to show dominance over the institutions of government.

Obedience to norms is not so much a matter of conscience as it is a matter of avoiding embarrassment. A notable literary example of public shaming is Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, in which an adulterous woman was required to wear the letter "A" when in public. Among the oldest forms of public humiliation, dating back to 1450 BCE, were the stocks and pillory, where individuals were yoked by their hands and/or feet in a wooden apparatus.

Taken together, regarding the politics of sex, perhaps most notable in all of this is that society is deprived of the talents within the citizenry. Scrutiny of self and family is a powerful deterrent to public service. Fear

of exposure and guilt over past actions can steer some individuals away from engaging in positions of political leadership. There can be the apprehension of embarrassment when matters thought to be private become publicly characterized in a way that feeds the public's appetite for salacious consumption. Even in conversations with friends, there can be the inhibition of sharing insights and seeking understanding of common sexual impulses. Added to this is the suppression of individual experimentation—all to the public's detriment. The police may brag about catching a "big fish"; however, the net is large and indiscriminant. Everyday citizens can be caught up and easily intimidated when accused of engaging in the appearance of sexual indiscretions.

1.3 THE RELIGION OF SEX

For sure, if one chooses an absolute perspective, God and sexual behavior will be closely and powerfully linked. Avoiding hell is a big incentive.

With God on your side, absolute thinking is all about claiming to be self-righteous. Said another way, anyone claiming absolute truth has taken a self-righteous stance. As guardians of society's virtue, sexual behavior offers a unique opportunity for some members of society to wield power over others in the name of God. Those who judge absolutely with respect to good and evil often claim to know the mind of God—absolutely.

Those claiming to have knowledge of absolute good and evil are in a position to establish moral standards regarding sexual behavior. While religions can be formed by different leaders, each having its own church, they can all be seen as condemning some sexual practices while embracing others. For these Absolutists, infidelity refers almost exclusively to sex.

Failure by some creates an opportunity for control by others. Here are three religious practices that ensure failure by the followers: First, discourage individual experimentation and candid discussions about sex. Suppress the use of dirty words and gestures. Second, remove sexual stimuli from public view. Cover up the private parts on statues and discourage exposure to nudity. For many, the prohibition of nudity will enhance its stimulus strength, much in the same way as wrapping Christmas gifts increases the child's curiosity and desire to unwrap the

contents. And third, discourage genital tension reduction practices such as masturbation.

Taken together, restrictions such as these ensure an individual's failure regarding moral compliance. With inhibitions high, when tension is released, it may be explosive and destructive.

Failure gives rise to embarrassment and guilt. A sense of integrity may incline one to seek forgiveness. Perhaps not so surprisingly, the organization that put forth the moral standards will be the same organization that provides the guidelines for forgiveness. It can be seen as a cruel irony that the failings of some were orchestrated by those offering forgiveness. And there are those self-righteous individuals who would use the indiscretions of others as leverage to berate and eventually dominate them. An additional incentive for submission to the leaders is the prospect of heaven for the compliant and hell for the others. Striving to do what they have been told is "right," the compliant seek forgiveness when things go awry. Being the agent of forgiveness provides the means by which absolute religious leaders can use human sexual experience to establish the religion's dominance over individuals. Over time, an individual's repeated failure leads to learned helplessness. Eventually, the self-righteous become moral guides to a flock that comes to require such guidance.

Teaching self-denigration, a variation on the ancient practice of flagellation, makes submission to religious authority more palatable. If you believe that you are a worthless piece of trash, becoming part of a powerful religious organization may seem attractive. Similarly, the contention of "putting others first" lowers one's expectations for personal achievement. Ignored in the dictum is that you are the "other" to others.

Consider that the dynamics underlying the passion of sexual perpetrators are similar to those of the sexual correctors.

Not to be forgotten, embracing the absolute perspective provides a sense of identity. You can take a stand and impose it on others. Absolute judgments don't let go. Truth is forever and unchanging. Some groups wear the halo of claiming to be "making a difference" in the contest between "good and evil." Claiming to be on the side of goodness, sexual

misconduct by others justifies hate and violence by the self-righteous. It feels empowering to dump on someone that has been caught in compromising circumstances. "Gotcha!" It feels good to reduce tension by yelling and striking out at the evil ones. The excitement can reach a point of feeling superior and thereby triggering a reduction of inhibitions. The historical record is replete with examples where absolutely oriented religious zealots seem to have been driven by a passion to crucify bad people. However, consider that the dynamics underlying the passion of sexual perpetrators are similar to those of the sexual correctors.

Closing this section on our cultural inheritance regarding matters of sex, it can be seen that institutional leaders in business, politics, and religion all interact and reinforce each other to maximize their control over the citizenry. Given a sex-chase culture, avoiding a chase may be like trying to avoid catching a cold. Our task is to begin by reexamining the absolute social norms into which we were born and force-fed throughout our lives. We have business working to convince us that we need a product; politicians seeking to persuade us that subordination to government authority is the way to be safe and avoid conflict; and we have organized religions seeking to persuade us to embrace a set of prescribed values. As it is with the absolute perspective, the proposition of an external reality takes priority over an individual's internal sense of integrity.

Given our absolutely oriented culture regarding sex, we are reminded of the previously cited conclusion reached by Herman Hesse: "I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in order to become a child again and begin anew" (*Siddhartha*—By the River). Given the daunting task before us, we will now turn to the RAM distinction as a pre-organizer providing our initial context for the topics that follow.

2. THE RAM DISTINCTION

We shall describe sex from our three perspectives beginning with the mixed, followed by the absolute, and finishing with the relative. In part, our intention is to go from the more familiar to the less familiar, from the simpler to the more complex, and from the less inclusive of human behavior to the more inclusive.

Here is a brief overview: (1) the Mixed is inclined toward physical pleasure that is restrained primarily by a concern for safety; (2) the Absolutist is guided by truth and driven by an intense sense of chase; and (3) the Relativist emphasizes interaction to maximize individual freedom while relegating sex to a symbolic gesture of low intensity.

2.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Physical)

The overarching interest is physical gratification by maximizing pleasure and minimizing discomfort. Here are three examples describing the mixed perspective.

First, if it feels good, do it. Sex is important because physical pleasure is important. The adult tells the child, "All I want to do is to make you happy." Others declare, "The customer is always right."

Second, be safe. Sexual behavior is wrought with danger—danger associated with losing control, social embarrassment, and myriad diseases. A sense of danger restrains that desire to feel good to the point of modifying the first principle to "Do it if it feels good and if there are no harmful consequences to you." Public discussions about sex will be moored in the safe harbor restricted to the mechanics of propagation. The powerful dynamics of sexual emotions will be relegated to private conversations where suggestion and innuendo reign supreme.

Third, fantasy sex is best. It's safe and there is almost no chance of rejection. Our rational capacity to fantasize can enhance our physical experience. Pornography is readily available and inexpensive. Watching exotic performers such as pole dancers and strippers can provide the appearance of a personal touch. Movies can provide a professional level of artistic quality and even a storyline. For creative types, one's own mind can be an inexhaustible source of sexual fantasy. In social situations, a little vulgarity along with sexually oriented jokes and jibes can provide amusement and bonding with other fantasy seekers. Direct sex is safest with a regular partner who is accommodating; however, fantasizing during sex may be necessary to provide the continuing stimulation necessary to achieve climax. The partner may be directed to be quiet and "just lie there." Role playing can facilitate arousal, such as the provocative and

humorous line of "I've been a very bad girl." As in any production, costumes can set the stage by dressing up as a schoolgirl or an Arabian manservant.

As an added philosophical note regarding the Mixed, children can represent a link to the physical emphasis of biological immortality. For them, childhood is an important time, representing the best life has to offer. While this may be a fantasy, the Mixed can imagine childhood as a time when one is free of responsibilities, enjoying unconditional support, and concerned only with being happy. Parents can get vicarious enjoyment watching their children being happy. Conversely, when children make the parents unhappy, the parent may lose control and become abusive.

As for maturity, the Mixed can be seen as consistent with Adult Stage-1 where both rational integrity and matters of choice are subordinated to physical gratification.

2.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Rational)

Absolute thinking requires absolute knowledge. The hallmark here is the declaration of absolute truth regarding sexual matters. Such truth leads to knowledge of right and wrong. A logical consequence of an absolute perspective is the imposition of rules. Rule enforcement gives rise to a fundamental competition between good and evil. Those who act the right way have the prospect of rewards, while those who act the wrong way can anticipate punishment. Considerable authority may be given to those enforcing such rules. Sexual fidelity—as spelled out by the rules—would be of primary importance. The rules come from several sources: parents to children, teachers to students, and civil and religious leaders to the society at large.

As for maturity, the absolute perspective can be seen as consistent with Adult Stage-2 where everyone and everything is subordinate to the rationally discovered truth.

2.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Choice)

We begin with the observation that all human experience involves

interactive relationships. Relatively speaking, sexual behavior becomes symbolic of an interactive relationship between two people. Experiences of closeness and intimacy are not limited to sexual behavior. Perhaps more than through sexual encounters, a strong sense of companionship can be felt when a couple goes for a walk in the park, engages in playful wrestling, snuggles, watches a movie, or simply sits in a library together with each reading a book of his or her own choosing.

When sexual behavior becomes symbolic of an interactive relationship, that symbolism can be extended to a couple's progeny: physically, a combination of egg and sperm; rationally, in providing parental guidance; and as a reflection of their choice to continue as a couple.

As for maturity, the relative perspective can be seen as consistent with Adult Stage-3 where both physical and rational considerations are subordinate to individual choice.

Looking forward: We can see that sexual behavior has been unbridled from theory throughout recorded history. Sexually related emotions seem to blow in and out like the wind—they may be pleasantly mild or have the destabilizing force of a tornado. Typically, society has been guided by authoritarians dictating what's absolutely right and wrong along with the threat of punishment for disobedience.

Helpful would be to have alternative theories that integrate the different aspects of sexual behavior in an intelligible framework. The purpose would be to describe the underlying dynamics of sexual behavior so as to permit each individual to choose one over the other.

For at least three reasons, theories are useful: (1) Theories provide a basis for establishing a rational containment around emotions. That is, emotions are kept (by higher-cortical centers) at a level consistent with the rational significance provided by the theory. It's somewhat similar to how the body will physically form a cyst to contain otherwise destabilizing infections. Without such containment, emotions can be self-feeding to a point of frenzy (under lower cortical control) where there is a full-blown, no-holds-barred, visceral engagement. (2) Theories can separate cultural influences (that are modifiable) from influences built into one's physiology (that are not modifiable). This is similar to the environment-versus-heredity

distinction. And, (3) theories can provide a context for personal understanding and communicating that understanding to a friend.

We will put forth two theories—one absolute and one relative. There is no theory for the mixed perspective due to its lack of rational integrity.

3. AN ABSOLUTE THEORY OF SEX

Consistent with the absolute perspective, the assumption is that we are looking out of our eyes and seeing something *out there* to chase, and to which we are either dominant or subordinate.

The central dynamic in our absolutely oriented theory has two phases: (1) the building up of excitement and (2) the reduction of that excitement. We begin with the building up of excitement that can be seen as having chase at its center. Filling in the ends, we have the sequence: stimulus-chase-conquer. And, yes, they correspond to the physical-rational-choice triad, respectively.

We can observe the stimulus-chase-conquer sequence between predator and prey, whether it involves a tiger and deer, a dog and cat, or a spider and fly. As for humans, we have devised a wide variety of sporting contests artificially created to excite. To illustrate, we return to the children's game of chase or tag. One child *is it*, another becomes a target (stimulus). There is a chase, and when caught (conquered) there is a declaration of "you're it"—and the game continues. Adults have created an entire industry of sporting events where the objective is to chase and conquer. Any and all of these games of chase can contribute to our understanding of sexual behavior as the big chase. We shall look at each of these factors in sequence—stimulus, chase, and conquering.

3.1 THE STIMULUS FACTOR

We have the observation that we seek out stimulation. We seem hardwired to do so. Just watch the visual scanning of an infant or the "people watching" of adults. Conversely, solitary confinement is considered a punishment. Even more to the point, sensory-deprivation experiments can produce profound mental disorientation and thereby demonstrate the

body's requirement for stimulation.

Add to this the absolute assumption that we believe we are looking out of our eyes and seeing things as they exist external to us. Here are some dynamics that influence our experience of what we believe we are seeing *out there*.

Research and personal experience attests to the observation that we, again, seem to be hardwired to have shape preferences. It's what the Gestaltists call *pragnanz* or good form, and it's what some of us are referring to as we make patterns out of clouds in the sky. Some floral arrangements seem to have a preferred balance, and some faces seem to have a preferred symmetry. It's the same with window dimensions; we prefer some height-to-width ratios over others. Perhaps some preferences are learned during early development and may involve critical periods or imprinting (that's when a brief amount of exposure can have lasting effects). However developed, the teenager may experience a strong emotion when observing a particular form—as in "a burning desire" or being "swept off one's feet."

Another idea that may be helpful is to consider that a stimulus involves a change or difference. A light going *on* in a dark room may be a stimulus, but so is a light going *off* in a lighted room. It's the change that creates the stimulus. In a sexual context, we take notice that the stimulus is often a perceived difference between a male and female. Take notice of where the eyes go when exploring a sexual stimulus. Arguably, they will go to perceived differences. Differences may be primary such as genitalia; and also secondary as with differences in musculature, stature, hair, voice, odors, skin texture, and color. Focusing on some differences may be considered a fetish, such as when one only targets another's feet or hands. Whatever the stimuli, surgery and cosmetics can enhance these differences. As some might put it, "Vive la différence!"

Take note that the strength of a stimulus is experienced as "stimulus minus inhibition." Just like electrical conductivity, some stimuli may be experienced only when inhibition or resistance is relatively low, as when there is a sense of anonymity when wearing a mask or dark glasses, or being hidden in the shadows as with a Peeping Tom. Similarly, during a trip out of town, one may experience anonymity and, consequently, sense stimulation not experienced back home. Also, we can observe that when

one is in a crowd, inhibition may be lowered as it turns into a mob.

Language, particularly certain words, may tend to increase or decrease the sensory effect. *Dirty* words can serve to excite and thereby reduce inhibition. For some, the use of vulgar words is necessary to reduce inhibitions; there may be a request to "Talk dirty to me."

And again, consider the emotional aspects of terms such as "shit" versus "feces" and "barf" versus "regurgitate." These underlying dynamics can be described in terms of fricatives and plosives. Fricatives create friction using letters such as "s" or "f"; while using plosives such as "b" or "p" provide a quick release. The use of fricatives and plosives can serve to increase the emotional message in a communication and reduce inhibitions. On the other hand, during an altercation, replacing fricatives and plosives can beneficially restrain an emotional escalation.

Notably, some words will trigger those higher cortical centers, increase inhibition, and reduce sexual excitement. "Shall we engage in coitus at three fifteen this afternoon?" will tend to intellectualize the communication and engage the higher (inhibitory) centers of the cortex. Talking can, in itself, engage those higher centers and restrain a desirable emotional escalation. Consequently, keeping those lower centers dominant requires some interactions to rely on implied consent. Asking if its okay to touch your girlfriend's breast may be met with "Just do it!"

Once again, low levels of sexual stimulation, such as when engaged in slow dancing or gently caressing the genitals can result in a pleasant sense of arousal. Hugging, cuddling, or spooning can have a similar effect. However, as the excitement increases, there can be a heightened arousal followed by a narrowing of focus on that external stimulus. Now a chase can be triggered, and this brings us to the next factor.

3.2 THE CHASE FACTOR

Hardwired, again! Just as it appears that we are hardwired to seek physical stimulation, we can see ourselves as rationally hardwired for chase. Whether we are speaking of animals or humans, we love to chase. It is with sheer delight that our family dog will chase us around in a circle of

adjoining rooms. As already noted, children enjoy playing hide-and-seek. Additionally, any number of computer games involves chasing a target. Movie dramas and "who-done-it" mysteries have typical chase themes—a good guy chases a bad guy. A televised car chase can attract and hold our attention until the car runs out of gas or the police perform a successful PIT maneuver. The love of the chase can be seen in some stock-market participants engaged in high-frequency trading, and chasing the odds in gambling can come to dominate one's life.

Notably, chase is a two-sided game. The roles of the chaser and the chesee are symbiotic. Both are essential for the game of chase to work. The players represent two parts of one concept. The distinction between the sides is one of the perceiver's perception. The difference becomes less clear as we take notice that the best offense is a good defense. And then we have some who provoke a chase. They may flirt or pretend to appear helpless—even birds do it. Some may provoke an argument simply for the purpose of enjoying "make-up" sex.

3.2.1 Three General Characteristics of Chase

First, chase requires resistance. Making a touchdown involves a chase only when there is an opposing team. In movies, resistance is enhanced by showing the bad guy winning the first confrontation. In business, chase is triggered by limiting response time, as in "last day of sale, don't miss this opportunity." In a sexual context, the male typically appears to chase the female. It's not the short skirt or mini-dress, in itself, that draws attention. It's any dress that draws attention to stimulus differences and then puts limits on visual access. A bra lets one know that breasts are present but are accessible only to those whom the wearer chooses. Enhancing and exposing cleavage can assist those who are slow to get the message.

Resistance also can be useful in explaining our love for the underdog. When a clearly superior competitor is far ahead, there is less excitement, and some spectators may begin to leave the stadium simply in order to beat the crowd. On the other hand, audience interest increases as a lower-ranked challenger rises toward victory. Rooting for the underdog keeps the chase alive.

Second, the goal has no intrinsic meaning. A distinguishing characteristic of chase is that it is the pursuit of the goal that is significant, rather than the goal itself. Competitive sports can serve to illustrate this point. There is virtually no significance to slam-dunking a ball through a hoop, pushing a puck into a net, or putting a golf ball into a hole. The objective is rationally and arbitrarily created. It is the pursuit toward the goal that serves a purpose, and that purpose is to create excitement.

Third, there is excitement for all. Excitement is experienced by both the chaser and chasee. When that 300-pound, muscle-enhanced defensive guard is chasing the lean and other-focused quarterback, both experience excitement! With both animals and humans, we can see the same underlying dynamics, whether it's the thrill of being the predator or the terror of being the prey. There is excitement!

We can see that the excitement generated is similar whether watching oneself or watching another engaged in a chase. The fans at a football game can become more excited than the players themselves. They can get excited vicariously without putting out any effort. As one famed coach described his disappointment with football: he sees 12 players in desperate need of rest, and a stadium of fans in desperate need of exercise.

And again, the dynamics underlying excitement can be seen as similar whether the chase is physical or fantasy. Watching a romantic movie or reading an erotic novel can be just as exciting as an actual flirtation. Actually, fantasy may provide less inhibition and, therefore, provide a greater sense of excitement.

The bottom line regarding chase is to generate excitement, which can be described in physiological terms.

3.2.2 Autonomic Nervous System

The autonomic nervous system is subdivided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. While they function interactively, the sympathetic prepares the body during emergencies and the parasympathetic for steady, long-term activities. It's like having a racehorse and a plow horse. One uses up energy quickly for high performance, while the other conserves energy for maximum total

performance. If a car comes barreling toward you, you want the sympathetic system to enable your body to respond quickly. Conversely, if you want to think about what you are doing with your life or any meaning attributable to it, you want the parasympathetic system to be dominant so that you are relaxed in a way suitable for reflection.

Notably, when the sympathetic system is dominant, it's those lower cortical centers that are in control—down to spinal-cord reflexes; conversely, when the parasympathetic system is dominant, the higher cortical centers are in control. It takes considerable training to have the higher cortical centers stay engaged when being assaulted, as when not flinching while getting an injection or biopsy in a sensitive area. Less dramatic is that we can regulate the combined systems and maintain a comfort zone throughout the day. If stimulation is low, we can reduce our sense of boredom by creating a chase. On the other hand, if we are overstimulated, we can get by ourselves, meditate, or simply close our eyes to reduce visual stimulation.

Going from parasympathetic to sympathetic can be measured in microseconds, as when we notice a spider crawling up our arm. In contrast, once the sympathetic is triggered, as in preparation for fight or flight, it takes time to get back to a relaxing parasympathetic dominance where rational behavior prevails. That is, even after resolving an emotional dispute, it takes time for that neurological and hormonal balance to be restored. What works for some is going for a walk without talking or thinking about the dispute; counting to ten works in some situations. Without such a break, there may be a tendency to start looking for ways to extend the dispute in order to justify the high emotions being felt.

Super-charging the chase. At any point, chase can become super-charged. A friendly game of half-court basketball escalates as if it's a life and death dual. We can observe a feedback loop. Our focus becomes narrowed, and there is an increase in effort followed by more excitement. This returns us to an even sharper focus, more effort, and more excitement. The game becomes an "us-versus-them" matter of survival.

Notable is that at some point there can be a significant loss of inhibitory control resulting in high-risk behavior. Sympathetic activity can increase to the point of a full blown "fight or flight" response. When crimes occur

during such high sympathetic activity, we speak of crimes of passion rather than premeditation. Many courts recognize a "temporary insanity" defense when high emotions render the individual out of control. Similarly, teenagers can be described as having the hormones to trigger the sympathetic system, but they have yet to learn skills of inhibitory control. Regarding sex, significant control may not occur until about the age of twenty-five. To repeat an earlier point: whether young or old, parasympathetic dominance keeps those prefrontal lobes active; while, during sympathetic system dominance, the lower cortical centers become dominant and restraint is decreased.

Extreme sports provide many examples of super-charged chase leading to extreme excitement and potentially extreme pleasure. Here we have kickboxing, the thrill of outracing an avalanche on skis, jumping over several cars on a motorcycle, being shot out of cannon, surfers riding giant waves, double backflips on skis or a skateboard, flying like a bird when base jumping, high-wire walking between two buildings, climbing sheer cliffs—and there is the rush when engaging in military combat. In many of these examples, the participants are playing Russian roulette with themselves. The risk of death only increases the excitement.

In specific cases, extreme activities may be necessary for some individuals to become aroused. They have simply habituated to lower levels of stimulation. As a variation on this theme, others may simply require extreme stimulation to overcome inhibitions. For whatever reason an individual engages in extreme activities, the benefits of increasing excitement and pleasure would reasonably be weighed against the possible costs—or maybe not, if reason has become subordinate to the physical excitement of chase.

Pacifist Bertrand Russell, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950, offers a personal anecdote to illustrate the power of chase. In the 1940s, when atomic power was being developed, Russell gained an international reputation for his argument that war was a no-win game. No one wins in an atomic confrontation. He made his arguments to the heads of state, and he was embraced widely by his peers. During his life, Russell achieved critical acclaim for his argument that our mutual desire for survival could provide the basis for an agreement to ban the use of nuclear weapons. However, at the end of his life, he professed that he was wrong.

In his memoirs, he wrote: "More powerful than the desire for survival is the will to get the better of the other fellow!"

While Russell's is an anecdotal expression, after being pointed out, it is one that can be seen frequently. Then, as it is now, the power of the chase and conquering, or getting the better of the other fellow, is more important than survival. We have computer hackers and Madoff-type Ponzi schemers attesting to the love of the chase. Murder-suicide events make the same point. For a significant number of people, knowing the risk of spending the rest of one's days in prison is insufficient to offset the desire to beat the system.

In the Garden of Eden story, we have a view on sexual chase that has been maintained throughout the written history of mankind. It begins with the admonition of not eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eve determined that it was good to eat from the tree and invited Adam to make the same judgment. The first thing they did was to cover their naked bodies. Thus began the chase. Symbolically, Eve can be characterized as saying, "I will not let you see me unless I choose to do so." Adam does the same. Down to the present day, we see females and males engaging in chase behavior that defines their gender roles. The female entices with provocative dress, sultry voice, and appealing gestures. "Come chase me, I am a trophy to be put on a pedestal." The male chases by offering gifts, a ride in a flashy car, or a status reflecting his celebrity or wealth. If the female finds the male's offerings acceptable, an agreement is struck that generally provides for the protection of the female's interests. After all, like a new car or precious coin, the exclusivity decreases with circulation.

Summarizing our comments on chase, we have a stimulus triggering a chase, and a chase triggering an ever-increasing level of excitement. Subduing or being subdued brings the chase to an end. And this brings us to our third dynamic: conquering and being conquered.

3.3 THE CONQUERING FACTOR

Marking the end of the chase is when someone conquers and another is conquered. This is the point at which resistance ceases and the sought-after objective is subdued. It's the point at which one person's will prevails

over the will of another—one's choices prevail over another's choices. The moment can occur by scoring the most points within a given time frame, as in football; or achieving a particular goal, as in having the highest hand in poker. It can be achieved by being judged the winner in a debate or having the most votes in a political contest.

3.3.1 Benefits of Conquering

Humans can see themselves as conquering just about anything: a mountain by climbing to its top, space by landing on the moon, a neighborhood by posting your graffiti, or even by branding something with your initials. Politicians love to have public buildings named after them, and dogs like to urinate high up on the tree trunk. Conquering is all about being in control and elevating oneself above others.

As a variation, we have conquering with gifts where the gift is coupled with an expectation of getting something back. Similarly, some will maneuver others to their will with compliments. And again, granting privileges and being nice is coupled with the expectation that the recipient will feel obliged to be compliant in return. We have the parent telling the child, "I asked you nicely, and now I am telling you or you will be punished." Some parents will add, "Why do you make me so angry?"

Another practice is that of alternating roles—sometimes being dominant and other times being submissive. We have the spouse who submits to abuse, sees that it pleases the partner, and even feels empowered by the apologies that follow.

Some have an interest in targeting their own physical body. They find pleasure in pushing back against their own body's pain signals. With a mindset of "no pain, no gain," a jogger can continue to a point of triggering chase. As fatigue increases, the runner continues to push against the pain until reaching a goal or exhaustion. Similarly, after paying for an all-you-can-eat buffet, there are those who will continue to eat until they can't take one more bite.

We have a body, but we are not our body.
--

Targeting one's own body may appear to be self-abuse, but the operative

term is "self." The context has to do with describing the self. We are our choices. We have a body, but we are not our body. We can enjoy a sense of control over our own body, as in starving and binging, branding our body with tattoos, beating our own body as in flagellation, and cutting our own flesh. And we have those who eat super-hot spices, consume alcohol to the point of a submissive stupor, and seek out self-dominance through drugs. We proudly declare that "It's my body and my choice." The body's pain receptors can provide resistance, but this only increases the pleasure of dominating the body and pushing back against the pain.

As described earlier under chase, we can see similar underlying dynamics whether we are (a) watching ourselves conquer another, (b) watching someone conquer us, or (c) watching two other parties trying to conquer each other. When alternating roles, some describe the behavior as sadomasochistic. An extreme example of pushing the envelope involves flirting with death by hanging to a point of temporarily cutting oxygen to the brain for the purpose of triggering that sympathetic nervous system and experiencing sexual arousal (autoerotic asphyxiation).

Moving on, conquering can frequently be seen to involve engulfing or penetration. For engulfing, we have a boa constrictor's squeeze, a handshake, and even the swallowing of a sword. For penetration, we have putting a fist through a wall or smashing a fist into the face of another as in boxing. We have a mosquito sucking blood and a hummingbird gathering nectar. A bee will penetrate with a sting and a hunter will shoot a bullet into the head of a magnificent animal.

Both engulfing and penetration can be observed from birth. Common to animals and humans, newborns will seek out their mother's teat and begin sucking. And, human infants will try to put just about anything into their mouths and stick their fingers into any available opening. Adult sexual practices can be seen to reflect those same sucking and penetrating movements. Think of hugging, French kissing, oral sex, and intercourse. All can be seen as reflecting acts of engulfing or penetration.

Here is another idea. Perhaps unique to the absolute perspective is finding identity in that which one has conquered. If you are conquering something that is absolutely *out there*, arguably such an accomplishment would elevate you above that which is mastered. Said another way, for some,

self-esteem can be seen to increase as a result of conquering. Additionally, increasing the risk increases the attractiveness of the challenge. The greater the challenge, the greater the possibility for a sense of personal accomplishment and self-worth. In this regard, trying to beat the odds at Las Vegas or taking a death-defying trip as an astronaut can increase one's personal sense of self-worth and even result in public acclaim. Conquering certifies that I am made of the *right stuff* and that I am *Number 1*.

Identity-seeking conquerors will display their trophies with pride. Mounted on the wall is the head of mature grizzly bear, a magnificent 10-point stag, or a demure gazelle. Objects of wealth provide the same message. A large diamond ring, a Bentley in the driveway, and that winter vacation home in Aspen become symbols of personal success. A private collection of art including an original Renoir or Picasso will make you the envy of your associates. Similarly, there are those who display with pride diplomas and certificates of accomplishment from prestigious universities. All make the statement that the owners have something of value and, by association, they are of value.

Having more value, or the appearance of more value, can be seen as the ultimate chase for many Absolutists. When conquering contributes to one's identity, beating the other guy can take on an extreme form. Not to be overlooked are the benefits of becoming the subordinate, to which we shall now turn.

3.3.2 Benefits of Being Conquered

Some people love to conquer. Others prefer to be conquered—albeit, by those with power, wealth, and a desire to take care of their conquests. Subordination has its benefits. Consider that exercising freedom makes for a tough workout. With submission, there can be a settling sense of relief and relaxing quietude as one avoids the demanding effort required in making choices. As Immanuel Kant put it: "...it is so easy for others to set themselves up as [our] guardians.... If I have a book that understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself...I need not think..." (*Enlightenment*, 1784).

Conquering and subordinating can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

Both winners and losers in a football game feel closer to each other than they do to the spectators. There is a bond between the players that is created by their choice to interact with each other. We can see this dynamic between spouses, government and citizens, king and subjects, as well as employer and employees.

Some exploit another's desire to be dominated. These are the self-righteous guardians spouting absolute truths that they are only too eager to help us embrace—verily, to save us. Similarly, given the effort it takes to manage freedom, the option of escaping from freedom by creating obligations can appear attractive. We can choose to become dependent and create a world guided by declarations of "I must..." and "I need to...." In this respect, we can max-out our credit cards and sign long-term contracts covering quickly depreciating assets. Incurring debt creates a voluntary servitude extending into the future. We can further reduce our freedom by scheduling our days with little or no discretionary time alone—as it is with the workaholic. Commitments such as these can provide relief from the stress of exercising freedom, which requires setting priorities and making choices.

Another approach to escape the stress of making choices is to tell someone that "anything you want is fine by me" or "I just want you to be happy." In one's relationship with others, it can sound like a good thing to relinquish one's capacity to reason and to choose.

Separately, here is an example we have all seen: that elderly relative who stacks her living space from floor to ceiling with personal items—or, at least, familiar items. If the items are unorganized, observers may describe these items as clutter and the elder as a hoarder. However, consider that her *stuff* provides a sense of security and comfort. Rather than escaping from freedom, the strategy is to insulate oneself from a cold and confusing world.

There are many ways that we can be successful in our attempt to escape from freedom. Confessing to a crime we did not commit invites others to take control over our life. And again, a wedding vow of "until death do we part" can cast a permanent role of being shackled to a lifetime guided by responsibilities, particularly if children are involved. In a word, commitment provides *relief* from the stress of being free.

Once more, losing ourselves in an activity can create a sense of mind-numbing quietude. We can jog to a point of zoning out, submit to watching a TV plot unfold, or listen to familiar music. For some, a sense of letting go of the cares of the world can be achieved when soaking in a warm bath or relaxing in a sauna. Involving more effort, there are those who will commit to a cause. They are prepared to live and even die for something bigger than themselves, such as saving the country or the planet. Submitting to destiny or fate can be seen in some gamblers. Each of these examples can provide a sense of relief from decision making.

Any act of submission can be seen to involve something akin to taking on the role of a child in a child-parent relationship. We can claim subordination to those whom we claim are in control of our lives. Then we assert a self-righteous demand that it is their duty to take care of us. We take a job in government or a large corporation, and we may be proud of our membership in a compulsory union that subordinates individual choice to the collective voice. In each of these examples, we can assert that others are responsible for our problems while we indulge in our victim status.

Here is another approach to the art of submission. Arguably, it is in the *eye of the beholder* as to who is the conqueror and who is the conquered. Take the Greeks and Romans. The Romans conquered the Greeks physically; however, the Greeks, as teachers of Roman children, are said to have conquered the thinking of the Romans. Who is conquering whom is not self-evident. The male may believe he has conquered the female physically; however, the female may believe she has conquered the male as to how he thinks and what he chooses, as she subdues him and makes him over in her own image.

The woman has leverage. The pregnancy card can be a passport to marriage. Children can be used to ensure long-term financial support and social worthiness ("I raised four children"). The sequence for achieving control can be put forth as follows: The female gets males to chase her. She selects one and encourages him to chase her. Often what follows is a commitment by way of a contract or moral obligation. If he breaks it, she presents herself as a victim who has given him the best years of her life. He has taken advantage of her. She is now used goods. She asserts her right to damages in the way of compensation and punishment. Others may offer their support with a "me too" mantra, while lawyers can be

heard to say "let me help you." A variation on this theme is to accuse someone of doing evil; the accused resists and thereby creates a chase. Domination is achieved when the accused shows remorse and expresses sorrow, becomes a target of public scorn, or pays the accuser money. However, it's not a free ride. Even though the game of submission can be taken seriously, it is time-consuming, and playing such a game can serve to distract from the serious task of experiencing freedom and personal responsibility.

As a background notation to assessing the nature of one's excitement, consider that individuals differ as to their placement along the stimulus-chase-conquer triad. The dynamics of excitement vary depending on whether an individual is: (a) low on stimuli (easily bored); (b) high on stimuli and low on chase (the spectator); (c) high on stimuli (always thinking about sex) and high on chase (getting and giving phone numbers to many prospects), but low on conquering (not following through)—catching a fish, then letting it go or hiring a prostitute and just talking; and (d) high on all three—stimuli, chase, and conquering (absolute marriage commitment, or killing and mounting a magnificent animal).

This completes our absolute theory's first phase—stimulus-chase-conquer triad for the purpose of building up excitement. We turn now to our absolute theory's second phase having to do with reducing that excitement.

3.4 TENSION REDUCTION (Letting Go)

Reviewing our absolute theory up to this point, we have put forth the contention that a perceived external stimulus triggers a chase which produces excitement. Now, we shall describe the muscle systems used to reduce that excitement. Notably, reducing excitement can be achieved through virtually any muscle system or combination of muscle systems in the body, and the pleasure derived from doing so reinforces additional chase activity. Generally speaking, the greater the excitement and the faster it is reduced, the more intense the pleasure.

Looking more specifically at tension reduction, we shall consider four general groupings relating to one's physiology, followed by a description of three social applications.

3.4.1 Small Muscles

Some small-muscle systems seem particularly effective at slowly reducing low levels of excitement. From birth, we have those grasping, sucking, and hugging reflexes. Later, we have eating food or chewing gum, biting nails, talking, sucking as in kissing or smoking, twiddling thumbs, strumming fingers, twitching, smiling, singing, walking, running, and slow dancing.

As an aside, we point out that dating back to ancient times, Greek Komboloi beads—a short string of beads flipped back and forth in one's hand—may be the world's oldest recorded stress reliever. Also from ancient times, the name "worry beads" speaks for itself. Today, we have fidget spinners, squeezing a soft ball, and twirling a pencil between one's fingers.

3.4.2 Large Muscles

Systems involving larger muscles seem suitable for reducing more tension over shorter periods of time, such as laughing, yelling, crying, fighting, physical exercise, and manual labor. Think about it—we do not yell because we are in pain but because yelling provides relief. We don't laugh or cry because we are happy or hurt; we do so because laughing and crying reduce tension, along with a welcoming sense of pleasure or relief.

3.4.3 Muscles Involved in Sexual Orgasm

Arguably, the muscle systems involved in sexual orgasm (climax or ejaculation) provide the fastest reduction of high levels of tension. Even a local response involving only the genital region can be distinctively pleasurable. However, when the response radiates throughout the body, including sending shivers down the back, a genital sexual release can provide our most intense experience of physical pleasure.

3.4.4 Cardiovascular Muscles

Of possible concern is when we reduce excitement through the muscles associated with our heart and vascular systems. Temporary dips and rises in heartbeat may be associated with a pleasant sense of sexual arousal.

We hear about "matters of the heart" and "be still my heart." And there are those who say they have "lust in their heart." However, overloading these systems continuously over time may induce stress in the systems. Hans Selye, a University of Montréal endocrinologist, described the body's response to stress as a sequence, going from "alarm to resistance to exhaustion." Involving less risk, we have tension reduction through vascular dilation, as in smarting or flushing.

These four general physiological groupings have the same underlying dynamic. Chase leads to excitement, tension reduction, and pleasure. We shall now turn to describing the dynamics of three social applications relating to tension reduction.

3.4.5 When Skill is Required

We take notice that considerable skill is required for raising excitement to a maximum and inhibition to a minimum. That is, timing is critical to achieve the maximum amount of excitement at the time of release. Typically, the male chases the female, and the female maximizes her stimulus value by providing the necessary resistance. If both parties are somewhat skillful, excitement levels can reach remarkably high levels followed by considerable pleasure. Too much resistance results in the male becoming exhausted and just giving up the chase. On the other hand, too little resistance can result in low levels of excitement and consequently low levels of pleasure. When this happens, the female may be described as cheap. In this context, "cheap" simply means that the male received too little pleasure for the reason that there was too little resistance. We can observe that the Dance of Seven Veils provides more sexual arousal than simply viewing a nude.

3.4.6 Finding Safe and Effective Means

Finding a safe and effective means for reducing tension would seem to be desirable whenever one is reducing tension. Smoking and eating can reduce excitement, but these have undesirable side effects. Traditionally, males have reduced tension by masturbating. Social taboos make it unacceptable to talk about this. For some, a cold shower seems to work—but only short term. Sports have been another favorite way for males to reduce excitement. Elementary schools use kickball during recess, and

secondary schools require "physical education" each semester for both males and females. Females are catching up in regard to using sports for tension reduction. However, for as long as anyone can remember, females have been very effective at reducing tension through crying.

3.4.7 Comedy

Comedy can be a pleasant and publicly acceptable way to reduce tension. The skill in comedy is to say something that raises the excitement level, but can be reduced through laughter. There is risk. Notably, the underlying dynamics are similar for both laughter and anger. The risk is that when there is a great potential for laughter, there is also a great potential for anger. There is a line that is not to be crossed and a skill in knowing the location of that line in a given situation and with a particular audience. Black entertainer Chris Rock can say things that are unacceptable for a white comedian. On the upside, the talented comedian can help desensitize issues, and thereby lead to open discussion of otherwise unapproachable antagonisms within a society.

We turn now to a couple of related topics: (a) addictions and (b) bullying and abuse.

3.5 ADDICTIONS

Sexual addiction can be seen as having a set of underlying dynamics common to any number of other addictions, such as those involving gambling, alcohol, drug abuse, and eating disorders. In this regard, addiction can be seen as a self-sustaining, circular process involving chase. That is, a stimulus triggers a chase, which increases excitement. The release of that excitement gives rise to a sense of pleasure that enhances the strength of the stimulus. Over time, a learned neurological and hormonal sequence would make the behavior easy to trigger and highly resistant to extinction.

Addictions, as it was with submission, can be seen as a matter of escaping from the arduous task of managing freedom. Some existentialists describe this task as sheer anguish—being forced to make decisions when there is no rational basis for doing so. As cited previously in our *Brief History*,

Jean-Paul Sartre described the anguish in his *To Freedom Condemned*; and again, Eric Fromm titled his book *Escape from Freedom*. Similarly, Aldus Huxley argued that people want someone or something to take command over their lives in his *Brave New World, Revisited*. The bottom line is that, with a little practice, an individual may successfully escape from freedom by voluntarily choosing a life of addiction. That is, absolute thinking leads to a life dominated by chase, and repeated chase can lead to an addictive personality. Even if friends help to bring one addiction under control, that addiction may be simply replaced with another. At this point, there is an addiction to the chase—any chase.

The sequence involving the pleasure of tension reduction can be seen as similar to obsessive-compulsive behavior. An individual *obsessively* focuses on an idea. Chase increases and the excitement is *compulsively* coupled with a behavior that reduces tension and results in pleasure or relief.

Arguably, there is a genetic predisposition to chase. Or it may be that the predisposition is established in one's early years during critical periods of development. It's described as the love of the chase. Such individuals may have a higher likelihood of becoming caught up in a chase sequence and a greater likelihood to become addicted to chase itself. We can observe supercharged contests between (a) those who engage in prohibited sexual behavior and (b) those who seek to incarcerate them. It's a variation of the childhood game of cops and robbers and resembles the ancient struggle of good versus evil.

Regarding all addictions, the prescription for constructive change is to reduce absolute thinking. Absolute thinking is reduced as chase is reduced, and chase is reduced as we come to realize that *we do not look out of our eyes*.

3.6 BULLYING AND ABUSE

Bullying can be seen as what one person does to another, while abuse is what that other person experiences. Notably, some researchers describe sexual abuse as only 10 percent of abuse in general, but it gets 90 percent of the attention. Child abuse can be seen as the most sensationalized. However, children can be seen as one segment of a class of vulnerable

people. Other vulnerables include the less powerful, disabled, elderly, and unwary. A person sleeping or drugged may provide a low inhibition situation to the Absolutist. Those inclined toward chase experience a lower level of inhibition when seeing vulnerability. Depending on the circumstances, the response may be to attack or protect. For some, having a primary focus on sex may simply reflect membership in a sexually immature society. In this regard, public policy may prohibit physical abuse against children, but ignore parents and teachers who impose their ideological beliefs on children. And let's not forget absolutely oriented politicians and religious leaders who make a profession of imposing their absolute beliefs on others.

All absolutely oriented behaviors can be seen as having the same underlying dynamics, namely that they involve the chase sequence. Chase gives rise to excitement, and excitement is released through a system of muscles leading to either pleasure or relief. Sexual abuse involves tension reduction through the genitals, while non-sexual abuse is likely to involve large muscles, as in hitting, or small muscles involved in speech, as when yelling and ridiculing.

Bullying or abusive behavior can be reasonably described as situations where at least one of the participants is unwilling. In some situations, both participants are unwilling but forced to fight for survival. In cock fighting, the roosters would probably choose to be elsewhere. In war, those fighting would rather be home with family and friends. In such encounters, those doing the fighting are generally not those who made the decision to fight in the first place.

Reducing the inclination to abuse can be seen as a matter of recognizing that chase begins with absolute thinking where the enemy is seen as being *out there* and different from us. With absolute thinking, there can be only one victor; while there can be any number of contenders. For the Absolutists, the answer to any difference is to chase to the point of conquering or submitting.

This closes our section on an absolute theory of sexual behavior. To summarize: the absolute perspective leads to chase and high excitement, and reducing excitement achieves its most intense sense of pleasure when being reduced through the genitals.

As with any absolutely oriented chase, the alternative is found in relative thinking. That is, a process of recognizing that there is no one *out there* other than what's created by one's own mind—yes, the truth will make us free, but truth is relative rather than absolute. When interactions are seen to replace chase, relative thinking replaces absolute thinking. It all boils down to the existential question of whether or not you want to conquer others. One's answer will be followed by abuse or by interaction.

Looking forward, given that chase-related excitement can rise to a point where there is *a loss of control*, a relative perspective—to which we now turn—provides a means for *staying in control*. Perhaps it is an incentive for some to consider that a relative perspective provides brakes, as on a car. When there is control, one can feel freer to rev-up those emotions in a safe environment.

4. A RELATIVE THEORY OF SEX

As an introductory note, we point out that every individual has two basic tasks—one social and the other personal. Primarily, there is the matter of physical survival within one's society. Most societies are absolutely oriented. At issue is whether those in control maintain their dominance by focusing primarily on God, sex, or politics. In China or North Korea, physical survival is primarily a matter of conforming to a political ideology. In Iran or Saudi Arabia, physical survival is primarily a matter of conforming to a religious ideology. In the United States, physical survival can be seen increasingly as a matter of conforming to dictates regarding sexual behavior. Consequently, in each country, survival may be a matter of protecting one's privacy. In absolutely oriented societies, it is only in one's private life where maturity can take place—albeit, slowly. Unfortunately, restricting growth to private efforts deprives individuals from sharing and benefiting from the experiences of others. Given this chapter's focus, we will put forth an alternative to the absolutely oriented traditions of sexual behavior in the United States.

In a nutshell, our intention is two-fold. We aim to put forth a theory of sexual behavior that is consistent with a relative rather than an absolute perspective, and we will describe how one can implement a practice of interaction while reducing the role of chase. The purpose of such a theory,

as with any relatively oriented theory, is to maximize personal control over one's behavior and increase one's sense of personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Given that all of us were most likely raised in an absolute environment, arriving at a relative approach to sex can be seen as an interactive process involving dismantling our absolute framework and constructing a relative framework at the same time. It can be likened to taking an airplane flight that moves away from its beginning point and toward a new destination. Notably, the greatest stress may be at that midpoint when the distance to the anticipated new destination and that of returning home is about the same.

When moving to a relative perspective from an absolute perspective, dealing with Absolutists can be a major obstruction. Engaging an Absolutist can be likened to getting into a cage with a wild animal—caution is advised no matter how attractive and inviting the appearance. However, there is a significant difference in that the wild animal has been programmed by Nature and is subordinate to that programming. In contrast, the Absolutist chooses to be subordinate to a program of his or her own making and self-imposed. In classical terms, the Relativist is taking on the challenge of dealing with simple idolatry.

An additional challenge for an engagement between a Relativist and an Absolutist has to do with their age. Restating an earlier point, change requires time and effort. Youth are more likely to have both sufficient time and energy to deliberate between absolute and relative perspectives before choosing one over the other. On the other hand, when individuals begin their sunset years, they tend to continue their established patterns (assimilation) of thinking. They just don't have either the time or energy to deconstruct and reconstruct those patterns (accommodation).

And again, we have the intensity of the confrontation. While a relative perspective can accommodate change, the foundation of the absolute perspective is a belief in unchanging truths. Since truth is all-encompassing, any difference from absolute truth becomes a matter of one's intellectual life or death. Acknowledging any change by an Absolutist puts at risk his or her lifestyle and reputation. A chase is then triggered where effort escalates to match any resistance.

If unwary, a Relativist can stumble into absolute thinking by simply

responding to an Absolutist's characterization of something judged as good or evil. Whether one confirms or denies the characterization, he or she is now engaged in absolute thinking. While it may appear to be only modest when rejecting the title of being a hero (triggering only minor resistance and chase), disagreeing with an accusation of being evil may appear to be self-serving with an inclination to lie. If one becomes defensive, he or she is now fully engaged in a contest of absolutes. For the Absolutist, getting a Relativist to take the bait triggers and energizes a chase. The strategy is to simply invite the accused to turn the prod of absolute thinking onto himself or herself. To say that again, if as an accused you are characterized as being evil, and you take the bait, you stumble into absolute thinking whether agreeing or disagreeing with the characterization. To agree or disagree with an absolute judgment is to engage in absolute thinking. Notably, absolute thinking is the one thing that can separate an individual from both a relationship with God and Nature, on the one hand; and from modern-day science, on the other. There is no answer to an absolutely oriented question or accusation. To maintain personal integrity by *not* pushing back, Jesus advised: "do not resist" but offer one's other cheek when struck (Matthew 5:38); and Gandhi, with reference to Jesus, advised to just take the bone-crushing hit. The Relativist might put forth the idea that no individual is in a position to judge anyone—others or oneself. The Absolutist may simply take the resistance to judging as a sign of guilt—and say so. That's intimidating for most everyone.

Arguably, the only reasonable response to an absolute accusation is to discuss the merits of absolute thinking. The likelihood of that happening is similar to constructively engaging a wild animal. The Absolutist is just as compelled by his or her truth as is that wild animal by its instincts.

Missing the target is a necessary forerunner for hitting the target.

Notably, the Relativist does not lay claim to perfection in whole or in part. To do so would involve making absolute judgments. The Relativist can acknowledge frequently "missing the mark" as a matter of being engaged in the natural process of maturation. However, to be consistent with relative thinking, he or she will not judge such a miss in terms of good or evil. Without judging, *sin* becomes simply a matter of immaturity. As Nature would have it, learning to hit the mark involves initially missing

the mark. Baseball super-star Babe Ruth was known for his home runs; less known was his record of strikeouts. The point here is that missing the target is an essential precursor to hitting the target. The process can be seen as similar to that used in the scientific method. Researchers do not judge the experimental results in terms of good or bad. When hypotheses are not confirmed, they learn what *does not work*. Over time, this process of testing guides the researcher to what *does work*. This approach is directly contrary to absolute thinking where answers are known and bringing others into compliance is the goal.

We take notice that in many situations, trying harder is the way to success. However, in sexual situations involving chase, this frequently may not be the case. With chase, trying harder leads to conquering or submission. Either way, there is the pleasure of tension reduction and a heightened desire to begin another chase. Chase promotes more chase. Whether we are talking about sex or any other matter, trying harder from an absolute perspective increases chase and does not help one arrive at the interaction and enhanced control that comes from a relative perspective.

Within a relative context, we shall use the physical-rational-choice triad of human experience to organize our thoughts. While all three experiences are present in the adult, our priority on choice is consistent with a relative perspective at the Adult Stage-3 of development—our highest classification. We begin with our physical hardwiring within which both reason and choice operate.

4.1 PHYSICAL LIMITS

Generally speaking, sex is a means for reducing excitement, and this experience is present from birth. Even during the latter stages of pregnancy, Mary Calderone, M.D., a pioneer in sex education, stated that "ultrasound pictures show erections by the 29-week-old male fetus." For females, "clitoral erection and vaginal lubrication are evident from birth onward." She goes on to point out that "Sometime in the first 6 months after birth, the baby discovers his penis or her vulva and finds that it is pleasurable to touch. This discovery is part of the natural evolution of the child, and parents need to treat it by socializing the child. We don't try to stop children from urinating and defecating—we just teach when and

where to do it. Parents can do the same thing with self-pleasuring" (*A Child's World*, Diane Papalia & Sally Olds, 1987).

The point is that reducing tension is a physiological mandate. Notably, it takes only slight pressure and rubbing action to trigger the reduction of tension through the genitals. Bearing this in mind, suppression by itself will predictably be followed by unintended and unfortunate consequences. As for the "where and how," this is a matter of public policy and personal choice—particularly when the sex organs are involved. We turn now to our rational options.

4.2 RATIONAL OPTIONS

Through reason, we can formulate options from which to choose. Here are two rational options that can be seen as representing critical choice points related to human experience in general, and sexual experience specifically.

First, there is the task of developing the ability to recognize ideas as being consistent with either an absolute or relative perspective. Initially, this may require considerable mental effort. While our society may encourage absolute thinking, our personal experience will attest to our individuality. We can anticipate that it will take effort to override our habit of thinking that we are looking *out of our eyes* and perceiving a physical and rational world existing external to us.

Absolutely, chase is triggered by an assumed external stimulus existing in just the way we experience it. In this regard, it has been said that Helen of Troy was so absolutely beautiful that the image of her face "launched a thousand ships." Relatively speaking, the perceptions and emotions of those sailors would surely have come into play.

With practice, we can come to recognize a distinction between thoughts that rely on an absolute perspective in contrast to a relative perspective. Following this, our sense of integrity will link chase to absolute thinking, and interaction with relative thinking. Notably, dominance and subordination can be seen as two sides of the same absolute coin. On the other hand, interaction has a fundamentally different dynamic. This brings us to the second critical option.

Second, only after we have learned to recognize the difference between chase and interactive situations will we be in a position to choose one over the other.

Maintaining control is a matter of avoiding chase, and avoiding chase is a matter of choosing relative over absolute thinking. All chase begins with the absolute contention of thinking that we are seeing something *out there*. For many of us, chase begins with the eyes. That is, chase is triggered when one focuses on what one assumes to be an external event. In contrast, relative thinking turns one's focus inward, which maximizes interaction while minimizing chase. It can be seen that interaction becomes the antidote to chase.

Here's a thought for later reflection. At birth, most children are healthy. They are full of energy, inquiring, seeking stimulation of every sort, and generating rational systems for integrating that stimulation. However, by about eight years of age, they will have turned their lives over to the guidance of others who tell them what they absolutely should do with their lives. Employing the tools of doubt and fear, they will have been taught to think of the world as a place to which they are subject—and the chase after truth begins. Their inner spark is rendered irrelevant if not extinguished, and the matter of choice is not raised. We turn now to matters involving choice, relatively speaking.

4.3 CHOOSING (Low Risk v. High Risk)

Here is a threshold issue—do we choose to think about our sexual behavior? Plants and animals have a breeding season. In contrast, humans can choose to focus on sex any time and any place—day-in and day-out. Equally notable is that humans may choose not to focus on sex as a significant activity. When dealing with an Absolutist, it would be prudent to remember that there are those who aggressively oppose anyone choosing to talk openly about sex. Whatever we choose to think—or not think—about sex, there will be risk.

We point out that a distinction can be seen between rationally choosing to change our behavior, on the one hand, and choosing to implement a particular behavior, on the other. A rational decision takes only a moment, while implementation typically is a long process of rewarding the desired

behavior and extinguishing the undesired behavior. Similarly, we can choose to make New Year's resolutions, but we have neither the rational understanding nor ability to implement them.

Regarding implementation, we characterize our task as one of increasing control over chase for the purpose of replacing those dynamics with interactive responses. However, there is a note of caution. Given our absolutely oriented culture, there is considerable personal risk in using sexual situations for beginning to learn to control the chase sequence. Fortunately, there are many common, everyday experiences that can be used to increase our control over our inclination to chase. Over time, our interactive skills will become strengthened.

Here is a practical approach for beginning the task of having interaction replace chase. Consider that sexual chase is a subset of chase in general. A life of chase will focus on sex, and a focus on sex will generate a life of chase. Furthermore, recognizing and controlling chase in general may be a prerequisite for recognizing and controlling chase that specifically involves sex. If one is chasing all day long, there may be a lingering predisposition for triggering a sexual chase as the day becomes night. That is, reducing chase in daily activities provides the opportunity for specifically reducing chase in matters relating to sex. We turn now to reducing chase in low-risk situations.

4.3.1 Choosing in Low-Risk Situations

Arguably, the capacity to choose is uniquely human and, when dominant, is characteristic of the mature adult. Choice reflects both rational understanding and physical implementation. Choosing is where it all comes together. It's where the rubber hits the road. Choices are made from rationally understood options that are physically available. Our most basic choice is that of choosing on what or on whom to focus. It occurs when one physical action is chosen over another, or one idea is expressed over another. That is, each of us chooses that which is to be included or not included in our world of personal experience.

Our most basic choice is that of choosing on what or on whom to focus.

Consider the following three examples of low-risk situations that can be used to increase interactive skills before taking on the challenge of extinguishing habits of sexual chase and replacing them with interactive responses. It's like learning to ride "Grace" the gentle horse before mounting "Unpredictable" the bucking bronco. Our three focus points deal with our habits as we engage in driving, speech, and sports.

Driving can be seen as having the same underlying dynamics of chase as those associated with sexual behavior. Consequently, increased control of one can transfer to increased control of the other.

While driving, we can find ourselves in a somewhat involuntary situation of chase. With rapid lane changes, other drivers may cut in front of us for even minimal advantage. We may respond by closing the gap in front of us or driving parallel to a car on either side of us. Alternatively, we may find ourselves being the one who is changing lanes and cutting in front of others. Either way, the chase is on and escalation may become road rage with a complete loss of control. The loss of control can come without warning. However, while our frontal lobes are still in control, we can learn to inhibit the early stages of those ever-increasing levels of excitement associated with chase. Rather than sharpening our attention on that immature driver, we can turn our thoughts inward and reward ourselves with congratulatory praise if we are able to resist chase for even a moment.

Here is something that works with dogs. When a dog begins a chase, you can stimulate the dog's higher cortical centers with a *PSST!* sound. If done early in the chase sequence, the dog may stop the chase and momentarily become compliant. Consider that the same dynamics work with humans. We can make a soft *PSST!* sound early in a chase sequence and stimulate our own higher cortical centers, thereby momentarily gaining control. Some will achieve the same results by snapping their wrist with a rubber band. On some occasions, incessant talking by a female may quell the chase of an ardent male who is being compelled by that burning desire.

In this context, we have an opportunity to replace chase with interaction. We take notice that the sooner we recognize the chase sequence, the easier it is to achieve control. Rather than focusing on the external situation, interaction is enhanced when we pull back and see a situation where one driver (ourselves) is competing with another. Such thinking would keep

those frontal lobes active and facilitate staying in control. We can remind ourselves that the behavior of those other drivers reflect them, while it is only our behavior that reflects us. It is our choice to choose which behavior will reflect what we want to become.

Similar to driving under chase are instances of cutting in line at the supermarket or undermining our fellow worker while on the job. The purpose is to advance at the expense of others or to simply keep others from advancing. Turning our focus inward reduces such chase and guides us to a sense of personal integrity.

Speech habits provide another opportunity to practice controlling chase in a low-risk situation. It is something we do all day. Notably, the use of absolute phrases can trigger a chase that escalates into a shouting match and even physical altercations. Even our thinking can be held captive to our language habits. By learning to distinguish between our absolute and relative comments, we are provided the option of choosing one over the other. We may find that as we increase our use of relative phrases and interactive communications, we find greater satisfaction and constructive fulfillment in our dealings with others. We may find ourselves listening more and talking less. When this happens, we may find ourselves engaged in a process where relative phrases are being reinforced and absolute phrases are undergoing extinction.

Here are three specific focus points relating to our speech habits: (1) Speech is something so habitual that we are unaware of the choices being made or the assumptions relied upon. While our own biases may go unnoticed by us, others do take notice. It's similar to our body or breath odor. We generally are not aware of them, while others may notice them acutely; for example, a spouse may take notice of an unusual perfume or cologne to which we are no longer sensitive. (2) Compounding our language habits is that they are self-reinforcing. They will draw some people closer to us while pushing others away. If we attempt to change our speech from absolute to relative, friends may take notice of the difference and demand that we stop talking that way or risk losing their friendship. Substantive differences are not tolerated in any absolute system. Similarly, some books will be clear while others are tedious and boring, depending on whether or not the wording is consistent with our own preferences. And, (3) our language habits as stated earlier, whether

absolute or relative, were learned long before we understood the message.

"The tools of the mind become burdens when the environment which made them necessary no longer exists."

Consequently, it can be seen that just as language was the foundation upon which our absolute bias was established, our language will be the first to address if change is to occur. Yes, we are repeating that point regarding change. Perhaps it was an old Dakota tribal saying: "When your horse dies, it's time to dismount." And again, as Henri Bergson eloquently put it: "The tools of the mind become burdens when the environment which made them necessary no longer exists."

As for guidelines from a relative perspective, efforts to make changes in our speech habits could take various forms. Generally, we can limit our speech to our own experiences with communications simply as a matter of sharing our perceptions with others, and we can reasonably speak of our internal experiences rather than external realities. Similarly, we can acknowledge that every individual is a sovereign, and that no one is in a position to declare external truths to which others are subject. In this regard, we are all equal. And again, we can seek alternatives to replace value-laden judgments. A phrase such as "I like it" can replace "that's good." "I believe" can replace "It is." And again, "I like your appearance" can replace "You are beautiful." These distinctions can be seen as describing internal events of personal experience, rather than describing external events that are applicable to all. For some, simply saying they "perceive" something rather than "seeing" something can reinforce a relative habit of thinking. This brings us to our third low-risk situation, where controlling chase can be practiced.

Sporting contests can be seen as another low-risk opportunity to see absolute and relative perspectives in contrast, and to engage in the process of having relatively oriented interactions replace the absolutely oriented habits of chase.

We shall look first from the absolute perspective for the reason that was probably our cultural teaching. Absolutely, sporting events are competitive events where one side is primarily trying to beat the other side. It's an us-verses-them contest, where "they" are *out there*. It's a two-

pronged effort—pushing yourself forward and pushing the opposition backward. As a chase event, there is physical pleasure in beating the other side. Rationally, there are public accolades and monetary rewards justifying a lifestyle of chase. As for matters of choice, winning defines an individual as having self-worth and possibly immortal status in a hall of fame.

The teaching of this absolute game of chase can be seen to have begun when parents praised their winning children to other family members and anyone else they encountered. This includes that bumper sticker declaring "My child is a winner." Getting A grades becomes a time for rejoicing. Increasing the intensity of the chase several-fold are team sports. The child doesn't want to let the team down; doesn't want to miss a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity; and above all, doesn't want to be an embarrassment to the people cared about such as family and friends. If avoiding embarrassment is primary, relegating oneself to spectator status—cheering your team on to victory—can vicariously provide intense chases without fear of personal failure.

Furthermore, learning to chase can become generalized to business and personal relationships. As for sex, encounters may be characterized in terms of whether one "got to first base." Absolutely speaking, life is a chase, and fulfillment is a matter of being recognized and publicly validated as a winner. With the sympathetic nervous system dominant, life is lived in a state of perpetual emergency. When not on a roller coaster, one is living life on a racehorse. Those lower cortical centers associated with emotions take precedence over the higher cortical centers associated with reflection and prioritizing.

Now, let's take a look at sports from a relative perspective. Consider two male tennis players, each coming from a relative perspective. Given that life is an individual matter, the primary goal of playing is to mature one's own rational skills and their application to one's physical experience. To say that again, rather than beating the other person, the objective is to maximize one's own self-understanding and maturity. When each is playing his best, both become winners. When I prevail, I see what works; when you prevail, I see guidance looking forward. Your game pushes me to improve my game. Knowing what works requires the knowledge of what does not work. Both players need the opposition so that each can

test his own skills. As it has been said "You are only as good as your competition." If winning were the objective, simply play with a much weaker opponent or cheat. If personal growth is the objective, one may pit his own weaknesses against the opponent's strengths.

When personal growth is the objective, playing our best game may not even be our primary objective. There could be any number of social or political goals that could contribute to our personal growth. The successful competitor is he who matures the most by the experience. Similarly, as an adversarial process, sports can demonstrate how opposing efforts can result in mutual benefits. We have plaintiffs and defendants in the American legal system, the null and experimental hypotheses in the scientific method, free-market competition in business, and the pro-and-con sides in scholastic debates. In each case, the opposing efforts can combine to serve mutual benefits.

4.3.2 Choosing in High-Risk Situations

After developing skills and control in low-risk situations, growth-motivated individuals will always strive to understand an ever-increasing circle of human experiences. Here we have high-risk activities that may have severe physical and social consequences. As the frontal lobes become subordinate to lower cortical levels, there is the increasing risk that, prior to achieving understanding, abuse may occur. As chase escalates into a goal of conquering, emotions become increasingly dominant and guide rational thought toward an unanticipated loss of control. To address this matter, here are three focus points: anonymity, maturity, and the toughest task.

Anonymity and being in a position of authority decrease inhibitions and increase the likelihood of abuse. Targets can include animals, children, the infirm, and the aged. Anonymity increases when wearing dark glasses, or when the lights are dimmed. As for those in positions of authority, we have adults, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and religious leaders; all of whom are in situations where abusive behavior can become more likely.

As we mature, the desire to conquer will typically decrease. Top tennis players gain little self-worth by beating a novice. An accomplished hunter takes little pride in killing an animal with a high-powered rifle in a fenced-

in area. And again, the powerful contribute little to their sense of identity and self-worth by conquering the weak.

Perhaps the toughest task is that of choosing to try again after "failing." When engaged in complex social situations with high social risk, there are times when one can become one's own severest critic. Compounding the stress are those onlookers who are quick to see an opportunity for gain in putting you down. As with vultures and the "me too" types, they step out of the shadows and gorge themselves on the fallen. And again, they are the ones who join the sanctimonious chorus asking others to throw another rock or press for a crucifixion. Curiously, their behavior can be seen as reflecting the same lower cortical dominance as those about whom they are criticizing.

And there are those who feign vulnerability to ensnare those who are risk-takers. With an air of self-righteous injury, they will claim victimhood after failing to reject an approach. Perhaps resulting in more serious consequences are those who offer to defend you in exchange for your unconditional loyalty—think spouse, employee, or mobster godfather.

4.3.3 Two More Thoughts Providing Context for a Relative Approach

First, changing our behavior is a process—sometimes agonizingly slow. It can be described as what psychologist Clark Hull described as involving *habit strength*. Each time we do something, it increases the tendency to do it again when in a similar situation. Each repetition contributes to building a stronger habit and thereby providing stability to our behavior. Habits are efficient. They can be controlled at lower centers of the brain, requiring little mental effort. We are able to drive to work while listening to a radio talk show. Curiously, we may be most responsive to unexpected emergencies when doing so.

Fortunately, changing a habit has been studied extensively. Generally, it's a matter of (a) having a new response followed by reinforcement and (b) having the old habitual response not followed by reinforcement. Learning theorist Edward Thorndike called this process the Law of Effect, while B.F. Skinner referred to its application as behavioral modification. Notably, we can create our own reinforcements by choosing rationally to interact rather than chase. Though somewhat risky, one must engage in a

behavior in order to extinguish it. Suppressing behavior through punishment, or the fear of punishment, only delays the extinction process.

Second, we note that, while a one-night stand can produce the pleasure of tension reduction, it grows weaker over time and eventually requires a new partner to provide the necessary stimulus strength. How often can you conquer the same mountain before the challenge is lost?

In contrast, a maturing relationship can be perceived as renewed at each step of growth, and the sense of closeness may get even stronger. Not only may relatively oriented sex between a male and female ensure species survival, but it can also provide for offspring to be exposed to the interactive relationship between their parents regarding both heredity and upbringing.

As Nature would have it, sexual behavior is only one way a couple can experience a sense of closeness and intimacy. Whether laughing or crying, simply being together can strengthen a couple's sense of companionship. In such relationships, there may be a greater sense of intimacy than in that one-night stand. Happiness and fulfillment are found in the journey rather than achieving the preset goal of copulating. That fulfillment is one where the physical activity becomes symbolic of a maturing interactive relationship and a sense of intimacy. Notably, an interactive friendship would precede sex, if the sex is to be symbolic of intimacy. The level of intimacy would correspond to their interactive level of maturity.

And again, there may be a greater sense of intimacy and togetherness during cuddling than while copulating. With chase, a sense of closeness can be totally absent during sexual intercourse—it's just tension reduction as with masturbation. Similarly, when payment for services is involved, the payment is not for sex, but for the other person to go away after sex (as one Hollywood actor put it).

Relatively speaking, sex is not significant, but it may reflect a relationship that is significant. The same can be said of everything from a handshake to intercourse.

In closing this section on a relative theory of sex, we will briefly recap using the physical-rational-choice (PRC) triad. Relatively speaking, it

begins with choice when a person chooses a partner with whom to interact. *Rationally*, those interactions become increasingly integrated as a matter of maturity. *Physical* interactions, as with sexual relations, become symbolic of the union at a given point in time. Taken together, these ideas present the individual with a daunting task. As for society at large, real progress may only be achieved when public policy discourages males and females from seeing each other as targets and encourages interactive relationships.

We now turn to some topics of general interest regarding sex: gender, homosexuality, and love.

5. THREE SPECIFIC SCENARIOS (With a Relative Spin)

5.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES

Throughout Nature, males and females seek each other out for sex and companionship. There is something about each gender that completes the other. Even when men do not know how to dance, they still have sought the companionship of women. And again, even when women are not inclined to balance a checkbook, they seek out the companionship of a man. Their combined attributes can be seen as complementary.

The contention here is that there are gender differences—physically, rationally, and in matters of choice. Most differences can be seen as significantly influenced by an interaction of genetic and cultural factors. Within this context, our focus is on rational differences. We take as a given that physical differences are well understood by the discerning public. As for matters of choice, choices are made from options available only after being rationally constructed as alternatives.

We begin our focus on rational gender differences by taking notice that rational thinking involves two separate tasks. First is *induction*, where parts are added together to form a whole. Second is *deduction*, where a whole is used to guide one's steps going forward and leading to new experiences. A cycle is formed as the new experiences are inductively combined to form a new whole. That is, the rational part of living involves a process where each day provides new experiences which inductively are

added to one's current system of thinking to form an integrated whole. For those so engaged, they start each day as if they were born again with unlimited potential.

As for the distinction made here, males can be seen as having a propensity to gather parts and form wholes (induction); while females can be seen as having a propensity to begin with wholes and focus on applying them to specific applications going forward (deduction).

It can be seen that both induction and deduction are essential for dealing reasonably with the physical world. As for the distinction made here, males can be seen as having a propensity to gather parts and form wholes (induction); while females can be seen as having a propensity to begin with wholes and focus on applying them to specific applications going forward (deduction). When combined, these applications give rise to new experiences (parts) that complete a cycle to create new wholes. As for maturation, males mature as they combine their inductive skills with deductive understanding; females mature as they combine their deductive skills with inductive understanding.

This description of the rational process can be seen as consistent with a relative perspective where one's current understanding (wholes) is always relative to one's accumulated experience (parts). That is, induction always precedes and provides the basis for deduction.

5.1.1 When Males and Females are Interactive

When genders interact, we have complementary roles that set the dynamics for mutual growth and maturity. The role of the male is primarily inductive, where he seeks to explore and discover new frontiers. As primarily deductors, females tend to be supportive by nurturing and guiding what is gathered toward mutually desired outcomes.

These gender-role interactions can be observed at an early age. Referring again to authors Diane Papalia and Sally Olds, they cite the research of Cicirelli (1976) describing how "Girls talk more to their younger siblings than boys do: they give more explanations and feedback, and they are more likely to use the deductive method (explaining, describing,

demonstrating, and illustrating), while boys more often use the inductive approach (giving examples and letting the learner abstract the concept)" (*A Child's World*, 1987).

As adults, males continue their primary focus on inductively gathering and combining ideas, while females continue to be primarily focused on taking ideas and deductively applying them to preset goals. As former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher succinctly put it: "If you want to talk about something, ask a man. If you want to get something done, ask a woman."

Arguably, the best results occur when each gender is able to appreciate the contributions of the other and interactively combine them with their own. In this way, each contributes to the growth and maturity of the other along with enhanced achievements. Figuratively, each reaches out to link up with the other. That is, men are like those who stock the shelves with food at the store; women are like buyers who choose which foods to take home and prepare for mutual consumption.

And again, females can be seen as having more control over themselves regarding sexual behavior. That is, on the one hand, males can be enticed to chase almost anything—as in the "love of the chase." On the other hand, females may be more deliberative when choosing whom to support. Add to this the physical consideration that it takes very little time for males to reduce tension, while females would reasonably take longer before deciding to *give themselves to a male*. Also affecting the male-female roles is the rational consideration that a male can conquer ten females, while a female can't be subordinated to ten males at the same time. It's the same with horses.

A union of one male and one female is consistent with maximizing the freedom of each. He can initiate strategic plans for goals that she embraces and chooses to facilitate. He does the building, while she sees that the location is a good fit with those mutually embraced goals.

5.1.2 Gender Dominance

When males are dominant, they work to achieve parts but without direction—as in refurbishing an old car with no intention of going

anywhere. Accumulating parts without an overall purpose tends to gravitate towards burn out. It takes a great deal of energy to keep collecting more parts without having a purpose, which enables some parts to be discarded and others to be combined into an integrated whole. As for sex, the dominant male's natural tendency can be seen as continually seeking out new stimulation.

When females are dominant, they tend to dominate with deductive reasoning. That is, an idea becomes a given and a pivot around which all other ideas become subordinate. It is what we have described as a primary referent.

In practice, females will have a propensity to seek a binding commitment from the male. All that follows can be seen as efforts by the female to bring the male into compliance with her perception of that initial commitment. If not met with success, the female may become aggressive and look for a violation of their commitment, and seek to induce shame along with monetary damages as punishment. Add a self-righteous element, and the female can become as a heavy weight, retarding the male's maturational progress—physically, rationally, and in matters of choice.

If males remain in a contentious relationship, they may simply acquiesce and give up their spirit. They become resigned to a hostage situation—like an animal in a zoo. Some describe this giving up as the Stockholm syndrome, where the captive begins to identify with the captors and their agenda. As for the conquered male, sexual activity may be absent or simply energized by fantasy. A kiss can be delivered with the same enthusiasm as a Walmart greeting or when paying a fee at a toll bridge.

When males and females compete for dominance, each may seek to capitalize on the weakness of the other. Males may not see their behavior as inappropriate when failing to consider a female's inclination to do as asked, please, support, accommodate, and nurture. On the other hand, females can be seen to exploit the male's predisposition to seek new stimulation. Missteps can be used to shame and seek an admission of guilt and remorse. Conflicts may become a contest between the male's physical advantage against the female's verbal advantage. Push-back by one will energize push-back by the other—and the chase scenario begins. This mutual pleasure of the chase may bring them back together after separating.

Similarly, when males and females act separately, either approach can be seen as creating an absolutely oriented framework containing the seeds of its own undoing. Acting alone, the female can be likened to a kite without a tail; and the male acting alone can be seen as a tail without a kite. In a business setting, females can be seen as getting the product moving out the back door but with many returning as defective. Complicating the situation, males can be seen as never finishing the product as they seek to achieve perfection.

5.1.3 Let's Do This Again

Both induction and deduction are essential for establishing rational integrity and attaining physical achievements.

As a matter of personal experience, we can observe that males may work to save money without much thought given to how it would be spent; and we have females spending without much thought given to how the bills would be paid. Said a different way, males primarily focus on the trees while females primarily focus on the forest. And again, males are inclined to be near-sighted, while females are inclined to be far-sighted. Once more, males may have an eye on value, while females have a sense of good fit.

Here is a focus point. Traditionally, males are described as dominant and females as subordinate. The terms "initiator" and "supporter" may be a better fit when referring to complementary gender roles. The male may be the initiator of interactions, while the female may be in a role of choosing whether or not to nurture and support the relationship. The male may ask the female for a date, while the female may accept or decline. As long as the female retains the ability to provide or withhold support to a male, she is in an interactive rather than a subordinate role. That's not to say that males and females are incapable of walking on their own. It is to say that interactively, each can serve as a check and balance for the other.

There are many physiological examples where interactive relationships are designed for achieving common goals. Pairs of organs can be seen as reflecting complementary roles without subordination. The left hand of a right-handed person can be supportive without being subordinate. And

again, from our two cortical hemispheres to our two feet, we have interactions without subordination. Perhaps females can do everything a male can do, but the contention here is that they will do it differently and less effectively than when interacting with a male.

Perhaps a great example of complementary roles without subordination can be seen in the interaction between the brain and the heart. On the one hand, the brain seeks and organizes sensory input, while maintaining rational integrity. On the other hand, the heart provides unconditional nourishment to every cell including those of the brain. Notably, the heart will indiscriminately nourish both healthy and cancer cells. Discriminately, the brain will seek to find a way to destroy those cancer cells. Both brain and heart are at their best when working interactively. The underlying dynamic can be described as an inductively strategizing male brain being nourished by the deductively supportive female heart. While the brain can build a ship, the heart provides a good-fit destination. Arguably, it is artificial to ask which is more important between two essential contributors.

In closing this section, we take notice that from a relative perspective, men and women can interact in a way that raises each to a level higher than that which is attainable alone. It can be likened to using a male rocket for take off, and a female booster to get into orbit. To repeat our main point, sequence matters. To avoid a critical flaw, inductive experiences always provide the rational basis for deductive guidance.

5.2 HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR

As for homosexuality, nobody cares—except those who eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Physically, the body has minimal requirements when it comes to reducing tension. Whether engaged in self-stimulation or rubbing while dancing, the body just doesn't care.

As used here, homosexuality refers to sex between same-gender (same-sex) partners involving the genitals. In contrast, the term "gay" will refer to sexual orientation as a matter of public policy and is addressed in the chapter on politics.

To begin, sex can be seen as simply a matter of physical tension reduction. Notably, a wide variety of stimuli can trigger tension reduction through the genitals. Regardless of the means for attaining climax, the common variable can be seen as tactile stimulation and light pressure to the genital area while fantasizing or engaging in chase. Compared with some form of masturbation, intercourse is perhaps the most complicated approach in genital tension reduction. This is particularly the case if the goal is tension reduction by both parties at approximately the same time. Timing and mental preparation are essential.

Arguably, anyone could become homosexually oriented. One scenario is that, between the ages of about 7 and 12, an individual develops the rational capacity to perceive from different perspectives. Games of chase reflect one's capacity to take on the role of another person. Children are natural actors perhaps for the reason they have not yet developed a sense of personal identity. Taking on roles continues throughout adulthood, as in the "If I were a rich man" fantasy. In a chase sequence, one can assume either a role of dominance (chaser) or submissiveness (chasee). Same-sex chases in sports are common, such as in basketball or hockey. Whether the participants are the same sex or not, the objective is to build up excitement and enjoy the tension reduction upon completion. Arguably, the increasing acceptance of homosexuality is not its efficacy, but the failure of satisfying heterosexuality due to its complexity.

While it seems likely that everyone has the capacity to experience excitement toward a member of the same sex, most comply with the social norms of avoiding the use of the genitals in same-sex engagements. However, it would seem quite likely that some individuals would find themselves gravitating toward reducing tension through the genitals with a same-sex partner. It can be seen as a somewhat smooth transition to go from fighting to hugging, to kissing, and eventually to mutual tension reduction involving the genitals.

Stigmatizing same-sex tension reduction involving the genitals involves a subtle distinction. While it's okay to use one's large muscles to beat each other to a pulp or vocally unleash a mean-spirited diatribe, tension reduction involving the genitals between same-sex participants is discouraged. While boxers may hug after a fight, it would be discordant for them to spoon.

Culture has encouraged young people to chase and sexually conquer members of the opposite sex, while issuing strong admonitions regarding same-sex chasing and conquering. However, perhaps the stronger the admonitions (resistance), the greater the chase and the greater the pleasure in partaking of the forbidden fruit. To say that again, as a direct consequence of social derision, homosexual behavior gains excitement and an enhanced sense of pleasure upon its release. Choosing to resist cultural morays may provide an exhilarating sense of personal identity.

While homosexual behavior itself may have only a questionable genetic link, it is easy to see how a propensity for chase could be genetically or hormonally linked. Some individuals just seem to be more assertive and aggressive than others. It's easy for them to embrace a commitment to the "love of the chase."

It can be seen as a cruel contrivance to label some individuals as homosexual as if they had no choice. Everyone is potentially homosexual. Anyone can see anyone or anything as a target for conquering. When inhibitions are low, anyone can reduce tension by same-sex stimulation. The genitals don't care how stimulation is achieved. It is mere contrivance to tell a youth that he or she is homosexual because either feels an urge toward a same-sex target, and then seeks to engage in tension reduction.

Briefly, let's employ the RAM distinction. *For the Absolutists*, we have a game of chase. Encouraging or discouraging homosexual behavior involves the same underlying chase dynamics. *For the Mixed*, there is the acceptance of everyone as they are. So long as others subscribe to the doctrine of accepting everyone as they are, let's not argue about it. Don't disturb the peace or cause disagreeableness or divisiveness. Let's advocate unconditional love for everyone—except, of course, for those who reject the doctrine of unconditional love. *And, for the Relativists*, how someone reduces tension is not a significant issue. What would have significant consequences are the efforts of some to impose their absolute views for or against tension reduction between same-sex partners involving the genitals.

<p>The focus point for control is whether or not one sees another person as a target for chase and conquering.</p>
--

As for increasing one's control over personal sexual behavior, we can take notice that the issue is not about being homosexual or straight. Whether one identifies as homosexual, straight, bisexual, transgender, or whatever; all share the same underlying dynamic. The focus point for control is whether or not one sees another person as a target for chase and conquering. The underlying dynamics for the straight guy seeking primarily to reduce tension with a female are the same as if the target were another guy.

As an aside, we take note that gender distinctions may become passé. Arguably, current sex categories will become irrelevant as the idea of "sexual fluidity" removes gender identity from sexual interactions. Sexual distinctions, as it is with sectarian religious beliefs, will become whatever combination of ideas an individual chooses them to be at a particular moment in time.

Here's a closing comment. Controlling the emotions relating to sex may be enhanced by focusing on the escalation of excitement. Reducing chase would arguably reduce the escalation of excitement. Learning to interact—rather than chasing others, whether male or female—would predictably result in less excitement and significantly more control over sexual expression. Rather than seeing others as objects to chase and conquer, we could see opportunities for interaction. Reliable change would require a general reduction of chase throughout the day. Arguably, this would require applying a relative perspective throughout one's daily activities.

5.3 LOVE

The meaning someone gives to the word "love" would reflect his or her life experiences and level of maturity. We shall use the RAM analysis to classify and distinguish between some of the commonly used meanings given to the word. Going from the less mature to the more mature, we will use the sequence mixed, absolute, to relative.

5.3.1 Mixed Love

For the physically oriented Mixed, making physical love is a matter of

having physical sex, and having physical sex is making love. While sex is simply a matter of reducing tension through the genitals in an attempt to achieve a sense of physical pleasure, hugging and kissing may help set the mood. You know sex reflects love when you emotionally feel it. It just feels right. However packaged, love is all about maximizing physical pleasure while keeping risk at a minimum. Emotional feelings may alternate between domination and submission, as it is in football's offense and defense. Giving flowers is good, a diamond necklace is better. Remembering an anniversary is good if accompanied by gifts or thoughtful actions. Saying "I love you" and other words to that effect can bring tears to the eyes. If commitments are absent, the reference may be made to recreational sex. Taken together, "when sex is love" and "love is sex," this level of maturity corresponds to the Adult Stage-1 where physical gratification is primary.

5.3.2 Absolute Love

Absolutely oriented love is a bond that yokes the parties together. As with absolute truth, the terms of the agreement are unchanging and permanently binding looking forward. Notably, the parties—individually and severally—are subordinated to the provisions of the agreement. Having only two parties maximizes the power of each. There is risk. Each party is under pressure to remain the same. Any change represents a threat to the belief in the absolutely unchanging truth upon which the relationship was established. The absolute upside is that believing one knows absolute truth provides the appearance of an anchor with the expectation of safety and stability in an otherwise chaotic world.

The agreement may be made in public and officiated by a representative from God or government. Thinking that God is a party to a marriage certified by a religious or government representative can strengthen the sense of commitment. The downside is that if the marriage fails, the participants may question their relationship with God. Loyalty to the agreement is of the utmost importance. It is thought that the couple is so full of love for their own perceptions of each other that there just isn't room to love anyone or anything else. Deviation from the contractual provisions can be reasonably met with moral outrage and legal sanctions. After all, one plus one equals two only if each maintains an unchanging value.

Emotionally, the opposite of love is hate. But love and hate are two sides of the same rational coin. To define one is to define the other. A rationally constructed agreement between parties would lovingly support that which is good, and hatefully oppose that which is evil. What keeps the parties going are their mutual sense of self-righteousness and their mutual hatred of evil. After the couple becomes united, they become a family, which can be seen as the building block for an absolutely oriented society. Such a union corresponds to an absolute perspective at the Adult Stage-2 level of maturity where rationality is primary.

5.3.3 Relative Love

Choosing to communicate is what love is all about. Freedom is being able to choose that upon which we focus. Love is our act of choosing that upon which we focus, rationally think about, and physically interact. Whether our communications are positive or negative, it's the sharing and not the agreement that reflects our love. The opposite of love is indifference. To identify that which we love, we have simply to look at where we spend our time and money. Time is basic, and money is relevant because we can buy another's time to enhance that which we love. Relatively oriented love becomes cumulatively stronger over time as more experiences are shared with a person of our choosing.

It's the sharing and not the agreement that reflects our love.

Our experience of bonding through love will supersede physical sex in an either-or situation. While simple tension reduction can be physically intense, it is absolutely over when it is over. Relatively speaking, reducing tension through the genitals will be a physically pleasant side effect of varying degrees of intensity. In itself, such tension reduction will be of minimal significance. If it occurs at all, sex will become symbolic of the union. When the union is significant, a hug, a walk, or simply talking can be followed by a noticeable sense of pleasure and fulfillment.

Relatively speaking, a loving relationship is interactional. One person's love is simply a ringing phone until someone decides to pick it up. It's a knock on the door—a door that can be opened only from the inside. The phrase "I love you" can be seen as misplaced. The separation of "I" and "you" can be seen as logically flawed—there is the assumption that the

user has knowledge of the other as distinct from oneself. The phrase reasonably translates to "I love the perception of you which I created." Preferable would be, to again cite poet Mary Carolyn Davies, "I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you."

Relatively oriented love does not judge anything in terms of good and evil. Without absolute truth, who is in a position to judge or cast the first stone? However, we can have identity—the pinnacle of relative thinking and human experience. That with which I choose to communicate gives rise to my sense of identity, creates my world of personal experience, and reflects my level of maturity. Another way to describe identity is to consider the donut—a fresh, still-warm maple-covered donut. The donut is identified in terms of where it is, and where it is not. And so it is. An individual is described in terms of where he or she is focused, and where he or she is not focused, at a particular moment in time.

And, yes, that is at a particular moment in time. Relatively oriented love can accommodate change. It is not fixed. There is no anchor. Love dynamically reflects what the parties are experiencing and sharing one day at a time. That is, life is an individual matter, and change is an expectation just as it is with maturation. As Kahlil Gibran put it regarding love: "And stand together yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow"; and again, "let your love be a moving sea between the shores of your souls" (*The Prophet*).

Relatively oriented love becomes like a marriage that matures over time, each partner choosing to interact for the purpose of maximizing one's own growth and maturity. It's not the wedding or state registry that makes a marriage but the actions of each party day-by-day. Continuing after stumbling and missteps would characterize the resolve of each to move forward together. You don't love the other person, but you do love the interactive relationship. A fitting phrase could be "I love loving you." From a relative perspective, this experience of bonding through love corresponds to our Adult Stage-3 level of maturity where choice is primary. That's our most mature level of human experience.

CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER IV

As used in this chapter, the term "sex" has to do with reducing tension primarily through the genitals. Our highest level of maturity involves sex as a symbolic gesture reflecting the intimacy between two individuals that are linked by a mutual primary referent. As noted at the end of Chapter II, common referents include God, family, country, money, an ideological cause, security, or some blend of these. Whatever the primary referent, a relationship between individuals will necessarily exist within the context of their social structure. This brings us to the next chapter having to do with our politics or our relationships with others in our society.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS

INTRODUCTION: POWER RULES

1. THE RAM DISTINCTION	141
1.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Material Benefits)	
1.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Truth Rules)	
1.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Individual Freedom)	
2. AMERICA'S BEGINNING	147
2.1 THE FOUNDING FATHERS (Checks and Balances)	
2.2 AMERICA'S 1800s (Multiple Absolutes)	
2.3 AMERICA'S 1900s (Socialism's Rise)	
3. AMERICA'S CURRENT DRIVE TOWARD SOCIALISM	166
3.1 NULLIFYING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE	
3.2 NULLIFYING THE BILL OF RIGHTS	
3.3 NULLIFYING THE CONSTITUTION	
4. OUR "NO-WIN" CONFLICT	196
4.1 SOCIALISM'S THREE CRITICAL FLAWS	
4.2 CAPITALISM'S THREE CRITICAL FLAWS	
4.3 GRIDLOCK	
5. THE ROAD TO PEACE	209
5.1 IT'S A MATTER OF MATURITY	
5.2 THE TWO GIANTS (United States and China)	
6. INDIVIDUALISM, WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH IT?	215
6.1 INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY AND SIGNIFICANCE	
6.2 LINKING	
6.3 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT	
CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER V	218
BOOK SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	219

Dedicated to those who have pledged their lives and fortunes in the defense of individual liberty.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS

INTRODUCTION: POWER RULES

A basic premise regarding human experience is that physical power rules. By definition, the stronger have power over the weaker. To *rule* simply means having the power to control. Whether one is talking about a lion in the wild, a squatter living alongside a freeway, or a country with nuclear weapons, each establishes its turf by taking and retaining it by force and the threat of force. Given that power rules, it can be seen to follow that people will join together to conquer others or to defend their own freedom. Whatever government system we have, people are going to run it; their stewardship will be a function of their maturity and personal philosophy.

Generally speaking, the physically stronger will prevail over the weaker, and the larger group will prevail over the smaller. When physical power is combined with rational thought (and therefore the ability to work together), the power to control is enhanced; and when this combination is augmented with individual self-interest, the result can be augmented once again. The matter before us has to do with the ends to which the power of government is going to be used. Two broad options are that government will seek to maximize control over the people or the people will seek to maximize control over the government.

1. THE RAM DISTINCTION

Each perspective can be linked to a style of governance. Using our three adult-stage levels of maturity (Chapter 2), we can categorize governance styles accordingly. For readability we will address first the mixed, followed by the absolute, and then the relative. This sequence goes from

the first stage of adult maturity, to the second, and to the third, respectively.

1.1 THE MIXED PERSPECTIVE (Material Benefits)

A mixed political perspective can achieve integrity around the goal of material gain—feeling good physically is the *sine-qua-non* of the mixed approach. However, increasing material gain beyond survival can be seen to take on a life of its own as when one seeks primarily to enhance physical pleasure and the perpetuation of that pleasure.

There are situations where subordinating *reason* and *choice* can be a matter of physical survival, such as during times of social upheaval. Think of the Thirty Year's War in Europe (1618-1648), as the Protestants in the north duked it out with the Catholics in the south—described by some as one of the most destructive conflicts in human history. If you lived between the advancing and retreating lines, survival may have been a matter of embracing a mixed perspective.

Generally speaking, for the Mixed, personal politics simply may be a matter of acquiring material benefits. Lacking rational integrity, support is given to those leaders promising the most material benefits. Without regard to rational integrity, they can freely alternate between absolute and relative perspectives, or among multiple absolute positions while all the time maximizing material benefits. They can sell weapons to both sides of a conflict without a loss of integrity. In a word, the Mixed are opportunists.

There are many practical applications to a public policy based on a mixed approach. The inherent ambiguity of this approach is the lifeblood of bureaucrats. Without rational integrity, the response to each social problem is to pass an additional law. Over time, ambiguous and voluminous laws shift legislative power to regulatory agencies. Regulations become so numerous that no one is capable of knowing their content or of feeling confident that they are in compliance. When this happens, anyone can be found noncompliant if targeted by a government agency. Consequently, individual freedom then becomes a gift of government—to be dispensed or revoked as some agency sees fit. Bureaucrats become parasites who feed off the people until their hosts die.

Given their physical emphasis, the politically Mixed can be seen as consistent with Adult Stage-1 of our three adult stages of maturation. Included here would be those economists who contend that society is founded on an economic system—a world spinning on an economic axis. Expounding on high sounding phrases such as *a free market*, they are without philosophical integrity. Some will openly embrace both a philosophy of free choice and determinism. While seemingly profound, holding to such contradictions can be seen as unintelligible.

1.2 THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE (Truth Rules)

As always, the first step is to establish the absolute truth—this is the *sine-qua-non* for absolute thinking. While there may be any number of ways to arrive at that initial absolute truth from which all else can be logically deduced, we can distinguish between two approaches: (a) the traditional top-down approach and (b) the more recent bottom-up approach. Either way, the individual is subordinate to those assumed to be implementing absolute truth.

In the top-down approach, some individual is thought to be inspired by God concerning the absolute truth, as in a theocracy. We have kings, queens, lords, and masters, all of whom take the role of God-ordained truth givers. In a secular version, there are those who are deemed to be the smartest among us. They discover absolute truth through reason, as in a university setting. They contend that Nature has provided a few individuals with a clearer vision of absolute truth. Within this context, politicians can then claim to be relying on "experts" when making decisions affecting the citizenry.

In the bottom-up approach, a democratic procedure establishes absolute truth with a plurality of votes. It's a rational approach where everyone is considered to be equal. Just as the number 2 is twice whatever 1 is, the significance attributed to two people is twice that attributed to one person. The larger the group, the greater the significance. A one-world government would be the ideal. And conversely, the smaller the group, the less the significance. Notably, the individual is the unit of least significance. Ideally, bottom-up-truth creation attempts to establish the greatest good for the largest number of people. Of course, the will of the

group supplants the will of the individual.

Generally speaking, the bottom-up approach has wide application. Following a set of procedures creates a rational approach to reality. Termed *operational definitions* in a scientific setting, a dog going "without food for 24 hours" is defined as "hungry." In a legal setting, "guilty" and "not guilty" are defined by following a set of judicial procedures. And so it is with bottom-up governance, truth is arrived at procedurally as when a plurality of people agrees on a proposition.

Separately, another approach for establishing the truth is to employ what is called a "lie detector," which is alleged to distinguish between truth and lies. For the Absolutist, using a machine has the appeal of appearing absolutely objective. However, whether it is a lie detector, Geiger counter, or oscilloscope, if the assumption is that the absolute characteristics are being discovered, any interpretation involves the rational weaknesses of absolute thinking. Sometimes even a lie detector "lies."

However arrived at, individuals are expected to be absolutely subordinate to the absolute truth. Actually, obedience to the truth can be seen as a matter of definition. Absolute truth is defined as knowledge existing independently of the perceiver. Existing externally, such truth applies to everyone; and everyone is to be subordinate to it. While no one can act contrary to the absolute truth, actions that don't take truth into consideration can result in injury and perhaps death to the perpetrator and those around the perpetrator. For example, if you mix certain chemicals, an explosion may injure you and those around you. In government, having knowledge of absolute truth can be a basis for a leader to establish his moral authority over the citizenry by declaring that "It's the right thing to do." Morally speaking, good things happen when you act consistently with absolute truth, and bad things happen when you act without taking truth into consideration. So it is everyone's duty to bring society in line with truth and to suppress and eliminate those actions that reflect ignorance of, or disobedience to, established truth.

With knowledge of absolute truth, it can be seen as the right, and even the duty, of government to impose, by physical force if necessary, the doctrines of truth. Central government control is literally for everyone's own good—whether they realize it or not. It is simply arrogant for anyone

to think that he or she has a clearer vision of absolute truth than the combined thinking of the entire group. And, if one thought so, he or she should run for public office and let the public decide. To act on one's own assumption of absolute truth is anarchy—and that's a bad thing.

Absolute governance approaches can be seen as consistent with Adult Stage-2 of maturity. Reason dominates in a rational-physical interaction; and reason dominates choice in that every right-thinking individual should choose absolute truth over absolute evil.

Tolerance of evil is not a virtue!

It can be seen to follow that the identifying characteristic of absolute governance is observed when one individual or government imposes its will over another individual or government. The mantra of absolute thinking guides us: Tolerance of evil is not a virtue!

As an aside, we take notice that the top-down approach employs the absolute truth to *deductively* bring each individual into compliance. In contrast, the math-type rational simplicity of the bottom-up approach *inductively* establishes the absolute truth to which every individual is obliged to comply. Separately, either induction or deduction alone is inclined toward an absolute perspective. Interactively, induction and deduction can combine to form the basis for a governance system that emphasizes individual choice—a governance approach to which we now turn.

1.3 THE RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Individual Freedom)

As covered in Chapter 1, human experience is an individual matter. This contention is Nature's self-evident provision and the *sine-qua-non* for relative thinking. Curiously, rational notions of absolute truth lack integrity when combined with physical experience. Neither the individual with a hot stock tip nor those individuals holding jobs in government are in a position to tell others what choices he or she should make regarding his or her life.

Without absolutes, there is no rational basis for one adult to impose his or

her choices on another—in this sense, we are all equal and sovereign.

Starting with the contention that power rules, individuals form a group for self-protection. A group requires leaders, and so a government is formed. However, the group and its government are always abstract concepts existing only in the mind of each individual. *Government* is a mental creation conceived solely by its individual citizens. As such, government cannot reasonably represent an external reality to which individuals can subordinate themselves—even if they chose to do so. A creator cannot subordinate himself to his creation and maintain his role as a creator. Nature has decreed that each individual is the creator of his own experience—and there is no escape. We can observe a contrast. While Absolutists form governments to control the citizenry, Relativists form governments to protect members' individual freedom.

Another contrast is that a relative approach can manage change where absolute thinking falters. Relatively oriented policy is one that provides for change as experience and circumstances change. More to the point, the relative perspective can accommodate change without hatred, violence, or malice among those who differ from each other. In contrast, when policy is based on absolute knowledge, it is difficult to change without attacking the entire foundation of absolute thinking.

The idea of governance might have begun when some individuals became aware that there were others similar to themselves in that they also seemed to have conscious awareness and the capacity to make choices. Recognizing that equality is self-evident, it was seen to follow that their actions could help or hinder one another in achieving their own goals. Self-interest and mutual goals could guide how they would interact with each other.

Within this relative context, the role of government would necessarily and exclusively be for the purpose of protecting and maximizing the individual freedom of its citizens to choose from alternatives available. Agreements would take the form of written social contracts. The more mature would seek to bestow freedom for themselves and others alike as a matter of personal integrity. Relatively speaking, government is established to publish and enforce our social contracts. Notably, these social interactions are based on individual self-interest.

Social contracts can be seen to have developed naturally. Perhaps the first social contract was one where the parties agreed not to kill each other. Similarly, there would be an agreement providing for the acquisition and ownership of property. As a practical matter, the parties would hire a third party to enforce their agreements. The general purpose of social contracts, including those between the government and the citizenry, would be to publicly describe the point at which one's individual rights begins and another's ends. It's like describing daylight—not abrupt but in gradations, from dark to light and back again. As one Superior Court judge put it, your freedom to swing your fist diminishes as it approaches my nose.

Notably, an essential characteristic of social contracts is that they require good faith—or, as some would put it, "a meeting of the minds." Good faith is required for the reason that we do not have direct access to another person's conscious experience. Good faith can be seen as having at least two significant dimensions. The first involves things such as honesty, candor, and transparency. That is, one's communications are to reflect one's conscious experience with reasonable accuracy. Saying, "I was in fear for my life" requires the assumption of candor to be meaningful. The second dimension of good faith involves full disclosure. That is, a reasonable effort has been made to recall one's past experiences for relevancy. Saying "I don't remember" requires the assumption that I made a good-faith effort to remember. Said another way, good faith requires laying your cards on the table—all of them.

In closing this section, we take notice that governance which maximizes individual freedom is consistent with Adult Stage-3—the highest level of our three-stage theory of maturation. In that regard, the 1776 American vision of politics, to which we now turn, can be seen as an approach designed to maximize individual freedom while illustrating a relative perspective on governance where every individual is a sovereign.

2. AMERICA'S BEGINNING

2.1 THE FOUNDING FATHERS (Checks and Balances)

The Founders can be seen as initiating the American experience. There was James Madison with his thoughtful coherence, and Thomas Jefferson

with his air of eloquence. However, the ideas were not original nor were they claimed to be. About 150 years earlier, Roger Williams could be seen as implementing the idea of religious freedom as founder of Providence (1637), one of the first cities established in the colonies and later to become the capital of Rhode Island. Williams is said to have coined the phrase "wall of separation" between the church and state. Even earlier, the basic idea of individual liberty was codified in the Magna Charta (1215), the English Bill of Rights (1689), and expressed by political contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes (1651) and John Locke (1689). And there were the political philosophers such as the Irishman George Berkeley (1709) and Scotsman David Hume (1739) who contributed to the basic argument that, as a matter of Nature's design, human experience is an individual matter. In addition to all this, the Founders had the constitutions of the several colonies from which they drew guidance.

Consider the metaphor: America can be seen as a booster rocket coming off the thrust of European thinking. While European culture could not escape the gravity of its past, America was able to accelerate from their efforts and establish its own orbit.

The American idea was a system of governance designed to maximize individual freedom for every citizen, and it was set forth by the Founders in three seminal documents—the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Each document can be seen as anticipating the other two—that is, individual freedom has three moving parts.

Separately, the Declaration puts forth the idea that, most basically, we are individuals; and it is the individual that is in charge. The Constitution sets forth a rational design where government has so many checks and balances that it will only work when individual interests are maximized and government overreach is restrained. And, the Bill spells out those provisions thought to be essential for achieving and maintaining every citizen's freedom to choose. From this context, laws are not absolutes to which the citizenry is subordinate. Laws are a means for achieving a purpose; namely, to maximize individual freedom. In a word, the Founders implemented a philosophy of individualism. Here is a closer look at each of these three documents.

2.1.1 The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that individual freedom is a "self-evident" provision of Nature. Every individual is a sovereign, and human nature has confined each individual to his or her own world of personal experience. We are all equal in regard to nature's provision of being endowed with the prospect of having our choices give rise to self-determination. And, as a matter of nature's provision, no one is in a position to dictate to another the pathway to fulfillment—we are equal in this respect. As Abraham Lincoln is said to have put it: "No man is good enough to govern another without his consent."

Clearly, we are different physically, rationally, and in regard to the circumstances of our environment. However it's our choices that characterize and define each one of us as humans. As actor Michael J. Fox put it after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, "It's not what you have that's important, but what you do with what you have." While circumstances may dictate our options, each of us is free to attribute the significance of those events in which we find ourselves.

More to the point, our choices will necessarily result in our being different than everyone else. This is a metaphysical or spiritual notion of what it is to be human.

Given that we are free to choose from the options available to us, we are free to be different from everyone else. More to the point, our choices will necessarily result in our being different than anyone else. This is a metaphysical or spiritual notion of what it is to be human.

Furthermore, while Nature is equally there for everyone, one's perception of it and its impact will be different for every individual. Similarly, the law can be the same for everyone, but its impact will always be different for the rich versus poor, and for those with more versus less maturity. For example, the speed limit is the same for all, but a ticket will always have a different impact on each recipient. And again, the same sunset will be a different experience for each observing individual. Together, life's experiences always reflect an interaction unique to each individual.

Notably, the Declaration makes any Constitutional provision subordinate

to implementing the purpose for which it was created—namely, that of maximizing individual freedom. Every individual is a sovereign with the right and duty to remove any government that fails to maximize individual freedom. The provisions of a constitution are not imposed upon the citizenry as a rule of law; but rather, a constitution is a tool for maximizing individual freedom, and every provision would reasonably be interpreted within such a context.

Briefly stated, the message of the Declaration is that life is an individual matter. Consequently, the Declaration specifically yokes the Constitution to a declaration of individual freedom. That is, the U.S. Constitution, to which we now turn, is relegated to the role of implementing the Declaration.

2.1.2 The U.S. Constitution

Given that power rules, government is a necessity. The U.S. Constitution can be seen as having one primary purpose—to protect the citizenry from those who would use the reins of government to deprive the citizenry of their individual freedom. As Patrick Henry is said to have put it, "The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government—lest it come to dominate our lives and interests."

Whether it be large or small, arguably, government is not the problem. The concern has to do with the people at the reins of government. Absolutely oriented individuals seek power, and power-seeking individuals are attracted to public office. Leaders have interests similar to other leaders, and that interest is to continue as leaders. The process seems to begin with leaders serving the public, and to evolve into the public serving the leaders.

The threat to individual liberty by those controlling the reins of government was keenly felt by the Founding Fathers. George Washington cautioned, "Government is not reason; it is not eloquence: it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." Similarly, James Madison described government by saying that "It possesses an innate lust to expand its power with an appetite that grows with every bite."

Given that everyone puts self-interest first, the task was to employ a system of checks-and-balances that makes serving the public a matter of self-interest. To protect the citizenry from its own government, the Framers established a mind-numbing array of checks and balances.

Perhaps the most basic check-and-balance application was the design of three interactive branches of government. The participants would be drawn from the citizenry so as to reflect the nation's diversity of interests.

The American plan can be seen to decentralize control away from the central government and bestow control to the citizenry. The Constitution provides the means by which public officials will either reflect the combined broad interests of the citizenry, or they are voted out and replaced by those who claim they will. This makes the self-interests of the officials linked to the citizenry.

If individual freedom is to be harnessed, the Constitution would have to be changed. Such a change would have to be reviewed by every state and passed by three-fourths of the state legislatures. While democratically combining votes from divergent interests may decentralize power, the nation's leaders will eventually come to reflect the maturity of the citizenry. To maintain individual freedom, while not providing certainty, the system of checks-and-balances does provide a powerful backup system.

2.1.3 The U.S. Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights specifically identifies those provisions thought by the Founders to be essential to individual liberty and freedom from governmental intrusion. The Bill's specific antecedents can be traced back to many earlier documents including the English Bill of Rights (1689) and the subsequent Virginia Declaration of Rights of June 1776 (as drafted by George Mason).

It was George Mason who refused to support the Constitution until he was assured that it would be amended with a bill of rights. By itself, the Constitution (before amendments) can be seen as simple idolatry. The people create a constitution and then they subordinate themselves to it. As Mason was said to have put it on August 31, 1787: "I'd rather chop

off my right hand than put it to the Constitution as it now stands" without a bill of rights.

Basically, it's a matter of owning one's own life—that is, owning one's religion, speech, and property. We can see a parallel to our triad—religion (choice), speech (rational), and property (physical). Establishing such rights does not guarantee freedom, but they act as a counterbalance against those who would impose their own truths on others. Said another way, the U.S. Bill of Rights places restraints on the Constitution (prior to amendments). The Constitution can be likened to a gas pedal, and the Bill to the brake pedal. As it is between gas and brake pedals, the Bill limits the effect of the Constitution.

As for our focus regarding the Bill, we have: (1) freedom of religion as most basically the right to choose one's own primary referent; (2) freedom of speech as most basically the right to choose with whom one associates and shares one's experiences; (3) the right to own property, particularly that of owning a home; (4) the right to protect one's property; and (5) the right to a trial by jury, insuring that it will be your neighbors who determine if you violated public policy. We now look at each of these five provisions in greater detail.

(1) Freedom of Religion provides that it is the individual who sets his or her own priorities while pursuing a sense of self-fulfillment. Human experience is a matter of individual choice. Under the Bill, the government is specifically prohibited from establishing or supporting an establishment of religion. Said another way, government is prohibited from establishing or even suggesting what might be absolutely good for any individual citizen. Notable is that this provision is the first amendment to be mentioned. Arguably, to suggest what is good for another individual is to take the first step in establishing an absolutely organized religion and to undermine the Constitution. Similarly, freedom of religion is for every individual. Consequently, freedom of religion for every individual would not include absolutely oriented religions—those that deprive others of their freedom of religion.

Here is a response to the question, "Whose life is it?" Some say that the individual belongs to God, truth, or the State. However, here we have the declaration that human life belongs to the individual. It is nature's decree

that every individual has the right to live one's own life, rather than a life determined by others. Self-determination replaces being led by rational academic leaders, religious moral leaders, or powerful political or military leaders. So says the God of Nature, so says the Declaration of Independence; and now, so says the U.S. Bill of Rights.

And so it was, the Bill of Rights was framed for the specific purpose of implementing the Declaration. That is, the Bill of Rights was the means and individual freedom as set forth in the Declaration was the *end*. As for justice, it is always a matter of fulfilling the purpose that the laws were intended to achieve—namely, maximizing individual freedom.

It can be seen that the freedom of religion is a religious tenet consistent with a relative perspective and inconsistent with an absolute perspective. The same can be said for all of the other provisions in the Bill.

(2) Freedom of Speech is a colorful way to describe the freedom to choose one's own associations, including one's choice of physical environment, rational ideas, and spiritual beliefs. Of course, others have the same rights, so one's choice of associations must be voluntary. Correspondingly, every individual has the right to be left alone. A freedom of association encompasses a right to privacy. And unless accompanied by due process, we are protected from defamation by those who would like to characterize us after their own image. Furthermore, as it is with religion, freedom of speech for every individual does not include speech that deprives others of their freedom of speech. No one has the right to hold another hostage to one's own speech.

Fundamentally, privacy is a condition of human nature—you can't jump into my consciousness and neither can I jump into yours. I can't walk a day in your moccasins, and neither can you in mine—even if we so desired. Given that human experience is essentially private, the Founders acknowledged an individual's right *not* to be concerned with justifying oneself to others, as in not being compelled to testify against oneself in criminal proceedings. Similarly, we have the right to wear camouflage—to go unnoticed as it is with a fawn in a hostile environment.

And there is more. A free marketplace of ideas provides the foundation for choosing with whom and what to associate. In this context, every

individual has the opportunity to engage in debate and become aware of alternative ideas from which to choose his or her own pathway. An *educated* citizenry (as distinct from a *schooled* citizenry) is essential to a self-governing society. Within the larger context of freedom of association, we have the basis for establishing social contracts between willing individuals.

The importance of free speech to American freedom has been portrayed as: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." That's a statement written by Evelyn Hall in *The Friends of Voltaire* (1906), to characterize Voltaire's (c. 1750) response to the abuse suffered by a fellow author, including the banishment of both him and his book.

(3) The Right to Own Property can be found in the Bill's 3rd Amendment requirement that the "consent of the Owner" must be obtained to quarter soldiers in a private home during times of peace. And again, the 4th Amendment provides for individuals to be secure in their "houses, papers, and effects." And once again, the 5th Amendment provides that "no person" shall be deprived of property without just compensation. Here are three reasons for establishing a right to hold private property in support of individual freedom.

First, a house can be a secure place for individual expression. However large or small, a house becomes a home as it comes to reflect the preferences of the owner. The books on the shelf, the paintings on the wall, and the comings and goings of visitors all become a living self-portrait of the owner. A home reflects the expression of one's individual freedom, a place of safety and a place to be left alone. Even the "homeless" will construct a protective shell that permits him or her to be left alone. The idea of individual sovereignty can be seen as beginning with home ownership. Of course, any expression of ownership is within a context of one's neighbors having the same rights.

Second, owning property serves the interest of individual liberty by decentralizing wealth. Given that power rules, the Founders wanted to decentralize power by decentralizing wealth. Individual ownership of property creates a check and balance on the power of government. Private pockets of wealth can offset the fiscal power of government to influence

public opinion. In addition to private wealth, we have large corporate businesses, private foundations, and churches.

Third, owning property can be seen to provide the basis for individuals to make person-to-person exchanges. Wealth can gravitate to those who provide products and services for which others are willing to pay. A connection is thereby made between financial stewardship and benefits to the citizenry. Within this context of private ownership, the right to start one's own small business is available to everyone. Individual entrepreneurship becomes a way to test one's ability to serve others. Whether by goods or services, one measure of success can be seen as the amount the public is willing to pay in order to obtain what you have to offer. A free-market economy of goods and services can be seen as a necessary, but not a sufficient, provision of a free society.

As an aside, there would be restraints to prevent those who control property from holding others hostage to their products or services—as it is with cartels, single-source providers, and price fixing. While patents can be used to provide an incentive, antitrust laws and taxes curb monopolies that would otherwise work against maximizing individual freedom.

Having in mind the right to own property, *ownership* simply means the right to *control*. Consequently, either the power of government is used to control property, or the power of government is used to maximize the right of individuals to control property. Arguably, the vision of the Founders was to maximize individual freedom by having the power of government support the right of individuals to control property.

(4) The Right to Protect one's property using force is set forth in the 2nd Amendment. The right to bear arms can be seen as a means of protecting the rights provided in the 1st Amendment. Additionally, this provision is consistent with the right and duty of individuals (Declaration of Independence) to remove a government that is unable or unwilling to secure individual rights. Notably, reference is made to arms, but the size of the weapons is not explicit. However, within the context of maximizing individual freedom, the weapon could be small, or just large enough to enable one individual to prevail over another individual. Rather than individuals having weapons sufficient to overthrow an army, the provision

is for individuals to be able to join together to form a militia for the purpose of securing a "free State." Arguably, every individual having a shoulder-mounted rocket launcher does not maximize individual freedom. Neither is freedom maximized by every country having a nuclear bomb.

(5) The Right to a Trial by Jury (6th Amendment, criminal; 7th Amendment, civil) can be seen as the most basic check-and-balance provision protecting individual citizens from those who would use the system of government to dominate others. As John Adams is said to have put it: "No man's property or liberty can be taken from him till 12 men in his neighborhood have said upon oath, that by the laws of his making it ought to be taken away."

Given that the provisions in the Bill put limits on Constitutional authority, "trial by jury" defines "judicial power" (Constitution, Article III, Section 2) as including jury verdicts and making them primary over the instructions of judges. Said another way, a judge is the presiding officer over the court and lawyers are officers of the court, with both serving the jury. In establishing trial by jury, the Founders relied on a system of faith in an assumed sense of justice widely shared by the citizenry. As the esteemed U.S. Federal Appellate Judge and judicial philosopher Learned Hand put it: "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help" (*Spirit of Liberty*, 1952).

Notably, the Bill of Rights takes a superior standing to the Constitution as written before amendments. Thus, the right of a jury to determine both facts and applicability of law takes a superior standing to the power of a judge to do so. That is, the conscience of a jury member takes priority over the conscience of a judge. It is within this context that a judge puts forth the applicable laws on which charges were brought; it is the duty of the jurors to determine the facts and applicability of the law to the circumstances of an instant case. Perhaps more to the point, a jury's superior standing over a judge is expressed in the Declaration of Independence with the citation of a citizen's right and duty to remove a freedom-depriving government. Thus, a judge who fails to inform a jury of its responsibility to establish both the facts and applicability of law could be seen as usurping and nullifying the authority of the Bill.

The primacy of a jury verdict was clearly put forth by the first U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Jay. He described the Court's finding that jurors have a right "to determine the law as well as the facts in controversy" (*Georgia v. Brailsford*, 1794). A law need not be nullified by a jury, as some say. There is no applicable law until a jury makes such a finding. The overriding objective is to determine whether the application of a particular law is consistent with maximizing individual freedom in a given set of circumstances. Thomas Jefferson made the point eloquently and succinctly: "I consider trial by jury as the only anchor yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principle of its constitution." We take note that due to the limits of language, enforcing the letter of the law will always diminish the ability of the law to effect its intended purpose. And again, as Thomas Jefferson put it: "In the hands of judges, the Constitution is a mere thing of wax that judges can twist and shape to their liking and in their own design."

Furthermore, the provision that one be tried by an "impartial jury" from the "same district" where the alleged crime occurred can be seen to require timeliness. Community standards and people change. Trying an event arising at another time and place becomes a trial using standards that are no longer applicable against a person that no longer exists—both have changed. Statutes of limitations are designed to prevent such miscarriages of justice.

We can contrast this relative approach with the absolute approach where there is no provision for change. Absolute justice requires every individual to be accountable throughout his or her life, including the acts of one's parents and for the acts committed by one's group from the beginning of time. Arguably, every act had consequences going forward that affected others.

Relatively speaking, it can be seen as reasonable and necessary to individual freedom to establish a point at which every individual can forget about defending himself or herself against past actions. It's a matter of balancing the right to hold others accountable for their actions and the right to pursue one's own happiness. Statutes of limitations (civil and criminal) are a safeguard preventing government from depriving a person of his or her pursuit of happiness, and preventing government from holding each and every citizen hostage in perpetuity. Just how long must

a person keep tax records?

Once more, it is only a jury of one's neighbors that can embrace the concept that life is a work in progress and missteps are inevitably an essential part of maturation. The same can be said of a nation. The U.S. would not reasonably be held liable for alleged damages to women for their exclusion from voting prior to 1920. Similarly, we have term limits on legislative office holders and time limits when seeking amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Arguably, incarceration is a matter of protecting the community, and this does not create a rational basis to punish.

Finally, findings of "guilty" or "not guilty" refer to agreements among the members of a community. They are not absolute judgments of good and evil. Arguably, incarceration is a matter of protecting the community, and this does not create a rational basis to punish. While individuals can make laws to achieve social stability, such laws must always remain subordinate to the purposes for which they were created—to maximize individual freedom.

TAKEN TOGETHER, the above-cited three documents put forth the vision of American individualism. The Constitution sets up a decentralized system of governance, the Bill of Rights yokes the Constitution to the basic tenets of individual freedom, and the Declaration of Independence tethers both to the self-evident provision of Nature that life is an individual matter undergoing constant change. Maximizing individual freedom is the touchstone to which every action and law is validated.

As an aside, consider that our physical-rational-choice triad describing individual human experience can be seen to parallel the Declaration of Independence (choice), the U.S. Constitution (physical), and the Bill of Rights (rational). Similarly, one can see a parallel with the three branches of the U.S. Government: executive (centralized integrity of choice), judicial (rational), and the legislative (physical).

2.2 AMERICA'S 1800s (Multiple Absolutes)

Here we have a time when the "pedal hits the metal." During its first 120 years, Americans in the 1800s can be seen as maneuvering around the vision of the Founding Fathers with a system of multiple absolutes.

For sure, very few of the colonialists had embraced the idea of individual freedom as a philosophical idea. There was the idea of individual freedom, but it can be seen as a freedom to embrace one's own absolute truth. That is, the mindset was that individuals have the right to give up their freedom to a dictator of their choice. Some would pledge allegiance to the government (rule-of-law types); others, to a religious leader (worship-an-image-of-god types); and still others would embrace a variety of humanistic belief systems such as love-of-family or love-of-free-market types. Each would take his or her own truth and subordinate all else to it.

During the 1800s, America can be seen to have embraced a top-down dictatorship model with every individual having the freedom to choose his or her own dictator.

"better to have a policy of individual freedom than having your absolute truth prevail over mine."

From the beginning, support for the Constitution can be described as reflecting an attitude of "better to have a policy of individual freedom than having your absolute truth prevail over mine." Multiple absolutes create a standoff, somewhat like the standoff created when both sides have a nuclear arsenal. Consequently, there would always be an underlying tension as one group (or coalition of groups) attempts to have its absolute truth dominate over others. It could be likened to living with wild animals, each with its own agenda and ready to strike if there is a threat or opportunity.

What made the system work for individual freedom in America was the presence of multiple viewpoints—a church on every corner, each with its own absolute truth. That is, religious freedom was achieved not because anyone believed in such freedom, but because all agreed to such a public policy rather than having another's absolute religion prevail over their own.

As for secular ambitions, they included building dynasties around one's own personal priorities, such as money, power, or family.

It was the existence of multiple absolute truths that served to reduce the likelihood of any one absolute truth prevailing over all others. Individual freedom was a byproduct of having a system of multiple absolute truths. There was integrity, but only to one's group. In the medical association, it was common to take an oath to share and teach only to other physicians and their family members—"to these alone." Physicians may be reticent about sharing their thinking even with their patients. While there was high camaraderie within the group, to assist another competing network would likely be viewed as disloyal.

The Founding Fathers were aware, or so it seems, that multiple interests could enable the system to work until the nation matured to a point of recognizing Nature's decree that every individual is *born free to choose* his or her pathway to happiness. The Founders' awareness of one group's desire for having its absolute truth prevail over others can be seen as evidenced by their construction of an elaborate system of checks-and-balances. Multiple and overlapping procedures were designed to ensure that multiple interests would be represented in government decision making.

We can summarize the nation's public policy from about 1776 to about 1900 as a time when groups organized around their own absolute truths while vying for the authority to use the power of government to dominate the citizenry. Multiple absolutes led to dynasty building, with each having its own menu of special interests. These interest groups included: medical, judicial, media, military, churches, foundations, nonprofits, education, sports, business, and political parties. As one would expect, integrity was sought only within one's own dynasty. Even more to the point, when interest groups combine, they could be a formidable force. A former general, U.S. President Eisenhower identified the military-industrial complex as having an agenda that puts their own interests ahead of the national interests. Some have said the same regarding the medical-pharmaceutical complex. To this point, prior to becoming U.S. President, Herbert Hoover argued that it was the multiplicity of absolute truths that prevented any one group from dictating government policy and thereby toppling the principle of individual freedom (*American Individualism*,

1922). As he described it, a check-and-balance system was created when individuals were free to join groups of their own choosing.

Looking forward, in the early 1900s there arose a new mental model. This model, in the name of the people, created an ideology of a bottom-up dictatorship that collectively challenged the system of multiple absolutes. In the name of the people, group rights began to eclipse the rights of individuals. In this new world, individual *will* is subordinate to the collective will.

2.3 AMERICA'S 1900s (Socialism's Rise)

America saw the inexorable growth of socialism. From a seed to a giant sequoia, it came to cast its shadow over America's entire political landscape. In direct contrast to the Founders' message of "government subordinate to the interests of the citizenry," the new message for Americans was that the "citizenry is to be subordinate to the interests of government." In contrast to the individual defining the group, with socialism the group defines the individual. Americans are now faced with a choice.

Socialism is both different and contrary to American individualism. That is, if some ideas can be seen as consistent with the American provisions, then it follows that some ideas can be seen as inconsistent with these American provisions—some *American* and others *un-American*. If it is believed that the U.S. Bill of Rights provides for individual freedom, and if it is believed that socialism mandates the individual to be subordinate to government, then it can be seen to follow that socialism is *un-American*—at least for now.

Arguably, absolute thinking is at the core of socialistic thought. The citizenry are subjected to truth, and truth is created by group consensus. Said the other way around, the group creates the truth to which everyone is subordinate. It can be seen to follow that absolutely oriented groups require leaders to which the group members pledge their unconditional loyalty.

Socialism's group-think gave rise to identity politics. Rather than thinking

of ourselves as individuals, the idea was to think of ourselves as primarily members of a group. I am Black, White, male, female, North American, Asian, Hispanic, Christian, Jew, Muslim, socialist, capitalist, liberal, conservative, labor, management, gay, straight, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, powerful, powerless, electrician, teacher, or vegetarian. That is, I am a member of a group, and my group membership defines who I am—my identity.

As it happened, the term "socialism" was rejected by a large segment of the American citizenry. There was an intuitive rejection of the concept if presented with that label. However, a significant portion of the citizenry could be persuaded to support socialism if the idea were presented as a democratic, populist, or progressive concept. Upton Sinclair, 30-year member of the Socialist Party, put the matter succinctly: "The American people will take socialism but they won't take the label." That was in 1951 and just after World War II. At that time, Americans were generally opposed to both (a) Hitler's top-down socialism termed "Nazism" (the National Socialist German Workers' Party) and (b) Stalin's bottom-up socialism termed "communism" (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Either way, American's understood socialism to mean individual subordination to government. As such, both were rejected by a broad swath of Americans.

However, in America, colleges and universities were a fertile setting to inspire a preference for socialism. They provided students with an extension of their childhood dependence on parents for social and financial support. Campuses became an extended-womb environment typical of advanced societies. Socialism had a superficial attraction to students that had little experience with independent living and even less experience with the consequences of uninformed decision making. Group identity provided students with considerable relief from the angst of personal decision making in a world of overwhelming complexity. Even more so, identifying as members of a group gave rise to a sense of collective power that translates into a sense of purpose as they exerted that power over others. It is exhilarating (think adrenalin rush) to take over an administration building, to stop traffic on a freeway, or to shout down a speaker for expressing views contrary to your own.

Consistent with advancing the ideology of socialism were those university

economists who described socialism as a purely economic theory. All else was referred to as public policy, and reference was made to the awkward and unpopular terms of "collectivism" or "statism." The effect has been to let socialism, as with the invisible man, go undetected and unchallenged in the world of academia. However, as with any absolute approach, socialism (group over individual) had critical flaws making it vulnerable to rational debate. Consequently, suppressing open and free debate was essential to socialism's success. Students and professors would be administratively instructed in politically correct speech.

In addition to the economists, professors within the community of scholars aspiring to authoritarian leadership positions were drawn to socialism's ideology. They enjoyed having students listen to them as oracles with absolute tenure. Power-seeking professors gravitated toward administrative positions with an agenda of implementing bureaucratic dominance.

When students became of age to vote, they found themselves desiring a government run by leaders offering to take care of them. They supported candidates who promised a government that would give guidance to their lives and provide all the benefits of the good life. As for individual liberty, there was no reason to think about it, and certainly no reason to fight for its preservation.

We now turn to the two pillars of socialism—equality and democracy. By way of introduction, observe that words can have significantly different meanings depending on whether they are interpreted within a relative or an absolute context. The pillars of society established by the Founders can be described as equality and democracy for the purpose of maximizing individual freedom (relative). In contrast, the pillars of socialism also can be described as equality and democracy, but for the purpose of subordinating the individual to the centralized control of government (absolute).

2.3.1 We have Socialism's Pillar of Equality

Socialism's ideal (think idea) is a country where every individual is equal (think the same) in material wealth and rational ideology. Individual choices are subordinate to socialism's rational ideology, which has the

purpose of achieving equality. Socialism's ideal can be seen in contrast to the ideal of America's Founders, where the term equality is a self-evident provision of Nature providing that no individual is endowed with the authority to rule over another. Individual choices were a significant construct to the Founders and would necessarily result in individual differences (physically, rationally, and in matters of choice).

As for those *A* and *F* students, give them all *C*s; same with *B* and *D* students. The assumed effects of individual effort are not to be recognized.

As a corollary to socialism's doctrine of equality, individuals are not responsible for their present circumstances. They are not responsible for what appears to be their success or failure. If someone has more wealth than the average person, it is due to fortuitous circumstances not of their own choosing, such as an inheritance or privileged childhood. Given that everyone is to be equal, everyone is entitled to an equal share of whatever wealth and benefits exist. Similarly, there are no losers—everyone deserves a passing grade. The ideological yoke of equality is an all-inclusive truth. Socialism is a world without peaks and valleys, without snowfall or rushing streams. As for those *A* and *F* students, give them all *C*s; same with *B* and *D* students. The assumed effects of individual effort are not to be recognized. Teach that there should be equal outcomes regardless of the personal effort expended or one's chosen priorities. As for admission, select students based on group identity with the ideal of having every group represented. Eliminate barriers that reflect individual differences.

And again, to paraphrase former U.S. President Barak Obama, whatever you have, you did not build that, you do not own that, and nothing reflects your personal achievement. This can be put another way. Your life and dignity are a privilege given to you by circumstantial accident and government. Consequently, your speech and associations should be guided by government regulations. It's all for the common good.

As for wealth, tax the rich until they have paid their "fair share." Their fair share is to pay more until their wealth is equal to those with the least. The game plan is to keep closing any gap until we are all equal.

And there is more. With the message of equality, differences are deficiencies that are to be rendered insignificant. Your gender is whatever you say it is—at the present moment. All races and religions are to be respected. Their differences are not of social significance. No one is to be hated. Given that we are all equal, it follows that we are one indivisible and all-inclusive unit. There is one race, the human race. And this gives rise to human rights. Arguably, whoever has the authority to define, and the power to enforce human rights, is in a position to rule all of humanity. The belief that the will of the group reflects absolute truth and goodness can aptly be called humanism, for humans are its creator.

Not to be overlooked, socialism enjoys a rhetoric that is intoxicating: "common good," "progressivism," and "humanism" all carry the aura of enlightenment. We turn now to socialism's second pillar.

2.3.2 We have Socialism's Pillar of Democracy

As Karl Marx is said to have put it, "Democracy is the road to socialism." Vladimir Lenin echoed this sentiment with "Democracy is indispensable to socialism."

Socialism's democracy becomes a means for establishing the truth to which all citizens can be held accountable. With democratic socialism there is the willingness to sacrifice anyone. That is, group consensus replaces the individual conscience. And again, one's individual conscience is subordinated to the democratically established collective guidance. Socialism can be seen to fulfill the same role as an absolutely oriented religion. Absolute truths are set forth to which every individual is subordinated.

Woodrow Wilson can be seen as putting forth a similar connection between democracy and socialism. As Wilson (1887) put it: "For it is very clear that in fundamental theory socialism and democracy are almost if not quite one and the same. They both rest at bottom upon the absolute right of the community to determine its own destiny and that of its members." Wilson later became the President of Princeton University (his alma mater), and during his leadership role in the progressive movement, he became President of the United States (1913-1921).

The point here has to do with the application of democracy. With socialism, democracy is a means for yoking every individual to the collective will or common good. That is, the will of the group dictates individual behavior. Power is a matter of creating a coalition that reflects a majority. Doing so provides power to the majority. The minority is disenfranchised. A familiar illustration involves a group of five wolves and three lambs who agree to vote on what to have for dinner.

In closing this section, consider that Americans have choices as to how they implement both equality and democracy. Either they can choose (a) the Founders' use of these terms which are designed to maximize individual freedom, or (b) they can choose socialism's use of these terms which are designed to subordinate the individual to a group consensus. This brings us to the next section.

3. AMERICA'S CURRENT DRIVE TOWARD SOCIALISM

Twenty-first Century American governance can be seen as on the threshold of embracing socialism and letting go of the Founders' provisions for individual freedom. Connecting the dots over the last 100 years, socialism can be seen as continuing to gain ground until it is now close to dominating American politics. Its momentum and mass seem to be facing no remarkable resistance. Head-to-head, socialism's single absolute perspective can be seen as eventually prevailing over America's current practice of multiple absolutes competing against each other. That is, individuals unified under a single idea such as the common good have a tactical advantage over a system of multiple absolutes. A united group of ten can prevail against 100 separate individuals.

And again, socialism can flourish in a country that maximizes individual freedom, while individual freedom can't survive in a country dominated by socialism. Once more, the advantage of an ideology or philosophy such as socialism is that it can work to advance on many fronts at the same time, and can have a multi-generational focus.

However, America currently has a significant barrier restraining socialism—it's the wording as put forth in those founding documents. In

a temporal sequence, the Declaration of Independence (1776) was followed by the Constitution (1787), and then the Bill of Rights (1791). However, the idea of the Bill of Rights conceptually preceded the Declaration and Constitution in that these documents were designed to implement the freedoms provided in the Bill of Rights. For socialism to prevail, its advocates will have to *nullify* both the intentions of the Declaration of Independence and the provisions found in the Bill of Rights. More subtle will be changes to the interpretation and wording of the Constitution.

Nullification can reasonably describe socialism's current strategy of preparing America to relinquish its freedoms as put forth in the Bill of Rights. The process is one where laws and the interpretation of laws are put into practice even though they are *contrary* to the provisions in the Bill of Rights. The contradictions are repeatedly put before the public until they are no longer seen as contradictions. Orwell's classic *1984* described the practice as one involving "doublethink"; or as it came to be known, "doublespeak." When successful, the public is able to embrace two contradictory ideas without the contradiction coming to mind. What follows is a citizenry that lacks rational integrity and increasingly puts its trust in authoritarian leaders.

Similarly, John Holt described the teaching of doublethink in our school system in his best-selling book *How Children Fail* (1964). In the summary, Holt puts forth the notion that children are force-fed contradictions as if they were not contradictions. Over time, the children come to believe that their confusion reflects their own deficiency. Consequently, they begin to repeat words without meaning, and they become increasingly alienated from reliance on their own sense of personal understanding. They find themselves isolated and confused.

Confounding the situation, a mix of absolute and relative thinking may be necessary for students to get passing grades and praise from society's moral leaders. However, there is an inevitable downside to being taught a mix of absolute and relative ideas as if they were *not* contradictory—it undermines a child's sense of integrity and self-respect. As with Orwell's doublespeak, these children increasingly become reliant on authorities to guide them on what to think. It was Holt's experience that by grade school, doublespeak children were resistant, if not impervious, to changing from

this role of being dependent on authority.

The point here is that the individual freedoms provided in the Bill of Rights can be nullified by simply implementing the practice of socialism's contrary doctrine of group dominance. Faced with contradictions that are not presented as contradictions, the citizenry will increasingly come to rely on leaders offering to think for them. When this happens, changing the impact of the founding documents will go unnoticed by many, and resistance will appear futile to the others.

While socialism's use of nullification works well against a system of multiple absolutes, it does not work well against those words of individual freedom found in the Bill of Rights. We shall contrast the Founders' words of freedom against socialism's nullifying agenda on three key provisions: (1) individual freedom cited in the Declaration of Independence, (2) freedom of speech in the Bill of Rights, and (3) protection of citizens from government dominance in the Constitution. For each of these three documents, we will briefly cite the Founders' provision, followed by socialism's nullification.

3.1 NULLIFYING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Founders' Declaration of Independence builds its case on the principle of individual freedom that fulfills the role of religion in one's life. The basic premise is that the *Laws of Nature* afford equally to every person the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That is, an individual's own conscience is to be enshrined as the compass guiding one's steps. Accordingly, the primary role of government is to protect these rights. And even more so, if government fails to protect these natural rights, "it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The Declaration puts forth the idea that every citizen is entitled to be an *individual*, to own his or her own life. The underlying idea can be seen as maximizing one's right to live a life of one's own choosing. Thus, Americans are united by only one pledge, and that is the pledge to maximize individual freedom for every citizen.

In contrast, we have socialism's nullifying agenda where government imperatives subordinate individual conscience. Government sovereignty replaces individual sovereignty. Socialism's strategy can be seen to emphasize: (1) a pledge of allegiance to government, (2) establishing a new moral standard, and (3) imposing a standard of equality. Together, it's an effort to supplant Nature's God with a man-made idol.

3.1.1 Pledge of Allegiance to Government

The Pledge of Allegiance as a conditioning process can be seen as beginning in 1892 when avowed socialist Francis Bellamy authored the Pledge. It had been about 100 years since the Bill of Rights, and it was about 50 years after that when Congress (1942) adopted it as a national pledge. At that time, Congress went further than the socialist Bellamy by including Lincoln's commitment to a nation "indivisible." And again, in 1954, Congress added the words "under God." Americans now have a pledge that makes the citizenry subjects of a government from which they are unable to secede and which is assumed to be guided by God.

That God provision is curious. It's the government that is under God, rather than the individual having personal access to God. Well, the U.S. Supreme Court found the Pledge to be unconstitutional—or at least unconstitutional to require anyone to recite it (*West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 1943). What's curious is that our schools continue to teach tens of millions of children each year to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. When they enter adulthood, they continue to recite the Pledge thinking it is an expression of loyalty to the United States. This creates a palpable advantage for those supporting socialism. On its face, the Pledge is a new declaration making individuals subordinate to government's God in the name of the people, rather than Nature's God as experienced by each individual. And again, a *government* under God would seem to be directly contrary to the *self-evident* provision of individual sovereignty in the Declaration of Independence as well as the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights providing individual freedom of religion and its prohibition of a government religion.

A significant portion of the citizenry came to love the idea of subordination. In 1961, U.S. President John Kennedy, during his inaugural address, rallied the citizenry to "Ask not what your country can

do for you, but what you can do for your country." Public support for this slogan could be seen as widespread and enthusiastically embraced by those conditioned by that recitation of socialism's creed. As for Kennedy, he can be seen as supporting a top-down governance system consistent with his religious upbringing.

As an aside, on June 28, 2016, this socialist ideal was advanced just after the British citizenry voted to leave the European Union (Brexit). At a closed-door meeting of heads of the European People's Party—the largest party in the European Parliament—German Chancellor Angela Merkel was quoted as saying of British Prime Minister David Cameron: "The principle should always be: Country, party, person. Cameron did it the other way around. And when you do that, things always go wrong." Consider that no statement regarding the last two world wars would better describe the fundamental difference between Germany on the one hand, and Britain and the United States on the other. It's a matter of an individual's status as either servant or master to government.

3.1.2 Establishing a New Moral Standard

Socialism would have government serve as the sovereign creator of the nation's moral compass, rather than being guided by individuals, each relying on his or her own conscience. To this end, we have the U.S. Supreme Court declaring itself to be the determiner of the "common good." Thus began the practice of the Court imposing its determinations of goodness on the citizenry. Establishing a standard of the common good can be seen as nullifying the reliance on the principle of individual freedom in the Declaration of Independence.

The self-righteousness imposed by the Court can be seen as similar to those kings and queens who thought that the God of Nature put them in positions of authority over others. When employing the standard of the common good, the Court acts as if its judicial appointments are a public recognition of their status as royalty. Socialism encumbers every citizen with the duty to rely on the collective conscience of the Court majority, rather than on his or her own conscience. As it has been determined by the Court, the common good is the new standard, replacing individual freedom. Live and die for the common good—rather than for individual liberty. It's the Court's common good that creates socialism's yoke,

binding and uniting every citizen. However, in contrast to Nature's God as experienced by each individual, socialism's God is "made in America" and privately manufactured in the minds of at least five individual Supreme Court members.

And there is more. The idea of the common good is not to be found in the Constitution. We turn to the provision of "general welfare" in the Constitution (Section 8). Congress, with the duplicity of the Court, has repeatedly used Section 8 to justify dispensing goodness to individual citizens. This application can be seen as being a somewhat recent socialistic twist on the interpretation of the Constitution.

As the socialists would have it, interpreting "general welfare" as applicable to individual citizens makes every citizen a dependant of the government. Over time, dependency can be seen as morphing into subordination. It was some time ago, in *United States v. Butler* (1936), when the Court ruled that the general welfare language related only to "matters of national, as distinguished from local, welfare." Since that time, one can see a remarkable shift in the political preference favoring socialism.

For socialists, it can be seen to follow that knowledge of the "common good" creates a "compelling state interest." That is, once the Court establishes that it has knowledge of the common good, it is compelled to subordinate the citizenry accordingly. To say that again, while not provided for in the Constitution, the Court established itself as the determiner of the common good and its application as a compelling state interest.

Over the last 50 years, the Court has addressed the matter of a compelling state interest. One way to characterize the findings is to say that the Court was trying to determine when the Court could overrule the Constitution. Sometimes the Court held that it was entitled to disregard the Constitution whenever it chose to do so; at other times the Court ruled that the Court can only overrule the Constitution when it declared a "compelling state interest" (CSI). In *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963), while not a finding in this case, the Court did establish that the Constitution could be overruled with a finding of a CSI—which came to be known as the *Sherbert Test*. In 1990, the Court reversed itself and found that CSI was not necessary for the Constitution to be overridden (*Employment Division v. Smith*). In

1993, the Court again reversed itself holding that CSI was necessary (Religious Freedom Restoration Act). In 1997, the Court again reversed itself holding that CSI was not necessary to override the Constitution (*City of Boerne v. Flores*). In 2000, the Court again reversed itself holding that CSI was necessary to override the Constitution (Religious Land Use and Institutional Persons Act). Since 2000, the Court has frequently cited the necessity of demonstrating CSI when the Constitution is to be overridden. Arguably, the Court employs so much nuance and parsing in these cases, that the Court's holdings can be seen as having less to do with constitutional integrity and more to do with the political and religious preferences of the Court members.

Consider that each time the Court relies on a "compelling state interest" when making a determination, the core provision of individual freedom in the Declaration of Independence is progressively nullified.

As an aside, we point out that the phrase "common good" can be found in early drafts of the Constitution and in the colonial constitutions of both Pennsylvania (1776) and Massachusetts (1780). The U.S. Constitution was not adopted until 1789. Arguably, the Founders' rejection of the wording "common good" and the adoption of "general welfare" can be seen as a significant distinction. "General welfare" specifically referred to duties that would be uniform throughout the United States, such as to coin money and establish post offices. For the government to be empowered to dispense the common good makes every citizen a dependent of said government for his or her fair share of goodness. While dispensing the general welfare makes the government a servant, dispensing the common good makes the government a master. Increasingly, the Court can be seen as morphing from servant to master.

We turn now to our third and last illustration of socialism's strategy of nullifying reliance on one's individual freedom of choice as put forth in the Declaration of Independence.

3.1.3 Imposing a Standard of Equality

In contrast to a previous Court's ruling of "separate and equal" (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896), the new Court's majority-of-five chose to rule that *separate* is inherently *unequal*; and, henceforth, to be unequal is to be

unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). Arguably, this reasoning relies on the absolute belief that if two parties are unequal it is necessary to contend that one party must be inferior. Additionally, while not overturning *Plessy*, the ever-accommodating Chief Justice Warren described *Plessy* as being about segregation in transportation and did not apply to *Brown* for the reason that *Brown* was a case about segregation in public schools. We can observe that *Plessy's* decision of separate as inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional has been applied broadly by the courts. And again, the Court can be seen as buttressing its position by later prohibiting "disparate impact" (*Griggs v. Duke Power*, 1971). By requiring equality of outcomes, arguably, the Court has nullified a citizen's right to choose and the right to be different by one's own choices. Arguably, the Court has gutted the core premise of the Declaration of Independence as to individual freedom, and replaced that core with the idol of "equality."

Consistent with the Court's rulings in *Brown*, and then *Griggs*, there is a public policy developing. Everyone is equal, everyone is a winner, and individual effort doesn't matter. Everyone who participates should get a gold medal or blue ribbon. Divisiveness is to be discouraged, and individual opinions are not noteworthy. There is only one humanity, and it is governed by the one absolute truth of equality. Spawned in the universities, the idea of equality has become dominate among academics.

The above three examples can be seen to illustrate socialism's agenda to replace the Declaration's individual freedom with socialism's declaration of group dominance. This brings us to the U.S. Bill of Rights and its provisions for freedom of religion and speech.

3.2 NULLIFYING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The Founders set forth a Bill of Rights that codifies the Declaration's freedom of religion for every individual. The Bill of Rights then goes further by codifying the freedom of speech for every individual. While both religion and speech are freedoms of association, religion can be seen as one's private choosing of priorities, while speech is a matter of public expression.

The Bill of Rights (1st Amendment) provides that "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...." Within the context of maximizing individual freedom, "freedom of speech" can reasonably be seen as a freedom of association—the right to communicate your thoughts to any willing recipient. We take notice that holding others hostage to your communications would be antagonistic whether packaged in religious rites of human sacrifice or defamatory communications whether verbal (slander) or written (libel). That is, it would be barred to yell through a bullhorn outside your neighbor's house at 2:00 a.m. or to commandeer another's telephone with your telemarketing messages.

As an essential element, freedom to speak and share ideas provides the basis for understanding alternatives from which individuals can choose their life's pathway. Basically, freedom of speech provides a right "to hear or not to hear" the communications of another. In a word, the right to control one's own associations is a right to privacy. Drawing the line where one's freedom ends and another's begins would be a continuing challenge for a maturing society.

In contrast, we have socialism's nullifying agenda where government imperatives subordinate individual free speech to government-approved speech. Consider the following three items to be on socialism's agenda for nullifying an individual's freedom of speech as codified in the Bill of Rights: (1) creating group rights, (2) establishing speech codes, and (3) imposing compulsory unions.

3.2.1 Creating Group Rights

Establishing *gay-marriage rights* can be seen as nullifying individual freedom while advancing the principle of group rights. To begin, let's make a distinction between *homosexuality* and the *gay rights movement*. Homosexuality, as used here, has to do with sexual practices (see Chapter 4); whereas, the gay-rights movement addresses political, religious, and judicial matters. The focus here is on gay rights and specifically on gay marriage. At issue is whether or not same-sex couples are to receive benefits not afforded individuals. Asked another way, do the rights of an individual choosing to marry take precedence over the rights of an individual *not* to marry? Fundamentally, it can be seen as a question of whether socialism's priority of group rights takes precedence over

individual rights.

We have five focus points: (1) traditional marriage; (2) U.S. Supreme Court ruling; (3) gay benefits; (4) Court as supreme ruler; and (5) Court as moral authority.

(1) Traditional Marriage: Marriage is not cited in the Constitution or Bill of Rights. Arguably, the Bill of Rights provides exclusively for individual rights and, as such, prohibits any group being given a favored status over the rights of an individual. While the courts could enforce marriage contracts between parties, such enforcement could not be applied reasonably to the deficit of non-parties.

Marriage has been traditionally a religious rite. As a state function and a matter of law, marriage can be seen as an accommodation for the care and protection of children. We can observe that offspring are a predictable consequence of a cohabiting male and female. The customary marriage rights and benefits are for the care of the children, and not for the couple. In this context, there has been no tradition of same-sex marriage for the reason that there is no expectation of offspring.

While not at issue here, a state-registered contract of marriage typically provides for the transfer of assets upon the death or incapacity of either spouse. The same can be accomplished with a will, power of attorney, or trust.

(2) U.S. Supreme Court Ruling: We take notice that America's founding documents establish individual freedom as the touchstone around which all else is to revolve. Voting was established as a tool serving only the purpose of maximizing individual freedom. In contrast, socialism is built on the principle that group interests take priority over individual interests. On Friday, June 26, 2015, the Court's majority-of-five (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) decreed that the union of two individuals shall rise above the dignity and benefits afforded individual citizens. This decree puts in place the socialist principle of group over individual interests. Arguably, socialism is now the official doctrine of the United States. We can see that the American flag shall henceforth represent the absolute, socialist doctrine of group-rights supremacy over individual rights. Embracing the doctrine of socialism, Justice Kennedy described it this way: "No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love,

fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were." Arguably, Kennedy was putting forth his religious beliefs. Embracing this socialistic ideal, the Court's majority-of-five was able to nullify all three Founding documents, and establish that a group of two shall have rights not afforded to individuals.

Four separate dissents were filed. Chief Justice John Roberts noted for those celebrating the ruling: Rejoice, "But do not celebrate the Constitution. It had nothing to do with it." Justice Samuel Alito described the Court majority as "imposing its own views on the entire country." Justice Antonin Scalia perhaps was more pointed: "Today's decree says that my Ruler, and the Ruler of 320 million Americans coast-to-coast, is a majority of the nine lawyers of the Supreme Court;" and again, "A system of government that makes the People subordinate to a committee of nine unelected lawyers does not deserve to be called a democracy." Perhaps, more pointed yet, Scalia asserted that the majority's assertiveness represented a "threat to American democracy." Justice Clarence Thomas responded to the majority opinion regarding their assertion that the Court has the power to bestow dignity to people. He argued that the Court majority doesn't understand what dignity is or where it comes from. Dignity is "innate"; the government is "incapable of bestowing" it. As he described it: "Slaves did not lose their dignity (any more than they lost their humanity) because the government allowed them to be enslaved."

(3) Gay Benefits: The benefits granted to same-sex marriage partners are substantial. One count cites over 1,000 benefits and preferences for married couples. Benefits include those associated with a surviving spouse, including pension and social security benefits. Another benefit gives married gays the right to extend citizenship status to a non-citizen partner. More tax benefits are achieved through dependent deductions, community property rights, and the elimination of estate taxes. Public policy extends these partnership benefits to the workplace, such as the inclusion in an employer's health plan. Those who choose not to marry, do not participate in these benefits.

(4) The Court as Supreme Ruler: In 1996, Congress passed and U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act setting forth a uniform application of federal laws regarding the definition of marriage

as between one man and one woman. There was substantial support, with the House voting 342 to 67, and the Senate 85 to 14.

However, in 2013 (*United States v. Windsor*), the Court-of-five repealed the Act as unconstitutional citing the equal protection clause in the 5th Amendment of the Bill of Rights: "No person shall be...deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Speaking for the majority, Justice Kennedy argued that his intent was "to protect in personhood and dignity" an identifiable group of citizens, and for the "protection of the class in their own community." The minority-of-four argued that the Court majority-of-five overstepped its jurisdiction when it heard a case on its merits when there was no case to appeal. Arguably, the point here is that the Court majority-of-five can be seen as elevating itself above the U.S. Constitution when it suits their personal religious-type preferences.

And, in 2015, we have the gay marriage ruling by the same Court's majority-of-five. Their argument began with a novel interpretation of the equal rights protection clause in the 14th Amendment of the Bill of Rights. This Amendment was adopted just after the Civil War (1868) and provided equal rights for newly enfranchised citizens: "...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." In that wording and context, the Court majority-of-five took "any person" to mean "two persons" as in gay marriage. Arguably, the Court majority-of-five reigns supreme over the Congress, the President, and the American citizenry.

In a similar posturing, the Court majority-of-five ruled that it had the authority to establish dignity to members of the citizenry. As cited above (*Obergefell v. Hodges*), the Court majority rejected the idea of inherent dignity bestowed by Nature on every individual, and maintained that it was the Court that had the authority to judge the individual worth of each citizen. In so doing, the Court's majority-of-five became a "Court of Supremacy" over the citizenry.

That is, we can observe the Court majority-of-five opposing the Declaration of Independence and the entire Bill of Rights in its argument that gays would have neither dignity nor the respect of others unless the

Court so ordered. The contrary assertion is that it's the individual who chooses to respect, or not respect, another person. Such respect would reflect the maturity and identity of that individual. For the Court to rule on who does, and does not, deserve respect reflects the identity of the Court. With its ruling on gay marriage, the Court's identity replaces an individual's identity; and usurps every individual's freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The Court's gay-marriage ruling can be seen as nullifying all three Founding Documents: the Declaration of Independence, establishing human experience as an individual matter; the Constitution, as establishing three equal branches; and the Bill of Rights provisions giving supremacy to individual freedom.

(5) The Court as Moral Authority: Consistent with the Bill of Rights, the government can enforce any contract between consenting adults. However, it would be prohibitive for the government to judge the desirability of any contract. The Court's majority-of-five ruled otherwise. Nullifying the provisions in the Bill of Rights insuring individual freedom, the Court ruled that it could give preferences to those choosing to marry over those choosing not to marry. The Court takes unto itself the determination of which agreements are better than others. That is, the Court becomes the moral authority for the citizenry; and, in so doing, becomes the head of a State religion.

As per the Bill of Rights, the freedom to marry is no more sacred than the freedom not to marry. To marry or not to marry is a matter of free speech (association); and to favor any speech is contrary to free speech. Whom you choose to love—not love, or hate—is an individual matter freely chosen. Surely, an expression of an emotion must be by mutual consent (individual freedom). You can't hug the next attractive person you see on the street, nor can you strike them for being unlikable. In contrast to the Bill's provisions, the Court's majority-of-five has ruled that those who choose to marry are something *more* than they were as individuals and deserve more rights and privileges than those who choose not to marry. This can reasonably be seen as a religious doctrine. The ruling's specificity makes it a directive for guiding a citizen's pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.

Looking forward, America has been placed on the slippery slope of socialism. A unified couple is greater than two single individuals. And by extension, the family of the couple is greater than the couple; the nation is greater than the family; and the global community of nations is greater than the individual nations. At each slip, the group gets larger and the individual becomes less significant. Religious freedom and the freedom of association have been nullified by decree of the U.S. Supreme Court's majority-of-five.

Let's emphasize that last point. The U.S. Supreme Court reflects an absolute perspective when it imposes its personal preferences on the citizenry. The primary opposition to gay marriage was from a coalition of absolutely oriented churches. The contest became one between two absolutely oriented institutions. The organized churches argued that it is God's absolute will to have marriage between one man and one woman. The Court's majority-of-five argued that it is their absolute will that marriage is between anyone they say.

In this contest of absolutes, the unified efforts of socialism's advocates had the advantage over the fragmented and multiple absolute truths of absolutely oriented churches. If the only objections to gay-marriage rights are presented in the name of organized religion, the socialists will prevail. After all, to incorporate a religious doctrine into law would be contrary to religious freedom. However, if the principle at stake is not gay marriage but its group rights prevailing over individual rights, individual freedom may very well prevail. As it is, the Court's majority-of-five has set a new compass heading for America. Its historical setting toward maximizing individual freedom and self-determination has been reset to steer America toward the socialistic ideal of individual subordination to group interests as defined by their leaders. That is, if one believes that the American Bill of Rights provides for individual freedom of association, then the Bill must be nullified for socialism to succeed in its goal of group supremacy.

3.2.2 Establishing Speech Codes

For context, we take notice that controlling speech begins simply enough with grammar codes for the purpose of facilitating communication. We have Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1389) seen by some to be an effort to standardize English usage; Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the*

English Language (1755) becoming a standard for both spelling and word usage; and in an effort to simplify the rules of spelling, Noah Webster (1828), lawyer and editor of the *Federalist Party Newspaper*, compiling his own soon-to-be-popular dictionary. Similarly, *Robert's Rules of Order* (1876) became a widely accepted guide for group decision making while insuring individual interests.

To capture a culture, first take control of their language.

With socialism, the speech codes become restrictions through which all ideas must pass. To capture a culture, first take control of their language. Language is the tool of thought. To control language is to control thought and critical decision making.

Taking priority over thought, the speech codes become a master over expression. Using "he" to include both males and females becomes a call to arms, and an opportunity to impose a gender-free language using only plural forms. The dictionary, rather than a guide for the common way to spell a word, becomes the *right* way to spell a word.

Politically correct speech requires the censorship of cartoons such as the nearsighted Mr. Magoo for the reason it is non-inclusive, and therefore creates discomfort for those not included. Notably, it is not the specific item being censored that is important. What's important is the power of some to censor the speech of others.

With socialism, some words become taboo and are referred to only by a first letter followed by dashes. Prohibiting the *N-word* was said to protect a class of persons from disparagement. Generally not said is that such protection is a government-controlled benefit that substitutes for self-determination. Arguably, such prohibitions result in an increase in stimulus strength, thereby making the protected class more vulnerable to assaults.

Today, heavy on absolute rationality, schools and colleges have become centers for developing speech codes to which all students and faculty are to be subordinated. With their roots in socialism's cause of an all-inclusive equality, no speech should be permitted that distinguishes between individuals. As with Gulliver and the Lilliputians, the giant potential of

free expression is immobilized by multiple and picayune restraints.

As a matter of public policy, "scholarships" are awarded—not on scholarship—but based primarily on group identity, such as race and need. As performance declines, there is the call for more central control. Alternatives such as charter schools are marginalized. There are efforts to remove all performance standards as being divisive. The central message is that a student's personal choices and efforts are insignificant. Consequently, students should not be held responsible for their performance—including repaying those student loans.

Attacking a person rather than his or her ideas can prevail in a country where individual freedom and dignity have been denigrated.

Censorship becomes the software replacing book burning. Nullifying an individual's right to embrace or avoid as a matter of personal choice, socialism exposes its self-righteous core by prescribing that which is to be embraced and that which is to be avoided. When the prohibition of hate speech is linked to any speech that makes anyone feel uncomfortable, the individual no longer owns his or her own emotions. We take note that while socialism may not prevail as a rational idea, the tactic of attacking a person rather than his or her ideas can prevail in a country where individual freedom and dignity have been denigrated.

"I know you" traps one in the imagination of another.

With socialism's absolute twist, personal privacy is nullified. Others can create images of you and publish them as the absolute you. Such creations can create compelling images that will shade all future communications and deprive the target of the basic freedom to communicate. In this case, the individual becomes a social product created by those with media power. "I know you" traps one in the imagination of another.

3.2.3 Nullify Speech by Imposing Compulsory Unions

The United States is a union, but it has a Bill of Rights that enables voluntary unions and prohibits compulsory unions. As Samuel Gompers has it on his Washington D.C. Memorial: "No lasting gain has ever come

from compulsion. If we seek to force, we but tear apart that which united is invincible." Samuel Gompers (1850-1924), an English-born Jewish immigrant, was initially an organizer of cigar makers. Later, he became the founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL and later AFL-CIO). Under his leadership, the AFL was said to have become the largest and most influential labor federation in the world.

For the socialists of America, organizing labor into compulsory unions was a natural beginning point for inculcating the doctrines of European socialism. In order to work for a living, socialism's compulsory unions required their workers to take an oath subordinating their individual consciences to the majority opinion. That is, workers were required to agree to have the collective *will* dominate their individual thoughts and actions. And again, workers were compelled to give up their individual freedom and become yoked to a majority vote. Individuals who believed in the supremacy of one's individual conscience were characterized as "scabs" and targeted for abuse. Spearheaded by compulsory unionism, socialism established a populist base among workers and an alternative to individual freedom as expressed in America's Bill of Rights.

Socialistic adherents are perhaps most known for their compulsory labor unions. However, the legal and medical professionals can also be seen as compulsory unions. Citizens are prohibited from practicing either profession without membership in their respective organizations. Even in marriage, a couple who give up individual conscience to a marriage union can be seen as planting the seed of their own destruction. The common core of compulsory unions of any kind is a provision that members must support the union contract over individual conscience. We turn now to socialism's attempt to nullify the U.S. Constitution.

3.3 NULLIFYING THE CONSTITUTION

The U.S. Constitution puts forth a system of governance that is centralized with enough power to protect the citizenry from foreign attack, and yet decentralized enough to protect the citizenry from being dominated by those at the reins of their own government.

In contrast, we have socialism's nullifying agenda where those at the reins of government conspire to remove the constitutional restraints

protecting the citizenry. Our three-fold focus is on (1) nullifying the system of checks-and-balances, (2) nullifying jury independence, and (3) nullifying a citizen's right to own and protect his or her own property.

3.3.1 Nullifying Checks and Balances

We begin by taking note of constitutional power. As described earlier, complete power resides in three-fourths of the state legislatures—if they can combine their efforts in a timely manner. Diversity of interests prevents the likelihood of such a takeover. Next, we have Congress. However, it's the system of checks-and-balances provided by three separate and equal branches of government that erects a barrier against any one branch becoming dictatorial over another branch. If one branch could become dominant over the other two, it can assume complete power over the citizenry.

The House of Representatives can be seen as a power point. It can impeach the President and members of the Court. If the House impeaches both the President and Vice President, and the Senate removes both from office, the Speaker of the House takes on the duties of the President.

When a majority of the House and two-thirds of the Senate are from one political party, that political party has complete power over the citizenry.

The U.S. Supreme Court can be seen as the most attractive target for those supporting socialism's short-term goal of centralized control. That is, presidents change and the 535 members of Congress reflect diversity by design. In contrast, the U.S. Supreme Court has the greatest concentration of power in the hands of the fewest number of people. Members have life-time tenure and are the most insulated from public scrutiny. Here are three instances where the U.S. Supreme Court can be seen as establishing its own dominance over Congress and the executive branch.

First, judicial review can be seen as an early example of the Court's willingness to seek dominance in U.S. governance. It was not unexpected. The Founders recognized the ability of the Supreme Court to usurp the freedom so carefully provided for in the Founding documents. In *Federalist #81* (paragraph 4, c. 1788), Alexander Hamilton acknowledges

the concerns that "the errors and usurpations of the Supreme Court of the United States will be uncontrollable and remediless." However, Hamilton argued that the danger is a "phantom" due to the Court's "total incapacity to support its usurpations by force" and the Senate's authority for "degrading them from their stations" by impeachment (*ibid*, para. 9).

And again, Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, is said to have expressed concern over the possibility of usurpation by the Supreme Court. As he reportedly put it: "Power is the great evil with which we are contending. We have divided power between three branches of government and erected checks and balances to prevent abuse of power. However, where is the check on the power of the judiciary? If we fail to check the power of the judiciary, I predict that we will eventually live under judicial tyranny."

In the anti-federalist papers of the day, an author writing under the pseudonym Brutus encouraged the citizens of New York to oppose ratifying the Constitution. His concern was in protecting individual liberties from central-government domination. These concerns were later ameliorated with assurances of a "Bill of Rights." While authorship is unknown, the writings are thought to be the work of a career politician, namely: Robert Yates of New York, Melancton Smith of Poughkeepsie, or John Williams of Salem. Brutus XI (31 January 1788) addressed the matter of domination by the Supreme Court, saying in part:

"It is moreover, of great importance, to examine with care the nature and extent of the judicial power...They are to be rendered totally independent, both of the people and the legislature...No errors they may commit can be corrected by any power above them...The only causes for which they can be displaced, is, conviction of treason, bribery, and high crimes and misdemeanors...but where these are wanting or ambiguously expressed, to supply what is wanting by their own decisions...The judicial are not only to decide questions arising upon the meaning of the constitution in law, but also in equity. By this they are empowered, to explain the constitution according to the reasoning spirit of it, without being confined to the words or letter...And in their decisions they will...determine, according to what appears to them, the reason and spirit of the constitution...there is no power provided in the constitution, that can correct their errors, or controul their adjudications. From this court there is no appeal...

This power in the judicial, will enable them to mould the government, into almost any shape they please."

Additionally, in Brutus XV, the writer fears that the proposed Supreme Court's structure would make the Supreme Court's decisions "independent of heaven itself."

As it unfolded, it did not take the Court long to test Patrick Henry's contention and Brutus's prediction. *Judicial review* can serve as a beginning point for pointing out the Court's inclination to establish itself as having authority over Congress. In its landmark *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) decision, the Court asserted its dominance over the Congress. The Court decided that it gets to tell Congress which of its laws is valid or invalid. Here we have the movement toward replacing the three equal branches of government with a hierarchical system headed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Today, perhaps it is out of a contrived sense of fear, the great majority of Americans believe that they are to be subordinate to the rulings of the Court. Consistent with socialism, when the Supreme Court plays a tune, the citizenry believe they have a duty to dance to it. This message of citizen subordination can be seen as nullifying the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, the reasoning underlying the Bill of Rights, and the body of the Constitution.

Second, abolishing the city-rural distinction can be seen as another effort by the Court to nullify the Constitution's system of checks-and-balances. The Founders specifically provided for the interests of city dwellers to be held in check by the interests of the lesser-numbered rural dwellers. Different lifestyles give rise to different interests. City dwellers can be characterized as more interdependent and requiring more central bureaucracy. Rural dwellers, such as family farmers, can be characterized as relying more on self-determination and having a more direct connection between their individual actions and consequences. Representation by both of these groups provided a safeguard for preserving individual freedom—until the Court decided to the contrary. And again, the Court demonstrated its intent to make unilateral declarations.

There was resistance to this usurpation. Taking a closer look can be helpful for understanding socialism's progress. Looking back, we can see that in the 1920s, more Americans came to be living in cities than on

farms. The conditions were increasingly set for the disenfranchisement of the rural voter. In an in-your-face decision, the Court ruled 8-1 that state legislative districts had to be roughly equal in population (*Reynolds v. Sims*, 1964). By erecting the "one man, one vote" principle, the Court removed the protection that the Founders had specifically provided.

In his lone dissent, Justice John Marshall Harlan II criticized the Court for ignoring the original intent of the Founders. He claimed the Court was imposing its own idea of "good government" on the states. Harlan further claimed that if *Reynolds* were correct, then the U.S. Constitution's own provision for two senators from each state would be constitutionally suspect since the 50 states don't have "substantially equal populations." Notably, Article V of the Constitution specifically provides that "no State, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage [representation] in the Senate."

In the aftermath of the Court's decision, Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois led a fight to pass a constitutional amendment allowing unequal legislative districts. He warned that: "the forces of our national life are not brought to bear on public questions solely in proportion to the weight of numbers. If they were, the 6 million citizens of the Chicago area would hold sway in the Illinois Legislature without consideration of the problems of their 4 million fellows who are scattered in 100 other counties. Under the Court's new decree, California could be dominated by Los Angeles and San Francisco; Michigan by Detroit."

After a long, hard battle, Dirksen was ultimately unsuccessful. The Court successfully demonstrated its power to blatantly and unilaterally nullify specific provisions of the Constitution.

Third, the Court usurps congressional authority. Our illustration has to do with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Congress passed and U.S. President Lyndon Johnson signed the Act. It prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, color, or national origin in public places, schools, and employment.

At issue here is whether or not the Court can supersede both of the other branches of government if it deems it necessary. That is, can the Court override the constitutional provisions of *separate and equal* branches, of

free speech (association), and the laws enacted by Congress? The Court has declared that it can! After Congress passed, and the President signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination based on race, the Court ruled that such discrimination is permitted when the Court says so (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Using their doctrine of the "common good" and their Bakke findings (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978), the Court's majority-of-five ruled that its authority supersedes that of the Executive and Legislative Branches of government. Race-based affirmative action is a good thing, they say. Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor declared that a "compelling government interest" was sufficient to justify the use of racial preferences in school admissions. Specifically, Court approval of discrimination based on race supersedes the authority of both the Constitution's "equal protection" provision (14th Amendment) and Congress's Title VII (Civil Rights Act of 1964). Some saw it as simply patronizing when O'Connor famously wrote: "We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary." Presumably, "we" refers to the Court.

Let's say that again. The Court demonstrated its unilateral privilege to overrule the other two branches of government. In an apparent doublespeak fashion, five justices ruled that a law passed by Congress and signed by the president is subordinate to the beliefs of the Court's majority-of-five. In an Alice-in-Wonderland situation, the words in the Constitution mean whatever five justices say they mean. In this case, the Court nullified the law, arguing that discrimination *is* permitted until *they* rule that it is *unnecessary*. The broader implication is that the authority of the Constitution is not in its wording, but in its interpretation by the Court's majority-of-five. We take note that there is no provision in the Constitution for the Court to override Congress or the Executive Branch.

As an aside, discrimination based on sex was not initially included in the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, but was added in Title VII by way of amendment. Prior to this, in 1941, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt outlawed discrimination based on race, color, creed, and national origin in the Federal Government and the defense industry (Executive Order 8802); and in 1948, U.S. President Harry S. Truman abolished discrimination "on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin" in the United States Armed Forces (Executive Order 9981). The point to be added here is that prohibiting certain types of discrimination has a long history with both

the executive and legislative branches of government. Notable is that the Court-of-five can unilaterally negate this history.

We now turn to socialism's nullifying agenda regarding citizen control over all three branches of government.

3.3.2 Nullifying Jury Independence

While trial by jury is provided in both the Constitution (Article III, Section 2) and the Bill of Rights (Amendment VII), it can be seen also as a critical check on constitutional authority. As cited earlier, Thomas Jefferson made the point eloquently and succinctly: "I consider trial by jury as the only anchor yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principle of its constitution." And again, Jefferson had particular reservations regarding judicial authority. As he put it: "In the hands of judges, the Constitution is a mere thing of wax that judges can twist and shape to their liking and in their own design."

As used here, jury independence refers to the authority of a jury to ignore the strict letter of the law, and to deliver verdicts based on sympathy, on humanity, and sometimes on common sense.

The Founders made individual citizens the caretakers of their own liberty by establishing the jury system. As cited earlier and attributed to John Adams: "No man's property or liberty can be taken from him till 12 men in his neighborhood have said upon oath, that by the laws of his making it ought to be taken away."

The idea of trial by jury has a long history. However, as some researchers put it, "Its origin is lost in the night of time." The Greeks tried Socrates by "popular jury" in about 399 BCE. The U.S. version was directly inspired by English Common Law. Perhaps a distinction without a difference, a jury of one's "neighbors" or "peers" is called out in the English Bill of Rights, while the U.S. Bill of Rights calls for an "impartial jury" from the same "district" where the alleged crime occurred. Either way, the governing purpose can be seen as making government subordinate to the local citizenry.

Also having a long history are those efforts to make a jury subordinate to

government authority. The landmark case is often cited as the 1670 London trial of William Penn and Mead. A brief overview of Penn's case can provide the context within which U.S. citizens have a right to a jury comprised of "members from the same District" in which the alleged offense occurred.

The 26-year-old Penn was a Quaker. He later immigrated to the colonies and became the founder of Pennsylvania. However, at the time of his trial, he was still living in London. His father was an admiral in the Royal Navy, sat in the House of Commons, and was knighted by King Charles II. Penn was being tried before the Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, Sir John Vaughan. It was a jury trial where Penn had been charged with creating an unlawful street demonstration. Mead was charged with conspiracy, but was later found to be just passing through the crowd of about 300 people.

At trial, Penn was outspoken. In the Court transcript, we have Penn accusing the judge of violating his rights under the Magna Charta. He also accused the judge of being "sinister" and "arbitrary." An incensed Judge Vaughan accused Penn of being a *saucy fellow*, *impertinent*, *troublesome*, and *pestilent*. At one point, Judge Vaughan had Penn forcibly removed from the Court; however, Penn's yelling could still be heard and recorded.

Then the case became interesting. The Judge gave jury instructions as to the law. If the jury found certain facts to be true, then the law required them to bring back a finding of "guilty." The jury found the alleged facts to be true, but one jurist refused to make a finding of "guilty" as per the jury instructions. Juror Edward Bushel persuaded the other jurors to do the same. An infuriated Judge had them locked in the deliberation room without food, water, or toilet facilities. He warned them that they shall not be dismissed until they have "a verdict that the court will accept." After two days, the jury returned with a verdict of "not guilty." On capricious grounds involving their dress attire, an angry Judge Vaughan fined them and remanded them to jail until the fine was paid. Guided by principle, Juror Bushel refused to pay the fine.

The basic argument was that Nature has endowed every individual with the right to act upon conscience, and no individual or institution has the authority to encumber that right.

At this point, the whole matter was sent to England's highest court for review (*King v. Penn*). What happened here has been memorialized by the King's Court findings, Penn's trial transcripts, commentary by Parliament, Lord Chief Justice Coke, and others. The primary finding was that Juror Bushel had the right to ignore the judge's instructions. To paraphrase, the Court found that Clause 39 of the Magna Charta was to be re-interpreted: "To assist the struggle against absolutist government... trial by peers" no longer referred to an obscure baronial privilege as it did in 1215 but was now to be taken in law to mean a right of every defendant prosecuted by the state to ask for acquittal by a trial of one's peers. Furthermore, the Court found that each juror was to be bound to his own "conscience" even if contrary to a judge's instructions regarding the law. "The power of judgment lies in the breasts and consciences of twelve honest neighbours." The basic argument was that Nature has endowed every individual with the right to act upon conscience, and no individual or institution has the authority to encumber that right.

And there was more. The King's Court found that judges who sought to bind a jury to his instructions regarding the law were "tyrants" engaging in "treason." And that their actions are "abominable" when seen in the light of justice. After 1670, there were some tumultuous events as the "tyrants" struck back. By 1689, the English Bill of Rights codified the principle of a right to trial by one's peers, and the right of jurors to act solely on personal conscience.

Inspired by English Common Law, America's Bill of Rights established a citizen's right to trial by jury. The right to a jury trial can be also seen as a safeguard to individual liberty and an essential check and balance on the U.S. Constitution prior to its amendments.

Socialism's Nullification: Dedicated to the principle of citizen subordination to government, jury independence must be subverted. It's an easy slight-of-hand. Generally speaking, people understand the idea of subjects having a duty to embrace loyalty to their king. Simply overlay the words to come up with: "Citizens have a duty to pledge their allegiance to their government." Thus, socialism's mantra becomes "no man is above the law"—laws made by those holding the reins of government. Socialism's nullifying agenda advances the cause of the primacy of judges by limiting the findings of a jury as subordinate to a

judge's instructions. As the socialists would have it, laws serve to bind the citizenry and provide the basis for punishing or rehabilitating violators.

We now turn to socialism's nullifying agenda regarding owning and protecting property. As stated earlier, we take notice that nobody owns anything. As a matter of practice, to own means to control, and to control means to own. We may have control over something for a period of time. We really can't take it with us.

3.3.3 Nullifying the Right to Own and Protect Property

America's words of freedom were put forth by the Founders when they provided for individuals to be "...secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects..." (Constitution, 4th Amendment), and to be deprived of neither "life, liberty, or property" (5th and 14th Amendments) without due process. Doing so created two checks on government's power over the citizenry. As noted earlier, private ownership decentralizes wealth away from the government, and it provides a place where an individual can exercise maximum jurisdiction and self-expression.

The personal ownership of property provides the basis for an exchange of property through contracts between individuals. James Madison described the importance of contracts as a "constitutional bulwark in favor of personal security and private rights" (Federalist #44, c. 1788). As part of the Constitution (Article 1, Section 10), the *contracts clause* prohibits a state from passing any law "impairing the obligation of contracts." Chief Justice John Marshall (1819) referred to "the inviolability of contracts" between individuals. In 1878, Justice William Strong wrote that there was "no more important provision in the Federal Constitution" than this contracts clause. It can be seen that the contracts clause clearly sets the individual as sovereign and government as the servant.

...without savings, tomorrow you may belong to the government.

Another aspect of ownership has to do with savings. We have the right to enhance our individual freedom by securing our freedom for tomorrow. Squirrels do it by storing nuts, and bears do it by adding fat to get through the winter. Personal savings equip an individual for self-reliance looking forward. Without such savings, individuals become dependents of the

government for their future well-being—without savings, tomorrow you may belong to the government.

Property ownership begins with owning one's own body. The primary rational task for each individual is to maximize control over the sensory information coming in and the motor action of personal behavior by choosing from the options available. Having that freedom to choose is what distinguishes the human from that squirrel and bear.

Socialism's nullifying agenda provides our next five focus points: (1) Nullifying the Contracts Clause; (2) Nullifying Freedom through Taxation; (3) Nullifying Freedom through Debt; (4) Nullifying Freedom through Regulations; and (5) Nullifying the Freedom to resist by placing restrictions on gun ownership for self-protection.

(1) Nullifying the Contracts Clause: The contracts clause (Constitution, Article 1, Section 10) is perhaps second in significance only to the checks-and-balance provisions, all of which reflect the heart and sole of freedom's Declaration of Independence.

Nullifying the contracts clause was a critical win for bringing America under the yoke of socialism. There have been various court findings, but they can be summarized: If a state law advances a significant and legitimate public purpose, and if the law's approach is reasonable and appropriate, the state law can nullify the Constitutional contracts clause unless its application causes a substantial impairment of contract rights. Now, that's the art of obfuscation. Perhaps it was *Pike v. Bruce* (1970) that the Court seriously relied on public interest over individual sovereignty regarding the application of the contract clause.

A more clear reliance on public interest can be found in *Allied v. Spannaus* (1978). The Court ruled that "Literalism...of the contract clause...would make it destructive of public interest..." That is, public interest prevails over individual interest. As the Court put it: It is "...the sovereign right of the Government to protect the lives, health, morals, comfort and general welfare of the people, and is paramount to any rights under contracts between individuals."

Let's look at that again. In order to protect, it follows that something must

first be identified. And so it is, the Court has made itself the determiner of morals and general welfare for the citizenry, and protector of its own moral and welfare determinations. Here we have an unambiguous declaration of a government religion. Cited above in *Allied*: "Legislation adjusting the rights and responsibilities of contracting parties must be upon reasonable conditions and of a character appropriate to the public purpose justifying its adoption" (*United States v. New Jersey*, 1977).

In *Sveen v. Melin* (2018), Justice Kagan writing for the Court's majority, saying if a state law "does not substantially impair pre-existing contractual arrangements..." it does not run afoul of the *contracts clause*. Justice Neil Gorsuch, the Court's lone dissenter, argued that "the [state] law before us cannot survive an encounter with even the breeziest of contracts clause tests...the majority's interpretation of the Clause seems hard to square with the Constitution's original public meaning...After all, the Constitution does not speak of 'substantial' impairments—it bars 'any' impairment."

In an earlier case relating directly to property, the Court effectively nullified property ownership in a 5-4 decision finding no provision in the Constitution protecting an individual's right to "own" property (*Kelo v. New London*, 2005). If the individual does not own the property, who does? The Court's majority-of-five ruled that they do. Said another way, there is no place an individual can call "home"—no place that can securely reflect an individual's expressions of freedom. The Court's majority-of-five, relying on the 5th Amendment to the Constitution, found that the "public use" provision permits government to take private property by force, simply for the purpose of getting more taxes from the new owners.

Furthermore, while the 5th Amendment to the Constitution holds that government shall not take private property except for "public use" without just compensation; the Kelo Court cited *Berman v. Parker* (1954), where that Court referred to "public use" interchangeably with "public welfare." This slight-of-hand promotion could easily link up with the "general welfare" provision (Constitution, Article I, Section 8) to centralize the well-being of the nation solely into the hands of the Court's majority-of-five.

[Take a breath!] Separately, "you don't own that" is the message we still hear from government agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Services, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Environmental Protection Agency. When that puddle in your backyard is ruled to be a navigable waterway under their control, we have a nullification of an individual's right to own property.

(2) Nullifying Freedom through Taxation: Taxation is the primary action available to Congress for taking wealth away from the citizenry and empowering government. There is an ever-increasing spiral as taxes increase inflation and inflation increases taxes. As Vladimir Lenin reportedly put it: "The way to crush the bourgeois [middle class] is to grind them between the millstones of taxation and inflation." Daniel Webster, arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court (*McCulloch v. Maryland*, 1819), stated that "An unlimited power to tax involves, necessarily, a power to destroy." Chief Justice Marshall concurred. Arguably, by taking from the rich and giving to the poor, government controls both!

Within a context of maximizing individual freedom, government has a duty to reasonably license and regulate religion (prohibit human sacrifices), speech (prohibit defamation), and driving a car (prohibit drunk driving). However, regulatory compliance can be so extensive and convoluted that power is bestowed on myriad government agencies. As James Madison put it: "It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood." Additionally, the power to regulate enables government to impose the costs of compliance on private individuals and businesses, thereby creating an emperor's power to give a thumbs up or down for survival. It is disingenuous to say that ignorance of the law is no excuse. Government agencies pass thousands of laws and regulations each year. While they may not accept ignorance as an excuse, it is an excellent reason.

(3) Nullifying Freedom through Debt: On a balance sheet, debt is the flip side of ownership. While owning property enables individuals to ensure their freedom looking forward, public debt restricts everyone's freedom. By incurring considerable debt, Congress has made every citizen an indentured servant, along with every future generation for the foreseeable future. As Voltaire (c. 1750) put it: "In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give to another." Admittedly, there can be a perverted sense

of community as the national debt yokes everyone, along with future generations to a status of indentured servitude. Compounding the visible debt, Congress has created an off-the-books debt with unfunded entitlement programs such as Social Security using Ponzi schemes where future generations pay for current consumption. By saddling and bridling the citizenry with an increasingly burdensome government debt, perhaps it's out of a sense of futility that so many individuals see little else to lose when they incur considerable personal debt and save so little. Believing that their personal efforts will make no difference, they indulge in short-term gratification.

(4) Nullifying Freedom through Regulations: Regulatory agencies can be seen as just another way for government to advance socialism's political agenda of citizen subordination. Civil penalties can be crippling. Perhaps there is the appearance of extortion when criminal filings are dropped for a price. We have CEOs agreeing to have their corporations (shareholders) pay billions of dollars in fines to avoid defending themselves against criminal allegations brought by an attorney general and numerous regulatory agencies. Similarly, asset-forfeiture programs can confiscate property without even the appearance of due process.

(5) Nullifying the Freedom to Resist by Restricting Gun Ownership: Notably, when government fails to protect individual freedom, the 2nd Amendment of the Bill provides individuals with the right to restore their freedom using armed force. As expressed in the Declaration, this constitutional provision fulfills the right and duty of individuals to remove that government.

Restrictions on gun ownership can be seen as nullifying one's right to bear arms as provided by the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution. Arguably, guns can be used for self-defense as well as for the purpose of dominating others. Arguably, the government's banning of guns eliminates both applications. However, the banning of guns leaves the citizenry dependent on the government for protecting oneself, family, and property. Such dependency can be seen as a socialistic ideal.

Let's put these last five parts back together—reassemble them, so to speak. They all have to do with nullifying one's right to own and protect property. The right to own property is nullified when: (a) government deprives

citizens of their constitutional right to make contracts; (b) taxation on property becomes onerous; (c) citizens become indentured servants through government debt; (d) regulations become so entangled as to prevent any clear understanding; and (e) government removes a citizen's constitutional right to own a gun for self-protection.

Concluding comments on America's current drive toward socialism:

Socialism's success will be observed when the actual provisions of the Bill of Rights are deleted, rather than simply existing side-by-side with socialism's contrary provisions. Arguably, we are not there yet—but we are close. Trial balloons can frequently be seen overhead to test public acceptance of constitutional change.

Soon we will have a generation of young adults who have never been exposed to the vision of the Founders for a country where individual freedom flourishes. They will have been taught a vocabulary of socialism before they are able to conceptualize the ideology. As it is with animals born in a zoo or a horse harnessed at an early age, subordination will seem to be the norm. They will be forever dependent on their caregivers. And so it is for every individual, there will be a point of no return—where survival as free agents is not an option.

4. OUR "NO-WIN" CONFLICT

Arguably, both socialism and capitalism have redeeming features. Socialism provides an intelligible framework for a sense of community. Capitalism provides an intelligible framework for a sense of personal identity. However, it's the deficiencies of each that give rise to lasting conflicts. These deficiencies are the focus of this section.

4.1 SOCIALISM'S THREE CRITICAL FLAWS

4.1.1 Socialism is Dehumanizing

Socialism can be seen as dehumanizing in that it limits human potential by being in conflict with human nature. Arguably, human experience is an individual matter—I can't jump into your consciousness and neither can you into mine. That's nature's design. Human experience can be

likened to juggling three balls—physical, rational, and choice. Both physical and rational capacities can be observed in virtually all animals—from the one-celled amoeba to almost-human chimpanzees. However, individual choice can be seen as the unique characteristic of being human. For government to accommodate only our physical and rational capacities is dehumanizing. To blindly follow the choices of another encourages despotic bullies. Given that to be human is to have the freedom to choose as individuals, making individuals subject to the *group will* reflects a failure to believe in one's own humanity.

The point here can be made any number of ways. Whether you are talking about a slave-holding plantation owner, a self-righteous leader proclaiming to know the *mind* and *will* of God, or an agent of the government dictating individual preferences, they are all variations of top-down authoritarianism. Yes, when put into practice, bottom-up socialism can be seen to necessarily morph into top-down socialism. In socialism, the first commandment is to replace "To thine own self be true" with "To thine own group, thou shall be true."

It's an old story. Faust, a classic German legend (c. 1500), describes a highly successful man who was dissatisfied with his life. He makes a pact with the Devil to exchange his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. About 1500 years earlier, there is a similar story where Jesus was tempted by the Devil with worldly power and fortune. We are all tempted to trade our personal integrity for promises of fulfillment—not once, but frequently during our lifetimes.

Today, we have socialism asking that individuals surrender their personal integrity over to the group consensus. Rather than personal wealth, the exchange is for an equal share of the common wealth. There is the promise that doing so will result in a sense of fulfillment. Everyone is equal within the collective. Individual choices are eschewed. Agreement reigns supreme, while being disagreeable or different is suppressed. The word "we" replaces the "I" just as collective authority replaces individual freedom. This point was elaborated upon by soviet-schooled (albeit, defector) Ayn Rand (*Anthem*, Chapter 11). Socialism is an authoritarian system consistent with an absolute perspective. Consequently, there can be only one truth, one consensus, and only one party with the authority to establish public policy. Freedom of speech and association are restrained,

since any variation in the party line is an assault on the entire ideology of socialism. At some point, adults and children can be seen to give up individual thought and feel comfortable only when guided by people in positions of authority.

Notably, socialism has never achieved its purported objectives of well-being. Equality within an all-inclusive group will gravitate to the lowest common denominator. As social commentator William Buckley use to say, "You can't raise everyone to the top." You can only tether everyone to that minimal standard established by those who are the least mature. We have all seen what happens to animals when so restrained. Consider the animal that is strapped to an arm attached to a wheel for grinding corn. Even if well-fed, walking in a circle is that animal's destiny throughout its life. Elephants, if restrained at an early age, at first will resist with all their strength and will. After a time, they will give up and even without restraints remain compliant throughout the remainder of their lives. However, even those animals in the zoo, receiving the best physical care by the brightest caregivers, will try to leave if they find the door open.

As with any system that makes individuals subordinate to government with top-down authoritarian rule, some people will seek to be at the top and are prepared to get and remain there by force.

4.1.2 It is Necessary to Use Force

We can observe that animals can become subordinate through force and the threat of force. As a product of human intervention, a magnificent animal can be taught to comply with the role of a beast of burden or performer of circus acts for the amusement of spectators, and for the financial benefits of those in control.

Arguably, there is no rationale for one person to dominate another. However, through force, adult humans can be sent to rehabilitation or re-education facilities for the purpose of retraining their minds with techniques appropriate to large groups. Critics call it brainwashing and say that it destroys individual initiative. Socialists say that's a good thing. Given that socialism defines the individual as of least significance, employing harsh treatment against individuals is acceptable when advancing the goals of socialism. However, even socialists will agree that

it is better to rear youth to be inclined toward socialism than to employ force after the fact.

During their formative years, socialism can override human Nature's decree for individual differences. To make this point, in *The New Left* (1970; Chapter 9, *The Comprachicos*), Ayn Rand cited a passage from Victor Hugo's *The Man Who Laughs* (1869). As the story goes, infants are placed in ceramic pots with the bottoms cut out to permit the child's legs to extend out. Over time, the child grows so as to take on the form of the pot. When growth is somewhat complete, the ceramic is broken away. The shape of the child reflects the preferences of those in control. So it is with socialism, each new generation of children becomes the raw material from which the machinery of government molds them after the expectations of those in power.

Whether trained as children or adults, socialism's citizenry will come to have little ability or desire to make individual decisions.

4.1.3 We have Corruption at the Top

Force works to control the weaker but not the stronger. Individuals can be forced by an overlord to relinquish self-interest, but those at the top do not have the threat of force and so will always be inclined toward self-interest. With socialism, that is corruption. Corruption attests to the primacy of self-interest as Nature's design. From the top, corruption spreads to family, friends, and co-conspirators. Corruption at the bottom suggests that even the weak seek expressions of individual freedom.

Leaders can, and eventually will, exercise their freedom of choice over others. When equality is imposed on the masses, leaders necessarily become top-down dictators and the citizenry become hostages. With socialism, government will become increasingly dominant, and self-interest will decree that those in authority will subordinate the citizenry. To address the many facets of corruption, we will group them using the P-R-C triad.

(1) Physical factors: Physical practice will always fall short of the ideological ideal. Government regulators will always be able to find fault with individuals they find resistant to subordination. Socialism rests on

an idea without checks and balances. Two plus two will always equal four by definition; it will always be false when checked against physical experiences. Setting an ideological standard from which to judge, human behavior will always result in observed discrepancies. The individual is always at risk of condemnation—always a captive.

(2) Rational factors: At the top of our list, we have the assertion that what is termed socialism today is not socialism as described by the early theorists. Arguably, none of those theorists described the evolution of socialism as resulting in a government run by ruthless dictators that deprive the citizenry of free speech, personal choice, and personal identity. They did not describe leaders that would bring about the death of millions of citizens to achieve and maintain their hold over the people.

Attempts at socialism have morphed into authoritarian and dictatorial forms of leadership where we can see schools without education, courts without justice, churches without religion, sex without love, media news outlets without integrity, and individuals without character.

Early advocates of socialism can be seen to have written about a society where government would no longer be necessary. Some argued that capitalism was a necessary beginning that would evolve into socialism (induction to deduction). And then, socialism would evolve into a society where there would be no need for a powerful central government. Each individual would give what he could and take what he needed. Or, as Marx is said to have put it: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." There were those who argued that violence would emerge between the stages. While present-day socialism has evoked great violence, the achievements have never been achieved. Attempts at socialism have morphed into authoritarian and dictatorial forms of leadership where we can see schools without education, courts without justice, churches without religion, sex without love, media news outlets without integrity, and individuals without character.

The deficiency is that of externalizing something that is essentially internal.

As for another rational factor, we take notice that socialism reflects simple

idolatry. It creates the common good by consensus, and then imposes those findings on the citizenry. Whether the imposition is in the name of the people, the common good, or government—it's idolatry. As it is with some religious leaders, it just lacks rational integrity. It's an age-old conundrum. You create something and then bow down and worship your own creation. While an idol may be made of physical clay, socialism is a rational idea created by its members. It's the same problem whether the idol is physical or ideological. The deficiency is that of externalizing something that is essentially internal. However, once assumed, external truths put forth by leaders can rationally be imposed on others.

(3) Choice factors: How is it that an individual would choose to embrace an ideology that minimizes the significance of the individual? They don't—it's forced on them. Socialism's leaders maintain control over a citizenry by prohibiting the freedom of speech and the freedom of association. Socialism can be seen as the default when there is a loss of individual significance. Said another way, a leader becomes a dictator without an informed citizenry, and an informed citizenry requires freedom of speech and the freedom of association. An individual becomes a physical hostage when required to pledge loyalty to another individual or to a group of individuals. We refer again (see Chapter 4) to the Stockholm syndrome. When we believe that any other individual or group controls our destiny, we are inclined to adopt their agenda. Whether in the name of God or country, when the powerful control what we hear and how we act, we all suffer from the Stockholm syndrome. It's a matter of physical integrity (survival) dominating rational integrity, and there is no basis for choice.

Socialism attacks both prejudice and discrimination. However, both are cast by human nature. Every human act involves the exercise of both prejudice and discrimination. A dinner involves choice of food and the prejudgment as to its health effects; driving a car involves discriminating between alternative destinations and the prejudgment of safety. The only question is whether it is the individual or government that chooses which prejudices and discriminations are to be followed.

Given that human nature decrees human experience to be an individual matter, dictatorships will always require compliance by force and be antagonistic to the human spirit. Socialism creates a void in the human

spirit that only can be ignored by distractions such as by drug use, gambling, computer games, and the bullying of others. Although self-destructive, perhaps these behaviors are chosen by individuals as a final effort at being free to choose—albeit, to their own demise.

Socialism is a voice reflecting an external locus of control. That internal voice most easily comes to one's mind when alone and external stimulation is minimized. Individual privacy is anathema to socialism.

Summarizing socialism's critical flaws, we have the subjugation of the individual to a collective will by removing the option of individual choice. To do so is to oppose the natural characteristics of being human. Consequently, socialism must be imposed by force, and as such contains the seeds of its own destruction as revealed in wide-spread corruption.

4.2 CAPITALISM'S THREE CRITICAL FLAWS

4.2.1 Capitalism Lacks a Sense of Community

There is a "my people" versus "your people" separation. Secrecy from outsiders becomes a cardinal rule among competitors. Don't blow the whistle on your drug-enhanced teammates. Attorneys don't testify against each other. Some medical practitioners proudly take a traditional oath swearing not to speak against other doctors. Even prison inmates consider snitching on fellow detainees at the gray-bar hotel to be a cardinal sin.

Whether talking about medical, legal, political, educational, or religious institutions, capitalism can be described using the physical-rational-choice triad: physically, a love of money; rationally, a desire for control; and choice, a self-righteous sense of wanting to be seen as "doing good."

Loyalty and honor to your own translates into a distrust of strangers, particularly for those who look or act differently than you. Our gain often depends on a loss for another. From selling unnecessary products and services to selling defective products and ineffective services, there is always a conflict between the traditional buyer and seller. We have the incentive to take advantage of them before they take advantage of us.

Since beating the competition is the primary goal, helping the other side becomes a conflict of interest, suggesting betrayal and a lack of trustworthiness. There is the recent story from Southern California where a house burned down while two fire departments argued over who had the responsibility to respond. Securing patents creates an impediment to the sharing of results. Private parties will protect their research even if doing so delays progress by decades.

Power rules as individuals join together forming networks to gain advantage over others. To maximize efficiency, leadership becomes authoritarian. As logic would have it, the networks are self-centered systems with their own cast of characters, including leaders, heroes, and martyrs. Individual loyalty to organizational goals is mandated—everyone is to be a team player.

4.2.2 Competition Becomes a Public Policy

Winners and losers are the product of embracing a competitive spirit. There is a tendency to make a competitive contest out of virtually every public and private enterprise. The focus becomes an all-consuming goal of beating the other fellow. Chase is triggered, conquering is the goal, and pleasure is the reward. While a competitive spirit may be described as leading to success in business, it can be toxic when applied to public policy matters or interpersonal relationships. Consider what happens in schools.

Schools teaching competition to students most obviously can be seen in sporting contests. But even a spelling bee can trigger the competitive spirit, as students are taught to spell words that they will rarely, if ever, use. Everyone is encouraged to take sides as a player or supportive spectator. It's an environment where rivalries between schools are encouraged. Demonizing the opposition gets the adrenalin flowing. Students are told that supporting the team is supporting the school—and that's a good thing. As with staged dog fights, students are pitted against each other as some strive to get honors while others are just trying to avoid the ignominy of being labeled a loser. Teachers become role models as they indulge themselves with the sweet sense of union power when challenging the administration and board of trustees. As former Green Bay Packer Coach Vince Lombardi famously put it: "Winning isn't

everything; it's the only thing."

Politics becomes a competitive sport. Whoever controls the reins of government is empowered thereby to facilitate the interests of those who support them. The question becomes, who gets to control the reins of government? It's a matter of one group's interests versus another group's interests—us-versus-them. We can all enjoy the love of the chase, and party loyalty is essential. Soliciting public support is a necessary chore, while gaining control of government's regulatory power over others serves our side exceptionally well.

Punishment is a necessary tool for compliance. With a competitive mindset, the only provision keeping anyone from breaking the rules is a punishment-detering threat. Rules without enforcement are ineffectual. And without rules, you have no competition. As in competitive sports, there must be punishment for those who violate the rules—5 yards for delay of game, 15 yards for grabbing a face mask. Applied to the general citizenry, prison is more to punish wrongdoers than to protect the citizenry. Similarly, guidance to parents can be that sparing the rod will spoil the child. Even with an animal, some may find it necessary to beat the family dog to gain compliance. And then there are those in law enforcement who lie in wait for the opportunity to punish others for the sheer joy of having the power to self-righteously beat them into submission.

Perhaps we have seen this happen. When misfortune strikes, as in an auto accident, one's first thought is to establish who is at fault. Getting support from witnesses, including your own passengers, establishes who is on your side. After finding the satisfaction that it was not your fault, attention can address the injuries to the other party. If severe punishment is anticipated, panic may predispose you to just leave the scene.

Material gain as a priority is advocated by capitalism. It's an economic system based on competition. As an Adult Stage-1 level of maturity, reason serves the physical gratification of accumulating more money and power. The right choices are those that serve this purpose. The vision is to be first a *winner*, and second to be made of the *right stuff*. It is within this context that integrity is experienced.

Deception comes to permeate everything with which the salesman comes into contact, including his family and community relationships.

A salesman begins with a goal of persuading a potential buyer to purchase a product. Selecting only those facts supporting the product, facts are packaged in a way with little resemblance to actual physical or rational experience. Deception comes to permeate everything with which the salesman comes into contact, including his family and community relationships. Fragmented interests with temporary alliances (coalitions) are formed that enable some special interests to prevail over the community interests.

4.2.3 Perverse Value System

Deception within the rules is not only acceptable, it is admired. The quarterback will fake a hand-off to the running back before passing to the wide receiver. The Texas Hold'em player will *slow-play* to hide a very strong hand or play aggressively to hide a weak hand. The picture of the hamburger advertised on television will appear so much more appetizing than the one you receive after ordering. State lotteries and gaming casinos showcase the winners while being silent about the losers. The admonition is *buyer beware*.

Ritual cleansing provides one with a self-righteous halo. It is important for competitors to give the appearance that they are making a difference by caring for the less fortunate. Isolated acts of charity invite new participants and encourage the losers to keep trying. And again, while leaving the underlying dynamics untouched, showcasing selected acts of charity serves the system well. By *giving back*, the donors give the recipients an opportunity to be made over in the image of the donors. We publicly save that puppy, while privately euthanizing thousands of unwanted dogs. We provide a meal to a homeless man or woman on Christmas—before they go back to the streets from which they came. Give a dollar to the single mom in the parking lot begging with her two infants. Her sign saying "God bless you" will give her a competitive edge. Charity administrators will do quite well for themselves as they compete with other charities for a greater share of the public's generosity.

For the competitor, it feels good to win and bad to lose. Winning contributes to a sense of personal competence and success as a human being. There is a virtue attributed to those who use teamwork for the purpose of beating the opposition. And conversely, losing contributes to a sense of being incompetent and a failure as a human being. Being labeled a loser is both hurtful and demeaning. Then there is the matter of keeping score. Whereas in sports, the score records who is winning; in an economic system, capitalism rewards its winners with physical benefits, such as money, power, and celebrity.

It's only a business decision—nothing personal.

Heartlessly, the powerful will dehumanize the less powerful. "It's not personal" when you beat your competitor—it's just following the rules of the game. Winning can be seen as a natural role, just as when a lion devours a gazelle or dispatches another lion from the territory. When workers are fired without regard to the impact on their families and society at large, it's only a business decision—nothing personal.

Here are a few more illustrations with which we are all too familiar. There is the fishing village where a few people overfish and fish during spawning. While the few benefit, the village becomes poor. And again, we have the building of a bridge to nowhere. This benefits the contractor and the local politician, but the burden is borne by others. And then, there were those tree-studded mountains that are now denuded by strip-mining. A few made money before abandoning the site and leaving the land and people scarred and nonproductive. There are short-term gains for a few with long-term losses for many. Such acts are not personal in the game of us-versus-them.

Perhaps the most impersonal acts are committed by the legal entities called corporations. Created by government, managers and shareholders of corporations are largely protected from personal liability. By talking about corporate responsibility, CEOs can give shareholders' money to local charities. They still have time to find ways to receive extraordinary compensation without direct shareholder approval.

The same mindset can be seen in U.S. foreign policy. As one British critic expressed it: "I put to you that the United States is without doubt the

greatest show on the road. Brutal, indifferent, scornful and ruthless it may be but it is also very clever. As a salesman it is out on its own and its most saleable commodity is self love. It's a winner" (Harold Pinter, Nobel of Literature acceptance speech, 1905).

And there we have it, critical flaws in both socialism and capitalism bring us to what follows.

4.3 GRIDLOCK

America's current political dynamics can be seen as the result of two groups competing for the reins of government while building on two separate foundations. One group, the traditional forces of capitalism, is almost equally offset by the rising interests of the other group, socialism. What we have is aptly described as gridlock. As in a tug of war, the pulling power on each side is just about equal. Everyone is frustrated.

Interestingly, gridlock can be seen as a fail-safe mechanism provided in the U.S. Constitution. The primary concern of the Founders was to protect the people from the authoritarian-styled governments in Europe and around the world. The idea was to require government to either have the support of a broad coalition of the citizenry or the system would freeze up in gridlock. That's a good thing.

As is always the case, it's a matter of maturity. Both socialism and capitalism are consistent with Adult Stage-2, where reason dictates over physical and choice considerations. Maximizing rational integrity, ideas become a hierarchy which is imposed upon the citizenry. Those in power have both the privilege and duty to see that their own absolute truths and goodness prevail. We have each side pointing fingers at the shortcomings of the other. Invitations from one side to the other are disingenuous in that they are like the hunter that quacks like a duck only in an attempt to shoot it. As the two contrary systems seem to compete fruitlessly to dominate each other, today's generation can be seen as tiring of the bullying and divisiveness associated with multiple and contradictory interest groups. It is better, some say, to adopt socialism's all-inclusive, absolute doctrine of the "common good" as a standard to which everyone is subject.

If the U.S. Supreme Court is evenly divided between those coming from absolute and relative perspectives, and one or more is coming from a mixed perspective, there will be chaos until one or the other perspective becomes dominant.

Here is a way to describe the underlying dynamics separating the Republicans and Democrats. The citizenry are evenly divided, and government is simply spinning on its bureaucratic wheels. We can see the Republicans as clinging to relative positions (capitalism) regarding economics, but absolute positions (socialism) regarding morals. In contrast, we can see the Democrats clinging to relative positions on morals, but absolute positions on economics. Both parties are energized by a sense of competition and are inclined to demonize their opponents. Party leaders will resist change and encourage the divisiveness that makes necessary their leadership.

Instability gives rise to uncertainty, and uncertainty gives rise to strong leadership—first charismatic and later ruthless.

Individual citizens have done the same and taken sides. Government is reflecting the contradictions of the citizenry. Therefore, rather than the government, it's the citizenry that must establish their integrity before their representatives can resolve the gridlock. What we have now is a mixed state of affairs leading to unmanageable levels of frustration. It can be described as America's second Civil War—one between socialism and capitalism. Eventually, America will slip into a default with everyone being subordinate to centrally controlled governance. Instability gives rise to uncertainty, and uncertainty gives rise to strong, central leadership—first charismatic and later ruthless.

Resolution can be seen to lie in the citizenry's right to debate in an environment that maximizes each individual's right to freedom of speech and association. Some refer to the freedom of association as including the freedom of religion. Whatever. It's all about maximizing every citizen's right to his or her combined freedom of speech and association.

5. THE ROAD TO PEACE

In this section, our goal is to address the relationship between the U.S. and China. However, before doing so, we will briefly review the underlying dynamics of such relations.

We begin by taking notice that human experience involves the interaction of parts and wholes. The leaf is part of a tree and the tree is a part of the forest. The individual citizen is a part of a family, and the family is a part of a nation. Peace occurs when parts are combined in such a way as to form an integrated whole comprised of the parts.

Discord occurs when parts exist without being integrated into a whole, and when wholes are created without reliance on the parts. Additionally, the dynamics can be seen as similar whether the discord is within a single individual or within a nation. As cited earlier, this parallel of dynamics has been attributed to Socrates by Plato in about 400 BCE. *In the Republic (Book IV)*, Socrates argues that there exists a parallel between the dynamics underlying individual behavior and those of the state. Understanding of either contributes to the understanding of the other.

As for the dynamics of interaction between the individual and society, we can illustrate by an upstream-downstream metaphor. Maximum effectiveness occurs when individuals (parts) see that their own best interest includes the other person and eventually every other person (whole). With maturity, the individual living upstream does not pollute the water for those downstream. Everyone is upstream to some and downstream to others. Our garment seamstress is downstream to the wholesaler. Rational integrity is achieved when individuals come to inductively realize that their own best interests are reflected by a public policy that deductively maximizes freedom for every individual. That is, to reduce one person's freedom is to reduce everyone's freedom and replace it with a privilege granted by those individuals having the power to reduce that first person's freedom.

As an aside, government could simply impose public policy without the informed consent of the individuals involved; but without individual understanding, the imposition would have to be through force or blind

obedience. Relying on such governmental force or mindless submission would morph toward a centrally governed dictatorship over an increasingly immature citizenry.

5.1 IT'S A MATTER OF MATURITY

Adding to the idea of part-whole interaction is the idea of maturity as a cyclical process. Achieving and maintaining personal and social integrity requires a dynamic process that can interactively adapt to a pool of individual experiences that are continually changing. It's a matter of parts leading to wholes, which in turn lead to more parts. Requiring only our Adult Stage-2 level of maturity, consider the following three illustrations of interactive cycles.

First Illustration—From Zygote to Mature Adult: We have all been taught about the journey of the single-celled zygote (egg and sperm) becoming an organism through a process of cell division. While observable, the interactional process is somewhat difficult to describe. The cells do divide, but if that were the whole story, we would wind up with a glob of cells numbering in the billions and each identical to every other. It's similar to the distinction between the worker with 30 years of experience versus the worker with one year of experience 30 times. By observation, we notice that the cells interact so as to differentiate into eyes, muscles, bone, skin, blood, and nerves. And again, these differentiated cells form organs and eventually evolve into an organism. It's as if that first cell evolved with an adult in mind. This organism continues to mature from infant to child to adult. To establish the cycle, adults give rise to new zygotes. It's a remarkable process! Similarly, there are those who are amazed when considering the Monarch butterfly that migrates using subsequent generations as if the whole journey were already anticipated. Nature can be seen to provide any number of *physical* examples illustrating the part-to-whole-to-part process of maturation and the cycle of life. In our next illustration, we can see similar dynamics described at the *rational* level.

Second Illustration—Dialectic: Social philosopher Hegel put forth the dialectic approach to rational problem solving. His dialectic describes rational problem solving as beginning with a thesis that gives rise to a

contrary idea or antithesis. Rationally uniting the two gives rise to a synthesis. The synthesis then becomes a new thesis, and the dialectic continues. The process can be seen as describing how the brain thinks and matures over time. It's all about ideas. As Hegel put it, "What's real is the rational, and what is rational is real." Personally, some individuals describe this three-beat-rhythm experience (thesis - antithesis - synthesis) as what happens when they argue with themselves. Notably, the dialectic process can be seen as directional, going from less-inclusive ideas to ideas that are more inclusive of human experience.

Applied to current international governance, the dynamics of the dialectic process can be seen to have wide application—top-down leadership competing with bottom-up leadership for dominance, or any two absolute political systems. Consider: North v. South Korea; the European Union v. the American West; Germany's Socialism v. England; Yankee North v. Confederate South; Socialism v. Capitalism; Eastern v. Western Catholic Orthodoxy; China v. Hong Kong; China v. Taiwan; and Russia v. Ukraine. These distinctions can be reversed depending on whether one is referring to theory or practice.

Dialectically speaking, progress is a matter of each thesis and antithesis being combined to form a synthesis where collective well-being is built on the foundation of maximizing individual freedom.

We turn now to an approach that describes understanding in terms of physical-rational interactions creating a feedback loop. Arguably, it's an approach that is limited to experiences that are based only on observations of measurements that are publicly repeatable—*scientific facts*.

Third Illustration—Modern-day Science: For background, we will begin with a review of the old, traditional "science." From about 400 BCE to about 1900 CE, there was an approach to knowledge labeled "science." This approach made observations in a particular way and labeled them *as facts*. The belief was that the addition of facts over time would provide a more complete and intelligible concept of reality. These concepts were thought of as reflecting truth or approximations of the truth. There was talk of error. That is, while not claiming to have the complete truth, in whole or part, there was the notion of accurately measuring how much

their observations deviated from the truth. Since the facts were thought to represent the characteristics of an external reality (independent of the perceiver), the old science would be consistent with an absolute perspective.

Enter modern-day science. By the early 1900s, the foundation of traditional science had already begun to shift. Absolutely oriented science began to morph into the relatively oriented scientific method. The transformation has been slow. As Nobel recipient physicist Max Planck put it: People don't change, they simply die and a new generation grows up with different experiences. And, as Jesus put it 1900 years earlier: "Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Modern-day science combines an inductive and deductive approach to understanding human experience. The inductive contribution is one of combining facts into a theory. Theories (wholes) are always built on facts (parts), and never the other way around. Then the theory is deductively tested in a physical application. And again, rather than reflecting absolute truth, a theory is a testing platform upon which it can be validated by observation. If the results of the physical observation are consistent with the theory, the theory is said to be supported for continued use. If the results do not support the theory, the theory is modified to accommodate the new facts. So, the reasonable construction of a bridge is relative to the facts known by the builders at that time. The interplay between facts and theories provides a system of checks-and-balances. It's a spiraling process where an ever-increasing number of physically observed facts are accommodated by rational theories. Notably, the method brings about change with minimal violence. New ideas create new perceptions and more mature responses. This brings us to looking at the two major international players.

5.2 THE TWO GIANTS (United States and China)

To begin, we take notice that separately, capitalism and socialism tend to morph into absolute perspectives that are imposed on the citizenry without checks and balances. The leaders of America's capitalism inductively

exploit the citizenry, while the leaders of China's socialism deductively dominate the citizenry.

Stating the contrast another way, America employs an inductive, bottom-up approach for capitalism; whereas China employs a deductive, top-down governance for socialism. We also take note that the extension of capitalism leads to a philosophy of individualism; while an extension of socialism leads to a philosophy of communism (think communal or collectivism). Thus, capitalism is the economic building block for individualism, and socialism is the economic building block for communism. We shall now take a closer look at these building blocks with capitalism setting individual interests as primary, and socialism setting group interests as primary.

From its absolute perspective, America's capitalism assumes that a public policy of unfettered competition among individuals will lead to an ideal society absolutely blessed by God or Nature. And China's socialism can be seen as having leaders who assume that they have the absolute truth regarding public policy; as such, they believe they have a right and duty to impose their will over the citizenry in the name of truth (*Pravda*), in the name of the state, or in the name of the people.

As it is with contrary absolutes, each country seeks to dominate the other as a matter of internal integrity. This leads to a sense of mistrust and an us-versus-them beginning point for communications. Each side sees its own safety dependent upon having the physical power to dominate the other side. Each is looking for a defect in the other that can be exploited.

On the world stage, the contest can be seen as significant. Consider that most countries are living under the protective arm of either the United States or China. The most challenging task facing the civilized world is to discover the road to peace between these two giants. Time is of the essence. Arguably, considerable progress must be made before some protected group becomes a catalyst that provokes direct physical conflict between these giants. Arguably, human survival requires a system of peaceful coexistence among competing ideas. Such an achievement would have the upside of taking the money spent on armaments of war and using it to advance the well-being of just about everyone.

We can achieve peace when the citizenry (parts) establish a government (whole) with the sole purpose of maximizing individual freedom. This would be consistent with a relative perspective, where every individual is sovereign. That is, rather than having citizens believe in their government, those at the reins of government would believe in their citizenry.

For achieving peace, we can take a lesson from the three musketeers. The mantra is "all for one and one for all." When separated, we have socialism's one-for-all without capitalism's all-for-one; and we have capitalism's all-for-one without socialism's one-for-all. To say it again, peace is a matter of dynamically combining socialism and capitalism. Fortunately, the tools for success have been well established in both philosophy and science.

Philosophically: America and China can be seen as involved in a natural, dialectic process of worldwide maturation. In 1789, America set forth a capitalistic design of government (thesis). In 1949, China set forth a socialistic design of government (antithesis). The current task can be seen as conceptualizing a new system (synthesis) that accommodates both America's capitalism and China's socialism. The task is similar and as old as the Tao's yin-yang synthesizing night and day, or female and male. The task is to conceive of the fusion of apparent contrasts where socialism (yin) and capitalism (yang) each contribute to an integrated whole.

It's the opposition that gives rise to the collective insight.

Curiously, the more each perspective is developed, the clearer becomes the pathway to synthesis. That is, each type of logic would have to be developed separately before the two could be pragmatically and rationally combined into a single overarching concept. It's the opposition that gives rise to self-improvement and collective insight.

Scientifically: From the scientific method of the 1900s, we can draw upon the dynamics of the interactive relationship between factual parts and theoretical wholes. Facts are always the building blocks for theory; the reverse, whether benevolent or not, is tyranny. Similarly, capitalism's all-for-one inductively provides the building blocks for socialism's deductively applied one-for-all. Capitalism's individual freedom provides the foundation for socialism's maximizing everyone's individual freedom.

To paraphrase American political commentator and economist Robert Reich, practice capitalism while having in mind its effect on the whole of society.

Summarizing, the role of government would be to combine the experiences of free individuals (parts) to form a theory of public policy (wholes). Public policy would always strive to accommodate every individual, just as theories serve to accommodate every fact. As a matter of their histories, America would be focused on maximizing individual freedom (parts), while China would be focused on maximizing that freedom for everyone (whole). Together, America and China would each have a keener understanding of the other's potential contributions. For sure, there are those in China who yearn for individual freedom and dignity; and there are those in the U.S. who yearn for collective well-being. It may be that reconciling these two groups within each country will provide the prerequisite development for reconciling the differences between the countries. Establishing integrity within one's own borders may precede establishing peace between nations. Separately, these two nations are absolutely and necessarily confrontational. As successful hedge fund manager Ray Dalio observes, capitalists tend not to be good at dividing the pie and socialists tend not to be good at growing the pie. The United States and China could unite their efforts from a relative perspective in a way that would be necessarily complementary. As with modern-day science, change could be accommodated peacefully and with remarkably greater rewards for all.

Over time, we can experience a maturing society where each generation builds on the framework of the previous one. The "ideal" society (think "idea") would be one that has public policies designed to accommodate every human experience in every possible situation with integrity. This brings us to the next section.

6. INDIVIDUALISM, WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH IT?

We have three focus points: (1) individual dignity and significance, (2) linking human experience, and (3) defining the role of government. Taking each in turn, consider the following.

6.1 INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY AND SIGNIFICANCE

We take notice that human life, in and of itself, is not significant. A common virus, earthquake, or drunk driver can end it all. A mindless act can either create or destroy life. And again, without a relative God construct, we all share equally in the absurdity of existence, a point aptly described by Franz Kafka (*Metamorphosis*). As he put it, each of us becomes as a giant bug in space unable to plant our feet anywhere.

Also notable is that there are not a lot of ways to attribute dignity and significance to the individual. However, as recorded throughout the history of mankind, one way is a belief in God. Even if it is self-evident that human experience is fundamentally an individual matter, it's a belief in God from a relative perspective that can be seen as a way to attribute significance and dignity to the individual. A person may choose to assume that there is a God or not. Either way, it's a significant choice. Embracing the belief that an individual is capable of choosing to seek, or not seek, a personal, interactive relationship with God creates a uniquely significant event within human experience.

6.2 LINKING

We seem to be hardwired to compete, but competitors can become cooperators when faced with a task that requires cooperation to achieve success. If you study such things, you may recall how C. W. Sherif demonstrated this dynamic in his Robber's Cave field experiment. Similarly, it's been said that war makes for strange bedfellows. The Covid-19 virus makes the same point. That is, while we are natural competitors, our adversaries can become partners when linked by common cause.

The idea of Nature's God provides a unique basis for linking and achieving integrity with all of nature. Nature, in its entirety, can be seen as having integrity. And what can be said of Nature could be said of Nature's God. That is, a relative perspective on God can be seen as potentially linking all of physical Nature, including human nature. If the premise is that the Force behind Nature, including human nature, has integrity; then it can be seen to follow that individual integrity would develop as a matter of maturity.

Once again, there can be hope for achieving harmony among people who see themselves basically *linked*, as with members of a family. When one feels connected to others, his or her happiness becomes their happiness; and the suffering of any one in the group becomes the suffering of everyone in the group. A relative approach to a belief in God can be seen as a way of *linking* all mankind. Similarly, such a linkage can be seen as that employed among relatively oriented scientists worldwide who are linked together with a common belief in a logically integrated and, therefore, comprehensible physical universe.

6.3 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

A belief in God could describe the foundation upon which a mature government could be built—namely, one of establishing a public policy that recognizes and seeks to maximize freedom for every individual. As a practical matter, individual freedom is primarily a task of preventing government from depriving the citizenry of their individual freedom. And again, the primary task of government is to be powerful enough to protect the freedom of every individual from everyone else. As it is with adding fractions, differences can be combined using a common denominator. With maturity, there can be peace among those who embrace a common denominator of maximizing individual freedom for everyone.

Arguably, if global peace does come, it will be led by those with a relative philosophy leading to a relative perspective regarding God. Relatively speaking, the term “God” would refer to “Nature’s God.” That is, a concept of God derived from an individual’s experience with Nature. The idea of Nature’s God was cited in the opening paragraph of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. It was also cited by Paul (Romans 1:20). And again, naturalist John Muir wrote extensively about finding God in Nature. “Nature’s God” can be contrasted with the “God” of absolutely organized churches where the definition is generated by the organization’s leadership.

And again, without a relative concept of Nature’s God, socialism prevails over either a “no God” concept or an absolute concept of God. However, with a relative concept of Nature’s God, individualism prevails over both. Maximizing individual freedom would be primary for those who believe that every individual has the option of choosing (or not) to seek a personal, interactive relationship with Nature’s God.

In summarizing this section on *What's God Got To Do With It?*—we take notice that the above three focus points can be seen as accommodating choice (dignity), reason (linking) and physical experience (government), respectively. Taken together, they can advance the profile of constructive rather than destructive behavior, cooperation rather than alienation, and peace rather than war. Said another way, individuals can extend their open hands for an interaction of mutual trust and cooperation, rather than forming a fist to dominate the other. As for the U.S. and China, rather than competing with the intent of conquering, they can compete to build bridges for the purpose of mutual cooperation. It all rests on a core belief in the dignity and significance attributed to the individual.

CLOSING THOUGHTS—CHAPTER V

Each of us lives both as an individual and as a member of a society. Both are necessary; neither is sufficient. We can see a maturational sequence pertaining to governance. Initially, governance will be by brute force. When brute force can only result in mutual destruction, there is a choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives—a fork in the road.

Governance can be guided by the principle of the common good—typically termed "communism." Alternatively, governance can be guided by the principle of maximizing individual freedom—typically termed "individualism." That's a philosophical distinction.

Here is an economic distinction: Whereas socialism can be seen as a good fit for implementing communism, capitalism can be seen as a good fit for implementing individualism.

And now we have human nature. Arguably, life is an individual matter. After dealing with physical survival, maturity can be seen as a striving toward maximizing individual freedom. It is this mutual desire for becoming one's own person that provides the foundation upon which individuals come together for the purpose of maximizing group fulfillment. When one's world of personal experience observes the pain of another, there is the motivation to reduce that pain—not for the benefit of the other person, but to reduce the pain within one's own world of personal experience. That's human nature.

BOOK SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have described the distinction between absolute and relative thinking, and discussed this distinction in relation to a philosophy of individualism and human development. We have shown how differences between absolute and relative thinking undergird discussions about God, sex, and politics. Throughout this discussion, we have highlighted the advantages of the relative perspective. In the following sections, we summarize some key ideas found in each chapter.

CHAPTER 1: PERSPECTIVE

How would one describe human nature? We proposed that there are basically two mutually exclusive perspectives: We discussed the ever-popular *absolute perspective* which assumes that *we look out of our eyes*. Here it can be seen to follow that we have access to absolute knowledge of nature's characteristics as they exist unto themselves, independently of any perceiver. Again it can be seen to follow that as part of nature, humans are subordinated to its truth and laws. In contrast to the absolute perspective, we put forth the *relative perspective* as being based on the premise that *we do not look out of our eyes*. That is, our eyes and every other sensory organ only receive stimuli. Consequently, human experience is always relative to an individual's sensory ability and past experience at a given moment in time. The contention here is that the relative perspective regarding human experience is the more mature (accounts for more experiences) of the two perspectives; and, as such, is our primary focus.

Relatively speaking, it is self-evident that human experience is a matter of individual conscious awareness—we are only aware of that with which we are aware. Furthermore, all of our experiences are the result of interactive encounters between the sensory system of our body and that which it is sensing. We take notice that while it is reasonable to believe

there is an external world, it is not in our nature to know its characteristics apart from our interactions with it.

CHAPTER 2: A PHILOSOPHY OF INDIVIDUALISM

Conscious awareness is an *individual matter*—you can't jump into my conscious awareness and neither can I into yours. Understanding human nature begins with the relative perspective that human experience is an internal rather than an external event. We have no access to the physical or rational characteristics of an external world. The only world anyone perceives reflects the perceived characteristics unique to that individual and never the characteristics as they exist absolutely unto themselves.

We can distinguish between three types of experiences creating a *physical-rational-choice triad* (similar to the traditional triad of body-mind-spirit). The governing dynamic can be seen as a sense of integrity first within and then between each component of the triad. It is this sense of *integrity* that provides a system of checks-and-balances where choices are made from *rationally formed alternatives* within a context of what is perceived as *physically attainable*.

Life is a journey in that each day provides new experiences requiring additional integration (sometimes simply expanding by *assimilation* and sometimes requiring the creative reconstructing of *accommodation*). The journey is unique to each individual. Just as we read one word at a time, life comes one moment at a time, and what comes later changes the significance of what happened before. The same can be said of walking one step at a time. Life is a dynamic process where current experience is always relative to what came before. *Maturation* is a process of integrating one's choices in a world of ever-expanding physical and rational applications. The objective is to discover for ourselves that which is physically pleasing, rationally coherent, and a matter of our own choosing. When integrated, one's choices give rise to a sense of *personal identity and fulfillment*. Arguably, salvation is a matter of individual maturity: (a) salvation from poverty (physical); (b) salvation from ignorance (rational); and, (c) salvation from the sense of a meaningless life (choice).

Relatively speaking, choice reigns supreme. Choice involves an individual setting both sensory and rational priorities. It is this ability to choose one's interactions that can be seen as uniquely human.

As for the traditional questions: "What do we know and how do we know it?" We know our conscious experience, and we know it through the senses of our body. And again, "Who are we and where are we going?" We are individuals who are making choices with the goal of establishing a personal sense of identity.

CHAPTER 3: GOD

To fulfill our inclination for integrity requires choosing a *primary referent* around which all experiences are rationally integrated. Some choose to seek money and power. However, a belief in God is perhaps the most common choice of primary referent as noted throughout recorded history. Some concepts of God are more mature than others (accommodate more experiences). As presented here, the most mature involves a personally-interactive relationship between God and the individual.

CHAPTER 4: SEX

Arguably, sexual behavior is a person's most formidable challenge when seeking to achieve physical and rational integrity. Notable is that a physical union between a male and female can give rise to another individual, thereby completing the cycle of human life and insuring species survival. It's the same with plants and animals. However, there is a difference. Plants and animals do not choose their destiny. For some, there is the hope that humans have the capacity of self-determination. For those choosing a life of absolute chase, reducing tension through the genitals can be seen as giving rise to the greatest sense of physical pleasure. A relative approach to living casts sex as a symbolic union between a male and female in the cycle of life. The symbolic meaning will always reflect their level of interactive maturity.

CHAPTER 5: POLITICS

Power rules. Consequently, one's relationship with others is a matter of

political significance. Individuals can unite to maximize freedom for every individual or unite for the purpose of dominating others. How we see others sets the stage for interactions. And again, some interactions are more mature than others. Relatively speaking, those who are willing to give to others the same rights that they desire for themselves can be seen as the most mature. Peace can be seen as resulting among individuals who are linked with each other—finding integrity within their own experience and with everyone else.

A common belief in Nature's God can be seen as fulfilling this vital sense of linking. Arguably, if peace is to occur it will be riding the surfboard of relative thinking. When dealing with someone who judges in terms of good and evil, it's not a matter of sex or politics, it's a matter of religion—and an absolute religion at that. The Absolutists can control only by force, and the non-thinking Mixed can only follow a leader. It is only the relative perspective that provides the basis for recognizing the implications of realizing that we don't look out of our eyes. Integrity within the domains of sex and politics can be seen as achievable only by employing a relative perspective. And a relative perspective on sex and politics can be seen as achievable only by employing a relative perspective on God. Accordingly, it is the *relative perspective* that can be seen as providing the inspiration for a great leap forward in understanding human experience.

—absolute thinking involves a mental illusion

Here is a closing thought. Whether it be an individual or a nation, every decision made can be seen as embracing either an absolute or a relative perspective. Whether the focus is on God, Sex, or Politics—absolute thinking involves a mental illusion (looking out of one's eyes). However, before the idea of relativity is known to an individual, relying on an absolute perspective can be simply attributed to immaturity. For children, "magic" shows can provide illusions that are entertaining and eventually teach the message that things are not always what they appear to be. For adults, the scam illusionist can convince us on how to make our money grow, even as we watch it disappear. Absolute illusions become absolute delusions when we rely on them when plotting our life's journey. Similarly, asking another person to engage in absolute thinking (characterizing and absolutely judging good and evil) relies on the same fantasy. Arguing with an Absolutist is arguing with an illusion. As it has

been said since the beginning of recorded history, to judge absolutely in terms of good and evil is to remove oneself from a relationship with Nature and with the God of Nature.

Human nature decrees that life is an individual matter which is consistent with a relative perspective, a philosophy of individualism, and governance structures that serve only to maximize individual freedom. We are all equal in the sense that no one is in a position to judge another or even in a position to suggest what someone else should do with his or her life. That is what is meant by “freedom of religion.”

When involved in decision making, rather than characterizing alternatives as “conservative or liberal” or “good or bad,” consider distinguishing alternatives in terms of whether or not they rely on an absolute or a relative perspective of human experience. Within this context, a relative perspective offers inspiration for those seeking integrity, a beacon of light in the darkness, and a basis for durable friendships with oneself and others.

From the writer:

The expression of the ideas presented here is a work in progress. As the writer, I personally invite your comments. Taken as a whole, this writing can be seen as a reasonable attempt at organizing human experience. However, just about every individual, thoughtfully attempting to do so, could improve a portion of this writing. Perhaps another edition will be forthcoming based on comments from readers. This writer has set up a nonprofit organization and website for this purpose.

Organization: Foundation for the Study of Individualism (FSI)
P.O. Box 1211, Arcadia, CA 91077-1211
Website: www.individualism.org

