

“Post-Civilized” Possibilities: Living Lawfully

J. Harmon Grahn

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0 Introduction

In our time, it is becoming increasingly evident that Earth-humanity are experiencing serious difficulties—to the extent that our long-term planetary *survival* is coming into doubt in growing numbers of human minds. There are many and various opinions as to *why* this is happening; and not total agreement even *that* it is happening. Yet there seems to be a growing consensus among humans everywhere that “things are not as they should be” right now, on planet Earth. As to “how things should be,” there seem to be as many different opinions as there are people holding them—at latest count, climbing swiftly beyond the seven thousand, thousand, thousand (7,000,000,000) mark.

This circumstance raises further difficulties for those who are able to observe at least some aspects of “the human predicament,” and would like to “do something about it.” Indeed, many already are energetically engaged in activities intended to “do something about it;” yet it is highly questionable how many, if any, of such endeavors are really effective, or might even be contributing, in spite of their intent, toward “making a bad situation worse.”

What follows addresses this second complex of difficulties, by developing an approach to them that lies within reach of anyone, anywhere; and if followed may “do some good,” and at worst is calculated to “do little harm;” or if possible, “no harm at all.” Even so modest a contribution, multiplied by many, would be significant in a time, everywhere, of cascading emergencies.

1 The Paradox of Human Creativity

In “*Post-Civilized*” Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part II* § 1 What Is The Law? we arrived at an exquisitely simple statement of The Law of Nature, operative throughout Cosmos, naturally including all human interactions on Earth: *patterns that do not work do not last.*¹

The corollary to this Cosmic Law would be that *patterns that work persist*; and consequently that Natural Law operates selectively in favor of patterns that work, in preference to patterns that do not work. A casual glance, near and far, around those parts of Cosmos that lie within reach of human observation seems to confirm this selective bias of Natural Law: inasmuch as the Cosmic Scheme appears generally to work extremely well, and is observably efficient at weeding out patterns that do not work, whenever, and wherever they occur; and conversely, sustaining patterns that do work.

¹wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#wit101.55

In § 3.2 Living Lawfully of the same essay, the speculation was advanced that the material sector of Cosmos acts in effect as a "proving ground," or a species of "school," or a "sand box" for nascent creative, intelligent, purposeful beings to "learn by doing" what works, and what does not work, among such beings.²

If so, then the *practical paradox* faced by an individual, or a species of creative, intelligent, purposeful beings, such as Earth-humans, snaps into sharp focus: *a*) the exercise of intelligent, purposeful creativity requires the limitless scope of unfettered liberty; *b*) the unfettered liberty to exercise intelligent, purposeful creativity makes it possible for some such beings (the stronger) to fetter the liberty of other such beings (the weaker); and *c*) exercise of this possibility *disrupts the pattern* of intelligent, purposeful creativity, and renders it dysfunctional *for all members of the species*³ of otherwise innately intelligent, purposeful, creative beings. This is the practical paradox into which all "civilized" humans on planet Earth fell thousands of years ago, and from which we have yet to extricate ourselves.⁴

Schmookler's parable of the tribes,⁵ discussed in the essay cited in Footnote 4, does not leave very much "wobble-room" for an "unenlightened" society of creative, intelligent, purposeful beings to evade one or another of the consequences⁶ of resorting to coercive power, in relation to another "unenlightened" society of creative, intelligent, purposeful beings. The only graceful exit from such conflicts of interest seems to require at least a minimal level of "enlightenment" in both societies engaged in a confrontation, such as described in "*Post-Civilized*" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part I* § 3.2 Living Lawfully, pp. 20-22.⁷

So, in practical terms, what does "at least a minimal level of 'enlightenment'" mean; and what is the likelihood of it being achieved among typical populations of contemporary Earth-humans? There may be a natural bias in favor of fulfilling this condition, under some imaginable circumstances.

Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have found that when just 10 percent of the population holds an unshakable belief, *their belief will always be adopted by the majority of the society*. The scientists, who are members

²*Ibid.* wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#cth03.2.10

³Grahn, "*Post-Civilized*" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part I* § 1 A Can of Worms. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-d.html#acow01.12

⁴Grahn, *The Writing on the Wall #5: "Don't Take Any Wooden Nickels"* § 2.2 Wealth and Power. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow05.html#econ02.2.0

⁵Andrew Bard Schmookler, *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution*, Second Edition, State University of New York Press, 1995.

⁶wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow05.html#econ02.2.9

⁷wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#cth03.2.12

of the Social Cognitive Networks Academic Research Center (SCNARC) at Rensselaer, used computational and analytical methods to discover the tipping point where a minority belief becomes the majority opinion. The finding has implications for the study and influence of societal interactions ranging from the spread of innovations to the movement of political ideals.⁸

The finding may have implications as well for those seeking solutions for the human predicament. If "at least a minimal level of 'enlightenment'" might be equated in this instance with a recognition among humans with conflicting interests that a satisfactory resolution of their conflict is *least likely* to result from engaging in acts aimed at compromising the liberty of other humans: then according to the Rensselaer study, if as few as ten percent of the populations in potential conflict hold this conviction, it will swiftly gain prevalence throughout those populations: possibly leading to alternative resolutions that work, in preference to choices, such as aggressive hostility, that do not work. This may seem like a tall order; yet in view of the dismal record of the outcomes of human conflicts throughout "civilized" history, it may be achievable.

However, the finding that beyond the "tipping point" of 10%, "the minority rules" in the dynamics of collective choices, may over-simplify its large-scale applicability in the real world. The human predicament on planet Earth is shared alike by *all* of its seven thousand million residents. This is not a homogeneous constituency. Although, as above, the human predicament may be stated in fairly simple terms, putting any imaginable "solution" to it into practice is quite a different matter. A significant feature of this complex challenge is the almost universally unrecognized, yet inescapable *partiality of all human opinions about anything*, discussed in "*Post-Civilized*" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part II* § 1 What Is The Law? pp. 2-11.⁹

If you wish to delve into some of the exquisite details of how partial perceptions of "reality" have played out among the major players of wealth and power during the unfolding of recent history on Earth, I highly recommend Dr. Carroll Quigley's (1910-1977) account titled *Tragedy & Hope*¹⁰—although illustrating the partiality of human perceptions was not Quigley's primary aim.

⁸Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (2011, July 26). Minority rules: Scientists discover tipping point for the spread of ideas. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved June 6, 2013, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/07/110725190044.htm> (Emphasis added.)

⁹wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#wit101.9

¹⁰Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy And Hope: A History of The World in Our Time*, first published in 1966 by The Macmillan Company, New York, Collier-Macmillan Limited, London . . . Third Printing 1998 With Permission of William Morrison by George S. Gabric, GSG & Associates, Publishers, P.O. Box 590, San Pedro, California 90733 USA, ISBN #0-945001-10-X.

Making excellent use of the advantage of hindsight, Quigley's perception of recent history was nevertheless as prone to partiality as were those of the "cast of thousands" who made their appearance in his epic tale; and he, like anybody, may not have "gotten everything right" either. However, he did render the valuable service of compiling between the covers of a single volume an impressive and comprehensively coherent account of the unimaginably complex fabric of human events throughout planet Earth that have contributed to the emergence of the human predicament now challenging all of us.

Quigley's epic tale—as does human history in general—illustrates, again and again, in excruciating detail, how the major players on the world stage rescued defeat from the jaws of victory (or sometimes, seemingly the other way about) because their many and various understandings of "reality" were partial, and differed significantly from the circumstances they actually faced. Their errors and their consequences were in many ways, and often, complicated and compounded by their arrogance in wielding unbridled coercive power.

Connecting the dots, developed at detailed and fascinating length, Quigley eventually approached a description of Western Civilization that he believed distinguishes it from its antecedents and contemporaries; and if sustained, or resuscitated in our time, may prolong the Western contribution to human evolution into an as yet only dimly imagined future. He called this distinguishing quality *the Outlook of the West*:

The Outlook of the West [Quigley wrote] is that broad middle way about which the fads and foibles of the West oscillate. It is what is implied by what the West says it believes, not at one moment but over the long succession of moments that form the history of the West. From that succession of moments it is clear that the West believes in diversity rather than in uniformity, in pluralism rather than in monism or dualism, in inclusion rather than exclusion, in liberty rather than in authority, in truth rather than in power, in conversion rather than in annihilation, in the individual rather than in the organization, in reconciliation rather than in triumph, in heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, in relativisms rather than in absolutes, and in approximations rather than in final answers. The West believes that man and the universe are both complex and that the apparently discordant parts of each can be put into a reasonably workable arrangement with a little good will, patience, and experimentation. In man the West sees body, emotions, and reason as all equally real and necessary, and is prepared to entertain discussion about their relative interrelationships but is not prepared to listen for long to any intolerant insistence that any one of these has a final answer.

The West has no faith in final answers today. It believes that all answers are unfinal because everything is imperfect, although possibly getting better and thus advancing toward a perfection the West is prepared to admit may be present in some remote and almost unattainable future. Similarly in the universe, the west is prepared to recognize that there are material aspects, less material aspects, immaterial aspects, and spiritual aspects, although it is not prepared to admit that anyone yet has a final answer on the relationships of these. Similarly the West is prepared to admit that society and groups are necessary, while the individual is important, but it is not prepared to admit that either can stand alone or be made the ultimate value to the sacrifice of the other.

Where rationalists insist on polarizing the continua of human experience into antithetical pairs of opposing categories, the West has constantly rejected the implied need for rejection of one or the other, by embracing "Both." This catholic attitude goes back to the earlier days of Western society when its outlook was being created in the religious controversies of the preceding Classical Civilization. Among these controversies were the following: (1) Was Christ Man or God? (2) Was salvation to be secured by God's grace or by man's good works? (3) Was the material world real and good or was spirituality real and good? (4) Was the body worthy of salvation or was the soul only to be saved? (5) Was the truth found only by God's revelation or was it to be found by man's experience (history)? (6) Should man work to save himself or to save others? (7) Does man owe allegiance to God or to Caesar? (8) Should man's behavior be guided by reason or by observation? (9) Can man be saved inside the Church or outside it? In each case, with vigorous partisans clamoring on both sides (and in many cases still clamoring), the answer, reached as a consensus built up by long discussion, was *Both*. In fact a correct definition of the Christian tradition might well be expressed in that one word "Both." Throughout its long history, controversy over religion in Western society has been based on a disturbance of the arrangement or balance within that "Both."¹¹

Summarizing, Quigley laid out a six-point pattern which provides the basis for the Outlook of the West:

1. There is a truth, a reality. (Thus the West rejects skepticism, solipsism, and nihilism.)

¹¹*Ibid.*, XX Tragedy and Hope: the Future in Perspective, The Unfolding of Time, pp. 1227-1228.

2. No person, group, or organization has the whole picture of truth. (Thus there is no absolute or final authority.)
3. Every person of goodwill has some aspect of the truth, some vision of it from the angle of his own experience. (Thus each has something to contribute.)
4. Through discussion, the aspects of the truth held by many can be pooled and arranged to form a consensus closer to the truth than any of the sources that contributed to it.
5. This consensus is a temporary approximation of the truth, which is no sooner made than new experiences and additional information make it possible for it to be reformulated in a *closer* approximation of the truth by continued discussion.
6. Thus Western man's picture of the truth advances, by successive approximations, closer and closer to the whole truth without ever reaching it.¹²

Quigley's picture of the Outlook of the West, dynamically sustained in ebbs and flows throughout Western experience, seems not to be in jarring disharmony with the vision expressed in this essay, and its prequels.¹³ However, notwithstanding the philosophical outlook of the Western, or any other so-called "civilization" that has ever arisen on Earth, the pattern unambiguously disclosed by *the sequence of human events*, elaborated in rich detail by the narrative of Quigley's history, is overwhelmingly dominated as a matter of course by the exercise of coercive power by the strong minority, who "do what they can," over the weak majority, who "suffer what they must." The Outlook of the West, in other words, may honestly and sincerely be what Quigley said it is; yet the *practice* of the West—or of any "civilization"—is now, and has always been, throughout all "civilized" history, the exercise of coercive power by the strong, at the expense of the weak: consequently *stifling the native creativity of all humans*, at all times, everywhere on Earth. [See Footnote 3.]

Furthermore, the record of history demonstrates with endless repetition, alike among the uncounted succession of major, minor, and seemingly insignificant human events, the fragmentary *partiality of all human perceptions* of "reality;" [see Footnote 9] and the consequent folly of all human choices dictated by the exercise of coercive power. Therefore, a solution to the paradox of human creativity is not to be found among the detritus of "civilized" history; and must be sought elsewhere.

¹²Ibid., p. 1229.

¹³wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/jhg01.html#writings

2 Absolute Democracy

The challenge facing contemporary humanity may be summarized fairly succinctly in ten steps:

1. Cosmic Law is selective, and discriminatory: favoring patterns that work, and eliminating patterns that do not work. This Law may be presumed to be binding upon everything that exists, including even "the gods."
2. The features that distinguish humans from all other life forms on Earth are *a)* our limitless creative imaginations, and *b)* our ability to substantiate as actualities what we imagine. This is the essence of *human creativity*.
3. The exercise of limitless creativity requires limitless liberty.
4. Not everything that is humanly imaginable can be made to work in actuality: therefore, hazards are associated with the exercise of limitless creativity.
5. The hazards associated with the exercise of limitless creativity require the requisite liberty to be linked with correspondingly limitless liability and responsibility: the creator is absolutely responsible and liable for his creations, and their consequences.
6. Not all Earth-humans have yet fully matured; and like children, do not always act responsibly.
7. A "world system" that works is a condition necessary for the sustenance of its every inhabitant: therefore, *every individual* holds a stake in the condition of the "world system;" and, for weal or woe, with his every responsible or irresponsible act, makes a vital contribution to it, and to his own success or failure in Cosmos.
8. Acting responsibly—or not—is the exclusive prerogative of the acting individual; and the consequences of individual choices affect in widening circles everybody, and everything: contributing ultimately to a "world system" that either works, and is sustained, or that does not work, and is not sustained.
9. All human acts are informed by innumerable and various *partial perceptions* of reality, and often lead to unanticipated and unintended results: therefore, *acting responsibly* is a vastly more comprehensive virtue than either "holding accurate beliefs," or on their basis, "doing the right thing."

10. Last, but not least, the effects of human acts that limit the liberty of others, thereby stifling their creativity, apply not only to those on the receiving end, but cascade outward: limiting to varying degrees the liberty, and stifling the creativity of all humans everywhere, including the originating actor(s).

The Law governing the human challenge is stated in item 1 above; and compliance with The Law involves a convoluted compromise among items 2, 3, and 10—complicated by items 4, 5, 6, and 9. Items 7 and 8 sketch the context in which the human challenge is being decided. The Outlook of the West described earlier by Quigley approaches, but by no means resolves this challenge—as resoundingly testified by the record of “civilized” history, described by Quigley, and others. This is so because the substance of history consists primarily of what people actually do, and only secondarily of what they say, or claim to believe.

A tenuous solution to the challenge facing contemporary humanity may lie within the *capacity for choice* shared by every individual human. Even so, no one can make any choice for anybody else; and conversely, anyone may exercise his choice without the encumbrance of anything, or anyone else.¹⁴ Indeed, willing or not, every individual exercises his choice with every human act. There are no inconsequential acts; and the consequence of every act contributes in some way, either to a “world system” that works, and can be sustained, or to one that does not work, and cannot be sustained. There is no third choice available, such as “none of the above.” Part of the “world system” seems to be that, like it or not, it is organized as an “absolute democracy,” with universal suffrage, and with no option for abstaining.

One might suppose, with a constituency of seven thousand million humans now resident on planet Earth, and every one of us “registered to vote”—not only once, but many, many times, every moment of every day—that no single vote can be decisive. “What difference can it possibly make,” one might ask, “what I do or do not do, from one moment to the next? I’m only one among seven billion other humans, and any choice I make about anything will surely be submerged in the clutter of all other human choices on Earth.”

However, this “election” is “rigged” (by human standards) in a very peculiar way: *everybody votes*, early, and often; and every vote counts, either toward human success on planet Earth, or toward failure, and extinction. There is no middle ground, and every

¹⁴It is true that the choices of some can foreclose upon choices that would otherwise be available to others. The pistol barrel in the back, accompanied by the offered choice, “Your money or your life,” furnishes a stark example. Nevertheless, even in extreme circumstances, one has a (possibly reduced) spectrum of choices, and at every juncture cannot avoid, or be prevented from, selecting one of his available choices, to the exclusion of all others.

human act, no matter how seemingly arbitrary or insignificant, lays a measurable weight in one pan of the balance, or in the other.

Maybe no single vote is decisive; but the polls never close, and every human act, from moment to moment, around the clock, around the world, 24/7, casts a ballot in the perpetual election that decides the present and future of humanity, and all life on planet Earth. And since everybody votes, all the time, even the votes of a single individual add up . . . possibly to many different things. They add up, for one, to a cumulative *individual life* that, depending on its combined content, contributes either to a world that works, or to a world that does not work. And the opportunity to vote enables the possibility of changing one's life-pattern at any and all times, simply by changing the choices he makes, moment to moment, in his daily life.

Even if no single vote is decisive, nevertheless, every vote counts, ultimately in favor or disfavor of a "positive outcome" for humanity. If as stated in item 9 above, all human acts are informed by innumerable and various *partial perceptions* of reality, then it is incumbent upon each individual to decide—unavoidably on the basis of partial perceptions—what a "positive outcome" consists of, and how best to encourage it.

Most partial perceptions are probably neither "entirely wrong," nor "entirely right," and in their aggregate may average out to some general consensus of a similarly mixed quality. However, if increasing numbers of individuals decide to *act responsibly*, rather than irresponsibly; and to act *with the intent* of a "positive outcome" for humanity, however they evaluate what a "positive outcome" would be, then a trend could plausibly be set in motion favoring outcomes that increasing numbers of individuals might agree really are "positive," and preferable to alternative, "less positive" outcomes. For this reason, *acting responsibly* makes a far more potent contribution to the outcome of human events than does "being right:" because even when "wrong," or mistaken, one who is responsible for his acts corrects his errors, and does his best to repair any damage they may cause. Practiced habitually, and in growing numbers, this is a powerful contribution toward a "positive outcome" for oneself, and for humanity.

As mentioned in a prior essay,¹⁵ in general, it is always in the interest of each of the parts to contribute to the success of the whole; and conversely, *it is never in the interest* of any of its parts to "benefit" at the expense either of the whole, or of any part of the whole. The reason for this observation is not difficult to understand, and amounts only to a minor adjustment to widespread perceptions of what is, and is not, in one's own best interest. It simply acknowledges the self-evident fact that any damage to the whole of which I am a part, is inescapably damaging to me. Thus acting responsibly, with the

¹⁵Grahn, "Post-Civilized" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part II* § 1 What Is The Law? wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#wit101.27

intent of a "positive outcome" for humanity, is entirely consistent with acting responsibly, with the intent of a "positive outcome" for oneself; and involves no conflict of interest for anyone arriving at such a choice. This is not "rocket science," and it seems plausibly imaginable that increasing numbers of individuals might adopt it in principle, and apply it in practice to the navigation of our own lives.

Additionally, the election that decides the present and future of humanity, and all life on Earth, may be "rigged" in yet another way. As mentioned earlier, beyond the "tipping point" of 10% of a population, "the minority rules" in the dynamics of collective human choices. As also mentioned, in application in the real world, this finding is probably more complicated than may be obvious at first sight; yet it is nonetheless a surprising discovery, and in some circumstances might furnish a disproportionate edge in favor of implementing a solution to the challenge facing contemporary humanity.

Suppose, for example, that the perception that *seeking advantages for the population at large is an essential component of achieving advantages for oneself* were to take root among a small, possibly obscure population of humans. If 10% of them or more were to become convinced that acting intentionally to benefit the population as a whole would have the collateral effect of benefiting themselves individually, then by the dynamic observed in the Rensselaer study, this conviction might swiftly become predominant among the remaining 90% of the population. This is particularly likely if the conviction were borne out in practice by observable confirming results.

If so, then life among this particular population would noticeably improve over the course of time. Such improved conditions would not only be enjoyed by the population, but would be observable by visitors from neighboring, and possibly distant populations. Since this favorable change is the product of the deliberate intent of population members, not of haphazard circumstances, members of the population would be aware both of its cause and effect; and would be able and willing to "share the secret" with any who indicated an appreciation of it. In this way, the idea, easily expressed and understood, might be imagined to spread to other populations; and if it were to gain a 10% toehold within such populations, would likewise proliferate. In this way, a very favorable trend among humans may be imagined to spread.

2.1 Responsible Self-Interest

The possibility of putting in motion a favorable trend benefiting rather than further injuring the human condition on Earth is based upon the assumption that *positive intent*, and *responsible acts* are of greater significance than are the "rightness" of individual or collective perceptions of reality. Because all human perceptions of reality are partial,

their accuracy is always uncertain. The distinction between benefit and injury, however, is much less ambiguous. For those who embrace the principle: *a*) that any benefit for the whole benefits each of its parts; *b*) that injury to the whole constitutes injury to the parts; and *c*) that the whole sustains a benefit or injury when any part sustains a benefit or injury—the path of responsible individual self-interest becomes clear and uncomplicated.

As mentioned above, this is so even in the presence of error. Even when mistaken, if the *responsible intent* of an act is benefit for the whole, the parts, and the acting individual(s), the result is entirely different from that of an *irresponsible act* intended to benefit the actor(s), regardless of the consequences borne by the whole, or other constituents of the whole.

In the first instance, if negative consequences of an act are brought to the attention of its perpetrator(s), their natural response is to abort the act, and take any measures necessary to remedy its adverse consequences. This is the practice of responsible self-interested intent. In the second instance, the *irresponsible* actors are unconcerned with the consequences of their acts to any besides themselves, and if strong enough, may resort to coercive power to implement their acts in spite of resistance. This is the practice of "civilization." The first practice works, and can be sustained, because it always has means of correcting its errors. The second practice does not work, and cannot be sustained, because it perpetuates its errors with coercive power, and evasion of responsibility.

This selection of alternatives is simple enough, and clear enough, that it is plausibly imaginable that growing numbers of individual humans might voluntarily adopt the path of responsible self-interest in preference to the historically prevailing path of "civilization." The probability of this actually happening increases as the unsustainable path of "civilization" continues to dissolve, and consequent stresses mount in the lives of "civilized" people. Because it neither opposes nor resists anything, the path of responsible self-interest is not in conflict with the path of "civilization," and does not intentionally provoke its antagonism. It simply *opts out* of the "civilized" path of coercion and resistance, and instead puts into unilateral practice the principles of responsible self-interest.

The choice of responsible self-interest does not render those who make it invulnerable to interference, or to the consequences of the irresponsible acts of others. Indeed, the irresponsible acts of "civilized" humans may already have irrevocably foreclosed upon all sustainable options formerly available on planet Earth; and all of us may in effect be "dead men walking," even as we discuss these things. However, as long as we continue to live here, we may as well imagine that some of us may yet "pull our bacon out of the fire," and survive the present human predicament. Here, I am only suggesting that if such an outcome is still within reach of anybody, it is more likely to be achieved by the path

of responsible self-interest than by the paths of coercion and evasion of responsibility pioneered historically by "civilization."

There is no point in trying to disguise the fact that this is a "long shot," whose outcome at best is highly uncertain. However, it does have a singular advantage over any strategy that involves passive observation of the unfolding sequence of horrifying human events, and anxiously "hoping for the best." The path of responsible self-interest is an option available to anybody, anywhere, at any time. It requires nobody's permission, and cannot be obstructed by anybody, or anything, so long as the individual making this choice remains alive, and volitional. It thus provides a coherent reply to the often perplexing question implied by the cascade of human events: "Oh yeah? So what are you going to do about it?"

The idea of "doing something about it" returns our attention to the can of worms we're already dealing with here: because "civilized" history seems to have been occupied with "doing something about" practically everything, from Day One. Because all human acts are informed only by partial perceptions of reality, "doing something about" just about anything, particularly in a large, aggressive, energetic way, is fraught with hazards that a responsibly self-interested individual would approach, if at all, with considerable caution. Such prudence is not to be confused with "timidity," or "indecision." A responsibly self-interested individual is one, practically by definition, who is keenly interested in putting into action only choices that have a significant probability of yielding results favorable for the whole, for each of its parts, and for the responsibly self-interested individual initiating the act. This is not a casual or arbitrary matter.

On the other hand, because a responsibly self-interested individual is habituated to acting with caution, and anticipates consequences with responsible care, the hazards associated with his acts are probably significantly less than the hazards associated with irresponsible acts. For this reason, the acts of a responsibly self-interested individual are more likely to work, and achieve favorable results for himself and others, than are the acts of an irresponsible individual.

This implies that, particularly in a time in which it is becoming increasingly evident that the irresponsible patterns of "civilization" do not work, and cannot last, responsibly self-interested humans are more likely than irresponsible humans to succeed, prosper, and thrive. Or at least to survive. As events actually play out, it may be that, as in a shipwreck at sea, it is probably preferable to grasp something that floats, instead of something that sinks. Irresponsible acts, so to speak, do not float.

In any case, it looks to me like few, if anybody on Earth, have a reliable understanding of the events now unfolding throughout the planet; and consequently that it is a waste of time and physical and emotional energy to plan for any specifically imagined contin-

gency. It strikes me as fundamentally more sound to cultivate responsible self-interest, and endeavor in any contingency to help oneself by helping others to the greatest extent possible, under whatever circumstances actually emerge.

In a highly uncertain, complex, and imperfectly understood "world system," one prediction can be made with considerable confidence: Whatever the course of events, probably no one will disagree that friends are more valuable than enemies; and the most reliable way to have friends (or enemies) is to be one. *Which one* is your choice. There now. That's pretty dirt-simple isn't it?

O.K. So we can acknowledge realistically that the outlook isn't brilliant for the inhabitants of planet Earth right now; and as mentioned above, the game may already be over for all of us. But . . . what if it isn't? What if some of us, say by applying the simple principles of responsible self-interest, are somehow able to weather the storm, and come through this thing still functioning, on a still habitable planet? If a number of us wind up together in the same place, what will we do then? What kind of a society will we create together? And what will we do differently than our forbears did, who gave us "civilization?"

2.2 Speculative Fiction

Here, we must enter the domain of speculative fiction: because in unvarnished candor, it is doubtful that there exists even one among all seven thousand million of us with a reliable grasp of what is now unfolding among humans on planet Earth; and if such a one does exist, the probability of persuading significant numbers of peers to share his insight, in preference to all contrary opinions, may be vanishingly small. Any projection into future events and contingencies, therefore, can be no other than wildly speculative.

Very well. The basis of our speculation here will be the stipulation, however improbable this may seem, that after the planet-wide storm now raging has run its course and subsided—as all storms eventually do—a (possibly not large) population of humans find ourselves still standing; gather together, maybe in widely scattered groups, in the midst of the wreckage left in the storm's wake; and commence the task of salvaging what we can use, creating what we need, and can; and embark upon the next chapter of humanity's adventure on planet Earth. "We," "us," "ourselves," etc. are the operative words here, because (however improbable this may seem) each of us imagines *ourselves* surviving any calamity, no matter how severe, and no matter how many others may perish in it. And why not? The one thing none of us can imagine is the contingency of "not being."

Another improbability should perhaps be mentioned: that in the wake of such imagined devastation, the globally catastrophic scenario described in a prior essay,¹⁶ is evaded somehow, and does not eventuate. If it did, there would be no survivors, and there would be no story. Such an improbability is presumed to be permissible in fiction; and in the real world, this one is being almost universally ignored anyway.

A corollary stipulation here is that, in the wake of planet-wide human experience, there remains among the survivors very little enthusiasm for rebuilding "civilization" along any lines resembling its historical record; and consequently, that there exists widespread spontaneous receptivity among survivors for the principles of responsible self-interest discussed in the prior Subsection. This stipulation naturally reflects the author's biases; but then, that is its purpose. However, it may not be very "realistic." Yet again, not being very realistic is one of the enshrined prerogatives of fiction.

Additionally, the 10% tipping point briefly discussed earlier may be imagined to amplify the effects of the stipulated spontaneous receptivity for the principles of responsible self-interest: hastening the spread of their practice, and catalyzing the emergence of human cultures on Earth in many ways *unlike* the so-called "civilizations" we have experienced and studied over the course of the past several thousand years. What follows will attempt to elaborate upon *how* and *why* such emergent human cultures may not resemble prior "civilizations."

2.2.1 Now That We're Here, How Do We Get Out?

Good question. Earlier, in summarizing the Outlook of the West, Quigley's first point was: "There is a truth, a reality. (Thus the West rejects skepticism, solipsism, and nihilism.)" What exactly was he talking about?

Briefly, *skepticism* doubts that certainty, or knowledge is conclusively attainable through human inquiry. "A philosophical skeptic," according to the *Wikipedia*, "does not claim that truth is impossible (which would be a truth claim), instead it recommends 'suspending belief'."¹⁷

According to the *New World Encyclopedia*TM (in part):

Solipsism (Latin: *solus*, alone + *ipse*, self) is the position that nothing exists beyond oneself and one's immediate experiences.

[. . .]

¹⁶Grahn, *The Writing on the Wall #5: "Don't Take Any Wooden Nickels"* § 4 The End. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow05.html#end04.0

¹⁷*Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, Skepticism. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skepticism

Solipsism is first recorded with the Greek pre-Socratic sophist Gorgias (c. 483 B.C.E.-375 B.C.E.) who is quoted by the Roman skeptic Sextus Empiricus as having stated:

1. Nothing exists
2. Even if something exists, nothing can be known about it, and
3. Even if something could be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others

Epistemological solipsism is generally identified with statements 2 and 3 from Gorgias; metaphysical solipsism embraces all three.¹⁸

According to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy."¹⁹

Thus *skepticism*, *solipsism*, and *nihilism* seem to embody a descent in the order named into increasing pessimism as regards the human capacity to understand, and achieve a sustainable balance within the Cosmos in which we find ourselves. However, being skeptical that certainty, or knowledge, is conclusively attainable does not deny that, as Quigley put it, "There is a truth, a reality." It doubts only that any of us can know with certainty what that truth, or reality really is; and consequently recommends "suspending belief."

This aligns fairly closely with how I perceive things, and with how I deal with my own perceptions. Like just about everybody, I suppose, I too hold beliefs about how I think things are. However, I do not claim my beliefs to constitute "knowledge," or "certainty;" and I follow the skeptical recommendation of "suspending belief;" or at least, of treating my beliefs gingerly and provisionally, with the expectation that they will probably change, as I continue to learn more. On the basis of experience, this seems to me a prudent policy.

Accordingly, the position of solipsism that nothing exists beyond oneself and one's immediate experiences is a good deal further than I would ordinarily be willing to go in my highly provisional structure of beliefs. On the other hand, I cannot deny the possibility that the solipsist view, or something like it, may actually be "how things really

¹⁸New World Encyclopedia™, Solipsism. www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Solipsism

¹⁹Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Nihilism. www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism/

are." As I understand it, this is why many thinkers reject solipsism out of hand: because it may neither be positively confirmed nor falsified. However, the same criticism may be leveled against many widely held human beliefs; yet this does not seem unduly to trouble the holders of such beliefs.

Finally, nihilism appears to me to plunge into the abyss of despair from which there may be no resurrection. Moreover, nihilism seems to contradict the evidence of my own senses, that encourages me to believe that the universe "out there"—if there really is anything "out there," beyond the margins of my own mind—seems by and large to work exquisitely well; and is evidently quite capable of repairing its "defects," when and as they may occur. However we may have gotten ourselves into our contemporary predicament, nihilism illuminates no way out of it; and seems instead only to plunge more deeply into impenetrable darkness. As the notice reads at the entrance to Dante's (1265-1321) *Inferno*: Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.

Such philosophical arguments can be quite intricate and convoluted, and one may easily become entangled in them, and lose track of the purpose that prompts the argument. In the present instance, the purpose is not argument for its own sake, but a quest for a basis for solution to the human predicament that displays some potential for actually working in the real world. This quest may even extend to reexamining some arguments long since discarded, and supposedly laid to rest by earlier thinkers.

The brief discussion above of skepticism is a case in point. Notwithstanding Quigley's statement that "the West rejects skepticism," our inquiry has yielded a prudent argument in favor of some degree of skepticism, especially in relation to one's own beliefs—that may be applicable as well to the "authoritative" convictions of others. Experience and history seem to affirm the validity this argument; and surely do not refute it.

Although I am willing to concede the bottomless poverty of nihilism as a potential source of solutions to the human predicament, I find myself being more circumspect as regards the richly various arguments of solipsism. The idea that *solus ipse*, self alone, constitutes the singular constituent of *existence* raises questions that seem to me to have some bearing upon our quest for a way of being human that works.

What, for instance, is meant by the term, *self*? Is *self* exclusively the being enclosed within the envelope of flesh, that came into "existence" at the moment of birth, and exits "existence" at the moment of death? If so, what was its status before the moment of birth—during gestation? What, if anything, was gestating?

Such questions raise additional questions: such as the question of *continuity*. It is said that the human body replaces its entire population of cells in the course of a period of years, and that this process is repeated several times during the span of a typical human lifetime. The sense of *self*—although this too may change, grow, and mature in non-

material ways with the passage of time—like the body, remains identifiable as a single contiguous entity throughout the course of ceaseless change; and one can truthfully say things like, “I am an entirely different person now, than I was during my callow youth;” or, “I’m not the man I used to be.” What exactly is going on here?

The phenomena of *change* apply not only to human lives: for as far as we are able to see, they apply to everything that *exists*. Nothing is static; all is in motion; yet there remains a coherently observable *continuity* between every former and latter state of anything to which we may give our attention. Although in a sense, “one cannot step twice into the same river;” in an equally valid sense, the river Nile, for instance, has been flowing past the Pyramids, and the Sphinx, from time out of mind. Although never twice the same, it has uninterrupted continuity. Is this not so?

If so, then where are the “boundaries” that delineate the differences between the former states and the latter states . . . of anything? At what point does “something” cease being what it was, and commence being “something else” instead? At what precise frequency of the electromagnetic spectrum, for instance, does “red” cease being “red,” and become “orange?” Are such “boundaries” really “objective,” “absolute,” or “intrinsic” to the nature of “reality?” Or are they arbitrarily and subjectively drawn by whoever or whatever may happen to imagine them—like a transparent grid of squares artificially superimposed upon an otherwise seamless continuum? And if the latter, where in the “length” and “breadth,” “beginning” to “end” of Cosmos, does *self* end, and *not-self* begin?

Although summarily dismissed by generations of philosophers, the idea that *solus ipse*, self alone, constitutes the singular constituent of *existence*, may after all contain elements worthy of further examination. Of crucial interest in the present instance, for those willing to give it their consideration, the idea may illuminate *a way out that works* of the human predicament here on planet Earth.

2.2.2 How So?

The trend of the prior sequence of questions seems to imply a perception long advocated by various individuals with a reputation for “wisdom:” sometimes summarized as the essential “unity,” or “oneness” of the apparent multitude of differentially identifiable “things.” The thousands of millions, or perhaps trillions of individual cells that combine synergistically in the material body of an individual human may serve as a prototypical example of this essential unity: *E pluribus unum*: Out of many, one. It is a relationship observable as a nation composed of many individuals, households, townships, counties, and provinces; or as a “universe” composed of countless galaxies; galaxies composed of countless solar systems; stars and planets composed of countless molecules and atoms;

and so on: "As above, so below; as below, so above"—from the infinitesimal to the infinite, and back again; for as many laps as anyone may care to imagine.

Contemplation of this universal relationship between the many and the one may provoke an experience of awe and wonder; yet there is nothing about it that is beyond the comprehension of a child. In this instance, however, our purpose is not primarily to provoke an experience of awe and wonder, although this may be a collateral "side effect." Our purpose is to explore the *consequences* "on the ground" of cultivating within ourselves the essential identity of the whole with each of its parts.

This is a concept that diverges profoundly from the *practice* of Western—and indeed from all so-called "civilizations" that have left their footprints in the annals of history—even though it has been given diverse expression in many "civilized" philosophies and religions. The *practice* of "civilization," start to finish (regardless of what the sages, philosophers, and holy men have *said*) has ever been division and strife, not unity and concord, among the parts, and between the parts and the whole.²⁰ How this development unfolded, and has persisted during the thousands of years of "civilized" history, is discussed at some length in a prior essay. [See Footnote 4.]

The identity of the whole with each of its parts—put into *practice*, not merely considered as a philosophical concept—has consequences for anyone who makes this practice a part of their life. Such practice, if undertaken at all, can be pursued only by the deliberate intent of its practitioner, and sustained only by persistent effort. One of its consequences is the gradually strengthening conviction that the distinction between "self" and "others" is unreliable, misleading, divisive, and an obstacle to fulfillment of the limitless human potential. This is so because the relationship between "self" and "others" is a subset of the overarching relationship between the part and the whole, at any scale, in any context; and the relationship between the part and the whole is one of reciprocity and mutual interdependence. Neither is complete without its reciprocal counterpart: which effectively establishes an inseverable identity between them.

Of course the identity between the part and the whole is not one of *congruency*, but one of *complementarity*, analogous to the relationship between the quantum and wave properties of light; or the relationship between one's right and left hands. They are not the same, yet they bear a constituency within a larger whole which is not complete in the absence of either of them. Absent any part, in other words, the whole is incomplete; and absent the whole, naturally the part, so to speak, "has no place to stand."

²⁰Perhaps it should be mentioned here that division and strife among humans is not the "natural," "relaxed," or "default" state for human relationships. It is provoked by various sources of stress, mostly or entirely related to *fear*. We shall develop this observation further in due course.

The practical identity between the part and the whole, and consequently between "self" and "others," has the effect of clarifying further (if further clarification is needed) why, as discussed earlier, it is always in the interest of each of the parts ("self") to contribute to the success of the whole ("others"); and conversely, why it is never in the interest of anyone to "benefit" at the expense of anyone else. Practicing otherwise is similar in effect to "shooting oneself in the foot." Why would anyone want to do that?

As mentioned in Footnote 20, division and strife among humans, which includes "benefiting" at others' expense, is not the "natural," "relaxed," or "default" state for human relationships. It is provoked by various sources of stress, mostly or entirely related to fear. In comfortable, relaxed, and stress-free circumstances, most people find it fairly easy and natural, most of the time, to get along with one another. Exceptions occur in the presence of conflicting interests, particularly when at least one party to the conflict resorts to violence, coercion, and/or deception, as means of establishing the prevalence of one will over an opposing will. In such instances, the conflict is not resolved by agreement upon a mutually acceptable compromise, but is settled in the typically "civilized" way: by the prevalence of strength over weakness.

This has the immediate effect of engendering and/or perpetuating *fear*: because as discussed earlier, it disrupts the flow for both parties of *intelligent, purposeful creativity*, the fundamentally distinguishing quality of humanity: because *a*) the exercise of intelligent, purposeful creativity requires the limitless scope of unfettered liberty; *b*) the unfettered liberty to exercise intelligent, purposeful creativity makes it possible for some such beings (the stronger) to fetter the liberty of other such beings (the weaker); and *c*) exercise of this possibility disrupts the pattern of intelligent, purposeful creativity, and renders it dysfunctional *for all members of the species* of otherwise innately intelligent, purposeful, creative beings. *Nobody* wants to be on the losing end of this unequal exchange.

And so, defending against the eventuality of coercive power rises to the top of the list of priorities for anyone affected by any such fear. Ironically and tragically, however, there is no entirely satisfactory defense against the fear of coercive power: because "win" or "lose," once turned loose, coercive power, and its consequent subversion of humanity, becomes a growing menace to all humans everywhere, weak and strong alike. This is a fundamental theme of the history of every so-called "civilization" that has ever risen on Earth; and it is a fundamental fact of life for all "civilized" humans, in all times, everywhere.

So what is to be done? Like it or not, here we all are; and now everybody on Earth, one way or another, is witnessing the galloping horror of coercive power run amok. This is a condition that does not work; and so, it will not last. So much we may rely upon:

This too shall pass. Of course, it may take everything with it, and leave nothing behind, from pole to pole, but an uninhabitable planetary desert. This is a thoroughly plausible possibility; but it hasn't quite been fulfilled yet, and maybe, with luck, it won't reach full maturity. Meanwhile, we're still standing. What shall we do while we're hanging around?

No one may (lawfully) answer this question for anybody else; yet each of us—any who will—may answer it for himself. Those who imbibe the identity between the part and the whole, or the "self" and "others," may elect to pursue their own best interests by responsibly endeavoring to advance the interests of "others." Those who follow the practice, "Each for himself, let the devil take the hindmost," will follow some branch of the "civilized" path to its eventual destination; and the best of luck to them. My guess is, they will surely need it.

Of course, as things stand at the moment, it is evident that we can all use as much "luck" as we are able to muster; and "luck" seems to have a way of favoring those who follow paths that work. Perhaps it is no mere coincidence that Cosmic Law displays a similar bias.

3 Living Lawfully

As mentioned at the outset, there is a Subsection in a prior essay bearing the same title as this Section.²¹ Although The Law may be stated succinctly, and variously, as in that instance: "And harm ye none, do as ye will;" or elsewhere in the same essay,²² and earlier in this one, as: *patterns that do not work do not last*—surely much might be added in a discussion of *practice* of The Law, here "on the ground."

Living lawfully, in the sense intended here, engenders living patterns radically different from actual "civilized" patterns—yet perhaps surprisingly, many lawful patterns are held in high esteem, and are even strongly recommended by many "civilized" people. Highly esteemed; strongly recommended; but seldom practiced. Why is this? How can it be that the sincerely held ideals of many, many people are so far removed from their actual conduct "on the ground?"

Many people, for example, believe, and preach to one another the "Golden Rule," expressed in many different yet similar ways,²³ such as: "all things whatsoever ye would

²¹Grahn, "Post-Civilized" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part II* § 3.2 Living Lawfully. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#cth03.2.0

²²*Ibid.* wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#wit101.55

²³Grahn, *The Writing on the Wall #7: "Not All That Can Be Imagined Works In Practice"* § 3.6 Love. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow07.html#p-civ03.6.1

that men should do to you, do ye so to them." (*Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31*) Yet throughout the vast fabric of actual human commerce, the prevailing *practice* is much nearer to: "Do unto others, before others do unto you." Why this disconnect? Why is the *practice* of so many people so far removed from what they *preach*; and from what they sincerely seem, and claim, to believe?

We touched upon this above, where we observed that it is provoked by various sources of stress, mostly or entirely related to *fear*. Elsewhere, we have explored some of the reasons for this, illuminating how *the fear of coercive power* has emerged as the foundation for all Earth-human "civilizations." [See Footnote 4.] Overcoming and transcending this fear thus emerges as the "gateway" through which all must pass who will participate in the next chapter of human evolution—which I have been calling "post-civilization."

Fortunately, there are a number of circumstances which in effect provide a "boost" in favor of actually making the prescribed transition at this time: *a)* as mentioned, absent stress and fear, the "natural," "relaxed," or "default" state for human relationships is not antagonism, but concord and friendship; *b)* the natural world is swarming with beings that exemplify lawful living, and whose consequent beauty and grace are appreciated even by "civilized" humans who do not; *c)* The Law itself encourages compliance, because noncompliance simply does not work, and does not last; *d)* one way or another, the reign of coercive power on Earth is coming to an end, because it is not in compliance with The Law; *e)* therefore, like it or not, "civilized" Earth-humans are faced with the stark choice either of "mending our ways," and bringing ourselves into compliance with The Law—"or else."

Stated so, this may sound more menacing than it really is. Actually, everything in nature—including our native human proclivities—leans in favor of The Law. "Civilized" humans attempt to swim against this universal current only because we have learned to fear the consequences of not doing so. In a few words, we fear what our fellow humans may "do unto us," unless we "do unto them" first. Obviously, our fears are not groundless, as is eloquently testified by the bloody record of "civilized" history. Yet the acts they have provoked have never achieved the desired result of relieving our fears. Instead, they have propelled us "against the current," inexorably toward a yawning abyss: because they perpetuate a self-destructive pattern that does not work, cannot last, and is therefore unambiguously *against The Law*. What a predicament! What shall we do? What *can* we do—lawfully?

The question cannot be answered by or on behalf of "we," the human collective. It can only be answered by and for "I," the individual volitional, acting human. However, "my" individual, complementary identity with all "others," discussed above, makes "my"

answer consequential for all "others" as well. Therefore, whatever I decide to do, in order to be *lawful*, must not only work for me: it must also work for everyone and everything else. Or put the other way about: if my act—any act—does not work for everyone and everything else, it cannot possibly work for me either.

This is not a rigid or inflexible doctrine, because it includes ample allowance for the inescapable fact that all volitional acts are informed only by *partial perceptions* of "reality," and are therefore subject to error. Errors lead to unanticipated, and usually unwelcome consequences, and so exact penalties. For those who *act responsibly*, penalties prompt correction of errors. For those who *act irresponsibly*, the penalties for errors are typically evaded, and are laid instead as burdens upon "others;" while the errors themselves are sustained and perpetuated. For many reasons, this does not work; among which, in the view being developed here: there are no "others." We all share a common identity, irresponsible and responsible, strong and weak alike. Could this have anything to do with why the "civilized" powers and principalities, even though they cannot refute it, do not like the idea of so-called "solipsism?"

Whatever you like to call it, the complementary identity between "self" and "others," put into practice, has a number of perhaps surprising consequences; such as:

1. It discourages acts affecting "others" that affecting oneself would be unwelcome.
2. It encourages acts affecting "others" that affecting oneself would be welcome.
3. It encourages full liability and responsibility for the consequences of every act.
4. It encourages reciprocal treatment by "others."
5. Practiced reciprocally by the members of a population, it practically eliminates strife.
6. Conflicts of interest, when they occur, may be resolved easily and amicably.
7. Governance of a society so ordered is exquisitely uncomplicated, because each member governs himself: the composite meaning of identifying "self" with "others," and acting responsibly.
8. Those, such as children, who have not yet mastered self-governance are guided by those who have.
9. Assumption of full responsibility and limitless liability for one's acts is rewarded with limitless liberty to act; which enables in turn unfettered exercise of the intelligent, purposeful creativity that identifies mature humanity.

10. In sum, the identity between "self" and "others," put into responsible practice, has the potential to produce *lawful* societies.

This is not a "utopian" claim; it is not inevitable; nor does it propose that achieving or sustaining such lawful societies is "as easy as falling off a log." Lawful societies seem within reach of human possibility, *given associations of responsible humans with a will to achieve them*. However, this is a "given" subject to considerable uncertainty at this time, because only an individual human can make the choices of living responsibly, and identifying himself with "others." Historically, on the basis of performance, these have not been the choices of "civilization"—even though they are consistent with the religious and philosophical *ideals* of many "civilized" people, and are in harmony with the biases of Cosmic Law. The "civilized" fears that oppose them are formidable, and it remains to be seen whether fear will be overcome, or will continue to proliferate toward global panic, mass insanity, and self-destructive chaos.

The resolution of this uncertainty may not be a matter of "all or nothing." Just as no one can make choices for anybody else, neither can anyone's choices reap the direct rewards or penalties of the alternative choices of others. Those who make different choices propel themselves along different paths, which do not seem *necessarily* to lead to a common destination. This is why even next-door neighbors who see each other every day may be living, one in "heaven," the other in "hell:" because they habitually make different choices in their daily lives. In such circumstances, either neighbor may change his "destination" from "hell" to "heaven," or from "heaven" to "hell," simply by changing his habits. Such transmutations—because of the habitualness of habits—are not necessarily easy; yet neither are they impossible.

Of course the possibility also exists that, as mentioned earlier, a point might be reached (and may already have been passed) whereby the choices of the strong minority foreclose irrevocably upon the choices available to *all* Earth-humans: bringing the human adventure on Earth to a close. In that eventuality—if it is so that there really is no opposite to *being*, such as "non-being"—the adventure of human evolution might be continued in other non-material domains; and/or in material domains, such as on alternative habitable planets within the material sector of Cosmos. That is, if the human adventure cannot be continued on Earth, because Earth becomes uninhabitable, then in this speculative view, the adventure will continue "somewhere else." But it will continue: until the last of *we existing beings* "gets it," and learns the fine art of selecting and following paths that work, and avoiding paths that do not. Simple in concept; subtle in practice; and *essential*, everywhere, and always.

From the limited and partial perspective of material Earth-humans, such "possibilities" are highly speculative, and may be pursued introspectively in solitude, and maybe

shared among "resonant" minds. However, like the idea that *solus ipse* constitutes the singular constituent of existence, such speculative possibilities can neither be definitively confirmed nor denied by anyone, on behalf of anyone else; and necessarily occupy the unique domain of each individual's almost entirely imaginary cognitive map²⁴ of "reality."

Thus as discussed earlier, *acting responsibly* is an incomparably higher and more potent virtue than holding "right opinions," or bearing an "accurate" cognitive map of "reality:" for the reason that all human opinions and cognitive maps are subject to incalculable error; whereas acting responsibly, although similarly prone to error, is poised for the recognition and correction of errors as they occur. This has the salutary effect of incrementally improving the verity of partial opinions and cognitive maps, and favoring choices that work over choices that do not work: an intrinsically *lawful* bias, beneficial to all life.

The primary obstacle to making more widespread the virtue of acting responsibly, as discussed in the same essay, is the prevalence of *egoism*, described as perhaps the most pernicious illusion among finite Earth-humans; and suggests that *the most formidable and dangerous challenge faced by those who ascend to the summits of wealth, power, and fame, is the almost inevitable obscuration of their absolutely reciprocal relationship ($\frac{1}{\infty}$) to infinity (∞).*²⁵

This may be an unwelcome and deflating observation to those puffed up with egocentric pride, and motivated primarily by fear of what potentially more powerful and egocentric adversaries may "do unto us," if "we" do not manifest even greater power and pride, and "do unto them" first. The lust for battle, and the satisfaction of out-maneuvering the foe have their appeals, yes—but do they not grow rancid, *after several thousand years?* How much is enough? And what will today's victors have gained, if their victory is bought at the price of the habitability of the planet?

The typical answer to such challenges is denial; but when the last breath is drawn, there is nothing to deny, and no one to deny it. And the last breath on Earth shall surely be drawn by the last human still breathing, unless many human patterns that do not work are replaced by patterns that do. Today, little is certain, anywhere. However, one thing at least is certain: *This too shall pass.*

For those who have had enough, there are alternatives. Responsible self-interest, and identity of "self" with "others," have healing compensations for bruised egos, battered by the futile patterns of ceaseless strife, and the perpetual threats of attack, plunder, tyranny, and annihilation.

²⁴Grahn, "Post-Civilized" Possibilities: *Beyond Wealth and Power, Part II* § 2 A Cognitive Map. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#acm02.0

²⁵*Ibid.* § 1 What Is The Law? wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-e.html#wit101.10

3.1 Human Commerce

Another of the unexpected consequences, not mentioned above, of the practice of acting responsibly, and the complementary identity between "self" and "others," is that they obviate the necessity of *money* in human commerce.

Is this not a contradiction in terms? Perhaps surprisingly, it is not. Being interrelated and interdependent, *all things* engage in a continuous hum of commerce—meaning manifold mutual material and non-material exchanges. The exclusively human invention of money is employed in commerce only among "civilized" humans; otherwise, nothing like money exists anywhere in nature. This might suggest that money may be *unnatural*.

Maybe so; but we shall not make this our opening premise. However, it may be useful to take another "flight of fancy," and imagine what a human society *without money* could be like. This of course assumes a society of *responsible adults*, who deliberately agree amongst ourselves to the practical identity between "self" and "others."

The principles of responsible self-interest prompt the members of such a society to seek opportunities for advancement of the interests of our fellows no less vigilantly we seek opportunities for advancement of our own interests: because of course, we evaluate both as having equal weight, and in effect, of being the same.

In some down-to-earth families there is a saying: "If Mamma ain't happy, ain't *nobody* happy!" In a society adhering to the principles of responsible self-interest, and the identity of "self" with "others," the scope of this familial principle may be enlarged to something like: "If *anybody* ain't happy, ain't *nobody* happy!" The simple objective of responsible self-interest in such a society, for all its members, is therefore to keep "everybody happy," if possible, *all of the time*.

Such an objective may not be achievable, "all of the time," because social relationships are dynamic, and in constant flux. However, if this objective is held in common by all of its members, a society so arranged might come reasonably close to achieving it, and sustaining it, *most of the time*; and routinely correcting lapses in this favorable condition with relatively little effort at any moment, by any single individual.

We mentioned earlier that the features distinguishing humans from all other life forms are *a)* our limitless creative imaginations, and *b)* our ability to substantiate as actualities what we imagine. Thus all humans share the impulse to create: to give expression to our unique human natures, individually, and as a species, by bringing into actuality the products—*that work*—of our fertile creative imaginations. If so, then what could be a more natural, fruitful, and sublime confluence of human impulses than those of human creativity, responsible self-interest, and the identity of "self" with "others?"

There is perhaps no more satisfying human accomplishment than bringing into actuality a product of the human imagination *that works* as well, or maybe even better than imagined. And a close second is having one's creative accomplishment appreciated and valued by "others." However, in our "civilized" experience, this collateral outcome of the creative impulse is often tarnished by the blight of egoism; [see Footnote 25] but it does not have to be so.

Egoism is mostly—maybe entirely—a product of fear, which as described earlier, is a chronic byproduct of "civilization" itself. Here, however, we are imagining a "post-civilized" society of responsibly self-interested individuals who mutually identify ourselves with one another, and strive to keep "everybody happy," at least most of the time.

If this seems to you like an "impossible dream," then how do you evaluate the "civilized" dream of bringing—and of course *keeping*—everybody and everything under the singular suzerainty of the strongest wielder of coercive power on Earth? As Pharaoh said unto Joseph, when he made him ruler over all of Egypt: "I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." (*Genesis 41:43-44*) This has been the "impossible dream" behind every "civilization" that has arisen on Earth: *Without* [overpowering "authority," tyrannical or "benign"] *shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land*. It is a dream prompted by the *egocentric fear* that unless all "others" are subdued by the strongest power, the tyrant's power may weaken, and some even stronger tyrant may rise and overpower him instead. Hence the "Golden Rule of civilization:" *Do unto others, before others do unto you*.

And so it has been, for the thousands of years of "civilized" history: coercive power, first there, then here, has waxed strong, and conquered, and established its "authority," sometimes with tyrannical oppression, sometimes with relative benignity, always with unassailable power, yet never without flaws, and "leaks," through which power was eventually lost, allowing somewhere a rival power to rise. . . . And so the cycle of the rise and fall of "civilizations" has been repeated: always unique in detail, yet always the same in principle. And *it has never worked*.

You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,
How it went to pieces all at once,—
All at once, and nothing first,—
Just as bubbles do when they burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.
Logic is logic. That's all I say.²⁶

²⁶Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Deacon's Masterpiece or The Wonderful "One-Hoss Shay" A LOGICAL STORY*. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/shay.html

End of the umpteenth "civilization." The Law is The Law. That's all I say.

Speaking of bubbles . . . we are still on track of the idea that the complementary identity between "self" and "others," and the practice of acting responsibly, obviate the necessity of money in human commerce; and we are endeavoring to imagine what a human society without money could be like.

Simply, in a society in which all practice responsible self-interest; identify "self" with "others;" share the impulse to create; and being responsible, enjoy unbridled liberty to exercise our creativity—what place exactly should *money* occupy in our commerce?

All members of the society here imagined are uniquely and exuberantly creative: for this is human nature. All equate our own interests with the interests of "others:" for this is the common ethic that identifies our society as a whole. All act responsibly, and selectively in favor of patterns that work, in preference to patterns that do not work: for this accords with The Law. Being uniquely creative, each has gifts to share with "other" selves; who being uniquely creative in turn, are eager and able to reciprocate. So . . . who needs money?

Money is the unique invention of "civilized" power, and over the course of the past several thousand years has evolved into by far the single most potent instrument of coercive power in a formidable arsenal dedicated to that exclusive purpose—to the extent that today, and trailing far into the "civilized" historical past, *money* and *power* have become synonymous; and either one may be measured in terms of the other. This is now the dominant "fact of life" throughout all "civilized societies." Is it not so?

John Emerich Edward Dalberg, Lord Acton, 1834-1902, is quoted as having said: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In "civilized" practice, "big money" has become in our time as close to *absolute power* as anything imaginable; and has, and continues, to *corrupt absolutely* every "civilized" institution on Earth. Every natural and traditional human value and virtue have been subverted by the power of money, and by the insatiable and universal "civilized" thirst for more and more of it, as the only hedge against otherwise being devoured by overwhelming coercive power. And so, "big money" has established globally exactly what it was vainly intended to prevent. This condition is *unlawful*, and it *does not work*. Please, somebody, *tell me it isn't so!*

The "solution" to this alarming condition does not involve a campaign against money. The only "solution" to it—that is visible to me; you must decide for yourself if this is so—is to *become one who lives lawfully*. That is all. No one can do it for you, and you cannot do it for anybody else. Each of us must do it for ourselves—and only in this way, for each other, for our planet, and for all life.

3.2 A Lawful Society

No one in the society sketched in the preceding Subsection has any need to “keep accounts” of who gives what to whom, or what its “value” may be. The nature of creativity is to create; and responsible self-interest insures that only creations *that work* are created and exchanged as gifts. No loss is sustained in giving such gifts away, “with no strings attached,” because every creation springs into existence from the boundless creative imagination of its creator; and even greater creativity is in the pipeline—not only of one, but of every member of the society. Unbridled human creativity amounts to a rich and bottomless cornucopia, bringing into actuality a ceaseless flow of beautiful and useful inventions that may never otherwise have existed anywhere.

Each creator, being unique, brings into actuality a succession of unique creations whose common elements are that they work, are useful, and that they exhibit the highest quality of which their makers are capable: for this too is an element of the creative impulse. There is no sterner criticism of a human invention than that of its responsible inventor. He perceives flaws in his work that might be overlooked by the most gimlet-eyed professional critic—and corrects them, before his invention is shared with anybody.

Yet even so, there is nothing so perfect it cannot be improved; or with modification or amplification, may not be applied to additional uses. Creativity, freely shared, feeds and inspires further creativity, in endless chain-reactions that spiral upward through a society so ordered, to ever mounting, and never ending heights of beauty and utility. Each human invention stimulates the creative imaginations of its inventor, and others, bringing into actuality improved variations—or (almost) entirely new inventions, incorporating elements and features of their predecessors; and often applicable to uses not imagined by the “original inventor.” Come to that, there really is no “original inventor,” of anything. The process of invention has no beginning nor end: for it springs from an endless flow of creativity that is naturally self-perpetuating.

Thus the creative process is not, and has never been a “solo performance,” for which the inventor of a particular item may legitimately take exclusive credit—or as in “civilized” practice, proprietary profit. Every human invention ever made has been the work of many creative imaginations.

This is another consequence of the practical identity between “self” and “others;” and it casts in high relief one of the fatal flaws of *egoism*. For the egoist, be his creations well or ill, claims exclusive “credit” for them that is not his to claim. Even the inventions of a tyrant cannot be brought into actuality without the complicity of many others: for what is a tyrant, without an army?

For a society, by contrast, where responsibility, and the identity between “self” and “others” are common practices, a universal sharing is possible, that produces rich cascades of benefit for all. Creative invention is self-rewarding; yet creative inventors have needs and desires of greater diversity than may be satisfied by their own inventions alone. It is fortunate, therefore, that such a society as imagined here is populated by many creative inventors, whose inventions do not duplicate, but complement one another. All are functional, of high quality, and have among them many diverse uses; and naturally are widely valued and appreciated. As mentioned before, a close second to creating a useful invention that works is having one’s invention appreciated and valued by “others”—as it is sure to be, if it really is useful, functional, and of high quality.

In a society of unbridled creativity, therefore, where responsibility, and the identity between “self” and “others” are common practices, a rich commerce of free exchange may spontaneously emerge: whereby each creative member contributes the fruits of his genius, and reciprocally benefits by the creative genius of his peers. There is no need for anyone to keep a tally of the relative “worth” of these fluid exchanges. All give of their best: for anything less would not give complete satisfaction, either to the givers, or to the receivers of gifts; and all receive in turn the best their peers are able to produce. The net result is that all enjoy the best of everything their society creates—which constantly improves, because improvement is the natural fruit of practice.

Such a society, being populated by unique individuals, may naturally be anything but uniform or homogeneous. If all members are creative, some are surely more creative than others: more experienced, more skilled, more imaginative, etc. If everyone contributes his best, the contributions of some will inevitably be recognizably superior to those of others. Thus even if responsibility, and the identity between “self” and “others” are common practices, there may emerge a species of “rivalry” among members, in which the most creatively gifted, and lavishly contributing take the prize. In such a case, there would likely emerge a kind of “hierarchy” in which the most creatively gifted, and generously contributing members would naturally become the most influential leaders of the society.

There appears to be nothing contrary to The Law in this, because it is not imposed by the coercion that universally cripples human creativity. Any member of the society may aspire to, and achieve such leadership, simply by being among its most creatively gifted, and generously contributing members. Every member of the society knows who the most creative and generous among them are, and their elevated status is within reach of all alike; yet is gained only by those who make the outstanding effort to achieve it.

Every member of the society knows as well the least creative and forthcoming among them, and who among them act with the greatest and least responsibility for their

acts—and relate to each accordingly. Those who enjoy the rich bounty of the society, but contribute little to it, and/or act irresponsibly, are clearly seen by one and all for who and what they are: and do not enjoy the elevated status of their more forthcoming peers. They may be tolerated with compassion, but are also appropriately quarantined by their peers, and prevented from being a drain upon, or a threat to the society at large: until such time as they exhibit greater responsibility, creativity, and generosity toward the whole.

Thus in a society of unbridled creativity, where responsibility, and the identity between “self” and “others” are common practices, there exists constant and ubiquitous encouragement toward expanded creativity, more disciplined responsibility, and closer identity between “self” and “others.” This naturally applies to all children; and to any others who are not willing or able to participate fully and responsibly in social commerce.

I submit to your considered evaluation that this constitutes a preliminary description of a “post-civilized” *lawful society* with at least some potential for working in practice. It doubtless requires further refinement, for it is at this stage entirely imaginary, and has not been tested “on the ground.” It may be recommended, because in relation to all “civilized societies” that have emerged historically, it is clearly an alternative approach to human social relationships. It does not share the primary defect of “civilization:” that is, being established and maintained by coercion, which everywhere and always cripples the vital human nature of creativity; yet it addresses the issue of non-coercive leadership, and accommodates the differences among people natural to any human society.

The claim that such a lawful society may actually be established “on the ground,” among real people, relies upon the universal accessibility of the extremely simple conditions necessary for this to occur: mainly, a human constituency of responsibly self-governing individuals who agree to the identity of “self” with “others.” This is achievable by any individual human who *chooses* to make it so; but it cannot be achieved by anyone, on behalf of anyone else; and of course, it cannot be coerced.

These factors bring the lawful society described within reach of anyone; yet they hold no assurance that a constituency consisting of many such individuals will actually emerge. A “minority of one” is not sufficient to establish such a society: for of course, a society by definition consists of more than a single individual.

There is nothing “new,” or “revolutionary” about the conditions necessary for the emergence of a lawful society: they have been recommended in numerous forms practically throughout “civilized” history, and form the moral basis for many longstanding “civilized” religions and philosophies. Yet they have never been put into widespread practice in any historical “civilization.” The only reason we can recommend them yet again is that now, “civilization” is swiftly coming to the end of its tether; no longer works, even

marginally; and if not replaced by an alternative social arrangement that *does work*, or may be adapted in such ways that it *can work*, then it looks like the "final curtain" for "civilization," and maybe for Earth-humanity.

If so, then the formula for a lawful society suggested here, and in many other places, and repeatedly shunned and ignored by "civilized" humanity, particularly by "civilized leadership," may now have an appeal it could never command before: because now, *nothing else works!* To the perplexing question, in other words, *If not "civilization," what?* I am proposing an exquisitely simple "answer:" *Try living lawfully.*

Unfortunately, even if this gambit is accepted, we're still not "out of the woods." Even if a group of responsibly self-governing individuals should establish amongst ourselves a lawful society along the lines described . . . presuming we are not the only survivors of the "civilized" collapse, *what will we do when we encounter other groups of survivors?* And, *what will they do to us?* Will that occasion a repeat of the play-out of Paleolithic humanity, so many hundreds of centuries ago, after they mastered the technology of producing their own food? [See Footnote 4.]

3.3 Multiple Societies

As mentioned earlier, even the formation of a single lawful society, as described, is an incredibly long shot: based mainly upon the speculative assumption that by the time the collapse of dysfunctional "civilization" has run its course, any survivors will be so fed up to the back teeth with "civilization," and all its wiles, that they will be willing to try almost *anything* in preference to a repeat performance of "civilized" history. *Anything?* Even *acting responsibly*, and identifying "self" with "others?" It's still a long shot; and I have to admit that on the basis of past human performance, much more probably the first thing most survivors of "civilization" will try to do is (God help us all!) rebuild "civilization," in its every sordid detail; and bludgeon into compliance any who disagree with them. If so, *sic transit gloria mundi.*

However, out of sheer orneriness, if nothing else, I'll adhere tenaciously to the assumption that, *regardless of the probabilities*, that's not what happens; and that *we survivors* "somehow" pull together a lawful society instead. So there. That's the hard part. The rest is easy: If *we* can do that, then others can too, in the same way, and for the same reasons.

Of course, this does not insure that "they," or even "we" will actually do it. But at least the same logic applies to the emergence of many lawful societies as to the emergence of one: for a single lawful society is necessarily composed of many individuals who make the voluntary choice, and sustain the necessary effort, to live lawfully. If a single indi-

vidual can, and actually does this, then it is possible; and others can do it too. If several of us in association make this choice, then we shall constitute a lawful society, thereby demonstrating that such an organism can be assembled. If one lawful society can be assembled, then other individuals, who will, can duplicate the process, and improve upon it. In this way, even if it is a long shot, a lawful "post-civilization" may be imagined to be within human reach; and the nightmare maelstrom of "civilization" at last transcended by "post-civilized" humanity. Is this not a project worthy of focused human effort?

If so, then for any individual, the necessary effort is entirely local, and consists only of mastering the individual art of *living lawfully*. That is all. Whether anyone else makes similar effort is not of local concern: for a lawful society can emerge only when and if lawful individuals make ourselves so. Nobody can make anybody else into a lawful individual; but anybody who will can make a lawful individual of himself. This is how the work gets done; and each of us must do the work; otherwise the work will not be done, and we'll all end up where we already are: out on a limb, with nowhere else to go.

Regardless of probabilities, a lawful society is possible: because the story of human creativity has nothing whatsoever to do with probability. Whatever "is likely" to happen, or whatever "will probably" happen, as far as humans are concerned—and as far as any creative nexus is concerned—does not count: because creativity is governed by *The Law of what works*, not by the so-called "laws of probability."

Every product of the creative imagination—human or "other"—that has ever been brought into actuality, and *works*, is *incalculably improbable*: simply because it is not a product of chance, or arbitrary happenstance; but is instead a product of creative, intelligent, purposeful design. Further, without creative, intelligent, purposeful design, nothing would exist: because *things that work* are not products of chance, or arbitrary happenstance; and *things that don't work don't last*. This is The Law.