

Perfectly Flawed Inadequacies

I just returned from an amazing river trip and with it, an awed appreciation for a canyon's waters—unsuspecting current. Wow! As I sit here typing, my mind keeps drifting back to the river; to the similarities my kayak experience has with living life so immersed in such an unrelenting techno-paced seek. I assure you, I've gained a humbling respect for undercurrents, which so subtly but swiftly, careen towards great and looming granite walls, where life-giving waters swirl once more, before forbidding undercuts swallow all shimmer and froth, forever lost—to some unknown abyss.

Speaking of life, I've been pondering over the birthing of our country's mission statements and the heavy magnitude of what needed conveyed. Of the thousands of words to choose from, ***In Pursuit of Happiness***—made the final cut. I've thought about the kind of men our forefathers must have been to pause in their defining task and specifically choose those words. It's a great observation to consider. Living life includes tackling societal quandaries, but it's also about living it individually, with as much fulfillment as we can find. It's in our ability to reflect, to laugh, to feel joy—to *pursue our own happiness*. Those men must have felt certain that life and liberty were all for naught—otherwise. This series begs us not to lose site on just how valuable, pure humanism truly is. Living life is so much more than top-dog racing, shoving humanity beyond human, or feverishly clamoring for some empty prize to finally prove once and for all—what we are or are not.

Ray Kurzweil, undoubtedly the world's foremost techno-predictor, wrote a straightforward accounting about where technology is spiraling. There's nothing obscure about his implications and that has immense value. We don't have to waste time puzzling out where we're being led; though his predictions make the phrase—*ignorance is bliss*—understandably alluring. I've washed my hands of this project a dozen times because of this and I've tried to prepare myself for the possibility that others may very well bail for the same reasons. Don't. That won't help us pursue a damn thing.

We need to light a fire under ourselves. Who doesn't know this? But how? I believe millions of us want to go rationally forward like Dr. Jung's parting advice counsels: *learn to move individually responsibly—in a mass-minded way*. This series has been buoyed upon this unshakable belief. From there, I came to see it as a twofold study-guide, an escort to some great books and articles, and a mini-study about us; about where we've been, where we're at—where we're headed. And throughout my learning about where we are headed; which it's now 2019 and still, I haven't found anyone who's stepped up to the plate to help engage us in Our Story—*The Story of Our Times*. But, that's just it—time. It's something we are running real short on so here I am, learning to write, but don't despair! I'm perfectly flawed. In spite of my inadequacies, I'm giving this my best shot.

Eddy to Abyss.

We now share this Earthly paradise with a wholly new-type of intelligence. It comes with grave existential perils worthy of every human to consider. Possibly, we are living our current lifespan stalled at this juncture of choice because we sense that perilousness. But like an inexperienced kayaker's curiosity compelling them to leave the tranquil eddy and take a closer look at the swirling edge, if we believe we're capable of stopping shy of how much techno-enhancing human bodies can take on before morphing into a mere machine or worse, then please realize: ***once we breach those waters—we're committed. An inevitable undercurrent will swiftly remove all choice from our grasp and there will be—no turning back.***

While twiddling our thumbs, we can at least look more intently for our own values and reflect with renewed appreciation about what it actually means to be human. While at it, we could stoke a bit of passion to help galvanize a conviction that pureform humans are ***worth keeping*** just the way we came. Also while here, it wouldn't hurt to look with unwavering eyes locked on this techno-dawn and consider the plausibility of other lifeforms and what might have happened to them when they too—were drawn to this same abyss. Then when we do get unstuck, maybe we'll heed that unknown warning reverberating in the silent sky to chart a wiser, less reckless course.

A course beholden to our magnificent planet—a continuance to shelter mankind.

The Gem.

To accept techno-enhancing as the next greatest fad includes another question Ray poses: "Should machines get to have emotional experiences or should that matter?" To this I'd like to shout—how in the hell do *its* experience emotions if *its* don't have the biological means in which to create such! What am I missing?

The incalculable, miniscule to mammoth variables which make each of us who we are, is one more reason I've opted for the long road to tell *Our Story*. Because we can, please reflect upon what's quintessentially us—in you. Just use your own handy-dandy imagination to do so and visualize what a tragic waste it would be to relegate this gem to hosting an intelligence incapable of feeling ***Appreciation — Gratitude — Compassion — Love — Joy***. Flowers would probably quit blooming. What a waste.

Going outside is a great way to keep in mind why it's good to be king of this amazing hill. Other handy-dandy abilities like *feeling* a part of an outdoor amazement can easily be triggered by simply choosing to let even one Earthly marvel ***awe and inspire you***. It's the easiest way to tap into, and be flooded by, our free for the taking emotions whenever we want. Like watching to then reflect upon a single bee's tedious *purpose*. A simple enough task I suppose, but her efforts then initiate such an intricately woven, ever-expanding process of such magnitude, even humans can *sense* being a part of it all. Watching bees work is to witness pure unadulterated intent—in motion. Well, our intent easily side tracks. Luckily, those free for the taking emotions can guide and compel us; put the oomph back into intent and retract us. ***All we have to do is paste some focus onto the asking***.

Other emotions seem to do their own bidding; like we're a mere vessel going where steered. Needful, in-body rushes awaken a swelling of passion; ***our hearts were really a thumpin' ~JM***. We have carefree pulsing's too, ones that act like their only job is to careen about just to tickle our insides; ***the sun is on my side - I smile to the sky, got a pocketful of sunshine ~AB***. These are all finger-snapping ours so long as we stop to reflect, to then appreciate and reaffirm each and every day, just how lucky we are to be of human intelligence—***actually able to experience a life on this prodigal gem***. And if we'll strive to cultivate those clever pulsing's, then I believe we can tackle some of our societal tribulations without all hope getting squished from us. Indeed, I believe our forefathers purposefully tackled their tribulations with resolute intent—to *pursue happiness*.

Boulders.

Take a deep, grateful breath of life, roll up your sleeves and let's do this. First boulder—us. It's a headscratcher alright. The dynamics of the *we boulder* can be posed in one question: ***must freer and educated masses still need imminent danger to nip at their heels before pasting together some countering unity?*** I'd considered using this question as the title of this series but even I can see it's a bit long for a title. Well, history can only serve up what's known. No certainties come with what freer and educated entail until some mass puts it to the test but what is historically certain—***desperate times come with waiting for that imminent shove***.

This installment is a transitional one and I'm starting to see the Goliath 1st half was easier to write than this 2nd David half. Turns out—it's much easier to look back and/or reiterate what others wrote as opposed to striking out in the great unknown! So here I am, pussy-footing around boulders and all because they aren't yet ready to topple upon us with that do or die imminence. Problem is—***pureform us won't get the luxury of that kind of shove***. Listed on Baby-G's resume is the word ***irreversible***. Already, the monitoring of our every move and the gorging on any and every lifeline we hold onto has become standard fare for Baby-G. Quickly, our resume needs to say we advanced from *The Imminent Push Minors to The Prevention is Key Majors*.

Indeed, this whole series has been buoyed upon unshakable beliefs. The Goliath half: ***we have no business altering our pureform state***. This belief blossomed from a question once asked: ***is this gem ours to covet—or just any mojo-making intelligence?*** Well, the directive came back to covet the damn thing which is why the David half developed. So if we have no business tinkering with

our pureform state and we want to keep our king of this hill status, then what in the hell are we doing to ensure we don't just throw it all away? Here, I got stuck again. It's not in me to write a scary Goliath preview of what's to come with no offering of hope to prevent what seems so unstoppable but I didn't know how to proceed. Then poof! Dr. Jung's advice thumped down. Suddenly—*hope became tangible*. Learning where we are headed to then learn how to write about that trek wasn't because I also had to come up with re-tracking solutions too! My learning's were to help raise awareness to embolden hope! Well, maybe I misunderstood this part of the directive cuz it damn sure isn't easy to instill hope from a series chocked full of drags! Regardless, learning to move individually responsibly in a mass-minded way is—*tangible hope*. As for viable solutions—that's your part of the mass-minded deal. It's why this series comes with a forum, currently sitting idle, somewhere in the clouds—waiting for you.

Prevention 101.

The Ageless Power Dance—the title I did opt for. It reminds me of a Pink Floyd song about dogs and sheep; ***what we get for pretending the dangers not real? Meek and obedient we follow the leader but we better watch out—dogs are about.*** All peeled back, the sheep persona of every mass is timeworn simply because masses rarely moved *en masse*, until the dogs actually started gnashing on their heels. So, time to check on the dogs.

Dogs or fat-assed rats, either way doesn't matter. What does matter is *pack mentality*. Make no mistake: the 1% pack including the .01%, most certainly are—***gripped by top-dog mentality***. For 2018, CNBC reports that the average CEO rakes in around \$15 million annually; about 271 times more than average us. But, these CEO's are like little toy yappers compared to the top 200 dogs that leap up into the \$142 million arena. And still, those are but junkyard hounds compared to the 85 richest Great Danes which stand guard over \$152 trillion of combined wealth which equates to more bones than 3 of the 7 billion rest our—piled hordes. So aside from a wealth disparity of such monstrous proportions that's paving the way to Oligarchy mayhem, let's shine a spotlight on fevered hording. I'd bet every penny I clutch—*these dogs awaken to check their daily rankings before even taking their first sip of espresso*.

This matters. Corporate dogs have fired up their propaganda machine—*billing workers as inept and/or unsafe and deserve to be replaced with inanimate its*. Why? We need paychecks. Baby-G doesn't. They pocket millions at our expense—*all for stature*. ***Frenzied hording is what's advancing invasive technologies detrimental to our very being!*** So back the question once asked; *why would we just give this gem to some artificial, unappreciative pretender?* Well, that question needs stretched out a bit because there damn sure isn't room on this gem for us to peacefully reside without a paycheck—all with an ogre splat in our lap! If these hammerings bring on some rising indignation, that's great! While we are still the all-powerful consumer of this great capitalistic ride, we have every right to pound on this one in too: ***this gem of a ride is not an exclusive for only the mega-rich to pursue happiness on.***

Capitalism is the current moneyed-lead we've got going. Our solutions need to encompass improving it. So when I hear us idly entertain some notion that by collapsing it we can build something better—I can see we aren't thinking this one through. Collapse spells disaster is so many ways, I'd have to add another installment just to scratch them!

Many of us aren't equipped to provide airtight solutions and that includes me so don't whizz through this series looking to find any or you'll be disappointed. This series is a starter-kit for moving responsibly forward *en masse*. Raising awareness *is* the process to learning a new skill. Moving *en masse* to push back some of the info-deluge careening down *is* like showing up at the job site together. Moving to become discerning consumers is—*to open the tool box and break out the sledge hammer!* This is not a new concept. But, it has yet to be put to a thorough test. I see our system in dire need of repair, we as the repairmen and the result—*a healthier, forward-adapting system*. Maybe getting started then, simply begins by rearranging how we view capitalism.

Americans have been freely choosing what to purchase for many years. Junkyard dogs have used that time to studiously learn the nuances of en masse purchasing power. Great Danes then evolved simply because enterprising hounds worked out a way to direct how a free capitalistic jig would best fit their tempo. Nothing new here. Wolves learned how to work together to round up their dinner too. Meanwhile, this herd has yet to figure out how to work out any rhythm to much of anything! Indeed, it's time for a change. Moving towards supporting and promoting businesses that make concerted efforts to fairly appreciate human outputs; businesses that still value and employ us, *is capitalistic voting-casting!* And once that hammer swings, I've no doubt that our insistence to keep these challenged times guided by common decency, will ensure a more genuine—capitalistic experiment.

Boulder Field.

I don't consider God concepts as a boulder. Rather, I believe those concepts are inextricable from what's labeled spirituality and that's definitely inextricable from being human. Besides, I don't have enough years left in me to write about what volumes have already been written about. What I do see as our next boulder; what today's bottled message zooms in on, is directional steering.

Ever notice how easily partisan torches get lit to distract us; almost as if to intentionally divide us? Vote ballots include directional steering addendums where choices like gambling and the legalization of pot have made their mark. For years, we've been riled over heady topics like pro-choice and same sex marriage; topics which make their mark as to who we vote for. So, where was the addendum which asked for our nod to transcend? How about the one that asked for our approval to entrench real-time monitoring onto *our highways?* Was our permission asked for the allowance of Drones to peer in our very windows and I missed out on that too? How about the one that years ago: *should have spelled out how monitoring to replace every workforce with machines would one day usher in actual, not just Hollywood techno-fantasy stuff, but very high existential perils to all humanity?* What audacity! For years, all of us have been fully apprised about the total mayhem up ahead and yet, our guides have rushed forth, not even bothering to garner our consensus. Why? Equally important—***why haven't we forced these issues into mainstream focus?***

When I think about our part—complacency comes to mind. But when I think about their part, I wonder if powerheads deemed we aren't competent to weigh-in on such momentous, big picture steering. Maybe their negligence in not asking our consent has been intentional. Maybe they see us as hopelessly messy—*replaceable*. I try to see ourselves from their perch and yes, I can see a bunch of miserable and unhappy people making really poor choices over and over. People hardly parenting with care—caring even less for themselves. But when I leave the Walmart parking lot and drive over to Home Depot, downtrodden hopelessness stops streaming and not because I'm afflicted with an over panglossian perspective. It's by way of common observations that I derive at this undeniable fact: a righteous, so-superior attitude must be why it's so lonely at the top because down here, most of us sure as hell aren't any messier than the ones perched on high! ***We too are worth keeping.*** So, it's all of us or nothing. ***What's it gonna be boys? ~ML.***

The Human Experiment has trudged haphazardly but overall, it's still been towards a more tolerant, civilized existence. And yes, we have lifetimes of adapting yet to do. Oh to see the day when no child will ever know heinous acts, misery or abuse! And though Super-G will surely remove all choice from even transcending elites, it's our own powerheads right now, who are either foolishly or subversively doing the same, and it's an outright betrayal of the legacy our predecessors paid for in real bones—and blood! ***Today's power hounds are undermining humanity's very chance to learn how to soar in-unison and, this is not their choice to make—unless we let them.***

Who's making the Decisions 'round here anyway?

Machines can't yet compete with us at many higher-thinking levels but *Deep Blue and Watson* are two prodigies paving the way for the rest of the pack. Exponential means it won't be long before the gist of Ray's ponderance comes to bear: "*Will original thought or consciousness, which is derived exclusively from key bio-based humanistic traits, be missed on Earth if decisions are deemed best-made from non-bio processors a zillion times larger than humans?*"

We already see the fruition of this reality coming at us via Smartphones; a spin-off from those smarty-pant prodigies. Already, Apple's *Siri* and Amazon's *Alexa* sweetly voice choices to us, cleverly map our days out for us, awakens us, schedules us, think for us. Samsung recently purchased *Viv*; evidently intended to be *the* prima donna of interactive AI. Whatever. Just know that by our acceptance of smart talkin' interactive AI, we will be the ones flinging the gate open wide, for the next irreversible, cash cow stampede. But, that's not all. Though not yet demurely voiced, a copious stream of Artificial Intelligence gushes through the doors of edict-making chambers the world over. The process underlying smooth talkin' robotics is the same process underlying how ruling policies directly impacting us are now hatched. *The gravity of Ray's ponderance is now unfolding.* So, is this progress?

Here's how decisions are being made 'round here nowadays. In order for information to even land in a machines sorting room, values must be assigned to every trinket. *Humanistic ingredients not easily assigned value—don't even get invited to the party.* First-stage decision-painting—now pathetically marginalized. Next, in a time of such vast streams of too much information, those value-assigned, heavily marginalized, now sorted trinkets, are then prioritized and to do this—*parameters must get set. Data now quantified.* Today's decision-making process rests in the hands of programmers and whoever pays their bills—*decides what invitation parameters get set.* All except us—***the monumental test group***—all have their own invitation parameters; governments, scientists, corporations—industries.

Biased or not, a swollen stream of too much information is like a stream swollen with too many salmon. Fishing programmers must then batch-up, even price-up, their catch. One parameter-setter wants premium fresh, another flash-frozen, and a third just wants the leftovers canned to look tasty. So a great way to make data look tasty is by way of the PowerPoint rage going on. Just give a drab and lonely snippet of data a few moments in the dressing room, suit it up in colorful pies, bars and arrows and poof! Out comes 10#'s of some great looking stuff!

In today's power-chambers, where critical policy is hatched, by the time tweaked and stretched trinkets of marginalized data gets shoved through every agenda running, slicked-up then in flashy ways for policymakers to better appreciate the big picture in which to base decisions from, it's still a copious pile of too much information so it doesn't work so well. When drowning—it's hard to see clearly. In all this—***human intuition is being demoted to the back seat.*** So if it seems that lately, our ruling duo seems to be driving without common sense, I'd like to provide today's machine-netted intelligence process as one big reason why. Humans aren't aware of but a skiff of what we intrinsically know, therefore many of our decisions are intuitive—*common sense decisions.* This cache happens to be one immeasurable, super-charged, all-natural and even free, bio-enhancer to our known data-cache. It's something no machine will ever have and it's high time we reconsider what data-hording has to do with actual comprehension—***the true measure of wisdom.***

Cognizantly choosing for ourselves what we want to accept in our society *is* the game plan. Haven't we endured perfectly polished politically correct rhetoric long enough? Before Baby-G comes to fully deliver spotless-sounding policy completely gutted of true value, we could simply choose to accept that it's our inadequacies that are, after all—perfectly flawed! Now that's something artificial intelligence is gonna have a real hard time trying to mimic!

Directions to Fishtown.

Social Mobility. That's what Harvard Professor Niall Ferguson keeps dinging at. I'll finish reading his books, *The Ascent of Money* and *Civilization* after I finalize this series as I'm certain they'd bring on yet more installments. And, once my traitorous confidence catches a whiff of that—not even duct tape will hold it down. Luckily, *Newsweek* covers a bit of what Ferguson has to say in their January 23rd-2012 issue. He writes: "There are two nations found in America—the rich and the poor." Ferguson highlights other contributors attesting to such. "In lower-class America: Family, Work, Community, and Faith are all in a state of collapse. As a consequence, the traditional bonds of civil society have entirely atrophied." That's us again. And though I doubt many readers of this series will hail from the Fishtown side of the dock: *our income and jobs are markedly dropping at a rate where more and more of us will find we've somehow landed in Fishtown—sooner than later.*

To recap Ferguson's take: "The fix-all's politicians toss us fork in two diverse directions: European-styled welfare state, i.e. tax the rich to pay for the poor, or allow unimpeded capitalism to spiral wherever the 1% wants it to and in the meantime—*hope their civic responsibilities awaken.*" Guess you know what I think about banking our future on a hope.

Both forks already come with years of their own calamity-brand pitfalls so what about a third fork? Ferguson writes: "Somewhere between the extreme scenarios of social collapse (coming apart) and the great awakening, (coming round, perhaps) there lurks the mundane possibility the U.S. could muddle along for quite some time with its current level of social polarization. But as a father of a newborn American, I would much rather he didn't grow up in one of two hopelessly separate nations so I say we tackle the inequality issue head on. After all, this is the perfect year to do so as the choice in November will be stark." Ferguson wrote that in 2012. With no viable 3rd option in sight, I've no doubt about what lies ahead.

Here comes the Onslaught—again.

The year of 2011 was my incentive to push forth on this endeavor as I knew what year followed. Well, *c'est la vie*. Then, 2016 came and went. Regardless of which round, by every fourth fall we divide simply because we are primed to do just that. So before we take *two steps back again*, please ask yourself if dividing over the same two distinct fix-all boxes that yo-yo back and forth is really worth it. I'm sure Ferguson offers viable ways to tackle inequality and therefore nearly every societal quandary as most are tied to it. And though I don't yet know what his tackling's entail, I damn sure know this series is a preamble to any viable 3rd fork!

We talk allot about how a 3rd fork splinters us moreover than 2 forks dividing us. Really? Let's think this one through. If 2 forks are truly all that's viable; and roughly half of us fervently believe we've correctly chosen the viable one: *then how in the hell can approximately 150 million of us be so wrong?* Don't be too quick to grab for a shallow answer. *Roughly half of us fully-functioning smarties, cast against the other half of fully-functioning smarties.* Who's graced to judge just exactly how many dummies keep tipping the scale anyway? Rather—*the middle is the scale.* Polarization is setting in, not because half of us are dumb but because two platforms have been well-honed for many years. There are viable parts to both sides. We know this so let's forgo the squabbling over right/wrong ideology. Instead, let's cast our ire on the fact that both sides drove smack into the den of big damn corporations funding powerhouse lobbyists. The result? ***One fully entrenched Oligarchy submerged two viable platforms!***

Politicking is big big business. Their propaganda machine wreaks havoc on our democratic rise. Of both markers we agree. FYI: *the voters most affected by this new way of politicking happens to be us; the ones who've been an adult at some point during the past 30 years.* Maddow versus O'Reilly was a great place to see how info-inundation worked us over the last time. Behind them was *MSNBC* and *FOX* and lurking behind them, and again, will be mega-buck corporations. Back then, it was *GE* and *Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.* Not afraid to be outspoken, Maddow tried to unspin the

mire behind GE's tax refund. Hard for her to do as she clearly pointed out—*GE's the hand that feeds her*. And to think GE merely made appliances! Well, hidden hands have hidden agendas.

Sure, partisan rivalry affords political commentators endless job security but someone still signs their paychecks and when it comes to the kind of wads it takes to circulate a weekly periodical, air one primetime communicating-commercial or broadcast a nightly newscast much less purchase entire dedicated channels, those shadowy parameter-setters absolutely have agendas. For instance, when I wrote this, *Newsweek* was owned by *The Washington Post*. In turn, *The Post* was owned by *Graham Holdings* until Amazon's founder purchased it. Actually, Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos investment firm *Nash Holdings* made the purchase. Meanwhile, the Graham family and Warren Buffett had the helm at *The Post* for many years where their investment firms, *Graham Holdings* and *Berkshire Hathaway*, were the largest individual stock holders of *The Post*. Maybe they still are. I can't keep up. So—*what's our news doing even hanging out in investment firms?* More importantly: ***why are investment firms investing in news-rooms which typically aren't even money-making investments?*** Add to that, who actually makes any stock worth buying? Yikes! It's a deeply muddled tangle and that's us, along with our very own news, smack in the middle!

The Charade.

Let's skip the charade ~ just speak plain. CWK.

Regardless of what we once registered as or the labels we now wear, all of us want the same thing: *responsible, ethical representation*. Instead—we get a charade. Stature-hording has grown to a point where individuals buy entire countries and they don't just walk into a bank and lay the money down. ***Public opinion buys countries—including democracies***. The communicating billions spent to tweak our opinion becomes pocket change in comparison to the potential, untold billions to reap. Their wads don't pad what's now become a heavily leveraged democratic sham without projected goals in mind. So, if I was a powerhead flush with untold millions in which to pocket myself a winner, I'd need to know which candidate to bank on! We are being pulverized with slicked and dicked-up information simply because we are public opinion of the greatest capitalistic democratic experiment ever and—***we've become damn hard to gauge***.

Vote-casting is off-limits even to money-backed motives. Tweaking our opinion then is the only way in which to favorably affect who to bank millions on. *Rich powerheads don't stay rich very long if their invested hordes don't recoup favorable returns*. Make no mistake—Super PAC's are here to buy *Our Democracy*. Don't think these leads have your likeminded directional steering desires front and center. For instance, since he was recently in the news, try to sleuth your way to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's real political passions via his wealth-ties to *Foremost Maritime Corp* (Mitch's sugar daddy). Here, I learned that by registering ships in places like The Marshall Islands, and then not flying the U.S. flag, it's much cheaper to beat the tax man! So, should Mitch get a free pass since he doesn't run *Maritime*—only feeds from its hands? While sleuthing, you may as well look into what those ships and Mitch have to do with what's happened to the price of Kentucky coal. Then remember—*Mitch is the heavy-hitting proponent of Super PAC power*. Now don't think I'm only picking on the color red. Wait til you see how the House Minority leader dresses up in the color blue!

As to the price of our opinion on Pennsylvania Avenue, consider this *NewsMax* report just before the 2012 election. "This Presidential Election is expected to pass a \$2B fundraising mark by Thursday. This eye-popping figure puts this election on track to be the costliest in history." Do we think the next round will be purchased any cheaper? Fred Wertheimer, a longtime campaign finance reform advocate said in 2012: "The distinctive factor in this election is the outside money being spent; *the corrupting money financing it. It symbolizes the disastrous campaign finance system we now have and the undue influence the relatively few, well-financed individuals and interest groups now wield over governing decisions*." By 2016, I read where the Koch Brothers gang had geared up to the tune of \$900 million. The George Soros gang; a mere \$550 million. The final outcome? *The Washington Post* reported the 2016 deluge for presidential and congressional elections ended up around \$6.5 billion. This, is one more status quo absurdity that won't change—until we make it.

Now, full-circle back. Political commentators then deliver. If this jerk-us-every-which-way vexing feels like we are being used in someone's deception—we are. Partisan-division is a great way to keep us stymied, it another's game, and we are being used as pawns. None of this is a newsflash but if this is how the self-serving divide us nowadays, this refresher is like a Leatherman tool to help extract our democracy from an Oligarchy funding a charade! Still, so long as we exist in some capitalistic-type of system, then our opinion is literally worth everything. And whenever we want, we can simply take our opinion off towards that nobly envisioned rise. Whenever we want—*we can choose to become the duly respected partner in an authentic, democratic experiment.* For now, it would behoove us to stretch for some unifying signs; ***have you ever tried really reaching out for the other side?~B.*** Here's one of mine. I've noticed that die-hards can watch the opposing flavor; the Rachael or Bill's, learn and not get offended, right up til the end of their airtime hour when the commentator's senses take leave. This is where we should tune out—not before. Well, I suppose their senses actually stay intact, it's just that the rigid left and right need mollified as they are the ones who do speak out. *They are the gaugeable, bankable ones.*

Distinct Steering?

Political commentator Bill Maher made a valid point about TV personality's responsibility to stop minimalizing our real-time quandaries. I agree. To be fair though, giving it to us straight up is not our preference. Watered down is what we get simply because that's the way we like it. However, change begins with us. So we could start, by stopping, the lobbing of cynical impediments at those who shout for responsible governing. ***Who lets the dogs out?*** We do. During the 2012 round, the folks who spoke frankly about the mess we are in were labeled declinists. We rolled our eyes and nodded agreement. During the 2016 round, *declinist resurgent's* got slapped on the folks who won't sugarcoat it anymore. Propaganda revisited: *information deliberately spread to manipulate or harm a person, group or movement.* Spinmeisters await delivery of the telling-signs wafting off our opinion and then—spin away. Sure, power-control schemes will likely forever remain standard suffrage; today's impishly cultivated spin *is* yesterday's treacherous court intrigues, but we could at least quit giving them a heads-up about where our weakest flanks are!

To get an idea of how important our opinion is to the Wall Street pack, just think of the millions *BP* spent trying to clean up their reputation. The exact price tag hasn't been divulged but *The Huffington Post* reported; "BP spent millions on advertising in response to the spill—above the nearly \$100 million spent during the four months of the spill itself. An additional \$42 billion was spent to cover the costs of the spill." And to think our opinion doesn't come with a price! But again—that's while our opinion still matters.

Here's a volatile torch. Democrats spend more than Republicans. Probably true—once. Well, here's a glimpse of the previous, distinctly colored white houses. In August of 2011, *CBS* reported the eight-year Bush administration added \$4.9 trillion onto our debt. Soon thereafter, the Obama administration tallied on another \$6 trillion for a grand total of about \$11 trillion in those 16, flyby years. However, Obama did inherit two wars and one granddaddy of a recession. Regardless of however overlapping debt gets divvied, it took about 20 years to rack up the first \$6 trillion whereupon it only took 16 years to triple that. And as 2019 unfolds under the first two years of Trump; a self-proclaimed business wizard conservative—so comes a nearly \$3 trillion thunk more.

Newsweek's January 30th-2012 issue covers the head of *The International Monetary Fund*, Christine Lagarde who said: "At the end of the day we have to reach a compromise and a common platform. I leave aside the bastards because that's the one thing I don't compromise with; people who lie and cheat, people that are not with group behave like parasites." Lagarde must try to bridge an entire world. ***Divided by a world so undecided~RHCP.*** For us, if we really want to gear more responsibly towards a better future, then just know—that while we still are—we are this gem's prime candidate to forge the way.

I don't think we're as divided as others want us to think but even if we are, then just ask yourself—whose team does that benefit? Without a doubt, change is in the air. Exactly how we change is what's not yet known so let's shoot for a head-on tackling as we can't afford to muddle any longer. A 3rd consensus-building fork stands the best chance of forcing a U-turn back towards a healthier democratic path but the longer we wait, the more we'll get divided. Honestly, it no longer much matters whether it's a democrat or republican show. This two-fork ideology has been submerged below one fully entrenched, two-fork crony system which includes politicians of either color and fat-rats of every green to gray shade. ***A vibrant, capitalistic/democratic experiment cries for a chance!***

America is in Decline.

And, all on our watch. In the 2012 round, this was supposed to be a hot topic come debate time. Well, I missed a few minutes of debate #1 so maybe it was mentioned but our Nation's decline should have been hammered upon during every debate but wasn't. Wasn't hammered on in 2016 either. Why? Has our rulership deduced we can't handle the truth or do we not want to hear the truth? Either way, we must somehow come to grips with the fact that Our America is indeed—declining.

During my 2018 efforts to update these installments, this decline topic has been most responsible for my latest procrastination bout. So much in fact, Christmas and New Years are now in the rearview. Basically, I'm not keen to dash post-recession hopefulness. America's economy is up and unemployment is way down and those statistics alone are genuine rays worthy of hopefulness. Procrastination set in cuz I kept coming up emptyhanded; what could I possibly type that might help stay our focus on other decline measures—*without deflating hope*. Ah, learning to write. Surely this process ranks right up in the top 10 most humbling experiences. Anyway, just to get beyond this damn boulder, I opted for a simple reminder. *Though immeasurable, the value of hope, of any feel-good really, is actually what compels us to overcome any of life's challenges. Not despair.*

So, not to pooh-pooh our recent economic gains or record low unemployment but we'd be in deep doo-doo by now had our economy not turned up and unemployment not gone down. Also, there's the cyclical nature of economics that we should stop forgetting about since our presidential hopefuls and their spin maestros sure don't! A prime consideration in deciding *when* to throw their hat in the ring comes factored straight out of this predictable enough cycle simply because riding an upswing comes with a huge perk—the *near guaranteed 2nd term*. Well, I guess its fair game; presidents that eagerly take credit for upturns they've done little to encourage, but it's embarrassing when our support for their 2nd term then lauds such misbegotten credit! To more fairly apprise economic cycles, *Nber.org* says that America has experienced 11 of them since WWII. Tallied cycles, referenced as expansions to contractions, holds the average peak to trough at about every 4.6 years. And on average, each downturn lasts about a year with the exceptions of 1969-70, 1981-82, and 2007-09. So basically, economic ebb and flows are normal. What's not historically normal but rather, one stark newday reality, can be evidenced within a few other decline measures we'd be ignorantly reckless to ignore.

Statistic Minefield.

Before I begin, I'd just like to borrow a quip from *Wikipedia*; "*please help improve this section by adding citations from reliable sources.*" You see, I've found *us.gov* statistics akin to bare-bones; numbers with little context. Experts then attempt to add depth to those numbers whereupon reliable sources then attempt to make it all comprehensible! Yep, it's a minefield out there. *Most data used came straight outta *us.gov*.

Decline measures we can't afford to keep ignoring. First and foremost, our ever-spiraling debt. Second, our GDP; (Gross Domestic Product). Third, the job market/household income scene and fourth, income disparity and poverty. These combined measures largely indicate the overall health of a nation.

1). US Debt: In the past 30 years; (which means both democrat and republican leads are equally culpable so we should cease finger-pointing) our debt absolutely bloated. This debt, which typically ranks in the top three of world debt, shows no restraint. Estimates for 2020 is \$24 trillion; for 2028 is

\$33 trillion. This spells decline in the starkest, most factual manner. Eventually, like whenever the next recession hits, this indicator alone—will most definitely spell *Deep Sh*t*.

2). Our GDP to national debt continues to stall above the 100% benchmark. From 1940 thru 2017, this statistic averaged around a healthy 60%. The all-time high; *the inability to afford our way of life*, was back in 1946 which came in at a whopping 118%. All-time low was in 1981 @ 31%. Narrowing our focus to a 10-year lookback, we began 2008 at a very respectable 67%. By 2010, we landed in the unsettling waters above 90% and by 2012, we breached the 100% benchmark. Since then, we've continued to exceed the ability to pay for our existence. By 2014, this GDP/debt ratio was at 103%. Today, it's around 105%. By 2020, this offset is estimated to be around 109%. To stay this course, languishing above that 100% benchmark, means our debt will continue to bloat. To lower that benchmark, we could raise taxes and/or lower governing and infrastructure expenses. Or, we could simply stand to defend our way of life by protecting our jobs and wages to generate the taxes needed. ***Yesterday's America flourished simply because paycheck wielding consumer us, constantly greased the massive commerce/governing wheels.*** Today though, decent job markets are dropping left and right, never to return, compliments of job-eliminating machines which once birthed—hardly grease a thing.

3). The job market scene. From 1948 thru 2018, our unemployment average has been around 5.7%. Currently, we are below average at 3.7%. For the employed, we are categorized as full time, part time or seasonal. Part time is considered to be below 34.5hr work weeks and further refined as involuntary or voluntary. Involuntary are those who seek full time but settle for part time whereas voluntary is obviously chosen. Of today's 27 million part time workers, the majority seek full time but settled for part time. As for wages, our averages increase as we age, lower after retirement. For those just entering the job market, annual averages begin in the \$20,000 range, then upwards to the \$50,000 range before heading back down come post-retirement.

How we are sliced. Using data from *us.gov Bureau of Labor and Census*, as of October 2018, American population was 325 million. Of this, about 206 million of us are between the working ages of 15 to 64. Of that, 129 million work full time jobs, 27 million work part time and 6 million remain unemployed. *Experts remind us to take into account that unemployment averages can be up to 7% higher because: the bureau doesn't distinguish between full time or part time, nor do they factor in how many people quit looking for work altogether. The bureau doesn't count people among the unemployed unless they are *both* jobless yet say they are looking for work. This is meant to *not* count those who really don't want a job such as full-time college students or stay-at-home parents. So, by adding up those accounted for in the working age slice, I came up with 44 million unaccounted for!

More slicing. From 1950 thru 2018, America has averaged a 59% labor force. As we close 2018, we hover around 62%. Basically, our country tries to stay afloat on the backs of just over half of us which means that historically—***this used to suffice in keeping that GDP/debt ratio below the 100% benchmark.*** Not anymore. This dismal reality has heads a-scratching. So, experts attempt to divvy up all that's dismal. Much of what's dismal is attributed to what a now global economy comes with; disproportion in trade agreements and overseas labor markets for instance. As for job-eliminating technologies, finally, I see more and more mainstream coverage here; experts more fairly questioning the impact job-eliminators have wrought. But, stay wary. There's still a bunch more rising clamor bent on snuffing out what's valid to question. Our job is to notice.

Another headscratcher comes out of the unemployed, post-recession scene where those numbers continued to escalate from 24 to 40 weeks for those who remained in those lines. Lines even more swollen had thousands of troops not deployed; had our at-home bureaucracy not bloated. When those lines finally did abate, from 2012 onwards: *for every 5 jobs created—3 have been in the low-skill, low-wage sector. This is now called—The New Normal.*

4). Household Income. Here, the job market scene takes on more depth and for good reason. Of the 44 million missing us, many can surely be found trying to remain at home during child-rearing

years which is why household income plays such a heady role. Also, any clan living under a single roof well understands the value of pooled income. Specific to income, it's further refined as *Median or Mean*. *Median Income* is the amount that divides all American income into two equal groups, half having income above, half below. *Mean Income* is derived at by dividing just the total income of each single group by the number of members in that group; i.e. *Household Income*.

When I began constructing this installment in 2011, I had used \$55,000 as the Median Household Income. Maybe that was correct, maybe not. It's hard to tell and for valid reason. To start, the Bureau changed the way it queries data so statistics now come with even more variables. Aside from Median and Mean Income, income is derived per capita, (per individual), family or household, as well as income refined as real or nominal. Take 2017 for instance, the nominal median income per person was \$31,786 while the mean income per person was \$48,150. Also, nominal income ignores cost of living, real ignores inflation. Also, where we live is factored into the mix as is age, race and gender. Because of these confounding factors, average annual household income, (a family of 2 adults and 2 minors), can range anywhere from \$55,000 to \$100,000. ***FYI: \$55,000 more aptly depicts what the bulk of Americans attempt to pursue happiness with.***

Historically, when unemployment is low, pay rates increase. But now, post-recession onward, our pay increase comes in at one dismal, 1.9% growth. This doesn't even contend with inflation or cost of living. Also historically, with the exceptions of a few dips and peaks, American household income has remained fairly stagnate for the past 30 years. Another post-recession reality punctuates this. *The New York Times* reported that after the recession: "*median household income of \$50,000 continued to fall 6.7% more in the 2 years following the recession than the recession itself for a total 9.8% decline—the largest drop in decades.*"

With an annual poverty bracket for household income set at around \$23,000, with an annual average household income set at around \$55,000, whereupon the bulk of Americans fall somewhere in-between, the storms a-brewing are evident. You see, if we narrow this in-between more; omit the skewing brought on by top brackets, the more realistic take has the bulk of us trying to make-do on an annual average household income around \$40,000. So wherever these folks live, high or low cost areas, their earned income either singly or combined, is what American households average in order to keep themselves fed, clothed and sheltered. Well, we all know that anywhere in America, \$40,000 doesn't stretch very far.

Obviously I'm no statistician but sometimes I'm observant. To paint a fairly accurate big picture scene, think of the slice-n-dice numbers format as the canvas whereupon our own observations color it. Notice that more and more of us must now find a way to pay for our existence via seasonal, part time and/or in low pay sectors. Notice how many must now work several jobs just to make ends meet. Notice the many young adults, even those with young families, who now stay in their parent's homes well into their 20's. Notice the many houses which now shelter a variety of folks all squeezed together under a single roof. For some, this choice stems from customary or societal trends but for most, it's a chosen reality for economic survival. ***Today's Social Mobility Avenue is yesterday's newly paved one but is now in dire need of repair.*** Whatever means we use to try to better comprehend what's really going on, doesn't matter nearly so much as that we at least try. But, some statistics easily align with our own observations. These can be found under the umbrella called Income Disparity.

Income Disparity.

During this 2019 update round—another bloating occurred. And, it began here. But, it wasn't until I'd expanded the following installment way beyond what anyone could possibly digest in one sitting, that I finally realized, conceded, that I'd need to create a dedicated, 2019 installment. So, I came back to here; to cut out what had taken me days to put in.

Income Disparity deserves a hard look. A more in-depth take can be found in the newly created 2019 installment but for an endnote on disparity here, this installment was first created 7 years ago where then, I had written 13 million Americans lived in poverty. Today, somewhere, there's about 46 million Americans existing below poverty. I now wonder, did I get 13 million wrong then, or is this social mobility working its way to Fishtown?

Missing Statistics.

The solutions to right our dangerously listing ship reside in the supply, demand and wage equation. Basically, our output ratio must overcome our debt to lower that %100 benchmark. So, here's what I really want to know: ***how many job-eliminating technologies are responsible for this killer? Where is this statistic?*** I've given up trying to find statistics for a 10-year lookback. Most current articles are geared toward predictions. And, I suppose that's logical. I'd guess tallying-mechanisms would needed to have been in place all along; from the assistive crossover to full blown replacement. I'd guess that when this past decade opened, there came an onslaught nobody had prepared for.

Current AI reality coverage has slowly trickled forth. In 2014, Journalist Annie Lowrey stated: "Measured relative to GDP, total compensation and its component wages and salaries have been declining since 1970. Wages and salaries have fallen from approximately 51% GDP in 1970 to 43% GDP in 2013. The root causes of wage stagnation include *technological change*, the decline of labor unions, and globalization, economists think, though they disagree sharply on how much to weight each factor. But foreign-produced goods became sharply cheaper, meaning imports climbed and production moved overseas." Lowrey notes: ***"Computers have taken over for humans in many manufacturing, clerical, and administrative tasks, eroding middle-class jobs growth and suppressing wages."***

Of the 129 million full time workers, where 95 million live close to poverty, but all share in the burden of trying to keep this entire country afloat, then it only makes sense to share that burden more broadly. Forget about raising or lowering taxes. Seems only logical to simply generate what's needed by employing more of us at more decent pay rates! Why isn't this happening? Of the 10% elitist gang where our ruling chiefs all reside; those we vote in to enrich humanity for the betterment of mankind by facilitating a healthy full circle reality where jobs hold steady so as to pay for everyone's safe existence, have they lost their senses? Have we? ***How logical is it to expect our 10% luxury living elitists to empathize with our plight?*** And anyway, much of the 10% clan were born into lifetime luxury so that's really all they know. To feel what a drooling wolf scratching at the door is like—can't possibly be a feel they know.

Oligarchy revisited: *Government by the few; a society in which money is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small faction of persons or families; power exercised by a small and privileged group usually for corrupt or selfish purposes.* In 2012 our approval of our elitist Congress reached a record low of 13%. Up til then, the average approval rating was 34%. But by 2013, that rating dropped even further, into single digits, and I saw these dreary numbers as hopeful signs. ***Especially when the economy is looking up, it's imperative we keep decline measures in the forefront of our minds.*** That's Prevention 101. But somehow and mysteriously, our approval rating has since climbed to 17%. Why? *There has been no fundamental changes in congress over the past four years.* Their status quo jig hasn't changed. Why then, has our opinion of them improved?

Left in Fallout Dust.

If we head back to basking, then business-as-usual means corporate/political powerheads will continue to huff-n-puff their way to digitalized papered-money banks, bilk from our tax coffers, legislate more pork, our debt of trillions will keep mounting, insider trading on the hill will continue unrestrained, blame-game posturing will continue, Super PACs will completely own our democracy and an Oligarchy will absolutely flourish. Truly, it won't much matter who we vote for today or tomorrow: ***The Debt Clock is set for status quo and only a unified mass demanding a better foot forward can change the way that clock ticks.*** No Trump, Hillary or whoever next—throws their hat in. Nobody but us.

Meanwhile, there's still that horrific existential brink just ahead that we won't even talk about. Once there, transcending and disparity lines will undoubtedly intensify the mayhem roiling on that brink. Tomorrow's rulers will then draw the line of who's real and who's not. Will pureform humans be left behind in the techno-dust, deemed mere fallout? This grave hypothetical scenario is not hatched from superfluous paranoia but delivered straight from the voluminous chapters' history provides us attesting to how the power dance rocks. **Technology is the only new twist.** Lines of division eventually but have always spelled perilous trouble for every mass. *We are the ones who end up on the front lines of every division rulers have ever drawn.* And for those eager to witness the days of superintelligence, then just know that absolutely everything techno will be *irreversible and entrenched.* Directional steering will slip from even the paws of rich transcending dogs where then, humanity will not merely take two steps back but rather, one careening face plant of a dive. First dusting-off dazed assessment? Anarchy.

The Keys.

Intertwined and convoluted; it just aint easy addressing the insufferable power dance. Little wonder no one's stepped up to the plate to tell *Our Story*. It's said that humans would not attempt many things if not for optimistic ignorance, so—you see how perfectly flawed I am?

By large, this series is a 10 year look back. Please take some time to consider what's changed within that time; within the past 30 years as well. Consider also—*all that hasn't changed in The Ageless Power Dance.*

I've used this quote from distinguished social psychologist Alex Carey numerous times because it's well worth memorizing as it perfectly frames the juncture at which we stand. *The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and—the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.*

Knowing where we actually stand is critical. Demanding an ethically-guided forward-ho is critical. Learning to move en masse beyond mere quibbling over today's charade is critical. The calamities we face are so much bigger than any political party can tackle alone or even together. **Do we get a second chance to the answers that we lack?** ~CS. Yes! Yesterday—we were the keys. Today, we merely hold them but that's still enough. Freer and educated means there's been a colossal change in human development. Paradigm shift basically means: *a dramatic change in methodology or practice—a change of one way of thinking or another.* Today's masses are the privileged benefactors of this fairly new, practiced change that includes a perspective adjustment we've yet to cash in on and ready or not—**we must start believing now is our time.** This is our ride. This is still—*Our Democracy.* We are free to activate those anomalies whenever we choose. To do so, we simply start at the most agreed upon basics and go from there. And, to remain the pureform kings on this gem? Well, that's about as basic as it gets.

I am sincerely yours, Publius