

armed disputes afflicting the planet presently. From Ireland to Serbia to Israel/Palestine to Lebanon to the Russian southern periphery to Iraq/Iran to India/Pakistan the slaughter goes on in the name of religion. In the US, freedom of religion and personal expression must constantly be defended, as corporate and military power closes in. Corporate goals, advanced and enforced by military means, and justified with the messianic zeal of fundamentalist religionists, create a deadly mix certain to lead to disaster.

If this analysis is correct, the question then becomes, "Are violent tendencies inherent in the contemporary corporate/government/military world order or do they merely adhere to whatever system holds power?" The example of the Low Countries and Scandinavia would seem to indicate that, although its complete elimination doesn't appear to be possible, institutionalized violence can be greatly reduced without endangering the social fabric or territorial integrity. Other quite different systems seem to demonstrate the opposite, some in much higher relief than the US.

The evidence seems to indicate that where there is a settled population, democratic oversight of corporate power, a universal economic safety net, and minimal militarism, that unless fanned by the flames of racism, ethnicism, or religious militancy, chances for a less violent way of life are much improved.

As the world's strongest military and economic power, the US cannot avoid setting the pace in the preparation and use of coercive agencies. If we mean what we say when we praise peace, freedom, and responsibility, we must work to make the agencies of institutionalized violence smaller and their employment a last resort. Neither humanity nor the biosphere can any longer endure the ravages of widespread technologized warfare.

We must somehow make the corporation responsive to the common good. Defining the common good is no longer the difficulty it once was. Survival for ourselves and our environment is about as common a good as one can imagine.

Those of us who see the world in this kind of perspective have very different political opinions from those who don't. We're not necessarily better or smarter, but we must become more activist if we're to maintain a hopeful attitude while looking into the abyss. That's why it's becoming ever more important for us to put aside feelings of fear and hopelessness; to speak out; to organize; to seek creative solutions and work toward their implementation.

What we will be working toward is a time in which there will only be one kind of people: those that can live out their lives in dignity, freedom, and security with each other, and in harmony with the rest of nature.

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activities unsustainable in the long-run. They place greater value on property-owning than wage-earning; greater value on marketing than producing.

These, then, are the by-products of a form of organization whose stated justification for existence is its proven ability to most efficiently provide the range of goods and services required by modern civilization. According to current doctrine, these goods and services are then bought and sold in the marketplace where Adam Smith's "unseen hand" will determine the exchanges whose profitability will select the fit from the less-fit. I call this the *doctrine of market determinism*. Constant reference to this secular doctrine is as central to corporate culture as profession of belief in God is to organized religion.

Governments, on the other hand, are charged with, among other duties, regulating the increasingly corporate dominated marketplace with a highly visible hand—the rule of law. That hand holds not the carrot prompting the successful trade deal, but brandishes the stick of socially sanctioned coercion at perceived miscreants. Compared to the unrestricted violence and appropriation of property permitted kings as their divine right, the rule of law (in conjunction with a vigilant and uncorrupted judiciary) is benign. And yet, the threat of execution, incarceration, or fine is thought necessary to enforce the law. These threats are made credible by the recruiting and deployment of military and police forces—the agencies of institutionalized violence.

True, such forces are legitimized in the public mind by their charge to not initiate violence but to only be reactive to lawbreaking or threat of invasion. To propose the abandonment of the use of force to maintain civic order and national integrity would be naive. However, nations can be ranked by the degree to which they are prepared and accustomed to resorting to it. On this scale the US must rank as one of the most militaristic and heavily policed nations, in spite of geographic shielding against invasion and having the world's most productive economy. The US is the only nation that has used nuclear weapons against an enemy population. The US has fought or aided wars against national liberation all over the globe. There are more prisoners in US jails than any other country besides Russia. Police brutality against minorities and leftists has been a consistent feature of American life from the lynching and murder of blacks and Wobblies in the 19th century through strikebreaking, Vietnam, and Waco in the 20th.

Prior to the present over-populated era, victims of persecution could escape to unsettled, or sparsely settled, lands. Now there is no place to which to flee. The fact that so many still seek to emigrate to the US, proves only that it's safer to live in the belly of the monster than at the mercy of its teeth and claws.

The institution of property ownership, originally contrived as a solution to territorial disputes, has become a bastion of privilege for "owners", and a locked door to the poor. Not all nations make the occupation of a piece of land on which to simply stand a conditional right, as the US does. Lack of respect for this fundamental need—a place in which to gain sustenance and to rest from that effort—produces a restless, rootless population that cares little about either neighbors or environment. Such a population, having no true homeland to lose, is violence prone.

Human territoriality, not content with the material plane, extends even to spiritual realms. The three major messianic faiths: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, are factors in the longest standing

- The demise of the extended family, historically; as well as current attacks on the integrity of the surviving nuclear family (such as the necessity for bi-spousal employment, TV Pied Piperism, money-problem divorces, promoting worker mobility, child-targeted advertising).
- Pollution of the land, water, and air.
- Indifference to irreparable topsoil erosion, deforestation, and species extinction.
- A contentious atmosphere surrounding all productive enterprise. Business fights governmental regulation. Corporations attempt to starve and devour each other. Management employees claw their way to the top, as workers (seeing their real wages declining) either organize against management or kill themselves in an effort to be more productive than their co-workers. Consumers attempt to gain recompense for deaths, injuries, and poisonings. Companies hire ever more security guards to protect against shoplifting and looting.
- The elevation of money, as the symbol of wealth, to the status of ultimate value in which all other values are soluble.
- The perpetual anxiety experienced by property owners and wage-earners alike over the ups and downs of the business cycle.
- A financial establishment whose mechanisms of credit and exchange dictate the enslavement of millions in life-long debt.
- The neo-colonization of equatorial countries with attendant rain-forest depredation, pollution, worker exploitation, and cultural disruption.
- Participating in the starvation of public education.
- Shaping of higher education to fit corporate agendas.
- Indoctrinating the public with the fraudulent notion that all new technology is an unalloyed good.
- Indoctrinating the public with the fraudulent notion that maximal employment of technology will lead to (at some undisclosed point in the future) a shorter work-week with no loss of pay.
- Corrupting the regulatory and procurement functions of government at all levels.
- reliance upon, and consorting with, the military for mutual growth.
- Readiness to enjoy the profitability of the weapons trade in peace and to equip opposing armies (often both sides at the same time) in time of war.
- Creation and control of mass media as a vehicle for advertising corporate wares and political candidates.
- Cultural de-evolution, i.e., "no-brainer" and grand-guignol entertainment, resulting from corporate mass-marketing displacing ancient artistic traditions.
- Using mass media to, if not actually glorify violence, to pander to the mass public's fascination with its depiction.
- Muzzling or buying-out of intellectual and artistic creativity contrary (or unrelated) to corporate agendas.

If the above depiction of the negative influence of corporate culture seems unbalanced, consider how ubiquitous is the image of the corporation as the source of all things desirable promulgated by the daily blizzard of advertisements and media hype.

All of these characteristics are either violent in and of themselves, or promote violence down the road. They institutionalize the predatory aspect of human nature at a time when humans gain sustenance increasingly from each other rather than from the proximate universe. They pursue

While acknowledging the power of the hedonic urge, the Realist ruthlessly seeks (with varying success) to suppress it in himself and his community lest he be vulnerable to his competitors as he tirelessly panders pleasure to the rest of the population.

Today, the artisan/merchant tradition is institutionalized in the corporation.

The warrior/guard tradition is institutionalized in nation-based mechanized police and armed forces at every level of government from local to international.

The explorer/landowner tradition is institutionalized in a worldwide web of real or imaginary fences dividing the surface of the earth into private reserves varying in size from nation to ash-crypt, and permanence of tenure from eternal sovereignty to sub-lease.

Thus, the human conditions which Realists find axiomatic; want-poverty/greed-gluttony, fear/aggression, and exclusion/invasion; have become institutionalized in corporations, government, and property relations. It is one thing to recognize, as Realists correctly do, the ubiquity of greed, fear, and territoriality, but quite another to institutionalize them as a civilization's primary motivators. This is precisely what our economic, governmental, and military institutions have done. The inevitable result is institutionalized violence.

In the context of this hypothesis, let's look at the U.S. today.

The power, values, and style of the corporation have come to dominate contemporary life. Invented to promote colonization less than four centuries ago, it has become the near-universal modus operandi of the business enterprise of even the solo entrepreneur—the tyrannosaurus rex of our era. It has triumphed as an organizational modality because of its ability to marshal capital, its flexibility in attracting and motivating aggressive and innovative management, and by maximizing labor productivity.

The corporation's sole raison d'etre is growth and profitability. Service to the public and fair reward to employees are among the costs of doing business. The lack of personal accountability (other than capital risk) of the stockholder, and limited responsibility of the hired managers creates an entity with huge power in the marketplace (which it also tends to own) without being charged to take responsibility for its actions other than to keep honest books, avoid criminality, and to conform to such other strictures as the various agencies of government may enact.

And enact strictures government has: anti-trust, truth-in-advertising, minimum wage, the legitimization of workers right to organize and strike, pollution penalties, to name but a few, are recourses to which the public has resorted to protect itself from the corporations' immense power divorced from responsibility for its exercise.

Even with such safeguards as these in place, corporate dominance has introduced the following characteristics, among others, into the fabric of contemporary life:

- The devaluation of human labor through fragmentation, routinization, and automation.
- Gross inequity in the distribution of income as the rewards flow to the owners of real and corporate property.

so, and others that have lain dormant, or have been slowly developing, are becoming essential to our survival. If that's true, which I believe it is, then there are (in our unique historical circumstances) indeed two kinds of people: those who are shaping their lives and actions toward sustainable human survivability in harmony with the rest of nature and those who aren't. For me, it's of paramount importance to attempt to be in the first category.

What, you may ask, are these defining characteristics? If I were forced to articulate them with two contrasting words, they would be violence and non-violence.

I mean by these words something a bit more far-reaching than the dictionary definition. My use of the words is meant to place emphasis on the outcome of an action more than the character of its commission. For me, the truly violent act forces the victim to take a path of no return. Thus, if the act leaves no scar, violence has not actually occurred. In my view, violence occurs in infinite gradations throughout nature, but only in *human* actions do the considerations of human volition, appropriateness of the target, and duration of the consequences, make *choice* of action an issue.

Of course, all animals must consume other life forms to survive. Plants, with the possible exception of the Venus fly trap, are not afflicted with our moral culpability. But animals in the wild eat their fill because they occupy a niche that allows it. The history of human civilization began with the invention of agriculture, which was, at the minimum, devised to stabilize a source of continuous plant-based nutrition. Some early agriculture-based societies proved unsustainable because of their violence to wild nature. Only with the advent of industrialism have civilizations inflicted widespread global violence on nature.

As our numbers and power on this planet increase, so do the numbers of actions with possible violent outcomes. The 20th century has been one of unprecedented violence to each other and our environment. Presently, that violence is beginning to put not only our species, but the balance of the natural world from which we sprang, at risk. It is the purpose of the paragraphs that follow to examine the sources of this violence and suggest alternative actions. Two caveats: all such attempts at global overview are doomed to overgeneralization, and none of the ideas put forward are original. My limited goal here is to tie together some root-level themes as a consistent basis for formulating opinions on contemporary issues.

To that end, I would first ask, "What are the basic motivations underlying most human behavior?" The Realist (or cynic, if you prefer) branch of the conventional wisdom has long held them to be: fear, greed, and territoriality in relation to our fellows and environment, and if those are not immediate priorities, then, sensual pleasure for ourselves.

Further, the Realist distrusts altruism. Noble aspirations will cower before the stick and succumb to the lure of the carrot. The warrior/guard became a universal answer to fear. The artisan/merchant became a universal caterer to greed. The explorer/landowner expanded the territorial urge (with the aid of the other two) into the concepts of ownership, sovereignty, and nationality.

## TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE--1995

It's been observed that there are two kinds of people; those who divide people into two kinds of people and those who don't. Personally, (ignoring for the moment the paradox at the heart of the conundrum), I would far prefer to be in the latter category than in the former. As a member of that category, I could luxuriate in the comfort of loving my fellow human as myself, for I would see all people as being, in all important ways, no less nor more than myself. The essential equality of all people would cause race, ethnicity, sex, age, wealth, physique, health, intelligence, behaviors and expressions to become but variations on a single theme. Indeed, modern as well as ancient spiritual guides urge us to not only embrace the perception of the unity of all human consciousness, but to extend this viewpoint to the universe as a whole.

Unfortunately, I find myself unable to manage such a saintly and dispassionate view of the human race. To even begin to work on developing such a view, I would have to withdraw to the cloister of a monastery, removing myself entirely from the hurly-burly of contemporary life. Intuitively, I know my destiny lies in engagement with the carnality and tumult of everyday life as experienced in this very specific time and place in human history.

Not that I expect or desire to have an important place in history, rather, that my lifetime happens to occur in a historical time of particularly crucial importance to the human race. Perhaps history is the aggregate record of the lives of billions of individuals, some reinforcing each other and some canceling each other out, but none of any importance by themselves. On the other hand, the actions, inventions, and insights of a very tiny few—the great religious and military leaders, philosophers, and artists—acting on their free will (or following their inspiration) appear to have blazed the trails that the rest of humanity has broadened to create the highways and byways of the totality of human experience.

Whether the current historical situation is seen from a mechanistic or anti-entropic perspective, the crucial contemporary question seems to me to be: *is humankind* (the one species unique in having the capacity for self-identification) *capable of evolving into the kind of creature that can survive the excesses of its own success?* Or are we helpless to prevent our exponentially increasing numbers, combined with a ruthless industrial technology, from causing the collapse of the biosphere on which we are utterly dependent?

True, some view these questions put this way as a hysterical reaction to certain by-products of modern life with which human ingenuity, having come this far, will learn to cope. Others hold that we are witnessing the “end days” prophesied in the Book of Revelations. Still others hold that all value lies in experience and that experience is experienced only in the moment.

These views all have in common the fatalistic notion that we are powerless to affect the impersonal forces of history. They differ only in their degree (and style) of pessimism or optimism.

My question to these Fatalists is, then: *what is the purpose of the evolution of humankind's intellectual prowess if it is ultimately to be the architect of its own demise?* My intuition is that the working out of the human purpose on this planet has a long way to go; that we are beginning now to turn a corner where certain characteristics of our species that have served us well no longer do