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PROJECT LAMB

A Blueprint for the Recovery of Ethical Boundaries

By

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L A M B

“Legal And Moral Boundaries”

I. MORAL BOUNDARIES AS LIFE SUPPORT

Without clear moral boundaries, civilization will succumb to its demons.



All civilizations represent institutionalized systems of allegiance. For any civilization to survive more than generation or two it must rest on a robust underlying moral foundation from which its governing structure, laws and systems for the allocation of accountability derive their legitimacy. This ethical foundation and the implementing rules and norms of governance are a civilization's *normative infrastructure*. When that infrastructure fails, a civilization dies.

The normative infrastructure of modern Western civilization has been damaged by mindless empiricism, doctrinaire philosophical materialism and malignant skepticism. Collectively these forces have done something that has never been accomplished before: they have undermined confidence in morality itself, except as social convention. This is an invitation to nihilism.

Our common moral infrastructure has been under attack for the last 150 years by intellectuals whose weapon of choice was the acid of comprehensive doubt. That weapon was originally aimed at the legitimacy of archaic authoritarian institutions, especially at

hereditary rule and theocracy. The attack proved very effective in the developed world, but the acid did not return to its bottle. It has continued its work, eating away at the supporting foundations of civilization itself, much as it did early in the last century in pre-Nazi Germany and pre-Soviet Russia. In the 21st century, corrosive doubt is compromising civilization's immunity to nihilism, atavistic tribalism and the other emerging forms of totalitarianism. Our civilization will remain at risk until its normative infrastructure is fully reconstituted, its moral credibility is restored and the self confidence of its defenders becomes the norm instead of the exception.

Unless civilization recovers robust confidence in its own value, the tendency of its intelligentsia to wallow in suicidal irresolution will precipitate the actual suicide of the civilized social order. The prospect of a new dark age looms, but is far from inevitable. This is an optimistic take on our circumstances, one that begins in realism and asks us to see the deep continuities on which reasonable hope is founded.

II. RESTORING "LAMB"

The quest for the restoration of the deeply embedded ethical principles sustaining civilization's Legal And Moral Boundaries (LAMB) is too important to be left to the academy and the clerisies. The current situation will not be resolved by denial or complacency. Inaction is not an option.

Some members of the intellectual community have recognized the scope and seriousness of the damage, and are braving the slings and arrows of political correctness in the academy as they work slowly to repair the damage. But their attempts to repair what the skeptics have undermined are being fought at every turn. Just one example: Think of the striking success within intellectual circles of the attacks on religious authority. Consider: if religion fails altogether, is there another equally powerful (and *benign*) source of moral authority?

Although the immune system of civilization has been weakened by cultural and moral relativism, until recently, the so called common people have been inoculated by common sense. But their immunity is relentlessly being compromised as an amoral ethos invades the popular culture here and in Europe. While the academy is working at glacial speed to repair the damage, we are facing an approaching train wreck.

The present age has been dominated by the themes of rebellion against authority and the sacrifice of innocent men, women and children on a monumental scale. Very large forces are still afoot in the world and we humans may not have yet seen the worst they can do.

The cultural and philosophical acids loosed in the last century or so cannot dissolve everything. Even the stubbornly pervasive notion that ethics and morality are merely human constructs is beginning to run its course. Recovery of our essential boundaries is possible. A secular - religious consensus is within reach. But civilization is more fragile

than we would like to think. We can ill afford to wait another century while the professional philosophers grind out solutions piecemeal.

Lucid underlying continuities in fundamental ethics exist such that, when they are fully recovered within the social order, the necessary legal and moral boundaries will be naturally determined. This task necessarily involves a convergence of a secular humanism of increased depth, with a renewed pan-religious understanding of increased scope. Most contemporary theists have passed through Stage One Monotheism, in which the One True God was recognized as supreme over all lesser gods into Stage Two Monotheism, in which only one deity is recognized. I propose that we are on the threshold of Stage Three Monotheism in which deity (by that or any other name) is recognized as transcending sect, denomination and the religious-secular divisions. We are united by the supreme source of ethical awareness.

The quest for profound and elegant integrations of theory has driven modern science. I believe that the discovery of the fecundity and heuristic power of *integration* at all levels of human discourse and thought will rescue human ethics from its current fall toward the abyss.

The prophet's vision of the lion and lamb lying down together is about the deep human thirst for integration of seeming opposites. A simplistic homogenized monism denies or apologizes for evil. But there is a deeper sense of moral integration that preserves and defines moral boundaries. **That** integration will lead us to moral renewal. The gift of the "lamb" is the insight that our legal and moral boundaries can save us.

↓

LAMB

Underlying Continuities In Fundamental Ethics Recovered Legal And Moral Boundaries Restored
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III. FALLING WATER

"It is clear now to everyone that the suicide of civilization is in progress. What yet remains of it is no longer safe. It is still standing, indeed, because it was not exposed to the destructive pressure which overwhelmed the rest, but, like the rest, it is built upon rubble, and the next landslide will very likely carry it away."

Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, p 2

“The political and economic conflicts and complexities of the last few decades have brought before our eyes dangers which even the darkest pessimists of the last century did not dream of. The injunctions of the Bible concerning human conduct were then accepted by believer and infidel alike as self-evident demands for individuals and society. No one would have been taken seriously who failed to acknowledge the quest for objective truth and knowledge as man's highest and eternal aim.

“Yet today we must recognize with horror that these pillars of civilized human existence have lost their firmness. Nations that once ranked high bow down low before tyrants who dare openly to assert: Right is that which serves us!”

Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years*, pp 9-10)

Certainly, Schweitzer and Einstein were prescient. In jettisoning the sanctions of traditional religions, the 20th century's prevalent secular ethical systems suffered an immediate and pervasive crisis of authority. When analyzed carefully, the post-religious belief systems were based on naked normative assertions lacking ultimate authority, or they were an attempt to recast the ethical contents of particular religious belief systems in secular terms. In the worst cases, they were attempts to dress dreadful authoritarian ideologies in neo-religious garb. Eric Hoffer's classic analysis in *The True Believer*¹ made the compelling case that Soviet Communism and Hitler's National Socialism adopted secular-religious organizational forms strikingly similar to that adopted by authoritarian religions.

No ethical system can prevail if it depends solely or crucially on imitation, nor on arbitrary assertion of value. No ethic will be capable of exerting a constructive force in human affairs unless it is grounded in something more fundamental than the transient opinion of political leaders or the fragile consensus of popular preference. And no ethic will long survive if it is not convincingly rooted in the accepted verities of human experience. Twentieth Century secular ideologies offered a hollow solution to the problem, one in which mob enthusiasm temporarily (and disastrously) masked the ridiculous pseudo scientific theories of Marxist social engineering and the malevolently racist eugenics of National Socialism.

We can drift for a time, but not forever. As Dostoevsky wrote, “Without God, everything is permitted.”

A legal career that brought me into intimate professional contact with a criminal population in the thousands over the span of three decades, has given me a special insight

¹ There are a number of editions of this book, dating from the original one published by Harper and Row in 1951. I had the privilege of seeing this passionate, coherent, trenchant self educated longshoreman twice when I was a law student in the late sixties. He was a robust, stocky man with the autodidact immigrant's earned self confidence. He maintained from life experience that the “common” people were “lumpy with talent”, and that the intellectuals (especially those who never had to rub shoulders with “ordinary” people) were dangerous when left idle. As he saw it, the failure of civilization to keep the intellectual class busy, productive and happy was a potentially fatal mistake.

into Dostoevsky's observation. A Few years ago, I was enjoying another day in my practice of criminal law as a Public Defender in the City of Oakland, California. While walking back to my car from the downtown County jail where I had met with a murder client, I overheard a conversation behind me. A few feet away on the sidewalk I noticed a woman in her twenties and her child, a girl about nine or ten.

The pair had obviously just visited a prisoner charged with felony assault. "See," the mother was saying to her girl, "if you *cut* somebody, you can end up in there." That exchange, not an isolated incident in my practice, spoke volumes about the deteriorating condition of our society. The tone of the remark was flat, conversational. There was no sense at all that the woman was communicating an event of *moral* significance. It was as if she had said, "See those weeds? If you don't cut the grass, that's what your lawn will look like." The content of the remark was coolly practical, without emotional judgment, something of the order — "If you go 45 on that street you will get a ticket."

I invite you to place yourself in that conversation. As someone who enjoys a firm sense of the "rootedness" and validity of ordinary morality, assume you are talking to your own child. Someone your daughter knows has knifed somebody, causing grave injury, and is in jail for felony assault. Imagine what you might say and how you would probably say it. First, consider your tone. You would feel a gut reaction to the event, a sense perhaps captured in the "My God, how could he have done that?" or "I hope you never hang out with him!" Every part of you would tend to communicate to your child that the act of assault itself was wrong. Whatever your words, you would be speaking in a context in which the given was - "We don't do that. It is wrong." What was important about that mother's remark was the context that it revealed, a context in which basic morality was simply absent, just as if you were talking about color to a blind person.

I picked this vignette out of many because it was not an isolated sample from an atypical population, but the harbinger of a trend noticed over two decades and literally thousands of criminal cases. This is like finding dry rot and a termite in your kitchen floor, then finding telltale powder along the bedroom walls, and in the bathroom. There never is just one termite. Without question, my experience has shown that the general criminal population has deteriorated over thirty years, resulting in far more sociopathy, far less conscience. That population, whether rich or poor, white or otherwise, is increasingly dominated by individuals for whom common morality is not an innate feature of reality (occasionally violated as a result of human weakness), but is merely a set of invented game rules, themselves utterly without authority.

In short, the state of affairs foreseen by Schweitzer and Einstein before World War II persists and worsens. This culture remains in deep crisis, visible at all levels. With the retreat or outright collapse of supernatural belief systems supporting ethical foundations among the best educated intelligentsia, ethics is in an eerie state of suspension, and imminent free fall.

Years ago, I imagined moral foundations of civilization as a giant bucket of water, in which the outer wall of the bucket represents the network of theistically grounded ethical belief structures, placing the ultimate basis for ethics outside mere human convention and invention. Then I imagined a series of frames. That was frame one. In frame two, the bucket becomes transparent. In frame three, the bucket is suddenly gone. The water, momentarily bucket-shaped is quivering. This captures the present situation among the prosperous intelligentsia.

And frame four?

IV. EVIL AS CATASTROPHIC CLARIFICATION

Evil clarifies.

I was in Manhattan on September 11, 2001 and remained there for several days afterwards. When we humans are confronted with large scale evil, the experience is illuminating, much as a descending night flare on a battlefield reveals the configuration of forces around us. Our many differences are exposed as different versions of the good.

I believe that our capacity to recognize evil is innate and allows us to “reverse engineer” if you will the core affirmations that evil in its various forms seeks to deny or destroy.

When confronting prospective evil the core nature of the threat matters. Think of an earthquake or tornado, and contrast an example of large scale, human directed malevolence, like the Nazi death camps or the Pol Pot massacres. In common natural disasters, structures and the physical basis for life are imperiled. Our response is calibrated accordingly. When purposeful human malevolence looms, we are threatened on the immediate physical level, but we are also attacked on the level of our deepest values.

This is why true evil draws us back to our core values.

Any recognized confrontation with evil illuminates the core ethical values that tend to unite all that it threatens.

An ethic may be defined as a set of values, ideal behaviors, or norms which are asserted to apply to the one who asserts it and to other individuals. An ethic is distinguished from formal law in that an ethic is asserted to apply whether or not the sanctions of organized society will be employed to enforce it. Like general law, a principled ethic applies to those who would impose sanctions as well as those who would be sanctioned. But an objective ethic does not depend for its normative authority, as does general law, on the particular views of individuals, either collectively or separately.

An objective ethic implies supra-cultural validation.

We must assume the task of ethical restoration can be done. What, then, might be the broad outlines of a successful objective foundation for ethics? I propose the following:

- Any such ethical framework would be consciousness centered (for consciousness is the common referent of all value) and would apply, by its own terms, to all conscious, sentient, thinking creatures. (To be fully objective, an ethical foundation must be universal. All arbitrary boundaries and categories must be merged into distinctions that share an agreed, fundamental ethical significance.)
- The operation of the ethical framework would be fully consistent with life affirmation, and with the consistency principle (i.e., reason).
- To warrant objectively valid status, the ethical framework would operate in credible sense as an aspect of discovered properties of objective reality. The philosophical framework supporting ethics, then, would itself support a coherent view of the nature of reality and our knowledge of it. These features imply that ethics flow from an operational epistemology and a larger world-view than utilitarianism and historicism.
- The authority of any such ethic, in the final analysis, would be sufficiently rooted in the universal and widespread in adherence to subordinate raw political power to principle.

So, having confronted evil, I am able share the conviction of those humanists and religionists alike who are confident that there is a universal good that transcends our sectarian perspectives. These perspectives converge on several core affirmations from which the ethical sensibility arises. As conscious, living, intelligent beings with the innate capacity for empathy and creative inspiration we share three affirmations: life, creation, and conscious intelligence. All affirmations begin with life affirmation, which leads to affirmation of conscious being, and proceeds to reverence for all creation. I note these three affirmations are so deeply entwined that any discussion of one cannot be separated from the others.

Conscious being is the property of life itself having awakened; this is meant in the same sense that life is the property of the universe that localizes and intensifies the tendency toward self creation. Conscious being is the venue of significance, without which the question of value would be incoherent. Conscious being presents three (at least three) powerful, life-enhancing capabilities: compassionate empathy, foresight, and creative innovation. This suggests the moral purpose of conscious being as well as its provenance. In this way, consciousness and life affirmation necessarily lead to creation affirmation, though the deep understanding of the universality of the processes of creation, of the roots of life and consciousness in the processes of creation.

Life affirmation, respect for conscious being and reverence for creation are the innate affirmations of the enlightened being. For the theistic religions, they are at the heart of

the human -- deity relationship. For humanists, they are the foundation stones of the core human agenda. For civilization, they are the governing normative principles.

Our respect for the integrity of conscious being and our reverence for creation in all its forms, directly support the values of human dignity and creative freedom, among others.

As I an ethical realist, I know that our universal values are protected within almost any civilized enclave more than in a brutal state of nature. But it is a simple fact that not all social conditions and regimes support these values equally. We require the infrastructure of a civilization harmonized with life, consciousness, and creation.

I note that the value of creation, alone, provides us with an interesting test of social organization. In that moment of liberation when an evil regime is defeated, human creative activity resumes and music plays. When evil seizes control, the creative community attempts to escape. The creative ones are the canaries in the mine. These insights permit a definition of evil on “Edmund Burke” scale: *Evil is present in any serious, purposeful challenge to the human role in creation, and to all the other universal values on which human civilization rests; evil incarnates an agenda and conduct that constitute an authentic threat to life, consciousness and ongoing creation.*

And I have expressed my hope and prediction that the spiritual significance of creation by human agency in all its forms, the innate holiness of the human creative enterprise as it serves and enhances life and conscious being, will be at center stage in the spiritual practice and ethics of the 21st century. It is often said that the opposite of evil is the good. I think the opposite of bad is the good. But the opposite of evil is the numinous. Our species’ holy encounter with creation is at the center of ethical recovery.

V. OVERCOMING RELATIVISM & EMPIRICIST DOGMA

The widespread cultural and moral relativism are products of the dominant academic world-view, where all of our important knowledge is the product of empirical verification, in short, the gift of “science.” The destructive corollary is that the rest of human knowledge (including our moral insights) must be founded in superstition or personal preference.

Throughout academic and scientific circles, penetrating deep into the educated intelligentsia everywhere, among key opinion leaders, educators, and the media, a new world-view prevails. Not unfairly, it can be described as a bleak, relativistic naturalism. Its key features are:

1. All objective knowledge comes from empirical procedures.
2. Human values are not like verifiable facts. They are more like mere preferences, or psychological states.

3. Evolution, which fully explains our arrival on this planet, is essentially a series of developmental accidents, mediated by organic-environmental fitness.
4. The universe at large is without purpose.
5. Morality is essentially a cultural invention, relativistic and plastic.
6. [In the most extreme form:] All aspects of interior human conscious being and all the non-material features of reality that it apprehends are purely material, consisting of matter and energy.

Any culture that lacks a unifying framework of thought and belief capable of resolving fundamental philosophical conflicts tends to find real world conflicts irreconcilable. Accommodation seems a value in itself, including accommodation with evil. In the absence of an agreed objective foundation for ethics, the resolution of ethical questions is left to the subjective views of those who are affected, including those in power. In the real world of events, this means that the resolution of conflict oscillates between fragile consensus and force. In this context, nihilism becomes the response of an equally “valid” point of view, lacking only the “legitimacy” of those who occupy positions of formal authority.



This situation is no more stable than falling water.

These views, collectively, are the “dead universe paradigm.” It is so powerful in academic circles that those with religious views must cloak them under the euphemism “spiritual” or are otherwise shamed into silence. The foundations of civilization are being eaten away by these ideas. Their cumulative effect, in modern terms, is very much like a computer virus. But the core of the notion is hollow. Our universe can only be

considered *dead* by excluding life and conscious being. If we *represent* the emergence of the meaning and purpose of the universe, the dead universe paradigm is false.

VI. THE DECLINE OF LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

When the authority of ethics and the ethics of authority are in decline, the need for the rediscovery of a common source of moral authority that is independent of human political institutions is so urgent that people are driven to “any port in a storm.” Secular humanism (in its materialist form) and pragmatic utilitarianism were temporary ports that over time have provided inadequate shelter, separately or together, for the damaged moral infrastructure. Moral systems that are rooted in the lowest common denominator are far too vulnerable to hedonism, particularly in the torrential form unleashed by the modern media driven culture.

By devaluing principle, the current materialist, hedonistic culture encourages the morality of imitation. In this milieu, particular elites, endowed by circumstance with the prestige conferred by worldly success, glamour, or access to special knowledge, have become a source of moral emulation.

Three modern elites stand out in the developed world by virtue of their cultural prominence and the inadequacy of their contributions. In ascending order, these are the cynical academics, the shallow entertainment media personalities, (particularly the movie stars who become economic and foreign policy experts), and the narcissistic professional sports figures. The first are largely disqualified by virtue of having adopted a value-free empirical materialism, the second, operating in a sort of New Age fog, are disqualified by having only the vaguest idea what they are talking about, and the third demonstrate the utility of having a good criminal defense attorney.

The current versions of secular humanism have bought us time by attempting to carry forward an essentially religious value structure as a unilateral secular human stance. I believe this effort is failing, in part, because of the absence of a deeper universal basis for ethics. I believe that much more is needed. Although secular humanism did buy the culture time, it was not (and is not yet) an adequate response to this crisis, because it is inherently incapable (in its present form) of providing an answer whether the physical universe has any purpose, because, within the current secular humanist framework, that question is irrelevant. And whether moral values have objective authority is also irrelevant. In place of these notions, humanism supplies the stance that we humans alone determine our own purposes, values, and norms. I find this view is as incomplete as the world-view of an infant whose moral horizons are the edge of the crib, the maternal presence, and the next bottle.

Whatever the cause, the failure of contemporary secular humanism to connect to the deeper universal, to incorporate discovered ordinal principles, and commit to a satisfying methodology -- other than an appeal to a crude Benthamite materialism to resolve moral

conflicts -- is crippling. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian ethic, based on a materialistic "greatest good for the greatest number," begs the fundamental ethical questions and invites the mob rule of a society in the grip of an anti-ethic. Ironically, the defense of Bentham's own country against the Nazi war machine was successfully conducted by men and women whose heroic devotion to the cause was fueled by far deeper moral convictions than utilitarian thinking is capable of providing. To ascend to the next level, humanism must be able to provide a convincing answer to at least three questions:

- *Why practice integrity?*
- *Why risk anything for a value?*
- *Why care about the human condition – or anyone – after you are gone?*

VII. CHALLENGES TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT & RELIGION

We face the virtual collapse of the best features of the Enlightenment consensus, and the rise of neo-tribalism, in the guise of political correctness and interest group politics. However laudable the development of what we might call "oppressed category" consciousness in the last decades, these and other movements also reflect the adaptation of individuals to the angst of a value-free, secular environment, in which each individual is left to reinvent a moral code without reference to God, the Tao, or other ultimate authority. Left in this bleak situation, individuals automatically seek larger affiliation and identification as a substitute; movement, race, gender, and gang supplant religion or theistic belief. This is the predictable consequence of the collapse of ultimate normative principle.

Religion has lost its grip on the intelligentsia and on the dominant western culture, not only because the empirical spirit of the age has eroded theistic belief, but also because the appended ethical structure seems too narrow in the context of the modern culture. I strongly believe that contemporary discussions of ethics must squarely address the question of self-benefiting choices and others'-benefiting choices. In any reasonable discussion of this issue, an intelligent 21st Century audience will find that the ethics of predatory nihilism and salvic self-immolation are equally irrelevant.

The task of recovering a robust and meaningful ethical system intelligible and persuasive to the 21st Century human mind requires the integration of all natural, core human goals, values, and interests in a comprehensive ethical framework that makes sense at every level.

This is a particular challenge of religion and its allies. As a practical matter, no proposed ethical system that ignores self-benefiting choices, or places them in polar opposition to others' benefiting choices can flourish in a culture that has discovered the value of freedom and self development. Any viable ethical framework able to flourish in this century must necessarily be comprehensive and richly textured enough to include the full range of all ethical norms, values, motivations, and considerations that commonly operate

in human affairs. Even so-called negative values, like the pursuit of power and recognition, must be fully integrated, the continuum from self-denial to greed must be acknowledged, and models developed to guide individuals along this continuum. In this enterprise, objective principles remain essential. And it will be equally crucial to develop contextual models for the implementation of normative principles. While context issues such as scale and relevance can change outcomes even within the framework of an agreed, universal value system, principle itself must survive, lest we descend again into rootless relativism. The restored foundations of ethics must be well integrated.



VIII. ELEMENTS OF RECOVERY

The identification of social, economic and political interests, *qua* interests, does not provide the basis for the resolution of conflicts among them. Indeed, much of the difficulty with the current cultural situation is that all ethical issues, in the absence of governing moral principle, have degenerated into a contest between competing political interests that, in turn, are fragile coalitions of other sectarian interests.

I propose that five elements of agreement, by taking us out of interest-based ethics, move the bar a long way toward the restoration of the restoration of civilization's ethical foundations.

1. Commitment to *reason* and *veracity* as the basis for communication;
2. Commitment to the principle of *integration*, both as an epistemological and as a normative principle;
3. Commitment to three *meta-ordinals*: life over death; consciousness over non-consciousness; creation over stasis;
4. Commitment to the reality of *normative principles* derived from these three meta-hierarchies and understood as deeply rooted in the universal features of reality.
5. Recognition that *context*, while crucially important to application, illuminates, but never negates principle.

The restoration of a viable, universal ethical framework, grounded in objective reality, must be the overriding task of philosophical thought until the foundation of ethics has been rebuilt. In effect, I am proposing that we must find ways to bridge the gulf between theism and its potential allies, a cognitive bridge that will rebuild the foundations of the ethical infrastructure.

There are several promising, parallel lines of development. The ecumenical movement and the efforts of theologians to demonstrate the broad, underlying ethical consensus that already exists among major religious traditions offer the prospect of important progress.

But religion as such faces major obstacles in this Century because of the growing secularism among the intelligentsias of the developed world.

What we are calling the “dead universe paradigm” must give way before ethics can fully be restored to the status of discovered truth. If a paradigm shift does occur, I see at least three convergent lines of development that will bear fruit in the next two decades, assuming enough resources and attention are brought to bear.

From superficial Benthamite utilitarianism, we can expect the emergence of a deeper and more sophisticated realism; in effect, a deepened, integrated empiricism can lead to the rediscovery of the embedded social universal norms that make up the systemically necessary normative architecture of every functioning civilization. We can reasonably expect that these discovered norms will be fully consonant with the underlying religious ethical consensus.

The key to the robust authority of such a development is an underlying paradigm shift away from extreme materialism. This shift will allow these common norms to be seen as discovered universals, aspects of the deeper reality that emerge from the situation of conscious rational beings in community.

From secular humanism, we can expect a paradigm shift from a focus on the apparently contingent situation of Homo Sapiens on the third planet of one solar system, to a deepened appreciation of the inherent situation of all conscious rational beings in the universe. Again, a metaphysical shift from materialism yields a deepened understanding of the common situation of conscious rational beings and of the norms necessary for them to thrive. And it will be accompanied by the discovery that the practice of moral integrity is as essential to interpersonal life as homeostatic integrity is to biological functioning.

From religion in general, we can expect the continued development of non-sectarian religious thought and renewed relevance to immediate human needs. This will necessarily be accompanied deepened *integration* of three elements: (1) *ongoing* creation and our relationship to it as a supreme normative demand; (2) the full range of human concerns as the proper subject of useful theology; (3) what we might call the “world scripture,” i.e., the totality of rational, spiritual, and esthetic knowledge of the universe.

I am a robust optimist, but even my optimism must be tempered by the lessons of history. Time is of the essence because human society abhors a moral vacuum. The events of 9-11-01 in Manhattan, Washington D.C. and a Pennsylvania field should have served to remind all of us that this world has not seen the last of abhorrent, militant authoritarianism. Evil in its various forms will always exist as a background pathogen in the human condition, ready to take hold when and wherever our species’ grasp of the underlying moral order is sufficiently weakened.

Each of the benign alternatives to the next Dark Age represent possible lines of cultural development. These benign forces must be in play now rather than later. Their success

crucially depends in turn on our culture's breakout from the self-imposed boundary conditions of a crabbed and unrealistic materialism.

IX. A SECULAR-RELIGIOUS CONSENSUS?

The deep underpinnings of human moral belief – mostly religious in provenance – have been gravely weakened by the intellectual and social developments of the last two and a half centuries. There has been a sharp decline in the popular belief in the possibility of any post mortal sanctions or rewards for human evil and good; among the world's intelligentsia, such belief systems are rejected as superstitious or even delusional. But the surviving secular moral systems have failed to meet the challenges posed by cultural and moral relativism. As a result, nihilism and atavistic authoritarianism have appeared like opportunistic infections to attack civilization itself, just as common diseases make inroads into populations with compromised immune systems. It bears reiterating: When the normative infrastructure of civilization has been weakened, civilization, itself, is at risk.

A realistic basis for a secular-religious consensus about the ultimate foundations of ethics now exists. Those of us who recognize the need to repair and restore civilization's damaged moral infrastructure need to make that happen. Whatever our other affiliations and perspectives, we are in agreement about the nature and urgency of the problem and the need for solutions that bridge the secular / religious divide.

We need to overcome moral relativism before more damage is done to the culture. However our world views vary (though we may come from secular, religious or less definable perspectives), we need to be united in the belief that the deep basis for morality is not a mere human invention. From a variety of backgrounds and disciplines we can reach a robust consensus that the enduring foundations of ethics are embedded in the very fabric of the reality we inhabit, whether we understand that fabric in terms of the deepest human traditions, the discoverable truths about the "life, the universe and everything", the ultimate ground of conscious experience, or the mind of God.

I propose that the underlying foundation of all valid universal ethics is the "human condition" itself, that is the inherent condition of any living rational conscious being with innate creative capacity living among others in a state of civilization. I am persuaded that this human condition, or inherent normative position, is common to all creatures who experience "I am" in the world. This insight tends to break out of the particularism and parochialism typical of the humanism of the last two centuries. A sufficiently deep and comprehensive understanding of that situation, the true "human condition", yields a number of very fundamental normative alignments. These are the natural universal normative alignments which embed deep ethical principles. From these core precepts, all of the general ethical claims, virtues and prohibitions that apply to conscious beings similarly situated can be generated. This resulting body of moral rules and principles

constitute the deep normative infrastructure of civilization. The need to recover our species' deep ethical foundations is urgent.

X. BREAKING THE MATERIALIST SPELL

Core assumptions, often unexamined, can govern the thought and discourse of whole era. An authentic shift in the way reality is understood must take place among many of our intelligentsia before a general recovery of our ethical foundations can take hold. The educated world is still enthralled by the vision of “world-as-machine”. For many of them the topic of ethics is like esthetics; questions of right and wrong are matters of preference, politics and taste, essentially outside the realm where the *real* discoveries about reality are made.

This article is too short for a full philosophical exposition about the nature of reality. But The topic is necessary to any discussion of ethical foundations because the materialist mind set refuses to see human morality and ethics as more than behavioral descriptions and culturally conditioned preferences.

The comprehensively mechanical explanation of “life, the universe and everything” is patently incomplete. Recovery from our current morally compromised circumstances requires us to break the spell of comprehensive materialism, to overcome once and for all time the notion that **all** reality can, in essence, be reduced to “matter and energy”.

Those of you who are comfortable with theism and/or Plato's conception of reality (temporarily out of favor among many physical scientists) will recognize parts of my argument against doctrinaire materialism while noticing its original elements. I believe that there is a reasonable reconciliation the artificial (and destructive) fractures that were created by the philosophical materialists of the last two centuries.

When you are lost at sea but within rowing distance of a large land mass, even a crude map and compass can mean the difference between drowning and mooring. While much work remains to be done by the professional philosophers and theologians, I am confident that the general direction outlined here will take us to land.

To the doctrinaire materialist, physics and chemistry, biology and a few other scientific disciplines are the total explanation of “all that is, seen and unseen”. An uncritical commitment to this view denigrates humankind's greatest esthetic and moral achievements as mere fluctuations in bio-electric circuits. It is as if the difference between the characters of M. Gandhi and Charles Manson could be fully captured by measuring their alpha brain waves. Or it is as if one could measure the essential difference between Mozart's Requiem and a recording of similar length taken in a cattle slaughterhouse by measurements of air pressure changes over time. No purely physical description can capture these things. We all know better. But we let the materialists hold the center stage even when ethics are being discussed.

Narrow materialism as a comprehensive explanation of everything, including our inner spiritual and esthetic lives, ultimately fails because of the hubris of its proponents and our own common sense. The very enterprise of science depends on a world view whose reality models, mathematical and otherwise, are effectively regarded as discovered organizational properties of reality, properties that are, in essence, *non-material*. The advent of computer technology has vividly demonstrated the unique status of information as something that, while carried or stored in various physical media, enjoys an ontological status that is independent of its immediate physical manifestations. And information, qua information, can produce physical effects that are quite independent of any physical/mechanical metric. Consider just two examples. One command string actuates the bomb, another does not. One design configuration of a process performs the same work more efficiently, consuming less energy than another. These are differences caused essentially by information *content*, something to which physical science can assign no mass value and no energy value. Nor can science locate the number system or the laws of geometric relationships in any part of space-time. In short, Plato was on to something.

When addressing the question of the foundations of human ethics, we need to achieve a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of the “I am” in the world, one where both the “I am” and the world have correlative material and non-material components. The “I am” state (in essence our local experience of conscious being) is no biochemical accident. It is the defining property of all intelligent self conscious being localized in the space-time organized realm, i.e., of conscious individuals living in “event space”. The fact that “I am” has no adequate explanation within the materialist mindset reveals only the obvious: that this emperor (i.e., materialism as the comprehensive explanation of life the universe and everything) is very naked indeed.

XI. THE DRAMA OF EMERGING BEING

Our place in the world is not an absurd violation of the laws of chance. Life is neither bleak nor meaningless because there is a central narrative of the “world” that supplies an answer the “meaning of life” question.

The drama of the world depends on a little secret: *It is still a work in progress*. The universe, this world and all the worlds are still “under construction”. And we conscious living beings are part of the construction party.

The study of organization has generated an extremely important insight into reality: Complex systems tend to manifest additional levels of organization via the phenomenon of *emergence*. If (as I believe) “Plato was on to something”, emergence can be seen as a sort of phase transition between a Platonic existent (a form, design or relational existent) in the non-material realm into “event space”. After the fact, of course, we are able to say that the emergent was always latent or *potentially* existent in the physical realm.

Again, while the full exposition of my point would take longer than a single article, I am persuaded from this line of reasoning that the principal meta-drama of the world consists of the emergence of successive iterations of Meta Being into event space, where MB represents the essential design template or configuration of all possible forms of conscious being. The really important piece is that the emergence into “event space” of Meta Being consists of its *partly conscious aspects* or “*reduced resolution*” copies if you will, and that you and I are among them. This ongoing drama is the central feature of every local “event space” regime/region.

Those of you who tend to reject classic theology might think of Meta-Being as the ultimate Platonic form, the master archetype of conscious being in the same sense that an engineer might concede that nature has prefigured solutions to many engineering problems. But having done that exercise, you might then think about how a purely material/physical description of your favorite work of art would leave out the very essence of the work that made it your favorite. Think of MB as a lifeless archetype or design if you will, but consider that your preferred description may well be omitting something essential.

Meta-Being is an ancient conception, but one that can be re-understood in contemporary terms. I suggest that this One ultimately differentiated and perfectly integrated Being has enjoyed a presence in religious and receptive secular thought from the beginning of human discourse.

The ongoing emergence of MB in the world always is taking place within developing, finite settings that cannot possibly contain its full expression. In religious shorthand, this is the notion that the world cannot ever fully hold or encapsulate God. [Religion tends to hold the converse view.] In secular shorthand this is a version of Plato’s notion that the world can only approximate perfect form (here expanded to include much more variegated and complex forms/algorithms/designs than in Plato’s examples). In either conception, the takeaway notion is that the world is incomplete and that we humans, as conscious mortal beings, are carrying the imprint/blueprint of ultimate being into the universe.

The ongoing emergence of latent MB is mediated through complex exchange relationships among conscious (and pre-conscious entities). This is a process that in its earliest phase was manifest in biological evolution and is recapitulated in symbolic form in important aspects of human cognition. Unlike the processes of natural selection, we humans tend to sacrifice hypotheses and drafts rather than whole species. But in a very real sense, the creative faculties of the developed human mind represent a similar process concentrated and greatly accelerated. By various means over time, the world achieves creative differentiation within successively more comprehensive integrations; apparent chaos reveals emergent order.

Therefore “randomness” does not define the world narrative, nor subtract the meaning that its drama brings to it; instead, random/chaotic processes in nature operate as a

necessary component of all ongoing creative processes in event space. In effect, randomness/chaos is the portal through which innovation can enter an otherwise mostly law driven, deterministic world.

Creative possibilities are generated in the mind in a way that a rigidly deterministic process could not indefinitely mimic. This is why creative mental processes occasionally seem chaotic to the uninitiated. But there are also moments of seemingly unbidden inspiration when remarkably beautiful and ordered solutions and “messages” appear on the mind’s stage.

XII. THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUS BEING

The foregoing discussion sheds a good deal of light on the ultimate nature of consciousness itself, though I would hardly venture to claim as the materialist philosopher Michael Dennett prematurely did, that consciousness is now *explained*.

The mind/brain is an acutely information sensitive instrument, capable of mining the realm of event space for form and information, detecting very subtle implications and relationships, many of which seem (very plausibly to me) to be held only in Plato’s realm of form space. Our species’ information sensitivity and processing capabilities are much more powerful in these functions than a rock, say, which can capture a Pleistocene footprint without a shred of understanding, and much more rapid than the processes of natural selection. After all, the glacially slow trial and error processes of biological evolution can take a species the better part of a million years to develop flight technology. Yet Homo Sapiens’ cognitive equipment was capable of advancing from the wheel to a moon rocket in a fraction of that time.

The recorded accounts of human experiences of inspiration (whether creative, scientific or spiritual) all capture a similar sense of the sudden emergence of information where before it was absent. To understand how information exchange (whether “God messages” or scientific/creative inspiration) can occur without a classic mechanical medium requires an expanded conception of ontology.

Again, this is a condensed discussion. But consider the implications. Assume that we live in a fully integrated reality wherein: (a) The physical/mechanical realm is only one phase of an existence that fully integrates the material and non-material realms. (b) Consciousness/mind is an information sensitive receiver of acute sensitivity that bridges the material and non-material phases of existence operating in both. (c) Mind space is the realm in which conscious being experiences life.

To understand mind space as an emergent phase of reality that exists both in and outside space-time is so fully consonant with common sense that I am tempted to say that this view is self verifying.

In this view, we humans are emergent individual self-conscious beings whose essential cognitive structure approximately mirrors the nature of Meta-Being, but we only partly instantiate its full nature. Meta-Being retains a separate but invasive presence that is in active relationship with all conscious beings in space time via a process of information exchange.

Therefore it is in the very nature of conscious intelligence that the mind simultaneously occupies and links two ontological phases of existence, the material realm of event space and the non-material realm of form space. Science mines the realm of event space for the information it manifests that sheds light on the form and structure of the material world. As it does this, the scientific mind is also traveling in Plato's "form space" from which theories, mathematics, and relational insights are derived.

The human mind is capable of mining **all** reality for information. In this conception, "mind space" links to "form space". The link to ethics flows from the notion that all reality is fully integrated in a way that links form space, the innate design of biological conscious being and the inherent circumstances of that being as it necessarily exists in the world. In this way, the human mind contains the capacity for ongoing access to *value space*, if you will, the sub-realm of form space from which all ethical precepts are derived. [The basis for this derivation is outlined in XIII following.]

This view of the relationships between nature and humanity, the material and the non-material, is a fully integrated one in which Meta-Being (in whatever terms MB is named or described) becomes the ultimate integrating feature of all reality.

To my non-theist friends: Please note here that a significant ethical question is beyond the capacity of strict atheistic materialism to answer. Consider how you might answer this question: *Given any ethical principle that I believe does apply to me, why should I care, especially as to consequences of my actions and failures to act that will only appear after my personal death?*

Philosophical materialists cannot provide any authentic answer to this question. Yet civilization's ultimate survival depends on the persuasive force of post-mortal ethical authority or an equally powerful functional equivalent. An answer is available, but to get there one really has to acknowledge and use the deep connections between what we are calling *value space*, *mind space*, *form space* and *event space* in order to begin to understand why caring about one's own existence leads to valuing that which lies well beyond it.

XIII. THE INHERENT ALIGNMENTS OF BEING

Recall, a definition of ethics:

Ethics is the set of norms, prohibitions and virtues, that are understood to Operate (i.e., to have intrinsic authority) whether or not they are enacted into formal law, or whether they are or are not

followed or agreed to by any given set of individuals. Cultural and ethical relativism are really anti-ethical positions in that they deny this status to all norms, hence the current problem for civilization.

Common sense tells us that surely ethics in the classic sense are real, that is, they are discovered, not invented. I propose that they can be derived from The Human Condition (i.e., that of all of all other living conscious intelligent beings). There are three sets of three normative alignments that proceed from a deep understanding of why we humans care about fundamentals at all, and what conditions (developmental and interactive) require us to discover, learn and apply the rules of ethics to our own actions and to others. The three main categories are Vector, Exchange and Integration-- referring to the core sources of human ethical motivation (Vectors), the face the world presents to us as one dominated by Exchange relationships and processes, and our own developmental need for Integration.

Each of these three groups of alignments contains its own set of three sub-alignments:

A. The Vector Set

Life almost always favors its own existence. Were it otherwise, the death impulse would have long ago extinguished any species that harbored it for more than a transient moment in a small part of its population. Like other “obvious” features of reality, it is tempting for some to dismiss as trivial that the universe is so constructed such this self-validating feature of the life impulse would be the case (even without taking into account the mounting body of evidence for the anthropic calibration of many fundamental constants in nature). But the fact of emergent *purpose* in the universe cannot be ignored, nor can its inexorable link to the biological imperatives that make up its platform. It is hardly surprising that the conscious mind emerges with a strong, built-in desire to life.

These are deeply related alignments.

The 3 *developmental vectors* of “I am” consist of:

1. Life Affirmation
2. Creation Affirmation
3. Affirmation of Conscious Intelligence

As the three development vectors emerge in individual consciousness they begin to acquire the force of *purpose*. As this happens, they undergo a process of mutual, self-reinforcing integration. We quickly learn that conscious intelligence serves the individual’s life affirmation/survival impulse (or at least does so when it is functioning optimally) and also becomes (again optimally) the venue for individual creative activities. Ethics emerges as these three alignments knit together and, though a process of incremental universalization, we humans begin to integrate and value instances of life, creation and conscious intelligence as they appear in the world around us. As I mentioned in the earlier discussion about evil, conscious being has developed life-serving faculties

that in turn predispose it to acquire an ethical predisposition: the capacity of foresight, empathy, and creative innovation. I would now add to that short list, the desire for integration, and note that the tendency to value universalization is a natural product of the human cognitive predisposition to achieve ever wider fields of integration. Natural progressions from “I affirm the value of my life” to “I affirm the value of Life in general”, and so on, are essentially wired into the developmental path of intact, intelligent healthy beings.

B. The Exchange Set

As newborn infants we do not understand exchange. Mother provides and we receive. The capacity to grasp the reciprocal nature of exchange as a general world principle marks the beginning of the adult mindset.

The three *exchange relationships* that confront “I am” in the world are:

- Physical exchange
- Social exchange
- Information exchange

What we call the “world”, the realm of space-time bounded event space, is characterized by complex interwoven exchange relationships. Atomic exchange, metabolic exchange, social / economic exchange, and information exchange are all deeply related examples of the pervasiveness of exchange as the defining dynamic feature of the “world” we inhabit. The accountability and reward exchange relationships of any civilization represent emergent exchange structures designed to facilitate and foster the living conditions of its members. For theists, deists and others in the spiritually minded disciplines, information exchange is the venue for spiritual exchange, which is the essential feature of the “I >> Ultimate” relationship.

C. The Integration Set

I am proposing that integration, seen as a property of overall existence and as a normative principle in its own right, is the secret key to metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Integration is the fact / value interface that transcends the ontological divide described by Kant and others.

The integrity of an organism is essential to biological functioning. As a general world principle, a degree of integration is the necessary condition of cooperating systems. Within the realm of science, the holy grail of the successful theory or scientific explanation is the comprehensive integration of all the available data. It should be no surprise that biological integration is closely linked to health at any number of levels.

The three *developmental integrations* of “I am” consist of:

1. Self/ "I am" Integration. A note: Mental illness and other cognitive and moral disorders can all be shown to represent failures of internal integration at some level. Our term, *integrity*, captures the essential normative thrust.
2. Self/Other "I am" Integration. A note: The common term for the tendency to achieve integration with another self is *love*. The capacity for love seems to be innate to any healthy, well integrated personality.
3. Self /Ultimate "I am" Integration (Ultimate "I am" as Ultimate integration). There is a growing body of evidence that almost every thinking person will sometime experience at least a glimpse of this sense of integration with ultimate being (or beingness). Some theologians might call the experience grace while more secular minds might report the experience as a moment of awe and inspiration. Carl Sagan, a nominal atheist, eloquently described this feeling in his description of the earth seen from space in *The Pale Blue Dot*.

My non-theists friends please note: When approaching the topic of ethics at the most fundamental level, you can't really escape the notion of Meta-Being, even if you only use it as a normative archetype or a necessary referent. In this connection, I am reminded of Martin Buber's formulation of the normative relationships that are at the core of human ethics. He wrote of "I – thou" (as opposed to I – it) and "I – Thou" (where the capitalized "Thou" denotes Meta-Being, making the relevant relationship in human ethical discourse a triad).

The underlying moral foundations of the culture are seriously damaged. The processes of restoration require us to recover the basis for objective, trans-cultural moral principles. Religion cannot accomplish this task alone. The task: (a) Recover the foundations of ethics. (b) Integrate ethics with reason and realism. (c) Restore robust legal and moral boundaries. (d) Repair the normative infrastructure of civilization. (e) Reinvigorate the self confidence of civilization.

XIV. THE CASE FOR CREATIVE CIVILIZATION

This argument can be condensed to a single paragraph: On a very immediate level, the problem is one of integration of ethics and necessity. Neither ethical principles nor civilization itself can long survive separately. I am proposing, as a threshold unifying notion, that all authentic ethical and moral systems necessarily are organized around the core affirmation of life, particularly human life. This leads quickly to the idea that our lives (and even our competing ethical/moral perspectives) can best thrive in the context of a civilization that is designed to protect those basic conditions needed for safe and productive human interactions. This insight alone will take us a good deal of the way to a renewed, robust foundation for human ethics. My closely related proposal is that, among

civilizations, those constructed and conducted in order to protect and promote specifically **creative** human activities are best suited for ultimate human survival. Here is a point by point exposition of that argument:

1. That the moral infrastructure undergirding modern civilization has been damaged is the legacy of several converging cultural and intellectual forces, among them: (a) the spread of cultural and moral relativism; (b) the increasing rejection of religiously founded belief systems among the educated elites; and (c) the denial of the very reality of objective ethics among these influential groups in favor of social-psychological description (i.e., the notion that there is no “right and wrong”, just cultural and psychological predispositions). The resulting mindset has promoted the personalization of authority institutions, a situation that risks a profound de-legitimization of constituted authority.
2. This state of affairs is an aberration, resulting, in part, from the spread of extremely corrosive forms of philosophical materialism (i.e., the world view that reality is essentially just matter and energy, and that value, meaning and significance are subjective illusions).
3. The overall circumstances are reversible because the underlying “belief” systems of the relativists and a-moralists (unbelief systems, really) are flawed, fragmented and incomplete.
4. The needed realignment begins with the acceptance and full integration of the core normative affirmations supporting human life and aspirations. These can be distilled to a small set of mutually reinforcing fundamental norms. Three such alignments, properly understood and integrated, generate the foundations of the all other ethical norms. They are the affirmation of life, particularly human life; the affirmation of conscious intelligence; and the affirmation of the creation processes in the world, especially the creative activities of humanity.
5. More specific ethical norms are the result of the practical task of working out the implementation modalities of these three fundamental affirmations in the context of systemic human interactions. This leads us directly to the development and definition of the implied moral boundaries and their incorporation into the regulatory architecture of civilization. The health and survival of human civilization requires fidelity to these three core normative alignments, the development of robust ethical systems based on them, and the establishment of robust, authoritative control boundaries supported by a system of law and justice.
6. Human civilization is the major social technology developed to regulate human cooperation in order to facilitate the optimum realization of human aspirations. [The extent to which it does so poorly or well is a separate question, taken up in **g** below.] The

conditions for the realization of human life, intelligence and creative activities necessarily require the protective envelope of civilizations dedicated to their defense from predators and oppressors.

7. Civilization, in this sense, represents a *morally-driven* protective social technology. It follows that not all civilizations are equal in this respect. The specifically creative civilizations are those which offer robust protection for human creative activities, the latter typically requiring special protections for free expression. All such creative civilizations require similarly aligned systems of law, which form the basis of a rational justice model, incorporating impartial rules, consequences and individual accountability. The justice systems appropriate to creative civilizations are necessarily aligned with laws consonant with abiding moral principles, enforced and administered to protect human activity within their boundaries from predatory aggression, assault and fraud, among other things. Preservation of the integrity of enforcement and administration is essential this task. A vigorous commitment to protect all creative activity from various forms of oppression and suppression, including that originating from the governing elements themselves, is the hallmark of a robust creative civilization.

XV. REASONABLE MORAL DISAGREEMENT

One of the perennial lessons of history is that many of our insights, opinions, and approaches to the core human issues have changed while some have remained more constant. The advantage of achieving clarity about the foundations of human ethics is that it will help us to make reasonable judgments about the areas of social disagreement that touch on the true ethical fundamentals and those that don't. As an example of the first, the sought for clarity permits us to condemn slavery while understanding exactly *what* we are condemning and *why* we are able to do so with confidence. Examples of the second might enable us to better frame our disagreements about whether and under what circumstances to permit certain under-age sexual activity, and to refine the opposing arguments in terms of agreed fundamental principles.

Creative disagreements can be defined (for these purposes) as those ethics-based or ethics-driven controversies in which each side is capable of making a rational appeal to the relevant fundamental ethical principles, but that the resolution is dependent to a greater or lesser extent on testable experience. I propose that any protocol for creative disagreement would have these six features among its necessary elements:

1. A requirement for reason, candor and veracity in the discussion;
2. The capacity to identify the dispute as one of the creative disagreements as opposed to a classic good-evil struggle;
3. A method to identify the means to test the elements of the problem that might prove capable of factual clarification or resolution;
4. Preservation of the freedom of the disputants to engage in an open discussion;
5. The burden of persuasion rests on those who are advocating change;

6. An option for social differentiation when the dispute is both significant and irreconcilable.

To clarify the kind of setting in which such a protocol might work, let's consider one hypothetical example: New neurological fetal research radically alters the abortion discussion for most people when it is discovered that brain activity in a 20 week old fetus is consistent with the capacity to feel pain and to engage in dreams. [I stress that, as of this writing, this discovery is just a hypothetical.] Those for whom the abortion question is not resolved ideologically (e.g., some by opposing abortion from the moment of fertilization, others only from the much later moment of fetal viability outside the womb) would presumably be unaffected. But for the rest of those in the discussion, the research may well affect the ethics of the decision to terminate a pregnancy for reasons other than the protection of the mother's health. Option six might represent the tolerance of jurisdictional differences with different rules affecting the question.

The scope and gravity of the novel ethical questions raised by technology represent a serious challenge to all traditional ethical systems, and present a particular challenge to a civilization crippled by a damaged ethical infrastructure. Unrepaired, the damage may be serious enough to trigger serious destabilization of the social order.

XVI. CREATIVE CIVILIZATION AND SURVIVAL

If authentic ethics proceeds from recognition of the three shared human affirmations -- life, creation (including the human creative endeavor itself) and conscious intelligence, certain things naturally follow. The mutual integration of these three affirmations, and the need to protect these values in the context of human exchange relationships, gave rise our species' greatest social technology, the invention of civilization.

Creative civilization – humankind's latest version of that social technology – emerged in the last few hundred years. As a specific development in social technology, creative civilization was designed to mediate the conditions of social exchange and to further each of the three core normative affirmations, while giving special support for the conditions that foster and protect human creative activity. The protection of free human expression is a specific characteristic of a creative civilization.

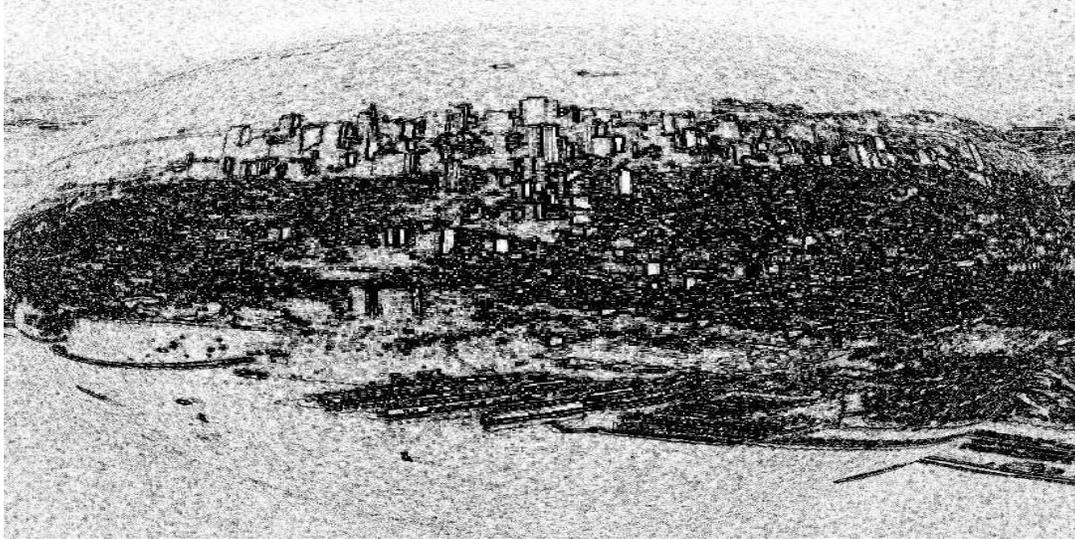
At the outset, civilizations emerge to protect their members from outside predators. Sooner rather than later the social order must protect its members against internal predators as well. The project of sustaining human civilization requires the establishment and ongoing defense of a set of legal and moral boundaries which individually and collectively operate to optimize the conditions in which human life, conscious intelligence and creative activities can flourish. Thus, there are critically important arrangements necessary to sustain civilization. These include the institutions that support law, enforce rules of conduct and allocate responsibility. For a number of reasons, both practical and moral, the laws of civilization need to be fairly closely aligned with fundamental ethical principles, though not all ethical precepts need necessarily be written into the formal legal structure of a given social order.

None of the core legal prohibitions common to the major functioning civilizations (such as those against theft, fraud, assault, murder, kidnapping and so on) were arbitrary or accidental developments. All of the major criminal prohibitions adopted by civilizations can be shown to be related to the interest in promoting the primal value triad (life, creation and conscious intelligence) and fostering the conditions needed to protect civilization's members as they enjoy the fruits of these values. The English Common Law is an excellent example of an accidental field test in which rules and norms were generated in bottom up fashion over several generations of dispute resolution. That the behavior norms revealed by that process are highly similar to the core behavioral precepts of Buddhism, Confucianism, Judeo-Christianity and all other functioning secular civilizations represents a degree of imitation to be sure (in the sense that the principle of the wheel, once implemented was copied) but also represents a social example of convergent evolution, much as the aerodynamic configuration of a dolphin's fin resembles that of a trout. There is an underlying schema.

Within the last 200 years, various civilizations have begun to develop rules and institutions to protect the freedom of creative expression; this represents a predictable development in our species' greatest social technology given the growing understanding that the incubation of creative activity requires a certain protected scope of creative expression. I am persuaded that our species' ultimate survival is tied directly to the success of **creative** civilization.



When we humans travel in space and encounter another civilization that has developed entirely separately from ours, I am confident we will immediately recognize the structure of that alien civilization and we will recognize the supporting normative architecture. Given my original premise that all ethics is driven by the three primal alignments described, I would expect to find these values and the attendant civilizations designed to protect them among the “little green men and women” of other worlds. And I am confident that the longest surviving civilizations will be the creative/adaptive ones.



Of course there is another scenario. If we allow human civilization to wither for lack of attention to its normative infrastructure, it will die. The extra-terrestrial archaeologists will pour over our ruins, wondering “Where did they go wrong?”

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