

Taking Action for a Better Tomorrow



JEREMY P. BOGGESS

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By:

Jeremy P. Boggess

Volume One:

The Survival and Advancement of our Species and Society

OR

Just another voice, like that of the woman known as Cassandra, Kassandra, or Alexandra

To my mother, Lu Ella, for teaching me strength.

To my father, Don, for instilling kindness and empathy in me.

À la femme de ma vie, Brigitte, pour m'avoir rendu l'espoir.

And to all those other people who helped make this possible.

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Introduction

This book is a point of view and an observational look from a common man at the progression of our societies, humanity, and our world. It is a look at where our various societies and humanity and the world have been, currently are, and are headed in general. What do we do when it appears that uncertainty and change not only seem to be constants in your world but also appear to be at a heightened level? What lies in the future? Whatever does lie in our future, we must remember, in our concern for the future, that our course is often predicated on and laid out in the present. What we do right now is the greatest determining factor for the future.

I want to help us survive. My basic motivation has always been the survival and advancement of our societies, humanity, and the world. But the problem in reading works such as this, as with any philosophical literature, is that the author consciously or unconsciously will attempt to persuade the reader. So, I do apologize if there is any feeling of persuasion. It is also important to remember that the meaning of a message is soured when reward is expected in exchange for delivery. No matter what a person may say, how easily one can assume they are a liability when it is believed they are only there for their own needs. Thus, I do not wish my writings to be tainted by the view that I seek personal compensation beyond the survival and advancement of humanity.

Again, I reiterate that my main purpose is not persuasion, but I do hope that we will all think about how our actions affect ourselves, others, and the world, and how they will affect the actions and the world of people not yet born. I hope this book will have you ask a variety of questions, both of yourself and about the world around you.

I do not claim to know anything new; I just restate what many of us have been thinking. I have posed some questions without answers and given some answers without asking the questions. I hope that my writing will help us think about our actions more, instead of being just viewed as irrelevant words. I hope my writing, and what I have done, will help. I hope it will be accepted as a legitimate piece of work and not seen as just another piece of “cardboard philosophy”¹ created by another crazy idiot.

Chapter One: Changes Occurring in the Fractionalized World of Today

Threshold

I feel that something is happening worldwide. I believe that we now stand at the “threshold” of current society and maybe even the future of our species. Is this a new dawn, or the end? Some changes are occurring that are beyond the ability and daring of our modern world to even report. No matter where our politics, beliefs, or tendencies lean, we must admit that there are strange movements and occurrences happening now. As of late the world seems to be suffering from more serious growing pains and changes than it has ever experienced before.

Yes, we have always had chaos, and there has always been discontent in all societies throughout time. However, it seems that in the world today the numbers of the discontented are growing faster than in previously recorded rates. There seems to be a higher rate of the growing observable discontent, not only within the commonly thought of societal groups where discontent is normally found, but it also seems to be growing within a more diverse ranges of societies found in the world. Their numbers seem to be growing faster in proportion to that of past societies. We have observably become more fractionalized, not just on national or cultural levels, but also at microcosmic levels within societies, and even sometimes within the individual.

It seems the world is more chaotic than it has been in the past. Perhaps it has always been like this, and we have not noticed it until our current technologies and communication networks have allowed us to see it. But I believe the chaos in this period of change is different and unlike any experienced by past generations. Never in the accepted recorded history of humanity has there been such frequency, speed, and diversity in change, such ability and opportunity for change, and such

quick and easy methods for it to spread in our societies, ideologies, and our world in general. With the growth of the world—increased population, new interconnectedness, and all of our various advancements and other changes—our world appears to be becoming increasingly more fractionalized. Many people seem to be becoming increasingly fractionalized, polarized, or both.

We are seeing the world changing exponentially and in more diverse areas before our eyes. Our current world, as a whole, is increasingly experiencing these changes. These shifts seem to be happening more simultaneously with other world experiences. They seem to be occurring more frequently, quickly, and in ever widening range of areas both old and new. Some of these changes are coming at an almost exponential rate. Every generation today has witnessed unprecedented advancements and changes relative to their own previous life experiences. The world is changing and becoming rearranged in almost every way imaginable and sometimes in even unimaginable ways. It is altering in a way that past generations have never experienced before. These changes may even be seen coming from a multitude of areas. They may be seen taking place simultaneously. They may be seen as taking place both independently as well as affecting the changes of each other. Two of these areas that changes are coming from are terrorism and global economics. More areas that are changing in our world are the political and geographical. Yet another area is the technological world. Unfortunately, we have even become a world where valid tangible data in the measurement of statistics and studies have become a point of debate. We have become a world where subjectivism has replaced deduction and reason by some. A world where deduction has been corrupted by subjectivism. A study is believed or not, not based on its data, but who produces or complies it. Back to the subject at hand: There are many who believe we are also experiencing simultaneous changes including but not

limited to scientific breakthroughs, sociological changes, cultural changes, and changing migratory patterns of various species, including those of our own human species. Some even say that there are currently uncommon global environmental and climate changes. Some go even further and contend that there are genetic changes occurring within some younger generations, resulting from how they have adapted their bodies or minds to accompany technology. Even the speeds and ways in which we distribute, examine, integrate, and exchange information are changing at explosive rates compared to the past. Perhaps we are even not yet aware of all of the changes, big and small, as well as their causes and effects, that our world is experiencing. Let us look closer at what changes we have witnessed and know to be true from our own observations.

Edge of a Frightening and Unknown World

Ironically, I wonder how many people are having fun, acting as if nothing is wrong and pretending for their own self-assurance? Unfortunately, most people are willing to ignore a situation until it directly affects them—at which point, panic and overreaction are common responses. I fear that we have accepted our façades of normality as truth. It is our false façades of normalcy that led us into our current predicaments in the first place. Ignoring a situation never makes it better or go away, and generally makes it worse. Sorry folks; the joke and the “free ride” is over. It is time for people to stand up and say: “Stop playing with the future of our children.” When I look back, I wonder if we have truly learned anything from our past experiences. But more importantly, are we going to take different actions in the future than those that have led us to these various ongoing fiascos?

Virtually all societies in the world are finding themselves at the edge of their own unique or undefinable event or shift. But, for all of us, is it the edge of a new

inconceivable dawning or one of our possible myriads of darkness? Unfortunately, as each society blames the others' ideologies for the problems of the world, it looks like darkness ahead. We have become a world of people in constant paranoia of other establishments, groups, political organizations, and governments, to name only a few. However, some people are becoming more aware and accepting of others and their differences at this same time. They are also realizing the actions we take today ultimately affect the outcome of the changes we are currently experiencing. The various actions we take today will have a significant impact on not only the next millennium, but also eons to come.

Being frightened of an unknown future is universal and a recurring theme in human nature and history. The common denominator in most of us is that we are shaped by the past, constrained by the present, and anxious about the future. However, there is still time for us to realize our potential. The progression to a new dawning will be difficult and may seem improbable at times. However, improbable does not mean impossible.

Changing World—Change, Flexibility, and Adaptability

It is a new world of quick, extreme, and drastic change. Generations today are being born into a world where the only normal they know of is what some may call “the new normal.” Quick flexibility and adaptability will not only be favored in the new world of tomorrow, but will be requirements for survival amid the rapid and diverse changes still coming. Even our current understanding of “quick,” “flexible,” and “adaptable” may be considered mild in the world of tomorrow. This flexibility and adaptability will be required in many ways and in many circumstances. In my opinion, the normalization of quick flexibility and

adaptability of response needs to be more securely normalized. I am not just talking about flexibility or adaptability in a specific area that is experiencing change, but in all areas. I am talking about the ability to recognize the need for alterations and to be able to cope in all areas in which change is occurring, while at the same time having the ability and foresight to identify and accept the long-term consequences of our actions.

As the world is already adapting and altering course in so many areas and ways, many observers of our complex planet need no convincing of the incalculable variety and complexity of the coming demands. From some perspectives these changes are not only exponential but taking place all over. However, even between observers who can agree that these changes and alterations are taking place, there is debate on the affected areas, extent of the changes, and/or the causation of the changes. There is even more debate on how to proceed regarding prevention and/or what solutions are needed. Unfortunately, many people feel that they are unable to make significant contributions to the preventions or solutions that are needed. There is also a need for more exploration on how to adapt in response to these world changes, and in turn acceptance.

Many changes that have brought opportunities for advancement and progress in the past have also on occasion brought chances for disaster and regression. Thus, a great concern of mine are the epic man-made cataclysms and societal regressions that we have been doomed to repeat. I am concerned that we may make one or more wrong decisions that may take us generations or longer to recover from. Or even worse, one that we may never be able to recover from.

History Repeated

In the past, it has taken much tribulation, time, and suffering to recover from devastating changes. Those recoveries never compare to what was or what could have been. And especially not to where we could be now. How many times have we lost knowledge and been forced to repeat history because of that? How many times has history already been repeated that we are not aware of, and more importantly to what extent? To help understand what I mean, even what can seemly be a minor instance can be devastating. In “Journeys in Space and Time,” the eighth episode in the television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, noted American astronomer and scientist Carl Sagan speculated and stated, “What if the scientific tradition of the ancient Ionian Greeks had prospered and flourished? . . . I think we might have saved ten or twenty centuries.” And in episode 1 of that same series, Sagan said, concerning the burning down of the Great Library of Alexandria: “Accurate numbers are difficult to come by, but it seems that the library contained at its peak nearly one million scrolls. . . . Only a small fraction of the works survived. . . . For example, we know that there once existed here a book by the astronomer Aristarchus of Samos who apparently argued that the Earth was one of the planets, that like the other planets, it orbits the sun, and that the stars are enormously far away. All absolutely correct. But we had to wait nearly two thousand years for these facts to be rediscovered. . . . But it’s gone, utterly and forever.” I suspect other knowledge within that library that was lost potentially took centuries or millennia to be rediscovered. I ask, have we had in our distant past even more devastating and severe setbacks or cataclysms? How long can we continue to create more of these setbacks until we potentially create one that could be our final one, where we may not have the chance to recover?

Yet, some argue that the loss or practice of our modern ways may not be such a bad thing. There are those people who believe in preventing the potential fall of humankind by living in the façade of a simpler time. Some of those who have this belief believe in living in a way that is pre-technological or even pre-industrial. And if they so wish, they should be allowed to. And, between those people there is still the debate concerning at what point in the past their lifestyle should imitate.

Of course, turning away from our modern age also means turning away from many of our modern benefits and conveniences. We must also remember that one aspect of a point in history usually comes attached to another. Knowledge, discoveries, and advancements will eventually lead to more of the same. So, often it is an “all or nothing” proposition. People who choose to live in these old-fashioned times have some very valid arguments—for example, that belief that we have lost many of the positive aspects of life that were once present in the past. Yes, it is true that we have forgotten many of those positive benefits of the past, and perhaps we should reconsider some of those. However, living as if you were in the past does not prepare for the future, just as living as if you were in the world of tomorrow does not prepare you for the realities of the present. And living in the present, not preparing for the future, gets us nowhere but the present. Not to mention, forgoing the knowledge or advancements of the present, whether on purpose or by accident, it is only a delay. The human nature is to seek and find. And, as I have stated before, one advancement will lead to another. Future generations will eventually arrive at a point where they face similar dilemmas. They will eventually arrive at a similar point in time to that we wished to avoid. And who is to say that they will not make even worse decisions when they reach their dilemmas? Burying our heads in the sand does not make the problem go away.

Changing World: Beginning or End?

Yes, our world has been changing since its conception. Since the beginning of time, civilizations that have reached their apexes have either adjusted, overcome, and/or matured past their growing pains. When they have not adapted as needed, they have collapsed and fallen into the abyss. Some have fallen, supposedly, due to their inability to sustain themselves. Or, they have allowed themselves to become prey to others within and/or without. Societies have also failed out of their inability to balance elements of their society or maintain the necessary structure within. They have also failed when they became overconfident, spread themselves too thin, or forgotten the sacrifices of the past generations which other citizens remember. And others sadly have failed when they became compliant through their acceptance of what the future will bring. The weight of their own corruption has also made civilizations weak. This self-centeredness or corruption has made them unsteady even without the influence from the history of civilizations before them, from the self-indulgence of their own present one, or from the weight of how future civilizations should be. We now find ourselves at yet another one of these turning points. In the past when civilizations have had tests or turning points, they only risked the survival or future of their own civilization. The difference now is that we have the capability of extinguishing our species completely. So, we ask ourselves, is this the beginning of the end? I say, it is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. It is the dawn of a new age.

Our world is truly at the crossroads. Humankind is on the edge of monumental change or possible extinction. We have come to another one of these points in human history. One of the myriad possibilities is worldwide civil war. In the age we live in now, once started, civil war has the likelihood of spreading like a

wildfire relatively quickly. And war is not generally thought of as being conducive to the survival of the species. Remember that “highly improbable” still implies some probability and that “insignificant” does not completely negate possibility. I do not think that I am a doomsayer. But let us say for a moment that the world does not change its path. Then we may have a doomsday that makes the earth uninhabitable or results in a world that will be gradually broken down into nothingness. Or perhaps progress into total chaos which could result into a slow death for our future. There are countless possibilities that all have their own probabilities of occurrence. Unless we accept our responsibility, the world may fall into another dark age and be doomed to countless generations of rebuilding, waste, or never-ending darkness. The difference now is, unlike civilizations of the past, we are more connected to each other globally. We all have an effect on each other, like ripples in a small container of water. Incidents, more today than in the past, are more connected, have greater effects on one another, have a greater possibility of spiraling out of control, and have the possibility of resulting in more extremes. In these ways, it may be unlikely that the phoenix of civilization will rise again if something drastic happens. Recovery, or even survival, is not certain for our world or species.

We as a species are on trial and we ourselves are the judge, jury, and even executioner if need be. However, my hope is that we will at least show ourselves leniency and allow rehabilitation to build a new future, distinct from that which seems to be fated to us. It is necessary for me to have hope and faith in the human race. I remember and have hope in the saying, “every cloud has a silver lining.” Am I right? Am I wrong? Am I a pessimist, an optimist, or just plain naïve? When I think about it, I really do not know what I am. I do not consider myself naïve nor an optimist about the future. I just think—or more accurately, hope—that society is

too aware of what is going on to let us fall. Perhaps we are only misguided currently.

I believe this time in history will be remembered as the predecessor to either the greatest leap of a world renaissance or the worst dark age that we have experienced in our recorded, fabled, or even lost histories. I have a feeling that when generations in the future look back at this point in human history, our own time, we will be remembered as the ones who took our species to and from “the brink,” or alternatively humanity will be rendered incapable of remembering our history at all. Why does it sometimes take a brush with extinction or annihilation for a society or way of life to recognize the ills of its ways?

Sometimes, in life, it may seem as if there is no beginning or ending. However, every second has its own beginning and ending. When people look for beginnings, they may see nothing but endings. Sometimes we must be reassured and reminded that there are beginnings, not just endings. We must not forget this is not the beginning of the end, but merely an end to a new beginning. In the past, we have had leaps forward, events that have changed the course of history (for good and bad), monumental discoveries, and advancements—certain times that have opened the world to marvelous and uncharted courses. In all those times, whether for the long-term betterment of the world or not, I remember my personal version of an old idiom: “where there is opportunity, there is hope”!

Actions in Our Shrinking World

Each person is ultimately the one responsible for himself or herself, and others do not have the right to dictate to another. But it is important that we become more mindful of the effects of our choices on others. In the choices we make in these

times of various struggles (from calls for freedom to basic fears of survival), we must acknowledge that we are not alone in what now appears to be a smaller world. Degrees of separation are shrinking between individuals, groups, events, and ideas. As world relationships, connections, causes, and effects increase, degrees of separation in the world are also being reduced.

With increased communication, ease of travel, and interdependence the world is becoming figuratively smaller, and cultural understanding is becoming increasingly more important to our mutual survival. In this new world, no longer are we the only ones affected by the consequences of the actions that we take. Logic dictates that increased interaction is more probable to occur in our new world. This only makes it more important that we are appropriate and caring neighbors, and that we think about the consequences of our actions and interactions. We must be neighbors who are courteous (not to the extreme of being exploited), helpful (not to the extreme of denying someone their self-reliance), and mindful (not to the extreme of being too dictatorial).

Cultural Interaction

Increased interactions without gaining understanding can lead to increased divisions. Such “gaps” would not have to exist if we could only respect and appreciate ideas in the context of the era or area in which they were developed. Of course, this does not mean validation, it simply means examination. In analyzing the various ways that these gaps can take place, we must not forget that generational gaps can be more severe than cultural gaps. Even though those of a younger generation from various parts of the world may be born into different cultures, they often have more in common with their counterparts born on the other

side of the planet than with their grandparents within the same culture. These gaps exist in many other areas in addition to generational. For example, it could be said one who lives in a large city has more similarities with another living in a large city in a different culture than with another living in a very rural area within that same culture, and vice versa.

Compared to the past, our new technological and interdependent world of mass communication and mass transportation provides a new ability for relatively effortless and diverse migration and interaction between cultural and social groups. We (as a world) are becoming increasingly personally aware of and experiencing the sociological differences, not only between cultures but also between individuals within that culture, that we have only heard about before. Unlike the past, when the average possible contact of a person with another diverse culture would be minor or theoretical, our new world provides this opportunity for diverse interactions to be more practical and even somewhat convenient for all. We are experiencing more exposure between elements of differing culture groups not only on a societal level, but also on a more individualized and personalized level. Individuals and even individual elements of cultures that would rarely have had contact with each other before are commonly experiencing new exposures and encounters, including more frequent firsthand exposures as the result.

With this, the world becomes less and less isolated. Those of differing beliefs and cultures will naturally encounter one another with both unforced and forced interactions. The new structure of our developing world is even forcing interactions between neighboring cultures who live in close proximity to each other. Neighbors who have traditionally despised and purposely avoided each other are having more frequent forced interactions. Just like families living in close proximity within a modern-day housing complex, each nation or culture is

responsible for itself within its own residence. However, like neighbors living in the same area, when someone performs an action or causes conflict it has the possibility of spreading and impacting others, disrupting more than just themselves or their own space. One disruption always has the possibility of creating more.

Some people may fear others of different cultures, religions, and races, not because they are new, but because of continuing aggressions that have been played out for generations before they were born. Today, with the aid of modern technologies, it seems that the aggressive, various pasts and divisions of our societies are putting all of our futures into jeopardy more than ever. We are in a new century, yet there are conflicts and violence still over ideals and actions that people have been fighting over for centuries. And those actions tend to be repeated.

Yes, anger over the injustices of the past is valid. These conflicts are not easily forgotten and are easily repeated. However, what is the logic of continuing conflicts inherited from generations past? So, we ask ourselves, what is the motivation of those who would continue these conflicts or injustices? And based on that, why is there conflict or injustice? Is it a form of greed or control under the pretext of something else?

A governing body is responsible for the wellbeing of its citizenry. And sometimes even neighbors can become overzealous, intrusive, controlling, or greedy. Chaos and change are often what most civilizations fear. Is the fear of losing what they have accomplished thus far, within the society, the motivation behind the fighting? Is it fear of being replaced? Even if replacement of a governing body or society were true, from the point of view of those experiencing change, it may not be replacement for them in the conventional sense. All adaptation is some form of change. And of course, any change does have a potential for a deficit. However, sometimes adaptation is necessary for survival

into the modern times. But this does not negate the fact that when people feel that their way of life—what has been protecting them and keeping them civilized for generations—is threatened or under attack, they may feel they have no other choice but to react by lashing out. However, some extreme lashing out and other negative responses done under the pretext of self-protection are inexcusable.

Fear of the Loss of Culture

World cultures around the globe are experiencing a heightened sense of concern for the loss of their cultures. Not only is this feeling found within cultures, but nations as well. Today, it seems, not only are national boundaries dissolving within, but also long-founded organizations, cultural norms, customs, and traditions found within and across national boundaries are also being lost. Beliefs that people have relied on for generations for a sense of stability are currently drastically changing, or even dissolving. In addition to desire for expansion and advancement, fear can drive a society. The fear of extinction, of loss of a way of life, is often a primal motivating factor and can be a driver for societies of the world to adjust and preserve their vision of society. So, the fear that many have when they believe that their way of life may be unprotected or threatened can be appreciated. But they can forget that differences can often bring unknown strengths to the whole.

In the pursuit of preserving or protecting we must remember that fear can be a disadvantage. In many cases, fear can blind and cloud the mind. Fear can cloud judgment. This clouded judgment can impact actions, thus impacting the consequences of the long-term results. When we become resistant to change, we can fail to see the potential found within adaptation, as well as fail to see the beauty and possibilities that come with the survival of differences. This can cause

us to become vulnerable when change does eventually occur. Possibly resulting in failure. Failure because of our vulnerability to change. For a society or culture to survive it must change to adapt or run the risk of the fate of most cultures, lost to time. However, fear may be warranted in the short term for the basics such as survival. Ironically, at the same time this fear or anxiety can also bring moments of clarity, acceptance, focus on priorities, or help you possibly realize probable chains of events that are likely to take place. Even though one may be a little slower or weaker compared to others, sometimes this fear can increase the physical strength or endurance, mental abilities or fortitude, or awaken or strengthen spiritual awareness to create overall balance. Sometimes, it brings perspective, strength, or new abilities. Sometimes, fear can help us remember our priorities or give us direction. Sometimes, we forget that adaptation within a culture can mean survival in the face of what otherwise might mean collapse or abandonment of the culture. Thus, to help long-term survival, we must not fear change or adaptation.

We must not fear the preservation of other cultures either. We must even aid them, when aid is needed. Preservation of the culture of another today can mean the preservation of our own tomorrow. It is important to remember that in preserving others we ultimately preserve ourselves. If we do not make an honest effort in the preservation of different and diverse cultures, whether our culture is the current one in favor or not, we can open ourselves up to a greater chance of extinction, for all cultures including our own.

We live in a world of the World Wide Web, but we still maintain a narrow, myopic view of it. We often have the most interaction with our “local” (our personal zones of influence as well as the areas where we reside or interact). We seem to affect it the most, and it in return affects us strongly. It also often seems that the “global” (events, society, and everything else in the world outside our

perceived area of influence or the areas where we reside or interact) affects the local world more than in the reverse. But, in reality, the global is just reacting to our local world and the numerous other various “locals.” The world is reacting to the different combinations of these locals. These various “collectives of locals” include ours and other different combinations and collections of personal relationships, events, communities, households, cities, towns, groups of political, social, or other nature, et cetera. Different combinations of these combine to create different collectives of locals. The global is simply reflecting the actions of these different combinations or collectives of locals back to the individual local. In this cycle, we take part in the protection of our local by taking part in the global. If we believe that our responsibility is to the local and their authority supersedes global, then we already have the belief of the local over global. Thus, we already know the importance of our responsibility to protect and preserve organizations, cultural norms, customs, traditions, and the sovereignties of the local. If we believe that we live in a world where we must be globally responsible primarily, then within our global responsibility is the obligation to protect and preserve the local. With this, we must remember that with our perceived improvements, in this time and our world, we have not outgrown ourselves and our own human self-centeredness and irresponsibility—with our increased abilities, we have not outgrown allowing ourselves to impact the lives of others to their detriment. We have not fully realized and accepted the responsibilities of what we can create because of our direct or indirect actions. Unfortunately, we have not outgrown our propensity for denying our responsibilities to all. We can no longer downplay our personal responsibilities and abilities to preserve and better the global in the form of taking and doing the same and more for our local and the local realities of others, without downplaying our role in the global. Our attention to the local does affect the global, even more so than we may realize. Increased efforts for both do have an

effect on both. We must do what we can for both, however, wherever, and whenever we can. Both equally demand our attention, and they do affect one another. So, doing something in one does affect both. The extent to which they cumulatively affect one another is not what we should diminish. The fact is that they do.

Loss of Traditions

Sometimes, to our disadvantage, traditions can be left behind or forgotten. In some cases, we have left these traditions behind for the sake of practicality. And traditions that are positive and lost through time are not always found again. If they are refound, they do not always have the same significance. They can have a less desirable interpretation than that of the past, or worse, they can be replaced with a completely less desirable tradition altogether. Before throwing out or forgoing our traditions or heritage that we deem outdated or impractical, we must make the honest attempt to adapt them into modern times for the sake of preservation. Within our modern times lies new ways to adapt or preserve those positive and productive traditions of the past. One example would be the family reunion or even day-to-day family connections, which today can be supplemented with family social media interactions such as on family websites, family chat rooms, or family email chains. This allows family connections to be maintained over great distances and despite time constraints. This outlet offers more connections than had been available before, while keeping a closeness that may have been lost due to various outside demands or constraints. It also allows individuals to make more frequent and diverse family connections than had been the norm in past generations. It is our duty to hold on to those traditions that strengthen the family, community, beliefs, values, or groups. We must hold on to those traditions and values that do

not constrain the family, community, beliefs, groups, or the individual. We must hold on to those traditions that build mutual respect and also create, preserve, and/or empower positive community and family. We must preserve those traditions that bring positive bonding, togetherness, and/or advancement for the whole group. Yes, traditions do not always have the same meaning in different time periods, and the practices of traditions will inevitably change over time. However, it is the complete loss of place and the feeling of alienation that can draw people to extremist groups or beliefs. Traditions that develop bonding and respect for all are the ones that must be preserved.

Upholding Traditions

Events or gatherings that bring diverse cultures together for the sake of mutual enjoyment, appreciation of each other, commonalities, or relaxation must be preserved. Some examples, but not all, include diverse gatherings or team celebrations of excellence or personal dedication, events celebrating sacrifice or community achievements or projects, mutual appreciation, and times of friendly competition. Other examples of these gatherings can include a wide range of endeavors to be admired and encouraged. Similar to the family dinner that gathers people together for a period of time, we must bring differing cultures together across cultural lines, promoting social cohesion and bonding between cultures and subcultures. Even the division of gender groups can be at a disadvantage because of the denial of insight and perspective that the other may have. Respectful social bonding is essential and has always been essential to the survival of our species.

The Opportunity for Opportunists—the Lure of the Radical or Extremist

When people feel that their personal identity, culture, or beliefs are under attack, shrinking, or being demeaned, they may turn to the more radical or extreme elements of their culture out of fear. They themselves may not necessarily believe in the more radical message. However, in the immediacy of fear the moderate might grasp for the extremist because of something they believe that extremist possesses. They may grab for the handful in the hope that a few may remain. Just as one may take a large handful of something as they reach into a covered bowl, hoping to retain a few or the select items that they want. They may not even desire or agree with all the aims or views of the extremist. They could also believe that the extremist may be the better of two evils or that the extremist may be the only one able to bring back or preserve what they feel is suffering loss. It is fear of loss that can allow some to be enchanted by and support, or at the very least, be tolerant of the extremist. It may be a fear in the moderate that the extremist may be the only one with the ability or willingness to preserve, protect, or restore what they consider is in the best interest of their culture. Without this fear or concern, the more extreme or aggressive elements would have significantly weaker strongholds on the moderate and in general. Remember, the extremists are opportunists and their bases are never more powerful than when the culture they reside in experiences actual or perceived attack. Without this fear, real or imagined, the power or influence of the radical would be considerably diminished. To combat the radicals, we can erode their supportive bases by helping preserve the culture wherein they draw their support. We can take away the allure of the radical or extreme variant by making an effort to erode the argument that the culture is under attack or suffering loss.

Opportunity for the Opportunist—Filling the Void

The disenfranchised can be a valuable base of recruitment for the radical or extremist. They can be recruited from inside as well as outside any society. The opportunist can offer that which the culture cannot or will not provide. To prevent this, it is best to supply the disenfranchised with a reason not to grasp for the radical or extreme message or messenger. There is an old saying: “Those who have nothing to lose have the most to gain.”

Many people also need an enemy to feel complacent about their own place in this world. They feel that there is some outside force holding them back, or worse, trying to destroy them. The extremist also seeks out those who have a lack in their lives, or feel threatened or abandoned. This feeling of not belonging or lack of identity in the individual can lead to a draw toward views they may have never been drawn to before. These groups are easy targets for the extremist, because the only resistance they have are voids waiting to be simply filled.

Extremism and Radicalism in Society or Government

When we strive to combat extremism or radicalism in a society or a far-leaning government, we must be careful not to swing the pendulum too far in the opposite direction. In our efforts to combat the extremism of radicalization and the closed-minded, narrow goals that are followed in its pursuit, we can sometimes forgo other issues and/or compromise our own beliefs or values, as well as those belonging to others. This can result in the opposite effect of what we wish to create. We may be creating an atmosphere where the opposing radical element may flourish. When the people of a nation swing the pendulum of government, they

must take caution. The restoring force has no choice but to drive the pendulum the other way, but like with a pendulum that swings too far to one side, they could overcorrect when it swings the other way—on occasion with even more disastrous or tragic consequences.

Opportunity for the Opportunist—Belief in Superiority, Desire for Past Glory, or Simple Greed

Sometimes we have a habit of looking for the charismatic person who offers stability, quick, simple, painless solutions, or a return to past glory. Unfortunately, for many people the past is all that they can hang on to, or it is the only thing that defines them. They forget that a glory in the past was a result of the particular circumstances within that past. There are some things in life that can never be put back the same way as they were before. Remember the old saying, “we can never go back to the way things were before.”

There are also those who, thinking they are superior, will swallow nearly anything that is told to them if it empowers their belief in superiority. The radicals will use this to their advantage, tapping into this desire for justification of superiority or a yearning for perceived romanticism of the past. They find opportunity in the exploitation of fears, aspirations, or just simple greed in their target populations. And some people can be convinced to do almost anything if they think that they are capturing the past or just simply coming out ahead. Unfortunately, there are also those who will bend over backwards for anyone or anything if they think that they will benefit or not get caught. In reality, these delusions will ultimately leave us all weaker.

Opportunity for the Opportunist—Compliancy Empowers

Throughout recorded history, humankind has been plagued by corruption. Men and women in powerful or unique positions have always taken advantage of others. They have often used their influence only to satisfy their own greed, promote their agendas, and/or defend their positions. Many have been able to do this through the oppression of others. The time and opportunity have now risen on the planet to change that. It is time for us to govern ourselves and finally allow all of us to grow and mature. Now is the time for the peoples of this globe to cease being told how and what to think by a select few. We must follow the path that is the most logical and beneficial for all. Yes, our own needs are important to meet, and advancements need to be integrated, but not at the unnecessary expense of others. We must do what is in the best interest of all. All of humanity may never all follow this path; however, humans can be very resourceful when threatened by extinction. Yes, no matter what we do, there may be someone out there willing and able to exploit those who follow the paths that are mutually beneficial for all. There may be those willing enough or vulnerable enough to follow exploitative paths as well as those who will lead. However, as we all grow and become enlightened, these people, and especially those who follow them, may finally realize that they do themselves and all of us more harm than good in the long run.

The question for us is how to deny opportunities for those who would lead others toward paths contrary to those which are mutually beneficial for all. It is not a matter of stopping those who would take the advantage. It is not a matter of stopping those who would become susceptible to those influences. It is a matter of supplying those who would become susceptible with what they need to resist. It is a matter of eliminating what the opportunists need to flourish or even to be created. It is a matter of preventing an environment that is conducive for those opportunists.

We all can too easily add contributions to the collective creation of the environment suitable for the opportunists. We can contribute merely by being compliant. These moments of compliancy, whether we recognize them or not, may even seem to be insignificant or unrelated to us. These moments do add up to supply those openings for the opportunists to exploit. Within all of us lies that which the opportunists can use. It is we who supply their opportunities and environments of compliancy. It is we who must no longer allow environments of compliancy to come into existence.

There is an old saying: “Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t.” In this saying, the thing I always remembered is “. . . the devil . . .” When I was a child and was told this saying, I always replied, “Why does it have to be a devil?” I have always viewed it as a weakness to choose between which devil, instead of creating a third possibility. Choosing to accept something bad because the alternative could be worse does not negate your responsibility for choosing something bad. Whether through acceptance or compliancy, toleration of the extremists will only embolden and strengthen them. Even if it is ultimately false, since the radical offers hope for protection of traditions, culture, or a way of life, the fear of loss may delude many to the realities of subjugation. But once the radicals become entrenched, they become emboldened and their true nature of extremism and fanaticism unfolds.

Opportunity for the Opportunist—Divisions

We now stand at a very important crossroads in human history. With all the uncertainty and the wide ranging and extensive changes in the world, we have a human desire to seek out solutions or to find stability from those who can promise

them. Too often, many of these extremists, radicals, or opportunists will come in the form of tyrants. Many can be under the influence of these tyrants who promise them what they want to hear. However, they only deliver tyranny in the form of advancement for themselves and their cohorts. While many may support those who make these promises, few that promise such things will put much emphasis on the practicality of logical delivery of those promises or oaths. Nor will they put much emphasis on the consequences of the resulting mess. We must not only avoid coming under the influence of tyranny, but also use those opportunities that the tyrant utilizes. We must instead reclaim those instances for advancement toward the betterment of conditions for all. We must be careful not to delude ourselves into believing or accepting the tyrants' rhetoric.

Radicals and extremists of various sides may try to divide the middle. And yes, one of their greatest assets is that they embolden and empower more actions from others like themselves. However, sometimes they do not accept that some of their actions may have the possibility of souring the moderates' view of them. Extremism can give birth to opposing extremism where it may have never existed. To reiterate: The asset of the extremists can also be a liability for them in that they set the stage to bolster the opposite extremists. The extremist or radical does not realize that they are a slave to cycles. *Do not be a slave!*

Often, extremists on opposing sides may use the same tactics and secretly hope their enemy will succeed in some of their lesser schemes, so they themselves may succeed and further their own greater ones. Often this is the intention, as small victories occur on one side that present the perfect opportunity for the opposing side to further their own agendas. Their "extremism may be different, but they have the same result," as someone once mentioned to me. They will misuse or

exaggerate what is available to them for personal advancements. Divisions plus violence will equal the opportunity for personal advancement for some. The danger is this can develop into a cycle.

Chaos does have an order to it. Chaos does follow patterns and sometimes certain chain of events. In this respect, chaos and order can sometimes appear to be one and the same. There are often elements that can be found in both. In addition, our definitions of chaos and order can be vastly different depending on our perceived and desired outcomes. Some can perceive the world as chaos with pockets of order. In this debate, I find myself more of an “exostentialist”², not to be confused with the term “existentialist.”

In any case, these are times of rare chances for the opportunist. We all have the choice: Pull our world onto a path where we can be proud to bestow it on future generations or fall under the influence of the opportunists. We must not fall victim.

Perceptions and Assumptions

A perception or assumption of weakness can be a benefit for those who are perceived to be weak. How many battles or wars have been lost because of an incorrect assumption of an opponent? Appearances; how deceptive. A preconceived notion about someone else can be fatal for those with the incorrect assumption. Preconceptions or biases brought into the decision process can not only distort the current decision but also the entire decision process when new or relevant information is introduced. Decisions are better made without unwarranted or biased influences. Assumptions can be a weakness and can leave us vulnerable. A perception within the mind cannot be undone easily. Once implanted, whether it is recognized or unsuspected, held consciously or subconsciously, dismissed or

not, it will ultimately affect, even if only in a small way, all subsequent decisions. Throughout history, how many battles have been won or lost because of a preconceived notion?

The same influences and information that we use to base our decisions on are influences that also limit perception. As we collect information, we can close off the pursuit of other resources or avenues of receiving said information, in the effort to refine or improve the path or paths that we have chosen. Other information or the resources we collect from may be considered secondary, and their value possibly diminished in comparison to that which we have decided to focus on. In this way, at the point that the world affects us, we become susceptible to it. When we grow up cloistered or stuck inside, we can become vulnerable to the outside. When we grow up isolated in the inside, we can become vulnerable through our misinterpretations of the outside. We can also become vulnerable in being viewed by others, as others may view us with the wrong perception or assumption of us, as well vice versa. When we are isolated, others may not be able to fully appreciate us, and again vice versa. They may also more easily develop misconceptions of us, and vice versa. We must be careful. We must ensure that they fully understand us in relation to their experiences. In addition, we must ensure that they understand our reasoning and our experiences. We must also be careful not to fulfill their misconceived expectations of us. When we buy in to the perceptions that others would put upon us, do we only see the way others want us to see? Unconsciously, do we also sometimes sell ourselves into these perceptions that others may have? If so, do we do it for a form of entertainment, our benefit, our convenience, or are we forced into it? Not only must others have firsthand experience of us, but we must have firsthand experience of them in return. Those whom someone has never met before can be prejudged based on past experiences

and biased information. Because of this there can be incorrect information resulting in an incorrect judgment. This incorrect judgment can be based on the results of the mere association of that which they may or may not be completely joined, allied, or even preconditioned to. Too often we forget that the actions, beliefs, or rhetoric of one is not necessarily a representation of another or the whole group, nor does it accurately represent those who may be merely sympathetic or motivated by other external reasons. It is important to remember this also applies to the associations between groups. While this is common knowledge, it can often be difficult to reconcile logic with our emotions. However, we must be careful not to get swept up in an emotionally charged moment. We must remember that the actions of one do not necessarily equal the whole. Nor will those who are only sympathetic or motivated by external reasons react the same.

Many too easily ally themselves with groups or ideologies that they may not entirely agree with, just because the groups seem to be beneficial to their own short-term goals. Belonging, associating, or even sympathizing with a specific group can influence others' perceptions of us. Right or wrong, this may ultimately impact their perceptions of our own separate ideals. Our affiliations have the potential to trigger incorrect preconceived images and notions in their minds of what we may or may not be about. After people have those assumptions in their minds, anything we say from then on may be clouded by those assumptions. This clearly has the potential to create more problems for the future than solutions for the present.

Communication for Survival in Our New World

With the speed, interconnectivity, interdependency, and many other facets of our modern world of cause and effect, the need for improved communication and cultural understanding is becoming increasingly important to our mutual survival.

Often in our world people listen more closely to those who say what they want to hear, who speak in the simplest terms, or the most colorful terms that accord with their sympathies. Despite negative results or without the forethought to think ahead, some can often discredit or disavow those whom they do not agree with and promote or embellish those whom they do. Sometimes, people can act from the weakness of only superficial or hasty observations, biased secondhand accounts and preconceived notions about people instead of engaging in actual dialogue and gaining firsthand experience. We, humanity, are one people: We cannot afford to allow misconceptions, misunderstandings, or stigmas about other cultures or ideals to stand in the way of logical examination and discussion in our thinking and interactions. But in this, we must also be careful in linguistics. While translators may translate the words, the true heart of the meaning can become lost. Words are but crude metaphors that we use to describe the describable, the indescribable, the tangible, and the intangible. But difficulty does not mean impossibility. We must continue to strive toward bettering our communication between peoples. We must improve ourselves not only in the skill of linguistics, but also in how well we express our intentions, ideals, and concepts. We must improve our foresight of the results of our actions and presentation. Degrees of separation are shrinking, and at the same time people around the world are becoming nervous and unsure of where others may stand. We are individuals. And yes, individuality must be respected. Since we are individuals, we have different

minds, perspectives, and experiences. Not everyone views everything completely identically. How one person views something is not exactly how another will perceive it. Nor has everyone had exactly the same experience, even if they are in the same situation together. This is a reason we must be clear and diligent in living our beliefs or values—so that others are less likely to portray us, our beliefs, or our values inaccurately. The human tendency is toward stereotypes; we must ensure that we are able to communicate clearly and portray ourselves and our ideals accurately.

Remember the old axiom, “actions speak louder than words.” We have truly failed in this. We have failed in this by not following through with it. Hypocrisy has taken root in our world and devalued our rhetoric, ourselves, and our world. In following those whom we believe to portray our ideals, we must remember that those who speak very well may not fully understand or believe what they pronounce. Or, if they do, they may speak double-talk. We cannot afford to follow those who speak to us in the most elaborate terms and be fooled because of their tone or perceived expertise. And also, with those who speak in the most simplistic or expertise terms, we cannot afford to be misled because they state our own sympathies. We must have the fortitude to not be swayed by those who speak to our sympathies when they possess questionable character or agendas. We must have the strength to reject them, even if it may appear that we are rejecting our own ideals or interests. We must follow those whose character and actions we consider to be purer than our own, and not the words or rhetoric of those who fulfill our superficial needs or speak to our desires or fears. We must continually question and reexamine those whom we do follow. There are many ways people have succumbed to following a pied piper into darkness.