

*X35 – EXchanging Worldviews, 35:
EXploring Prospects for Peace & Prosperity, 27:
EXtricating Humanity from EXcruciating Problems by, 21:
EXpediting Cultural Change via, 17:
EXterminating the God Meme, through 9:
Scientifically Sound EXtraterrestrial Perspectives*

Dear: In this final X-chapter, I want to summarily review suggestions in previous X-chapters and to explore a few additional ways to exterminate the god meme, to rationally expand scientific humanism, to solve our problems more intelligently, to build more successful global-scale cooperatives, and thereby, to promote more peace and prosperity. I'll provide only a few additional examples, because in case you've forgotten, my "assignment" from a certain troublesome four-year old was, not to solve all the problems in the world, but only to explain why I don't believe in god (any god).

In the previous chapter, I provided some example of many successful and welcome global-scale cooperatives, such as international scientific organizations, technical committees, trade agreements, NGOs, etc. In the previous chapter, I also provided some examples of "successful" but unwelcome global-scale cooperatives, such as all international, proselytizing, religious organizations, including all Muslim supremacist groups, such as al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood.

I purposefully didn't emphasize the most obvious international cooperative, i.e., the United Nations, in part because the UN is an admixture of welcome and unwelcome parts: some parts of the UN (e.g., UNICEF and WMO) are working wonderfully, other parts (e.g., UNESCO and WHO) are working fairly well, and other parts are a disgrace to the human race – in part because of the corruption of the UN by religious nuts, particularly by those in the Vatican (Roman Catholics) and by Muslim maniacs.

To illustrate what I mean and to provide you with additional details about how (I suggest) the UN could be improved, please consider the following May 2008 post from one of my blogs.¹

¹ From <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2008/05/un-is-hopeless.html>.

THE UN IS HOPELESS

Little hurts more than losing long held and strongly felt hopes, such as the hopes most people have for their children and grandchildren. But there comes a time in such despair when, to go on living, the anguished must reject such hopes, replacing them with new hopes, held with less idealism and more realism, with less passion and more wisdom. Yet, in the process, one dies a little – or a lot. As Samuel Coleridge wrote in *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*:

*He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.*

When I memorized that stanza, more than 50 years ago, I was president of my high school's UN club. At the time, we were full of hopes for the future world, heralded by the UN's Declaration of Human Rights. But now, what a sad depth to which the UN has sunk. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said with dismay about the UN's former Commission on Human Rights:

We have reached a point at which the Commission's declining credibility has cast a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole, and where piecemeal reforms will not be enough.

In 2006, in an attempt to remove that "shadow", the UN General Assembly attempted to reform the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) by replacing it with the Human Rights Council (HRC), but as is illustrated below, it was only a "piecemeal" reform, with the only significant change being a shuffling of the letters in its acronym.

Below is quoted text from pp. 68–73 of a UN document² from the Seventh Session of the HRC. To the quotation I've added the notes in "square brackets" in hopes of prodding readers to consider how ludicrous and even despicable this resolution is. It was introduced by representatives from Pakistan and Egypt [on behalf of all Islamic nations] and passed by a vote of 21 to 10, with 14 abstentions.

7/19. Combating defamation of religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense]

The Human Rights Council,

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/1 of 24 October 2005, in which the Assembly emphasized the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of

² At <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/7session/index.htm>.

any kind as to race, color, sex, language or religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, and acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world [note that the statement is about “the importance of respect and understanding for... diversity”, not necessarily respect for religions and cultures!],

Recalling also the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in September 2001...

Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981,

Recognizing the valuable contribution of all religions to modern civilization [somebody’s gotta be kidding!] and the contribution that dialogue among civilizations can make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Noting the Declaration adopted by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at its thirty-fourth session in Islamabad, in May 2007, which condemned the growing trend of Islamophobia [are we “unbelievers” (in nonsense) not to fear an ideology that, in its “holy book”, unrelentingly calls for our murder?!] and systematic discrimination against the adherents of Islam and emphasized the need to take effective measures to combat defamation of religions [how can one “defame” ideologies that are indefensible, being nothing but childish superstitions, scientific speculations by savages, babblings of deranged psychopaths, and legalistic mumbo-jumbo concocted by megalomaniacs?],

Noting also the final communiqué adopted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference [is this an Islamic or a UN document?] at its eleventh summit, in Dakar, in March 2008, in which the Organization expressed concern at the systematically negative stereotyping of Muslims and Islam and other divine religions [and those who believe in Santa Claus, fairy godmothers, elves, witches, and sundry other supernatural silliness, such as ghosts, angels, and gods], and denounced the overall rise in intolerance and discrimination against Muslim minorities [and others who require no evidence to form their strongly held beliefs], which constitute an affront to human dignity [for certainly it’s undignified to hold beliefs more strongly than relevant, reliable evidence can support] and run counter to the international human rights instruments,

Recalling the joint statement of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Union and the Secretary-General of 7 February 2006, in which they recognized the need, in all societies, to show sensitivity and responsibility in treating issues of special significance for the adherents of any particular faith,

even by those who do not share the belief in question [and in particular, sensitivity to those delusional people who are convinced that they've been abducted by aliens, that angels communicate with people, and/or that Santa Claus really does live at the North Pole, e.g., by sensitively and responsibly getting them psychiatric help],

Reaffirming the call made by the President of the General Assembly in his statement of 15 March 2006 that, in the wake of existing mistrust and tensions, there is a need for dialogue and understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions to commit to working together to prevent provocative or regrettable incidents and to develop better ways of promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of [and from] religion and belief [including “respect” for all ideas that are patently absurd?],

Welcoming all international and regional initiatives to promote cross-cultural and interfaith harmony, including the Alliance of Civilizations and the International Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation and their valuable efforts [such as?] towards the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue at all levels,

Welcoming also the report by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on the situation of Muslims and Arabs in various parts of the world [when everyone knows that we should be tolerant of people who have made it abundantly clear that they desire to rule the world]...

Welcoming further the reports of the Special Rapporteur submitted to the Council at its fourth and sixth sessions... in which he draws the attention of Member States to the serious nature of the defamation of all religions [and the defamation of fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson and others] and to the promotion of the fight against these phenomena by strengthening the role of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and promoting reciprocal understanding [of each other's myths and fairy tales, absurd antihuman laws, and defunct scientific theories] and joint action to meet the fundamental challenges of development, peace and the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as the need to complement legal strategies,

Reiterating the call made by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to Member States to wage a systematic campaign against incitement to racial and religious hatred by maintaining a careful balance between the defense of secularism and respect for freedom of [and from] religion and by acknowledging and respecting the complementarity of all the freedoms embodied in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights...

Emphasizing that States, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance and freedom of

[and from] religion and belief through education [except, of course, in the case of “the one true religion”, disbelievers of which and apostates from which are to be killed],

Noting with concern that defamation of religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] is among the causes of social disharmony and instability, at the national and international levels, and leads to violations of human rights,

Noting with deep concern the increasing trend in recent years of statements attacking religions, including Islam and Muslims, in human rights forums [when obviously if you’re convinced that any religion is stupid, you have no right to express your opinion]...

1. *Expresses deep concern* at the negative stereotyping of all religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense], manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in matters of religion or belief [I mean, after all, just because you cling to stupid ideas, doesn’t mean that you cling to stupid ideas – I guess];
2. *Also expresses deep concern* at attempts to identify Islam with terrorism, violence, and human rights violations [I mean, just because such identification is abundantly clear in Islam’s “holy book”, the Koran, doesn’t mean that it’s true – I guess], and emphasizes that equating any religion with terrorism should be rejected and combated by all at all levels [for after all, people will next be calling a spade a spade, and we can’t have that];
3. *Further expresses deep concern* at the intensification of the campaign of defamation of religions and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001 [because, after all, just because all of the September 11th terrorists were Muslims and behaved in a manner consistent with Islamic teachings doesn’t mean that they were Muslims following Islamic teachings – I guess];
4. *Expresses its grave concern* at the recent serious instances of deliberate stereotyping of religions, their adherents, and sacred persons in the media and by political parties and groups in some societies, and at the associated provocation and political exploitation [after all, when you have “sacred persons” such as Sir Isaac Newton defamed by deliberately provocative people such as Einstein, then who will be safe from criticism?!];
5. *Recognizes* that, in the context of the fight against terrorism, defamation of religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] becomes an aggravating factor that contributes to the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms of target groups and their economic and social exclusion;

6. *Expresses concern* at laws or administrative measures that have been specifically designed to control and monitor Muslim minorities, thereby stigmatizing them and legitimizing the discrimination that they experience [for after all, if people want to be terrorists, they should have the freedom to be terrorists];
7. *Strongly deploras* physical attacks and assaults on businesses, cultural centers and places of worship of all religions and targeting of religious symbols;
8. *Urges* States to take actions to prohibit the dissemination, including through political institutions and organizations, of racist and xenophobic ideas and material aimed at any religion or its followers that constitute incitement to racial and religious hatred, hostility or violence [so, from here on out, everybody, stop distributing the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon, cause they're all loaded with such crap];
9. *Also urges* States to provide, within their respective legal and constitutional systems, adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from the defamation of any religion [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense], to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] and their value systems [such as: "Kill the infidels"] and to complement legal systems with intellectual and moral strategies to combat religious hatred and intolerance [certainly we should combat religious hatred and intolerance, such as is promoted in all "holy books"];
10. *Emphasizes* that respect of religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] and their protection from contempt is an essential element conducive for the exercise by all of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion [yes siree: defunct ideas MUST BE protected – otherwise, for goodness sake, people will start thinking for themselves, and we can't have that];
11. *Urges* all States to ensure that all public officials, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military, civil servants and educators, in the course of their official duties, respect all religions and beliefs [and all defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] and do not discriminate against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief [I mean, just because some people are bonkers doesn't mean you're to consider them bonkers] and that all necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;
12. *Emphasizes* that, as stipulated in international human rights law, everyone has the right to freedom of expression [except, of course, those who express their opinions that anyone who believes in any god is bonkers], and that the exercise of

this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities [not to criticize any religion or defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions [e.g., laws of blasphemy against defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] but only those provided by law and necessary for the respect of the rights or reputations of others, or for the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals [which certainly should be big enough loopholes to permit any theocrat to drive through with columns of tanks and armored personnel carriers];

13. *Reaffirms* that general comment No. 15 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in which the Committee stipulates that the prohibition of the dissemination of all ideas based upon racial superiority or hatred [such as are contained in the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon] is compatible with the freedom of opinion and expression, is equally applicable to the question of incitement to religious hatred [except, of course, for one minor detail: people have no control over their ethnicity, but they do have (or should have) control over the stupidity in which they profess “belief”];

14. *Deplores* the use of printed, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and of any other means to incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination towards Islam or any religion [or any defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense];

15. *Invites* the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to continue to report on all manifestations of defamation of religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense], and in particular on the serious implications of Islamophobia, on the enjoyment of all rights to the Council at its ninth session;

16. *Requests* the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the implementation of the present resolution and to submit a study compiling relevant existing legislations and jurisprudence concerning defamation of and contempt for religions [and defunct scientific theories, superstitions, fairy tales, astrology, and similar nonsense] to the Council at its ninth session.

Believe it or not, the above resolution (for some strange reason, without the added remarks) was adopted by the UN’s Human Rights Council. Nations in favor included: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Wikipedia states:³ “Of the Council’s members from the Organization of the Islamic Conference, 16 of 17 voted for the resolution, along with China, Russia, and South Africa.” That

³ At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Human_Rights_Council.

diplomats from China, the Philippines, Russia, and South Africa voted for the resolution is a disgrace to the people that they supposedly represent. Nations voting against the resolution were Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

So now, everybody, take note: according to the above resolution of the UN's Human Rights Council, religions have "rights"! The Council should rename itself: *The UN Council for the Rights of Humans and Religions*. Roy W. Brown of the International Humanist and Ethical Union summarized such idiocy well:⁴

... no-one has a duty to respect any religion. Furthermore, lack of respect for a belief should not be confused with hatred of the believer. It is the believer that merits protection, not the belief.

And how are we to define defamation? Are we no longer to be permitted to condemn misogyny, homophobia, or calls to kill – if they are made in the name of religion? Are we obliged to respect religious practices that we find offensive? Is lack of respect for such practices to be considered a crime? Are ideas, are religions now to be accorded human rights? Surely, when religion invades the public domain it becomes an ideology like any other, and must be open to criticism as such. To deny the claims of religion is neither defamation nor blasphemy.

Again, why protect just religious ideas? Why not all ideas? Shouldn't all ideas have as many "rights" as religious ideas? So, will the Council entertain its renaming as *The UN Council for the Rights of Humans, Religions, and Other Ideas*?

But then, what would happen if ideas conflict? Suppose, for example, that someone supports the idea (as strange as it might seem) that all religions are idiotic, infantile, holdovers from (as Richard Dawkins said) "the cry-baby phase" of human development. Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Joseph Lewis:

Let me tell you that religion is the cruelest fraud ever perpetrated upon the human race. It is the last of the great schemes of thievery that man must legally prohibit so as to protect himself from the charlatans who prey upon the ignorance and fears of the people. The penalty for this type of extortion should be as severe as it is of other forms of dishonesty.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Henry Mencken:

Religion is fundamentally opposed to everything I hold in veneration – courage, clear thinking, honesty, fairness, and, above all, love of the truth... God is the immemorial refuge of the incompetent, the helpless, the miserable. They find not only sanctuary in His arms, but also a kind of superiority, soothing to their macerated egos; He will set them above their betters.

⁴ At <http://www.iheu.org/node/2546>.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Robert Ingersoll:

The doctrine that future happiness depends upon belief is monstrous. It is the infamy of infamies. The notion that faith in Christ [or Allah] is to be rewarded by an eternity of bliss, while a dependence upon reason, observation, and experience merits everlasting pain, is too absurd for refutation, and can be relieved only by that unhappy mixture of insanity and ignorance, called “faith.”

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Clarence Darrow:

The origin of the absurd idea of immortal life is easy to discover; it is kept alive by hope and fear, by childish faith, and by cowardice.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Mikhail A. Bakunin:

Religion is a collective insanity.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Thomas Edison:

So far as religion of the day is concerned, it's a damned fake... Religion is all bunk.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by W.K. Clifford:

It's wrong always, everywhere and for everyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by William Archer:

I suggest that the anthropomorphic god-idea is not a harmless infirmity of human thought, but a very noxious fallacy, which is largely responsible for the calamities the world is at present enduring.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Bertrand Russell:

My own view of religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery to the human race... I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Charlespie Mary Alice McKinney:

Religion does three things quite effectively: Divides people, Controls people, Deludes people.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Gene Roddenberry:

I condemn false prophets, I condemn the effort to take away the power of rational decision, to drain people of their free will – and a hell of a lot of money in the

bargain. Religions vary in their degree of idiocy, but I reject them all. For most people, religion is nothing more than a substitute for a malfunctioning brain.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Frank Zappa:

If you want to get together in any exclusive situation and have people love you, fine. But to hang all this desperate sociology on the idea of The Cloud-Guy who has The Big Book, who knows if you've been bad or good – and CARES about any of it – to hang it all on that, folks, is the chimpanzee part of the brain working.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Joseph Daleiden:

In the final analysis all theology... is a marvelous exercise in logic based on premisses that are no more verifiable – or reasonable – than astrology, palmistry, or belief in the Easter Bunny. Theology pretends to search for truth, but no method could lead a person farther away from the truth than that intellectual charade. The purpose of theology is first and foremost to perpetuate the religious status quo. Religion, in turn, seeks to maintain the social stability necessary for its own preservation.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by President Thomas Jefferson:

Religions are all alike – founded upon fables and mythologies.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by President James Madison:

Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by President Abraham Lincoln:

My earlier views of the unsoundness of the Christian scheme of salvation and the human origin of the scriptures have become clearer and stronger with advancing years, and I see no reason for thinking I shall ever change them.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill:

Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities – but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Albert Einstein:

The Jewish religion like all other religions is an incarnation of the most childish superstitions.

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Richard Dawkins:

If all the achievements of theologians were wiped out tomorrow, would anyone notice the difference? Even bad achievements of scientists, the bombs and sonar-guided whaling vessels, *work*! The achievements of theologians don't do anything, don't affect anything, don't mean anything. What makes anyone think that "theology" is a subject at all?

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Sam Harris:

We have names for people who have many beliefs for which there is no rational justification. When their beliefs are extremely common we call them "religious"; otherwise, they are likely to be called "mad", "psychotic" or "delusional".

Suppose someone supports the idea expressed by Sunand Tryambak Joshi:

The atheist, agnostic, or secularist... should not be cowed by exaggerated sensitivity to people's religious beliefs and fail to speak vigorously and pointedly when the devout put forth arguments manifestly contrary to all the acquired knowledge of the past two or three millennia. Those who advocate a piece of folly like the theory of an "intelligent creator" should be held accountable for their folly; they have no right to be offended for being called fools until they establish that they are not in fact fools.

Then tell us, Oh Wise Members of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, will such ideas also be protected – or just the ideas recorded in sundry, ridiculous "holy books"?

No wonder respect for the UN continues to plummet. As Sigmund Freud said about all religious beliefs:

The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life.

Maybe Freud was right, but I'm not quite ready to give up on humanity. Instead, I'd urge all readers to ridicule all gods, all religions, and all "holy books" out of existence. Think about it, and if you're so inclined, consider what Bertrand Russell said:

A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men. It needs a fearless outlook and a free intelligence. It needs hope for the future, not looking back all the time toward a past that is dead, which we trust will be far surpassed by the future that our intelligence can create.

But as sad as it is for me to say, I've lost hope in the UN. Yet, that's not to suggest that some UN organizations aren't successful (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, WMO, and others), but we need to start over, planning to keep what's working and to

jettison what isn't (such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Human Rights Council). Best would be start over "from scratch", because with the rules of the existing UN, I expect that the members will never agree to needed reforms, since nations almost certainly won't agree to reduce their representation, privileges, and power.

For example, starting from scratch, let's invite all nations to join a new organization (maybe call it the Global Congress, GC, or the Global Council, GC, or the Global Cooperative, GC, or similar), with two houses of congress, with passage of any resolution requiring a majority in both houses, and with each participating nation having representation in both houses. In one house, maybe call it "The House of Rights", the votes of the representatives would be weighted by the number of people that each diplomat represents multiplied by a measure of the people's freedom, e.g., as a first approximation (until a better measure becomes available) as given by summing columns A (Electoral Process) through G (Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights) from the Table⁵ produced by Freedom House, with the goal being to have each vote reflect the freely held opinions of people whom each diplomat represents in reality rather than as claimed by the nation's rulers.

In the other house of the Global Congress, maybe call it "The House of Responsibilities", the votes of the same nation's diplomats would be weighted by the financial contributions to the GC made by each representative's nation, with the goal being to have each vote reflect the willingness of each nation to shoulder the responsibilities associated with each resolution. For example, if funding for the GC were similar to current funding of the UN, then those nations paying "the floor rate" of 0.001% of the total budget would have their votes in The House of Responsibilities multiplied by 0.001%, while (again if current contributions continued) votes of the following nations would be multiplied by the following numbers (reflecting their 2007 percentage contributions to the total UN budget):⁶ US 22% (the maximum currently permitted), Japan 16.6%, Germany 8.7%, UK 6.1%, France 6.0%, Italy 4.9%, Canada 2.8%, China 2.7%, Spain 2.5%, Mexico 1.9%, Australia 1.6%, Brazil 1.5%, etc.

Similar weightings of all ballots would occur in all Committees, Councils, Working Groups, etc., established by the GC, although probably not by establishing two subgroups within each group (although the rights and responsibilities associated with every resolution would, of course, need to be thoroughly and separately evaluated), but instead, by weighting each ballot in each group both via "rights" and "responsibilities". For example, the following table shows the results of the two separate weightings for a GC Human Rights Council vote on the resolution dealing with "Combating defamation of religions", assuming the votes cast would be the same as were cast in the UN Human Rights Council.

⁵ At <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=372&year=2007>.

⁶ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UN_-_Financing.

<i>IN FAVOR</i>	<i>Population (100 M)</i>	<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Rights Weighted</i>	<i>Responsibility Weighted</i>
<i>Azerbaijan</i>	0.084	0.32	0.03	0.005
<i>Bangladesh</i>	1.504	0.53	0.80	0.010
<i>Cameroon</i>	0.163	0.27	0.04	0.009
<i>China</i>	13.233	0.17	2.25	2.667
<i>Cuba</i>	0.113	0.07	0.01	0.054
<i>Djibouti</i>	0.008	0.35	0.00	0.001
<i>Egypt</i>	0.740	0.27	0.20	0.088
<i>Indonesia</i>	2.228	0.65	1.45	0.161
<i>Jordan</i>	0.057	0.42	0.02	0.012
<i>Malaysia</i>	0.273	0.48	0.13	0.190
<i>Mali</i>	0.120	0.74	0.09	0.001
<i>Nicaragua</i>	0.055	0.67	0.04	0.002
<i>Nigeria</i>	1.315	0.51	0.67	0.048
<i>Pakistan</i>	1.579	0.35	0.55	0.059
<i>Philippines</i>	0.830	0.69	0.57	0.078
<i>Qatar</i>	0.008	0.24	0.00	0.085
<i>Russia</i>	1.432	0.34	0.49	1.200
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	0.240	0.10	0.02	0.748
<i>Senegal</i>	0.116	0.76	0.09	0.004
<i>South Africa</i>	0.474	0.86	<u>0.41</u>	<u>0.290</u>
TOTAL =			7.86	5.712
<i>OPPOSED</i>	<i>Population (100 M)</i>	<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Rights Weighted</i>	<i>Responsibility Weighted</i>
<i>Canada</i>	0.334	0.99	0.33	2.977
<i>France</i>	0.605	0.94	0.57	6.301
<i>Germany</i>	0.827	0.96	0.79	8.577
<i>Italy</i>	0.581	0.92	0.53	5.079
<i>Netherlands</i>	0.164	0.99	0.16	1.873
<i>Romania</i>	0.217	0.81	0.18	0.070
<i>Slovenia</i>	0.021	0.91	0.02	0.096
<i>Switzerland</i>	0.073	0.99	0.07	1.216
<i>Ukraine</i>	0.465	0.73	0.34	0.045
<i>UK</i>	0.608	0.98	<u>0.60</u>	<u>6.642</u>
TOTAL =			3.59	32.876

For the calculations shown, numbers in the “Relative Freedom” column are obtained by summing columns A through G of the 2007 Freedom House figures already referenced (used until a better measure of freedoms becomes available), and numbers in the “Rights-Weighted” column are the products of the nation’s “Population” (in hundreds of millions) and its “Relative Freedom” (divided by 100). The “Responsibilities-Weighted” column is obtained from the 2007 funding for the UN, copied from the relevant UN report (p.9).⁷

⁷ At <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/assessmt/contributions2007.pdf>.

As a result, for the same nations voting in the same manner on the same resolution in a GC's Human Right Council (which passed in the UN's Human Rights Council by a vote of 21 to 10 – although the representatives from China and Russia might display more responsibility when their votes are more significant), the “Totals” show (if I've made no errors copying all those numbers!) that although the resolution would have passed by 7.86 to 3.59 (about 2 to 1) with a rights-based weighting, it would have failed by 32.876 to 5.712 (about 5 to 1) with a responsibilities-based weighting. Therefore, upon failing to be approved by both measurements, the stupid, antihuman, religious-defamation-nonsense resolution would have been rejected.

As for other details about the proposed Global Congress [or Global Cooperative], they would be worked out by mutual consent. I'd expect agreement that an Administrator would be elected by a majority of both houses for a single term (maybe for six years), that the Administrator (and only the Administrator) would have veto power, which could be over-ridden by a two-thirds majority in both houses, and that the Administrator would be commander-in-chief of the GC's police forces. Also, I expect that an independent judiciary would be established with lifetime court-appointments of judges by majorities in both houses – all (including the Administrator and all diplomats) of course impeachable by a majority in both houses.

If a few nations started the GC (e.g., the US, Japan, EU nations, Australia, Canada, India...), then I expect that within a few years, the rest of the nations of the world would quickly follow, leading to the simultaneous abandonment of the UN. Good riddance: the UN is UNdermined, UNSuitable, UNSound, UNTenable, UNwise, UNworkable, UNrepresentative, UNdemocratic, UNconscionable, UNscrupulous, UNSuccessful, and UNworthy of further hope.

Actually, Dear, I wouldn't recommend that we immediately jump to such a voting scheme for the new “Global Cooperative”. As you might expect from the previous two chapters, I'd instead suggest (following Popper's recommendation) that the proposed method (of two different ways of weighting representatives' ballots) first be tested (and thoroughly evaluated) at smaller spatial scales (e.g., in villages, cities, and states), before testing it at the global scale. Nonetheless, from the above post, I hope you saw both how religions have added to “the wrongs of the world” and how corrections might be made, toward the goal of more peace and prosperity.

Also, Dear, please remember from earlier chapters that the goal of “peace and prosperity” shouldn't be taken literally: it's an asymptotic state that, realistically, can't be achieved. Instead, humans should continuously seek not ‘peace’ but “just” reduction in physical violence and not ‘prosperity’ but “just” sustainable development.

TOWARD MAKING MORE PROGRESS

Toward those goals, to terminate this long series of **X**-chapters, to complete my explanation of what I mean by saying **Belief in god is bad science and even worse policy**, in this chapter I'll try to summarize how I think that humanity might be able to make more progress on the painfully long and difficult road leading to reduction in physical violence and to sustainable development.

No Peace Without Justice

As others have said about the goal of reducing physical violence, toward the goal of more peace, we won't achieve peace without justice. But opinions about social justice are just opinions, and until such opinions are based on tested hypotheses rather than speculations, justice can't be achieved.

Fortunately for humanity, however, as I've tried to explain in the **J**-chapters, Nature has provided each of us with hypotheses about natural and personal justice that well summarize our personal experiences (e.g., that generally we get what we deserve and not what we don't deserve), and each of us has performed a sufficient number of tests of such hypotheses to conclude that the hypotheses are reliable. Therefore, potentials seem fairly good for reaching a consensus view about the meaning of social justice.

No Peace Without Common Goals

But in the attempt to extrapolate from the fundamental hypothesis about personal justice (that we generally get what we deserve) to possible agreement on social justice, an obvious question is: What is it that people are trying to "get"; i.e., what are their goals? Peace isn't possible if someone is trying to get what belongs to someone else; there won't be peace between Israelis and Palestinians, for example, if both claim that the same land belongs to them. Thus, for peace, goals can't conflict.

As I've argued from near the beginning of this book, all of us pursue the same trio of prime goals: survival (or "thrival") of ourselves, our families (however large we recognize our family to be) and our values (whatever we decide to be the bases of our values). Insofar as other people assist us in the pursuit of our trio of prime goals (or as a minimum, don't deter us from them), then not only reduction in physical violence but also cooperation is possible; otherwise, if others deter us from our goals (or worse, make it impossible for us to reach our goals), then peace won't be possible.

Goals Depend on Worldviews

But as I've also repeatedly stressed in earlier chapters, our goals depend on our worldviews. Most theists pursue survival not just in the lives that they have on Earth but also in their fictitious "eternal lives in paradise", most theists recognize as "family" not just those with close genetic ties but also "fellow believers" (whom Muslims and Mormons even address as "brothers" and "sisters"), and all theists accept the values prescribed in their particular "holy books". In contrast, scientific humanists have concluded from the available data that each of us has only this one life (on Earth), that all humans are members of the same human family, and that most values are to be evaluated based on the "thrival" of oneself and the human family.

Derived from different worldviews, stunning differences in goals (including values, e.g., moral values) exist, not only between Humanists and theists but also between different groups of theists. Thus, as examples,

- Relying on their (fake) "holy book", Jews claim a homeland in the Middle East,
- Relying on their (fake) "holy book", Arabs claim that the land belongs to them, while
- Relying on the scientific method, most Humanists look at the situation and say something similar to: "You're both crazy: there are no gods; no book is 'holy'; people don't own land; the land owns people."

Meanwhile, war wages on, with people on both sides (like animals) obviously most committed neither to their gods nor to their "holy books" but to the law of the jungle: might makes right.

Worldviews Depend on Religious Views

I expect that essentially everyone would agree that prospects for peace would dramatically improve if everyone adopted the same worldview. Muslim supremacists, for example, make it abundantly clear that they want everyone in the world to become Muslims. Similarly, if we all became devout Orthodox Jews, Roman Catholics, Evangelical Christians, Mormons, or any similar form of madness, then almost certainly there would be less strife in the world. Yet, not only is there essentially zero chance of all religious people adopting one "faith", the 20% (or so) of all humans who are Humanists will never agree to relinquishing our minds to control by any group of clueless clerics.

Again, I suspect that progress could be made toward peace (but not necessarily toward prosperity) if we all agreed on a worldview, e.g., if we all became Wahhabi Sunni Muslims, as Saudi clerics promote with their petrodollars. But it won't occur: not only because the rest of the Sunnis won't agree with the Wahhabis and the Shiites won't agree with the Sunnis, and not only because Christians (and Buddhists, Hindus, etc.) won't agree with any version of Islam, we scientific humanists will never agree with any of those dreamers, wallowing in their delusions.

Religions Inhibit Progress Toward Peace

Yet, again I'd agree that not all problems, which we humans have managed to get ourselves into, are caused by religions. In this final X-chapter, however, I don't want to review all such problems, in part because I've already outlined some of them in earlier X-chapters and in part because a certain troublesome grandchild didn't ask me how to solve all the problems in the world – “just” why I didn't believe in God.

Nonetheless, Dear, if you dig deep enough, you'll find that the roots of many of our problems are buried in and feed upon religious ignorance. As a reminder of such cases, consider the following abbreviated list.

- There are problems related to injustice (e.g., wars), overpopulation (e.g., starvation), and overconsumption (e.g., environmental pollution, species extinction), many of which are derived from religious ignorance.
- There are problems even with the concept of ‘justice’: ideas of social justice are just opinions, and many such opinions are derived from religious ignorance.
- There are many problems in education, many of which are again related to religious ignorance.

Still, we obviously have serious problems that have little to do with religion, such as problems in all forms of government, problems with all existing democracies, and even problems (as I addressed in the previous chapter) with trying to solve social problems by applying the scientific method.

The Need for Cultural Changes

To solve most such problems, cultural change is needed. In the previous two chapters, I outlined examples of how cultural change might be expedited by exploring (viz., promoting, supporting, and engaging in) experimental cooperatives, including extraterritorial cooperatives (and at the global scale).

For such cooperatives, I would continue to maintain that, rather than trying to force cultural change by enacting and enforcing new laws (at best, almost always a fruitless effort, and at worst, achieved by dictatorial, tyrannical rule), almost always a wiser way to induce cultural change is to try to change customs – because, when all is said and done, “**Custom is king.**” If customs can be changed, then appropriate laws usually follow, eventually.

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As an illustration of the advantage of changing customs rather than laws, consider the asymptotic goal of worldwide prosperity, pursued through sustainable development. In this consideration, suppose that people agreed on the meaning of “worldwide prosperity” and on general procedures to achieve that “prosperity” (e.g., *via* more production, less consumption, fewer people, or whatever). Then, laws could conceivably be enacted and enforced to promote the goal (e.g., of “sustainable development”) in the chosen manner (e.g., laws to prohibit people from eating more than a specified number of calories and using more than a specified amount of water per day, laws to restrict consumption of nonrenewable resources used in housing, transportation, and so on, including laws to limit the number of children that women were permitted to bear). Almost certainly, the result would be a police state even worse than the one described in Orwell’s *1984*. Instead, far better would be if customs “just” evolved, such that, e.g., fat people found few friends, people driving gas-guzzlers and living in huge mansions were shunned, women with more than two children were generally ostracized, and so on.

In turn, the best way to change customs is *via* education – and not just education in schools and universities but especially *via* the mass media. In free societies, such education can’t be dictated, but competent artists are usually sensitive to cultural needs and can manage (and have managed) to “stir the masses” – many times in subtle ways, e.g., in films, obese people are generally depicted as being either buffoons or power mongers, ostentatious people are generally depicted as being psychologically disturbed, women with large broods are generally depicted as being fools, married to brutes or brainwashed in religious balderdash, etc. Obviously, however, much more education is needed if humans are ever to get on a path toward sustainable development.

Yet, even if a definition for ‘prosperity’ were widely accepted and even if customs were adopted that stimulated humanity to seek such a state (which, even if possible, would probably be a very slow process, requiring many generations), it doesn’t follow that Nature would oblige us! Once again, look at the limits. For example, if the human population on the Earth were to reach the state of “standing room only”, then most of those standing would in fact be dead! Further, given the data supporting the concept that the vast majority of the people in developing countries (such as China and India) strive to achieve the living standards of people in developed countries and given the consensus of knowledgeable scientists that the Earth’s resources won’t be able to meet such a demand, then as I argued in **X5**, surely the most reasonable and realistic alternative is, not to pursue “prosperity” for ~10 billion people, but “sustainable development” for a total human population on Earth of about 1 billion people.

Some Needed Cultural Changes for Sustainable Development

As I tried to indicate in earlier **X**-chapters, a huge number of steps must be taken to get humanity on a path toward sustainable development. As a reminder, some of the needed steps are the following.

- Worldwide, teach kids critical-thinking skills (especially by educating them to apply the scientific method in their daily lives).
- Promote human rights, especially women’s liberation (*via* education, to liberate them economically and from patriarchs, in turn, so women will gain control over their reproductive capabilities).
- Educate people worldwide about the need for sustainable development, especially in the consumer-crazed Western countries, to curb consumerism and the relentless drive for economic growth.
- Protect the environment, commit to “zero population-growth”, and work toward the longer-term population goal of about 1 billion people.
- In spite of the worldwide objections of religious fundamentalists, provide free birth control and family planning services worldwide.

In conflict with such needs, clerics of patriarchal religions continue to promote their ignorant ideas about sex and reproduction, demanding that women’s prime roles be for men’s pleasure and as baby-producing machines.

The clerics of such religions are stuck with rigid, antiquated rules “sanctified” by their “holy books”. But as in the case of their ignorant, rigid (“religious”!) ideas about a flat earth, creationism, and existences of various gods, no doubt their idiotic idea about sex will contribute to the eventual and welcome demise of all such religions.

The Need for Religious Women to Change

Yet at present, even many women in fundamentalist religions (including Islam and various Christian sects, such as Mormonism) defend their roles as baby-producing machines, some probably because they’re unable to think for themselves and some probably because they’re convinced that their sexuality is their “nest egg”, providing them with lifelong security from a male slave of their choice. It’s an instinctive choice (a feeling), essentially identical to the instinctive choice made by all female animals: they advertise that they’re willing and able, they wait for males to strut their stuff to try to impress them, and then, they take their picks. In essence, they’re custom-sanctioned prostitutes.

I wouldn’t be surprised if therein lies another reason why many women are pleased to be associated with fundamentalist religions, even though such religions (including Mormonism) are misogynist. In such cases, women find that their religion’s vehemence against adultery, “loose women”, male homosexuals, masturbation, promiscuity, prostitution, etc., protects their own sex-racket from “unfair competition”! Their religion may be misogynist, but it protects their monopoly.

Such women, however, need a “reality check”. One fundamental reality is that humanity has two options: either evolve or become extinct. Thus far, humanity has evolved by adapting. If such woman don’t adapt to the new reality of too many people in the world, then humanity won’t evolve but begin to “devolve” (i.e., degenerate), as is occurring in most underdeveloped and overpopulated countries, including most of Africa, much of South America, and most Muslim countries. Bringing another child into the world can therefore be a curse rather than “a blessing”.

On the other hand, I’d agree that another aspect of reality is that most women who are so unfortunate as to be born into fundamentalist religious families aren’t able to choose. If they were granted the fundamental right to rule their own bodies, my guess is that, if “cultural conditioning” by ignorant clerics and patriarchs were absent, less than ~10% of all men and ~50% of

all women would want children. Yet, my guesses are that ~90% of women want a lifelong male companion and 99% of men want sex. To satisfy such wants, some “social contracts” (e.g., marriages) are probably useful, but the clerics’ idiocy to promote more breeding must stop.

Clerics Devalue Life and Increase the Cost of Love!

In that regard, Dear, should you ever want to become as angry at the clerics of the world as your old grandfather with the beard (although I certainly hope that you’ll never feel either the need or the inclination), then consider the following clerical idiocy.

Essentially no matter the religion (certainly it’s the case in Mormonism, Islam, and in fundamentalist Christian sects such as the Catholics and the Evangelicals), you’ll find the clerics preaching that there’s too much sex (most of it “**an abomination before the LORD**”) and too few babies (i.e., too few future paying customers in the pews). Reality, meanwhile, is exactly opposite: too many babies and not enough sex! The result of such idiocy is exactly opposite form what most clerics claim to promote: what the clerics do is devalue life and increase the cost of love.

Fortunately for humanity, many sexual constraints are being relaxed (because with modern contraceptives, sex needn’t lead to children) and probably will be relaxed further in the future (if more medical and technological advances lead to less concern about sexually transmitted diseases). Someday, I hope, humanity will reach such an enlightened state that women will be required to obtain doctorates in anthropology, biology, history, psychology, physics, or similar sciences (or maybe even in math, if their capabilities in evaluative thinking are demonstrated!) before they’re permitted to have children. Now we’re talking nirvana!

Curbing Consumerism & Curing the Growth Syndrome

But setting that happy possibility aside for another millennium and temporarily ignoring the desperate need to defuse the population bomb, sustainable development also demands curbing rampant consumerism and the relentless growth syndrome, especially in the West and especially in the US: they’re twin dragons that need, if not to be slain, then at least tamed. Lester R. Brown of the Earth Policy Institute summarized the situation well:⁸

⁸ Copied from http://www.earthpolicy.org/Books/Seg/PB2ch01_ss2.htm; adapted from Chapter 1, “Entering a New World” in *Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*.

THE NATURE OF THE NEW WORLD

Lester R. Brown

We recently entered a new century, but we are also entering a new world, one where the collisions between our demands and the earth's capacity to satisfy them are becoming daily events. It may be another crop-withering heat wave, another village abandoned because of invading sand dunes, or another aquifer pumped dry. If we do not act quickly to reverse the trends, these seemingly isolated events will occur more and more frequently, accumulating and combining to determine our future.

Resources that accumulated over eons of geological time are being consumed in a single human lifespan. We are crossing natural thresholds that we cannot see and violating deadlines that we do not recognize. These deadlines, determined by nature, are not politically negotiable.

Nature has many thresholds that we discover only when it is too late. In our fast-forward world, we learn that we have crossed them only after the fact, leaving little time to adjust. For example, when we exceed the sustainable catch of a fishery, the stocks begin to shrink. Once this threshold is crossed, we have a limited time in which to back off and lighten the catch. If we fail to meet this deadline, breeding populations shrink to where the fishery is no longer viable, and it collapses.

We know from earlier civilizations that the lead indicators of economic decline were environmental, not economic. The trees went first, then the soil, and finally the civilization itself. To archeologists, the sequence is all too familiar.

Our situation today is far more challenging because in addition to shrinking forests and eroding soils, we must deal with falling water tables, more frequent crop-withering heat waves, collapsing fisheries, expanding deserts, deteriorating rangelands, dying coral reefs, melting glaciers, rising seas, more-powerful storms, disappearing species, and, soon, shrinking oil supplies. Although these ecologically destructive trends have been evident for some time, and some have been reversed at the national level, not one has been reversed at the global level.

The bottom line is that the world is in what ecologists call an “overshoot-and-collapse” mode. Demand has exceeded the sustainable yield of natural systems at the local level countless times in the past. Now, for the first time, it is doing so at the global level. Forests are shrinking for the world as a whole. Fishery collapses are widespread. Grasslands are deteriorating on every continent. Water tables are falling in many countries. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions exceed CO₂ sequestration.

In 2002, a team of scientists led by Mathis Wackernagel, who now heads the Global Footprint Network, concluded that humanity's collective demands first surpassed the

earth's regenerative capacity around 1980. Their study, published by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, estimated that global demands in 1999 exceeded that capacity by 20 percent. The gap, growing by 1 percent or so a year, is now much wider. We are meeting current demands by consuming the earth's natural assets, setting the stage for decline and collapse...

Ecologists are intimately familiar with the overshoot-and-collapse phenomenon. One of their favorite examples began in 1944, when the Coast Guard introduced 29 reindeer on remote St. Matthew Island in the Bering Sea to serve as the backup food source for the 19 men operating a station there. After World War II ended a year later, the base was closed and the men left the island. When U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist David Kline visited St. Matthew in 1957, he discovered a thriving population of 1,350 reindeer feeding on the thick mat of lichen that covered the 332-square-kilometer (128-square-mile) island. In the absence of any predators, the population was exploding. By 1963, it had reached 6,000. He returned to St. Matthew in 1966 and discovered an island strewn with reindeer skeletons and not much lichen. Only 42 of the reindeer survived: 41 females and 1 not entirely healthy male. There were no fawns. By 1980 or so, the remaining reindeer had died off.

Like the deer on St. Matthew Island, we too are overconsuming our natural resources. Overshoot leads sometimes to decline and sometimes to a complete collapse. It is not always clear which it will be. In the former, a remnant of the population or economic activity survives in a resource-depleted environment. For example, as the environmental resource base of Easter Island in the South Pacific deteriorated, its population declined from a peak of 20,000 several centuries ago to today's population of fewer than 4,000. In contrast, the 500-year-old Norse settlement in Greenland collapsed during the 1400s, disappearing entirely in the face of environmental adversity.

Even as the global population is climbing and the economy's environmental support systems are deteriorating, the world is pumping oil with reckless abandon. Leading geologists now think oil production may soon peak and turn downward. Although no one knows exactly when oil production will peak, supply is already lagging behind demand, driving prices upward.

Faced with a seemingly insatiable demand for automotive fuel, farmers will want to clear more and more of the remaining tropical forests to produce sugarcane, oil palms, and other high-yielding biofuel crops. Already, billions of dollars of private capital are moving into this effort. In effect, the rising price of oil is generating a massive new threat to the earth's biological diversity.

As the demand for farm commodities climbs, it is shifting the focus of international trade concerns from the traditional goal of assured access to markets to one of assured access to supplies. Countries heavily dependent on imported grain for food are beginning to worry that buyers for fuel distilleries may outbid them for supplies. As oil security deteriorates, so, too, will food security.

As the role of oil recedes, the process of globalization will be reversed in fundamental ways. As the world turned to oil during the last century, the energy economy became increasingly globalized, with the world depending heavily on a handful of countries in the Middle East for energy supplies. Now as the world turns to wind, solar cells, and geothermal energy in this century, we are witnessing the localization of the world energy economy.

The world is facing the emergence of a geopolitics of scarcity, which is already highly visible in the efforts by China, India, and other developing countries to ensure their access to oil supplies. In the future, the issue will be who gets access to not only Middle Eastern oil but also Brazilian ethanol and North American grain. Pressures on land and water resources, already excessive in most of the world, will intensify further as the demand for biofuels climbs. This geopolitics of scarcity is an early manifestation of civilization in an overshoot-and-collapse mode, much like the one that emerged among the Mayan cities competing for food in that civilization's waning years.

You do not need to be an ecologist to see that if recent environmental trends continue, the global economy eventually will come crashing down. It is not knowledge that we lack. At issue is whether national governments can stabilize population and restructure the economy before time runs out.

As for restructuring the economy, I showed you in the previous chapter that even Adam Smith (the “godfather” of free enterprise) saw that capitalists must be constrained: they can't be trusted with the people's well being, because successful capitalists must necessarily first and foremost make a profit – or they'll go out of business. Yet, there's an obvious solution to that problem: so long as the people (e.g., through their representatives) constrain all capitalists in every industry equally (i.e., so long as the playing field for every industry is “level”), then free enterprise will reward the winning capitalists (and eliminate the poor performers). Thus, what's needed is for the people (through their legislators) to define new rules by which the capitalist “game” is to be played. A suggested set of new rules is given in the following article,⁹ written by James Speth, who is “[dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies](#). This article is adapted from his book *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*.”

⁹ Copied from <http://online.barrons.com/article/SB121460947928712267.html>; published in the 30 June 2008 issue of *Barron's Online*.

Changing the Object of Capitalism

By JAMES GUSTAVE SPETH

Revising capitalism.

LIVING WELL IN THE 21ST CENTURY WILL REQUIRE THAT we soon begin the transition away from a capitalism driven by the quest for profit and growth.

Capitalism has been staggeringly successful as a growth machine. It took all of history to build the \$7 trillion world economy of 1950. Today, we add that much output every decade. The world economy is on a path to quadruple in size by midcentury.

The benefits of this expansion have been huge, but at least for those of us in the affluent societies, economic growth has now entered a period of sharply diminishing – or even negative – returns.

This shift is most apparent on the environmental front, where economic activity is extracting a heavy, unsustainable toll.

ALL WE HAVE TO do to destroy the planet's climate and biota and leave a ruined world to our children and grandchildren is to keep doing exactly what we are doing today – with no growth in the human population or the world economy. Just continue to release greenhouse gases at current rates, just continue to impoverish ecosystems and release toxic chemicals at current rates, and the world in the latter part of this century won't be fit to live in.

But human activities aren't holding at current levels: They are accelerating dramatically. The escalating processes of climate disruption, toxification and biotic impoverishment, which continue despite decades of warnings and earnest effort, constitute a severe indictment of the capitalism we have today.

The main features of today's capitalism work together to produce an economic and political reality that is highly destructive of the environment.

They include: an unquestioning society-wide commitment to economic growth at any cost; enormous investment in technologies originally designed with little or no regard for the environment; powerful corporate interests whose overriding objective is to grow by generating profit, including profit from avoiding the environmental costs these companies create and from amassing deep subsidies and benefits from government; markets that systematically fail to recognize environmental costs unless corrected by government; government that is subservient to corporate interests and the growth imperative; rampant consumerism spurred by sophisticated advertising and marketing; and economic activity now so large in scale that its impact alters the fundamental biophysical operations of the planet.

The burden of managing accumulating environmental threats, and of addressing the powerful forces of modern capitalism driving them, has fallen to the environmental community, both in and outside of government.

But that burden is too great. We have run a 40-year experiment on whether mainstream environmentalism can succeed against these forces, and the results are that it works poorly, selectively, and too slowly to keep up.

The system of modern capitalism as it operates today will grow in size and complexity and will generate ever-larger environmental consequences, outstripping efforts to cope with them.

Mainstream environmentalists work within the system, but working only within the system won't succeed when what is needed is transformative change in the system itself.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT there are a variety of prescriptions to take the economy and environment off their collision course and to transform economic activity into something benign and restorative.

Market failure can be corrected by government, perverse subsidies can be eliminated, and environmentally honest prices can be forged. The laws, incentives, and the governance structures under which corporations operate can be transformed to move from shareholder primacy to stakeholder primacy. The affluent countries can shift to a post-growth society where jobs and economic security, the natural environment, our communities, and the public sector are no longer sacrificed in order to sustain high rates of growth – mere gross-domestic-product growth that is consuming natural and social capital, both now in short supply. An ethic of sufficiency can moderate consumption.

Indeed, there are many steps that can be taken that would both slow growth and improve social and environmental well-being.

They include measures such as legislating a shorter work week and longer vacations; greater labor protections, job security, and benefits; restrictions on advertising; strong social and environmental provisions in trade agreements; a new design for the modern corporation; rigorous environmental and consumer protection; greater economic and social equality, including genuinely progressive taxation for the rich and greater income support for the poor; major spending on public-sector services and environmental amenities; a huge investment in education, skills, and new technology; and programs to address population growth at home and abroad.

The sum of these and other measures would undoubtedly slow GDP growth considerably in the United States.

The economy might even evolve to a steady state, where a declining labor force and shorter work hours are offset by rising productivity.

That wouldn't be the end of the world, but the beginning of a new one. As John Stuart Mill noted long ago, there would still be “as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the art of living, and much more likelihood of it being improved.”

As I showed you in earlier X-chapters, Dana Meadows advocated the same goal, but in the above article, James Speth wisely emphasizes a legislative approach to achieve the common goal.

Yet, I should immediately point out the obvious, namely, that such a legislative approach won't work if it's applied only in the US (or in the EU, or in any limited area), because in the existing global economy, industries will move to countries where the rules are not so stringent. I should also add that the capitalists wouldn't move just to avoid the new rules; they'll be forced to move (to stay in business; otherwise, they'll be “killed” by competitors who did move). Thus, if capitalism is to be constrained by laws that seek sustainable development, it's essential that such laws be global.

The Need for Global-Scale Constraints

Therefore, Dear, I trust you see that your generation is faced with some major problems, which, if not solved, will almost certainly lead to global economic and social collapses (as described in X-5) “**compared to which the Black Plague will be a trivial occurrence.**” As I summarized in X8:

The Human System is organized (or more appropriately, disorganized) by grouping into factions, with each faction trying to learn how survive in a hostile environment and how to outsmart competing factions – by capturing the benefits of cooperation (in part by punishing cheaters), by utilizing the advances of relatively few innovators, almost invariably by raping their environment, and by trying to gain advantages through manipulating political processes.

To avert the threatening global economic and social collapses, your generation must find ways to enhance cooperation at the global scale, and to do that, I think that the best option is to replace the UN with a much stronger and more representative Global Cooperative (GC), such as I sketched in the post to my blog and reproduced at the start of this chapter.

For such a Global Cooperative to constrain global capitalism (to stimulate the world to adopt the goal of sustainable development), major efforts must

be made to define, legislate, and enforce all environmental and social costs for all enterprises. But I should add that evaluating the true costs of all enterprises is, itself, an enormous challenge, now being undertaken in fields of studies variously labeled as environmental economics, ecological economics, resource economics, etc.

The challenges of the field are not just associated with estimating specific costs in specific processes (e.g., the cost associated with global warming derived from the perfluorocarbons released to the atmosphere during the smelting of bauxite to form aluminum) but also the staggering number (millions?) of processes that must be considered, each with its own set of consequences. If you're looking for a career, Dear, then if you'll get your Ph.D. in resource economics, then certainly there's enough work to do to guarantee you full employment for the rest of your life!

It's not certain that you'd have full employment, however, because it's not certain that your generation will have the wisdom and the political skill necessary to establish a Global Cooperative that will be able to withstand the pressures to maintain the *status quo*, permitting capitalists to rape the environment and permitting consumers to continue their binges, with no concern about the environment, the biosphere, or future generations. No doubt intense pressures will continue to come from capitalists (worried that they'll go out of business if they're charged for future increased costs of raw materials and for the damages they do to the environment and to the social fabric of communities), and no doubt intense pressures will continue to come from consumers, not only from those who don't want to pay environmental or future costs of products but also from those religious fundamentalists whose worldview is some version or other of: "Don't worry; the magic man in the sky will take care of us."

THE NEED FOR A REALISTIC WORLDVIEW

Which then brings me back to the purpose of this book: not to suggest that you get your Ph.D. in environmental resources, not to promote sustainable development, and not even to promote reduction in physical violence, but to explain to a certain trouble-making grandchild why I don't believe in god (any god). As I've written before, many times, **belief in god is bad science and even worse policy**. Thus, horrible policies (such as rampant consumerism, environmental damage, child abuse, treating women like cattle, and so on, out to and including terrorism and wars) result when

people adopt data-less worldviews in which some god or other is assumed to be in control. To remedy such problems, the critical need is to get a whole lot of people to change their worldview – to (in the words of a certain grandchild): “**Get Real!**”

What astounding differences there are in worldviews! Fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, Mormons... frozen in the speculations of savages, gazing starry-eyed toward an afterlife, drunk on their supernatural delusions, fervently “believing” (wishing) that their god will save them, are blinded like deer in the headlights of an approaching car – and approaching doom. Scientific humanists, convinced by applying the scientific method that the universe is natural, trying to improve life on Earth for future generations, are struggling to exterminate the god meme – trying to get people to **Get Real!** No god will save humanity; gods don’t exist; the only “savior” that humanity has ever had (or ever will have, unless we have some friendly extraterrestrial visitors) is human intelligence.

As far as is known, there’s no one here but us people – and already there are too many of us, consuming too much. As Walt Kelly had his comic-strip character, Pogo, say: **We have met the enemy and he is us!** Further, no one is available to help us solve our problems except ourselves. Somehow, each of us must gain the wisdom displayed by Socrates, as reported by Diogenes Laertius: **Often when looking at a mass of things for sale, he would say to himself, “How many things I have no need of!”**

In these X-chapters, therefore, I’ve been exploring prospects for peace and prosperity if a significantly greater fraction than the current 20% (or so) of all humans were to adopt the worldview of Humanists. In our worldview, the entire universe is entirely natural. In our view, all “supernatural beliefs” are just ideas, derived from childhood indoctrination, unconstrained imaginations, incompetence in critical thinking, and/or malfunctioning brains. In contrast, Humanists hold their beliefs only as strongly as relevant evidence warrants. Pictorially, our worldview (from an extraterrestrial perspective) is illustrated by “**the most significant photograph ever taken**”, i.e., the Earthrise photograph taken by Apollo astronaut Bill Anders while orbiting the Moon:¹⁰

¹⁰ Copied from <http://www.universetoday.com/2008/04/22/apollo-8-astronaut-bill-anders-reflects-on-earthrise-picture/>.



Who, I wonder, can look at our beautiful blue planet, like a blue jewel delicately placed upon the black velvet of space, without being in awe – not only with its beauty but also with our fantastic good fortune to host the universe’s only known life. Who, I wonder, doesn’t look at our Earth without thinking something similar to Socrates’ statement, “[I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world.](#)” And who, I wonder, doesn’t think of people plundering our planet and brutalizing other people for millennia without asking something similar to Rodney King’s: “[Can\[’t\] we all get along?](#)”

Rodney King, however, is hardly a good role model for how to get along. In 1992, on parole for a robbing a convenience store while wielding a tire iron, he led Los Angeles police on a high-speed chase, the arresting officers used force to constrain him (an action video taped by a private citizen), the four officers were charged with use of excessive force, three of them were acquitted, which led to the 1992 LA or “Rodney King” race riots in which there were “[53 deaths, 2,383 injuries, more than 7,000 fire responses, 3,100 businesses damaged](#)” and “[nearly \\$1 billion in damages](#)”.¹¹

On the internet, you can find reports of King’s subsequent run-ins with the law, associated with his alcohol and drug abuse and his abuse of women, including his 1993 arrest for driving while intoxicated, his 1995 abuse of his wife (hit and run conviction), his 1999 physical abuse of one of his daughters, his 2001 indecent exposure, his 2003 plea of guilty to drug abuse, his 2003 arrest for suspicion of punching his girlfriend, and a 2005 charge of domestic violence.¹² So, an appropriate response to his “[Can\[’t\] we all get along?](#)” would seem to be: “[Not if we behave like you.](#)”

The Rodney King case illustrates that there’s terribly more wrong in this world of ours – and, in particular, in the US – than “just” religious idiocy.

¹¹ Copied from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodney_King.

¹² For example, see the 30 November 2007 report in *The Los Angeles Times* by Maeve Reston at http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-king30nov30_0,2055710.story?coll=la-home-center.

For example, what makes King “think” that he has “the right” to demand money from people in exchange for his not hitting them with a tire iron? With his unearned money, no doubt his plan was to garner products produced by others; i.e., to acquire slaves. Is that what he means by “getting along”? By what “right” did he lead police on a high-speed chase, endangering the lives of others? If he injured or killed people, is that just their “tough luck”? Is that what he means by “getting along”? His arrests for domestic abuse indicate that his adopted principle is “might makes right” – and he wants to know if we can get along? Well, in answer to his question, my answer is: **No – at least, not if we all adopt the law of the jungle – unless, of course, by “getting along” he means “as in a jungle”.**

By their actions, the Rodney Kings of the world don’t recognize the most elementary interpersonal moral code: **everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence.** People work to earn money; thereby, they claim their right to their existences. But the Rodney Kings of the world not only don’t recognize other people’s right to what they’ve earned, they plan to use stolen money to enslave others (buying goods and services from others with money they didn’t earn). The Rodney Kings of the world drive recklessly through the streets, not recognizing the rights of others not to have their lives threatened by reckless drivers. The Rodney Kings of the world not only don’t recognize the right of others to live without threats of physical harm, they brutalize weaker people (especially women). The Rodney Kings of the world use force to bolster their claim to be kings.

The brutality, the immorality, the ignorance of individuals can then be re-enforced and compounded when they form in groups, not only in mobs such as the LA rioters but also in cults and movements that pursue some “glorious” ideology. Think of the Nazis, the Communists, and Islamic supremacists. You’ll know that you’re not in the presence of a humanist, Dear, if the person claims to be, foremost, a member of some religious sect (a Mormon, Catholic, Muslim, or whatever), a member of some ethnic group (an Arab, Jew, African-American, or whatever), or a citizen of some nation (American, British, Chinese, or whatever). As Einstein wrote in 1934 in *The World As I See it*: **“Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.”**

THE NEED FOR AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL PERSPECTIVE

I expect that everyone is stimulated by seeing our planet from space. As reported by David Bradley, the following is a description¹³ of the reaction of astrophysicist Carl Sagan, who was winner of the American Humanist Association's 1981 award for "Humanist of the Year".

The Pale Blue Dot is a photograph of planet Earth taken in 1990 by Voyager 1 from a record distance, showing it against the vastness of space. By request of Carl Sagan, NASA commanded the Voyager 1 spacecraft, having completed its primary mission and now leaving the Solar System, to turn its camera around and to take a photograph of Earth across a great expanse of space...

Sagan:

From this distant vantage point, the Earth might not seem of particular interest. But for us, it's different. Look again at that dot. That's here, that's home, that's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there – on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand.

¹³ Copied from <http://www.sciscoop.com/sagans-scientific-poetry-animated.html>.

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

Even President Reagan (a theist) saw the need for an extraterrestrial worldview. About his 1985 meetings with the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikal Gorbachev, Reagan said:

I couldn't help but say to him: "Just think how easy [our] task... might be... if suddenly there was a threat to this world from another planet. [We'd] find out once and for all that we really are all human beings here on this earth together."

In fact, even most theists are awed by extraterrestrial views of the Earth and images of stars and galaxies: amazed that their God provided them with such a wonderful place to live; in awe that their God created the entire cosmos just for them, to live in for eternity – provided that they do as their clerics demand (which of course includes paying the clerics for running their con games). Thereby, theists choose to live in a dream world rather than real world. In their dream world, what "is" is what they "believe" (i.e., literally, what they "wish to be"). They "think" that what they "believe" is "true"; they "think" that, if they just "have faith", then they can gain knowledge about the world by "listening to their hearts"; thereby, they find pleasure in the proof-by-pleasure logical fallacy. The result is the clerical worldviews for schizophrenics, children, fools – and con artists.

It reminds me of the tremendous *Galaxy Song* by Eric Idle,¹⁴ performed in Monty Python's 1983 movie "The Meaning of Life". Below are the lyrics, along with a depiction by Jon-Lomberg of where our star (the Sun) is located relative to the hundreds of billions of other stars in our Milky Way Galaxy,¹⁵ in turn one of hundreds of billions of galaxies, illustrated with the Hubble Ultra Deep Field image of a small region of the observable universe.¹⁶

¹⁴ Listen to it at <http://www.gecdsb.on.ca/d&g/astro/music/galaxy.mp3>; watch it performed in the movie at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcTHBOjnUss>; the composers are Eric Idle and John Du Prez; the author and singer are Eric Idle; it's MCA record 6121.

¹⁵ Copied from <http://fuse.pha.jhu.edu/outreach/kit1/trig.html>.

¹⁶ Copied from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Observable_universe) where references are given.

Just remember that you're standing on a planet that's evolving
And revolving at nine hundred miles an hour,
That's orbiting at nineteen miles a second, so it's reckoned,
A sun that is the source of all our power.

The sun and you and me and all the stars that we can see
Are moving at a million miles a day
In an outer spiral arm, at forty thousand miles an hour,
Of the galaxy we call the 'Milky Way'.

Our galaxy itself contains a hundred billion stars.
It's a hundred thousand light years side to side.
It bulges in the middle, sixteen thousand light years thick,
But out by us, it's just three thousand light years wide.

We're thirty thousand light years from galactic central point.
We go 'round every two hundred million years,
And our galaxy is only one of millions of billions
In this amazing and expanding universe.



The universe itself keeps on expanding and expanding
In all of the directions it can whizz
As fast as it can go, at the speed of light, you know,
Twelve million miles a minute, and that's the fastest speed there is.



So remember, when you're feeling very small and insecure,
How amazingly unlikely is your birth,
And pray that there's intelligent life somewhere up in space,
'Cause there's buggers all down here on Earth.

Obviously, though, there's some intelligence "down here": witness the knowledge (of course gained by the scientific method) that's incorporated in that song and witness the fact that somewhere around 20% of the world's people are secular humanists.

Sadly, though, that means ~80% of the people in the world wallow in delusions about their gods. In contrast to theists (aka unscientific antihumans), scientific humanists have learned from experience that the only known way to gain knowledge about the world is by application of the scientific method: guess, test, and reassess; "a way to try to make sure we're not fooling ourselves."

From a scientific humanist’s perspective, any hypothesis about the nature of this world of ours and our place within it must summarize a substantial quantity of reliable data, must be succinct and should be consistent with well established scientific principles, provide testable predictions, and such predictions must continue to pass an unending series of experimental tests. Relative to establishing a worldview, the only such hypothesis known is that the universe is natural. The result is a scientifically sound worldview, with its scientifically sound extraterrestrial perspective.

Meanwhile, theists fool themselves – for the pleasure it provides them – dreaming that they won’t die; that they’ll live forever in paradise. They adopt a worldview not only supported by zero data but also, even if theists keep modifying their model to be consistent with available scientific principles [e.g., now backing off from their original flat-Earth model all the way to the initiation of the Big Bang, always leaving their God as “the god of the gaps” (in knowledge)], yet never once have any of their models provided testable predictions – except, of course, predictions to be tested by dead people! Thereby, in the process of fooling themselves, theists make even bigger fools of themselves.

THE NEED FOR A SOUND EPISTEMOLOGY

The fundamental need is for everyone in the world to “**get real**” about how knowledge can be gained, i.e., the key is epistemology. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, ‘epistemology’ is

the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion.

It’s correct that each of us has some instinctive knowledge (e.g., about how to keep our organs working, about how to avoid an object that’s coming toward us, etc.), our brains seem to be “hard wired” for some processes (e.g., to identify patterns, seek out causes, and so on), and sometimes we can intuitively detect signals in our environments (leading us to conclude that “there’s something wrong here”, “wow but that’s beautiful”, and similar). But to gain knowledge about the world external to our minds, repeatedly it’s been found to be inadequate to “listen to our hearts”, “abide by the advice of elders”, “conform to what’s written in scripture”, etc. Instead, the only known way to reliably gain such knowledge is by experimentation, i.e., “guess, test, and reassess”, commonly called “the scientific method.”

The problem, Dear, is that progress toward less physical violence and more sustainable development is impossible if the majority of the people in the world choose to live in dream worlds rather than the real world. To make progress we need, not only general agreement on a worldview, but the worldview must be realistic: it must be supported by substantial reliable data, it must be summarized by a succinct and testable hypothesis, and it must provide testable predictions that have been repeatedly validated. In short, worldviews must be based on the sound epistemology known as “the scientific method.”

Thus, if all the data-less ideas about the supernatural, about ghosts and gods, about immortal souls and paradise could be purged from all people’s thoughts, then not only would there be much greater agreement about our collective prime purpose (e.g., to solve our problems intelligently, to help humanity to continue to evolve) but also there’d be less strife, as we individually pursue our trio of survival goals [the survival of ourselves, our families (including all members of the human family) and our values (primarily based on our own survival and the survival of humanity)]. Thereby, too, there’d be much closer agreement on the concepts of personal morality (e.g., *always use your brain as best you can*) and interpersonal morality (e.g., *everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence*), as well as much closer agreement on specific immoralities, such as engaging in any form of physical violence (especially against women and children), robbing others (including our descendants, i.e., the need for sustainable development), and the horrible immorality of indoctrinating children in supernatural balderdash.

So then, what are the prospects for peace and prosperity in this beautiful blue planet of ours? Unfortunately, the answer seems to be: poor – at least until a much better job is done educating people. There’s a critical need for people to learn critical-thinking skills, the essence of which is the scientific method. That’s how knowledge of the world is gained. Applying the scientific method to try to understand the world, people will see that the only reasonable worldview is that the universe is natural: there are no gods and there never were; it was also just silly speculation. Applying the scientific method in their daily lives, people will conclude that the fundamental personal moral code is something similar to *always use your brain as best you can* and that the fundamental interpersonal moral code is something similar to *everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence*.

In astoundingly stupid contrast, more than half of all people in the world have been taught and apparently “believe” that being moral means doing what their clerics tell them to do. That if they’re moral (in actions from plundering the environment to blowing themselves up in some crazy “jihad”), then some magic man in the sky will reward them with an eternal life of pleasure in some fictitious paradise. Somehow we’ve got to get the message through to them: “No, you dimwits, you ain’t gonna be judged by some god; there are no gods and there never were any; you’re gonna be judged by other people – and if you don’t recognize their equal right to their own existences, then they’re not gonna recognize yours!”

There is, however and unfortunately, much more to it than that. For example, even if you, Dear, didn’t believe in some magic man (or supernatural Jabberwock) in the sky, if you were a Black in Los Angeles’ Watts District, then you, too, might have joined in the riots when you heard that the officers who arrested Rodney King were acquitted. Or as another example, if you were a Palestinian in the Gaza strip, you, too, might choose to try to kill as many Jews as possible: you, too, probably would have felt the existing and historical injustices, and probably would have decided to engage in violence – as your “right”, not based on the principle that “makes make right”, but based even on the interpersonal moral code: **everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence**. You probably wouldn’t be upset by the idea of killing others for the sake of what you considered to be justice. You probably would scoff at any idea about the “sanctity” of human life. Thereby, even if you didn’t realize it consciously, you would have decided that the root problem was: too many people.

In contrast, if there were, say, only three people in LA, you (a Black person), Rodney King, and an arresting officer (who was White), you probably would have praised the officer for taking whatever action he deemed appropriate while arresting King for driving dangerously – even if centuries earlier, that officer’s ancestors had enslaved Blacks. And if you were the head of the only Arab family in Palestine and a single Jewish family moved to Palestine (a family of few members, because most had been killed in the Holocaust), you probably would have, not only welcomed the Jewish family, but would have tried to help them become established. That is, Dear, as you well know: there are many more obstacles to peace and prosperity in the world than those derived from religious ignorance (e.g., too many people).

Yet (as I already wrote) on the one hand, you asked me why I didn't believe in god – and I'm still trying to describe what I mean by saying: **Belief in god is bad science and even worse policy**. And on the other hand, as I've been trying to show you in the many **P** and **X** chapters, many of the inhibitors of progress toward peace and prosperity (in particular, too many people) are, in fact, caused by people adopting the science of savages called “religion” rather than adopting the scientific method in their daily lives.

IN SUMMARY

When I started on this trek, way back in Chapter **J1**, I wrote:

Now, Dear, if you're wondering why I went through such simple ideas [ideas that simpletons adopt about life and death], it's because I want to introduce the next few chapters with the following thoughts: fundamental to human nature, almost as fundamental as our desire to live, is our desire for “justice”, based on our concepts of “good and bad” (i.e., our idea of “morality”). Therefore, in the next few chapters, I want to begin to explore what is meant (or should be meant!) by “justice”, “morality”, “legality”, and so on. And maybe I should explain to you why I plan to devote such a large part of this book to these ideas.

One reason is that, thereby, I'll be responding directly to a question from a certain four-year-old who asked why I didn't believe in God. Thus, Dear, I don't believe in god (any god) because belief in god is bad science and even worse policy – and I want to show you how “pathetic” this policy is, both sad personal policy and sick public policy. As Bertrand Russell wrote in his 1957 book *Why I Am Not A Christian*:

The question of the truth of a religion is one thing, but the question of its usefulness is another. I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue.

In particular, I want to show you what I mean by saying that belief in god (any god) is immoral, even evil – and therefore I need to explain to you what is meant (or should be meant) by morality.

And another important reason for devoting so much space to these topics is related to the following quotation (which I consider to be very important) from Sigmund Freud (from his 1932 book *Moses and Monotheism*):

While the different religions wrangle with one another as to which of them is in possession of the truth, in our view the truth of religion may be altogether disregarded. Religion is an attempt to get control over the sensory world, in which we are placed, by means of the wish-world, which we have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. But it cannot

achieve its end. Its doctrines carry with them the stamp of the times in which they originated, the ignorant childhood days of the human race. Its consolations deserve no trust.

Experience teaches us that the world is not a nursery. The ethical commands, to which religion seeks to lend its weight, require some other foundations instead, for human society cannot do without them, and it is dangerous to link up obedience to them with religious belief. If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man's evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.

In particular, Dear, please think about Freud's statement: "The ethical [or moral] commands, to which religion seeks to lend its weight, require some other foundations instead, for human society cannot do without them, and it is dangerous to link up obedience to them with religious belief." One of Freud's friends, Einstein, said something similar:

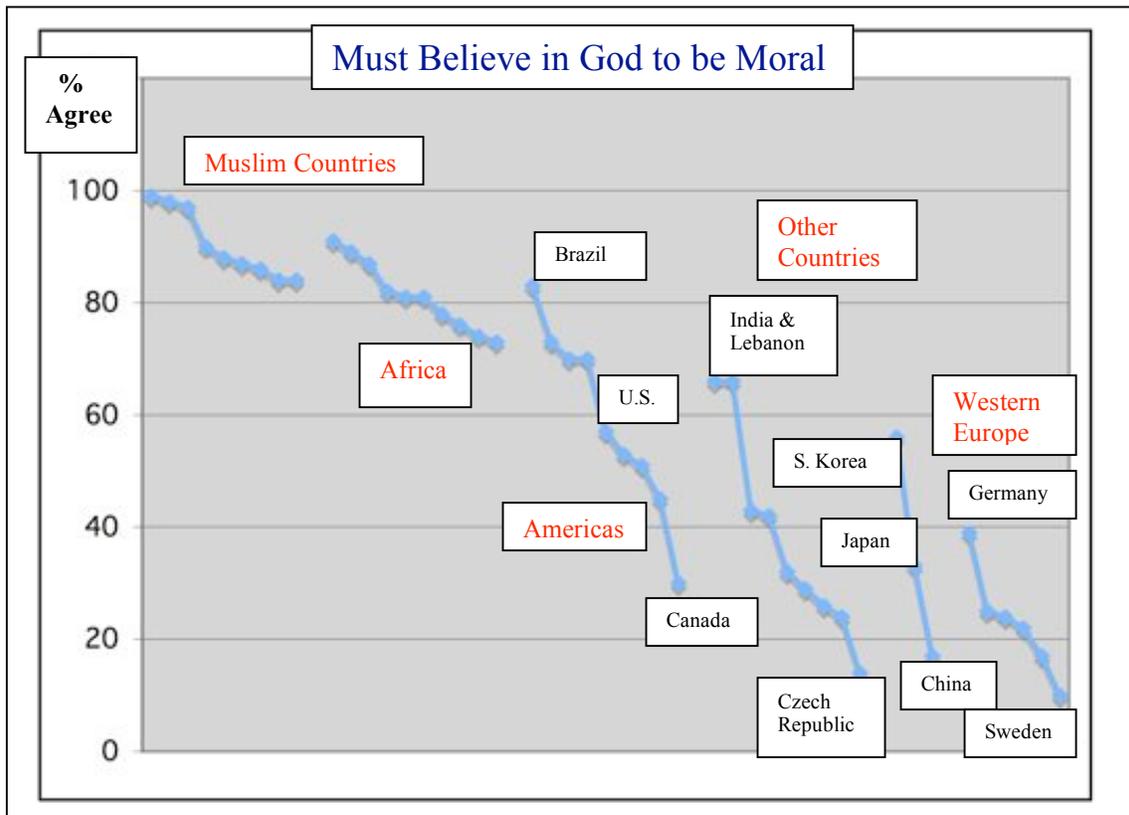
The foundation of morality should not be made dependent on myth nor tied to any authority lest doubt about the myth or about the legitimacy of the authority imperil the foundation of sound judgment and action.

I think that this Freud-Einstein concept is extremely important, Dear, and in this group of chapters (Part 3 of this book), I want to show you "some other foundations" (for morality, justice, and peace), namely those of Humanism, that are derived from science, simple to understand (and to apply), and don't require the involvement of any supernatural Jabberwock from the "wish world" (i.e., the world of believing").

Further, I want to amplify Freud's important point that "it is dangerous to link up obedience [to ethical or moral commands] with religious belief" and Einstein's important point "the foundation of morality should not be made dependent on myth nor tied to any authority". In particular, because I feel obliged to try to promote peace in this world, and because I'm convinced that peace is unlikely without justice, and justice is unlikely without a shared moral code, therefore, I again need to explain to you what is meant (or should be meant) by morality. Thereby, maybe I can show you a "foundation [for] sound judgment and action", a foundation on which peace may yet be built, extricating humanity from its 5,000 and more years of religious "neurosis".

As an illustration of how far we still have yet to go, consider the following graph, which I plotted from data in a 2007 Pew Report from their Global Attitudes Project, summarizing data from 45,239 interviews (!) in 47 "publics" (i.e., 46 nations plus the Palestinian territories).¹⁷

¹⁷ Available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/258.pdf>.



Say it isn't so! Is sanity common only in countries such as the Czech Republic, China, and Sweden? How could people in their right minds "believe" that a person must believe in God to be moral?!

And the answer to that question seems clear enough: they're not in their "right minds". They've been brainwashed since they were children into "believing" whatever their parents and their lame-brain, con-artist clerics tell them. Instead, if they had been taught (or if now, on their own, they would seek out) readily available knowledge, they'd see that common moral principles in all religions (be kind to others, with keenness; love one another, within limits; seek peace and justice; punish cheaters, etc.) are derived from human experiences as social animals – and now are even encoded in our genes. Thus, the human animal learned from experience that "[what comes around, goes around](#)"; therefore, don't steal, bear false witness, murder, etc. As Steven Pinker wrote in a 13 January 2008 *New York Times* article entitled "The Moral Instinct":¹⁸

¹⁸ Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html>.

The idea that the moral sense is an innate part of human nature is not far-fetched. A list of human universals collected by the anthropologist Donald E. Brown includes many moral concepts and emotions, including a distinction between right and wrong; empathy; fairness; admiration of generosity; rights and obligations; proscription of murder, rape and other forms of violence; redress of wrongs; sanctions for wrongs against the community; shame; and taboos... The exact number of themes depends on whether you're a lumper or a splitter, but Haidt counts five – harm, fairness, community (or group loyalty), authority, and purity – and suggests that they are the primary colors of our moral sense... The five... are good candidates for a periodic table of the moral sense not only because they are ubiquitous but also because they appear to have deep evolutionary roots.

Further, if people would dig, they'd see that differences among the [fake] “moral principles” of the many religions (e.g., to love a particular god, kill infidels and unbelievers, pay tithes to the clerics, etc.) are riders that the damnable clerics added so that they could continue to leech of the producers. As Pinker wrote in the same article:

Putting God in charge of morality is one way to solve the problem, of course, but Plato made short work of it 2,400 years ago. Does God have a good reason for designating certain acts as moral and others as immoral? If not – if his dictates are divine whims – why should we take them seriously? Suppose that God commanded us to torture a child. Would that make it all right, or would some other standard give us reasons to resist? And if, on the other hand, God was forced by moral reasons to issue some dictates and not others – if a command to torture a child was never an option – then why not appeal to those reasons directly?

Consequently, Dear, if people would seek out such elementary understanding of the sources of all morals, dump all the riders that the damnable clerics of the world added to protect their own useless carcasses, and while they're at it, if people would dump all supernatural silliness, shorten the moral codes down to **use your brain as best you can** and **everyone has an equal right to claim one's own existence**, plus add in the best knowledge that science has so far been able to glean and the obvious goal for humanity of trying to solve our problems more intelligently, then *Voilà!*, everyone would instantly become Humanists!

Yet, as Pinker points out, smooth sailing wouldn't necessarily follow, although deeper scientific studies will help:

The science of the moral sense also alerts us to ways in which our psychological makeup can get in the way of our arriving at the most defensible moral conclusions. The moral sense, we are learning, is as vulnerable to illusions as the other senses. It

is apt to confuse morality *per se* with purity, status, and conformity. It tends to reframe practical problems as moral crusades and thus see their solution in punitive aggression. It imposes taboos that make certain ideas indiscussible. And it has the nasty habit of always putting the self on the side of the angels... Far from debunking morality, then, the science of the moral sense can advance it, by allowing us to see through the illusions that evolution and culture have saddled us with and to focus on goals we can share and defend. As Anton Chekhov, "Man will become better when you show him what he is like. "

So, Dear, one of my main conclusions from these X-chapters (investigating possibilities for peace and prosperity) is that we shouldn't try to attain "peace and prosperity"! It's a Utopia – whose Greek meaning is *ou* 'not' + *topos* 'place', that is, "not a place", i.e., like 'Heaven', it doesn't exist. Instead, we should seek sustainable development, a decrease in physical violence, and resolutions of inevitable strife through rational arguments that result from applications of the scientific method – not based on various crazy speculations of theists (i.e., unscientific antihumans) about some magic man or giant Jabberwock in the sky.

The science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke summarized our situation well in the *Acknowledgements* of his book *2001 – A Space Odyssey*:

Finally, I would like to assure my many Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim friends that I am sincerely happy that the religion which Chance has given you has contributed to your peace of mind... Perhaps it is better to be un-sane and happy, than sane and un-happy. But it is the best of all to be sane and happy. Whether our descendants can achieve that goal will be the greatest challenge of the future. Indeed, it may well decide whether we have any future.

Data suggest that there would be more hope for the future if more people became Humanists – as I'm certain they will, as more people develop more skills in critical or evaluative thinking, thereby learning how to hold beliefs only as strongly as relevant evidence warrants.

In contrast, every religious group has its tenets or doctrines or covenants, written in some "holy book", to which especially the group leaders rigidly cling. But in the end, their fixed doctrines and stagnant books will be the nemesis of each and every religious group, because evolution (including evolution in thoughts) is inevitable. Consequently, all "orthodox" religious groups (dinosaurs that they are) are headed for extinction, and in most, we already see that those who continue to be religious are dolts, incapable of thinking for themselves.

It's necessary, Dear, somehow to get people to think for themselves: somehow get them to realize that the goal of all humans is the same – to be happy – and then to learn what “happiness” means – to help humans continue. And the damndest thing is: everybody already knows this, but then, most walk right past it on their way to some utopia or “promised” land, promised by some con-artist cleric. As Goethe said: “If you inquire what the people are like here, I must answer, ‘The same as everywhere’.”

Thus, a housewife in Afghanistan knows perfectly well what her goal is (to be happy, and she's happy helping her family), a factory worker in India knows exactly the same, and so does a worker in the coffee fields of Brazil. Yet the Afghan housewife prostrates herself five times per day before Allah, the Indian factory worker bows before Buddha “the enlightened one” or any of the many gods of Hinduism, and the Brazilian coffee worker kneels before Christ the Savior – because all of them foolishly bought the snake-oil remedies being hawked by their local con-artist clerics.

I'm confident that, if humanity survives, eventually all humans will reach the happy state when “reason makes right”, i.e., someday, there'll be not only “rule of law” but “justice for all” and “reason will rule the law”. But I'm less confident that society as we know it will smoothly evolve into such a happy state: it may collapse into anarchy, if there are more instances of “mob rule” (e.g., as in the LA riots) and unequal justice before the law (e.g., with cases such as O.J. Simpson and President Clinton), or it may be transformed into a dictatorship, especially if those who promote the law lie, linking religion to law (such as presidential candidates Oral Roberts and Pat Buchanan) ever gain political power. Whether or not our “spaceship Earth” can be steered between these two treacherous extremes, toward the happy state where the scientific method prevails, depends, of course, on whether youngsters as competent as you see the dangers, learn how to steer their societies, and have the resourcefulness, the courage, and most of all, the perseverance to steer the world through the treacherous times ahead.

And let me add some predictions. Because of the methods of group governance and the nature of the data (or lack thereof) used by orthodox religious groups, then provided they don't totally destroy this world, I predict that all orthodox religious groups will eventually become extinct (similar to the extinction of the passionately held religions of Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome). Further, I predict that it'll take

not more than a few hundred years (and maybe only a few more decades), rather than the thousands of years required in olden days, because of the “information revolution” (e.g., courtesy the internet).

Certainly it’s easy to mock such astounding ignorance (as I’ve tended to do), but recall Socrates’ assessment, “**There is only one good, knowledge [or willingness to learn] and one evil, ignorance [or refusal to learn]**”, and then consider some of the atrocities that such ignorance has caused: torture and killing of millions of “heretics”, witch hunts and immolations, the murder of millions of Jews, thousands of years of religious wars, and the terrorism of today. And although at least some of those atrocities are at least diminished in this country, other evils persist – but not so bad in our society as in the past or as still in the Muslim world.

For example, in the past in our society and currently in Muslim societies, for what I’ve written in this book I would have been (or, in Muslim societies, would now be) tortured until I recanted all – and then killed in a most horrible manner. As a result, then (and still in Muslim societies) there would be little hope, because generally, societies have such enormous inertia to change. That’s what the “Religious Reich” is now fighting against in this country: change. Yet now, many of us can more safely express what we think. With more free thinkers and with a free internet, then I expect that, in the not too distant future, such freedoms will rapidly spread worldwide.

I’m certain that the natural state for humans is to want to control their own destinies (that is, be in charge of their own survival), for when “push comes to shove”, everyone knows that the most reliable person to protect one’s own survival (or the survival of one’s genes) is oneself. Stated differently, my experiences tell me that all people want freedom from others telling them how to live their lives (except insofar as we agree to various rules of conduct that allow society to run more smoothly, e.g., drive cars on a certain side of the road). Therefore, so long as such thoughts are universal and so long as people can think about such ideas, then when the opportunity arises, the people will depose all dictators and clerics.

But it’s so sad that sometimes it can take generations for the people to rid themselves of such brutes. Therefore, Dear, I hope you’ll think (and act) with compassion about the poor people currently ruled by dictators in Cuba and North Korea and in many African and Islamic nations. In such Islamic nations, in particular, the dictatorships are in large measure supported or

caused by the failure of the people to see (or, if they see, to eliminate) the control grabbed by religious leaders, who as the rulers (in Iran) or as supporters of the rulers (in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, etc.) use hate for Jews (and now, hate for Americans) to maintain their dictatorships. Similar collusion among clerics and politicians occurred in the West during the thousand-or-so years of Europe's Dark Ages, kept dark by the cloaks of the Christian clerics, just as Muslim clerics now enshroud their nations in Islamic ignorance. I hope that free thinkers will be able to shine some light on the horrors of their clergy before the lives of too many more generations of humans are ruined.

Finally for this chapter, Dear, I'll note that to end the **J1** chapter I wrote:

And in case you're worried that you may miss the point I want to make (possibly because of the length of what follows or maybe more likely because of my incompetence as a writer), let me summarize all of it, here: Dear, please think it through and test your ideas for yourself – against data. Trust no ideas that can't be substantiated with data, and trust any idea based on data only so long as its predictions continue to pass new experimental tests. In brief: apply the scientific method. Remember: “[Religion is the science of children; science is the religion of adults.](#)”

Progress toward more peace and prosperity, reducing physical violence and attaining sustainable development, will take time. But that begs questions such as: How much pain will we (and the biosphere!) need to endure before humans adopt the needed changes? Will humans need to endure a worldwide economic collapse? Will humans adopt the needed changes only by first going through a series of wars and/or worldwide dictatorships? Given that there are so many ignorant religious people in the world, I'm really quite worried that there's a substantial probability that most of the world (led by the Christianists and Islamists) will experience catastrophic failures, with both economic and ecological collapses and a massive number of deaths by starvation.

But the future needn't be so bleak. To reduce the probability of such catastrophic failures, children throughout the world must be taught how to continue to apply the scientific method in their daily lives (just as all of them started to apply the scientific method when they were infants); parents and the damnable clerics of the world must stop indoctrinating children in clearly invented religious balderdash (forcing children to replace – with wishful and “magical” thinking – their natural inclination to apply the scientific method).

If that were to occur, if such mental abuse of children would stop, then humans would have a much better chance of solving the horrendous problems facing them.

One woman at the recent March in Washington, D.C. (of Humanists, free thinkers, atheists, etc.) carried a banner that summarized it quite well:¹⁹

GIVE OUR CHILDREN LOGICAL EXPLANATIONS, NOT MAGICAL ONES.

I appreciate that sentiment, but for reasons that I've tried to explain in earlier chapters (e.g., in **R**, entitled "Reason vs. Reality"), reason (or logic) isn't enough: since it's so easy to make reasoning errors, all reasoned (or logical) results must be tested experimentally. Therefore, I'd prefer something similar to:

GIVE OUR CHILDREN IDEAS EXPERIMENTALLY TESTED,
NOT CLERICALLY SANCTIONED.

Better still, as Schopenhauer (1788–1860) recommended (as I showed you in Chapter **X-15**), is to have children develop general ideas by extrapolating from their own experiences. In any event, to end these many **X**-chapters dealing with reducing physical violence and achieving sustainable development (and to end Part 4 of this book, dealing with replacing belief in god with confidence in the scientific method), I'll summarize with the following half-dozen points.

- 1) In our quest for peace and prosperity, we have met the enemy, and it is ignorance, epitomized by "conspicuous consumption" and by all the clueless clerics of the world. We need, therefore, to wage and win "a war to end all wars" – not a war with physical violence, not "just" some "cold war" or "hot war" or "war on poverty" or "war against terrorism", but truly "a war to end all wars": a war to eliminate ignorance, a war in which the scientific method terminates the silly speculations of all religions, a war to change customs, so "ordinary people" will repudiate and rebuke ostentatious consumption (e.g., by fat Americans driving Hummers and Saudi princes loading their wives onto 747s for shopping sprees in the West) and so "ordinary people" will figuratively spit on any and all clerics of the world.
- 2) There'll be no peace without justice, no justice without a common morality, no common morality without common objectives, no common objectives without a common worldview, and no common worldview without agreement about how knowledge is gained. But that won't happen until the vast majority of people revert

¹⁹ See <http://www.nobeliefs.com/GAMOW/GAMOW25.htm>.

to the religion of their birth, i.e., scientific humanism, until all clerics of the world are recognized as the lame-brain and/or conniving con-artists that they are, and until, thereby, all gods are dead and buried. The “legacy of the gods” is an astounding litany of injustices, revolutions, and wars. The lesson to be learned from the human folly of inventing gods is that there can be no peace (in one’s home, community, nation, or world) without justice; no justice without a shared morality; no shared morality without shared objectives; and no shared objectives until all gods are buried in the trash heap of human stupidities.

- 3) Again and again the solution seems clear: teach people critical-thinking skills – and then, for the people to apply those skills in their daily lives, to problems such as patriarchy, power mongering, religious ruses, and how to nonviolently attain human rights for everyone (and especially for women and children). The UN’s Declaration of Human Rights was a good start, but it has faults, e.g., by proclaiming that people have freedom from hunger, the producers of food are put in servitude! But the UN’s Declaration was a major step forward. Now, major additional steps are needed: educating the people about the rights and responsibilities of all humans and creating frameworks for their protection.
- 4) To establish such frameworks, notice again that the prime reason why justice (and therefore peace) has alluded humans – despite being sought for at least the past 10,000 years – is that there has been no adequate and agreed-upon definition of ‘justice’. Just as few fish would have been caught if there wasn’t an adequate definition of ‘fish’ and few diamonds would have been found if there wasn’t an agreed upon definition of ‘diamonds’, people must first agree that ‘justice’ is whatever a group of intelligent, reasonable, disinterested people – with a common set of moral principles (and therefore, with a common set of objectives, a common worldview, and a common understanding of how knowledge can be gained, i.e., *via* the scientific method) – decide is ‘just’. Therefore, if laws are to be just, lawmakers must be disinterested in the outcome of the next election (perhaps by restricting lawmakers to a single term) and jurors must have no interest in the outcome of any trial. Similarly, to make more progress toward peace, an international system of justice must be created, complete with laws defined by disinterested legislators, with disinterested jurors from throughout the world defining what is ‘just’, and an international police force to uphold the international law.
- 5) Thereby, Dear, see what an enormous task – what a humongous task – confronts humanity: to teach everyone how to apply the scientific method in their daily lives, to have everyone adopt ‘honor’ as a personal (and not a family or tribal) matter, to protect the rights of individuals (not families or tribes, and of course, not religious or any other ideas), to have everyone appreciate the responsibilities associated with such rights, to expand everyone’s concept of ‘family’ to include all humanity, and to be on guard never to let ignorant clerics ever gain power again. And therefore, Dear,
- 6) Work hard in your studies – but not so hard that you don’t get a reasonable amount of exercise!