

The Philosophy Works®
Lakeville, Minnesota, U.S.A.

Commodities **Expand** *“freedom”*

Jeff Setterholm
Version 0.91 January 2nd, 2013

Supersedes: version 0.891 November 25, 2012



© 2013 by Jeffrey M. Setterholm

Web Link: <http://ftp.setterholm.com/freedomJS.pdf>

Save as: freedomJS091.pdf

This document may be reproduced, in its entirety, without permission.

Read this paper cautiously; why?
See appendix “A”, pages 16-19.

Definitions of: **commodity**, **freedumb**, **freedom**, & **understanding**: ---

For purposes of this paper, let:

“**commodity**” = “A self-similar entity,
not subject to any patent, copyright, or coercion of users,
that at least a million people are likely to use each year
for at least ten years.”

Example: Sand is a **commodity**.

The word “freedom” is presently a muddle. Even within a single dictionary, meanings that are serious business to some people are neither here nor there to others; e.g.:

My *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (1956) has three primary definitions and nine sub-definitions for “freedom”, including ...in Philosophy... “*The status of the will as an uncaused cause of human actions; also, sometimes, as with Hegelians, self-determination; spiritual self-fulfillment.*”

During a recent three hour drive, I asked a retired college-educated friend of mine for his definition of “freedom”; after long & careful consideration, he concluded: “I know freedom when I see it.” Furthermore “freedom” means “something to you”... which I can neither predict nor express. Let’s lump the mass confusion into a new word:

Let “**freedumb**” simultaneously encompass
all the present and past uses, misuses, abuses, and
dictionary definitions of the old word “freedom”.

Let’s define “freedom” so that **you and I and our fellow citizens can all do stuff, within reason.** Let:

“**freedom**” =

“The individual’s right to make desirable personal choices
within commonly known & sometimes age dependent:
rules, constraints, demands and support by society
which apply uniformly to all citizens.”

Examples: Breathing air is a **freedom**.
Driving a car is a **freedom**.

My (1956) dictionary has at least five different meanings for “understanding”. We’ll use my single meaning which has five elements:

“understanding” (e.g.: of any subject):

1. accounts for past experience,
2. explains present experience,
3. predicts future experience,
4. grasps bounds, &
5. can be communicated.

J.M.S. 2004

Background... The clue that launched this paper: ---

Until this past summer, I had always thought of **self-promotion** as purely a good thing... natural human behavior in a free society. That self-promotion might have a dark side was news to me... learned while watching a well-done Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary on film star Mae West (1893-1970) a few months ago. (~ She locked herself inside the shell of her own self-promoting image.) Mae West was a sassy delight... but self-promotion gridlock captured my attention ...& inspired the inquiry of this paper because:

If self-promotion could conflict with freedom, then what else might, too?

Consider that “The Peter Principle” - rising to one’s level of incompetence, might be less than half the story – with “rising to the point of gridlock” being at least as important; e.g.:

Individual members of Congress may be closer to being self-promotion-gridlocked than to being incompetent.

We associate having freedom with voting. Voting suggests having some influence on the choice of the leaders who will affect our future. But superb planning skills (rather than “leaders” per se) underlie predictably, efficiently, and safely realizing future outcomes. For a breathtaking example of awesome planning skills in action, read about how “The Hanford Site” was established during World War II (e.g.: using Google):

As part of “The Manhattan Project”. Hanford, Washington was the place where, starting from scratch, nuclear bomb materials were manufactured that were in use in the U.S.A.’s atomic bombs three years later. Despite seemingly fathomless technical uncertainties – the plan was robust!

(Serious radioactive waste problems linger, but the place didn’t melt down or go boom!)

For a world of difference, imagine:
 Political promises ___ backed by superb planning.
 .vs.
 Political promises not backed by any planning.

Planning involves understanding. If one or more of the five requirements of “**understanding**” (on page 3) are missing, then understanding has not yet been achieved. At “The Hanford Site” in 1943 the understanding of manufacturing nuclear bomb materials began on a solid (planned) basis and improved over time.

The U.S.A. could focus on developing and improving shared understandings (including planning expertise and better long-range national plans) in which case our choice of elected leaders could, should, & would matter far less! Such shared understanding would be a nearly-free commodity, much like the air we breathe.

The Search Paths of this paper - <i>Summary</i>:	Page
“Freedumb”’s faults:	5
1.) <i>Cooperation is under-valued,</i>	5
2.) <i>Social English word definitions are mostly garbage,</i>	5
3.) <i>Unbridled greed, winners-take-all, & bullying are our “rut”,</i>	6
4.) <i>Freedumb’s Self-promotion has harvested gridlock, and</i>	7
5.) <i>Our “rights” are mostly uncertain (“laws”¹ “rules”).</i>	8
-&-	
“Freedom”’s remedies:	10
A.) <i>Actually separate church & state,</i>	10
B.) <i>Instructively <u>redefine social English words,</u></i>	10
C.) <i>Develop <u>robust national knowledge sets and simulation environments,</u></i>	12
D.) <i>Insist on <u>transparent, enduring rights, rules,& bounds,</u></i>	13
E.) <i>Add “<u>The Right to Peacefully Disengage</u>”,</i>	13
F.) <i>Encourage mass production,</i>	14
G.) <i>Establish a <u>known, reasonable, bounded, social safety net, and</u></i>	14
H.) <i>Seek <u>proportional outcomes, & other rutless strategies.</u></i>	14

The first page summarized this paper. Definitions of “**commodity**”, “**freedom**”, and “**understanding**” followed. You’ve just read the outline for the body of the paper (above). The search path has led me to suggest that **freedom**’s *remedies* resemble **commodities**.

“Freedom”’s faults - Details: in ~ **numerical** order.

1.) **Cooperation is under-valued:**

“Freedom”, regardless of the definition, plays a *minor* role in unifying peaceful societies – **“cooperation”** is the *main* ingredient. Beneficial shared understandings are the basis of peaceful efficient cooperation. Far beyond that... standardized understandings support widespread cooperation. E.g.:

*A dashed white line painted along the middle of a road **does not** separate you from **high-speed collision with oncoming traffic**, but the standardized understanding of what *the dashed white line* signifies **does** separate you... almost all the time.*

Speaking the same language simplifies communicating with other people.

2.) **Social English word definitions are mostly garbage:**

The Dictionary definition of a social English word often has multiple meanings... like a grab bag of possibilities. **“Freedom”** has long been a **rallying cry and excuse word** for justifying *selfishness & irresponsible license*. E.g.:

In the name of *defending* our **“freedom”**, both major-party candidates for the U.S. Presidency have publicly agreed on continued use of armed “unmanned air vehicles” (UAV’s/drones) **to kill people anywhere outside the USA that they deem appropriate** as Commander-in-Chief. What happened to the: “Due process of Law”? ...and” International Justice”?

Due process and international justice are casualties of our wars on... whomever.

Note that planning how to enjoy **freedom** presupposes **survival** – e.g.: *not being shot-at or harmed* and having access to *adequate water, food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare*.

*Denying healthcare to millions of our citizens – in support of “freedom” – illustrates the **mumbo jumbo** of **Social English word definitions**.*

Social English word definitions are a sea of internal-self-contradictions & weasel-words... which is to say... misrepresentations.

People who **don’t speak a lie** qualify as **“honest”**
- the definition needs a **major overhaul!**

3.) *Unbridled greed, winners-take-all, & bullying are our “rut”:*

The ancient governance “**rut**” has its roots in **a nearly-religious, testosterone-crazed conviction** that “**survival of the fittest**” is the **biological imperative** that **does, should, and surely will drive human progress**. Viewing the **countless number of action videos of aggressive rutting males of various species being absurdly acquisitive of mates and territory** adds to the ranks of **the ‘bio-believers’**. Green Bay Packers (football) coach **Vince Lombardi** (1913-1970) made national news for saying: “**Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.**” (On average, Lombardi’s quotes are a more thoughtful read.) **Worshipping at the altar of winning** is seductively attractive to **winner**s and their fans... why waste time imagining **any other social arrangement?**

The **rutters** dismiss **reciprocity & ignore the importance of cultivating & facilitating cooperation within a society**. In particular, **transparent &, enduring rights, rules, & bounds** and access to **efficient tools & skills empowerment** ought to allow people to prepare themselves to contribute to the society. Like “**A Perfect Storm**” hitting our shores, **our rut** is **washing away the landmarks** that many people were using to navigate into the future. Our present **rut** has *at least* three grooves: **unbridled greed, winners-take-all, & bullying...**

The **unbridled greed** practiced by some people threatens the **survival** of other people, hence denying **freedom**. Politicians advocating: ‘**unbridled greed** as the key to **American freedom**’ aren’t just talking **social English mumbo jumbo**, they’re clueless!

For further commentary link to:

<http://ftp.setterholm.com/philosophy/GreedIsNotAVirtue.pdf>

Goldman Sach’s executives label their clients: “**muppets**”... funny... but **a wake-up call** for developing a **shared understanding** of how Wall Streeter’s will function in the future. After a costly bailout, our nation’s largest financial institutions **remain too big to fail!**

Winners-take-all – is just one of the decision paradigms available to a free society.

The central fault: **Winners-take-all** defeats **social cooperation**.

Example - according to my notes at the time:

Congressional Leader John Boehner stood in front of **national TV cameras** on August 1st, 2011, and announced:

“I got 98% of what I wanted.”

Does that make the resulting “**fiscal cliff**” **98% John Boehner’s problem?**

No way! ...keep your eye on the ball... That’s 100% our problem.

How to stop **Bullying** - in public schools - is a hot topic in Minnesota these days. Meanwhile (e.g.): **legislative bullies** in the U.S. Congress **set the tone**, & (e.g.): **killing foreigners remotely** without due process of law is a reality. **Bullying in varying forms is an integral part of the fabric of American life and leadership.**

The only way we've been taught **to end bullying** is **to fight back**; obviously, the **fight back** solution has **not protected the weak** & has **not discouraged the practice of bullying the weak.**

For the same reasons that:

Human strength, speed, and situational awareness
will become **decreasingly** important in warfare
(e.g.: when **swarm weapons** are the opponents).

... 'geeks' may join the 'jocks' as physical bullies.

Swarm weapons, intentionally-engineered plagues, etc. – a **bully future** awaits! But **winners may be in short supply for centuries.** A **bully hangover** is preferable:

Let's put **the practice of bullying peacefully in check.**

4.) Self-promotion harvests gridlock:

Self-promotion has always been part of **the rut.** But **freedumb** has driven the tendency **over-the-top!** “Getting ahead” in a free society often involves **self-promotion**, or being promoted by a supporting group. (The alternative - for participants - is being a pawn in the game.) Being calculating about identifying & fulfilling some of the wants and needs of some other people – **looking like the solution** - is very beneficial to **self-promotion.** Many of the people who have finally “gotten ahead” **have no maneuvering room left...** they're “**gridlocked**”... by **who** they seem to be and **what** they seem to know (somewhat like **Mae West's self-consuming facade**), e.g.:

Historians have claimed that **we need to learn history** (...from *them?*) **in order to avoid past mistakes...** which sounded like a **great idea!** Yet the U.S.A. **didn't learn the economic history of the 1920's well enough to avoid the same mistakes in the 1990's; nor did we learn enough from World War I to avoid World War II.** In reality, “expert” historians intentionally cultivate a **wide variety** of endlessly-nuanced viewpoints as they **successfully** self-promote... **misrepresenting** their purpose.

Let's make **robust strategy modifications** based on history's clear “lessons”.

Endless nuance is a ubiquitous practice outside of our military services. E.g. Dress: In the military services, U.S. Military people know what uniform(s) will be worn on a given day; whereas:

An abrasive young technologist striving for upward-mobility within a defense company might choose to wear *cargo pants* to demonstrate his readiness for greater responsibility. &

The end is not in sight for how many *different* ways young people can intentionally damage their new blue jeans in order to be ‘cool’.

The U.S.A.’s leadership sometimes has trouble connecting the dots: 131 years passed (1789-1920) before **giving women the vote** via the 19th amendment; 100 years (1865-1965) from the 13th amendment abolishing slavery to passage of **the Voting Rights Act; financial recessions, panics, and depressions** occurring every 10 or 20 years, almost like clockwork, for hundreds of years. Meanwhile, **Humanities Professors** at our universities have perfected awarding each other titles suggesting *intellectual brilliance*. Putting our national *social progress* in historical perspective, **academic “peer review”** has been closer to *the vortex of a drain* than to *the uplift of an elevator*. **Protesters** (outsiders) have often *led the charge* on social change. The U.S.A. also funds many “**Think Tanks**“, but both **national clarity of purpose** & **world peace** continue to elude us.

Engineering is held to a *vastly higher performance standard* (e.g.: no one tolerates repeated bridge collapses) because technologists embrace **problem solving** (albeit amorally). It isn’t difficult to imagine the lethargy resulting from **technologists being as undisciplined as “experts in the humanities”**, e.g.: **The industrial “revolution”** would not have happened *if the definitions of technical words* were also garbage.

Perhaps in ‘free’ societies **self-promotion gridlock** rivals **the rut** is a wellspring of:

unproductive **nuances**,
misleading **titles**,
selfish **choices**,
artificial **complexities**, and
counter-productive **regulations**.

All governance experiences these – **freedumb** compels the behaviors.

5.) Our “rights” are mostly uncertain (“laws”¹ “rules”):

At the visible tip of the Iceberg, enduring *lawyer jokes* attests to the severity of the problem (though now second-fiddle to *politician jokes*). Many lawsuits become very expensive *lawyer vs. lawyer* events. The cleverest of the lawyers have *become very wealthy* by **manipulating “the rules”**- oops- **manipulating “the laws”** - which are “**not-close-to-rules**” in the sense that children are taught about **rules**.

A child doesn’t need to have his/her lawyer present while playing a competitive sport or board game because the rules are known.

Referee @ judge+jury+sentencing+punishment in one

The resulting **legal rights uncertainty** has reduced the number of **perceived choices** that ordinary citizens have:

Choice reduction = “freedom” reduction.

Apprehension of suspects occasionally shows amazing favoritism:

On June 13th, 1994, the wife of football star O.J. Simpson was murdered and O.J. was a suspect. A few days later **95 millions of us** watched on *live TV* as O.J. and his lawyer slowly drove along **50 miles of traffic-free Los Angeles Freeway**, followed by 20 police cars, for more than an hour, prior to O.J. deciding to “give himself up” to authorities. Many of us thought that **resisting arrest was a crime in itself** – instead of an option. The scene was a one-ring circus!

After a guilty verdict has been handed down, **sentencing** is sometimes **surreal**:

The Enron Scandal of 2001 resulted in the conviction of C.E.O. Kenneth Lay. Instead of going to jail, convict Lay was allowed to **go home for a month prior to sentencing**. According to news reports at the time, **he died during his month at home** (on July 5, 2006) and was **promptly cremated!** What *a slick way* to bypass serving hard time in jail; what felon **wouldn’t** want *a month off* first?

Years ago, public school taught that: “A person could only be tried once for a crime.”

Either **being tried once** didn’t apply to O.J., or **public school oversimplified the idea of “being tried”**. After O.J. was acquitted in Federal Court, he was **retried** for the same crime and **convicted in Civil Court**.

“Freedom”’s remedies - Details: in ~ **alphabetical** order.

A.) Actually separate *church & state*:

Since any individual’s **religious views** can **rightfully** be **arbitrarily uncooperative**, **religion and government *must* remain separated**. **Religious viewpoints can be imported** into **governance discourse** when expressed in **clear *secular terms***. For example:

“*The Golden Rule*”:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

... needs no appeal to any particular religious tradition. ***The Golden Rule*** articulates **reciprocity** – which is a no-brainer for many citizens.

Some religious traditions go further than ***The Golden Rule***, suggesting that ***compassion for other people*** is in order. The case for ***compassion*** can be made on purely secular grounds... resting on **the importance of cooperation**.

Perhaps **“Freedom of Religion”** could be protected within the more general secular concept of:

“Freedom of *Personal Fantasy*”.

B.) Instructively redefine social English words:

Clear word definitions support ***constructive communication***.

as

Solid foundations support ***buildings***.

Technologists are already there! ***Centuries of experience*** in **cooperatively defining and summarizing technical English words, rules, equations, and transforms clearly**, have resulted in a **spectacular** level of technical progress during the last century. ***Professors of English*** at our universities ***could have instructively redefined social English words during the same time period***, but didn’t.

Consider a candidate *ethical* word redefinition:

"**trustworthy**" = An adjective describing a person who manifests the *energy*, *will*, and *skill* to both **avoid catastrophes** and **achieve benefits** for another person or a group of people *at no unfair cost to society*, preferably at no cost to society. J.M.S. 2009

Now consider how we might deal with the **gnarly** word: "**marriage**"...

Sidestepping **purely religious controversies** that have *no business* being part of governance... & hence leaving the definition of "**marriage**" untouched, **create the secular words:**

"**morriage**" = "the voluntary legal union of two adult homo sapiens"
& **rewrite all the nation's laws to pertain to morriage** rather than to marriage. "**Voluntary marriage** between one man and one woman" would be a subset of **morriage**. Divorce & remorriage?... one way or another, the law should be clear.

"**manyiage**" = "the voluntary legal union of *more-than-two* adult homo sapiens"

This is stickier; but if **manyiage** is legally recognized – gender restrictions are inappropriate.

Don't *almost all of us* presently **know "love" when we feel it? You bet we do!**
Do you "**love**" *your car* and also **legally own it?** Many people do.

C.) Develop *robust national knowledge sets and simulation environments.*

Many of the by-products of **self-promotion gridlock** can be unlocked by transitioning to a *primary emphasis* on **standard, synergistic baseline understandings** of how things work (including open-source software tools, simulations, etc.). Three examples:

Let our History Professors *promptly* invent (by agreeing upon themselves) the national **shared understanding** of what history **must** teach us in order to avoid past mistakes in the future. Perhaps this can be done in a document that has less than ~ 1000 pages & less than ~ 1000 words/page...in less than one megaword, including an outline/summary of the key concepts that's only *a few pages long*.

Give our young people the option of “graduating” (or bypassing) public school and college *by testing-out on particular subsets of “national baseline knowledge sets”*. Everyone would have access to the **uniformly-excellent mentorship!** Our students would graduate from high school **with the vistas** that one gets from **standing on the shoulders of giants!** (Note: If *private schooling* is still more valuable than *public schooling*... then the baseline knowledge sets **need further improvement.**)

U.S. Military training courses are superb examples of “**imparting standard, synergistic baseline understandings of how things work**”. *Nuance-for-its-own-sake* is **not** part of course content! **To a remarkable extent:** people who are involved in military operations **are all on the same page** – **which allows mission briefings to be limited to the small number of non-standard aspects of a particular mission.**

Imagine the ramifications of **all our citizens** sharing a **nuance-free 6th grade understanding** of how our government functions. For one, voters would be certain that **all** our political leaders had been *clued in*.

Public **understandings** (~ education pathways) *in electronic form* - **mass produced** (=replicated) almost instantly at almost no cost - become **commodities!**

On the **hardware** side - to see *a computer* that costs \$35.00, runs at 800 megahertz on 5.2 watts of power, directly drives big-screen OpenGL2.0ES HDMI graphics, has a free software operating system, & fits in the palm of your hand, learn about the:

“Raspberry Pi”, model B.

British educators have *hit a computer hardware commodity home run!*

D.) Insist on *transparent, enduring rights, rules, & bounds*:

Clarify, simplify, & synergize the nation's laws (@ “the rules & rights”) so that *at least the majority* of public school graduates can *competently* and *efficiently* defend themselves in court... when aided only by the **National-Standard:**
“**Laws/ Lawyer/Evidence/Judge/ Jury App.**” (software)

Require written contracts to **clarify the rights & balance the interests** of all parties involved.

Include **video-records of proceedings** in courtrooms and/or involving judges *as part of the evidence*. Keep all the presented evidence accessible to the parties involved for two years after a verdict is reached. Further require that *verdicts*, *sentences*, and the *servicing of sentences* **logically flow** from the substance of the evidence.

“Intellectual Property” is a particularly convoluted aspect of uncertain “rights”; e.g.:

“Free” “Open source” software sounds like a great idea, but complicated “Open source” licenses muddy the water. **The license could be a one-liner:**

“*This software source code is in the public domain on-or-before* / / .”
(date)

The nation’s *standard knowledge sets* need to be born in *the public domain* and stay there; curbing “**re-inventing the wheel**” & reducing the squabbles about: “**What is, or is not, patentable**”.

Consider having **published, useful knowledge** simply pass into *the public domain* at age 17. (Continue to allow ‘**forms of expression**’, but not software tools and/or data, to be covered by ‘**copyright**’.)

E.) Add “*The Right to Peacefully Disengage*”:

Amend the U.S. Constitution, adding a new *human right*:

“**Individual people have the right to peacefully disengage from situations in which they have committed no crime.**”

Hence, logically, bullies who were also trespassing could be ordered to depart.

Fiddle with the wording... but let’s write a *bully-buster* that’s part of the law of the land!

F.) Encourage mass production:

Mass-produced commodities deserve focus as **the foundation of commerce**; e.g.:

Farmers are *the tiny fraction of our population* who sustain **our food** as a **mass-produced commodity**; hence no one need starve in this country.

Let's seek **inventions** (worthy of mass production) that become **enduring commodities**, rather than *fad fodder* for junkyards. **Competition inherently drives down the price of commodities.**

The ability to create & use automated machinery which augments or replaces human labor is the driving force behind mass production. **Adequately reward the planning, the know-how, and the teams of people who realize commodities.** [How to best achieve an abundance of *"means of production"* was at the heart of the **theoretical disagreement** supporting the *bitter struggle* between **capitalism & communism** for the better part of the 20th century. Historians: **Summarize the forces** that actually drove the struggle.]

G.) Establish a *known, reasonable, bounded, social safety net*:

With **the safety net** in place, the prospect of *being automated out of one's job* will seem less like *'the end of the world'*. The **safety net** will arguably be a **commodity** too!

H.) Seek *proportional outcomes, & other ruthless strategies*:

Improving our decision making paradigms is a worthy challenge! **Jog your noggins...**

Some decision paradigms could be based on **proportional control of outcomes**. E.g.:

In deciding how to allocate the nation's budget: Give each member of the U.S. House of Representatives control of *an equal share of the money* and hence **negotiate the national budget from the bottom up. For stability, somewhat restrict the rate of change of budgets.** [Note: Feedback from an experienced local government planner suggests that committees often clarify issues.]

Set the **"Override of the Presidential Veto"** at *the percentage of the popular vote* which elected the president; a win of 50% or less cancels the veto power.

Still other decision paradigms could be based on **trying to avoid needlessly polarizing the society - to make "divide & conquer" less of a cakewalk for scoundrels.** E.g.: Add in **"don't care"** along with **"yes"** and **"no"** on ballots will clarify what is or is not an issue.

Make the practice of **unbridled greed illegal** & include **consequences.** e.g.:

Leave **the unbridled greedy** with only *the social safety net* that protects everyone else from destitution... **justice would be well-served.**

Summary:

In learning from **Mae West's self-consuming facade** and the ancient **rut** that we're still stuck in, I **redefined "freedom" (on page 2)**.

Many of **freedom's** remedies that I considered...

**secularly re-expressed religious views,
clear English Social word definitions,
standard understandings,
transparent rules,
encouragement of mass production, &
the known "social safety net"**

fit my redefinition of a **"commodity" (on page 2)**.

Hence, it's no surprise that:

The *remedies* for achieving **"freedom"**
appear to resemble **commodities!**

J.M.S. 2012

...to me.

The identification and realization of specific useful commodities goes hand-in-hand with the identification and realization of a long-term national plan. The commodities and the plan may empower citizens with the resources and vision to become productive long-term contributors to society.

May we govern ourselves as efficiently as our farmers raise our food.

A close read of **The Philosophy Works®** logo
on the right side of page one
introduces **Appendix "A"**, which follows **on pages 16-19**.

Ideas can be dangerous. Cautiously approach anyone’s innovations. To illustrate the point: Consider a subset of the contributions of our nation’s foremost political philosopher and 3rd President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826); his skill with thoughts and words elevated him to greatness. Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, and later his writings became *the guiding light* of the Southern Confederacy *during* the American Civil War (1861-1865) which was the armed conflict most lethal to U.S. citizens in our Nation’s history. A deeply grateful nation completed the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C (38.88129° N, -77.03641° W) in the early 1940’s during World War II.

What’s wrong with the picture is that carefully-crafted words (like shaped-charge explosives) can focus (un)intended destruction. E.g.: Free people are *convinced* to undertake wars.

Both *question* and *improve upon* anyone’s social conjectures... preferably as part of a *non-exclusive group*. When personal compensation is involved, less constructive change may come from your exclusive group than from yourself, because exclusive groups may amplify selfishness more than *achievement of constructive purpose*. I suggest that major social problems would have been solved *a century ago* if exclusive groups of people *were able to solve them...* and subsequent social progress would have rivaled subsequent technical progress in the 20th century. (A rewind historical clock with no World War I and no World War II is difficult to imagine.)

Furthermore, in “improving” the present, substantial discernment is needed to retain or replace existing know-how. Consider Ralph Nader’s criticism of Chevrolet’s Corvair: Unsafe at Any Speed ...the rear-mounted engine moved the weight aft, the vehicle sometimes swapped-ends while moving fast on slippery roads... written in the 1960’s: We owned a Corvair; Dad lost control - on ice - and was thrown from the vehicle into a snow bank (~uninjured); the book had personal relevance. However, at the time, and into the 1970’s, General Motors designed and built some very reliable vehicles; our 1972 Oldsmobile Cutlass (Donna’s dowry) ran for 230,000 miles on the original the power train (engine, transmission, differential, et.al.). Conversely, the engine on our 1983 Oldsmobile Cutlass failed at 70,000 miles, and GM charged \$2,000 for the replacement; years later an automotive engineer said that the life expectancy of the engine had been only 30,000 miles. The auto ran to 280,000 miles on the 2nd engine, but was at the dealers shop over and over again for repairs costing several hundred dollars each. ‘Uncertainty’ is the essence of

‘adventure’, but involuntary adventures are usually unpleasant. For decades, GM’s autos had been the only ones I’d buy; I was a slow learner.

In contrast to GM, Toyota focused on building reliable automobiles, including our 2004 Corolla. (See ConsumerReports’s annual evaluation of used vehicle repair histories; I did.) Donna experienced un-commanded acceleration of the Corolla once, but the dealer couldn’t duplicate the problem, nor could we; problems that won’t duplicate are hard to diagnose. Meanwhile, Toyota’s technical decisions outclassed the technical decisions at General Motors; e.g.: “What happened to the electric car?” GM recalled and scrapped theirs; Toyota built the Prius. When problems arise: allow *sustained demonstration of competence* to create some credits. Critics always have semi-infinite choice, because each of us travel only a finite number of real paths in one lifetime; & hindsight in the forward direction is an oxymoron, even for critics, e.g.: me.

Thomas Jefferson popularized the idea that individual people, not just kings, have “inalienable rights”. Thus, another useful dimension – the idea of *personal rights* - was added to everyday social thought. But extreme social positions... e.g. *inalienable* anything... deserve suspicion as the first reaction... for the lack of *balance*. Jefferson didn’t confer ‘inalienable rights’ on his slaves, he conferred *slavery* upon them. ‘Finding *balance*’ has been a theme within oriental philosophy for many centuries. ‘Finding balance’ is related to the idea of ‘depolarization’, and to ‘resilience’ - having an optimistic & reasonable guess about what tomorrow will bring, via either “Plan A”, or the available fallback position: “Plan B”, whereas extreme positions can have as a bedfellow another far-removed extreme (like ‘priceless’ ⇔ ‘worthless’).

When copyrights block the dissemination of information society is not well served, e.g. when high quality copyrighted books are withdrawn from publication. Our best historians have provided profound insights into past events; for: compactness, scope, factualness, even-handed-insight, humility, and elegance of expression, The Lessons of History - by Will and Ariel Durant, ~102 pages ,Simon & Schuster,1968 – is a consummate masterpiece. The Durant’s book is out of print.

Tools and understandings impart skills. Skills can be used both constructively and destructively. Can humanity develop sufficient *shared self restraint* to employ skills constructively? That’s a tall order. My sense (since 1967) has been that increased ‘education’ beyond high school leads to increased selfishness; if true, then a counter-intuitive – bizarre - result. Would graduating skilled students from public high school help to stabilize society? Who knows?

Let's be astute enough to avoid fighting wars that we've already lost. *Corporations* and *lawyers* assured an ongoing & powerful presence by wealthy foreigners in the American Colonies before the American Revolutionary War and in the United States of America afterwards. Paul Revere's ride was signaled by lanterns hung in a Boston church steeple; "One if by land, two if by sea" supposedly warned of the route of British attack. I'm arguing that Paul's ride was way-too-little, way-too-late to achieve independence. Legislators who can't agree on *this year's budget* are mentally ill-equipped to consider: the present threats to *equality of opportunity* and *affordable contentment* that will be manifest 20 to 50 years in the future.

I'm concerned about our national frenzy to realize robotic warfare under centralized control (~ a \$4,500,000,000. investment this year); we don't have a solid plan for **protecting ourselves from our own national leaders** in the future. Empowering everyone somewhat risks anarchy, but empowering only a few people risks despots.

In addition, the political enthusiasm for remote-control killing of our "opponents" using armed unmanned drones in far off places is short-sighted. The practice will lose more than half its luster *when* (not *if*) our opponents start the targeted autonomous injury & killing of people in America. For patient opponents, inexpensive attack options abound. Combat veterans know that life as a potential human target on a recurring basis adds a new dimension to "being stressed". We may eventually become accustomed to *robotic predation*, but life will be more of an 'adventure', in a less pleasant way, for all people, regardless of their social status.

We've been training foreign technologists in our universities for decades; in so doing we helped empower foreigners of many persuasions. But **arrogant force projection is a poor idea** for an even more important reason...

Years ago, when American Universities started teaching freshmen in college how to splice genes, the option of engineering bio-weapons – germs on a mission – began leveling the playing field of strategic warfare worldwide; America's recent scuffle with the H1N1 virus serves as a reminder of our vulnerability... our on-shore vaccine manufacturing plants had all been shut down! Combat robots are no match for germs in lethality, longevity, stealth, or ease of delivery. A germy *letter* shut down a legislative office building in D.C. within recent memory. (Now, letters to our national government are first screened outside town.)

No library of *gloom and doom* is complete without: Pox Americana, The great smallpox epidemic of 1775-1782 by Elizabeth A. Fenn, The Great Mortality, an intimate history of

the black death, the most devastating plague of all time, by John Kelly, America's Forgotten Pandemic The Influenza of 1918 by Alfred W. Crosby, and The Mongol Art of War by Timothy May. (Surprisingly, Timothy May makes no mention that the 'Black Death' – bubonic plague – came to Europe in 1346 in the midst of the Mongol's westward conquest.) Given informed communication & the option: many societies of the day might have chosen plague as an opponent - rather than almost-inevitable defeat and subjugation by the Mongols. I don't mean to make light of biological pandemics, but the convergence of extreme selfishness, cleverness, power; & ruthlessness in a single individual - in any age – has had social effects as adverse as plagues (Genghis Kahn, Hitler, Stalin,...).

Nanotechnology's future in weaponry is also worthy of concern. How far down that road will we travel, and at what expense? Many years ago a science fiction writer envisioned that the future use of nanotechnology, having evolved to be a complete nuisance on Earth, would be restricted to the far side of the Moon. ☺

Finishing Appendix "A" on a relatively positive note...

We can be blind to the useful work of experts. Raw petroleum comes from deep in the ground in (usually) distant places as a gooey mess. Delivering refined gasoline at a retail price of \$2.50/gallon to your neighborhood is remarkable; delivery at \$1.00/gallon was a marvel. In the last 10 years, I haven't heard anyone complain about getting "a bad gallon of gas" from a filling station; the only complaints concern price. Though gasoline can explode and easily ignites, drivers of all ages, from all walks of life, fill their own fuel tanks with few accidents. A less-skilled petroleum industry *might have made* getting gas for your car, and then driving away, more of an adventure.