

Trailer to:

What's Right and What 'Right' Is

Fundamentals for Social Design

Defining Right, Wrong, Good, Evil, Justice, Sin, Ethics, Fairness and Morality

“Our duty is not only to make the right known, but also to make it prevalent.”

Edmund Burke

“There is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat, plausible, and wrong.”

H. L. Mencken

This is your world, maybe your only world, maybe your only existence anywhere, ever. And it is my world, my only world too and my family's only world and everyone else's only world in the most deeply personal ways possible. It is the only world of people we love, of people we hate, and of people who love or hate us. How is that ever supposed to work out for us in a highly competitive environment? Much better than it ever has in the past if we will just ask better questions about what we are doing here. This is about better questions and some of the tools required to produce high quality answers.

Why Ask: What's Right?

Why should we ask what it is that makes up 'right' and why might we need to know, specifically, what practices, actions, laws, norms, modes, ordinances, regulations, agreements, policies, assertions, customs, attitudes, systems, etc. are right, wrong, evil or whatever?

We should ask because - There are way too many important questions that still confound us, too many of our most popular and cherished answers to essential questions trail off into the ether, way too many serious, unsolved social problems remain. Our world is badly scarred by mediocre justice and a pervasive, fundamental disregard for property rights. That may not sound like a big problem but it truly is. A catalog of this world's serious social misfortunes would fill many, many volumes and bring us great sadness to tell and to hear. For personal serenity and political advantage, the depth of our dismal record is quite effectively hidden from us, by us, in a thousand ways.

We should ask because - When we face the evidence of what has been and today is still happening all around us, when we think not just of our local communities but of the world as a whole, it becomes clear that we are all part of an ongoing disaster to which we give far too little attention. We are, it seems, both co-managers and victims of an inefficient world notable at least as much for its lost opportunities as for its accomplishments. To fix it, we gotta ask more and better questions, starting with what *is* 'right'?

We should ask because - Citizens very much like ourselves are still imprisoned, tortured and terminated simply for *debating* basic human rights issues. That's the death penalty for a debating offense. Millions of innocents die every year, victims of a variety of commercial, personal and political interests. Today, tomorrow and everyday tens of thousands of children

will die of starvation, neglect and very preventable diseases. Right this minute, tens of thousands of parents, sisters and brothers are watching them die. Many are dying alone. Imagine what that looks like, and sounds like. Millions endure short lives of inconceivable sexual, emotional and physical abuse, many of them at the hands of their own families, often tolerated, sanctioned even promoted by their own governments. Not just abroad but here in our own neighborhoods. Imagine what it feels like for them right now and try to imagine what was in that just-dead child's mind as she closed her beautiful young eyes for the last time, just a second ago. Imagine what plans, hopes and dreams should have been occupying that child's mind. These things result from choices and social policies *we* make. They are not a given. They are very avoidable but their solutions are on the other side of the questions we don't ask and can be found nowhere else.

We should ask because - We maintain commodity markets for women and children. Many of us still believe that 'bride burning' and 'honor killings' are appropriate methods for managing common domestic concerns. Forever-illiterate children are forced to fight in violent conflicts, sold, raped, beaten, shot, tortured, killed or killing each other at a time in their lives when every single one of them should be cherished by a loving family and educated to the marvels and mysteries of a whole world and the world of opportunities it affords - at least to some of us. Children shot, starved or beaten to death before they have a chance to read even one book. Hundreds of millions of men and women live all or much of their abbreviated lives as the personal property of others and they may never get another chance, never get a chance to live like us.

For everything I mention here there are hundreds of thousands more I don't because it is not my purpose to depress anyone's spirit but rather to create awareness of vast unexploited opportunity to do better. By its nature, injustice falls most heavily on those who are in no position to do anything about it and remains largely unknown to or ignored by those of us who can help. We need to be informed and occasionally reminded of our interests in creating and maintaining a widely just world. This requires elaboration and example, much of it not pretty, some of it tedious, but a lot of it interesting, heartening, inspirational.

We should ask because - In the US alone, 2.3 million people are held incarcerated at a direct cost to taxpayers of 55 billion dollars a year, and that is only the tip of that iceberg. Those 2.3 million convicts are both perpetrators and victims of social dysfunction and lost opportunity. To that 2.3 million, add some multiple of 2.3 million representing those who loved them and to that add their victims and all who loved them. The annual dollar cost of crime in the U.S. is well over \$2.2 trillion a year paid by the past, present and future people of the U.S. and still, many millions of the guilty remain free to steal, damage or destroy both valuable property and human lives, including their own lives and the lives of their families.¹ This is not even close to the best we can do, but in a very real sense, it is part of some really good news for us all: our potential for improvement is immense.

We should ask because - The death toll from World War I was about 15 million people, World War II 55 million *people*. These millions were not all 'volunteer' soldiers. Some were conscripted soldiers, most were bystanders, unarmed civilians; sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers and grandchildren, most of whom had absolutely no responsibility for or understanding of the processes leading to their suffering and demise. The death toll for World War III will likely be in the hundreds of millions of people, accompanied by generations of lost social progress, and there is not much at this time to convince anyone paying attention that it won't happen in this century.

We should ask because - Worldwide, at least 180 million people died of egregiously atrocious behavior in the 20th Century, many from the violence and injustice they themselves initiated.² Take a minute if you will to imagine what the unedited, video of that would look like. 180 million people and that number doesn't include 100 years, 36,500 days of ordinary, and extraordinary, everyday assault, kidnapping, murder, rape, burnings, lynchings, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, torture, exploitation, theft, emotional crimes, extortion, slavery and intimidation. Very few countries around the world have escaped large-scale, unbridled violence in the past, and few will in the future unless there is major change in our understanding of justice and a clear and accurate vision of what is 'right' and how we make it pervasive in our world. So we must ask: What is this thing we call 'right', what do we need to know about it and what does it tell us to do and not do?

We should ask because - What goes around comes around. Justice matters. Injustice is deadly. Consider the millions of families, from all classes, who thought themselves secure and well off one day and the next found themselves in the killing fields, death camps, death marches or standing before firing squads, guillotines or an AK, pitch fork, airliner or machete wielding disenfranchised underclass. No doubt if the victims saw it coming they expected to avoid the looming holocausts by flight, defense or prayer, but they, and their families, were destroyed nonetheless. Millions of families of all classes, all over the world have discovered too late the erratic and deadly consequences of social neglect and just-for-us justice. For many of us living today, our turn is close around the corner. There is no way to know who will be next to fall victim to the wrath called out by disrespect. Which of us will be the next to experience a bright flash, the rising mushroom cloud and the last futile, frantic seconds of regret?

We hear good people advocate a position with great conviction "because it's right" or to the contrary "because that's just wrong" while on the other side of the room, fence or battle line other people, just as good, just as wise, just as kind and loving to their families are using the same words with equal conviction but a very different sense of who is right, or wrong, and why. Would our world be more likely or less likely to lapse into peace if we all knew what 'right' really was, and made it "prevalent"? Is it possible that peace could ever happen any other way.

Most, if not all, politically, religiously, economically, racially or tribally charged conflicts are about what at the core 'right' is and what specifically are the right and wrong actions to take, text to revere, positions to support. Conflicting notions of right and wrong, manifested in ill-defined, antiquated, self-serving and unsupportable, notions of fairness, property rights and justice are the fuel of war. Without improvement of and better consensus on the foundations upon which we attempt to build our social systems, our troubles will increasingly outpace our ability to cope as more challenging social issues pile up. If there is hope of peace, it will only be realized to the extent we agree on what 'right' is and reach accord on the social arrangements necessary to achieve it.

Finally, we must ask because we can do so much better than this. As it stands now, the dismal catalog of global social disappointments would take years to tell but with justified, well informed, coordinated, widely accepted social fundamentals and a constant awareness of the consequences of not getting it right we *can* achieve success in resolving our conflicts and in progressing positive social objectives by which we will *all* benefit. If we acknowledge the need, accept the challenges, get the fundamentals of right right to arrive at a conceptualization of right and wrong that we can all agree on, we have the means to reach the high ground from which vast social disappointment can be transform into substantial, sustainable universal justice and uncommon peace.

Getting it Right, Plan A

A model for conceptualizing the optimized or ideal form of social organization, one that at least in a theoretical sense would perfect our social world, i.e. would get ‘right’ right every time, is the universally benevolent (compassionate), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipotent (all powerful) ruler. This would be governance that:

- Is *motivated* to achieve what’s right for everyone – Universal Benevolence
- *Knows* what ‘right’ is and knows the *best* way to make it happen - Omniscient
- Has the *means* to make right happen - Omnipotent

Society would have taken a very different path if such a leader had perfectly and compassionately designed and managed every detail of our lives from the beginning, providing perfectly measured inputs, flawless conflict resolution, every incentive and disincentive, exactly and only as required. Missteps like those mentioned above would never have occurred. Life would have been optimized, just and peaceful for everyone, all the time. But that is not our history. The difference between that and what did happen is our Global Social Opportunity Loss. It is the difference between our potential for social optimization worldwide and our history of mayhem, disrespect, injustice, destruction, cruelty, waste and exploitation, with a measure of success and progress for a few but by no means, for all. It is the difference between how well we could have done as a world, as countries, as communities, as families and as individuals and how well we actually did.

Unfortunately, such a hands on, benevolent, omniscient, omnipotent autocrat doesn’t work here and we shouldn’t expect one to appear any time soon to make ‘right’ universally and clearly known. It seems that management has no plans to show up, in person, and authoritatively and unambiguously show us how to act. Perhaps (s)he is waiting to see what we can do on our own, to see if we are worthy? In any case, it seems that our problems will not get fixed until *we* fix them. So what’s the next best option for getting it right?

Getting it Right, Plan B

There is a simple concept for understanding good government, good social design and the essence of right and wrong and it is this: there is a *best* way to operate our world and that, in whole and in part, is what right is. Everything that advances the realization of that is right and everything that takes us farther away from it is wrong. It is what, without exception, defines not only right and wrong but good, evil, justice, sin, ethics, values, and all morality as well.

Does that definition allow for flexibility? Maybe. If flexibility is required to be the best possible system then the system, by implication, would have to be flexible. Would it require equality? Would it serve some people more than others? If equality is required for the system to be the best, then it will be exactly as egalitarian as necessary to be the best social system achievable whenever and wherever egalitarianism is required for it to be the best. Would it create Utopia? Of course not, but by moving in the right direction we shorten the approach to it, and the case can easily be made that it would be well worth even a very considerable effort. Is it doable? Yes, but if there were a simple, quick, easy solution, somebody certainly would have stumbled on it long before now.

Would it require justice, fairness, democracy, totalitarianism, fascism, capitalism, communism, spirituality, disparity, a firm hand, a gentle touch, empathy, tyranny, kindness, more government, less government, better governance, liberty, faith, diversity, generosity, greater personal freedom, less personal freedom, civil rights, basic human rights, animal

rights, natural rights, property rights, patience, compassion, godliness, self-indulgence, monarchy, oligarchy, anarchy, minarchy, utilitarianism, pluralism, liberalism, altruism, conservatism, collectivism, relativism, other 'isms' or...?

The point is that *whatever* arrangement of all these things and anything else it takes to be the best, that is what 'right' is. What 'the best system' is depends of course on what the individuals it is designed to serve require of it in order for it to be the best. We have to know their, our, true needs and nature as it won't do to find once again we've built a rabbit cage for alligators. We have to determine what it means to be 'the best', decide exactly who it will be best for, decide who will and how they will build it to become the best and maintain it to remain – the best possible world social system(s)/moral code. We will never quite get there but we can always get better, always get closer to it than we are. It is not a person, place or thing but a process, the process of approaching the best possible us, the best possible all of us.

The Fundamentals of Right

The Primary Social Vision:

To get 'right' right, one of the questions we have to answer is: 'right' and 'wrong' for who. For this we must start at the beginning, the theoretical, ethical beginning, the beginning we would have started at in the first place in a perfect world. The completely inside and outside the box, no restraints, no mistakes, no baggage, no history of injustice, pre who-hit-who-first, original, primo social beginning.

Visualize everyone who ever lived, is living or will live assembled together all in one place, every race and sex, as they were, are or will be on their first day of life. Make it the instant before they had a chance to commit any deed or think any thought, good or evil, by which they could possibly deserve a stain of guilt. No saints, no sinners, pure innocence. That is the PRIMARY SOCIAL VISION (PSV)³.

This I submit as the conceptually correct starting point for the social architects and policy designers who will determine what notions of 'right' and 'wrong' are to shape our world for all generations. This vision is one possible social origin, and it is my starting point. It is my who and it permeates the beginning, middle and end of this social point of view.

The Primary Social Charge:

Eventually, the members of the Primary Social Vision will in some way assume, or not assume, the responsibility to deal with the design and redesign of the basic moral code and social systems i.e. the political, economic, education and information systems that they and theirs will be born into, and grow within to the end of their days on Earth. This is the PRIMARY SOCIAL CHARGE (PSC)⁴. It is the answer to the question of who among us will take control of and responsibility for design of our social world and who will receive the benefits thereof.

This charge will be accepted, it is only a question of who will accept, or seize it, and what they will then do with us. The members of the Primary Social Vision could assume the responsibilities themselves or they, we, might relegate these responsibilities by choice or under duress to a subset of the whole. The question ultimately will be answered by the de facto definitions of ownership and property rights and those answers will, as they always have in the past, shape all our social assumptions and designs. How we accept this charge and how we carry it forward determines the quality of life for every creature on Earth from here on out. Nothing on Earth is more important to us than the execution of this charge, and very serious

mistakes have been made. Mistakes so horrendous and so shameful we would rather repeat them endlessly than discuss them in a meaningful way.

Suffering from poor information and groundless ‘fundamentals’, our answers to the charge and the consequent evolution of our social systems has taken many unfortunate twists and turns. Most social modeling of the past has poorly served a great many of us.

If we could examine all the individuals comprising the Primary Social Vision we would immediately notice that they vary in many respects. Some are baby girls some baby boys. Some belong to one family, some to another. They would be of various colors and conditions. There would be differences that we could see like sex, hair and skin color, and differences that are hidden from view such as longevity, strength, chemistry, mental capacity, personal preferences and all imaginable and unimaginable advantages and disorders of circumstance.

In the past, most social designers chose to assign different rights and responsibilities based on these differences, such as always dividing the nascent of the Primary Social Vision into different groups making the members of some groups the property of others. This level of control of any animal over another produces at best mixed, but usually horrific, results. In nearly all cases, the girls were made the property of the boys, sometimes even though those boys were already the property of other boys. The designers gave themselves special rights that others don’t have for no particular reason or for reasons important only to themselves and they granted themselves immunity from most of the negative consequences of their decisions.

Social and economic hierarchies were established which created classes ranging from the abject poor to the fabulously wealthy. The fittest in society (in a political power sense, if not a justice sense) seized design responsibilities and were free to create a world dedicated to serving their families’ every need and want. There is a universe of political arguments avowing why we might want to continue to do what they did. These choices are familiar if not ‘just’ social design choices that have been used throughout history. Arguments exist to support these choices but what kind of result did they produce compared to what could have been achieved? Were any of the old designs the best design? Did any of them come close to delivering the goal of achieving the best society? Did they get right the question of who should be served and if not, where and why did they go wrong?

If we take up the charge to decide which plans to employ, we must give thought to a criterion for scoring and ranking them. Will it be by superlatives: the greatest individual achievements or wealth produced, the finest arts, the most terrible diseases cured, does it create the best species, does it develop the greatest complexity and sophistication of marketing and manufacturing technologies? Or will it ask questions about how egalitarian the resulting society is or how many families it chews up compared to other systems?

Should distribution of the control and benefits of society be based on the ability to achieve political and economic power? Will it be about “the least of these,” or will it leave such questions unanswered? If we are trying to achieve the wrong things, if the ‘right’ fundamental premises are missing, we will do poorly relative to how well we could have done had we gotten it right in the philosophical beginning. Finding and applying the correct fundamentals helps us to avoid the all too common wretchedness of winning battles only to secure defeat in our war against high global social opportunity losses.

How then will we know if our plan to answer the charge is a good one? How can we “do real and permanent good in the world.” How will we know when we have it right. The answer of course depends on who is deciding and leads to the questions: who should decide, who should

take up the charge and who should be served? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different possibilities? Most people can agree that in general, the owners should both decide and be served. Following this view, the owners would assume the responsibility of the Primary Social Charge to decide and to have the right to be served. So who are these ‘rightful’ owners?

Primary Social Ownership:

The problems we face today in economics, politics, the environment, healthcare and other social realms are largely symptoms of our failure to correctly define and assign ownership rights and responsibilities. Some believe there should be no ownership of anything, but as long as there are things of value, someone, right or wrong, will step into the void, claim them and fight like an animal to defend what they see as their right to control and to receive the benefits to be derived from those things. Ownership will be assigned whether we like it or not. It is only a question of who will get to do it. Our success in appropriately assigning the ownership of society as a whole rests on correctly answering these questions: What are the justifications for assigning and reassigning, or transferring, ownership rights and responsibilities and what is the best way or ways to assign ownership of everything of value?

As for who the owners should be, I suggest that the individuals of the Primary Social Vision are and have always been the legitimate owners of everything that ever was, is or will be. That is the concept of PRIMARY SOCIAL OWNERSHIP (PSO)⁵. Everyone who ever lived, is living or will live are - fundamentally - the rightful owners of everything that ever was, is or will be. If not us, then who else should own our world, the only world in which we *all* live?

It is importantly a very comprehensive definition of who the owners are and who owns what. Less inclusive definitions lack the necessary scope. By simultaneously assigning ownership to everyone in general and no one in particular this definition seems at first to have no value whatsoever but it is the first step to a justifiable definition for all ownership and property rights. After walking around with it for a while in the presence of certain other essential concepts, one begins to appreciate the potential of some previously under-utilized social options. Options that make more sense and have greater promise for delivering prevalent justice and peace than any used to date.

Relative to existing legitimizing schemes for ownership and property rights, Primary Social Ownership is, comparatively speaking, easy to justify considering that virtually all of what passes today as ‘legitimate’ ownership is traceable to acquisition by war, treachery, threat, theft, extortion, mistake, chance, accident, ‘legal’ slight of hand, some other form of coercion, or by sale, gift or inheritance of property originally obtained by one or more of these means. It is not surprising that a system so based should be plagued with the violence and many serious and seemingly intractable problems we suffer today. Rather than rewarding the use of violence and other injustices by bestowing greater and greater property rights on the perpetrators of injustice, we should be moving toward social systems and devices that disincentivize the use of injustice to ‘justify’ possession and property rights.

The concept of everything being fundamentally owned by just one entity, is not a new one. For most of human history, despotic governments everywhere, like the feudal kingdoms of Europe, assumed that all land was the king’s as ordained by God (so say the kings). Individual property rights were granted by the king’s charter and survived at the king’s pleasure, for the king’s benefit. Everything, fundamentally, was owned by the king with a wide array of subordinate, conditional property rights granted to the extent that, and only so long as, they served the interests of the crown.

Primary Social Ownership differs from the feudal concept of ownership in that the single owning entity is not the one king or even all kings collectively, but everyone. The ability to trace the legitimacy of all ownership to a common authority, all the people, is essential for eliminating property disputes which would always otherwise be made intractable by multiple, overlapping, incomplete, contradictory, legitimizing origins. Though short on guidance for implementation, Primary Social Ownership provides the necessarily broad foundation for legitimizing property rights. The concept of ownership is itself not a simple one. It is highly nuanced by its components: benefit, control and responsibility, each with their own varieties.

Primary Social Ownership doesn't directly tell us about the details of social design any more than a building's foundation describes what the building above will look like, but it meets the requirements for justifiable, universal fundamentals which can support the weight of the world's social systems over the long run. It gets 'rights' right at the start. As we proceed from broad design to construction of the minutiae of our political, economic, education, information and other systems and policies, its presence will serve to nudge us the 'right' way as we arrive at each fork in the roads of life and advance in our own ways to social progress with optimum, but not unlimited, liberties and freedoms.

As for the distribution of fundamental ownership rights among members of the Primary Social Vision, I suggest that primary (fundamental) ownership be a strictly equal distribution among the owners. This is analogous to issuing one non-transferable, fully participating, voting share of stock, from the only class of stock, to each person who ever lived, is living or will live anywhere on Earth.

To restate this: everything that was, is or will be is, fundamentally, owned equally by everyone who was, is or will be. It is important to get this right at the beginning because property rights issues are the most difficult and deadly point of contention in human conflict. Correctly defining the ultimate legitimacy of all kinds of property rights is critical to the success of developing enduring, effective and widely accepted social systems fundamentals.

Although few concepts of ownership could appear more communist at first glance, this is not an argument for communism. My personal tactical preferences for the supporting political and economic policy lean heavily on democracy and markets to achieve what is right for the members of the Primary Social Vision. I would despair for our chances of social success without these tools. Motivation, innovation and initiative are resources way too valuable to discard, and so defining of who we are.

Likewise, this is no endorsement of democracy, capitalism and markets as they are practiced today. 'Communism' and 'capitalism' are both noble and necessary experiments the outcomes of which have suffered from poorly informed theory and disastrous execution because they both got property rights terribly wrong. Unless everyone owns everything there is no legitimate ownership of anything. But when everyone owns everything isn't it true that no one owns anything? The solution to this riddle is one of the keys to 'getting it right'.

In the interest of achieving optimum results for the owners, I advocate a much higher level of performance from our political and economic systems than has ever existed anywhere in the world. It is a mistake for communists and 'capitalists' to believe that Primary Social Ownership represents a diametrical conflict with market based economies. This simply is not the case. What makes the combination of Primary Social Ownership and markets not only possible but preferable is the vast array of accommodations, solutions, and all important incentives and disincentives made possible by the myriad forms of ownership coordinated by

the performance potential of *perfected* markets in goods and services, including political, education and information services.

Primary Social Ownership is fundamental, primary ownership. It is exactly equal and inalienable, all the time, for everyone. It cannot be legitimately sold, given or taken away ever. This concept does not preclude the use of an infinite variety of private ownership alternatives necessary to optimize society for all the owners. It would not surprise me to find that people enjoying many of the private ownership rights we have today should have them and more, but Primary Social Ownership is the fundamental, original, legitimate form of ownership to which all other legitimate forms of ownership are traceable and subordinate. Social justice is a condition necessary for peace. Primary Social Ownership is getting the priorities right. It is a condition necessary for social justice and is more consistent than any other definition of property rights with the notion that we are 'all God's children'.

What would it feel like? It would feel like everyone is an owner so everyone has a stake in the outcome. For most of us, that is a very different feel from the world we live in now. Primary Social Ownership requires and engenders an attitude of privilege and a respect for all owners and their families, a mind set in which every owner anticipates being treated with the respect and fair play entitled to any other owner. An acceptance that: though a win is not guaranteed to anyone, a fair place at the same starting line, a run under one set of rules and a viable set of options is due to all.

It reminds us always to treat every other owner with respect. It requires every owner to be respectable, responsible and accountable, knowing that we all deserve to be treated in-kind and are obliged to give value for what is received from other owners because to do otherwise is necessarily to disrespect the fundamental common rights of every owner.

When owners have a stake in the outcome, their motivations, their incentives and disincentives are drastically altered. They have a powerful reason to conduct their own lives 'wisely'. The practice of disrespecting the property rights of others removes justification for claiming respect for ones own property rights. We all seek our due rights, respect and responsibility and we are all entitled to benefit from our world, optimized for all of us, by all of us. Most importantly, it would feel like we were finally getting 'right' right.

The Fundamental Social Goal:

With fundamental ownership defined, the strategy for optimizing social design (Plan B) can be summarized: *The fundamental social goal for society as a whole is to achieve a social result that equally and optimally serves the best interests of all who ever lived, are living or will live.* This FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL GOAL (FSG)⁶ is the basis for all morality and strategic social design. The rest is tactics and the use of all known concepts to help the owners optimize their world by optimizing their alternatives and decision making. These tactics are the details of the design to accomplish the strategy of serving the best interest of all the owners. They are the set of details that comprise the plan to approach as closely as possible what a benevolent, omniscient, omnipotent despot would counsel us to do and to be.

Social scoring under the Fundamental Social Goal would likely not return highest marks for the most well off, the biggest successes of society, the quality of the finest schools, the most technologically advanced healthcare, the incomes of the top ten percent etc.. These things can be important but the Fundamental Social Goal implies an emphasis on the value derived by all and each owner compared to what is or should be possible. The lifting of all boats has

significant relevance. Differences between the best served and the “least of these” would likely be of great interest to the legitimate universal owner/designers.

An audit might ask everyone “how are you doing?” and require everyone’s input. Its analysis would anticipate the questions: Can we do better. What is the total global social suboptimization loss and what is the distribution of that loss across the entire population of owners. That is to say, how far did we fall short of how well we could have done for everyone, in the lifting of our boats. In accomplishing this, we should always be asking: how quickly is management recognizing its shortcomings and bringing effective corrections on line and how close a match the de facto social system is to our true nature, to who *we* really are and what we really need and want in an optimized world.

The Social Systems

To design legitimate, effective and fundamentally sound social structures and policies, it is necessary to understand and incorporate the Primary Social Vision (PSV), the Primary Social Charge (PSC), Primary Social Ownership (PSO) and the Fundamental Social Goal (FSG). The Primary Social Vision defines who is considered for ownership. Primary Social Ownership defines the set of individuals within the Primary Social Vision that will be designated primary owners. The Primary Social Charge is our responsibility to ourselves and each other to deal with the problems of designing our social systems. The Fundamental Social Goal asserts that the social systems will be designed and redesigned to serve everyone represented in the Primary Social Vision, minimizing lost opportunity for everyone who ever lived, is living or will live.

The social systems to be addressed here are the political, economic, education and information systems. Although it is useful for discussion to segregate and categorize social activity, these categories are in fact artificial and suggest a separation within the universal social network that does not really exist. When we refer to ‘economics’, it is easier to orient ourselves mentally to that subset of the whole to make it easier to think about, write about and follow the discussion at hand. However, it is important to bear in mind that these systems are all of a piece, all linked in time, space and function, perpetually shaping and reshaping one another and it is not possible to change part of the system without affecting all social systems and not plausible to expect a net improvement without considering the current and consequent states of the other systems.

Minimizing policy failure induced social opportunity losses requires that all social systems be operated systematically with all costs be internalized. In order to minimize unintended consequences, these systems need be designed and managed to compliment each other. The goal is the best global social system(s), not the best political, economic, education, information or any other subsystem. Optimizing a single subsystem suboptimizes the global system.

Religion is of course a very important social system and the need to include religion in a discussion of social systems and what ‘right’ is seems obvious. But to consider religion, even one religion in thousands, is beyond the resources of this author. Discussion of religion is complicated by the deep emotional attachments we often have for our own religion and at times by our suspicion of, even animosity for, other religious traditions. I trust that the justice of the principles discussed here will be recognized as consistent with the true will of everyone’s God and become accepted as part of the theological commons.

The charge is to create social systems that equally and optimally serve the best interest of all who ever lived, are living or will live, i.e. to *realize* the Fundamental Social Goal. This requires getting the fundamentals right, maintaining a very broad notion of the possible, using all the tools at our disposal, remembering our history and liberally incorporating new information going forward. Social policy must reflect reality and not treat the exception as though it were the rule. Policy must be based on the usual, not, as too often is the case, on what seldom is true. Policies anticipating that everyone is a college graduate, with legal and business training, raised by fully functioning parents, sophisticated, fully matured, networked and informed when in fact far fewer than 20% are even close to that may be politically expedient, but such policies only serve to hinder the interests of society as a whole. Policy makers should be discouraged from conjuring up fictional ‘bootstraps’ by which we may all pull ourselves up when such alleged bootstraps are merely the wordsmith’s cloak for wicked moral myths about the mechanisms of choice.

The end result of all social policy must be to equally and optimally serve every member of the Primary Social Vision as closely as the constraints of reality permit. Constant reevaluation and evolution will be essential for success and we should anticipate that, at times, it won’t be possible to get there from here until our designs first take us somewhere else. The path may not be straight but the goal, the Fundamental Social Goal, must always remain in sight.

Political Systems:

The primary function of political systems is choosing the political, religious, economic, education and information systems (which in turn are shaped by prior, existing and anticipated political, religious, economic, education, and information systems). Political systems by and large determine who is to be served by the available resources and how that will be accomplished. Other common roles are: administration and funding of governing functions, provision for common national defense and determination and enforcement of property rights. Expanded roles for political systems include everything else perceived as easier, better or more efficiently done via a common effort than by individuals utilizing markets or otherwise acting alone.

Political systems decide who decides, i.e. who participates in the decision making and who is deemed irrelevant. The participation rate can vary from a single person to 100% of the population. Governments on the low participation end of this political scale are referred to variously as authoritarian, feudal, dictatorial or oligarchic and on the high side as democratic, participatory or self governing. The Fundamental Social Goal seeks to achieve a social result that equally and optimally serves the best interests of all who ever lived, are living or will live. A political system attempting to realize the FSG would need to closely approach the 100% end of the de facto participation scale to reliably secure the best interest of all owners.

Political systems use various forms of incentives and disincentives to shape the social form. Among these are the granting and withholding of rights, community respect, taxes, fines, licensing, imprisonment, funding, loss of funding, confiscation, regulation, coercive force, threat of force, onerous paperwork, longer lines, higher prices, hurdles, hoops, torture and death. An important and difficult assignment for political designers respecting the Fundamental Social Goal is determination of the appropriate use of these and other powers when everyone is an owner.

When an owner disrespects other owners, society’s response must still respect the disrespecting owner’s fundamental rights as well as the immediate victims’ rights, the rights of other affected individuals, and the rights of the community at large, all of whom are also

owners. This highlights the importance of good law and good law enforcement. The cost of failing to uniformly provide quality enforcement and protection for all citizens becomes more apparent and more problematic when everyone is considered an owner. The political alternatives of under-funding justice and ignoring victims' concerns become less viable alternatives for legislators and enforcers when the victims are owners, and they know it.

What is the closest approximation we have to benevolence, omniscience and omnipotence in government? Real democracy. The people inherently have a personal, vested interest in and expert knowledge of their own concerns. We are all naturally inclined to be benevolent to ourselves and our loved ones. Make the people as smart as possible as soon as possible so that they will both recognize their best interests when they see them and know how best to achieve them. Make the people the government and they and their government more closely approach omnipotence.

Democracy and autocracy are powerful tools and like all tools, can be used for good or evil. Even in its less satisfactory forms, democracy is likely to be preferable to the alternatives. Whether it actually is or not depends on the surrounding economic, education and information systems. Real democracy is very high maintenance and not something that either is or is not. It comes in every shade of many colors and the owners must show up and step up to achieve the best. A democracy with a poor, ignorant or ill-informed populace is a poor, ignorant, ill-informed and unsustainable 'democracy'. A 'democracy' with a participation rate of 30% is just a large oligarchy. A 'democracy' with a populace that is neither knowledgeable nor politically active is a sham.

In a population composed entirely of owners, the legitimacy of the authority must be unassailable. The individual owners must be certain of its credibility. Partial democracies which are not or appear not to be legitimate will lose the essential confidence of the people. The people must know that the authority they are asked to maintain and submit to is genuinely legitimized by the true will of at least the majority of the people. Not just a majority of the voters but a majority of the people.

If everyone is an owner, everyone has not only the right but the responsibility to exert due control of their government via democratic mechanisms. This puts a very high premium on transparency, and competence. The people, the owners, must know what they need to know to govern their society, they must be capable of high quality decision making because ultimately either they are the decision makers or they are not exerting due control. In equal measure, their interests must all be incorporated, into the realized political product.

Economic Systems:

As authorized by the political system, the economic system decides who will get what, how much they will pay for it, who will do what for their pay and how much they will be paid for it. Political systems make broad policy decisions. Economic systems handle most of the minute by minute decisions comprising the vast majority of the decision making that gets us through the hours of everyday life. While the political question asks who's interests are going to be addressed, economic tools help us with the question of how they will be addressed, given the existing political system, state of technology and available resources.

Economic systems ration available resources to the owners' needs and wants. After the owners are fed, housed and made secure from immediate harm, economic systems must also provide for the future by generating additional investment resources to grow the base economy, build political, economic, education and information systems, and provide for the

national defense and internal security. Minimizing lost opportunity is not cheap but by definition it is the best value and should be the guiding principle for all economic system design. In turn, the economic system must provide us the resources to afford it.

Legal systems, schools, libraries, stores, transportation, information systems, tools, research, medical services, entertainment and communications all require a constant supply of ever increasing economic resources for maintenance and growth. The economic systems channel the available resources of a society into the often extremely complex production of need and want satisfying goods and services. ‘Economic’ means scarce or limited. All needs and wants cannot be met (most will not be met) because the resources available will always be insufficient to cover all the bases. The constraints of reality dictate that we cannot meet the vast majority of needs and wants. But there is nothing about reality that constrains us from striving to achieve the best possible outcome for everyone.

One need or want cannot be resourced without denying those same resources to others, all others. All economic systems are rationing systems. This is fundamental, cannot be changed and must not be ignored. If you give a particular good or service to one element or sector of society then you don’t give it to all the others. However, if there is a way to do more with a resource rather than less, so much the better. When an economic system gives to one we must ask what roles are diminishing marginal returns, opportunity costs and incentive playing. Who are we taking it away from, who needs it more, who ‘deserves’ it more. What is the overall effect with respect to the Fundamental Social Goal. The economic system is instrumental in determining who does what and who gets what for doing it. The implications for fairness, justice and efficiency in social design are enormous.

Economic systems develop need and want satisfying resources and distribute those goods and services. The priority of the economic system is not to make anyone rich or poor, provide jobs, maximize or minimize either executive compensation or labor wages, prevent moral hazard or create any particular opportunity of any sort for anybody. However, policies that do things like create ‘good’ jobs, efficiently produce and allocate need and want satisfying goods and services and respect the rights of owners not yet here are, in general, more likely to be part of solutions that reduce forsaken opportunities for owners as a whole than policies that don’t.

The social systems must use all the tools available to accomplish the Fundamental Social Goal. Markets are powerful tools for meeting the needs and wants of all society. They are the only tools available with the capability and capacity to do the heavy lifting of justly and efficiently allocating need and want satisfying resources while balancing the supply of and demand for many possible goods and services. Done right, they use the force multipliers, motivation and initiative, to expand capability and capacity while generating desirable byproducts like job satisfaction, creativity and security. The best way to fix a bad situation is to continually generate better alternatives until it just can’t get any better. This is what good markets do. However, they can’t do everything and at best, they only address the left half of the supply and demand curve. There are people, owners, out there on the right side, as well as a number of major crime scenes.

To put Communism, Capitalism and the Fundamental Social Goal in perspective, think of three respective carpentry crews. One crew is overly partial to hammers and allows no screwdrivers on the job site. Everything gets hit with a hammer. Another crew is married to screwdrivers, eschewing all hammers. The third crew is comfortable with both, using hammers for nails, screwdrivers for screws, has several sizes and types of each as well as

saws, levels etc. and is comfortable with and knowledgeable about how best to employ each for the good of the house. Which crew would you want to build the house you and your family are going to live in? Who would really prefer a hammers-only or screwdrivers only house?

Markets as practiced around the world today are a train wreck. A wrecked train is a kind of train, but it doesn't operate to its potential. Nevertheless, for want of available alternatives, way too many tickets for wrecked trains are being sold every day with the result that too many of us are going nowhere. Today's markets serve neither our needs nor our wants for goods and services with much efficiency or justice. In particular, they very poorly serve the need for the political and economic education and information essential in order for markets to realize the Fundamental Social Goal.

Some argue that the problem with markets and capitalism is government interference and regulation. They maintain that if left alone markets will function optimally. This ignores the obvious but little mentioned fact that the experiment with *laissez faire* has been run countless times over thousands of years of human history, with feudalism, despotism and the death of economic and personal liberties *always* the end result. Feudalism is a system that concentrates all political, economic, educational and informational power to a very small top. Feudalism is what the end result of *laissez faire* policy is.

In describing democracy as "...the worst form of government, except for all those others that have been tried from time to time" Winston Churchill appreciated democracy's potential while reflecting on his own experience with its weaknesses. The same is true of markets for many of the same reasons. One of the thorniest problems with markets (and democracy) is that by many devices and imperceptible means, this high service potential, friendly, useful gift of the gods is easily morphed into the devil's own playground. Like a lamb transforming into a tyrannosaurus rex with no change in name or appearance but resulting in a very different kind of animal and a very different outcome. Given the inherently democratic nature of genuine markets, it is not surprising that they share many of the vulnerabilities of 'democratic' political systems.

Planned economies such as communism have been offered as alternatives to markets. They come in versions usually ranging from poorly performing to even worse. The Communist emphasis on equality and justice is commendable but equality is unsustainable and the justice comes at too high a cost. There are significant problems with joining planned economies with democratic political systems. Centrally planned economies can't handle the speed and volume of decision making required in any but the smallest of societies and they're highly caustic to creativity, motivation and initiative. Proponents of *laissez faire* economics view planned economies like communism and fascism as "The Road to Serfdom." History supports this assertion as well.

When designing economic systems we must not lose sight of what is the very heart of economics. We often focus on the makeup of supply, the production and allocation of goods and services, but that is only half of the equation. The other is demand i.e. needs and wants and what are needs and wants but expressions of human feelings i.e. the owners' feelings. In fact all of all of the owners' feelings. Take away human feelings, and the whole 'science' of economics loses all meaning. Without human feelings, there are no wants, no needs, no demand, no goods or services to supply, nothing of value, no scarcity. Without human feelings, feelings "shaped by the hammer of natural selection upon the anvil of nature,"⁷ economics ceases to exist. Feelings are the ultimate bottom line and must be central to all social policy design.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of dealing with the fact that economics is all about all the feelings of all the people. It is even more difficult to imagine overcoming the problems involved in addressing every owners feelings when everyone is an owner, but we must do at least a better job of it. That is what justice is and education is a big part of the solution.

Education Systems:

The role of education is to improve the quality of both everyday personal decisions and broader social policy decisions. Setting the quality level of our decision-making ability, education sets the performance limits of our social systems and the upper and lower limits on the quality of our lives. Education and information systems tell us how to usefully perceive and react to what was, what is and what will be. Education is a productivity multiplier and lost opportunity minimizer for all personal and social functions.

One can imagine a society in which the decisions made by its individuals are so well informed and so consistently wise that there is little need for government involvement at all, no need for a political system. People could conceivably just know where to go, what to do and how to act and interact all the time. It is the ultimate goal of information and education systems to show us how to become individually and collectively benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent. Education and information are our means to approach that state.

All social systems must be staffed. Government, businesses, schools, media all require education systems that meet their present and future needs with competent, trained personnel. Those needs include educating everyone to manage their daily affairs, obligations as citizens, voters, parents, workers, supervisors, jurors, historians, mathematicians, economists, teachers, professionals, in short, the owners, in whatever their capacity.

Continuing research into the unknown is an essential part of our risk management plan. Both pure and specific purpose research and development are investments when we remember that the first step to getting the answers right is getting the questions right. We look to research to answer questions like: What do we need to know about the creatures that our social systems are designed for and what do they need from the system for it to be the best for them? Our ability to minimize global social suboptimizing losses requires that we get both the questions and the answers right. The right answer to the wrong question is not helpful. Education is expensive but cheaper than ignorance. Quality education management is the hinge pin of the process of building successful individuals and democratic societies now and in the future. Quality research and development is our answer to the known, unknown and unknowable challenges of that future.

Concepts are conceived, collected, analyzed and prepared for dissemination and production primarily in the education arena. Concepts are the gears of the mechanisms that process information into quality decisions in all scientific and social functions. Concepts connect the mind to the world. They are tools to visualize and make sense of our world, see into the future and devise solutions to coincide with problems as they arise. Essential concepts are concepts necessary to sustain and progress in any particular endeavor. For any decision-making context in which you lack the essential concepts and to the extent you lack them you will fail and continue to fail until you can acquire and utilize them.

Sadly, too many essential concepts are missing from the minds of the majority of the owners. It is one thing to disagree, and quite another to lack the means to bring at least a minimally informed opinion to the table. It is not surprising that many in power today don't get democracy. They have legitimate concerns that the average citizen-voter-owner is not up to

the responsibilities of ownership of their government. As a result, for centuries ‘democracy’ has existed with a wink and a nod of the educated political elites and a tacit understanding that for our own good they will retain the real reigns of power. Special interests possessing the concepts necessary to recognize and secure their interests can be consistently relied on to do the right thing for themselves, in style, and to leave the bill for others to pay. In general, we simply don’t have the distribution and depth of education it takes to sustain a real democracy. The empirical and subjective evidence on this is clear. I would like to add a disclaimer that nothing here is intended to suggest that those who have the knowledge to seize power also have the knowledge to use it wisely and well.

Chance favors the prepared mind. If we want to get lucky as a society, education is the key to knowing what we need to know when we need to know it. Technology is a force multiplier of everything. It is knowledge that allows us to use everything to better advantage. It gives us tools to do things we could never do before and the means to do the things we do more efficiently. The research component of education is a major source of new technology. Whether research is done in a university, corporate laboratory, work site, basement or garage, the future will require an ever increasing rate of technological progress. This calls for aggressive, thoughtful and open research and development policies if we are to sustain our ability to meet the demands of a growing population living on a shrinking planet.

World wide, the correlation between education disparity and political and economic disparity is compelling. The success of all our social systems rests on the success of our education systems. Disparity in education yields disparity in political and economic power. When a rising tide floats boats, education is the boat. Only within the limits of our education will we rise with the tide. Only those who keep their knowledge up to par are assured of retaining the political and economic power that is their right and responsibility as owners. Good government demands of its citizens a broad and deep knowledge base. Quality of life requires quality education. Done wrong, education is an entertainment expense, done ‘right’, a high yielding investment for the owners, all the owners.

Information Systems:

The role of the information systems is to feed the political, economic, education, information-processing and decision-making sub systems with correct and relevant information. Both quantity and quality are important. Injecting false or irrelevant information increases the costs of information and decreases its speed and efficiency. The decisions a society makes are only as good as the stream of information its decision making institutions and individuals receive. Bad information, either false or irrelevant, is counter to the interests of society. True, relevant information serves the Fundamental Social Goal.

Truth and good information are expensive and difficult to get at. Timely information is very expensive and very valuable. Consider what the information in a Wall Street Journal, published a week from now, would be worth today. Although too much information can impede the decision making process, lack of adequate, quality, essential information harms the personal, business and broader social decision making product. We are all in the same network. When any one of us makes unhelpful decisions due to an information problem, we all suffer. Sometimes we die. Sometimes we die in large numbers.

Markets, democracies, all social systems are nourished by the stream of information they receive. Poisoning that stream is not something we want to do. Political and economic policy and personal decision making performance can range from 0 to 100% depending on the quality and quantity of their information input. Lying is not OK. Dishonesty is not only costly

and inefficient, it is often deadly. It is in everyone's best interest, even the best interests of the liars and their families, to keep pollution of our information streams at very low levels.

Knowing your options and payoffs is the key to success or failure in every quarter of life. We are constantly surrounded by superior opportunities that we are not aware of or we don't know how to connect to. Whether it is people, businesses or institutions, when resources don't find their optimum places in our society, we are compelled to rely heavily on social band aids like prisons, welfare, gated communities, strikes, orphanages, electoral colleges, NGOs, free clinics, rehab and homeless shelters. The result is high social opportunity losses for all of us.

Conclusion

In the United States, in 1857, 70 years after the signing of the U.S. Constitution, only white, land-owning males were considered for inclusion as owners. In that year, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that the framers of the Constitution understood that some owners had "no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever profit could be made by it." Responding to a question about affirmation in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," Taney stated that "it is too clear for dispute, that the enslaved African race were not intended to be included, and formed no part of the people who framed and adopted this declaration..."

In these statements the Chief Justice of the highest court of the most democratically advanced country in the world at the time described his understanding of the views of our Founding Fathers, the authors of our most fundamental declaration of what was then considered 'right' and what right was thought to be. They failed tragically to get the scope of ownership correct. Had their social vision included all the members of the Primary Social Vision, such unfortunate and unsupportable opinions would have been nearly impossible to maintain. Because we could never get this right, slavery is still with us today in very big ways. We are still not able to get beyond the first step: all owners, no slaves.

In a world not only informed but also wise, atrocities would be rare as there would be little motivation to utilize them and fewer misunderstandings to facilitate them. What atrocious conduct might occur would more often be surrounded by powerful interests to detect and disincentivize it to extinction. The Primary Social Vision, Primary Social Charge, Primary Social Ownership and Fundamental Social Goal are tools for furthering this goal by making prevalent a better understanding of who the owners are and what their property rights are.

Our collective intuition has already led us to incorporate into our existing social systems much of what is implied by these concepts. From the poverty of despotic one-owner government to the proliferation of prosperous and more just societies operating under more inclusive, democratic policies, we have moved toward Primary Social Ownership. As a result, the middle class has expanded and quality of life has greatly improved for most of us.

Still, distracted by daily challenges, we too often lose opportunities as a result of keeping our eye on the wrong ball. Our risk of civil breakdown and disaster is still extremely high. Clarity of vision can help us to more quickly recognize and efficiently overcome problems in extending social justice concepts and carrying them into daily practice. Understanding what is right is not always obvious or easy but always easier when we are clear on who the owners are.

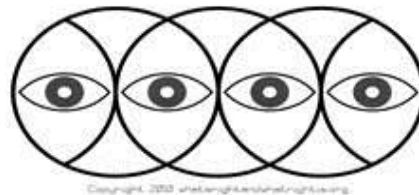
When we juxtapose “All people are created equal” etc., against realities like 95% of an illiterate region’s wealth controlled by a 5% closed class of tyrannical elites, who pay cash for Ivy League educations, we should know that considered, prompt action is indicated. We don’t have to wait for a new social technology to understand that maintaining commodity markets for the lives of men, women and children is not acceptable and we must put an end to it soon. We need a new social commitment to reach our true potential, a commitment to discover what our best is and do the best we can to get there. Settling for a distant second destroys too many of us and leaves us all diminished.

Completing the process of understanding and making pervasive what is right and what right is does not oblige us to precipitous or violent social upheaval. Though time is of the essence in matters of justice, a vast amount of work in many areas is required to move us up to where we should be on the getting-it-right learning curve. Precipitous, ill-conceived action is as likely to add to injustice as diminish it. An unobstructed view of *all* the children of the Primary Social Vision, coupled with well informed social systems founded on just principles of ownership will help guide our progress in getting closer to the places where we all want to be.

Jono

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

Thomas Paine



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¹ Anderson, David A., 1999 The Aggregate Burden of Crime, Journal of Law and Economics, University of Chicago Press, Vol. 42(2), Pages 611-42, October. The \$1.7 trillion figure restated to 2009 dollars using the CPI is well over \$2.2 trillion. No doubt the sizable medical portion in Anderson’s study and its higher inflation rate leaves the \$2.2 trillion a conservative number.

² Source List and Detailed Death Tolls for the Twentieth Century Hemoclysm. Matthew White, <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm>

³ PRIMARY SOCIAL VISION (PSV): Everyone who ever lived, is living or will live assembled together in one place as they were, are or will be in their first moments of life.

⁴ PRIMARY SOCIAL CHARGE (PSC): The responsibility for designing, or redesigning, the basic moral code and social systems, i.e. political, economic, education and information systems that they (the PSV) will be born into, mature and live out their lives.

⁵ PRIMARY SOCIAL OWNERSHIP (PSO): Everyone who ever lived, is living or will live fundamentally owns equally everything that ever was, is or will be

⁶ FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL GOAL (FSG): The fundamental social goal for society as a whole is to achieve a social result that equally and optimally serves the best interests of all who ever lived, are living or will live.

⁷ Edward O. Wilson, On Human Nature (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1978) p. xiv.