

In Pursuit of Happiness

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After the end of the Cold War, Americans breathed a collective sigh of relief. Many were convinced that the supposed end of tyranny would usher in a golden era of peace and prosperity.

This prediction may yet turn out to be true, but only if we remain vigilant in the defense of freedom against yet another of its foes. Today we face what was, until September 11th 2001, an ignored threat to our ideal of liberty under law. That is the threat of Islamic Terrorism.

If we are to prevail in this struggle, we will need to have a better understanding of what is the driving force behind this latest threat to freedom and how we may counter it. What the events of September 11th suggested is that religion is the real motivator of human actions, more so than either economics or politics. This should not come as a surprise, as religion has historically been the main path people have sought to happiness and fulfillment. This remains true even in our supposedly secular world and in spite of the fact that a lot of division and misery has been spread under the name of religion. To find out why this is so, we are forced to examine human nature and the conditions necessary for human thriving. Of particular interest to this endeavor is a recent Report to the Nation from the Commission of Children at Risk entitled "Hardwired to Connect". The report, co-authored by the YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School and the Institute for American Values, sheds some light on this subject. According to the report, recent scientific studies have indicated that humans are biologically hardwired to connect in two basic ways. First is a connection to a transcendent source of moral meaning and purpose and secondly, a connection to an "authoritative" community which serves as a medium of nurturing and the transmission of that sense of moral meaning and purpose. Such connections not only are conducive to human prosperity and thriving, but also seem to be able to repair prior genetic damage done by the absence of such connections.

What we have here is a case of scientific studies finally pointing to a conclusion that religious figures have known for centuries. While Aristotle is known for his insistence that man is a "Social Animal" and others have felt that the distinguishing human characteristic is that of a "Rational Animal", religious leaders have long seen our fundamental nature as that of a "Religious Being". The most prominent figure espousing this view is St. Augustine, who saw man's condition is one of being created in such a way that he seeks happiness. Happiness requires that man go beyond the natural to the supernatural. In his Confessions he wrote, "Oh God Thou hast created us for thyself so that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." In summary, humans are essentially religious beings, which make religion a VERY powerful force is shaping human behavior. Like any powerful force, it can be used for great good or great evil.

The brand of Islam that we find ourselves in conflict with represents a comprehensive worldview which is rooted in a particular understanding of God and touches on ALL areas of human endeavor. This is a battle that can not be won through military means, but it is fundamentally a struggle of ideas and values. Islamic radicalism addresses the fundamental human need for a connection to “a transcendent source of moral meaning and purpose and secondly, a connection to an “authoritative” community which serves as a medium of nurturing and the transmission of that sense of moral meaning and purpose”. That is why the religion is spreading so fast all over the globe. The secularization of modern society has left a spiritual vacuum in the hearts of a large and increasing number of people the world over. Radical Islam is simply filling that vacuum. The vision of God that animates Radical Islam is one of a wholly transcendent being who is above such human notions as reason and justice. Such a being has not created man in his image, granted him the gift of “Free Will”, or dominion over his creation. Man’s chief function is not to exercise loving dominion over God’s creation as a being created in his image, but merely to “submit” to God’s will. The word “Islam” literally means “submission” and a “Muslim” is one who submits. God’s will is communicated to man by his Prophets, the chief of whom was Mohammad. In modern times, religious clerics pass on God’s word to Muslims as learned interpreters of the Koran. Those who hold this view look forward to the appearance of a “Caliphate” who will combine the roles of both a political and religious leader and bring the whole world under the submission of God’s rule. In this view, there is no room for our notion of freedom and democracy as a political institution is out of the question.

In a *NEW YORK POST* September 4, 2003 article entitled “AL QAEDA'S AGENDA FOR IRAQ” Amir Taheri quotes from a book entitled "The Future of Iraq and The Arabian Peninsula After The Fall of Baghdad" by Yussuf al-Ayyeri, one of Osama bin Laden's closest associates since the early '90s. This is what he had to say about “Democracy”:

What Al-Ayyeri sees now is a "clean battlefield" in which Islam faces a new form of unbelief. This, he labels "secularist democracy." This threat is "far more dangerous to Islam" than all its predecessors combined. The reasons, he explains in a whole chapter, must be sought in democracy's "seductive capacities."

This form of "unbelief" persuades the people that they are in charge of their destiny and that, using their collective reasoning, they can shape policies and pass laws as they see fit. That leads them into ignoring the "unalterable laws" promulgated by God for the whole of mankind, and codified in the Islamic shariah (jurisprudence) until the end of time.

The goal of democracy, according to Al-Ayyeri, is to "make Muslims love this world, forget the next world and abandon jihad." If established in any Muslim country for a reasonably long time, democracy could lead to economic prosperity, which, in turn, would make Muslims "reluctant to die in martyrdom" in defense of their faith.

He says that it is vital to prevent any normalization and stabilization in Iraq. Muslim militants should make sure that the United States does not succeed in holding elections in Iraq and creating a democratic government. "If democracy comes to Iraq, the next target [for democratization] would be the whole of the Muslim world," Al-Ayyeri writes.

The al Qaeda ideologist claims that the only Muslim country already affected by "the beginning of democratization" and thus in "mortal danger" is Turkey.

"Do we want what happened in Turkey to happen to all Muslim countries?" he asks. "Do we want Muslims to refuse taking part in jihad and submit to secularism, which is a Zionist-Crusader concoction?"

Al-Ayyeri says Iraq would become the graveyard of secular democracy, just as Afghanistan became the graveyard of communism. The idea is that the Americans, faced with mounting casualties in Iraq, will "just run away," as did the Soviets in Afghanistan. This is because the Americans love this world and are concerned about nothing but their own comfort, while Muslims dream of the pleasures that martyrdom offers in paradise.

"In Iraq today, there are only two sides," Al-Ayyeri asserts. "Here we have a clash of two visions of the world and the future of mankind. The side prepared to accept more sacrifices will win."

Al-Ayyeri's analysis may sound naive; he also gets most of his facts wrong. But he is right in reminding the world that what happens in Iraq could affect other Arab countries - in fact, the whole of the Muslim world.

In essence, he is claiming that freedom and democracy are not compatible with the vision of Islam which he follows. This is a vision that is being spread throughout the world by Saudi oil money and is crowding out the more moderate voices of Islam which would welcome the ideals of freedom and democracy. One thing that is certain is that he fully understands what is at stake: *"Here we have a clash of two visions of the world and the future of mankind. The side prepared to accept more sacrifices will win."* He also considers the notion of democracy, which he brands as secular, to be a "Zionist-Crusader concoction". Again, he is right here. The principles of freedom, upon which our democratic Republican ideal of ordered liberty rests, are of Judeo-Christian origin. It is to that origin which we must return if we are to reclaim to spiritual vision to counter the all encompassing Radical Islamic vision. Those principles were at the heart of the American Revolution and are best summed up in our Declaration of Independence. We now will examine those principles and see how they saw human freedom as not only compatible with God's sovereignty, but part of God's divine plan.

The American Declaration of Independence points to the self-evident truth that we are endowed by our creator with the right to PURSUE happiness. This neglected phrase in early American literature expresses a profound understanding of human nature. Early Americans were relatively successful in establishing a society that provided a framework in which Americans could pursue happiness. Notice that they did not try to create a society that would provide or guarantee happiness. They realized that happiness could not be provided or guaranteed, but rather has to be pursued. Human nature is such that we need challenges to overcome in order to truly feel satisfied. Why does a mountain climber climb a mountain? Because it is there, it represents a challenge to overcome. If the obstacles and challenges are removed from our life, a small part of what makes us human is also. Individuals need to be left free in order to pursue happiness, rather than being consumed into some socio-political collective. Our modern welfare state robs the individual of the chance to pursue happiness by trying to provide it without requiring any effort. This is a big reason why the Welfare State will not only fail to solve the problem of human needs, but rather increase human misery in the long run. Such an approach is not even capable of identifying individual human needs, much less aiding in the satisfaction of such needs. Individuals are treated as parts of a machine rather than moral agents capable of making decisions that lead to lasting happiness.

It is all well and good to say that happiness must be pursued but that brings us back to the

question: Wherein does happiness lie? The founders gave a clue in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. "Article 3: Religion, Morality and Knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind,...". Two things should be noted here; first that our founders were concerned not only with the happiness of Americans but rather mankind in general, second that Religion Morality and Knowledge are necessary for human happiness.

The rest of this essay will further explore these three pillars of human happiness, how we got off the path leading to happiness, and how we may find the road back.

RELIGION

Following St. Augustine, the American Puritans viewed Religion as an indispensable necessity in the pursuit of happiness. This is significant because early American views on just about everything, especially religion, were largely shaped by the Puritans. It was they who founded all of the schools that educated the general population. Not everyone agreed with all of the details of Puritan Theology, but their general worldview was predominant in early America. That worldview, which formed the foundation of early American civilization and touched on all aspects of human life, was primarily rooted in the bible. Even those hostile to Puritan Theology agreed with the notion of ordering the society's public affairs according to biblical principles. Ben Franklin was generally considered to be an extremely pragmatic man who opposed much of Puritan Theology; let's see what he had to say on the subject. "Whoever will introduce into public affairs, the principles of Christianity will change the world." This is exactly what the founders had in mind. Obviously they did not intend to establish a state religion in the institutional sense. They just came from Europe and had seen the folly of such an attempt; besides to do so would have been against the principle of liberty and Biblical Christianity itself. They did however; intend to build the American government, and indeed, the entire American civilization on the principals of Biblical Christianity. What then did they consider those core principles to be? Ben Franklin had simplified the Puritan worldview to five basic points, which were held in general agreement by almost all early Americans, be they Puritan or Deist.

In a letter to Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale University, Franklin wrote: "Here is my creed. I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That he governs by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we can render to him is in doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion."

Franklin began by affirming the existence of one God, a transcendent being who created the universe. Two points are crucial here, if God created the universe, he cannot be a part of it. Secondly, the existence of a transcendent God means that the reality which we can all see, hear, feel and touch with our five physical senses, is not all that there is. This point is crucial. At issue here is the fundamental governing principle behind reality, as we know it.

When the ancient Pagans looked upon the physical universe of nature, they saw that it is ruled by force and governed by deterministic laws. The motion of the stars and all other physical entities follow pre-determined paths unless a greater force knocks them from their course. The core principle behind reality as they saw it was a fatalistic determinism which even the gods were powerless to change or escape. In such a world, choice and free will have no place. On the other hand, if reality as we know it began as a creative act of Free Will, then fatalistic determinism is not the fundamental principle upon which reality is based. Furthermore, if humans are created in the image of that creator, we possess the sacred gift of Free Will and cannot be governed by force.

This is the fundamental distinction between the Judeo-Christian based Theistic worldview and ancient Paganism, or even modern Atheism and Radical Islam. In short, if we are mere phenomenon of nature, and are not created in God's image, there is no principled basis for asserting human dignity or Free Will. Essentially, under such a scenario, the law of the jungle is the only rational principle guiding human action.

The next point that Franklin makes is that God governs by his Providence. In other words, God did not just wind up the universe like a giant watch and let it go, nor does he govern arbitrarily by whim. On the contrary, he has a definite purpose and governs according to that purpose. If we are created by God, and intend to find happiness and fulfillment in our lives, then we ought to concern ourselves with what that purpose is. The answer to this concern is in our next point. That he ought to be worshipped. This conjures up images in many of setting around and offering up sacrifices to God all the while telling him how great he is. In the meantime God is perched high on his throne coldly making judgments as to the worthiness of said sacrifices. What worship is really all about is entering into a one on one, personal relationship with God. Such a relationship is based on love. Since love can only develop when it is freely felt, humans were created with the gift of Free Will. This gift is so sacred that even God will not violate it, for without freedom, we cannot experience the loving relationship for which we were created. Of course the love of God is manifested in us as love of others. That is why the form of worship most acceptable to God is that we do good to his other CHILDREN. God considers us his children and our wellbeing is more important to him than any glory or praise we can give him. As the Bible says "We are our brother's keeper." It should be noted that we do not do good for others just to gain brownie points with God. Rather we do it out of love for others that is a reflection of God's love for them and our love for him. As Jesus himself said: "Love God above all else and love your neighbor as you MUST LOVE YOURSELF." Usually Christianity is not associated with self-love. The problem then is how do we love our neighbor if we don't love ourselves? The love of neighbor comes from self-love, which in turn comes from love of God. This should not be confused with the Pseudo self love that is nothing more than narcissism. Genuine love is self-expanding in that it prompts us to reach beyond ourselves to embrace another. Herein lies the key to the paradox of Jesus saying: "He who seeks to win his life will lose it and he who seeks to lose his life will gain it". Narcissistic self-love is self-contracting and, ultimately, self-destructive.

The love for others that humans exhibit at our best has led some to remark that man is a "Social Animal"; the most famous proponent of this idea was Aristotle. While not neglecting the social dimension of our lives, I prefer to see man as a Religious Being. Human beings are endowed with a religious impulse that drives us beyond ourselves. At some levels this impulse manifests itself in such activities as mountain climbing, or other sports. The motivation is to go beyond our natural limitations and expand those limitations. At the highest level, this impulse drives us to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of another; it is at this level which the religious impulse manifests itself as love.

Humans were meant to enter into a direct, one to one, loving relationship with God. It is for this purpose that God created, and it is for this purpose that we exist. Again, this is the reason that humans were created with Free Will. Love cannot come about as a result of force or coercion. This relationship is so important that God himself will not violate human Free Will. If he did there would be no concept of following his will, as there would be no other option. From this perspective, Liberty is a spiritual virtue as well as a political virtue. Only the individual has a soul and only the individual can enter into a loving personal relationship with God.

What does this relationship mean to man? Among the early American Puritans, Jonathan Edwards in particular, picked up on St Augustine's view of man's condition as one of being created in such a way that he seeks happiness. Happiness requires that man go beyond the natural to the supernatural. In his Confessions he wrote, "Oh God Thou hast created us for thyself so that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Similar thoughts can be found in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. That we seek happiness is a result of our incompleteness, our finitude. That we can only find ultimate happiness in God is a result of the way we are created. Man inevitably loves. To love is to go beyond oneself and to enter into union with the object of that love. This act of self-transcendence is also an act of self-expansion as such it is the foundation of all emotional, psychological and spiritual growth. In the act of sacrificial love, we go beyond the limit of self. This is the hardest limit to break of all. Again the love of God comes first. In responding to the love of God, as an act of faith, we go beyond our limit as temporal beings and embrace the transcendent. For a limited, temporal being, such an act is the most terrifying existential experience imaginable. This is something that we, as temporal beings, are not capable of doing alone. God first reaches out to us as an expression of love which Christians call "Grace". In order to complete the circle, we must respond in an act of trust, which Christians call "Faith". It is such a faith, responding to grace, which can deliver us from being torn between our finite nature and our infinite desires. The question is "How do we perceive the presence God?" As the Bible says, God speaks in a "Small and silent voice". It is often the case that we perceive God's presence in solitude and silence. Indeed, almost all the Biblical central figures had their most intense encounter with God in solitude. Abraham met with God alone out in the desert. Moses encountered God alone atop Mt. Sinai, and Jesus himself went alone out to the desert for 40 days before the start of his ministry.

What makes it inevitable that we love is, again our incompleteness. We can love things, such as, other people, our pet's etc., but we will only find ultimate rest for our heart in the love of God. This is because the capacity of man to love is infinite and the only thing that can quench infinite desire is the infinite God. In a nutshell, the religious impulse, which is a capacity that separates man from the rest of nature, is an impulse that drives us toward completion. The problem is that this impulse must be properly directed if it is not to become destructive. Again it is not wrong to love other things, it is just that we should not expect ultimate happiness from the love of other things. The love that comes the closest to ultimate fulfillment is the conjugal love between a man and a woman. As God said, "It is not good for man to remain alone." The conjugal love between man and woman creates a bond where they become one flesh. Out of this bond new life is brought about on earth. In this small way we are able to share in the miracle of creating life. Still love of God takes precedent even over conjugal love. Even more so it takes precedent over the love of the rest of the created world. As mentioned previously, the physical universe is ruled by force and governed by pre-determined laws. There is no room here for free will and choice that are so essential for a truly satisfactory experience of love. If man turns to the created world to satisfy his unquenchable passions, he will become a prisoner not only of the laws of force and determinism, but also of his own passions. It is for this reason that idolatry is the ultimate sin in the Bible. Sin as used in the Bible refers to a condition of being separated from God, or an act that separates us from God. It is idolatry that pushes us furthest from God because it redirects our love from God towards objects that can never satisfy that love. As the Apostle Paul said, "because we worshipped the creation rather than the creator, God gave us over to be slaves of our passions". The passions are not destructive in themselves, it is only when we become their slave rather than their master that they are destructive. We can only become master of our own passions when we direct our ultimate passion toward God, for only he can satisfy that passion. The satisfaction that comes from the experience when we do so is indescribable. On the other hand, we have all seen the destructive hedonistic lifestyles of those that have become slaves to their

own passions. We should not judge them but rather feel sorry for them. Such a lifestyle can only end in absolute misery. This is quite sad when God has something infinitely more fulfilling in mind for us than the momentary satisfaction that comes from sensual pleasure.

The final point is that God is concerned with how we live our life while here on earth. It is true that we have an immortal soul and look forward to a life beyond this life; but God put us here on earth for a reason. The Puritans held tightly to what was known as a “Covenantal Theology”. A covenant is a type of reciprocal relationship. As a being created in the image of God, humans were to enter into a covenant with God. In doing so we not only received great blessing but had great responsibility. It is our responsibility to make God’s image manifest in our lives and it was God's intention that we exercise dominion over the earth in much the same way a gardener cares for his garden. This means that we are to develop our God given potential to its fullest. In order to properly manifest the image of God in us and to claim dominion over creation we will have to accomplish two things; dominion over ourselves, and loving relationships with others. The principles that we need to adhere to in order to accomplish these two things are summed up in what we call morality.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that Franklin considered these five points to be “the fundamental points in all sound religion”. Though he arrived at these points from a Biblical perspective, they were considered universal religious principles, which apply to all regardless of religious affiliation.

MORALITY

For Edwards and the Puritans, morality was not something separate from religion. Morality is simply the practical application, in this life of the second half of Jesus' admonishment to love God above all else and love our neighbor as we must love ourselves. As St. Paul said, we are the temples of God and God's spirit dwells within us. We act morally when we manifest the spirit of God that dwells within us. If morality consists of loving our neighbor as we must love ourselves, then it can be said that morality is concerned with self-dominion and our relationship with others. Again we cannot fulfill God's blessing to have dominion over the entire creation unless we first obtain a certain degree of self-dominion and loving relationships with others. Let us first look at the idea of self-dominion. This concept is expressed in two principles that are deeply rooted in Christian tradition and the American founding. Those principles are personal responsibility and self-reliance. In particular we are to be masters of our passions rather than letting them master us. In addition to that, as much as possible, we should provide our own needs. As St. Paul say, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." In 1 Thessalonians 9:11-12, he also says, "...to work with your hands, as we charged you; so that you may command the respect of others, and be dependant on nobody." St Paul is not trying to be cruel here, he is aware that human nature is such that we need to strive to overcome challenges and emerge victorious in order to obtain happiness. Besides that, we cannot be of service to our fellow man if we are in a relationship based on dependency, mutual co-operation yes, dependency no. When you provide for someone without that person expending any effort or taking any responsibility for himself you do injury to that person's soul. The modern Welfare State is actually damaging to an individual's sense of personal responsibility, and thus their self-respect. A mature self reliant, personally responsible individual is ready to enter into fruitful relationships with others. Again, our relationship with others is a reflection of our relationship with God. This notion was worked out in great detail by the Puritans' in their “Covenantal Theology”. They believed that the bible laid out the basic principles of everything we do, from personal devotion to economics and politics. In short, they did not separate the sacred from the secular; all of human life was of concern to God. Let us now look at the nature of

human relationships.

The cornerstone of all human relationships, and indeed human civilization itself, is the conjugal relationship between a man and a woman. Next to a relationship with God, no other relationship is as fulfilling or as crucial to human happiness. Let us turn for a minute to the writings of Jonathan Edwards to find out why. To love is to go beyond oneself and enter into union with the object of that love. What makes it inevitable that man loves is his finitude or incompleteness. Again ultimate completeness can only be found in God, but a certain degree of relative completeness can be found in the love between a man and a woman. Men and women are created as polar opposites, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. It is for this reason that they complete one another. It is out of this special relationship that new life is brought into the world. The unity of opposites to bring about development is a universal law. We see it reflected at the elemental level when positively charged particles combine with negatively charged particles to form an atom. This holds true from atoms all the way up to the human family. Any society that wants to develop and avoid destruction will put a high value on the two-parent family. One thing we all have in common is that we were all born of a father and a mother. Keeping that situation intact is crucial to the development of children as well as the health of society. The family is the place where most needs are met that an individual is unable to meet alone, be they physical, emotional or spiritual. In particular, the family should be the main institution responsible for the education and religious upbringing of children, for it is the only organic and permanent institution. Since humans are religious beings, we often group together to share our religious experiences, beliefs, and desire to provide loving care for one another. Churches and other religious institutions have as their main function fellowship and religious instruction. They are, however the main source of care for the needy who are unable to care for themselves and have no family to do so. Next to the family, they are also the primary source of education in our society. Historically churches have founded relief agencies whose main function was to help the poor. It must be remembered that religious people founded Yale, Harvard, and all other schools in early America for a religious purpose. Families, Churches and other religious institutions are part of what we call "Civil Society". The institutions of Civil Society vital to a healthy society because they preserve and promote the moral principles that are a result of the religious encounter. It is these moral principles that act as a "cultural consensus", which hold society together. To get a good understanding of the role the institutions of civil society played in sustaining America's experiment in ordered liberty, one should read "Democracy in America" by Alexis de Tocqueville.

Since it is not possible for an individual or even a family to produce all that they want by themselves, we often come together to buy or trade for items that some one else has produced. This activity forms what we call the marketplace. When free individuals come together to engage in economic activity without the interference of an outside force, we have what is known as Free Market Economics. This arrangement has been proven time and time again to be the most efficient economic relationship man has conceived of. This is so because it is the only economic relationship that puts human free will first. The Free Market economic system has been criticized by some as immoral. This shows just a little bit of ignorance. No economic system is immoral or moral; only individuals are moral agents. The question is which economic system coincides best with the nature of free individuals. The answer has been proven countless times throughout history. Another name for Free Market Economics is Capitalism. This name has been a source of confusion for many. Capital is the material that runs an economic system. In the socialist view, most prominently represented by Karl Marx, capital is physical raw material such as goods or money. In this view, because there is only a limited amount of resources to go around, then one person's gain is another's loss. The focus of socialist economic systems is usually distribution.

The idea being that if someone does not redistribute a society's resources, many will go without. The ones who usually do the distributing are central government bureaucrats. Needless to say, their knowledge of economics is less than perfect. This view may sound compelling to some until the alternative is presented. In the Capitalist view, physical raw material is not the main source of capital, but rather, human creativity. Physical raw materials may be limited but human creativity is not. Creative entrepreneurs can use raw material in an ever-increasing quantity and quality. Here the power of human liberty is clearly demonstrated. What's more, if an exchange is voluntary, one person's gain is not necessarily another's lost. In fact, if we are left free to make our own choices, an exchange is not likely to take place unless it benefits both parties. The focus of economic activity in the free market is not distribution, but production and the agent of economic activity is the entrepreneur, rather than the government bureaucrat.

Because of human sin, we are not always able to control our passions and do not always act in a loving way to our neighbor. As a matter of fact human history has been one of violence. If we are to achieve true happiness, then we must ensure our safety. The main way to do this is to form an institution that restrains us from doing harm to one another. This institution is called Government. Government is the main institution in which free individuals engage in political relations with one another. The form of government chosen by the American founders is a democratic Republic. The legitimate powers of government rest on "...the consent of the governed." Even such a government can become a threat to our liberties if we forget its purpose. As St Paul said the function of the State is to bear the sword in order to be a terror to the evil-doer. Augustine saw the state as a product of man's sinful nature, and conceded to the state the right to use force in order to restrain us from doing harm to each other as did Jonathan Edwards. The second century Christian thinker Tertullian was even more wary of the state. He saw it as born in the act of conquest and gave no legitimacy to it at all. For him, the state was more likely to be used by the evil-doer as a terror to the innocent and righteous. In ancient Israel, at the time of the Judges, there was no formal state. The Israelites were informally ruled as a loose coalition of family based tribes. Sometimes "Judges" would appear to call the people back to the "Law of Moses", but such figures had no institutional authority beyond the recognition on the part of the people that these figures spoke for God. Many of the early Pilgrims and Puritans saw themselves as a second Israel and patterned their communities after the example of the ancient Israelites at the time of the judges. (Before they made the grave error of demanding that a King be chosen to rule over them) This skeptical approach to allowing the state to accumulate too much power was evident when our founders drafted the Constitution. It was for this reason that they put so many restraints on government power in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Even such restraints were considered not enough by some who were labeled "Anti-Federalists". They predicted that the restraints would be insufficient in the long run to curb the appetite for power that sinful man has. Perhaps their perception turned out to be a bit prophetic.

KNOWLEDGE

Education was considered of crucial importance to the Puritans as a tool that allows us to engage in the pursuit of truth and manifest the excellence and beauty of God. The relationship between knowledge on one hand, and religion and morality on the other, has been greatly misunderstood throughout history. The historical conflicts between faith and reason, or religion and science make one wonder if the two ideals are not mutually exclusive. When one looks a little deeper, it is discovered that knowledge and Biblical religion are inseparable. It is no accident that the greatest advances in scientific discovery occurred in civilizations with a cultural foundation based on the Bible. The reason for this is that the Bible emphasizes the blessing by God, for Man to

gain dominion over the creation. The scientific mindset could not have developed in cultures that are based in nature worship. The scientific method is a result of an attitude toward nature that is rooted in a concept of dominion.

On the other hand, it is impossible for Man to realize the blessing of dominion without knowledge. As God lamented in the Bible, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." Again, the Puritan approach to education was to see it as a tool by which truth may be pursued and dominion exercised. The knowledge required for the realization of the blessing of dominion, is broad and concerned with all aspects of human life from Theology and Philosophy, to Science and Mathematics, to History and such social sciences as Economics. A well-rounded education will touch on all these aspects of the quest for truth, for knowledge is nothing more than the means by which we seek truth.

Other sources of inspiration that early Americans looked to were the Classical Societies of Greece and Rome. That is why early American education was heavily invested in learning classical literature and the languages of Latin and Greek. Like the Greeks of ancient Athens, Americans viewed education as a path to the pursuit of happiness, or excellence. Formal schooling might play some role in education, but its role was limited. In his book "The Underground History of American Education" former New York State and New York City Teacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto mentions another book by Kenneth Freeman entitled "The Schools of Hellas". Freeman wrote the book in 1907 as a way of searching for the hidden genius of Greece in its schools. He concluded his unique study with this summary, "*There were no schools in Hellas.*" Gatto further comments:

"No place boys and girls spent their youth attending continuous instruction under command of strangers. Indeed, nobody did homework in the modern sense; none could be located on standardized tests. The tests that mattered came in living, striving to meet ideals that local tradition imposed. The word sköle itself means leisure, leisure in a formal garden to think and reflect. Plato in The Laws is the first to refer to school as learned discussion." ...

"The idea of schooling free men in anything would have revolted Athenians. Forced training was for slaves. Among free men, learning was self-discipline, not the gift of experts. From such notions Americans derived their own academies, the French their lycees, and the Germans their gymnasium. Think of it: In Athens, instruction was unorganized even though the city-state was surrounded by enemies and its own society engaged in the difficult social experiment of sustaining a participatory democracy, extending privileges without precedent to citizens, and maintaining literary, artistic, and legislative standards which remain to this day benchmarks of human genius. For its five-hundred-year history from Homer to Aristotle, Athenian civilization was a miracle in a rude world; teachers flourished there but none was grounded in fixed buildings with regular curricula under the thumb of an intricately layered bureaucracy.

There were no schools in Hellas. For the Greeks, study was its own reward. Beyond that few cared to go."

This was an approach that prevailed in much of early American as well. When schools were provided, they were usually run by churches or religious societies. Early Americans, like the Greeks of ancient Athens, did not equate education with schooling.

Earlier, the Northwest Ordinance was quoted to establish the fact that the founders considered Religion Morality and Knowledge to be necessary for happiness. This was expressed in article 3. Article 3 was a section of the Ordinance that encouraged schools to be established. In this article, it was suggested that the purpose of schools was to teach Religion, Morality, and Knowledge because they were necessary to happiness and good government. The next section will explore how we got so far off the path that the founders laid down. In that section it will be discovered that a large part of the problem was the shift in the purpose of education as a tool for the human pursuit of happiness to a tool used to socialize people to fit into someone collectivists view of utopia.

GETTING OFF THE PATH

By now it should be clear that America's founders inherited their worldview from Biblical Christianity. The central fact in Christian thought, like classical Greek and Hebrew thought, is that there is a reality, which transcends the natural world of our five physical senses. For the Jews and Christians, at the center of this reality is the creator and sustainer of reality itself, God. Man is a being with both a spirit and a body, our sense of identity, or soul, is shaped by interaction through body and spirit with both levels of reality. It is this ability to interact with the transcendent that separates us from the rest of creation. Indeed, it is from the spiritual aspect of our nature that we have free will. As was mentioned earlier, the material world is governed by force and ruled by per-determined laws. Human rights and dignity come from our ability to enter into a one on one, personal relationship with a being who transcends the mere physical world.

The above view was the fundamental ideological basis for western society. By its very nature, religion deals with the mysterious aspect of reality. Intellectuals of the classical era appreciated mystery and realized that some of the most profound questions were not reducible to rational analysis. As Blaise Pascal has said, “The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of. “ As the scientific method became dominant in western society, a growing number of intellectuals came to be uncomfortable with answers that could not be reduced to phenomenon observable via the scientific method. The result was a view that saw religion as a primitive superstition and the notion of God as a pious fairy tale. Human existence came to be seen merely to be a result of random evolution through the mechanism of natural selection. This combination led to the destruction of any distinction between man and animals. In time, there appeared ideologies that challenged this consensus by denying the very ideas that formed its core. These ideologies had varied names, Dialectical Materialism, Positivism, Naturalism, etc. The one thing they all had in common was the rejection of the notion of a reality that transcends the natural world, or the idea that there are fixed moral principles rooted in human nature. Next we will explore the consequences of adapting such ideas in place of the previously mentioned consensus.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche referred to this cultural shift in worldviews as the “Death of God” and saw it as inaugurating an era of Nihilism, or sense of purposelessness. According to Nietzsche, if this is what people will be asked to believe, then nobody should be surprised if in the arena of the future there will be wars such has never been seen before. Nietzsche, as an atheist, did not advocate a return to classical theism, but looked forward to the rise of the “Urbemensch”, or Superman who, unburdened by conventional Judeo-Christian morality, would be motivated solely by the “Will to Power” and impose his will on others.

In addition to Nietzsche, another major figure in the assault on classical Theism was Karl Marx. Both Marx and Nietzsche were militant atheists and passionately anti-Christian. They vigorously rejected the existence of God or an absolute moral code. As mentioned earlier, when the existence

of a transcendent reality is rejected, the only governing principle left is force and determinism. It should come as no surprise then what they both based their philosophies on. Marx once said: "Force is the midwife of every society pregnant with a new one." Nietzsche rejected the Christian ideal of "Love thy neighbor" as slave morality. He opted instead for what he called "Master Morality", for him the essence of reality was a will to power. Ultimately any thought system, explicitly or implicitly, based on force, will turn to the state to implement its ideas. Again the state is the only institution in society that is based on the justified use of force. In addition such thought systems will always end up in collectivism. The reason for this is that if you deny the basis of human free will and with it our essential individuality, we are reduced to becoming cogs in a big machine. The result of such an approach being a society that cannot deal with people as individuals, and therefore has no regard for individual rights. The fruits of Marxism were seen in Soviet Communism, while the fruits of Nietzsche's Nihilism can be seen in Nazism. While some contend that those two societies did not implement the ideas of Marx or Nietzsche faithfully, the reality is that Nazism and Soviet Communism are the end result of taking such ideas to their fullest logical conclusions. It is crucial that we recognize the link between ideas and their real world consequences, because a lot of suffering and misery in the world is the result of the well-intentioned application of some bad ideas. Indeed it may be said that most of the current social and political problems that the world faces today are the result of the application of bad ideas.

America itself is not immune to the fate of the former U.S.S.R., or Nazi Germany. In 1944, a man named Friedrich A. Hayek wrote a book entitled "The Road to Serfdom", in this book he argued that the path, which led the German's to the point of Nazism, was collectivism. It must be remembered that before Hitler came to power, Germany was a Republic and a center of much learning. The problem was that the learning was of the wrong ideas. Hayek argues that the other western countries are heading down the same road to serfdom as Germany traveled, only slower. This may seem ridiculous to some, but if one reads "The Closing of the American Mind" by Alan Bloom, we see that the ideas of Marx and Nietzsche are akin to Gospel among the elites who teach at America's Universities. The idea of a creator God or a transcendent reality is looked upon as an outdated relic of the dark ages by the leaders of our institutions of higher learning. Even more alarming is that the idea of moral absolutes is looked upon as dangerous to tolerance. Moral relativism is thought to be the basis of a tolerant, democratic society; and it is up to the high priests of the educational establishment to lead us out of the dark ages into a more tolerant, democratic world.

The ideas that were brewing in the universities finally broke out into the society at large in the 1960's. Moral relativism spread quickly through our society undermining the principles that were once considered to be indispensable to human happiness. Delaying gratification, along with personal responsibility and self-discipline were out. Conjugal love and the mutual responsibility that it implies were replaced with pure sexual pleasure. Personal responsibility gave way to a mentality of entitlement. The virtue of hard work and the satisfaction of overcoming obstacles to achieve success gave way to whining about being "victims of society". Even the idea of free will is under attack. Increasingly behavior traits are seen as biologically, sociologically or economically determined. Without a set of common moral principles to hold us together, our society is slowly segregating into warring factions. In addition, as the ideal of personal responsibility and self-reliance weakens, we turn to the state as the provider of our security. This trend is reinforced by our educational institutions' promotion of what is called "Multiculturalism", which is really just a cultural version of Marxist collectivism. A loving community of independent individuals is replaced with a mosaic of groups in conflict with one another. The difference is that the current reigning philosophy of "Post Modernism" has not only rejected the Theist worldview, but rationalism and any other view that purports to pursue the

truth. In this view, there is no absolute truth, but merely a jockeying for power among various interest groups.

Such views were birthed in our institutions of higher learning, but have filtered down through our whole culture to the point where it dominates just about all mediums of culture, from the media to the entertainment industry. Indeed, our education system itself underwent a drastic shift in its fundamental purpose. Education, which was once about the human pursuit of happiness and personal excellence, has shifted to a focus on socialization aimed at fitting people neatly as cogs in a collectivist utopian machine. Former New York State and New York City Teacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto outlines this shift in his book “The Underground History of American Education”.

There is an old saying that “Ideas Have Consequences”. In the case of rejecting the Judeo-Christian based Theistic view of human nature, that saying has been right on target. Not only has Nietzsche’s prophesy about “wars such has never been seen before” come true, but a whole host of problems have reared their heads as well, just as we have conquered other problems. Let us return to the Commission Report to examine some of these problems.

In the first half of the 20th Century, infectious disease epidemics, infant mortality, and poor nutrition were the primary causes of child morbidity and mortality. Since WWII these problems have become significantly less prevalent in Western child and adolescent populations: Physical health and living conditions have improved, vaccination rates are up, and infant and youth death rates have dropped.

At the same time, numerous surveys of child well being suggest that psychological problems, drug addiction, suicide and violence have increased significantly among young people during these same decades.

In short, while we have made progress toward solving problems related to economic and material conditions, we have lost ground in the area of emotional and psychological health. The conclusion of the Commission Report is that the increases of such problems are a result of the breakdown of connections with a transcendent sense of morality and purpose and with “Authoritative” communities. (The report differentiates between Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive communities)

Paradoxically, the path we are on robs us of both community and individuality. If we continue to ignore the fundamental principles upon which this country was founded; and go on trading genuine individualism with collectivism and essential liberty for government provided security, we will end up with neither liberty nor security, and certainly not happiness. Now let us turn to how we may get onto the road back.

THE ROAD BACK

By now it should be clear that we are in a conflict of visions with Radical Islam over the nature of the relationship between God and man and the role that freedom plays in that relationship. Radical Islam offers its supporters a comprehensive vision which addresses the basic human need for connection to a transcendent sense of meaning and purpose and to authoritative communities which pass on that sense of meaning and purpose. If we are to prevail in this struggle, we must offer a more compelling vision. I have touched on the historical fact that the western ideal of

ordered liberty has roots in Judeo-Christian principles. It is the abandonment of these principles and the secularization of society which has left a spiritual vacuum that radical Islam has been filling. Before we are going to be capable of engaging Radical Islam in this conflict of ideas, we need to prevail in a struggle within western civilization on the nature of man and the principle foundation upon which our freedom rests. It is no longer credible to go on believing that a secularized vision of society is capable of answering the challenges to our freedom that we now face.

The aforementioned Report to the Nation from the Commission of Children at Risk suggests that the solution to our current crises is to rebuild Authoritative communities. The starting point of such an attempt would be to revitalize the central institution of any society: The Traditional Family.

While agreeing with that assessment, I would like to suggest that it would only be possible in the larger context of restoring a culture which has a healthy respect for the Judeo-Christian based Theistic view of our essential nature as that of a religious being. Doing so would mean engaging our various cultural institutions on the role of religion in human fulfillment and to bring such a dialogue back into the public square.

The real battle here is for the one of ideas and values, in such a struggle, passing legislation and engaging in political activism is of lesser use than working to restore the institutions of Civil Society. In fact, seeking a political solution to every problem can serve merely to aggravate such problems by squeezing out the institution of Civil Society as government bureaucracies usurp their role by assuming responsibility for problems that only Civil Society can address. Not only does the expansion of political society usurp the role of Civil Society but also it drains vital resources, which a local community needs to support itself. This battle concerns our understanding of human nature and the nature of reality in general. If we start with a false understanding of these crucial subjects, then any attempt to secure liberty or pursue happiness is in vein. Central to that battle is the question of the existence of a transcendent God and a set of fixed moral principles based in human nature. America's cultural institutions are thoroughly saturated with the dangerous philosophy of moral relativism. As was stated earlier, such an idea is incapable of sustaining a free society. Notions such as tolerance, respect for the rights of others, liberty and compassion are moral virtues. In a society based on moral relativism, there is no justifiable reason why any of these virtues need be taken seriously. This is precisely the path that Germany was on intellectually prior to the rise of Hitler.

The first step for any concerned citizen is to become informed and network with other like-minded groups. The real work is in our institutions of culture. These are the institutions that spread ideas and values in the society as a whole. The chief institution of culture is, of course, the family. It is here where the battle is the most intense. Other institutions are the church, schools, news media and the entertainment industry. Any attempt to reverse the moral rot in this country, must begin by the taking back of these institutions. Let one thing be perfectly clear, taking back these institutions DOES NOT mean lobbying politically to have the government force them to be run the way we would like them to. Statism is the refuge of those who base their philosophies on force. The state is predicated on the use of force and as such should only be used to protect us from the unlawful use of force. Even this task is often better left to institutions that have no monopoly on the use of force. Once such power is granted to a single institution, it is close to impossible to keep it in check over the long run.

Religious people founded America's cultural institutions for a religious purpose. Harvard, Yale,

and indeed our entire education system were founded by as institutions of religious instruction. Next to the family and church, the institutions of learning are perhaps the most important factor shaping a culture. When families and churches conceded the responsibility to educate their children to the state, they guaranteed that in the long run, they would lose control over the content of education. In fact, it is the transferring of responsibility from families, churches and other institutions of civil society to the state that is the reason for most of the loss of religious influence in our culture. Education, welfare, and every other social function have to be taken back from the state and returned to the institutions of civil society. Instead of whining about the loss of religious liberty, today's churches should be concerned with reclaiming their responsibilities in society. If they were to do this, the violation of religious rights would be a thing of the past. We must remember that there is an inseparable link between rights and responsibilities. Most of the work has to be organized at the grassroots level, precinct by precinct. As neighborhood self help centers are established, we must phase out the welfare state. Taxes should remain in the private sector instead of being sent to Washington D.C. where they trickle down through the hands of countless bureaucrats, and finally, roughly 30 cents of every dollar actually goes to a welfare recipient. Worse than the gross inefficiency, is the insidious form of spiritual slavery that the welfare system promotes.

In looking at education reform, we need to return to the purpose of education mentioned earlier. Early American education was aimed at preparing individuals to engage in the human pursuit of happiness in its broadest sense. Our modern education system is more geared at "socializing" us to fit into a socio-political collective. Fortunately for us, breaking the current government run educational monopoly is being aided by the new technologies. We live in an age of communication; this gives us whole new ways in which to promote ideas. The communication age is already revolutionizing corporations. It is now possible to have your office right in your home. This is called the virtual office. The amount of money saved on office space is just one advantage. Imagine applying this idea to education. Why can we not create virtual classrooms? Schooling as we now know it would be a thing of the past. If we were not spending so much money on buildings, we could educate all of the children in America at a fraction of the cost that we now pay for that poor excuse that we call education.

Likewise the publishing and broadcasting industries are going to be severely challenged by the emerging technologies. Anyone concerned with the war of ideas that we are now in should make it a point to master these technologies. This is how we can do an end run around the cultural elite that insists on spreading the poisonous notion of moral relativism.

Of course, the above-mentioned reforms would be a lot of hard work but that is the price of freedom.

"Personal Responsibility is the Price of Freedom"
Robert Maynard