

Aphorisms and Letters

The Grand Experiment—What Went Wrong?

A Layman's Interpretation

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General Albert C. Wedenmeyer (Wedenmeyer Reports) remarked, "one often hears individuals state that they want good government; but many seem primarily concerned with security, material rewards, power, prestige, recreation and entertainment rather than with their responsibilities as citizen." This book, written in Streams of Consciousness, will hopefully provide some notable examples of what he meant. It is a collection of my personal thoughts and opinions ranging in scope covering religion, politics, parenting, philosophy, social issues, immigration, corporations and history. My goal is to provoke critical thinking in an individual who is persistently directed with sound bites on how to think from all fronts. Consequences can be devastating when decisions are made without relevant facts. Hopefully this book will provide some insight to the reader from a layman's point of view.

"Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking".

—John Maynard Keynes

Preface

I make no pretense at being a scholar. My formal studies, by conventional standards, are considered average. Although I never distinguished myself in the classroom, I have a great respect for learning and learned individuals as well as knowledge for its own inestimable value. What follows are not so casual opinions and observations of some of the daunting issues confronting this troubled nation that I believe is in a rapid state of (moral) decline. Whether such impressions appear plausible, I will leave to the reader's discretion. Should the ideas presented in these pages be received by some degree of skepticism, then I consider this humble endeavor worthy of my efforts. My main purpose in writing this "book", aside from wanting to leave something behind, was to encourage people to think critically about things. We are a nation that has grown complacent in its social and political outlook and interactions with other people; progressively exhausted by material dynamics, that many of us have forgotten how to properly question or doubt, for that matter, which is oftentimes the case when a nation has grown at "ease" with itself. I believe that America's (increasingly) lax moral attitudes are placing the nation on the brink of national suicide. What sets this nation apart from the "inevitable" decline of other great nations, however, is that no other nation has ever purposely promoted its own self-destruction! At no other time in recorded history has a nation's internalized sense of guilt dominated its social and political thinking; never a collective desire to purge itself of self-fabricated guilt complexes whose origins are, more often than not, imaginary rather than real. We, as a people, have devolved into groveling apologists for such remarkable achievements otherwise perceived by the historically illiterate as the product of wicked or contentious designs; in a word, we are seeking redemption for being a great nation. The path of least resistance, it seems, lies in undermining the customs and traditions of time-honored institutions that (once) made many of us proud Americans. I dedicate this book of ideas to family and friends, living and deceased, whose thought provoking insights provided the material for expressing such opinions as I understand them. I wish to especially thank my wife Rose for her untiring support and patience during some rather trying moments. Whether I have offended any individual or group, such was not my intention. I too, am conditioned by what I believe. In the final analysis, I am an average man of ordinary talents who is trying to make a difference in his own way inasmuch as my (meager) abilities will allow.

Alipio Baldi

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Chapter 1

The Wilderness 1992 - 1995

Our lives are not segmented however parts of a continuous whole united with our past which explains, perhaps, inasmuch as events change they remain (intrinsically) the same.

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Mr. Clinton, the "Manchurian Candidate," along with his Bolshevik wife, in what should soon prove to be a co-presidency, appear determined to kick establishment opinion in the groin. He (Mr. Clinton) seems to have a talent for dissimulation. President Bush, who is basically a good man, if anything else, is overmatched and overconfident. His overbearing complacency will mark his defeat come November. Perot, on the other hand, is a pretentious gadfly, albeit a wealthy one, determined to embarrass the president at whatever cost to his immense fortune. I believe that he will be somewhat of a factor in the upcoming election and should siphon a sizable portion of the popular vote, although I suspect his votes will have a negligible impact on the Electoral College.

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The rising crime rate remains a hot button issue with each party pointing the finger of blame at the other. The exponential increase in felonious crime (396 percent since 1960) covering the last eight (8) presidencies begs the question, which party stands accused of benign (urban) neglect that has reduced America's once thriving metropolitan centers to urban playgrounds and sandboxes? Although poverty has certainly been a contributing factor to our nation's urban malaise, it doesn't completely define the phenomenon. From an economic standpoint, even the poorest segments of society are incomparably better off financially than at the turn of the last century. The problem as I see it centers on rising expectations. Wholesale improvement in our (collective) standard of living has failed to keep pace with our insatiable appetites driven less by what we lack or perceive is lacking rather than an envious desire of having what other people have for the sake of having it. In addition, our collective failure to properly distinguish between equality of opportunity and equality of results has produced an entitlement mindset. Everything else being equal, differences in aptitude and talent, motivation, values and (ingrained) habits, health or the lack of, not to mention accident and chance are all contributing factors to financial success. Finally, there exist among us incorrigibles; so-called enemies of society; sociopaths who commit acts of wanton violence not for (economic) gain but rather for perverse enjoyment. This last group, in particular, appears to be growing at an alarming rate.

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The expression "Tickle Down Economics" has come under assault in recent years by liberal economists and socialists of a Keynesian persuasion as "pernicious" to the functioning of a well ordered society. It is often referred to by its liberal critics as "Voodoo Economics" although I cannot possibly imagine how any clear-thinking individual could possibly argue against economic policies that have occasioned ninety-six months of unprecedented (economic) growth and the return of economic prosperity after nearly two decades of high inflation and unemployment. I suppose it all depends on one's point of view. Nevertheless, there remain skeptics among us, including, unfortunately, so-called moderates who (should) know better but, for expediency sake, are hoping to score political points by maintaining that our thriving economy has left far too many people behind and that the "poorer" classes continue expanding at an "unprecedented" rate, with the more militant among them continue equating our nation's economic climate with the Great Depression. Such hysteria fails to refute what recent experience has confirmed: that a (far) greater number of people embracing a variety of individuals and (ethnic) groups are presently enjoying the highest standard of living in nearly two decades. The poor, of course, will always be among us. The emphasis on a sound economic policy, however, should be on Movement. Statistical measurements are merely snapshots in time of individuals or individuals falling within certain groups (or classes) at a fixed point in time (and space). Statistics, properly understood, are constant, although the essential "components" of statistical measurements, considered separately, oftentimes vary. Everything else being equal, an individual or an individual within a certain group (or class) who is poor, however defined, at a given point in time, like today for example, may not necessarily be classified as poor next year or next month or next week or tomorrow for that matter as the (economic) condition of that particular individual or individual within a certain group (or class) will generally vary over time. Economic indicators report raw data, such as the unemployment rate at a particular point in time. These indicators neither measure movement nor track the (economic) success of a particular individual or an individual falling within a certain group (or class) at a certain point in time. That is to say, these indicators do not necessarily measure the same people at different points of time in their lives but rather extract abstracts of such people understood in terms of (statistical) numbers. They oftentimes fail to account for individuals or individuals within a certain group (or class) who have risen above their present economic condition superseded by others. In this manner, it could be argued that statistical methods measure individuals or individuals within a certain group (or class) at a fixed point in time however do not necessarily measure movement as it relates to time and space; that is to say; they do not measure the same people at different points in their lives. Therefore, immigrants, for example, entering the country in search of economic opportunity, or those lacking skills and/or formal education are likely to be situated among the lower social and economic strata. Whether an individual chooses to live as a member of his or her own ethnic group or (or class) or as an outsider among members of another (ethnic) group is irrelevant. The greatest number, however, must invariably gravitate towards the lowest (economic and social) stratum. In time however, given a proper work ethic coupled with favorable economic opportunities, most should improve their social and economic standing. Economic assimilation, if history is any indication, has been a brilliant success in light of the many people from various ethnic backgrounds and races who continue to migrate to our shores either as individuals or as individuals within a certain group (or class) in search of a better life for themselves and their families. We should have cause for alarm, however, if over an indefinite period of time, the same individual or individual within a certain group (or class) were locked-in a cycle of poverty without recourse to a better life, which appears to be the case with some groups. This anomaly, however, should be considered a by-product of social engineering courtesy of big government beginning with the Great Society which I will treat later on.

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How unfortunate that life is not (immediately) self-correcting and that many of us must often suffer the inevitable consequences of our own determinate actions or non-actions as the case may be. When we are willing to learn from our mistakes, however, and become a better person as a result of our experience, perhaps our oversights and/or lapses in judgment will have hopefully served some useful purpose.

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I would like to say a word or two about term limits. Troubling as the continuation of mediocre leadership in government may seem to some of us, should a politically capable and talented individual, who has diligently pursued and honestly fulfilled the requirements of political office, be compelled to relinquish his or her seat by the imperatives of arbitrary laws rather than by free elections? Should individuals who have (consistently) demonstrated high moral character, generosity and (political) courage be held to the same standard(s) as another individual who is (either) morally or intellectually unfit for public office or has (otherwise) disgraced such

privileges? It would seem that at a time in our nation's history when our (personal) liberties are coming under assault, we shouldn't be quick to surrender our elective privileges which arguably keep us one step ahead of Big Brother.

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Unless I am interpreting events incorrectly, principles often seem to define the national debate while wallets typically underscore (parochial) points of view.

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Our need to preserve our moral purpose, when unsupported by an uncertain future seeks its assurances in the past.

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Political Correctness has undermined social relationships subjecting prospective friendships to litmus testing including, for example, what a person eats, drinks or, whether that person, heaven forbid, either smokes or consumes alcohol, thereby determining the suitability of forging (potential) friendships.

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The achieving of one's fullest potential is the ultimate "becoming"

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The willingness to endure (spiritual) hardship paves the road to "becoming" .

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Dignity neither indulges in Self-Pity nor receives Indulgences.

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A thought about appeasement as it relates to Tyrants: Tyrants are unappeasable.

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Childish Behavior is a by-product of stunted (emotional) development. Childlike Behavior, on the other hand, is the offspring of joyful innocence.

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Judge what is; more so that which (is) seeks to become.

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Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I believe, was genuinely concerned about the welfare of our nation. In retrospect, the New Deal, dismissed by many of its critics as an (economic) failure, nevertheless provided some measure of comfort and relief to people who needed it most. Providence, it seems, has a way of summoning the services of political and social "visionaries", (however) distinguished, suited to the requirements of the times. FDR may have been such a man. (Ronald Reagan was certainly another) The 1930's were unusual times for our nation that required extraordinary measures to soften the effects of an Economic Depression triggered by intemperate (market) speculation and a prevailing sense of continuing prosperity that eventually humbled the global economy and brought it to a grinding halt. Roosevelt's New Deal, sought to restore dignity to the jobless and homeless. Implicit in its designs were monetary provisions in exchange for profitable work, a concept that has become conspicuously absent in today's welfare environment. Prior to Roosevelt's hard shift to the Left, a decision encouraged by his socialist advisors and political critics who argued that the program's initiatives weren't going far enough or reaching enough people, FDR, political realist that he was, understood the inherent limitations of Public Works conceived as a stopgap until authentic pro-growth measures would begin to weigh in and hasten economic recovery. He understood the importance of self-reliance and the inevitability that some people would (necessarily) lag behind because of (their) essential failings (if not the failings of the programs themselves, problematic in the eyes of many economic conservatives which is not the central issue here). Nevertheless, FDR sought to provide the greatest good for the greatest number while drawing a distinction between those seeking employment and the chronically unemployed. However sincere his intentions, his economic agenda would unwittingly lay the groundwork for the Welfare State including the trappings consistent with social engineering.

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America's population at around the time of the Second World War was somewhere in the neighborhood of 135 million people. That number has steadily increased to 275 million. It seems that in whatever manner our nation tries to (efficiently) manage its diminishing resources, the continual rise in underemployment (as opposed to unemployment) is gradually reaching a "saturation point" were (the) confluence of population growth and (the) concomitant requirements for job creation is hastening diminishing returns.

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The "Democratic Coalition" of the 1930s consisted of Labor, Farmers, Catholics and Immigrants, among other groups. Principled Democrats that many of them were, each group endeavored, through hard work and self-sacrifice, to assimilate into the American Mainstream with the hope of obtaining their "fair" share of the American Dream. This, in sharp contrast with what nowadays is

commonly referred to as the “Rainbow Coalition” of disgruntled factions who are seeking to reconstruct society in a manner that accommodates their (own) private entitlement agenda. For such groups, the Common Good remains secondary to their own specific “needs” at the cost of undermining the creditable standards of a generous nation whose historical mission has been to provide economic opportunities for all its citizens.

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Homosexuality was once considered an aberrant form of behavior. Nowadays, it is generally considered an “alternative lifestyle”. This “progressive” change in attitude may be construed as the touchstone of a society which has either “grown” or is morally regressing.

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Limousine philanthropists and liberal do-gooders are “ardently” committed to the welfare of “Humankind” in an abstract manner whose “good works” are oftentimes a calling of the Mind rather than the Heart; performed with an arrogant affectation of immediate purpose that serves in reinforcing one’s own good opinion inspired by an egregious sense of their (own) “lofty” morals and principals.

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I am not necessarily opposed to unconventional or controversial methods as they (otherwise) relate to teaching provided that students are allowed sufficient latitude in making informed and reasonable decisions and that our schools and teachers seek to promote (intellectual) balance rather than reinforce a decidedly left-leaning social and political agenda. It is one thing to teach and another to influence susceptible young minds that haven’t yet obtained (sufficient) insight to alternative viewpoints. I am especially troubled by the increasing number of schools that, rather than inspire provocative thinking, seek to advance (pre-packaged) ideas.

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Multiculturalism does not enjoy the support of homogeneously minded individuals nor is this situation likely to change within the foreseeable future. Racial and Ethnic Integration, whether circumstantial or determined, is more likely to achieve a greater level of acceptance among contrasting types when left to their own devices because the act of (coming) together in this manner is perceived as a question of choice. Desegregation, on the other hand, is a coercive (political) action imposed upon unwilling individuals or groups by (judicial) fiat. The compulsory assimilation of diverse groups (against their will) possessing different values, customs, habits and points of view must inevitably promote resentment among individuals who perceive each other differently.

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“Forced Busing” has not only inconvenienced families and communities alike, but its stated mission, since its inception, has fallen short of its intended designs. Its time, I believe, has finally passed. Government has endeavored to create a level playing field by relocating children from inner-city neighborhoods to “better” schools located in suburban communities. The fact of the matter is that many of the children involved in this “quixotic” attempt at achieving higher academic performance were unprepared for the (immediate) challenges facing them. A number of above average schools had to compromise academic standards in order to accommodate the influx of “under-educated” students who were ill-equipped to meet their demands. In some instances, such standards had to be reduced or eliminated altogether. I have always favored remedial programs designed to improve the academic performances of underachieving children that would make them academically competitive rather than setting those children up for failure, which happens to be the case most of the time. Under-Achievement has been (invariably) addressed by watering down (academic) standards, thereby depriving children of an opportunity of reaching their highest (intellectual) potential while curbing the development of brighter, more talented children who, engaged in a slower-paced environment, oftentimes find themselves shortchanged as well, while having to wait for the (intellectually) sluggish, indifferent or slower learners in general, to play catch-up. In the final analysis, such efforts aimed at achieving (academic) parity have served in further diminishing academic standards to the point where such standards are no longer meaningful. A universal pass/fail system will one day prove the most egregious, irrelevant standard of them all.

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I support Bosnian intervention provided that our military objectives are clearly defined (including exit strategies) and that our fighting men and women receive proper training and provided the means of achieving their objectives quickly and efficiently lest our troops risk losing the support of the American People whose “tolerance” for war remains vital to the military success of our fighting forces.

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Liberals are hawkish on Bosnia, or at least many of them appear to be as evidenced by their support of America’s intervention in that country’s civil war. The perception of Human Rights violations committed against the Muslim population by Serbian troops has many of them in a lather. Such raises some very important questions including where were these self-styled freedom fighters twenty years ago when Human Rights were being routinely trampled on in South Vietnam and Cambodia? Where was their unqualified support for the Contra Freedom Fighters at war against a Marxian Dictatorship? Where was their sense of duty and honor and proportion, for that matter, for the (untold) millions who were slaughtered and abandoned by their putative allies or many individuals in our time left to the arbitrary currents of oppressive governments whose (ideological) doctrines place little or no value on human life? At what time were their muffled cries heard when defenseless women and children were being driven to the sea by the tens of thousands following the most egregious military withdrawal in American History? Perhaps things have changed in the wake of political correctness!

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I am convinced that we are slowly devolving into a godless society. Perhaps nothing best exemplifies this opinion than the irritatingly obtrusive “Happy Holiday” which has superseded traditional Christmas greetings should, heaven forbid, Merry Christmas offend the secular sensibilities of non-Christians and nonbelievers alike. Christmas, it should be remembered, is not a “holiday”. For hundreds of millions of practicing Christians worldwide, it represents the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It seems ironic that our intolerance for traditional customs has increased in proportion to our tolerance for things “diverse.”

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Poverty is a humbling experience. Nevertheless, and I’m going to take some heat for saying this, there appears to be something human and less artificial among those trapped in its web. Perhaps such thinking is merely the romanticized musings of someone who has been more fortunate than most. I can lay claim, however, to my own humble beginnings, having been raised in a cold water flat (the building was condemned when I was six years old) in Manhattan until my parents moved on to greener pastures in the Bronx, New York. My immigrant father took whatever jobs he could find until he was finally able to secure a construction job that brought our family a steady paycheck. Although our family was poor, we were never “needy”. Be that as it may, such concepts relating to rich or poor or lying somewhere in between are meaningless to preschoolers until “comparative impressions” start kicking in, which, for most children, is generally around the time a child starts kindergarten. One good thing about poverty, provided it isn’t severe, is that it conditions a family to properly manage their limited resources and improvise on the little they have. Poverty is thought provoking in the manner it spurs the imagination of things possible; however I digress. How wonderful it would be if our government were occasionally a dollar short so that it too might develop economical spending habits. (I forgot about taxes!) It seems that the more government has available to spend, the more it feels compelled to spend it. At any rate, I am not trying to make an argument for the good ole days, which weren’t always so good, although heaven knows why many of us oftentimes feel the need to remind ourselves that they were. Neither am I making a case for poverty; you know, a character builder and all that. There’s a tendency among some of us who have risen from humbler beginnings, however, to wear our (erstwhile) poverty on our sleeves as an affirmation of our “incomparable” achievement or perhaps we wax nostalgic for simpler times however “unpleasant”. Perhaps it’s the struggle that we miss the most, that brought our families closer together or perhaps it’s the (simple) pining of our lost youth.

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It has often been said that inasmuch as things change they remain the same. This is partially true. (Essential) Human Nature, never changes; only the scope and limits of its immediate environment that conditions the way it thinks and acts.

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The Special Prosecutor’s Office has lost a great deal of credibility in recent years. This “bipartisan” office was initially established to investigate and prosecute political figures found guilty of political misconduct and abuse of public office. It has subsequently devolved, however, into a quasi political agency consisting of political hacks commissioned to persecute or discredit political opposition.

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The governor of the State of New York is proposing a bill that will increase cigarette taxes thereby raising the cost of a pack of cigarettes to \$3.00, the highest in the nation; in this manner offsetting the fiscal ineptitude and corruption of our state officials whose gross mismanagement of the public treasury constitutes a greater sin than the sin tax itself.

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The prison population received some welcome news from New York City after it announced plans to establish a Civilian Review Board, the kind that is likely to attract a number of ACLU types on its committee. This initiative should improve the chances for early parole for a number of hardened criminals who, in the interest of society, should otherwise serve their sentences. As usual, it’s the victim and potential victims who always seem to take it in the neck!

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Penal Systems were established to punish (hardened) criminal offenders by locking them behind prison walls. Efforts aimed at rehabilitating criminal elements should be pursued whenever possible without compromising its intended purpose, however.

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The Surgeon General is hoping to encourage condom use (especially) among teenagers through public service announcements as part of the department’s “safe” sex education program. This is like distributing clean syringes to chronic drug users. Why not simply raise the white flag and lay down our (moral) arms. Society’s inability to properly instruct and influence its own children by telling them in effect, that inasmuch as (some) parents are either unable or unwilling to control inappropriate behavior, let’s at least make improper conduct safer; in this manner sending a mixed message to our “wayward” sons and daughters.

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A major obstacle often encountered in most relationships is the expectation of mutual reciprocity; that is to say; expecting a “fair” or proper return of affection equal in proportion to one’s own measure. I don’t believe that this is possible, however, because of the

emotional boundaries that naturally limit an individual's capacity to either love or to love in return. The best any of us could hope for is that we continue loving others in a manner consistent with our nature or capacity to love while placing our hope and trust in the reciprocal affection of those we love.

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Abraham Lincoln said that "a government must not be as strong as to challenge the liberties of a free society while at the same time remaining strong enough to maintain its existence". Despite the number of rhetorical portents emanating from partisan politicians and doomsayers about the imminent demise of democratic principles and rule of law, a political dictatorship (I am using an extreme example) in this country would be very unlikely. Our nation's scrupulously crafted system of Liberal Republicanism, deeply imbedded in our political and social institutions, has rendered this an unlikely possibility, unlike old world cultures whose political origins were founded on authoritarian, monarchial or tribal traditions. America's Declaration of Independence inspired the thinking of an incipient nation whose formative ideas would one day lay the cornerstone of our inimitable Constitution. This great document was not artificially conceived. It acquired a spiritual character inspired by the principles of Natural Law and Equal Rights of Men eloquently expressed in the political writings of Locke, Paine, Montesquieu and Burke among others. That our system of government might someday submit itself to tyranny is diametrically opposed to the American mindset accustomed to freedom, unlike (subject) societies whose uncertain social and political environments keep many of its citizen living on the edge of tyranny. The political prototype established by Americans for Americans is unique in the manner it was able to harness and (limit) the energies and imaginations of thirteen independent colonies while integrating them without unduly compromising their singular authority.

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Circumstances and events have elevated many people to greatness. Nevertheless, those willing to confront potential challenges possessed the character, ability and mindset to override them.

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The "demise" of Communism is likely to re-ignite national prejudices in the Baltic States and Eastern Europe. Economic instability will likely ensue. Western Europe has been slow to learn the lessons imparted by two world wars that reduced many of its nations to the second rank. It will be interesting to observe how events will eventually unfold. I expect Western Europe may gradually re-open its markets to its Eastern neighbors although they have their own (economic) issues to deal with. The United States, on the other hand, will need to assume a stronger presence in that region by encouraging free and open markets that will allow these nation's to prosper. It might also prove to be an excellent opportunity for America to "repair" fragile relations.

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Attempts to control spiraling health care costs will require the reining of special interest groups which is unlikely to happen any time soon as long as taxpayer recourse remains the fallback option.

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The underlying principles of "equality" under the law have been grossly overstated by our higher courts whose primary function should be legal interpretation; assuring that existing laws are being properly and evenly applied without regard to special interests or favored classes or groups. It is unfortunate, however, that many of our courts are becoming (de facto) less juridical and more of an auxiliary law-making "branch" of the government where activist judges seek to adapt the elasticity of constitutional law to their (own) privately held views of Justice.

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Contrasting Liberalism Old and New: The older version encouraged entrepreneurship; the modern rendition, regulation and statutory restrictions. Classical Liberalism supported individual rights; Modern Liberalism, group rights. The (old) was subservient to the will of the people while the (new) has assumed the role of Social Guardian.

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Housing Starts has increased 18.5 percent over the past year. This isn't too shabby for an economy that candidate Clinton suggested was on the brink of a Depression. Mr. Bush's laid back, elitist incumbency (perhaps he should have campaigned on his front porch) has ushered a fifth columnist who, heaven preserve us, will never be elected to a second term!

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It follows that peace is conditioned in advance of naught once a threat has properly revealed itself.

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Freedom and Power are synonymous: Freedom is a position of Power while Power is the Freedom of Choice. However limited or broad in scope, their relationship is certain.

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The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was not the panecan quick fix that many of its (avid) supporters had initially hoped for. Redundant in many ways, it reinforced existing statutes by establishing more laws without addressing essential issues of immediate

concern; that is to say, in what manner does an individual obtain the necessary tools needed to acquire access to better schools and higher paying jobs without compromising competitive requirements? Government, in effect, reaffirmed existing laws with the intention of enforcing rather than promoting equal opportunities for those who were neither prepared nor equipped to meet its uncertain challenges. The major obstacles were not the laws themselves but their (historical) implementation or lack thereof. That is to say, our society, despite (its) existing laws, did not fairly treat some of its citizens in accordance with the spirit of those laws. The inconstancy between their (underlying) intent and (purposive) designs oftentimes lagged, especially as it related to our nation's unfortunate treatment of its Black Citizens. The real tragedy followed the conclusion of our Civil War when rising expectations occasioned false hopes. The aftermath of the war (again) provided an opportunity for a newly united and (wholly) "integrated" nation to redeem its moral and political covenants by fulfilling the promises outlined in the Declaration of Independence and in the American Constitution. Once again our nation fell short of its historical promises. President Lincoln understood that efforts aimed at assimilating the emancipated Negro would require modifying our nation's social and political mindset aside from amending its laws. The reality was that, bigotry aside, many African Americans at that time were unprepared, either by temperament or conditioning, to be free; that is to say, Free to do What and How or Where? The learning curve of most African Americans at that time, by all objective standards, was steep. Many, lacking either viable or meaningful outlets chose the safer havens of discredited institutions giving pause to the adage "better the devil you know than the one you don't." The more enterprising among them, however, packed what little belongings they had and sought their fortunes elsewhere. (Many of their offspring would go on to enjoy rewarding careers in a variety of fields.) Educational and training requirements needed to achieve (at least) minimal competitive advantages generally fell on deaf ears, especially in the predominately agrarian South where managing a plowshare was all the education a sharecropper required. Lincoln's untimely assassination would leave a spiritual and moral vacuum on both sides of the racial divide where a bigoted South and disinterested North seemed equally content with maintaining the status quo. Once advancements in biotechnology in the sixties rendered traditional farming methods obsolete, massive numbers of African Americans migrated North to seek (other) employment opportunities. The diminishing demand for unskilled labor in the North left many families petitioning for relief. The uncomfortable "presence" of growing numbers of unemployed people living on the margins, accompanied by the rise in (violent) crime in urban neighborhoods that inevitably followed, seemingly revived the slumbering sensibilities; that is to say, fears of (White) individuals and reformers alike whose "social awareness", conspicuously absent for nearly a century, suddenly reached a fevered pitch once the "problem" hit "home". This epiphany of sorts aroused a latent "conscience" that subsequently engendered a variety of (social) programs designed to assist the needy, although once the smoke cleared, such programs oftentimes benefited poverty pimps rather than their intended targets. Rather than introducing gradual, measured change, an entire society was placed atop its head in an effort to compensate for its historical misdeeds instead of trying to correct rather than manage its effects. Be that as it may, after all these years, we, as a society are still reeling from the aftereffects of political tampering and social engineering that shies away from (underlying) core-issues.

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The mainstream median has this annoying habit of reporting (partial) truths, at least as they relate to (its) political commentaries, by passing them along as (completed) truths thereby presenting distorted versions of (real) truths.

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"Health Nazism", a term coined by Peggy Noonan in her Reagan Biography, correctly describes the advancement of a consumptive agenda in keeping with the principles of (political) correctness. "Unhealthy" eating and drinking habits may someday require a fiscal palliative. Sin tax(es) anyone?

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(Spiritual) Sorrow, not to be confused with Despair, instructs the Soul in the manner of Wisdom that Despair seeks to disavow.

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Students are spending more time in classrooms at every level than at any other time in our nation's history. Having received more education than their predecessors, however, does not necessarily imply that recent graduates are better educated but have received, rather, the most "education".

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In a highly specialized society, most students generally gravitate toward curricula that many perceive will provide the highest financial rewards in his or her chosen field. I am speaking of individuals who have a vested interest in their careers. The idea of acquiring knowledge for its own sake appears passé which is unfortunate for a society in terrible need of a well rounded education. The idea of acquiring wealth is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. It seems however, that the practical pursuit of monetary rewards coupled with a diminution of comprehensive knowledge has left our intellectual cupboards empty, establishing in their wake, in a manner of speaking, a Civilized Barbarism.

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Social Engineering's obsession with trying to fit or (accommodate) parts to wholes without giving pause to how each part is likely to function or react in relation to a particular whole or how the incompatibility of certain threading must disengage the entire fabric and render it meaningless has compromised the character of an orderly society whose meaning may be understood and its effectiveness measured by correctly assessing the functional utility of each of its components.

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The main reason why an increasing number of urban municipalities are enforcing mandatory residency requirements on its civil service employees, especially its policemen and firefighters, is due less to the common perception of increasing efficiencies which closer proximity to the “workplace” would supposedly facilitate rather than a transparent attempt at recruiting more minorities. As a result, municipal employees are being coerced into forgoing the comfort and security of suburban communities for the sake of their jobs.

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An individual’s standard of living is promoted by means as well as by some vague notion of an ideal or appropriate lifestyle whose expressive habits, unfortunately, are oftentimes inadequate to support such lifestyles.

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Introspection must be wary of falling into a state of Self-Deception.

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Most psychologists, I believe, are kooky by Osmosis.

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I suppose that I’m being unfairly critical of the psychological community which, not unlike other professions, is merely seeking to justify its existence. This profession has traditionally justified its position in proportion to the increasing number of previously unknown “mental diseases” that have surreptitiously seeped their way into the mainstream (lexicon) by virtue of broader classifications defining mental illness or other (psychological) disorders or peculiar habits or by overstating common oddities and making a clinical case out of them. Modern revisionism is likely to label every peculiar quirk or eccentricity of no immediate consequence, an abnormality. I wonder that many of us haven’t already been ushered off to the loony bin given the oddity of our (own) behavior. Of particular concern, however, is the increasing number of hyperactive or disruptive children routinely assigned, in proportion exceeding what is actually warranted, to special education or “remedial” training classes. We, as a society, seem to have lost all sense of proportion, if not our common sense, as it relates to raising our children. In the manner the medical community involuntarily over medicates its patients, we are witnessing a disturbing trend among psychologists, teachers, guidance counselors and social workers alike to overanalyze our children by reading into things that simply aren’t there. Some children will arguably require special counseling which is well and good. The manner a child is evaluated, however, should be exercised with caution; allowing for the normal growing pains and rebellious designs of rambunctious children coming of age rather than pre-categorizing them to conform to subjectively meaningless (personality) theories understood in textbooks.

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The portrayal of America’s military, its officers and men, in such an unfavorable light and the improbable characters oftentimes presented on the screen by the motion picture industry gives pause to how ragged bands of militia freedom fighters evolved into the best fighting units in the world today.

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On Friday afternoon, in what was generally perceived to be the work of some terrorist organization, explosives were set off in underground garages located beneath the World Trade Center leaving seven people dead and many seriously injured. This event should (must) dispel once and for all the myth of America’s Impregnability. Our complacency may have been justified at one time when the world was much larger and less traveled than the modern age of rapid mobility and open borders. Although this horrific event must never shake our nation’s resolve in bringing these culprits to justice, it should (also) provide a wake-up call to all Americans that this was not an exceptional event but a likely precursor to future attacks against American interests both at home and abroad. It should be kept in mind, however, that not all wars are fought on the battlefield. The climatic rise of despotic and reactionary fanaticism emerging throughout the Third World should serve as a reminder to our nation’s leaders and their allies that American Intelligence must be provided the necessary resources and latitudinal discretion needed to meet the increasing challenges confronting the Free World by Islamic Terrorist Organizations. Are you listening, Mr. President?

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Itlo-Americans are not the political force that their numbers might otherwise suggest. Clannish by nature, conditioned perhaps by the traditions of the Italian City State, many are productive individuals who are remarkably successful in their chosen fields. As a “non-political” group, many have quietly integrated into the American Mainstream without (much) fanfare. They remain hard-working, inconspicuous and collectively “apolitical”.

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Litmus Testing appears to be gradually superseding Merit as a requirement for promotion in the Civil Service as government agencies continue to assume the “burden” for historical grievances at the expense of worthier candidates while broadening the margins of (self) perception.

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Satan, a work associate recently explained, was conceived “in love” in God’s own image as was all His Creation, and that his subsequent Fall from Grace, precipitated by Prideful Will, induced him to choose Evil over Good. Evil, is a “concept” that for many individuals is oftentimes understood in abstract terms as “something” lacking (a) definitive substance or meaning that many are likely to treat casually or as an intellectual notion existing in the mind only or as “some thing” or “some one” personified, however lacking a tangible foundation. Evil cannot be understood apart from some contrary idea, that for discussion purposes I will refer to as “Good”, that provides it with its own exceptional predicates; that is to say, character and meaning. In this manner, Evil, or any other idea, for that matter, cannot stand alone, or so it would seem. For this reason, a society’s conventional notion of “Beauty”, as an example, is meaningless unless counterpoised by some other idea that opposes it with equal force which, for our purposes, is understood as “Ugly” or unattractive in appearance, not to be confused with something or someone an individual might otherwise consider morally reprehensible or displeasing to the senses which is not necessarily the same thing, if for example, that individual harbors a singular aversion or dislike to something or someone upsetting to his or her (personal) sense of decorum or “good” taste rather than offending the sensibilities of conventional customs. The same line of reasoning applies to Truth/Fallacy, Chaste/Defiled, Gentle/Harsh, Honorable/Unprincipled and so on. My point is that nothing taken by itself may be properly measured against itself. Neither does an idea convey meaning apart from itself. This argument does not imply, however, that some thing or some idea can not exist in its own right apart from other things or ideas existing within themselves. Our limited understanding of ideas, however, often distorts our impressions or ability to judge things critically or to reason correctly; factoring variation or intent or purpose whenever required in order to accommodate or justify some peculiar action or manner of behavior that, extended beyond its pre-assigned limits, often renders further interpretation futile. That God is all loving and good; whose Perfection embodies Perfect Goodness without fault or blemish, and having imparted His Goodness only; how or in what manner did (Humankind) manage to corrupt itself given the fact that Perfection is neither able to add nor subtract from itself without compromising its perfection thereby rendering itself less perfect which does not follow since Perfection, being aware of its own perfection, could not properly consent to its own degradation by assuming a less than perfect condition. God did not impart His Perfection to His creation but a likeness, rather, of His Perfection which is not the same thing, however. Having done so would have (paradoxically) occasioned the creation of nothing less than Himself which is neither feasible nor possible. He endowed His creation with the faculties of Reason and Free Will which, for our purposes, implies the absence of a nonexistent condition. Therefore, Free Will becomes a necessary condition of “Being”. God’s gift of Free Will is consonant with His gift of Life inasmuch as each mutually conditions the other. Angels and Humankind were created in a manner approximating or imaging God’s Perfect Nature. Therefore God created a universe which was potentially less than perfect although potentially perfect. Adam’s (Humankind’s) fall from Grace produced the first stain on God’s Creation, which did not proceed from God; however, insofar the potential for disobedience inherently lies in Free Will. Such was God’s intent, for where lies the merit in someone who is perfect and therefore incapable of sinning as opposed to (an) imperfect being that must continually prove itself in order to achieve perfection? An individual is therefore counted worthy by the quality of his or her own actions, not by what he or she is, but what he or she seeks to become. Free Will carries its own burdens understood as Pride. Human Nature, however, can not always separate Free Will from Pride. Pride, however, does not necessarily encumber our efforts to do “good” provided that we properly acknowledge the origin (God) of all human kindness and good works by recognizing God working through us. Pride’s (sin) lies in the mistaken notion that we (alone) are the eminent architects of our worldly achievements apart from the guiding light of our Creator. Pride would have us believe that it is God who should be indebted to us for having done his work! In this manner, pride in doing God’s Work, rather than self-pride, ennobles the Spirit whereas self -love remains the cornerstone of Pride that ultimately seeks its destruction. God, in His infinite mercy however, has provided a remedy to check its harmful effects. It is Conscience or God’s way of talking to us by directing our thoughts and actions while leaving final decisions to us. (Free Will) Abstracts become clearer in proportion to our (own) lively imaginations that otherwise provide substance and meaning to our lives.

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The Democratic Party is adept at embracing single issues and providing ports of refuge for its single-minded malcontents.

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The selling of America by Corporate Profiteers is tantamount to Economic Treason.

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A counterpoise to the “Practical Liberal,” I suppose, is an “Enlightened Conservative.”

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A major obstacle to balancing the federal budget is properly understood in terms of limited resources on the one hand and unlimited spending potential on the other.

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Clean neighborhoods are functions of attitude and values rather than Ethnicity.

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Lofty principles and ideals are impervious to financial setbacks inasmuch as they could not be purchased to begin with.

• • •

Memories preserve our lives (in their entirety) by making us (collectively) more thoughtful and wholesome, completing us as human

beings by reminding us of who we are, who made us who we are, why we have become who we are and who we hope to become, lest we forget “ourselves”. In this manner, our past secures a proper place in the present while becoming one with the present, brought closer together in harmony, neither conflicting with nor detached from the here and now however united in some manner, rather, as an integral component in its own time and place although remaining mutually sympathetic with time/present insofar both exist in the spirit of (a) past/present continuum; much in the manner the present will likely embrace the “unforeseeable” future that will soon find its (own) proper expression in the present, lending its own “retrospective” impressions that seeks becoming in (a) present/future continuum, who, along with the past, will leave its own inestimable imprint(s) as it seeks to achieve solidarity in a time/spatial continuum embracing all three.

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The rise in (disposable) income among working class families is barely managing to keep pace with the rising costs of consumer goods and services as might be expected from families relying (solely) on their weekly paychecks as their chief source of revenue unlike middle to upper (income) classes earning above average salaries who are able to invest a portion of their savings in outside investments that may (hopefully) generate additional income.

Addendum to the above: Reduce (exponential) consumption while increasing (arithmetic) investment.

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Addendum to the above: It is not what an individual makes but what he or she accumulates!

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The manner “family” income is defined should factor in the number of (contributing) breadwinners in that family, otherwise such statistics relating to income are meaningless; like comparing apples with oranges. As a general rule, a single parent supporting a family, unless he or she falls in a higher income bracket, will unlikely generate as much income as traditional two parent families where both husband and wife are working and bringing home a paycheck. In an age where higher divorce rates are occasioning more single-parent households, society needs to reconsider the traditional definition or boundaries of family as they relate to measuring income.

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Engaged in mortal combat (for the body’s soul), the Spirit will inevitably override the Flesh although the latter will give the crowd its money’s worth!

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The Academy Awards has devolved into a political three-ring circus highlighted by pompous, politically frustrated actors who are woefully mis-informed and should otherwise stick to the script while doing what many of them (often) do best; imitating their own (inimitable) imitation of life!

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At what juncture does permanent arrangements clash with provisionary conveniences accorded to every individual under the law or conflict with (the) National Interest, for that matter?

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Our military, since the conclusion of the Second World War, has provided a variety of educational and vocational opportunities for under-employed men and women (thereby) enabling many of them to (effectively) compete for better paying jobs once they retire from active service. This, aside from instilling the principle values and professional attitudes likely to produce worthier candidates in the marketplace. Deep cuts in defense spending, however, aside from compromising our national security, would (inevitably) place a heavier burden on social services that, although providing basic (the) material requirements for needy people, provides little else by way of Dignity and Character.

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I haven’t any qualms with government spending that, aside from securing property and person for our mutual benefit, (also) provides equal access for all its citizens, apart from (the) unequal (tax) disbursements dis-proportionate to income, including social security, public schools, libraries and hospitals as opposed to divisive spending programs likely to incite the animosity of individuals who, having defrayed most of the (social) costs, are receiving a dis-proportionate return on their “investment”. This, in conjunction with the urgent requirements of a balanced budget.

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We are all at God’s mercy. Therefore, although “good works” are essential for our spiritual salvation, Faith remains the cornerstone.

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Nihilism is the folly of disruptive imaginations triggered by enfeebled intellects that have shamefully abandoned all hope for (their) spiritual and moral recovery.

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