

Transcendental Truth

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth --- once we're done with it!"

We humans are extraordinarily challenged to try and step out of the subtle fallacies that condition our thinking, to see clearly the fundamental premises of our Father Culture and the human-centeredness of our reigning perceptions and mythology. We think that we have the right and the need to conquer and control the natural world at any cost. Our dominate-and-control civilization and our delusions of absolute good and evil prevent us from clearly understanding our place in nature.

People need to develop a new story, a new mythology, one in which our integral purpose is to live in accord with the world. We need a vision of the world and of ourselves that inspires us, one that is satisfying and meaningful.

We are in desperate need of a paradigm shift, a radically new worldview, an enlightened culture of respect for nature. We must invent a new way of living, adopting a new willingness and eagerness to protect ecosystems and minimize waste and pollution, a fresh 'modus operandi' that allows us to coexist peacefully with life's rich diversity. We need to cultivate a purposeful concern for the community of life on Planet Earth, striving to ensure that we begin to live in harmony with nature.

An authentic environmental ethic must emerge in this "postmodern era", one that makes pragmatic distinctions in values and intrinsic worth, one that simultaneously embraces and promotes an attuning of human actions with the biosphere.

"The soul of democracy --- the essence of the word itself --- is government of, by, and for the people. At the core of politics, the soul of democracy has been dying, drowning in a rising tide of big money, contributed by a narrow, unrepresentative elite that has betrayed the faith of citizens in self-government."

--- Bill Moyers

Democracy relies on informed participation of its citizens, and this is hindered and perverted by the disenfranchisement of voters, government secrecy, ideological absolutism, and distortions of the truth concerning matters of national and international importance. We require leaders who do the right thing, not leaders who mislead us to advance narrow interests.

"It is a sad day when the White House treats our national heritage like a business in liquidation, with its corporate allies seeking to convert the public's national resources to cash as quickly as possible."

--- Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

A primary objective of this Earth Manifesto is to provide PERSPECTIVE, to utilize its transformational energy towards a betterment of the world, through the cultivation of our awareness, our mindfulness, our understanding, and our becoming more fully awake and concerned about our world. We must make a concomitant commitment to clarity, truth, openness, empathy, compassion, involvement, activism, and positive change.

Unnatural Selection

“There is no question, from a scientific point of view, that human beings are an integral part of the great web of life that exists on our planet. Like every other living thing, we are one result of a great experiment in molecular biology that began four billion years ago in the warm waters of the Earth’s oceans, when life first appeared on the planet. We depend on the workings of the great web of life that surrounds us for all of our necessities --- things like clean air, clean water, and the food we eat.” ... “The more I thought about this, the more I realized that there is another aspect to it. Yes, human beings are part of life on our planet, but we have also had a profound effect on the workings of the planet as well. In fact, if you think about nature as something that happens in the absence of human beings, then nature has largely disappeared from the Earth.”

--- HUMAN NATURE, James Trefil (“Ask Mr. Science” Physicist)

Our distant ancestors were, in a large sense, much more “in tune” with the natural world than we are today, interacting with it in both simple and profound ways that we can no longer very well accurately even imagine. Let us focus for a moment on the non-human aspects of the natural world. The variety of beautiful places in the world is extensive, and there is an extent to which almost all human development and disturbance is a denigration and diminishment of nature’s beauty. Open spaces and parks and wilderness areas and old growth forests and coral reefs and free-flowing rivers and places with lots of wildlife are too valuable to sacrifice to wasteful and inconsiderate uses. They are too important to our survival to destroy them almost obliviously and without great concern.

Many of the Soliloquies in this Earth Manifesto have been created in honor of ideas whose goal is to help us recognize what we are losing, in terms of healthy foundations, vital connectedness, aesthetics, and sanity, as the natural world fades into the background of our lives. More and more people are having less and less contact with natural areas as human civilization becomes more urbanized. Inevitably, humanity is losing contact with, and respect for, the non-human natural world. This naturally and unnaturally reduces our innate motivation and inclination to want to help protect nature and the health of ecosystems upon which we depend. This is a risk, a tragedy, an alienation of our souls, and a diminishment in the quality of our lives and of our perceptions.

James Trefil: “For the last thirty to forty years, scientists have been tending plots of prairie grass, watching controlled forest patches, and counting cacti in the desert. The result is that we are coming to understand the general rules that govern ecosystems, the rules that govern the roles of various nutrients in specific ecosystems.” These understandings are critical to our future interactions with, and management of, habitats on the Earth. Yet it is sad to realize that we are gambling that we can emulate the balance and harmonious functioning of nature, without adequate precautions --- and also that our government has been exhibiting a pronounced pattern of undermining and disregarding science for politically motivated purposes.

The willingness, even eagerness, to sacrifice public lands and beautiful places, and to subvert our democracy to satisfy greedy Vested Interests --- and to do so with clever deception, Orwellian obfuscation, and dogmatic self-righteousness --- is a sin of the highest order. Opposition of our leaders to conservation, efficiency, and ecological sanity is wrong-headedness. While we are still aware of what we are losing, we must strive to protect the important aspects of nature that are key to wholesomeness.

Spiritual Bearing

Humanity seems to have lost its sense of interconnectedness with the cycles and rhythms of nature, so we frequently seem to be missing the whole point of being here at all, as we rush through our often- hectic, sometimes empty lives. The world of family life, daily work, business, entertainment, chores and social activities has become disconnected from a sense of larger spiritual values. But we can no longer afford a spirituality that is separate from, and disrespectful of, the natural world.

The increasingly precarious condition of our planet and its inhabitants cries out for greater involvement and concern that ever before. The difficult problems that face us on all sides --- the environmental crisis, the breakdown of family and community, the loss of humanity's sacred traditions and values, the widening gulf between the rich and poor, the lack of responsibility to the people by our leaders, the increasing stresses of modern living, the growing international tensions and conflicts --- all call for a new vision of human purpose, one that goes beyond having and getting and spending.

We need to develop a new well-grounded spirituality, a committedness and willingness to improve the quality of life on Earth through a clear awareness of what is truly important in the Here and Now.

Humanity has become disconnected from nature in a deep philosophical and psychological way. Our primal respect for the Earth and other life forms on the planet has slowly and insidiously become submerged. We first began separating ourselves from our innate connectedness to nature through many millennia of exploiting the land during the Agricultural Revolution. And our attitude towards nature has become progressively more destructive and less accountable with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution and its attendant drives to control, subjugate and technologically modify our surroundings.

Today, we are failing to achieve a clear understanding that the 21st Century must see a rapid Environmental Revolution. Our failure in this regard is largely due to the mesmerizing power of advertising and of the media --- and to the distractions and seductions of our obsessive materialistic culture.

The Environmental Revolution must be driven primarily by the restructuring of the global economy, in order to ensure that this economy does not destroy its natural support systems.

“Like the agricultural revolution, the environmental revolution will dramatically alter population trends. Whereas the former set the stage for enormous increases in human numbers, this revolution will succeed only if it stabilizes population size, reestablishing a balance between people and nature. In contrast to the industrial revolution, which was based on a shift to fossil fuels, this new social and economic transformation will be based on a shift away from them.”

--- State of the World, Lester R. Brown

Healing Ourselves, Healing Planet Earth

“At every level of biological organization, from DNA up, mechanisms of self-diagnosis, self-repair, and regeneration exist in us, always ready to become active when the need arises.” So says Andrew Weil, M.D., in his very valuable book Spontaneous Healing. Optimum health is achieved by providing the best conditions for these innate mechanisms to operate --- good nutrition, physical exercise, moderate consumption, balanced stresses, positivity of perspective and attitude, and a healthy connectedness to community, family, friends, and nature.

Likewise, the Earth’s dynamic natural systems have remarkable features of resilience and self-healing, as evidenced by the cleansing characteristics of wetlands, and by the natural succession of forest regeneration. Extinction, however, is forever; and we humans are dramatically impairing the ability of habitats, niches, and other species to recover from our onslaught of destructive development, exploitation, poisoning and polluting.

We must begin to implement policies that allow the Earth to heal and recover. This is in our long-term best interests --- there is no question about it. Support Progressive environmental legislation! And we must reform Campaign Financing to mitigate the powerful influence of environmentally destructive entities.

The seven principal means used by societies throughout history to get self-interested people to act in the common good are:

- (1) Laws and regulations;
- (2) Incentives and disincentives;
- (3) Education and understanding, and using reason to achieve a cogent appreciation of the problems faced;
- (4) Appealing to people’s values, and their recognition of the truly important qualities of existence;
- (5) Enlisting community involvement;
- (6) Thinking globally and acting locally; and,
- (7) Taking advantage of grassroots concerns and energies.

Environmental psychologists report that direct appeals, the creation of enticing incentives, effective communications, and forward-looking actions of peers are the most effective means for influencing behaviors to accomplish important goals.

History has shown, in such events as the fall of the Iron Curtain, that rapid change is possible once critical thresholds have been crossed. Individuals, businesses, political leaders, and the media must all become conscious agents of change in moving towards sustainability and the creation of an enduring society. We need creativity, clarity of mind, and energy of will to effectively respond to the challenges of rapid change.

Tiffany Twain speculates that we can best help to heal ourselves, our societies, and the Earth by reconnecting, scaling down, decentralizing, democratizing, and remembering that in being generous of spirit and in helping others, we often help ourselves in a deeply nuanced multiplicity of ways.

Pondering Punctuated Equilibrium

An understanding of the physical world reveals that change is continuous, but that it is not constant, a state of affairs that geologists call “punctuated equilibrium”. Alert observers note, for instance, that erosion is a slow, continuous process, but that much more rapid erosion occurs in association with relatively intense and sudden phenomena, such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, agricultural disturbances, forest fires and clear cutting. Likewise, any serious study of the state of the world reveals a steady, insidious and deleterious onslaught of man’s activities against the health and bounty of Earth’s natural systems, with much more rapid damage occurring in association with such exaggeratedly wasteful events as oil spills and wars.

Biological stability is grounded in variety, and the health of ecosystems resides in their diversity. Natural systems are dynamic, in the certain context that change is continuous, and all disturbances eventually run their course, resulting in a new equilibrium.

The planet’s ecological balance is being profoundly disturbed. The proverbial canary in the coal mine can variously be seen as disappearing bird and amphibian species, rainforest and natural resource depletion, sick and dying coral reefs, declining ocean fisheries, melting glaciers, and degraded groundwater supplies.

Life is out of balance, seemingly achieving greater imbalance by the day. We must choose to revise our roles in contributing to this disequilibrium. The human race has been dramatically increasing its extraordinarily malignant impacts on natural systems, but this too will eventually evolve into a new equilibrium, with or without us. This simple, apocalyptic-sounding observation gives urgency to our need to take bold, remedial, restorative actions --- such as those outlined in this manuscript. These actions must be given as much importance as other concerns of doctrine, security, justice, employment, and peace.

A fundamental theme of this Manifesto is that the Establishment, the Status Quo, and Business-As-Usual must yield dramatically here in the 21st Century to more wholesome ways of being. The question facing the generations alive today is whether the human community will take charge of its own cultural evolution and implement a radical shift to sustainable economies, or will instead stand by watching nature impose change as environmental systems break down.

Humanity is manifesting a “Folie a Tous” --- a collective insanity characterized by the shared delusion that we can, with impunity, ever more aggressively consume, damage, and degrade the resources and ecosystems upon which we depend worldwide --- as if we will be able to dramatically diminish the stability of Earth’s biosphere without ominous consequences for ourselves. This is a very risky presumption, one that we ought to consider carefully!

“And so, stoic and unafraid, departed the last wild Indian of America. He looked upon us as sophisticated children, smart but not wise. We knew many things, and much that is false. He knew Nature, which is always true. His were the qualities of character that last forever. He was kind, he had courage and self-restraint, and though all had been taken from him, there was no bitterness in his heart. His soul was that of a child, his mind that of a philosopher.”

--- Ishi

Playing Politics with the Planet

Historian Howard Zinn notes that there is an urgent and growing need to drastically redistribute wealth from the rich elite, and from military spending, to socially sane programs like urban infrastructure, environmental protections, full employment, public transportation, affordable housing, universal healthcare, sustainable development, and international peacekeeping and humanitarian aid.

Understand the mega trend! The marginal tax rate on very high incomes reached 77% to finance World War I, and was then reduced to 24% by 1931; it went up to 75% during the Depression in 1935, and reached a peak of 91% by 1963. John F. Kennedy reduced it back to 70%, and Ronald Reagan slashed it drastically back down from 70% to 33%.

President G.W. Bush's Administration has followed Reagan's lead in cutting taxes primarily on the wealthy by indulging in deficit spending, effectively borrowing from everyone in the future to enrich the wealthy today --- a philosophy that must strike any rational person as distinctly self-serving, shortsighted, and irresponsible. Worse, the so-called Death Tax has also been brazenly eliminated, guaranteeing that the rich are able to keep all of their wealth as generations pass. These shifts of the budgetary tax burden from the wealthy to all taxpayers, and to everyone in future budget years through the insidious expediency of deficit spending, are an unconscionable wrong-headedness.

These and other tax policies of the past 25 years are creating and exacerbating profound social hardships, simply in order to favor people who do not need money and more financial advantages. These policies effectively erode the health of our society, harm workers, disproportionately disadvantage women, rob the middle and lower classes, increase injustices, and make everyone less secure in one way or another. These policies are condemnably and unconscionably mean-spirited. They constitute an inhumane folly, and wrong-headedness, NOT virtue!

One percent of the people in the United States own 38% of all wealth, and the stage is set for further concentration of wealth. Americans must strongly support greater fiscal responsibility by tightly controlling spending, balancing the budget in non-recession years, and establishing progressive taxation with much higher rates for the highest levels of income.

Action, not complacency, is required. We must take back our democracy, and act NOW to change our political system back to one that is more fair and representative. Make Waves! Complain to your elected representatives. We must stop participating in the Coalition of the Willing to Be Manipulated and Misled!

Help advocate and actualize substantially increased taxes on the top 1% of income earners, and the enforcement of tax laws against cheaters --- it's them against us, and against our children!!

Fiscal Sin

Tiffany Twain wants readers to share her outrage at the callousness and disregard for fairness that is institutionalized in American taxation policies.

The federal tax system since the day Ronald Reagan took office has become blatantly and progressively less fair. It has increasingly become a subsidy system for the super rich, as David Cay Johnston poignantly reveals in "Perfectly Legal: the Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich --- and Cheat Everyone Else."

This is a scandalous and disgraceful form of class warfare. It is morally corrupt elitism.

Politicians deceive us about the true nature of our tax system. Congress has shifted the tax burden in the past 25 years away from the super rich. There are 28,000 Americans in households that comprise the top 1/100 of a percent of all Americans. Each of these households earns over \$8 million per year. These 28,000 Americans together earn as much as the 96,000,000 people at the bottom of the economic ladder. It is outrageous not to require them to pay a significantly higher share of their income than those in the middle class. The share of taxes that these super rich pay has declined dramatically, as the burden of everyone else has increased.

TAX has been made into a four-letter word in Washington, D.C. As a consequence, political leaders have been able to stealthily implement incredibly regressive changes in taxation. Illegal tax evasion by the wealthy has risen, IRS audits of the rich have diminished pronouncedly, and corporate tax laws have reduced taxes on Businesses. The super rich enjoy income deferral mechanisms, many tax code loopholes, and reduced marginal income and capital gains tax rates.

The <<voodoo economics>> of Ronald Reagan flooded into a legacy of great benefits to the rich, together with and unprecedented peacetime budget shortfalls. They did NOT trickle down to benefit poorer people, whose real wages have eroded since 1980. This has led to an exaggerated increase in the gap between the rich and everyone else. The Republicans continue to widen this gap with their obsessive and clever notion that they can attract voters by delivering tax cuts, no matter how imprudent such a strategy may be, and no matter how distorted the benefits of such tax cuts are to the general public.

These ideas are not cerebral hypothesizing. They are not about abstractions that have no impacts on the lives of Americans. They are about a veiled Social Darwinism, as if the rich are better and more deserving people --- a pandering to the rich which arrogantly ignores social ills. They represent a perpetuation of indifference and effective hostility to the general welfare of the vast majority of U.S. citizens. The Preamble to the Constitution says that the United States of America was created to promote the general welfare --- not to allow an elite to prosper at the expense of the people!

Republican ideologues recant! Save your jobs by heeding the concerns and the well-being of the people, or announce your retirement now. Citizens, let us remember these ideas in November 2004, and vote only for progressive candidates!

Fool's Gold

Economic, political and social policies are inextricable intertwined. In our democracy, whose fair representation is being subverted by elite ruling groups, we have been conditioned to mistake false goals for true values. My contention seems irrefutable: the controlling elite have very cleverly managed to buy influence and mislead citizens into supporting policies that are primarily beneficial to the Special Interests, the Status Quo, and the rich and powerful, yet at the same time detrimental to the majority and to future generations.

Ronald Reagan, for instance, used his folksy popularity to implement regressive tax reductions, cutting the marginal tax rate from 70% to 33% on very high incomes, asserting that lower taxes on the wealthy would "trickle down" to the poor. The rich sure did become richer --- and the United States began to run the largest deficits in world history, tripling the national debt in just 8 years. (This is a very serious Laffer!)

Deficit Spending is a clever political expediency, an easy, though irresponsible, way of borrowing from people in the future, who have no voice or choice, to benefit people today. It allows people and politicians to avoid making difficult budgetary decisions today, and allows us to further delay truly addressing fiscal, social, and environmental problems until sometime in the future.

Now, in the year 2004, the Republican administration has been loyally replaying the Reagan policies, claiming that they are Right. They:

- (1) Stake out the moral high ground, simplifying good and evil, right and wrong, portraying themselves as being primarily concerned with the common good, while striving to act in accordance with narrow Vested Interests;
- (2) Cut taxes to primarily benefit the fortunate few who have high incomes;
- (3) Dramatically increase military spending;
- (4) Cut social program spending and/or increase deficits to pay for the tax cuts and the increased military spending;
- (5) Give subsidies to Big Business, no matter how absurd (tobacco, nuclear power, oil drilling --- Good Grief!);
- (6) Diminish environmental protections, dismantling socially cost-beneficial regulations;
- (7) Pander to anti-choice extremists, formulating a seemingly cynically campaign against the basic reproductive and privacy rights of women in the U.S., and denying Congressionally-approved monetary support for family planning programs abroad;
- (8) Implement a more aggressively military foreign policy; and,
- (9) Strive to strengthen and perpetuate regressive Conservative doctrines.

It is transparently wrong to go along with policies that pander to the Right Wing. It is time that we began to change the character and course of our culture, economy, society and government, redesigning our institutions to be more sensible and fair.

Please lobby your representatives to support more Progressive policies and positive change!

LET US BE FOOLS NO LONGER!

Sense and Sensibility

A pressure cooker is an airtight metal pot that uses steam under pressure to cook food quickly. The physical principles of heat energy and water vapor, expanding in a confined space, create this potent pressure. These physical properties were utilized to convert heat energy to mechanical energy in such important inventions of the Industrial Revolution as the steam engine, the steam turbine, and the steamroller.

A young science student recently went directly from her Physics class to her Sociology class, where she had a secular epiphany: People on Planet Earth today seem to be making their world into a pressure cooker, creating rapidly increasing social pressure with the frightening convergence of three powerful factors --- (1) increasing population and consumption, within the definite constraints of finite resources; (2) increasing inequalities in the distribution of wealth, food, material goods, habitat integrity, power, and safety; and (3) a growing selfishness and greed of the “haves”, in the face of a growing destructive envy and despair of the “have-nots.”

Tiffany Twain recommends: **Defuse the Pressure!!**

Social progressiveness, economic fairness, and ecological sanity --- and not aggressive right-wing reactionary protectionism and political patronage --- grows increasingly necessary by the day, as we in America have headed the wrong way!

Live and Let Live! We must emasculate the authoritarian, puritanical, moralistic, self-righteous insistence of Intolerant factions of society, and mitigate their aggressiveness in trying to control others and to interfere in their personal lives. We must strive to achieve a noble, compassionate and affirmative project --- that of transforming our societies and institutions into ones that honor balance, moderation, justice, tolerance, fairness, freedom, and environmental sustainability.

The best interests of a miniscule minority are being served in America today, to the disadvantage and the detriment of the great majority. We must choose to plan more wisely and to implement intelligent, progressive policies, instead of formulating ways to facilitate the wasteful, inefficient, polluting and destructive uses of Planet Earth's natural resources.

Let's work together to change the world for the better — it is possible, it is important, and it is urgently necessary!! Let's choose a robust Environmental Revolution, rather than being distracted by games and wars and a lack of awareness and concern for the future.

“To deal effectively with our problems we must understand, accept, and apply one fundamental, indispensable proposition ... It is the ancient truth that drove primitive people together to ward off their enemies and wild beasts, to find food and shelter, to raise their children in safety, and eventually to raise up a civilization. Now, in this ever more complex world, we need to accept and apply this basic truth: that we're all in this together, like a family, interconnected and interdependent, and that we cannot afford to revert to a world of “us against them”, whether the divide is economic, racial, regional, or philosophical. It is the one great idea that is indispensable to realizing our full potential as a people.”

Reason To Believe, Mario Cuomo, 1995

Responsible Parenthood

Survival and reproduction are the two most important biological drives in the lives of every species of life on Earth. The reproductive success of human beings has been so great that it is now our multitude, not our paucity of numbers, which threatens our survival.

Parenthood is the most important responsibility that most humans undertake in their lives, if they choose to have children. Planning for parenthood is important. Preventing pregnancy, when partner or circumstance weigh strongly against it, is wise planning.

Birth control measures should be encouraged, and should be made widely available, and options should be widely communicated. Society should be very supportive of women, children, sex and morals education, contraception, and the right to choose. People who are against abortion on doctrinaire religious or moral grounds should be strongly supportive of birth control education, not just head-in-the-sand supporters of abstinence from sexual intercourse. "Just Say No to Sex" is the refrain from the current Administration and its fundamentalist religious supporters. "And if you screw up, tough luck, you'll have to pay the consequences and continue every pregnancy to term, because every fetus has a right to life." --- On the off chance that this puritanical abstinence advice is not effective enough to overcome the deepest of all biological drives, Tiffany Twain proclaims that society must support sex education, safe sex initiatives, and family planning programs.

Social conservatives hold a powerful conviction in the sanctity of a fetus as soon as an egg and sperm unite --- but they cynically seem to begrudge women any right to self-determination, often apparently not giving a damn about psychological, social or financial support or services for mothers and children after childbirth.

And our society must clearly address the issue of abortion. It is a terrible and difficult decision for a woman to have an abortion --- one of the most daunting and disturbing choices that any human being ever has to make. Society must become more supportive of women for whatever overwhelming reason they chose this difficult, and compoundedly-hard socially-condemned act. The man who gets a woman pregnant must be allowed up to 49% of the say in whether or not to let the pregnancy go to term; but the woman should never have less that 51%. Society should not interfere, and Roe vs. Wade rights must be upheld, making it a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee the freedom of choice.

Additionally, the Global Gag Rule is cultural arrogance of the highest order, a patriarchal, misogynistic, misguided policy that is so wrong-headed in creating unnecessary suffering that it transcends comprehension. The United States must reverse this policy!

World population has grown by 60% since the first Earth Day in 1970, while family planning funding has been reduced by 40%. This is insanity!!

Unchecked population growth threatens civilization and survival by encouraging overcrowding, aggressive competition for diminishing natural resources, social conflicts and wars, unsustainable consumption, and ecological destruction. We must effect change in this!!!