

# The



**...and the choices that we all need  
to embrace in order to improve the way our planet,  
and everything else within it,  
is treated...**

**Dimitri Harakidas**

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*The chaotic randomness of this world is absolutely marvellous; so much so,  
that it defies all logic and efforts to master it.*

*Dimitri Harakidas*

# Contents

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## Acknowledgements

1. Preface
  2. The Apparently Good Conduct (AGC) VS Actual Effect Equation (AEE)
  3. Morals, Multiculturalism and Politics
  4. Rules
  5. Is Specialisation a Good Thing?
  6. Compensation
  7. Entertainment and Media
  8. Corporations
  9. Democracy
  10. Obsolescence by Design
  11. Credit
  12. Food
  13. Ellada (Greece) – Europe – the World
  14. Environmental Compromise
  15. 99 Choices
  16. Final thoughts and messages
- References

## Acknowledgements

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This book is devoted to all my ancestors, from my parents to every single ancestor going back millennia to the very beginning of the human species when our sole purpose was to procreate, develop, make the bloodline flourish, so that I am now here today, to write these lines. I want to acknowledge with the upmost respect all the striving that my ancestors went through in their lives; many of them even sacrificed their lives, so I would be born free. Freedom is a gift of upmost value in all aspects that I am not prepared to give away for any reason at all. It is then my duty, to devote my very being to the purpose of ensuring that I, my children, their children and all the generations that will follow, will be free in every physical, spiritual and metaphysical sense.

In fact that is not solely my duty; it is the very duty of every soul living on this planet right now, including you.

It is an honour to even realise that my very DNA after thousands of years still resonates strongly to the calling of the very basic sounds and vibrations of the mana earth, still unchanged since the beginning of times. I feel that it is the responsibility of every single one of us to be connected and in tune with our lifeline, our mother earth and our destiny.

I further would like to acknowledge all the original custodians of our lands, who either willingly or not, have allowed us to be where we are today. It is not a coincidence that you are reading these lines right at this very moment, as it is not a coincidence that I wrote these lines.

I also would like to acknowledge the support that I have received from my family and friends that have morally helped me to complete the amazing task of writing this book.

This book is devoted to my two amazing daughters, Eirini and Eleni.

# 1. Preface

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The intention of *The 99* is to make readers think of the Truth and then take united corrective action based on the 99 choices outlined in the last chapter; corrective action which is so readily needed, as I feel that ought to alter the trajectory that we are currently on.

It is hard not to ramble when one is so passionate about something. What is there not to be passionate about? Planet earth? Our environment? The beautiful oceans, forests, flora and fauna? My health? My children's future on this planet? And how about the hard questions that all of us will be asked in fifty years' time such as... 'what on earth were you thinking when you were destroying everything along your way just to make a buck?'

People who make a living by destroying this planet in my view are simply serial criminals and there are no two ways about that. So when you do pick up repetition on my part, just say oh well...here he goes again, smile and be understanding. You will also discover that the concepts of this book are not really new; however you will not find a book that has all of these concepts in it. Any of these chapters could be a PhD task; however my purpose is to bring all of these issues up rather than fully analysing them. This book, instead of tapping into too much technical jargon, which for most is too boring and hard to relate to, is intended to reach your heart and hopefully to make you think in terms of a long-term perspective; namely for the continuation of life on planet earth as we know it, rather than a short-term and egotistical one.

The basic and undeniable fact is this: we live on a planet with finite resources; however we use our finite resources as infinite. That is the absolute reality. That is really where we are at right now – whether you are left wing, right wing, centre or of any other political, religious or scientific persuasion. Either we accept the theory of climate change or not: the undisputable fact is that we are running out of resources very fast and sustainable technology must be put into practice right now. We all think that we must keep the financial wheel running based on the current model; hence we are being short-sighted as our current model assumes infinite financial growth that by definition is not possible given the finite resources available on planet earth.

The most important natural resource available to us is clean, fresh water. An undeniable fact is that more and more water systems are becoming increasingly polluted and that certainly cannot continue as there will be no clean water left for us to use. In the meanwhile poverty, malnourishment and lack of access to clean water are currently at all time high levels, despite the claimed mighty technological advancements that we have 'achieved' during the last two centuries.

I feel really strongly that the usable time that we actually have to make much-needed, on-time, positive changes is running out very fast.

My target readers are everyone, especially though young people who want to start families either now, or in 10-15 years' time. Preparing a beautiful nursery for the baby is nice; futile though when the planet is filled with toxic gases and fluids... So in my eyes the nursery is the whole planet and that is the scope of this book. The planet earth and what we are doing to ensure that we can live in harmony with it; we must also ensure that we leave the world we inherited a far better place to live for the thousands of generations that will follow ours. We owe it to our ancestors and descendants because we are a link in the chain of time, history, culture, evolution and the universe itself and we can't afford to let it break, for any reason. Read on and spread the word.

This book started as an idea. Initially I wanted to write down my thoughts for personal consumption to reflect on my view of how our world is functioning today and just to let off some steam. However I soon realised that my writing needed to be externalised since what I was stating was relevant to every single living entity on this wonderful planet that we live on! I had no idea how it would turn out; in fact I had no idea that I had such clear and strong views about things. When I was about half way along writing this book, I was asked by a friend ‘what type of book is it?’ and I asked him ‘what do you mean?’ He said ‘I mean, what category of book is it?’ As I hadn’t thought about that until that moment, I had to think for a few minutes before I replied ‘it is a political one’. Although ‘political’ really does not express the full nature of this book: it is also environmental, it is about world peace, inner peace, love, beauty, enlightenment, progress and a lot more in that context.

I have used a lot of informal language mainly for two reasons. Firstly because I wanted to be as dramatic and descriptive as I could and secondly because English is my second language. Rest assured that my messages and thoughts are very concise and to the point. This book is not written with winning a literature competition in mind but it is a raw view that I have of the world we live in today; it can be quite challenging to accept some concepts but you will also notice that in writing this book I still leave many questions unanswered. This book effectively is there to jump-start, if you like, your thoughts and opinions and I call for everyone to contribute to this conversation as a matter of urgency. The beginning of each change starts by incorporating changes within, then externalising these changes into personal action. If most of us decide to truly take positive action and start implementing most of the 99 choices/solutions presented in the last chapter, one thing is certain. We will take charge of our destiny and we will be able to live on a happier planet with happier people in a happier environment and that alone will be a reason to be really proud.

‘The time is always right to do what is right.’ – Martin Luther King, Jr.

I also think that we have done a great job with building new technology over the past century and a half and we have gained unprecedented strength and control of this planet. However, our consciousness and real understanding in terms of the vast complexities of our world is still quite limited and is not at the same level as our technological might. We are like a two year old toddler (our consciousness) holding onto a nuclear bomb (technological might). Scary? Yes. Our knowledge is great however our deep understanding is not there yet and we must become humble, at least until we thoroughly develop our consciousness and real understanding of our world, before we unleash more questionable technology out there.

‘Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.’ – Martin Luther King, Jr.

I have absolute faith that one day our good sense will prevail. I honestly believe in the good nature of the vast majority of humans, I truly love the beauty of life and the wonderful challenges it presents constantly; after all, that is what makes it so beautiful. I believe in being a free spirit and honesty. I truly think that we are at the very beginning of our realisation of the workings of our universe so we must be very humble if we are to be in harmony with it. Nothing on this planet is a stand-alone entity. It may appear to be, however that is just appearances; the net of interconnectivity between the elements of our enclosed planetary system are far too intricate for us to understand in our lifetime, at the very least. What really matters is inter-human and inter-environmental relationships as at the end of the day we are all one, despite our colour, race, species and the beliefs that we have. The sooner we realise that we must co-operate rather than compete the better it will be for every living soul on this planet. We enter this world naked and that is exactly how we exit it. Everything else apart from happiness, great health, inner peace, love, harmony and

true enlightenment is really irrelevant. When we decide to drop our weapons, befriend one another and work collectively towards our long-term and enlightened existence, one thing is for sure: we are unstoppable. Rather than ruining one another for some paper currency, we can move out of this paradigm to a new life of universal exploration. If we decide to exist peacefully with our home, planet earth, we will soon discover that earth can and will support us forever. But if we keep on going with our present behaviour, soon we will be spat out just like dinosaurs were, to full extinction.

I truly believe in change; positive change that is. Let me explain with a parable. There was an exquisite painting, a masterpiece. Everyone walking past this painting was spending a considerable amount of time admiring it and especially all the intricate detail and devotion put into it by its creator. One day a person decided to change the painting because he felt that change was needed and would enhance it even more; he grabbed a paint brush and painted over the whole canvas with green paint. The same canvas was still there but all the hard work, time and beauty that was put into this painting was gone forever in a matter of just a few moments. Changes indeed were made to it, but were they for the good? Nothing is perfect though and to improve something that is already great, takes a lot of positive thought and creativity. Either destroying or bettering something is a by-product of thought and action, effectively change. The question is, which one do we prefer or, if you like, which changes does it make real sense to make? And that is precisely what I have tried to achieve in this book. I have tried to make sense out of things and then put things in perspective. You will read about this word many times because I believe the word perspective is a very important one indeed and once we learn how to use it properly, change can only be positive.

Corporations at the moment are having a great time running the world, and it is natural for them not to want to forgo that situation. They will conduct their agenda of their offensive business of ruining our environment and running our lives for as long as we let them do so. The very purpose of this book is to synchronise as many of us as possible so we can collectively make the necessary changes and have this crazy runaway corporate control philosophy brought to a halt. Change can take place from the grassroots; and the grassroots is us, you me and your next door neighbour. It is needless to stress that we owe this change to our children and their children.

Just like grass seeds don't wait around for the others to pop out of the ground,  
so we,  
Humanity-everybody should take personal action  
right now  
and the field is sure to green up  
in no time at all!

As a mechanical engineer I like to go down the road of the workings of various mechanisms. It is a logical process that anyone can follow, providing that he/she can see the various tell-tell signs and aspects of the mechanism's operation. Let's examine what an engineer does when troubleshooting a faulty machine. The engineer must be able to distinguish various parts of it, their individual function and the connectivity of subcomponents, sounds, vibrations, heat produced, etc. It does take a bit of time and focus but anyone could do that. By being able to break down the whole working system of an engine, the assessment of how an engine is performing can be very accurate as each malfunction normally points to a particular cause. Ideally that person will have experienced and seen a well-functioning engine so he/she knows how it performs and sounds when in optimum condition; I would like to stress this point because if one hasn't experienced a really healthy state, either physically, socially or environmentally, one cannot tell the difference. If someone has been eating junk food constantly, for instance, how could they know the difference between junk food and natural ingredients especially when they think that eggs grow on trees? Most people who were born

in the 70s and almost everyone from the 80s onwards has had a different way of upbringing than their parents, in terms of their relationship with their home, the environment, physical dangers, their relationships with elders, natural food, and in many cases it is none. These generations have been spending more and more of their childhood, as time progresses, in front of a screen and not in nature. It is very hard for most of us to realise what we have been missing out on.

Going back to troubleshooting an engine: a broken engine would sound just like an instrument out of tune; the receptive ear of an experienced musician would pick it up straight away.

*An assessment of an engine, a musical instrument or a situation is a logical explanation of various patterns that can be observed; an issue is identified when logic is applied as well as by putting things in perspective, especially when a healthy state of operation has been experienced in the past.*

In fact that is what I am trying to demonstrate with this book. It is about opinions and observations that I have been forming and have been shaping over the course of my life. As I like establishing patterns and connections between things, sometimes my opinions could be considered as far-fetched and unrealistic; but it is my opinion. You, the reader, will decide for yourself after reading each chapter. A cliché expression follows...you need to read each chapter, then you will need to think about it and then try and apply your attention and thoughts in terms of observing these patterns and see if you can read what and why something is happening. I could be completely bonkers, but hopefully I will be able to initiate more questions and healthy debates and ultimately corrective actions.

*We can all talk about issues but the energy of conversation alone is particularly low, as sound has little usable energy in it and in most cases produces no physical change. Action does.*

In some areas I will make certain predictions. In no case do I want to call these predictions prophecies or by any other word of that nature. These predictions are like a weather forecast; various patterns and inputs are observed, analysed and compared to current and historical information and observations. Weather forecasts can be accurate or not; they could be correct in one sense and not another, however for all practical purposes the forecast is based on logic. Similarly I am forecasting certain situations, which are a projection in a logical sense from the inputs, patterns and information that I have captured and analysed.

I was born and I lived in Australia till the age of four when my family eventually moved to Greece. In 1979 Greece was still backward in comparison to the neo-western way of life in the material sense. My younger brother George and I used to spend our three-month school summer breaks at my parents' village called Avarikos with our grandparents. I did not fully realise then – I was actually very lucky to be able to do that. I learned so much that I wouldn't be able to, if I was in the city. I remember during the early days we would have to carry water in big jugs from the plateia as there was no running water at homes. Along the way we would bump into someone that we knew, have a chat about things. Human interaction and exercise was inbuilt into the everyday lifestyle. In fact there were no home phones either at that time; there was only one telephone centre that its operator (Mr Nikos) would call out or send for the recipient of an incoming phone call. That phone centre had green doors but it was a grocery shop as well; it also used to sell lollies. So whenever there was an incoming call for us, the whole village knew about our phone call; and we, the children sometimes used to receive a lolly as a gift from the shop owner. Electricity at the time was at its infancy in the village and the only electric appliances that we had were the lights, the fridge and the iron. All the rest was old-school; wood-fired oven, gas stove, wood-fired hot water system and a donkey for transport. It was an unforgettable period in my life and I wish my daughters had this exposure. I gained experience which cannot be gained today as readily and that is a very important

point; in fact that is the sort of perspective which I have used in some occasions during the writing of this book. We used to ride our bikes anywhere as there were not many cars back then and since the community was very small we were quite safe. I explored so much back then. It was the best school as I was allowed to fall over and hurt myself.

*Learning by experience is far more intense and unforgettable than the one obtained solely by tuition.*

Apart from all of the above I was lucky enough to see how people lived in the old days. If there is a word that could describe the way I saw their way and my way of life, that word would be simple. Life in 2013 is certainly a lot more complicated however in either timeframe people eat, work, enjoy life, learn and sleep but there seem to be notable and interesting differences as well.

1. In the older days people had more time to spend with their loved ones. My mother for instance did not work until I was 15. As a family we did not have a lot of money, however we had our home, great food daily that we all could eat together and a mother who looked after her three sons and husband. In fact most families attained a similar status and none of them were 'well off' in terms of today's neo-western standards. As mainly husbands used to be the sole breadwinners, the mothers at home were able to shape their children in a customary way. Family principles were able to be passed from one generation to the next. Interference from TV and media was still at very low levels. Interestingly enough more families stayed as a unit for many years. I so admire couples celebrating 20, 30, 40, 50 and more years together. In the current state of affairs both husband and wife must work just to keep the water level of the financially sinking boat in check. Maybe there is a family meal on a Sunday; in many cases takeaway or microwaved food are the normal meal. Quality time is really limited and some studies show that it can be as low as half an hour per day. Children are being brought up in childcare centres and they are no longer exposed to a customary way of upbringing. Family values can no longer be transferred to the next generation in the same way as they used to. While spending six to ten hours at a childcare centre they only receive generic information. There is no way to teach each child individually as you would if there was a child and its mother scenario. Family enhances individualism and serves as the agent of passing on traditional values; child care only does so to some extent, at best. Divorce rates are at record highs; and no wonder – everyone is so stressed and mainly interested in their own career.
2. Back then people scored a lot higher than they do today in terms of happiness. Let me emphasise that I am talking in general terms. Every argument has its exceptions too. Maybe they used to be happier then for the reasons mentioned below:
  - a. They had to worry about fewer things. Consumers were not exposed to fashion trends as much because consumerism was not as established then. Shopping for new things constantly was not a normal thing. When people had time off, they used to go and visit their friends at their homes and occasionally they would meet at a restaurant. Parents used to play with their children. My father for six years, five days a week non-stop used to devote his afternoons at the swimming pool for two to three hours each day while we were training. Today this can hardly happen as most are stuck working till late because they have to, most of the time.
  - b. People used to physically exert themselves, since most jobs back then were physical or manual. As many studies have shown our bodies are designed to move, in fact the more we move the happier we feel. Our lymphatic system can only discharge toxins when we exercise. In fact it has no other way of doing it. So as most of us sit in front of a computer working the whole day, the level of physical activity is very limited.

After-hours gym or other exercise is required, hence reducing time with loved ones even more.

*Effectively our lifestyles today are very fragmented; separate time for work, separate time for exercise, separate time for socialising. It has become so regimented and fixed within time constraints that we need to function like clockwork in order to do things. There is no natural flow.*

- c. Manual work usually has visible results. For example a baker can see the loaf of bread that he just made so he has a sense of achievement from it. He can see that his efforts directly lead to a result.

*Throughout our history predominantly we have had the cause and effect experience for what we did. Sitting in front of a computer in a sterile environment hardly has the same results.*

In my view when people don't have a real sense of achievement in the long-term, it leads to dissatisfaction. It is human nature to avoid pain so it is normal that people strive to look for easy jobs and solutions. Manual work is harder than office work in a physical sense but who is to say that office work is better in the long term? And why is manual work frowned upon?

- d. Weather patterns have changed and are changing because of our activities. Weather patterns are linked to psychological patterns as well. We prefer stable weather where our body can relax and adjust slowly to it, as opposed to having all four seasons in one day.
- e. Food used to be pure. Today pure food is hard to find and for most is not accessible as it is very expensive. Good food as we all know is linked to well-being and the lack of it leads to ill health, both physical and mental.
- f. I am coming back to time, as time is of the essence when we talk in terms of life.

*Ultimately what determines whether we have a fulfilling life is what we spend our time on. And that factor has shifted a lot over the years; it has shifted towards paying off mortgages and credit cards.*

Why has the value of everything meaningful increased by so much? And why is everyone chasing material things so much when we know that when we go everything stays here?

Interestingly enough, the top three regrets that males had when asked on their death bed, revolved around working too hard and not spending their time more wisely in terms of family time, personal time and personal fulfilment.

- g. Debt and credit. I am sure that everyone is familiar with these two terms. Credit is an invention of the financial industry in order to accelerate the process of disassembly of the society. I will talk about this in another chapter. It's ok to buy something and you will pay for it next month or next year or in 30 years in case of a mortgage. If there was no credit, the world as we know it today would have been so different. In my view credit is the core of most problems that we are up against.

'If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values – that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.' – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Like most of us, I was always saying to myself that one day I will write a book. Until mid-December 2012 I had no compelling reason to write a book as such; it was then that I read the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of a really interesting book called 'The ant and the Ferrari' by Kerry Spackman. Something within overpowered me and soon later I realised that I needed to start writing my views in black and white as I had to vent out all of these thoughts. Good or bad decision...I shall find out. At some points of this book it may appear that some of my views are conservative (not politically speaking). Maybe

they are at times, sometimes being conservative is good. Principles like the laws of physics are truly important, so as we lose certain basic principles our lives become more and more confusing and nothing makes sense. Things don't always have to make sense, however walking along the middle road requires a fine balance between the logical (as we have a mind) and the non logical (as we have feelings). I wish I had had the courage to write this book ten years ago as I would probably have been able to influence a lot more in advance. As we are told by the scientific community, we are running out of time however we still have some time for timely corrective action. We need to move fast in order to get out of trouble. Of course whether we are in trouble or not is to be determined either by initiating immediate action or by just letting things happen as they are now and finding out 50 years later.

I will use the frog analogy here. If you take a frog and place it in a saucepan filled with cold water the frog will sit happily in it. When you turn the heat on gradually and systematically, the frog will hardly feel the temperature rise. When it does it will probably be too late. If on the other hand we have a saucepan full of boiling water and we try to throw the frog in it, the frog will jump out really quickly. I believe we as humans and society find ourselves in the first scenario. Things around us are happening in such a slow and methodical way that it is very hard to gauge what is going on, unless one decides to look back at recent history and put things in perspective. That is what I am attempting here and I think if you persist and read the whole book, surely at least one of the arguments I present will resonate with you.

Read on, have fun, argue within, talk to your peers, get moving! We only live once, let's make it count!

## 2. The Apparently Good Conduct (AGC) VS Actual Effect Equation (AEE)

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The title may sound confusing, but let me explain. Generally humans have a good nature and rarely want to cause harm; however when the perspective through which we can view our activities has been removed or altered, it is quite difficult at times to determine if the *effect* of these activities that we think are good for us and society, is actually good or bad; in fact we may think that the effect is good mostly and/or at least most of the time. That is because we focus and operate in the realm of a very small piece of the puzzle, called our everyday life. The puzzle has billions of pieces each one of them representing a human life and every other single living being on this planet, so looking at only one piece of the puzzle can hardly give us the perspective of the whole picture. If you zoom into a photo at the pixel level (piece of a puzzle), you will find that the screen is filled with one colour. Imagine that this is you and your activities in the middle of this gigantic puzzle with billions of pieces. Just by looking at the pixel, there is no way to determine what the puzzle is all about. Even if you zoom out to the region of 200-500 pieces (assuming that is how many people you may know) compared to the billions of pieces, 500 pieces represent a minimal fraction of the whole picture. More difficult, also, is to make a distinction between a good or a bad function when seemingly everything that we do causes no harm to the person or surroundings that we are directly dealing with; that is because we cannot determine whether our incremented activities are good or bad unless the whole set of actions and activities (the whole puzzle) around them is put in perspective and each piece is seen in relation to the others. In other words, the conduct that is done, apparently, with a particular purpose in mind, ends up having other impacts that were not necessarily foreseen by the people doing it. For this reason, a sub-title could have been used above to describe the Actual Effect: and that is Unintended Consequences (UC).

As we are all might be aware, our world today is facing quite a few pressing challenges: from environmental issues throughout the planet due to human activities, the demand for resources, overpopulation, all the way to the impending water and food crisis. The main culprit of course is us, the ones who live in western society and where the only thing that we advocate, is total control of the planet and its resources, as if the universe was tailor-made just for us, humans. How naïve and how arrogant indeed! The devastations that we are facing mainly stem from our totally excessive lifestyle. We are trying to educate our young children on how to avoid drug habits, because drugs will be detrimental to their lives; meanwhile we are treating our planet with contempt, as if we can move out of it when we are finished with it and somehow move to another planet and start the process of destruction all over again. We are calling ourselves 'humanitarian' because we provide just enough food to the starving, so they can procreate again, hence the starvation problem and the food stress only gets worse. We have decided to totally detach ourselves from the food chain and healthy competition for food with other fellow species – a process that has worked extremely well for millions of years; all of a sudden it is not good enough for us humans, and in order for us to survive, every other species that poses threat to our 'well-being' is doomed.

It is actually very intriguing to consider, what are we really thinking about? Why are we ignoring our pressing problems and instead conveniently worshipping at the altar of profits and a globally controlled economy? Unless we try to diversify our survival activities again, diversify the way we live again, diversify how we obtain our food again, and more specifically take the actions described in the last chapter of this book, the monopoly set-up will continue to work for the very, very few, and our world will never be the same again; welcoming and life nourishing. These challenges are the result of chronic and problematic behaviour that the minority population of our planet has been

engaging in for the last 200-300 years; however the effects are widespread and universal now. In this chapter I will analyse conduct and actions which, seemingly, are good or at least not bad (hence they are positive +) and are accepted and embraced by our socioeconomic system, however in reality they are not what they appear to be: at least most of them. The scope of this chapter is not to analyse conduct and actions which are directly controlled by rules, for example speeding in a car or stealing. It is my main intention to arouse thought, however the point here is the net *effect* (thought-arousing) and not the apparently good or bad examples that you may or not agree with!

### **Analysis**

'At a take away café, the owner is serving coffee to his/her customers; the coffee is great and the customers are very satisfied and happily in return pay for their coffee. The coffee is served in a single use paper/plastic takeaway container that will be thrown into the garbage bin after the coffee has been consumed. Apparently in this scenario everything is very civilised and no-one gets hurt and it is a win-win situation for both customers and café owner. Above all, the whole small picture is within the legal and accepted ethical constraints of our socioeconomic system. If we zoom out of this piece of the puzzle though, we will see a larger part of the picture. Let me demonstrate by only analysing the takeaway container component of this example and I will conveniently ignore (as we all do in our daily lives because it's a lot easier that way) the other components of the process such as the milk, the sugar sachets and the single-use timber coffee stirrer, the coal-produced electricity, the fossil-fuel based transportation of all goods (just to name a few) used to complete the process. Not to mention where the coffee beans come from and what the farmers and workers are paid for their work to produce them.(By the way, I chose this very simplistic example so everyone can relate to it).

Paper cups are the least expensive and the most widely used beverage-serving items. The base material may be recyclable; however paper cups must be coated with a polyethylene plastic to prevent damage to the cups from hot beverages. Most recycling facilities are unable to separate the polyethylene shell from the paper and these cups end up in landfills where they eventually decompose, releasing carbon dioxide and methane<sup>1</sup>.

Polystyrene foam cups can be washed and reused in theory, but are seldom reused in practice. They can be recycled as well, however they are not widely recycled due to lack of incentives to invest in compactors and the logistical systems required for recycling polystyrene economically. Unlike paper cups, where the paper element of the cup would biodegrade, polystyrene foam cups are non-biodegradable and will remain intact in landfills for hundreds of years.

Ceramic cups must be fired at high temperature in a kiln during manufacture, but can be reused hundreds or thousands of times. Ceramic cups can be used in microwave ovens and refrigerators; however they need to be handled carefully to ensure a long service life. Ceramic shards do not decompose readily and are not responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions on disposal.

A single ceramic cup is used in place of multiple disposable cups. In fact the average ceramic cup is used 2,000 times before it breaks and is disposed of. Therefore to allow a fair comparison between the two, a comparison of the energy required for the number of servings throughout the life of the ceramic cup is more appropriate.

Not only do paper cups have 3.14 times the emissions from energy use after 2000 servings compared to ceramic cups for the same number of cycles, the landfill component is totally out of proportion at 383.45 times in favour of the huge volume of paper cups. Included in the calculations were the emissions and energy required for washing ceramic cups.

Next time you go to a coffee shop, ask the coffee owner to show you the size of a box that contains 500 professionally packed medium size cups and then compare that with the size of a single ceramic cup; then try to imagine whether you could fill a dump skip with 500 scattered paper cups. Let's assume that the size of the box is 500 x 500 x 500mm and it contains 500 cups in 25 columns of 20 cups. In the box, one cup has a height of 500mm divided by 20 cups = 25mm as cups fit within each other. The actual height of a free standing cup is 100mm. Let's multiply 100mm by 20 cups in each column of cups = 2000mm or 2m. Then you could think how many of those you are using per day/week/year and then multiply by the millions of users around the world and let's also assume that you are an average user. Can you even read the number? Can you multiply this number by the number of years you think that this has been happening? I hope you do get the point. And that was only about our daily coffee habit. How about our soft drinks, bottled water and juice bottles/containers? And how about the pizza boxes, plastic bags, take away plastic food containers and burger boxes that we use? I am not going to analyse plastic bottles and carton boxes used to store beverages for a single use. Are there any volunteers to do the calculations on that one?

'After this diversion, let's return to the point. Figure 1 compares the energy required per 2000 servings for paper, polystyrene and ceramic cups. The 'break even count' shows that on average, ceramic cups must be used at least 31 times to justify a corporate policy switch from paper to ceramic; and on average 354 times to justify a switch from polystyrene.

**Figure 1.**

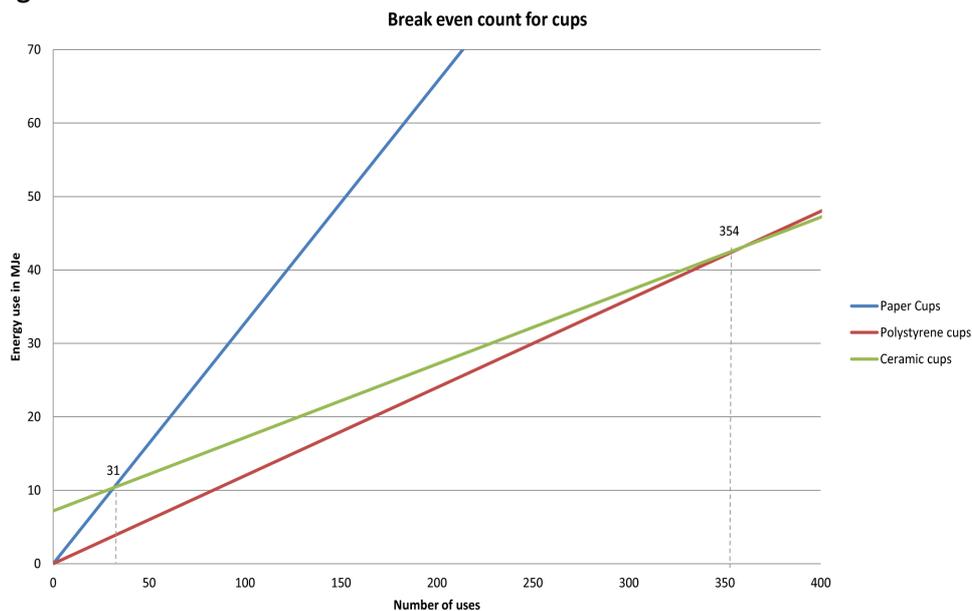


Table 1 shows total greenhouse gas emissions generated from energy use per 2000 servings. The ceramic cup clearly wins the water cooler debate, with the lowest energy requirement on a per serving basis. The ceramic cup also has the fewest carbon emissions from energy use.

Similarly to polystyrene foam cups, ceramic cups are non-biodegradable and therefore do not have emissions from landfill. In addition to this, the use of ceramic cups avoids accumulation of disposable cups in landfills as a single ceramic cup lasts several years and displaces the use of thousands of disposable cups.

**Table 1: Environmental benefits**

	Paper Cups	Polystyrene Cups	Ceramic Cups
Emissions from energy use during 2000 servings <sup>vii</sup>	1.1 TCO <sub>2e</sub>	0.43 TCO <sub>2e</sub>	0.35 TCO <sub>2e</sub>
Emissions from Landfill (per 2000 servings) <sup>viii</sup>	38kg CO <sub>2e</sub>	Negligible	Negligible
Volume required in the landfill <sup>ix</sup> (per 2000 servings)	51,000 cm <sup>3</sup>	100,000cm <sup>3</sup>	133 cm <sup>3</sup>

Environmental impact from cutting trees and habitat destruction, impact on traffic for transporting cups and waste both in terms of noise pollution and traffic incidents, plastic bags used to dispose of these cups, cleaning related costs and impacts have not been taken into account in the above analysis’.

The above information was taken from [www.carbon-clear.com](http://www.carbon-clear.com) Carbon Clear<sup>2</sup>.

As we can see, there is a lot more that is going on than the very simple transaction of a takeaway coffee purchase and a similar effect is derived from most of our daily activities. Not only do our habits affect our health, but we also affect everyone else through them. Remember that we are all connected in one way or another. Employers are liable for work safety breaches in most cases; so why aren’t we acting in the same manner by improving our living conditions and our habits? At the end of the day one thing is for sure: we need clean water, air and food to survive. How can we even contemplate a life without these precious and life supporting resources?

Would you ever bungee jump without a bungee, hoping that you will catch one on the way down?

So to counteract our crazy behaviour, we have billionaire advocates/investors that have already started the propaganda for geo-engineering<sup>3</sup>:

And yes! Let’s spray the WHOLE atmosphere with chemicals so that we can cool down the planet by one degree centigrade.

What an awesome scenario! Really?? Our so-advanced technology and superior know-how tells us that the best solution is to keep on going as we do today and then in a couple of decades we will have to start our climate tweaking via spraying more chemicals into the atmosphere...

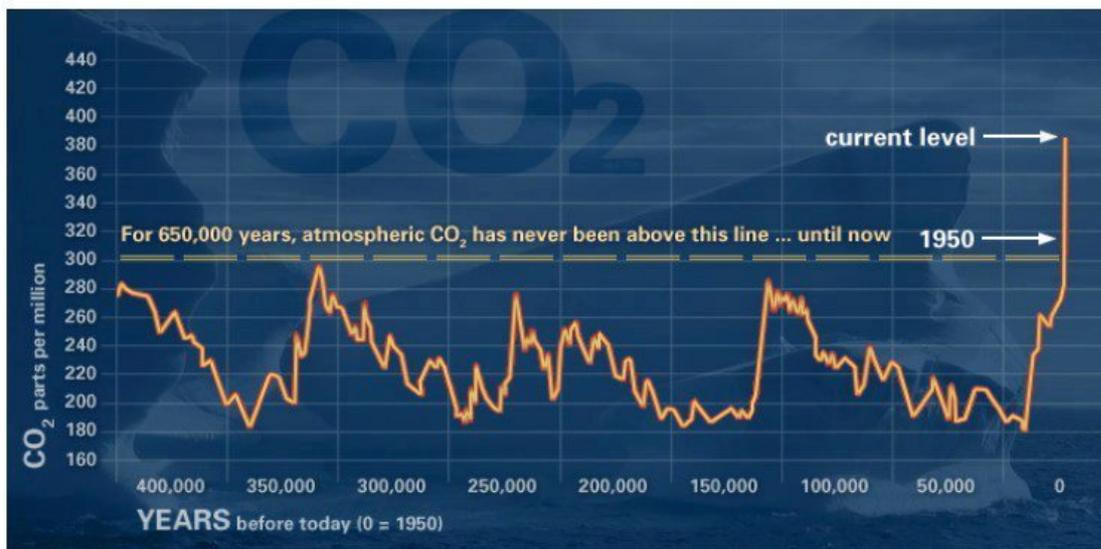
What would you rather do: change your lifestyle a fair bit so the atmosphere will be clean again and the weather relatively stable or do nothing and face consequences? I would like you to think who the victim is going to be if such a scenarios fails.... Consider this: if you hadn’t eaten for ten days and at the very best you had a 50-50 chance of survival if you ate a wild mushroom, what would you do? Would you wait to find out whether the mushroom is deadly or wait for something else to come up? The wild mushroom is something that you can see in front of your very eyes and the hunger is what you feel at this very moment; however in that situation I would not choose to eat something that could kill me, even if I had just 5% chance of dying. Or would you rather have this wild mushroom sugar-coated, so you would not feel that uncomfortable when you did decide to eat it...?

Very strong scientific evidence shows that we are looking at a temperature increase of 4-6 or more degrees centigrade in the next 85 years if we do nothing about it today ... and the ‘experts’ proposing geo-engineering are going to make a huge difference by dropping the 6 degrees by 1. What will happen with so much acid and other chemicals that climate engineers are planning to spray in our atmosphere? Does anyone know or dare to speak out? They only thing that they think

about is the 50 to 1 return on their investment...! I will only bring up acid rain in our forests and the effects. Imagine the same situation existed everywhere on the planet. Our green and blue planet will turn to a brown and dead-looking colour. Imagine how 'good' our life will be then. What will happen to our bees that we so much rely on to pollinate plants? What will happen to the plants themselves? What will happen to our world? Can we stop for a moment and really think about it? Is it what we really want for our lives? What will happen to the fresh and blue air, the oceans and mountains?

Figure 2.

## Climate change: How do we know?



The graph above was published by NASA in early 2013. It clearly shows that the CO<sub>2</sub> levels have literally skyrocketed since 1950. It also shows very clearly that CO<sub>2</sub> levels fluctuate naturally, however they did not rise above 300ppm (parts per million) for 650,000 years. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2013 concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> hit 400ppm and still rising. For more information go to <http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence>

If some want to keep on making money while destroying the way of life of 100% of the living organisms on this planet we simply must not let them continue to do so. Since we claim that we are civilised and moral, stopping these individuals should be as easy as stopping a murderer from committing more crimes by throwing them in jail for good.

In this chapter I am attempting to demonstrate that the conduct perceived by many as apparently good in most cases is not what it initially appears to be and that our actions are best judged by the end result instead. At the end of the day the end result counts (the whole picture) and not the individual pieces of the puzzle. I will start by analysing apparently good conduct which in my view has universal effect. It may appear weird to have included certain items below as apparently good, however what counts is that these things are happening right now, irrespective of the fact that you may think that they are good or bad. If something is happening in a mass scale, it means that there has been a massive amount of energy put to this project; hence its creator has advocated/lobbied to many people convincing them that his/her project or activity or work is good. Below are some examples:

## 1. Production of GM foods

During the last two decades there has been a great push from certain corporations via heavy lobbying to governments, certain consumer groups and associations for genetically modified crops to be used in lieu of the ancient and natural crops, with the pretence that they would increase crop size and yield returns. Another promise about these magic crops was the reduction of pesticides required to keep these crops healthy. Although that theory has worked in practice just for a few years, the after-effects are hitting growers and farmers globally with devastating effects for local environments, local natural balance and depletion of soils resulting in suicides of desperate farmers because they cannot afford the *whole* process every year. In fact just after a few years, life forms that are supposed to be killed or repulsed by these GM crops, have developed resistance (of course they have) and in turn more pesticides than ever before must be used in order to counteract these new super-pests. On May 1 2013, the US EPA ruled to increase permissible traces of herbicide on crops. Flax and soybeans, for example, could previously contain only 20 ppm of glyphosate. Now these crops can contain 40 ppm.

Experiments on subject animals have also shown devastating effects on their health when they were fed exclusively by GM foods; results have shown genetic malfunctions, early disease and subsequently early death. Why on earth are they allowed to develop genetically altered seeds and then allowed to monopolise the global seed market? Research upon research has shown that GM seeds and food are not only catastrophic for the environment but for consumers as well. Their effects in the food chain are devastating. Recent experiments have shown that when mice were fed wholly by GM food and then reproduced, their offspring were deformed beyond recognition in some cases. Why are these companies allowed to do something like that? Once again the 'unforeseen' effects of their actions are causing much bigger problems than those they were initially designed to fix. In terms of apparent behaviour these scientists are like you and me doing their forty-hour week; seemingly they are doing the right thing. They have a job, right? But what does their work do for everybody else on this planet? For some money and associated power, we are changing the very genetic code that evolution has beautifully created and has brought us to this very day. Is it really morally right manipulating the very code of life just to earn money? And why are people even allowed to invest in these companies? Just to make money; nothing else matters? As I mentioned before, their greed and short-sightedness creates demand for these technologies to be developed. What has happened to morals when it comes to profits? Why don't governments look at companies very closely when they start to trade, in terms of what these companies do to make money? And why are these companies even allowed to be listed in the share market? Where are the ethics? Why do ethics apply only to everyday people and not corporations? Why are they above the law? Why are they considered better than everyone else and why do they have more rights than anyone else? Well of course, it is the totally free and uncontrolled markets thing again...

I would like to see investors and owners of these GM industries actually consume the poison that they produce; not just once, but all the time. Because if they think that this stuff is good, they should be the ones eating it, right? In addition I would like to see the law being heavy-handed on them for all the suicides that farmers in despair are committing because of their products.

And what would the difference be, between the so-called terrorists and GM seed manufacturing companies? What is the difference in the *effect* of their actions? The topic of GM foods is analysed further in the food chapter.

## **2. Petrochemical exploration**

We need energy to conduct our daily lives and there is absolutely no argument about that. The whole planet is energy – free energy ready to be tapped, in a fully sustainable way.

Seriously, whatever is buried in the ground is buried there for a reason and that is especially applicable for fossil fuels of any sort. We have all seen the effects of air pollution in cities, we know the environmental and health side-effects associated with using fossil fuels, however we still insist on using them like there is no tomorrow. In addition the extraction of these resources in many cases demands risky operations resulting in devastating disasters, just like the one in the Gulf of Mexico very recently. The sinking of oil-carrying ships and associated accidents are not uncommon either, and in turn they cause huge localised environmental disasters. Forests are destroyed, wars in the name of democracy take place and millions of people suffer and die because of our hunger for fossil fuels. One could ask: what for? Knowing that there are alternative technologies which would make fossil fuels redundant, but instead, these new technologies are muzzled by fossil-fuel corporations, associated media corporations and governments.

Is that what we call civilization? Apparently ‘yes’ and that is a fundamental problem because we like misusing words when it is convenient to do so, especially when the argument of short-term financial prosperity is put on the table. We use fossil fuels because they are cheap; cheap they are, however how cheap are the environmental effects from climate change? Have you ever thought about the increasing storms and natural disasters and how expensive they are? How about the increasing insurance premiums? How about the disruptions and deaths caused by associated natural disasters? Why instead of considering/placing all the related factors into the workings of the equation would we ignore the costly factors and insist on using failed and out-dated technologies instead?

## **3. Lawyers defending clients irrespective of the ethical issues**

The legal responsibility to provide representation to both parties and to ensure due process is understandable, however too often lawyers will bend the truth in order to secure a favourable result for their client irrespective of the status of the defendant and the moral implications. The question is, though, why is the focus on the best result for the offender client, rather than being on the best interests of justice itself? Why when unshakable evidence demonstrates full guilt of an individual, a company or a corporation, is this client, a client in the first place? Although being innocent until proven guilty is in my view the right way to deal with these situations – everyone needs to be defended – in cases where a party is definitely guilty there shouldn't be any form of represented defence. Simply put, when someone receives a parking ticket, the decision is final and it makes no difference why the driver was five minutes late. Why, then, when crimes against humanity have been committed, an environmental catastrophe has eventuated, and so on, the accused deserves defence while the poor citizen that overran the parking allowance by five minutes has no chance of redemption?

My problem with this is not the fact that technical lawlessness is being defended, but the fact that certain cases are seen merely as a sport by lawyers and their main objective is to win the match, no matter what the means are, or what loopholes are used in order to do so and what the effects on the world are. A very recent example is the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (also referred to as the BP oil disaster) in the Gulf of Mexico.

“‘It’s as safe as Dawn dishwashing liquid.’ That’s what Jamie Griffin says the BP man told her about the smelly, rainbow-streaked gunk coating the floor of the ‘floating hotel’ where Griffin was feeding hundreds of cleanup workers during the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Apparently, the workers were tracking the gunk inside on their boots. Griffin, as chief cook and maid, was trying to clean it. But even boiling water didn’t work.

‘The BP representative said, “Jamie, just mop it like you’d mop any other dirty floor,” Griffin recalls in her Louisiana drawl.

‘It was the opening weeks of what everyone, echoing President Barack Obama, was calling “the worst environmental disaster in American history.” At 9:45 p.m. local time on April 20, 2010, a fiery explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig had killed 11 workers and injured 17. One mile underwater, the Macondo well had blown apart, unleashing a gusher of oil into the gulf. At risk were fishing areas that supplied one-third of the seafood consumed in the U.S., beaches from Texas to Florida that drew billions of dollars’ worth of tourism to local economies, and Obama’s chances of re-election. Republicans were blaming him for mishandling the disaster, his poll numbers were falling, even his 11-year-old daughter was demanding, “Daddy, did you plug the hole yet?”

‘Griffin did as she was told: “I tried Pine-Sol, bleach; I even tried Dawn on those floors.” As she scrubbed, the mix of cleanser and gunk occasionally splashed onto her arms and face.

‘Within days, the 32-year-old single mother was coughing up blood and suffering constant headaches. She lost her voice. “My throat felt like I’d swallowed razor blades,” she says.

‘Then things got much worse.

‘Like hundreds, possibly thousands, of workers on the cleanup, Griffin soon fell ill with a cluster of excruciating, bizarre, grotesque ailments. By July, unstoppable muscle spasms were twisting her hands into immovable claws. In August, she began losing her short-term memory. After cooking professionally for 10 years, she couldn’t remember the recipe for vegetable soup; one morning, she got in the car to go to work, only to discover she hadn’t put on pants. The right side, but only the right side, of her body “started acting crazy. It felt like the nerves were coming out of my skin. It was so painful. My right leg swelled — my ankle would get as wide as my calf — and my skin got incredibly itchy.”

““These are the same symptoms experienced by soldiers who returned from the Persian Gulf War with Gulf War syndrome,” says Michael Robichaux, a Louisiana physician and former state senator, who treated Griffin and 113 other patients with similar complaints. As a general practitioner, Robichaux says he had “never seen this grouping of symptoms together: skin problems, neurological impairments, plus pulmonary problems.” Only months later, after Kaye H. Kilburn, a former professor of medicine at the University of Southern California and one of the nation’s leading environmental health experts, came to Louisiana and tested 14 of Robichaux’s patients did the two physicians make the connection with Gulf War syndrome, the

malady that afflicted an estimated 250,000 veterans of that war with a mysterious combination of fatigue, skin inflammation, and cognitive problems.

‘Meanwhile, the well kept haemorrhaging oil. The world watched with bated breath as BP failed in one attempt after another to stop the leak. An agonising 87 days passed before the well was finally plugged on July 15. By then, 210 million gallons of Louisiana sweet crude had escaped into the Gulf of Mexico, according to government estimates, making the BP disaster the largest accidental oil leak in world history.’ – by Mark Hertsgaard<sup>4</sup>

#### **4. Cutting trees for a living**

There is nothing that anyone could say to me to justify logging of virgin and ancient forests. Logging is the ultimate demonstration of how primitive we are as living beings. Our civilization is still based on destruction of the natural habitat for its very survival. In fact all of the animals ‘inferior’ to us are doing a much better job in maintaining what is there, and they know something that we don’t: how to live in harmony with our only home. Any argument on this is like having a lawyer defending a proven criminal and that’s how far it goes. We have cleared enough land already in our quest to civilize this planet and if we are as good as we claim we are, there would be no need to cut any more forests. Instead, we would utilise the arable lands that we have already created in order to grow what we need in order to serve our purposes.

When there is a bushfire, seemingly for us the only thing that matters is whether houses and human lives are at risk. As without doubt human life is important, so are the lives of trees, animals and the whole ecosystem that has been destroyed by the fire. If anything, all living species have the same right to live on this planet and every life, is a life; every life should have the same value, as all life is an inseparable part of the wonderful chain of life. All chain links are the same in value, even though they might have different colours or be made from different materials; if a link goes so does the whole chain eventually. For that very reason, cutting trees and animals with them should be a criminal offence and not an honourable job. I also understand that people need to work and that forestry as they call it has thousands of people employed; it might make great financial sense cutting trees and exploiting forests, however one day when we have none left we will have to think about alternative jobs anyway. Why don’t we do it now and save what is left for our future generations?

#### **5. Bringing democracy to ‘needy’ and ‘under-developed’ nations**

The US is notorious for having an apparently altruistic desire to bring democracy to the world, no matter what the consequences are. During the last 50 years there have been millions of deaths in the name of democracy just like during the Crusades and the spreading of Christianity. It is so very nice of the US to want to spread democratic civilization throughout the world, especially in countries rich in natural resources such as oil.

#### **6. Privatising education**

Education is undoubtedly the future foundation of our civilization. Having the right education delivered to all will determine whether we are going to have a prosperous future or not. However, giving good education only to people with a good financial status is nothing more than having an heir inheriting the king’s throne even though the heir is retarded. Privatisation of education is considered to be the remedy for governments that want to downsize and save money; however that is not the case, because of the gigantic

costs associated with the lack of good education for all, which are evident in social and economic crises in certain poorer areas of societies. Apart from speaking of costs, the main effect of this apparently good conduct in terms of initial monetary savings, is a society which has inbuilt intellectual and socioeconomic gaps which are becoming wider and wider.

### **7. Privatising utilities**

Utilities in almost every country have been built via tax payer's contributions for many generations. They belong to people and they are for all. We have also been paying increasing levels of direct or indirect tax to our governments, while governments have been shrinking through privatisations. How is that possible? Is it because these utilities are actually profitable and when sold off to corporations, governments need to raise more money from taxes just to survive? And why are corporations given rights over our water and energy? Water for example is already a monopoly since there is only one source of water. Naturally in a monopoly situation the result is price hikes and declining service levels. Refer to the recent history of the private water industry in France. Water and energy networks are worth billions and are sold off only for millions. Why?

### **8. Buying more and more products in order to support our economy**

GDP is the master indicator of our economic prosperity. Share markets, businesses and governments look at this indicator religiously. It is expressed by the equation shown below:

$$GDP = private\ consumption + gross\ investment + government\ spending + (exports - imports)$$

This index has been the reference point for economies in terms of their performance and would only work in an infinite resource environment. Since we live on a planet with finite resources, perpetual growth is simply not feasible; hence the GDP index is simply short-lived and is grossly misrepresenting the real effects of our actions and 'secondary' impacts of the economic system in the environment and our long-term prosperity as a species.

In other words, when a household instead of having one TV set has two, three, four of them, or more, the use of energy and resources required to source materials, make them, transport and operate them, ultimately is good for the economy but not that good at all for the long-term survival of the planet. That is the choice that we must consciously make. Obviously the world will not be doomed if we have multiple TV sets alone in a household, however if we consider all the other factors such as fossil-fuel based miracle economic development, multiple vehicles per capita, multiple computers per capita, multiple or too many clothes and shoes per capita, excessive air travel per capita, excessive eating per capita etc, you will soon realise that our effective impact on our future is quite significant. If you think for a minute of a T-shirt and its volume; think of the collective volume of six billion T-shirts if everyone had one. Last time I looked at my wardrobe, I had about twenty...the same applies for shoes, furniture, food, and anything else you can think of...

### **9. Privatising broadcasting outlets**

The main concern for corporations is to make money; the way that they achieve that is irrelevant. This is a huge moral breach and the effects are dramatic. The majority of media outlets for instance over the last few decades in the western world have been owned by money- and power-hungry corporations. Apart from their normal stream of income which is through advertisements, media corporations serve corporate interests in other ways as well. For argument's sake, when there is a coal-mining magnate sitting on the board of a

news broadcasting channel (TV, Radio, print media, internet), logically one might assume that the coal miner has their own agenda and wants to influence what is broadcasted through the media that they control. Inherently news reports that we are exposed to are tampered with, hence they are inaccurate, hence they are serving a purpose other than the one that the media is there for in the first place: the actual right to freedom of speech for the majority, and not for the very few. Because currently freedom of speech is there mainly for the big money interests; fair enough, we can say what we want on the internet, but most of the time our comments have a very limited audience. In cases where people want to express their angst through rallies, police forces almost always make sure that their numbers and power will be strong enough to dissolve such rallies at any given time. Since the financial and other interests of corporations are so huge, they do their best to have their opinions voiced as much as possible and hence their advocates/offsidiers get lots of kickbacks in direct return for publicity that is required for the corporations to deliver their heavily subjective and many times not for the common good, messages. Conversely, opponents of such interests either get muzzled or can't even finish their sentences. Media and the effects of corporate ownership are analysed further in chapter 7.

As I'm sure you have realised this is only a small number of examples but they can be used as a guide to apply the principle to other scenarios. As I have already said it is the end result that really counts. I don't want to make you upset; I want you to realise the situation and then start making the right adaptations to your behaviour in order to avoid really big trouble ahead if you do nothing about it. Remember, the end result counts and not who is doing what.

Let me further demonstrate what I mean by substituting these factors in a simple primary-school level equation. Probably it is a good time to mention that the assumption is that since we are moral, for these actions to take place, our moral values must approve of them and in turn are considered to be apparently good conducts hence positive.

Below is the equation:

First part are the already mentioned points above... Apparently Good Conduct (AGC)

• GM food and crops	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Petrochemical explorations	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Lawyers defending clients irrespective of the ethical issues	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Buying more and more products to support our economy	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Privatising broadcasting outlets	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Privatising utilities	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Cutting trees for living	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Privatising education	(AGC) considered positive	+
• Bringing 'democracy' to 'needy' and 'under-developed' nations	(AGC) considered positive	+

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**Actual result of equation as per obvious assumption:**

Hence the (Actual Effect is not good) so it makes a negative...right? -

The result of this impossible equation reflects the current state of affairs (or *the effect*) at the global level and by looking at the state of the environment, animal welfare, human welfare, human physical and mental health, the current global financial state, political affairs and crises within them, terrorism, violence, natural disasters, climate change, the widening gap between rich and poor, personal debts, government debts and the dislocation of societal morals, one might conclude that

the state is more negative than positive. If you don't believe me; look at the statistics. Effectively the second part of the equation (bottom line) is the *effect* and as I mentioned in this paragraph the effect is not as good as we want it to be.

Another way to simply express the above impossible equation based on the examples above is this: Apparently good conduct = Not good effects. Once again it does not work. Why though?

The only conclusion from the above equation is that it is flawed. Either the first part is right, or the second is. Both cannot exist together and make this equation work in a sound mathematical sense. From experience and the facts around us, we know that the effect of the sum of many of our actions is not good; hence the second part of the equation is correct and the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the factors in the first part of the equation are incorrect by either considering them or labelling them as good/positive. The apparently good conduct is a masked sum of ill and destructive conduct labelled as good.

Obviously, our lives are not a mathematical equation and our lives cannot be summed up just the way I did, however I wanted to demonstrate to you in a very simplistic way, that what we may think is one way, might actually be another; and that is the key of my argument. The rest is up to you; just sit and think about certain things.

Further analysis of the factors in the first part of the equation looking at each factor separately could also show that either some elements of conduct are good as perceived by each one of us, and in turn some others are really bad causing a negative overall effect. Our job then would be to identify the good parts and promote them; and in turn try to really work hard on the bad points in order to move the effect into the positive area.

Either way, whether you agree with my examples or not, something is not working very well and even if during our daily conduct we have a good feeling about what we do and achieve, somewhere and somehow we are failing. Ultimately our responsibility to our ancestors and our children is to work on what is wrong in the situation that we are currently in.

This book hopefully will break down some of the elements which I think are crucially important and connected in order to derive the 'not good effect' that we are all experiencing. We will look at different problems, in my view, that our world is experiencing and the last chapter of this book lists and analyses 99 ways to make our world a better place for thousands of future generations.

### 3. Morals, Multiculturalism and Politics

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This chapter was one of the most difficult ones to write. It is so hard to make points about morals and not 'attack' someone personally. I would like to apologise in advance if I have disturbed you, however I could not find another way to demonstrate the points that follow. Initially I planned to write a separate chapter each for morals, multiculturalism and politics however during the writing process I discovered that I could not actually separate any of these three components hence I decided to deliver my thoughts in a more pure and holistic way.

‘Πάν το πολύ, τη φύσει πολέμιον,  
Everything in excess is fought by nature.’ – Hippocrates o Keios, 460 - 370 A.D.

‘Πάν μέτρον ἄριστον  
Κάθε εν μέτρω πραττόμενον είναι και το ἄριστον,  
Everything needs to be done in moderation  
Everything that is done in moderation is the excellent/ideal one’  
– Kleovoulos o Lindios, circa 560 A.D.

The above expressions by ancient Greeks are around 2500 years old and have great significance and should be applicable in our everyday lives. I would like to clarify what the meaning of *everything* has for me in the above quote, before I carry on with my other points. I apply the word everything to all tangible things. All intangible things such as emotions, passions, love, creativity, philosophy and spirit are not measurable in real terms and should not be in check; they should be left to each individual to act upon them for themselves.

Because:

*The mind has the capacity to set the right measure; hence the healthy mind and prudence are the best indicators for the right measure.*

What is measure? It is the middle path between two extreme scenarios.

The above expressions can function properly when there is a well-defined set of moral values that a society can function by.

In addition: *Indifference and apathy are immoral.*

‘He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.’ – Martin Luther King, Jr.

When things are happening around us and we know they are not right but we decide to ignore them, effectively we are responsible as well and the null action instead of speaking up or doing something about them is immoral and effectively a cover-up of these things or actions. Indirectly we accept these irregular things; once we accept something, it can take over.

‘It does not take a majority to prevail ... but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.’ – Samuel Adams<sup>1</sup>

‘Morality, derived from the Latin *moralitas* – manner, character, proper behaviour – is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are “good” (or right) and those that are “bad” (or wrong). The philosophy of morality is ethics. A moral code is a system of morality (according to a particular philosophy, religion, culture, etc) and a moral is any one practice or teaching within a moral code. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with “goodness” or “rightness.” Immorality is the active opposition to morality (i.e. opposition to that which is good or right), while amorality is variously defined as an unawareness of, indifference toward, or disbelief in any set of moral standards or principles. An example of a moral code is the Golden Rule which states that: “One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself.”...

‘Moralities are sets of self-perpetuating and ideologically-driven behaviours which encourage human cooperation. Biologists contend that all social animals, from ants to elephants, have modified their behaviours, by restraining immediate selfishness in order to improve their evolutionary fitness. Human morality though sophisticated and complex relative to other animals, is essentially a natural phenomenon that evolved to restrict excessive individualism that could undermine a group's cohesion and thereby reducing the individuals' fitness.’ – Wikipedia

So morality is a widely acceptable code of conduct that has evolved for many generations. The code of conduct defines the set of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours within a society. As research has shown, the code of conduct is something that is not used exclusively by humans; most animals have a strict code of conduct of behaviour and hierarchy is adhered to, and is determined either by seniority in age, sheer physical power and in some cases both. It is a simplistic way to determine the leader of the pack however it is really plausible and, as evolution has shown, a really effective way because in either case you have the best one in charge in real terms: the sharpest mind and body to keep everyone safe and so on, rather than who has connections and is corrupt, as in our human situation.

Each culture has defined different parameters upon which behaviour can be judged and ultimately these parameters form the signature of that culture. That signature defines countries and their customs and set of normal behaviours. There is a very wide variety of cultures in which moral rules and behaviours in some cases are similar to each other and some others are very different. Religions have been the core of formation of these sets of rules in most cultures and most religions have some common aspects: to believe in an entity and to be a good person and treat others the way you want to be treated. The way adherents to each religion define the path whereby a set of rules is acceptable can vary a lot even within the philosophy of the same denomination of a religion: conservative views compared to fundamentalist views and so on.

Up to a very recent time in history humans moved with great difficulty between cities or settlements, even when in today's terms the distance is considered is very small, as there were no modern means of transport. Trips used to take days, weeks, months or even years and were carried out by very few people. As people predominantly stayed in one place for the duration of their lives, their habits and ways of life were traditional in the sense that there were no inputs strong enough from other societies that could intrinsically shift their way of life in a significant way, wars excluded of course.

As the local ways of each society developed in an introverted manner there were distinct differences even between communities that lived in the same cities. Differences ranged from linguistic dialects to local customs and beliefs. There was a great level of individuality and colour, if you like, between

communities. Obviously even more evident were the differences between societies that lived in different countries.

During the last century there have been large numbers of people who have shifted or been displaced from their home place to other places within their countries or in other countries. This has occurred for a number of reasons, mostly financial. In many cases people are forced to move from their country because it is not secure financially or in any other way. Generally not many people want to move from their home country; but they do so mainly because invariably one way or the other they are forced to do so.

Moral codes are often complex definitions of moral and immoral acts which are based upon well-defined value systems that have evolved for many generations. What happens to the moral set of rules of a society when other cultures are being introduced into it? How will ten different cultures work as a whole and harmonious set of individuals acting in the same environment? As different cultures from all over the world start to live together and form a new type of society some interesting, in my view, things start to happen. When a multicultural society is formed the distinct differences that each individual culture possesses tend to water down and everyone in one way or the other blends in with the rest, hence people lose part of their cultural identity, language, habits and their traditional way of life. It is a necessary phase that must take place in order for a uniform society to form; however it brings with it a great loss of diversity and colour.

It is almost like when we hear about natural habitat loss and species becoming extinct forever. It is always a tragedy when that happens and some very committed scientists and volunteers do their best to capture the last generation of these animals that were living free in the wilderness so that the species will be preserved. Most of us are very sensitive about this situation and we can see that the loss of diversity is very sad. In my view a similar phenomenon is taking place within human cultures. The distinctive difference though is that this does not happen via reduction of human population (quite the contrary); but via the amalgamation of every society through globalisation. When a language or a custom is lost, humanity loses invaluable pieces of individuality, heritage and history forever. In my view every single language and every single ancient culture is of invaluable importance and it is our ultimate responsibility to protect and salvage whatever we have left alive. We can't afford to lose anything else from our colourful diversity in the name of unmanaged change and globalisation that we are going through right now. We can still have progress, we can still have change; but that requires humans to think outside the box of greed and short-sightedness. And above all, all of us are responsible for that.

By default a culture, in order to blend into the 'cultural majority', has to in some degree accept some deviation from the original set of moral rules which define it. I suppose when two cultures are very similar and then brought together the impact will not be that great; what happens though if two totally different sets of rules are 'forced' to blend in? What happens when a simple act is considered good for one culture and the same act is considered insane by the other? How can this black and white situation converge into one mutual understanding between these extreme perceptions? How do we create a new set of fair, grey rules? And how is that possible? What happens if a culture has to forfeit a core value that defines it in the first place so that it can assimilate? Can that forfeiting be transitional and can it be fully accepted? Or will it lead to internal conflict and ultimately conflict within the fabric of the society? If water and oil do not mix, how can we expect two very different sets of cultures to blend? The formation of a new subculture is required, but for this change to be made possible firstly a weakening/corruption of certain values needs to happen.

'We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.' – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Despite the current situation as has been described in chapter 2, we all have many common goals and that is the ground where we should all find a common target to move towards. At the end of the day we all want the best for ourselves, our families, children and so on, and based on that alone we can unite and work together. At the very least, I believe that no-one likes to be ruled by people who do not aspire towards the general good. I think that position is non-negotiable and it is up to all of us to make this crystal clear to anyone who thinks that they can ruin what we have, just so they can make trillions. If these guys and girls are so obsessed with money, we can donate them a few trillion of monopoly money so they can look at it because, really, above a certain amount of money, more money is just a number unless one is planning to buy a few countries with it...

One of the definitions of the word *corrupt* is: influenced by or using bribery. In order to weaken/corrupt certain values of a culture some form of exchange must take place. Power and money are almost irresistible to humans hence weakening of their integrity is possibly via bribery. Even just the promise of power to someone can alter his/her views in one way or another. A good example would be human behaviour within the institution of churches. Humans over the millennia have invoked religions as the rule of thumb for behaviour and morals. Simply due to human nature though, some people within this realm have traded off some of these moral rules in lieu of power. It has happened countless times; in fact there have been wars in the name of religion, which ends up being just an excuse for a country to obtain more power. As humans we are prone to self-indulgence when some sort of power is offered to us; and that very property makes us vulnerable. In a way, the neo-western way of life along with all of the great things that has formed our modern society, functions by converting natural resources, time, effort and ultimately cultures and habits into money. That very intrinsic function leads to behaviours where we think in terms of money and power first, rather in terms of empowerment and sound morality.

Even though we have a sense of responsibility to pursue our moral purposes, we still, at least occasionally, engage in immoral behaviour. Such behaviours jeopardise our moral self-image; however, when we engage in immoral behaviours we still feel as though we are moral individuals. The term 'moral self-licensing' attempts to explain this phenomenon and proposes that security obtained through self-image increases our likelihood to engage in immoral behaviour. When our moral self-image is threatened, we can gain confidence from our past moral behaviour. The more confident we are, the less we will worry about our future behaviour, which actually increases the likelihood that we will engage in immoral behaviours.

Via social contact through a well-established community structure, feedback can be obtained and corrective action can be applied so that the individual will be able to adjust their behaviour in line with the acceptable moral behaviour patterns. When individuals live in isolation, corrective action and feedback is not possible. A person may be surrounded by thousands of other people; however they can still be considered isolated if they don't commit to interpersonal relationships. Imagine if most of us engaged in various symposiums, gatherings and philosophical conversations in lieu of spending countless hours in front of a screen.

The difficulty lies in the fact that morals are often part of a religion and more often than not about codes<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes, moral codes give way to legal codes, which couple penalties or corrective actions with particular practices. Note that while many legal codes are merely built on a foundation of religious and/or cultural moral codes, often they are one and the same<sup>3</sup>.

Deviation from moral rules is evident in our current societies and it has different forms. I ask you to decide what is moral or not.

In my view, crime rates are at their current levels partially because of this very culture-blending and suppression process. In order to change people you must impose rules, rules which are not fair for individuals, but necessary to make the emulsion possible. Some react in adverse ways, hence problem behaviour is created. And that very problem is a contributing factor to many of the above issues.

We base our current financial system on GDP growth, and inherently the ever-increasing consumption of goods and services is required to achieve this growth. In order to find new ways to stimulate this growth pretty much everything has been transformed into a form of currency. The main component for good profits is mostly quantity; so in lieu of quality we focus on quantity and the good feeling that a monetary transaction will bring. In turn the shift from quality to quantity has changed the way we treat things, the environment, fellow humans and ultimately life itself. For the infinite growth economy to work a principle of stimulating an ever-increasing appetite for new products had to be invented; these goods had to become really cheap and easy to acquire and in turn replace ever more often.

*In the past, people used to emotionally attach themselves to humans and objects; now because everything has become so cheap and easily replaceable, including morals, effectively that emotional attachment has lost value. And the throw-away society mentality is not only limited to objects; it also transcends to human relationships.*

Hence we have such a great number of divorces and people in the western world are currently the unhappiest they have ever been.

*The decline of moral rules leads to a less securely structured society, less structure leads to vulnerability and further erosion of morality.*

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is an index of human well-being and environmental impact that was introduced by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in July 2006. HPI is a new measure of progress that focuses on what matters: sustainable well-being, for all. It tells us how well nations are doing in terms of supporting their inhabitants to live good lives now, while ensuring that others can do the same in the future. HPI provides a clear compass pointing nations in the direction that they need to travel in, and helps groups around the world advocate for a vision of progress that is truly about people's lives.

In the 2012 HPI interestingly enough the first 27 positions of the happiest countries do not belong to countries embracing the western philosophy. New Zealand scored 28<sup>th</sup> place and pure western and star multicultural countries such as Australia and the USA scored 76<sup>th</sup> and 105<sup>th</sup> respectively out of 143 countries that were assessed. By the way, China scored 20<sup>th</sup> in 2009 and in the 2012 HPI did not make the top 50. Is this because slowly China is becoming a westernised society, with terrible working/environmental conditions? Ironically Iraq scored 79<sup>th</sup> in 2009 and 36<sup>th</sup> in 2012. How can a war-stricken country like Iraq score so much higher than its 'liberator', the US? Can you see an oxymoron here? Is it because the US has done such a magnificent job and all their power has been depleted trying to help that poor nation? I don't think so. But why are the unhappy countries the bullies of the world? Why are we heading that way? And since it is so evident that the neo-western set of moral rules is not working in terms of happiness and environment why aren't we changing it?

*Simply stated, we have lost the plot by thinking buying will make us happy, which ironically is the driving force of neo-western cultural and moral philosophy.*

Even if we assume the western way of life is the best philosophy, certainly practice hasn't demonstrated that so far. It may be because it is a philosophy in its infancy compared to the ancient cultures, such as the Greek and Roman. Many cultures have evolved over thousands of years, so how can such a young philosophy possibly work properly especially when it requires the erosion of the rest in order to function? That is, by the way, another form of cannibalism, as described in chapter 8.

And why do we need to put up with the teething process of this new philosophy knowing that ultimately it makes us unhappy via the erosion of moral values and at the same time requires infinite natural resources to work?

Why is the whole world forced to function under this new and unproven moral set of principles? How can we be so sure that this is going to work? Why don't we implement contingencies instead of putting of our eggs only in the western philosophy basket? Would ever a corporation put all their eggs into one basket? Isn't that one of the 'Investing 101' basic rules? How can we do that with our lives, morals and cultures? So why do corporations want globalisation so much? If blindly putting all the eggs in one basket breaks all the known rules why is it still so 'blindly' implemented? Why do we defy history with such passion? Why can't we learn from past mistakes?

'If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values – that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.' – Martin Luther King, Jr.

When we compose an email of vital importance we are often advised to read it thoroughly a number of times, and in some cases to wait for some time after our thoughts have crystallised and then read it again, before pressing the send button. Why aren't we doing the same with the major decisions that we make about our very future; why are we in such a hurry to implement such unproven and obviously failing philosophies and technologies?

There is a Greek quote which translates into: 'you can tell the rotten fish just by looking at its head'.

Speaking of which, this brings me once again to the head of the society – the political scene. Politics is a major reason for the environmental and social situation today; it is more and more evident that in most countries today there are no boundaries between private sector and public sector. And that is a major problem for people and the environment. Effectively governments are serving private interests first. Look at recent history with the gun lobby in the US.

I remember politicians used to talk about a country's vision and how to make everyone's life better. There used to be excitement in the air about new projects that would benefit everyone. There used to be anticipation for new technologies and explorations that would make our life better.

Now, the talk is about costs, debts and selling public utilities to private interests just to make our national economies balance. Long-term policies are almost non-existent, and anyone who attempts to challenge the status quo is quickly dragged into the ground or even killed in the case of JF Kennedy and others in very recent history. Public education is being pulled apart, along with the future of our children, and those politicians who support it are quickly put down by their opposition.

But why is that so? Why aren't we focusing on the big picture and on the long-term for what we do? Why do we always give way to greed and instant gratification? Why would most politicians rather make decisions which will be favoured during the forthcoming election? Is it because the perspective of a politician *is* the forthcoming election and in contrast the issues that we face must be viewed

with a much longer perspective? The concept of being in power such as running a whole country is something that requires a lot of determination and commitment. The person who has reached office must be self-determined, convincing, articulate, well-connected and really smart, and truly believe in something. Without belief we can't go anywhere, full stop. I am also pretty convinced that the motivation of the vast majority of persons wanting to enter the political arena is altruistic. But what happens then? What happens in the course of the 10-30 years that it normally takes for a political person to earn a position of office?

*The Achilles tendon of politics is politics.*

Rather than simplifying policies and decision-making processes, new layers of control are added for the black and white (simple and straight forward) cases; and often to the contrary when decisions about cases of major impact are being made despite them demanding public consensus and a lot of research before being reached, thrift and accelerated processes take place before the public eye has any chance to catch up or resist.

Most of us are in a state of blissful ignorance or even denial that the environmental, social and cultural crises I've been discussing here are happening; on the contrary, most of us think that we can continue as we are, forever. A concept in many ways rather comforting as no-one likes major changes, including me.

Now having said all of the above, I also must state that most of us, no matter where we live and under what circumstances, are very adaptive. We are where we are now and despite all of the problems that we may have, we still can work together very effectively and we can all have a common set of criteria and targets. At the end of the day we all have an equal right, irrespective of geography and financial status; to have a good life. This detail must be made very clear to anyone who thinks the opposite. And this is our very uniting force. Despite our individual beliefs, we all need clean food, clean water, love and intimate relationships, health, art, well-balanced news outlets, good technology and ultimately a socioeconomic system which fosters the perpetual prosperity of humanity and every single living organism on this planet.

Now more than ever is the right time to really assess where we are and where we really want to be in the mid- and long-term future. It is our duty to open our eyes, unite and do what we need to do to make this place a much better place to live for thousands of future generations, as outlined in the last chapter of this book.

## 4. Rules

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*The more oppressive a society becomes, the more sterile it becomes also ...*

Rules are an integral part of our society and are there to provide its framework. As morals guide a person between right and wrong for their everyday activities, similarly rules are there to guide the community and everyone in it, so that it can function within acceptable behavioural patterns. Hence certain rules are necessary and without them, based on our current level of consciousness, we would have a chaotic situation and our modern society could not function properly. Having said that, though, we need to clarify that there is only so much that one can have of something – in this case rules.

As people are supposed to have the capacity to think for themselves, rules should be used as a guideline; their detail and extent should not be there to stipulate almost every facet of someone's life, like they do today mainly in western societies. After all, our society is meant to be comprised of highly sophisticated and educated people in general, so it must be assumed that they should be able to exercise personal judgement in most cases. Rules should be there to signpost certain things so we can operate in a smooth manner and should not be there to interfere in every single daily human activity. So a system with much fewer but heavily enforced rules should be introduced rather than the all-encompassing rule system that we have today. Recently in Sydney a traffic official who was assisting children to cross the road before and after school was banned from giving thumbs up to children because that action was considered inappropriate...

Imagine having a machine with millions of parts whose optimal function relies on all parts being in good working order. Imagine what would happen if thousands of parts started malfunctioning. A team of technicians would have to be employed full-time, working around the clock, to ensure and regulate the proper functioning of these malfunctioning components. As time goes past, more and more components would start to fail or malfunction on a regular basis, hence more and more time and energy would be needed to be spent on fixing these irregularities.

There are two ways that one could deal with this issue:

One way is to keep things the way they are, requiring the ever-increasing need for on-the-spot problem solving. As time goes by, more and more technical effort is required to keep the machine going, with the use of inferior parts as the maintenance budget does not allow for proper parts to be procured. Consequently this machine will be too expensive to run and one day it will cease to operate.

The other way would be to install overhauled or engineered components, thus reducing the need for constant monitoring and repair. The latter would then allow technicians to have more time to think about how to improve the overall performance of this machine, allowing it to be able to function indefinitely as they will not be using their entire time just keep it going.

A simple decision on the direction chosen has such a great impact.

If we try to apply the above analogy, with our society being the machine and the malfunctioning components being the misbehaving people living in it, we will soon realise that the need to have self-regulating and positive-thinking people is necessary for the society to function in a progressive

way. The technicians are the rules, controlling people's behaviour constantly in order to maintain order and rather than empowering individuals to behave socially in an intrinsic manner, we have stifling policies and procedures in order to maintain some sort of functionality. Apart from a really small percentage, the human population has a huge potential to flourish and make our society a much better place to live in without the constant intervention of oppressive, silly and petty rules. For the potential to be fully tapped, though, education, social circumstances, news and morals need to be looked at very seriously, and we must demand from our weak governments that all of the above conditions are satisfied.

Since some rules would still be required, in order to ensure proper functionality of the society, certain conditions should be satisfied as follow:

1. Rules should apply the same way and have the same weighting for everyone. That is a very fundamental condition since every human is supposed to have equal rights and conversely have exactly the same obligations as everyone else. No-one is above the law in any way. The opposite is insulence.
2. Rules should aim to have consistent outcomes and objectives and if they cannot be applied comprehensively to all situations in order to achieve a purpose, then they should be flexible. See my example below about seat belts.
3. Rules which are enforced in a microscopic level should also apply to a macroscopic level as well with proportional force. For instance, when someone is caught throwing a cigarette butt on the street and rightfully receives a hefty \$200 fine on the spot, then a major polluter should be fined accordingly and proportionally to the cigarette butt fine when caught polluting. How much money extrapolated from the \$200 cigarette butt fine should be paid by an oil company which destroys whole local ecosystems while spilling oil?
4. Rules are there to correct anti-social behaviour. Someone caught committing an offence is penalised. What happens if the same person gets caught offending again? The driving rules cater for this scenario and the rules are very strict. Each offence depending on its severity attracts a certain number of demerit points and when all points have been used the individual loses the right to drive. It is a great system. Why can't we introduce the same principle to other areas?
  - a. How about introducing it to rules which are there to protect our rights? For instance, it should be considered an offence and that person should be penalised if caught tampering with the news that we get from the media. Why is this type of conduct so widely accepted with no-one getting punished in these circumstances? Since we are supposed to live in an advanced and moral society governed by fair rules, why do we need to have facts and news changed and served to us twisted and turned?
  - b. Why is lying by political figures so acceptable? How many times have we heard politicians lying? Why don't they get fined or banned from politics for doing so? Each lie should attract three demerit points and a big fine. Four lies and your twelve points as a politician are gone forever. How good would that be: imagine a world with non-lying politicians!
  - c. How about when a gold miner is caught polluting rivers with heavy and toxic metals? How many cigarette butts would be equivalent to such pollution? And why do they get away with a few hundreds of thousands instead of a few millions? Instead, big miners, especially when operating in third-world countries, often get away with causing massive environmental damage and public health associated problems. Actually in the case of major pollution incidents, three strikes are too many anyway!
5. Rules cannot replace logic and common sense. Our world is a wonderfully random and unpredictable place full of surprises, some pleasant and others not. Scientists are unable in

their efforts to define and predict the exact condition of basic quantum elements via calculation in lab conditions. How can it possibly be expected of the rule-makers who strive to bring order to our random society, to make rules that can define the exact behaviour of humans so that their behaviour is fully predictable and controllable? Or is control the ultimate driver, in the first place? Rules are currently in production overdrive, designed in such a detailed way that they are treating everyone the same way regardless of their capacities, common sense and context of each action. I understand that we need to be practical about such things; however when a blanket rule is applied there should be an objective way to make exceptions. To make things even worse, the standards for these rules are based and designed around the lowest behavioural/mental/capacity end of the spectrum. Artificially, everyone is treated like a brainless being unable to make certain decisions. And that of course transcends to all levels of behaviour. For example, look at certain road rules and how far they go to police behaviour, look at occupational health & safety rules and how ridiculously complex they are...

6. *Rules should police the effect and not apparent behaviour...* This statement may not make sense initially, but let me explain. There may be a perceived contradiction in my statements above that 'same rules apply to everyone' and 'rules should have some flexibility'. How can that be possible? I will stay on the environment subject as everyone can relate to it and no-one can hide from the weather and its effects.
  - a. Coal miners are *apparently* benefiting our society because they employ thousands of people; hence they create jobs. They also create wealth for the country as the coal extracted is either used for local and cheap power production or is exported for profit. They also help to provide us with a stable and reliable energy supply.
  - b. The *effects* of coal mining are as follow: emissions from coal-burning have a major effect on our climate. How many cigarette butts would equal one giga-tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in terms of pollution effect? How about the footprint of transporting coal from one end of the earth to the other? How about the loss of habitat when forests are cut down in order for mines to operate? How about the loss of precious arable land? By the way, what gives coal miners the right in the first place to move in on land owned by farmers, or traditional owners, and extract coal, keeping nearly all the profits to themselves?
  - c. We have here the situation of an industry whose *effects* are allowed to continue virtually unabated. If we compare the impacts of coal mining, transport and use in industry with tossing a cigarette butt away, and extrapolate the fine, what would it be? Instead, despite their rhetoric about trying to limit climate change, and to tax mining fairly, governments actively encourage continued coal mining and export, do nowhere near enough to combat climate change and do little to ensure the profits of mining are distributed fairly.

As this point has demonstrated, someone's actions maybe appear honourable and beneficial for our society, but the effects of their actions are far from beneficial. This principle also works well with the proportional penalisation of anti-social behaviours and actions. The rules should look at the effects and not the apparent behaviour as previously discussed.

I think the route of our problems is the disassociation between the cause and effect of certain actions. As mentioned above, the severity with which an action is treated should be based on its effect. Every action should be looked at from a holistic perspective; it is the only way to be consistent.

In addition, once we are able to distance public affairs from private interests – that is, to take favouritism to certain private interests out of rule-making – and then manage to evaluate effects

arising from various actions, rules will be fair and equally applicable to everyone. It sounds simple but the vested interests are huge, so change will be very difficult to make; it must happen though and all of us have a moral and social responsibility to see such changes through.

There is a fine line between rules and their reach as I mentioned before, however there is the other side of the coin. This is where social rules/morals which guide an individual to act in a certain and civilised way without the need for formal rules, slowly dissipate. We have then a situation as follows:

*The decline of moral rules leads to a less securely structured society, less structure leads to vulnerability and further erosion of morality.*

Another similar version:

*Fewer moral rules, equals a less structured society, less structure leads to vulnerability and erosion.*

Which in turn leads to the following observation:

*A vulnerable and eroded society can be manipulated and handled very easily.*

Linguistic rules are there to make a language consistent so everyone using it knows how to use it properly and communicate effectively. Similarly, morals and principles act at the personal level as an experienced and sober driver that always drives their vehicle correctly and safely. However, when it becomes acceptable to change all the moral codes because old is just old and new is cool, slowly-slowly members of the society become like a drunk and bad driver, hence their whole lives need to be micromanaged by external rules in order to behave within socially accepted constraints.

As individuals lose their sense of direction, more and more totalitarian rules are being invented; however some of them either go too far or are really bad rules. In order to demonstrate what I meant in my last sentence, think about drugs. Everyone knows that drugs at best are not good for one's health. When someone is using a drug, he/she is affecting his/hers health and no-one else's. We also know that by making something illegal, that illegal item receives a lot of attention either because of human psychology always wanting the forbidden or because certain people just need drugs to function and they will obtain what they want whether the policy-makers like it or not. Everyone knows that; however rules about drugs, rather than becoming more flexible, are maintained in the belief that they protect people's lives and the society. If drugs were not illegal, they would be a lot cheaper too; hence drug related crimes would be minimal.

Another example is euthanasia. *It is my life and I do whatever I want with it.* If ever at some point one's life becomes intolerable because of a chronic disease or similar and the life on this planet is not worth living, then that person is entitled to have the choice to end his/her life, legally. Why is someone treated in such a patronising way about their own life?

I will also analyse a very common rule since more or less everyone can relate to: in Australia the police are very strict about everyone wearing seatbelts in cars. And for a very good reason as we can all understand the benefits of doing so. In fact the police are so keen to protect us that during public holiday periods even double demerit points apply; so if the driver and a passenger are caught without a seatbelt on, the driver is sent home without his licence and is facing a huge fine. One of the ways he can go back home is by using public transport; in this case the bus. The bus is a bit crowded and the unlucky ex-car-driver has to stand up. Not only are buses not equipped with seatbelts for seated passengers; passengers are even allowed to stand up and in some cases there are so many people standing that it is impossible for shorter people to hold on to something for

safety! But that's OK! And I would like to know what the difference would be between a car and a bus if both experienced a head-on collision with a tree, while both were doing the same speed? Do regulators assume that different laws of physics apply to each of these vehicles? How can rules be so absolute about the first scenario and so blasé about the second one? How can rules possibly claim safety as the only reason for seat belt reinforcement if all public transport vehicles are not equipped with seat belts? In my view by having this rule the following secondary things are achieved:

1. What would you think about a parent that was treating each of his/her children in a totally different way even though all else is equal? Say it was about giving an ice cream to the one and not the other and that was the absolute decision. You would probably think: that is so unfair. And it is, because logically both of them either should have one or not. There is no real reason to distinguish between them. Unless the parent wants to teach one child a special lesson just because he/she can. To say the least it is a very disrespectful thing to do. Hence we have a purely behaviour-affecting rule that for the same thing applies a double standard.
2. When there is a double standard rule, like the seat belt example, there is also a double effect from it. As it is obviously a lot simpler to apply this rule in cars their drivers are heavily penalised, but for buses the rule is totally different and the rule does not apply. Isn't that extremely hypocritical? By the pretext of safety on one hand the law is absolute and heavy-handed and on the other hand, safety is not even considered. That is how easily-controlled people are treated...

The second effect of this double standard rule is the instilment of undue fear. Fear of the whip. Fear is one of the most powerful instincts that exists in the human mind and can quite easily be used to control another human. So by creating a fearful environment people are treated like criminals and not like free-willed and self-determined individuals. By combining different sets of rules of a similar nature, soon we have an environment where people are not allowed to think for themselves and are forced to obey rules by default.

As a result since there is a practical limitation in being able to enforce seat belts on buses, then a degree of leniency should be implemented for use of seatbelts in cars in terms of penalty severity and some flexibility should be allowed in their enforcement, just to be fair...

'In obedience there is always fear, and fear darkens the mind.' – Krishna Murti

Another simple example that we can all relate to is the policing of speed limits. If safety is claimed, and not revenue raising, speed limits should be based on the mass of the vehicle as well as the traffic zones and not speed alone. How can a 20 tonne truck be safe doing 99km/h on a 100km/h zone and a 1.5 tonne car is deemed unsafe if it is travelling at 101km/h on the same road? How can regulators possibly claim logic and safety in these rules and be so strict about them as well? Many experiments have shown that a truck requires double or more, the stopping distance that a car does when they both travel at 100km/h, assuming the driver reaction time is the same. However, the same speed limit rule applies to all vehicles; so how can safety be the main motive behind it, as it is claimed to be?

As I mentioned above all rules are designed for the lowest capacity individuals, and this is the case for drivers. Instead of training drivers how to drive a car, they are trained at best on how to move a car. I think that having to renew a licence every three or five years is a purely money-making exercise unless the renewal is preceded by a successful defensive driving course update. Guess what would happen then? Fewer road accidents, fewer fatalities, fewer drivers on the road, fewer traffic jams, lower demand for cars, lower tax revenue through registration and fines, lower insurance policies. Can you see the contrast?

Rules should be able to reflect and focus on the *effect* of someone's actions...not the actions themselves.

Currently we have a complex and hollow ruling system, that is, one where the rules are not obviously designed to serve a clear purpose. The irony here is that the more soft rules are in place, the more loop-holes there are to be exploited, hence rules become like clay in the hands of experienced lawyers and in many occasions just outcomes are not the end result. Putting this into context, the complexity and unfairness of the legal system is there because of the series of rulings that have taken place over the past centuries. Similarly, you are where you are at this point of time, purely based on what you have done up to this particular moment in time...good or not? You decide...

## 5. Is Specialisation a Good Thing?

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The formation of the ideas, opinions and moral principles of a person is a very complicated and lengthy process. Studies have shown that we learn from the very minute we are born; our minds act like sponges and thrive on new information. Our brain has the capacity to perceive and act upon stimuli from our environment and learn from experience. There is no recipe for the best way to train someone's mind, simply because life and its inputs are so random. My view is that the more inputs a mind can have throughout its lifespan the more adaptive and creative it will become. When a new set of information is obtained, new connections form within the brain; the more information we obtain, the more connections are in turn formed. Consequently the multitude of connections and inter-connections allow us to be able to think in a more rounded way. This is a very rough explanation of what is happening in our brains; however detailed information in terms of brain operation is not within the scope of this book. Below are several examples to help me demonstrate what I mean.

**Example #1.** Jane can only speak English and her perception of other languages is extremely limited. She can hardly distinguish the differences between foreign languages when other people speak them; everything said is just a big blur. If she went on holidays to a foreign-language speaking destination she would have a really hard time communicating, even for the very basics. Her inability to communicate in different languages may even deter her from travelling and exploring foreign-language speaking countries; resulting in far less exposure to different cultures, hence impeding the furthering of her experiences and her overall perspective about other cultures. The lack of a skill such as a language in this case has more side-effects than just the communication barrier.

John on the other hand can speak English, Greek and Italian quite well. His perception of other languages is already a lot stronger than Jane's. Because he can speak three languages, he is a lot more flexible with his travels but most importantly he has the capacity to think in three different languages. This capacity alone puts him miles ahead of Jane in terms of mind flexibility (based on language), as his mind can think in multiple ways about the very same thing. Another advantage is that his ear will be able to distinguish quite easily other languages and even understand parts of French, Spanish and Portuguese as these languages share similar origins. As a result, by learning multiple things we effectively take advantage of the inherent ability of our mind to distinguish and form patterns, hence a single skill-set has multiple applications, especially when combined with other skill-sets.

**Example #2.** The same principle applies for working skills. Who do you think would be more skilled and flexible in the way that thoughts are processed – Nick who is purely a master carpenter or James who is very knowledgeable in carpentry, steel fabrication, engineering and electrical work? Nick can only think like a carpenter in terms of a technical issue; James on the other hand can think like a carpenter, steel fabricator, engineer and electrician, all at the same time, hence making James far superior in terms of thinking and analysing problems from multiple aspects, hence giving him the edge and flexibility to derive far better and more rounded solutions for a given situation. In this case we have a 'Jack of all trades' which in many cases is frowned upon, however I really think it is a good thing.

**Example #3.** Similarly, when a person from a young age is exposed to different languages, skills, hobbies as well as various sets of people that already have rounded knowledge and multiple skills, automatically this young person needs to adapt and learn a wide variety of

skills; hence our young person becomes very smart in real terms. This person will end up having a strong base of beliefs and a good sense of direction and it is unlikely that they will be easily misguided or controlled.

**Example #4.** Let me explain what I mean when I say smart in real terms. Let's assume that a bright young man by the name of Gary was brought up to focus and study hard; he excelled at school and decided to study mechanical engineering at university, where he also did very well in all the subjects, including calculations and 3D drafting and he managed to graduate with honours. At the age of 25 he is ready to enter the job market equipped with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He manages to get a job at a small engineering firm where they modify new materials-handling equipment (forklifts) for use in hazardous areas. The flameproof, as it is called, equipment consists of very bulky items as it needs to be strong enough to contain an internal explosion; the forklifts on the other hand are very limited in terms of available space for fitting flameproof equipment. Our engineer friend has never touched a piece of steel in his hands so far in his life and has very limited real hands-on experience. As he has no real experience, when he is asked to design very simple brackets he is unable to do so effectively because he hasn't had the exposure to physically understand how things work and fit together.

Another person by the name of Jack has a very wide skill range because when he was young his father would have him as an assistant when the family car needed repairs, he worked as a carpenter, a stone mason and one of his hobbies was to build and fly remote-control airplanes. As he was really busy with so many things, his studies were good but not excellent. He managed to finish college as a mechanical engineer though. Coincidentally he too was employed at the small flame-proofing engineering firm. As he was exposed to a multitude of different skills throughout his life, building brackets and designing mechanisms was like second nature for him. Our characters above, Gary and Jack, are both mechanical engineers; Gary is very smart on paper and Jack is smart on both paper and practice. There is no way of getting around experience: no matter how much you study something unless you have practical experience you can never perform. The main point that I am making, though, is that what makes Jack a far more capable individual is the fact that he has been exposed to many different areas of expertise so he has the capacity to work things out in a very comprehensive, rounded and flexible way.

In our modern society and economy there has been a lot of demand by the markets and shareholders for maximisation of efficiency in every facet of work processes.

It is intended that people learn more of a lot less, thus increasing efficiency thus reducing rounded thought which in turn has major negative implications for our society.

**Example #5.** Factory workers at a car manufacturing facility perform very specific and repetitive tasks over and over again. As their work requires very little personal input, their tasks tend to be very mechanical. Workers at the dash assembly station are perfectly accustomed to fitting and securing the dashboard assembly of a particular model; they are also extremely efficient at doing so. In the course of their time in the factory they may have glimpsed what their colleagues around the other stations are doing, but they don't have the faintest idea about what is taking place at the engine assembly department or the suspension process line. Their perspective of the car manufacturing process is very limited, just like the one that a turtle has of a forest. As the skill-base required to do this specialised job is very limited, these workers are almost unemployable elsewhere, such as a car mechanical workshop. A car mechanic needs to be very adaptable, skilful and knowledgeable

of the entire car and in most cases over different car makes and models. Our factory workers have limited skills and employment options and in turn are very susceptible, hence easily controlled.

**Example #6.** Assume that there are two people who live in the city and their work is half an hour's drive from home. One of them always likes to use the same route via a major road; in fact this person has never experimented in discovering alternative routes in case something happens with traffic and therefore lacks understanding of the city's road network. Conversely the other person likes to go to work and back using all sorts of different route combinations. Who do you think would be in a better position if a major road closed for any reason? Logic says the latter one. If you consider the destination to work as your life's aspirations and the different routes to be the skill-sets obtained by learning and experience, you will soon see that the more alternatives we know and have, the better it is for our very existence. And that is a very important point because while we surrender to the daily habit of doing the same things day in and day out we are susceptible in terms of job role fluctuations and even probable career changes as we have learned to be highly specialised and in most times single-skilled; hence our options remain limited and we are heavily dependent on that job.

This specialisation has moved into schools as well; children go to school to learn something perfectly well and the main target for them is to do well with their marks in order to be able to secure entry into university. Since the competition is so high, students specifically need to focus on the four to six subjects that they will be examined on for entry to university; however that leaves them no time to learn other 'secondary' things, which in turn limits their perspectives.

*When someone has limited perspectives or doesn't have the ability to readily see things from different angles he/she has limited choices and is potentially easily manipulated.*

Although this person may be extremely good at what he/she does for a living, his/her general knowledge may be limited. If though, things changed dramatically this person may struggle to cope in almost every given situation and probably has to accept without resistance the new way things are done in order to avoid temporary discomfort, i.e. working on a job that he/she hates, living somewhere that he/she doesn't like, putting up with things that he/she would not otherwise, putting up with worse conditions...

That is in my view our current situation; and the very reason why such abominable things are happening around us. We don't react because we can't stand feeling any pain; because slowly-slowly we have given away our rights so that we can maintain our buying status just to be able to pay our debts. In addition most people have ridiculous levels of personal debts; hence they are unable to protest. I have discussed about debt in another chapter.

When I was a child it was really drilled into my character that respecting the elders is very important as they have a very wide array of knowledge and experience from life. It is worthwhile most of the time to sit and talk with wiser people. Experience has shown me that everyone has something good to teach irrespective of their age; having said that, life experience teachings come mainly from the elders. We should equally respect the younger people also; every day I learn something new from my daughters. In the older days it was normal to see people from all age groups gathering and exchanging views about things. It was almost like a necessary part of someone's social make-up to learn from people with more experience. That is by the way how knowledge, habits and morals used to filter from one generation to the next.

Nowadays it is considered very uncool by teenagers to spend time with older persons. Instead children in their formative years spend a lot of time alone in front of a computer, TV and the like, or spend time mostly with their peers who have more or less the same experiences. It is an introverted form of upbringing in a way. Since there isn't much interaction any longer with more senior generations transfer of knowledge, morals, experiences and know-how are not happening, hence we have an interesting effect.

As knowledge used to be transferred and enriched from one generation to the next over the millennia, there was effectively a chain of wisdom that was connecting generations with their ancestry in an ongoing and endless fashion; knowledge and a kind of moral bank progressed through each generation. Experiences obtained through making mistakes could be transferred to the younger generations in various ways, one of which was via advice. Teachings and wisdom could be passed on and the same series of mistakes generally were not repeated as the store of knowledge was enriched all the time.

Because of the loss of inter-generational interaction (mainly in the western world) there appears to be an island effect of values, experience and morals which is forming in lieu of their continuation from past to future generations. A new set of moral values is forming as the chain of wisdom is broken. In some cases that can be a good thing because not all teachings from the past are good. Having said that though, wouldn't it be better if we could combine inputs from old and new teachings at the same time and make better and more educated adjustments rather than disregarding the 'inconvenient' knowledge from the past altogether? Children are now being 'educated' by childcare attendants, before and after-school carers, underpaid school teachers, addictive TV programs, addictive computer games and the internet. Effectively we now have a new type of sub-culture that is quickly taking over our offspring, since most parents simply don't have the time, energy or money to be parents. In addition our education system is considered to be a financial burden to the economy.

By translating everything to money as the common language, a comprehensive shuffling of the list of priorities and a new set of values is established. He who has the most money has the highest status; if a company or product does not make money it is quickly consolidated or discontinued regardless of whether it has superior value in other, deeper terms. In other words, the shallower we become the more our morals are being lost or eroded and as a result we lose our direction, hence our freedom. And as they say:

*If you won't make plans for yourself, someone else will make them for you.*

As the chain of wisdom is not there anymore, the direction of all progress and core values has shifted – a direction set by corporations. Their only objective is to make money and they have proved very well that they are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve their objective. But they can't do it alone. They need our solid participation. As they have shifted our values as a society through long-term strategies they have managed to disassemble our traditional societies and the way they used to function.

Once again I would like to make myself clear here that I am all for good and positive change. It is a great privilege for us to be able to invent and think. We need to be wise about how to use our gift. That is hopefully one thing that what will come out of this book.

I would like to demonstrate in my way how our lives have easily been controlled. In the very recent past, people mostly used to be self-employed. They would harvest their own food, families used to work together, work patterns varied depending on the seasons, and products and services would be

mainly limited within the boundaries of the local society. As people were closely linked to their adjacent environment, they respected it and could live in harmony. Life used to be hard at times when the weather was bad and there was not much food around, but more or less that way of life worked for thousands of years. Apart from the physical aspect that I just mentioned, there was another element – a very important one. People used to be almost totally in charge of their destiny and did not have to rely on anyone else for their food or wellbeing.

The following extract from Stacy Mitchell, of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, discusses the benefits of communities having greater control over their local economies:

‘That there’s a connection between the ownership structure of our economy and the vitality of our democracy may sound a bit odd to modern ears. But this was an article of faith among 18th- and 19th-century Americans, who strictly limited the lifespan of corporations and enacted antitrust laws whose express aim was to protect democracy by maintaining an economy of small businesses.

‘It wasn’t until the 20th century that this tenet of American political thought was fully superseded by the consumer-focused, bigger-is-better ideology that now dominates our economic policy-making. Ironically, the shift happened just as social scientists were furnishing the first bona fide empirical evidence linking economic scale to civic engagement.

‘In 1946, Walter Goldschmidt, a USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] sociologist, produced a ground-breaking study comparing two farming towns in California that were almost identical in every respect but one: Dinuba’s economy was composed mainly of family farms, while Arvin’s was dominated by large agribusinesses. Goldschmidt found that Dinuba had a richer civic life, with twice the number of community organisations, twice the number of newspapers, and citizens who were much more engaged than those in Arvin. Not surprisingly, Dinuba also had far superior public infrastructure in terms of quality and quantity; the town’s schools, parks, sidewalks, paved streets, and garbage services far surpassed those of Arvin.

‘At about the same time, two other sociologists, C. Wright Mills and Melville J. Ulmer, were undertaking a similar study of several pairs of manufacturing cities in the Midwest. Their research, conducted on behalf of a congressional committee, found that communities comprised primarily of small, locally owned businesses took much better care of themselves. They beat cities dominated by large, absentee-owned firms on more than 30 measures of well-being, including such things as literacy, acreage of public parks, extent of poverty, and the share of residents who belonged to civic organisations.

‘One might expect such findings to have had a powerful influence on government policy. In fact, Congress ignored Mills and Ulmer, while Goldschmidt’s study was actively suppressed by his bosses at the USDA, who, under the sway of big agribusiness, treated his research as though it were radioactive. They eventually fired Goldschmidt and abolished his entire department. In the following decades, a wide range of federal policies would work to facilitate and promote the concentration of capital and the rise of big industry.

‘Today, as we find ourselves struggling with a climate crisis that demands a far more active and creative democracy than we currently have, a new body of research is once again illustrating the civic advantages of decentralising ownership and transitioning more of our economy to community-scaled enterprises.

“Residents of communities with highly concentrated economies tend to vote less and are less likely to keep up with local affairs, participate in associations, engage in reform efforts or participate in protest activities at the same levels as their counterparts in economically dispersed environments,” sociologists Troy Blanchard and Todd L. Matthews concluded in a 2006 study<sup>1</sup> published in the journal *Social Forces*. In studies of both agricultural<sup>2</sup> (2001) and manufacturing<sup>3</sup> (2006) communities, the late Cornell sociologist Thomas Lyson also found that those places with a diversity of small-scale enterprises had higher levels of civic participation and better social outcomes than those controlled by a few outside corporations.

‘It’s not just that cities with more social capital are better able to foster local enterprises and resist corporate consolidation. The causality actually seems to go the other way: where economic power is diffused, political power is more widely and democratically exercised. And, likewise, as economic power becomes more concentrated, civic engagement slumps. Sociologists Stephan Goetz and Anil Rupasingha, for example, have documented a decline in civic participation, including voter turnout and the number of active non-profit organisations, after Walmart moves into a community. And, with each Walmart store that opens in a city, social capital further erodes, their 2006 study<sup>4</sup> finds.

‘Still other research has drawn a link between a small-scale economy and improved community wellbeing, including lower rates of crime and better public health. A study published in 2011, for example, found: ‘Counties with a vibrant small-business sector have lower rates of mortality and a lower prevalence of obesity and diabetes.’ The authors surmise that a high degree of local ownership improves a community’s ‘collective efficacy’ – the capacity of its residents to act together for mutual benefit. Previous research has linked collective efficacy to population health, finding that engaged communities tend to create the kinds of infrastructure (think of farmers’ markets and bike lanes) that foster healthier choices.

‘What is it about a locally rooted economy that fosters social ties and civic engagement? There’s much to be said for the value of doing business with people who know us and whose success is intimately tied to the wellbeing of the community. Small businesses are not merely smaller versions of large businesses; they are running on a different operating system altogether. Goldman Sachs makes money regardless of whether foreclosures are going up or down. But a local bank only does well when its borrowers do well. Business decisions are thus guided by very different motivations. And, in times of crisis, economic resources that are controlled locally are much more readily marshalled and reconfigured to meet shifting local needs.

‘Independent businesses also create environments that foster interaction. Research suggests you are roughly seven times as likely to end up in a conversation with another customer at a farmers’ market or neighbourhood bookstore than you are at a big-box store (not to mention the isolating experience of shopping on Amazon). To run one’s errands in places that encourage lingering and conversation, where economic exchange is embedded in human relationships, is to experience the place where you live in a meaningful way. No wonder this leads to more engaged and resilient communities.

‘Of all the environmental benefits that might flow from shifting to a more locally focused economy – from reducing global shipping to creating systems of production that are better matched to the limits and resources of particular ecosystems – perhaps the most significant would be a renewed capacity to act together for the common good and tackle the looming challenges before us.’ – By Stacy Mitchell, Institute for Local Self-Reliance<sup>5</sup>, originally published on Grist.

The decline of local communities can be traced back to the beginning of the industrial revolution; it was a great thing for humanity in many aspects, however in my view the industrial revolution was mismanaged and abused by the people in control, resulting in some not so desirable side-effects. As everything started to revolve around efficiency and productivity – money in vs money out – humans slowly-slowly became dehumanised beings, having to always comply and work within certain parameters and evermore specialised functions, just like machines do; however the only purpose of a machine is to serve its owner. This very principle is our civilisation’s biggest thorn. Consequently, obvious considerations such as human, moral and environmental are not part of the equation.

There is no wonder that everyone congregates in the big cities now, because rural life is no longer sustainable in monetary terms as it is no longer efficient. Many people work in jobs that they dislike and their lives are at best mundane. The vast majority of people these days are not self-employed, which is a major contrast to our earlier lives. The destinies of most are now controlled by their boss, not the weather.

It has taken me many attempts and I have had lots of espressos in the meanwhile, despite my doctor’s orders against coffee, in order to approach this subject in a short and concise way that will be effective in helping readers put some of their actions in perspective.

Firstly we will start by evaluating certain things in the day to day level and once we do that we will move up and above and we will try to see the whole thing from the eagle’s viewpoint.

Here is a typical scenario; by the way, it applies to both blue and white collar workers. Monday comes, people go to work wishing it was already Friday; at a job that they have to be at and if they didn’t they would lose everything. Do you notice something here?

We typically work because we produce something; either a product or a service. In turn these products and services hopefully are in demand and the wheels of supply and demand can work so everyone can have a job. Right?

It is a great concept that has worked for a few decades however it is widely evident that this model is not working anymore and it requires an overhaul.

We hear about jobs and job security and in order to protect them and ensure that we will have them no matter what, nothing else matters. As long as there are jobs we are set; everyone is happy. GDP is the only rule. So regardless of what a job consists of, as long as it achieves the objective of being a job we are all happy. In other words it is OK to have a job that produces genetically altered seeds or a job that requires genocides to be carried out, such as wars on terror or similar. See the recent history in Burundi when Hutu and Tutsi were involved in a bloody civil war with tens of thousands of victims, compliments of Belgium and its colonialism. A total division was carried out between tribes initially and then hatred was uncontrollable; hundreds of thousands of people died, armies from countries around the world entered the country in order to ‘protect’ the people, while miners were mining precious metals used for our gaming consoles. The troops, miners and peacekeepers had a job; what was really achieved though?

In today's society we have this disconnection from real life. In other words if one isn't doing something bad directly = doing nothing wrong; is that so in reality though? And what is the real difference between doing something directly compared to doing another thing indirectly? Because I am not holding a semi-automatic weapon killing people while I use my gaming console, I am not a killer. Directly I am not; indirectly though I might be one. That is what we need to ask and discover within ourselves and our consciousness.

But no-one wants to have people killed just because they want to play with their gaming console. In reality though that is the demand which is created by wanting to buy a gaming console or any gadget for that matter; just because certain things are not happening around us it doesn't mean that they are not happening elsewhere. It is the so called 'cause and effect'; things do not appear from nowhere. It is also impossible for a stock trader to feel the pain and devastation that is caused by his greed to make money when he is in front of a flat screen, while ecosystems and human societies are depleted in order for him to make money for himself and his investors. He may know about it; the convention though says: since he is not pulling the trigger or setting forests alight he is an honourable person doing his honourable job.

*Unless we try to associate the connection between cause and effect of our actions we are likely to be heading in the wrong direction.*

For all the pre-mentioned realities to take place as well as the adoption of specialisation, credit, moral value adjustments, etc. people need to be influenced in one way or the other, through a complex process that required a lot of planning and a deep span of time to mature. Everything for a start had to be translated to a form of currency. And everything in turn had to be broken down in small chunks, so just by looking at the small chunk you can't see the real picture (see chapter 1).

Just like when you are zooming into the pixel level of a picture you can only see a few pixels which are in an orderly state, you have no idea what the big picture is, because you are too far down the detail. If you zoomed out, you would then start to see with more clarity the content of the picture. Our jobs and lives are like little pixels in the big picture. We can see and relate to the adjacent pixels but we don't know what colours are elsewhere. It requires a lot of effort to lift your head up and see, but it is the only way to see what the picture that you are in actually is.

Once everything has a monetary value, then everything can be traded. We have to ask ourselves: what is the end result?

And because by nature humans are generally good beasts, we need to ask ourselves, why is there so much devastation out there? If the end result of what we did was good, why many people are so unhappy, why are so many people on anti-depressants? Why are people obese? Why do people do drugs and commit so many crimes? Why are our fisheries depleted by 90%? Why are forests being cut down so we can use palm oil for our soap?

Ultimately, why have all living beings in this planet been shouting out SOS?

I am sure that most of the readers have never touched an axe, dynamite, a gun or a piece of mining equipment, however by demand we have made someone else do so. In fact it is no different to the drones that the military is extensively using lately, where via remote control, someone from his office now has the capacity to throw bombs on the other side of the world. Imagine a military operator having lunch with his family; when the mission time is on, he goes into the study where the drone control centre is. In it, he will guide his drone to kill people. After the mission, like a

gentleman he re-joins his family for dessert. That is how clinical and sterile our lives have become; so fragmented that we are so detached from what is really happening as a result of our actions and everything is under the banner 'I am just doing my job'...

It is just like the relationship between the driver and the passenger of a bus. The driver is almost always a lot more alert than the passenger for obvious reasons. These altered moral rules act as the bus driver; and we are the passengers in a semi-asleep mode, looking around here and there, taken for a ride to whenever the driver takes us. We have made an agreement that the driver will take us to point A, however as the drive is long we decide to relax, maybe fall asleep by watching TV and/or by listening to silly media messages; the driver can easily change direction and take us to point B which is really far away from the point A that we were promised to get at, in the first place. Apart from the driver claiming total ignorance about the different direction, he also says that accidentally we run out of fuel and that we can't get back to point A... Judging from what is happening, it is apparent that we are currently heading towards point B.

And because of the previously mentioned fragmentation of our lives in terms of work and human relationships, we generally don't have the understanding of the actual impact of our lives on others and in turn we become very vulnerable because it is all a big cycle. Since everything is treated like a currency, our jobs by default are; even our very lives.

Firstly, that is because of the deskilling. The more that one specialises in something, the more one loses in terms of versatility. Then that function becomes a small component in the whole process that can be chopped and changed whenever it is deemed economical to do so. You can't chop and change a master craftsman as that will inflict damage in a major part of the process but you can do so with the person who inserts screws in specific holes.

Secondly, that deskilling requires people who effectively don't need to think very much and every one of their functions is very predictable. It is a form of dehumanisation and control.

Thirdly, there are lots of desperate people out there who are prepared to do anything in order to earn a living; we have a direct exchange between one's dignities and a simple mechanical action.

City residents, hence the vast majority of the population, do these types of fragmented jobs. Most of us do a job where we need to rely on the work of another 50 or so different job functions that others do in order for us to be able to survive. In turn we are at the mercy of people that we don't even know and ironically in some cases on people that we may even despise. In effect we rely on someone else to care for our food; we are at the mercy of food corporations for our very survival. Why does that make any sense? Can you imagine the level of leverage that is given to these corporations every time a small corner greengrocer closes the doors of their business because they can't compete? I would not be surprised if in the near future there were laws forbidding gardening for food in our home back yards...once you have everyone in the cities, control becomes too easy.

Radio stations play the same music every day; we hear about the same boring news all the time (the saddest by the way) and the same applies for TV and newspapers. There are still some good messages out there but they are very quickly swamped by the junk produced by the corporations. Since most media is controlled vested interests (see chapter 8), most messages are controlled as well. Morals in turn are the main target because once you have none the building fabric of the society very quickly decomposes leading to a society of guided drones that is just able to go to work and serve the rules all the way. Take time and listen to your gut feelings.

*We have all got sucked into the consumerism lie and dance to its tunes endlessly while taking anti-depressants to make our lives bearable.*

They say social media is a powerful medium to pass messages around people; social media can be a great tool or a simple waste of time depending on how it is used. Most of us are part of the social media wave enabling us to 'connect' with people around the globe.

The word 'connect' with media is somewhat slightly misused; interaction is considered as a connection and up to a level that is true, however you can have interaction with strangers/almost strangers and not a real connection. So most of us think that we are connecting with others, while in reality we are simply interacting at the most superficial level. I would say that this is mostly truth when it comes to meaningless articles and personal updates. As an example, on Facebook people love posting jokes, photos and their day to day activities in some cases far too explicitly. And that is all great; that is one side of social media which is fun and lets us exchange notes in a virtual way. What about the other side of the coin? Why don't we really connect to make things better and we merely settle for meaningless interaction? What if one wants to use social media in a more valuable way? I am talking in terms of using media as a way to exchange views about the environment, politics or maybe philosophy? Views that can transcend from the virtual world into real life! Imagine that! New waves of change could be generated through the vast power of social media!!!

## 6. Compensation

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Have you ever wondered what the real benchmark should be for setting a salary package for a profession? Surely the value/contribution of the particular function that a person/profession is performing should be proportional to the reward, right? What is it that defines the value of that particular set of functions? How do we define usefulness of a profession or function? Every job requires a different set of skills; skills obtained through the learning, experience and practice of each individual. How can we quantify that in terms of monetary value and how can we distinguish higher value vs lower value jobs?

A manufacturing facility operating under the job shop principle is an environment where items are made to order, most jobs are different from one another and there is little of the repetition you would have in, say, a mobile phone factory. To get a job done the services of different professionals are required such as estimators, designers, engineers, supervisors and fitters. Each of these professionals is an integral part of the jobbing process. If one of these roles went missing altogether from the 'equation', there would be a problem within the scope of the project as a whole, and the severity of which would depend on the team member and/or the job function itself. So how can we separate the professionals mentioned above in terms of their usefulness? From the initial customer inquiry until the point where a fitter/technician receives the job a number of important steps have taken place. If a fitter was not there for some reason, how can the job happen in the first place? So how can we say that an engineer is more useful than a fitter and vice versa? How can we say that the accountant or the estimator is more important than the fitter – purely because of their pay? How come a fitter is not even considered a professional whereas an engineer, estimator or accountant is? What is the real difference? Is it maybe because physical work is frowned upon? And why is that? Why is it that someone using their brain is considered more useful than the person who actually is using his brain and hands combined to make something? And why is there such a great gap in their pay? Surely a job could not be designed without an engineer and a job could not be done without a fitter, so what is the difference? Is it just simply the perception that we have of each function rather than the actual/physical value of it, which in turn dictates the monetary value of a work role?

What defines the value of a function/contribution to their society and ultimately the pay package of a soccer player, an actor, an engineer, a nurse, a teacher and a garbage collector?

Soccer is one of the most popular sports worldwide. It is played in almost every country and people gather to the matches in tens of thousands and a lot more view them on TV! Someone could argue that soccer has no value and someone else will support the opposite. But how do we define what is useful/valuable and what is not? Is it something that we obtain for the purpose of use and once we are finished with it we dispose of it? Is it something that has meaning beyond the material realm? Is it both? Could both be combined? Or is it something that is perceived to be valuable either for what it can teach us or what it can do while it is happening? Where does soccer fit in here? And why do the ten top soccer players earn between 12.2-37 million Euros each per annum as per Forbes review 2012, compared to the top ten nurses, or fitters or similar that earned roughly \$80,000 each for the same period; 400 times or so less money? If we assume that people work 40 years in their career, when a person earns 400 times more than another that would equate to 40 years of pay vs 10 lifetimes of work for our nurse; or just 0.1 years or 1.2 months or 40 days of work for our top soccer player. Why is kicking a ball 400 times more important than treating ill and needy people around the clock and any day of the year? Why doesn't the person that builds the best doors and windows

earn as much; think of houses without doors and windows and a life without soccer, the impact without one or the other and make the assessment of their significance yourself.

The Hollywood movie industry is glamorous, exciting but in all fairness fake. Hollywood movie scenarios are limited to maybe twenty. All movies produced revolve around the same scenarios and in most cases within fifteen minutes one can work out what the outcome is going to be in the end. All of them share another commonality such as the projection of the American flag and its national anthem and of course the so-called American way of life. And this very industry has created its super stars that for a few months of very hard work can earn up to US \$40 million. Now, how can these levels of compensation possibly reflect the real value of the actor's work? Why is an actor considered to be 800 times better than a nurse, based on their income? Or is their compensation based on their level of morality and commitment to improving people's lives?

If you stop reading for a moment and look around you, go to the closest window and see outside. Feel your shoes and the floor you are standing on. What you are wearing, what you are sitting on and in fact apart from the plants, sky and earth everything that you see is man-made/engineered. Anything humans have made has been designed-engineered by an engineer of a particular discipline. Engineering is an amazing and virtually limitless profession. Logic prevails, laws of physics are applied and when all is combined with great imagination the result is a testimony to true human greatness and ingenuity! Since the work and creations of engineers are almost in every aspect of our lives, why aren't they considered really important, based on their pay? Consider a soccer player and a movie star: an engineer has directly or indirectly built their clothes, the stadium, the TV cameras, the ball, the make-up and everything else that everyone relies on in our modern but not necessarily advanced world. Including so many other real disciplines, why are the ones that actually make what we use in order to improve our lives not being rewarded accordingly; instead people who produce fluff earn disproportionately much higher incomes? How come the creator-provider-maker earns so much less than the entertainer? In fact the reason you are reading these very lines is because engineering was involved in all of the processes between the writing of this book till this moment that you are reading it.

If any profession should hold the highest regard amongst all professions that would be the profession of teaching. One of the main reasons that our civilisation has progressed is because we have been able to pass accumulated knowledge from one generation to the next. As I have already stated, this profession should be regarded as the most important one and only the smartest should be able to obtain this title. Consider DNA and what happens when there is a mutation which affects reproduction in a negative way. Effectively the next generation will not be the same and most importantly will have a lower standard of capabilities. Teachers should be the agents of knowledge, principals, morals, new technology and breakthroughs; they are the ones that should have the status of the super stars and not the silicone-filled Hollywood ones...No wonder we have lost our sense of direction...When a government needs to make budget adjustments the first area that they usually attack is public education and public health, which brings me to the next profession.

If anyone puts themselves second and their patient first, that would be a nurse. A little while ago I had an emergency operation and up to that particular point in time I had not realised how selfless these people are. They put up with the most horrible side that the human body can have, day in and day out.

I will try and make this a more logical argument in order to demonstrate my notion. Assume that every working person on the face of the planet earth was to stop work right now for a period of at least a month. Which group of professionals will be missed first and which ones last, if at all? This is a

really important part of this book because this is one of the points where our realities are being fudged. Let me explain by analysing a small array of professions.

1. We have all the farmers of the world.
2. We have all the athletes of the world.
3. We have all the nurses of this world.
4. We have all the doctors of the world.
5. We have all the engineers of this world.
6. We have all the scientists of the world.
7. We have all the actors of the world.
8. We have all the cleaners of the world.
9. We have all the garbage collectors of the world.
10. We have all the bankers and financial workers of the world.
11. We have all the salespeople of the world.
12. We have all the factory workers of the world.
13. We have all the super-models of the world.
14. We have all the singers of the world.
15. We have all the teachers of the world.
16. We have all the bureaucrats of the world.
17. We have all the armed forces of the world.
18. We have all the politicians of the world.
19. We have all the CEOs of the world.
20. We have all the miners of the world.

Of course there are a lot more professions and I would like to apologise if I haven't listed your profession, however that is not the purpose of this example.

We need to frankly ask ourselves which of these professions we can't afford to do without. I would like you to be more actively involved with an exercise by listing the above-mentioned professions from the most important to the least important based on your judgement. When you are finished, you can change pages and compare our thoughts. So take your time and list professions from highest to lowest importance in terms of human survival.

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Below is my list professions from highest to lowest importance in terms of net importance and the last four won't have to follow any particular order because in my view they are just not that significant for our world and will be assessed as a group only. In addition when two professions are within a place from each other they can be considered as of equal importance.

1. A very safe assumption is that we can't afford to have our farmers/food producers stop work even for a day; I don't think I need to explain why.
2. Then I would say that without nurses we would be in real trouble, as accidents and maladies happen all the time.
3. Doctors.
4. Then we have the engineers. The only reason engineers are in that position is because the infrastructure designed and built by this profession already exists so a pause of their work will create minor problems in the short term, however further progress cannot be assumed without them.
5. Similarly the work of scientists can be paused for a little while; however their long term absence would be detrimental to our society.
6. Next is the profession of teachers where their role is not in the realm of our very survival. Professions that follow, have no vital role in our society in terms of our very survival.
7. Factory workers produce mostly secondary products that we use to improve our lifestyle.
8. Garbage collectors. Imagine what would happen if no one would pick our waste up for a whole month... Right?
9. Miners are a fairly important profession because we need what they extract for some of our needs. Having said that, their efficiency measures should be re-engineered and all the environmental concerns should be in the forefront of their considerations.
10. Politicians are positioned here, based on their collective behaviour over the past two centuries. Their position could be vastly improved if they had integrity; they really could act like conductors for the bettering of the life of the whole population rather than the ultra-very few.
11. Bureaucrats are in the realm of the last of the twenty professions that we are analysing today. Similarly to the politicians, had they been more efficient and definitely more people-oriented, they could be a vital part of our progress coupled with the work of politicians.
12. Armed forces can be totally non-existent if we assume no other armed forces exist. Imagine that: we would have universal peace thus saving 20ft container loads of money every year. No violent deaths, no calamities, no spite, no brains and energy wasted on promoting destruction. Many will argue that wars are needed; but that is only if one wants to push an agenda down someone else's throat. Does any country in particular come to mind by any chance?

13. CEOs are just overpraised managers and their function in most cases could be obsolete forever. In addition their pay is so out of proportion to the value of their function.
14. Bankers and their profession were invented a few centuries ago and their function has no importance for our survival. In fact, the world would be a much cleaner place without them around based on their recent general behaviour and the artificial crisis that the globe has been going through.
15. Sales professionals are in this position as they are the distributors, in a sense, of products.
16. We can live without cleaners as we can do our own cleaning but it is another useful function.
17. Athletes, actors, supermodels and singers in terms of their significance and contribution in our society in terms of our survival are nil.

As we have both done this exercise, it is quite unlikely for us to have prioritised all professions/functions in the same order; however I am sure that you will find a pattern of agreement or disagreement.

If our prioritisations are almost similar then you would agree that the importance of professions according to the way that they are being viewed and paid in our society has been misjudged by the market of the pay-scale setters, if such thing exists. Conversely if our prioritisations do not match, I am glad that you had the opportunity to see the alternative view.

I will not say that one is right or wrong, but I will claim that one is better. I will also claim what I have already claimed in the first part of this chapter in terms of real contribution and I invite you to really think about it.

So far we have discussed the secondary effects or notions if you like by reference to the up-side-down pay scales which are in operation today.

In my view the primary and most important negative impact of this skewed structure is the effect on judgement about what is important and what is not. Based on chapter 2 and the net effects of our daily actions, there is no doubt that our priorities are mixed up, thus creating big problems for us, but most importantly to the ones that will follow us: our children.

Imagine what would happen if the importance of professions was set as per the prioritisation above? At the very least we would be a lot more creative and progressive in the long-term sense. That is our duty and that is programmed into our DNA; that is, the continuation of the species and life. However our current actions directly contradict our very human make-up and that must change now.

By emphasising the wrong things we lose perspective on the real deal, and unfortunately that is seemingly the very role of super-stars, media and all related industries. The question is, though, why do we accept such scenarios? The next chapter covers this aspect of this argument.

## 7. Entertainment and Media

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'When men yield up the exclusive privilege of thinking, the last shadow of liberty quits the horizon.' – Thomas Paine 1776

*'Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:*

*'Tonight, I want to talk about our common responsibilities in the face of a common danger. The events of recent weeks may have helped to illuminate that challenge for some; but the dimensions of its threat have loomed large on the horizon for many years. Whatever our hopes may be for the future — for reducing this threat or living with it — there is no escaping either the gravity or the totality of its challenge to our survival and to our security — a challenge that confronts us in unaccustomed ways in every sphere of human activity.'*

*'The very word "secrecy" is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and to secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers which are cited to justify it. Even today, there is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions. Even today, there is little value in insuring the survival of our nation if our traditions do not survive with it. And there is very grave danger that an announced need for increased security will be seized upon by those anxious to expand its meaning to the very limits of official censorship and concealment. That I do not intend to permit to the extent that it is in my control. And no official of my Administration, whether his rank is high or low, civilian or military, should interpret my words here tonight as an excuse to censor the news, to stifle dissent, to cover up our mistakes or to withhold from the press and the public the facts they deserve to know.'*

*'Today no war has been declared — and however fierce the struggle may be, it may never be declared in the traditional fashion. Our way of life is under attack. Those who make themselves our enemy are advancing around the globe. The survival of our friends is in danger.'*

*'For we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence — on infiltration instead of invasion, on subversion instead of elections, on intimidation instead of free choice, on guerrillas by night instead of armies by day. It is a system which has conscripted vast human and material resources into the building of a tightly knit, highly efficient machine that combines military, diplomatic, intelligence, economic, scientific and political operations.'*

*'Its preparations are concealed, not published. Its mistakes are buried, not headlined. Its dissenters are silenced, not praised. No expenditure is questioned, no rumour is printed, no secret is revealed. It conducts the Cold War, in short, with a war-time discipline no democracy would ever hope or wish to match.'*

*'It is the unprecedented nature of this challenge that also gives rise to your second obligation — an obligation which I share. And that is our obligation to inform and*

*alert the American people — to make certain that they possess all the facts that they need, and understand them as well — the perils, the prospects, the purposes of our program and the choices that we face.*

*‘Without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed — and no republic can survive. That is why the Athenian lawmaker Solon decreed it a crime for any citizen to shrink from controversy. And that is why our press was protected by the First Amendment — the only business in America specifically protected by the Constitution — not primarily to amuse and entertain, not to emphasise the trivial and the sentimental, not to simply ‘give the public what it wants’ — but to inform, to arouse, to reflect, to state our dangers and our opportunities, to indicate our crises and our choices, to lead, mold, educate and sometimes even anger public opinion.*

*‘This means greater coverage and analysis of international news — for it is no longer far away and foreign but close at hand and local. It means greater attention to improved understanding of the news as well as improved transmission. And it means, finally, that government at all levels, must meet its obligation to provide you with the fullest possible information outside the narrowest limits of national security — and we intend to do it.’*

– Excerpts from the speech entitled ‘The President and the Press: Address before the American Newspaper Publishers Association’, given by US President John F. Kennedy at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, April 27, 1961.

The following paragraphs are an extract from the autobiography of a very famous person. It describes the role that biased media and entertainment have:

*‘Propaganda must always address itself to the broad masses of the people. For the intellectual classes, or what are called the intellectual classes today, propaganda is not suited, but only scientific exposition. Propaganda has as little to do with science as an advertisement poster has to do with art, as far as concerns the form in which it presents its message. The art of the advertisement poster consists in the ability of the designer to attract the attention of the crowd through the form and colours he chooses. The advertisement poster announcing an exhibition of art has no other aim than to convince the public of the importance of the exhibition. The better it does that; the better is the art of the poster as such. Being meant accordingly to impress upon the public the meaning of the exposition, the poster can never take the place of the artistic objects displayed in the exposition hall. They are something entirely different. Therefore, those who wish to study the artistic display must study something that is quite different from the poster; indeed for that purpose a mere wandering through the exhibition galleries is of no use. The student of art must carefully and thoroughly study each exhibit in order slowly to form a judicious opinion about it.*

*‘The situation is the same in regard to what we understand by the word, propaganda.*

*‘The purpose of propaganda is not the personal instruction of the individual, but rather to attract public attention to certain things, the importance of which can be brought home to the masses only by this means.*

*'Here the art of propaganda consists in putting a matter so clearly and forcibly before the minds of the people as to create a general conviction regarding the reality of a certain fact, the necessity of certain things and the just character of something that is essential. But as this art is not an end in itself and because its purpose must be exactly that of the advertisement poster, to attract the attention of the masses and not by any means to dispense individual instructions to those who already have an educated opinion on things or who wish to form such an opinion on grounds of objective study – because that is not the purpose of propaganda, it must appeal to the feelings of the public rather than to their reasoning powers.*

*'All propaganda must be presented in a popular form and must fix its intellectual level so as not to be above the heads of the least intellectual of those to whom it is directed. Thus its purely intellectual level will have to be that of the lowest mental common denominator among the public it is desired to reach.*

*'When there is question of bringing a whole nation within the circle of its influence, as happens in the case of war propaganda, then too much attention cannot be paid to the necessity of avoiding a high level, which presupposes a relatively high degree of intelligence among the public.*

*'The more modest the scientific tenor of this propaganda and the more it is addressed exclusively to public sentiment, the more decisive will be its success. This is the best test of the value of propaganda, and not the approbation of a small group of intellectuals or artistic people.*

*'The art of propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the national masses. That this is not understood by those among us whose wits are supposed to have been sharpened to the highest pitch is only another proof of their vanity or mental inertia.*

*'Once we have understood how necessary it is to concentrate the persuasive forces of propaganda on the broad masses of the people, the following lessons result therefore:*

- *That it is a mistake to organise the direct propaganda as if it were a manifold system of scientific instruction.*
- *The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted, and their understanding is feeble. On the other hand, they quickly forget. Such being the case, all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare essentials and those must be expressed as far as possible in stereotyped formulas. These slogans should be persistently repeated until the very last individual has come to grasp the idea that has been put forward. If this principle be forgotten and if an attempt be made to be abstract and general, the propaganda will turn out ineffective; for the public will not be able to digest or retain what is offered to them in this way. Therefore, the greater the scope of the message that has to be presented, the more necessary it is for the propaganda to discover that plan of action which is psychologically the most efficient.*

*'Stated further:*

*'The broad masses of the people are not made up of diplomats or professors of public jurisprudence nor simply of persons who are able to form reasoned judgment in given cases, but a vacillating crowd of human children who are constantly wavering between one idea and another. As soon as our own propaganda made the slightest suggestion that the enemy had a certain amount of justice on his side, then we laid down the basis on which the justice of our own cause could be questioned. The masses are not in a position to discern where the enemy's fault ends and where our own begins. In such a case they become hesitant and distrustful, especially when the enemy does not make the same mistake but heaps all the blame on his adversary. Could there be any clearer proof of this than the fact that finally our own people believed what was said by the enemy's propaganda, which was uniform and consistent in its assertions, rather than what our own propaganda said? And that, of course, was increased by the mania for objectivity which addicts our people. Everybody began to be careful about doing an injustice to the enemy, even at the cost of seriously injuring, and even ruining his own people and State.*

*'Naturally the masses were not conscious of the fact that those in authority had failed to study the subject from this angle.*

*'The great majority of a nation is so feminine in its character and outlook that its thought and conduct are ruled by sentiment rather than by sober reasoning. This sentiment, however, is not complex, but simple and consistent. It is not highly differentiated, but has only the negative and positive notions of love and hatred, right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Its notions are never partly this and partly that. English propaganda especially understood this in a marvellous way and put what they understood into practice. They allowed no half-measures which might have given rise to some doubt.'* – *Mein Kampf*, Chapter VI by Adolf Hitler. (Bullet-points-my emphasis).

*'Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal.'* – Martin Luther King, Jr.

The principles above are not limited in application to war between nations and races. They can be applied to the implementation of any new idea, philosophy, or way of life if you like; the above is evident just by looking at the vast changes in our lives and the way we do certain things compared to 10-20-30 or so years ago, considering that humans are apparently not willing to change easily. Technology is of course a major force for this change, and has only been generated by the ingenuity of human brainpower.

Based on the stimuli that we have been receiving consistently from any form of media for the past 50 or so years, what is heavily portrayed is buying new stuff, violence, junk-food, shallow sex, drugs and that's it! The transmitters of these messages want to make us believe that just these things count. There seems to be this massive amount of effort to reduce humanity to the very basic instincts of fear of death and fear of hunger. I am in not a psychologist; however this is my view.

To analyse my points a bit more, I'll start with sex and the way that, in my view, it is portrayed. For starters, sex sells. That is a fact. So anything that can have the sex connotation in it and sell, is a go-ahead. From TV advertisements, to musical artists, to sports people, to actors, to most of the fashion available to us, etc., sex is everywhere. Providing that the real essence of sex was consistent with our general social make-up and our upbringing in terms of sexual liberty, enjoyment and so on, that would be OK. That would not be pretentious and ambiguous. What do I mean by that? For instance

love-making/sex in movies is highly censored and for some reason sex is considered a huge taboo. For some reason it is considered wrong for us to watch something as natural as love-making; however it is OK to watch someone explicitly slicing someone's throat. What is going on here? Why is it OK to watch uncensored violence at any time of the day and night and *not* OK to watch people making love? In fact even by putting the act of love-making aside, we are not even allowed to see genitals either. On the other hand, there is a massive, flourishing sex/porn industry. And again apparently there is nothing much wrong with that, however the point is that sex has become another product or probably another by-product, which in turn sends mixed messages to most. How is love-making not allowed in movies but cheap and offensive material, as it is labelled, is OK to be out there...?

So many things around our sexuality are being reduced to the lowest level thus creating guilt about the most basic element of life on this planet. Hence an antithesis exists between the sexual desire and the validity of this desire, thus creating an intrinsic perception coupled with the puritan pretentiousness of our western societies around the most basic element of our lives, which is sex. And coupled with religious beliefs such as the ones in Christianity that sex is a sin, the scene is set for the not-too-uncommon dysfunctional relationship that humans have with the very basics of our existence and that in my view unnaturally affects the lives of millions in one way or another.

Our brainpower combined with our psychology though, is susceptible to certain pre-mentioned stimuli and long-term habits and in many cases its optimal functioning can be limited and prevented from properly understanding and judging certain situations, especially when subjected to strong and systematic propaganda via any source within the firm grip of vast vested interests, the effect of which is summed up in this whole book.

In the rest of the animal kingdom differences exist in terms of size between animal types (not belonging to the same species) but the net significance of each is the same in one way or the other, as every living being has its own unique function, like yourself. Between humans a difference of 100 to one in terms of size does not even exist, let alone the significance of one's existence. Let me explain: it is said that 300 of the richest people on planet earth, monetarily worth as much as the rest of us. So how does each of this ultra-minority of 0.0000005% or 300 people think that they have 20,000,000 times more entitlement to power and money than you<sup>1</sup>? What makes them so special? The numbers, though, very clearly show that an enormous difference of their (the 300) perceived interests and right to live, at an epic proportion of 20,000,000 to 1 (one, uno, ένα, ein) exists today. How is that possible? Can you accept that someone is 20,000,000 better than you in any way? Athletes receive glory for winning races by a margin of 0.01% or even 0.00000085% in cases of high speed motor racing<sup>2</sup>; that is a 0.001% difference between the two. How much glory would someone receive if they were 20,000,000 times better in terms of performance than their opponent? Would such difference ever be accepted in the first place? Would these athletes be in the same group or even in the same sport? No wonder these 300 seem to think that they belong in a difference of species compared to you and I based on what they do in terms of power, media control, ownership of a massive part of the food chain, energy resources, capital, etc...

Entertainment in the ancient days used to be quite different from the types we have today. The ancient Greeks developed theatre, drama, comedy, satire and music; and these forms of entertainment were mainstream. It is human nature to require something extraordinary for entertainment as we tend to get used to things quite easily and we need different types of stimulations to keep us happy as we progress and we become more complicated beings. And that holds true and works very well if entertainment is treated like something special.

I am a fan of all of the above-mentioned forms of entertainment, and in addition I like doing other things for entertainment such as hobbies and sports and as you have probably realised by now, one of my main advocacies is balance and variety; which includes exposure to entertainment and media.

There are two aspects that I will discuss here and they are both of equal importance. This leads me to discuss addiction, which means: 'The state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics such as alcohol, nicotine, addictive food, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma'. (English dictionary)

As the last part of the sentence states, '...that its cessation causes severe trauma'; anyone can do a self-assessment to determine whether there is an enslavement/addiction to anything psychologically or physically habit-forming in their life by analysing daily habits and then refraining from one or more of them.

I will ask you to do a seemingly very easy challenge. Let's say that I challenge you to do the tasks below for a week:

- not use your TV
- not use internet other than for work purposes (most of the time)
- use your phone like a phone (talking and texting)
- walk and live your life without earphones
- read no magazines
- meet with friends and talk about health, politics and current affairs
- eat healthy food
- exercise
- check out a sunrise and/or a sunset
- walk/exercise without your phone
- sleep with your phone on silent and with it in another room
- write down your thoughts before and after this week.

It is only for a week that I am asking you to disconnect from our connected world. See how it feels; particularly pay attention to your thoughts and their patterns. Share your experience with other people and ask them if they are willing to take up the challenge. If you end up liking it, do some or all of the above on a regular basis; nothing is too difficult and at the end of the day moderation is paramount. There is nothing wrong with not doing or doing any of the above in moderation; however the trick is for us to be able to be aware of our habits and not let our habits control us.

The most common of all addictions is drug use, however I would like to look for more and seemingly more benign activities such as shopping, eating, gambling, exercise, playing and watching sport, TV-watching, computer use, etc. The opposite of overdoing something is the compulsion to avoid or 'do nothing' and procrastinate forever. Like I have already said and will say again: moderation is the key. Moderation in most aspects is the key because if we moderate our activities, in turn we moderate our thoughts and feelings, and hence we tend to be more balanced.

We will stick to the scope of this chapter being about entertainment and media and since we have already discussed addiction, we will look at the related addictive behaviours.

As the boundaries of entertainment stimulus have been pushed so much and are so widely accepted, the apparent result is that most of us splurge out of control in these behaviours and we need more and more all the time.

The main difference between entertainment through history and now is that in the past it used to be contained within specific timeframes and places – go to the theatre or go to the movies or go to the concert to be specifically be entertained – whereas nowadays anyone can be entertained anytime anywhere provided they have a TV, smart phone, radio or a laptop.

Entertainment used to be a special feature of someone's life to which they used to allocate a specific time to go and be entertained, because their daily life was about living in the moment and it was about living through their own life.

And that is a really important point because people used to go through life thinking about it, and about their close family and close community issues and so on. In other words people had the time to reflect on what was going on in their lives; they also had time to think of improvements and feel uncomfortable if something was not working out. Probably that is another reason why entertainment did not have to be extreme for people to have a good time; simply because there was no entertainment overdose.

Nowadays, we have entertainment overdose in all levels, making it an inseparable ingredient of our lives. Not only can't we have a day without some form of media entertainment, in many cases we don't have a moment without it. Not only is this behaviour like having a drug habit in terms of the more we have, the more we need it, also it does not let us concentrate on what is important to us – our lives. Instead we think and learn about other's lives: people that we will probably never meet or have much in common with. A big contrast to this situation is when we take a holiday in remote areas where power, internet and phone signal are not available; our head clears, we can think a lot more clearly, our mood positively changes, we can sleep, think and have a great time without any of the modern thought- and life-interceptors. If you have never experienced that, you are truly missing out and I suggest you try it. We really don't need to have our eyes stuck on a mobile phone screen when we go about our daily lives. We also don't need to detach our senses from the real world by using headphones while we work, exercise, walk and travel. Instead of us being aware and alert to what is happening, we are in this trance of virtual overdose.

Many live their lives through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, mobile phone applications, mobile phone games, gaming consoles of every kind, TV reality shows (massive problem), music devices of any kind, pointless internet usage, sports watching and while we enjoy doing the above activities we get bombarded by targeted and sophisticated behaviour-changing advertisements. Bingo! In the western world almost everyone has access to all of the above and everyone is susceptible to mismanaged media exposure.

Principally entertainment is required for us to feel good and is a necessary ingredient of our lives, since we have a complex profile as a species. Entertainment becomes a problem when it becomes a propaganda tool for vested interests.

But we also need time for thinking and debating, time to sift through political issues, time to spend with loved ones, time to plan ahead, time to cook some real and healthy food and, most of all, time to learn.

The main problem with our use of time is that we decide to waste it instead of using it effectively. There is no-one to blame apart from ourselves because when we turn a device on, we do it and no-one else does. *We* make the decision to spend our time ineffectively in front of a screen of any kind.

Having said that, the messages out there are very strong, very well-orchestrated and consistent and it takes a lot of energy and sense of strong will and discipline to counteract them and do what is

really required instead. As I am not by default a writer or a big reader for that matter; in order to write this book I had to persuade myself countless of times to write rather than waste my time. Life is a constant battle and we should treat media entertainment mostly as interference to our lives. Our brains are designed to avoid dangerous situations when they are evident; we are scared of snakes and we don't like being chased by hungry lions either. These hazards are undisputedly real for our senses and we react accordingly; however the very subtle modern ones go almost unnoticed under our life-sustaining radar causing us problems in the long-term.

As we are struggling with the basics and we don't give ourselves time to reflect on what is really going on around us; we dance to the music that some want us to dance to: hence our current state of affairs. We keep our minds occupied with the most trivial things while we lose our grip on our lives.

The messages that we receive are:

- buy new things because you are totally uncool if you don't have the latest
- you are not good enough
- your life is boring; you are boring
- live your life through other people's lives as yours is just not good enough
- you are not good-looking enough
- you are not perfect enough
- people with supernatural powers are cool and are capable of achievement
- life is all about shallow sex
- it is cool to deform your body in any way in order to look cool and like the 'stars'
- it is perfectly OK to be unethical; in fact the more the merrier
- violence is cool, sensuality is not; killing is considered fine to be viewed even by children, however even the mildest form of nudity is considered inappropriate. Another way that our brains are tinkered with
- do what the superstars are doing as they are the best thing in this world.

Although we are concerned with what is happening right now in contrast with fairly recent times, I will ask you to think about what the movies were like back in the 50s. By doing a quick recollection of films and their themes and characters you will probably come to the conclusion that they used to relate fairly closely to everyday people and their lives. The characters were normal people, living some dramatic situations and most of the time scenarios were quite realistic compared to normal everyday life. As time progressed, movies changed in character and themes, including their protagonists and their capabilities. Since every era of movie-making has pushed the boundaries a bit further every time, so has our desire and requirement to obtain and to be exposed to more and more dramatic and non-pragmatic scenarios. The movies function similarly to a habitual drug-user who needs to increase the drug dose as times goes by in order to obtain the same level of satisfaction: the more the entertainment level is boosted, the more we lose our sense of reality. The very same principle is not limited to movies, entertainment and drugs only; it can be applied to everything that is not done in moderation.

During the last few years, most major box office Hollywood successes have involved movies where both the characters and the movie scenarios are unreal. Either we have scenarios with superheroes, super good-looking people, or characters with such super-abilities that they make everyone watching them feel inadequate. In many cases, movies shown at mainstream cinemas are at least 50% cartoons; either the characters in them are talking animals, fairies, beasts or they contain other scenarios that don't exist in real life. And that in an entertainment context could be acceptable; however when this type of content is all that is available it makes you think, why is that so? Why do we need to see movies with angelic-looking vampires? Why do actors have to look good in such

an unreal way? Why do we need such unreal stories to make us feel better? Have we lost touch with reality and the only thing we can relate to is fantasy?

Sportsmanship is a word whose meaning is in decline, at least at the elite athlete level. Doping and match-fixing is nothing else but the norm in today's sports scene. In my view being an athlete is something of great importance because the eyes of many humans lie on athletes and their awesome performances. I expect from athletes to be role models for good and moral conduct; after all exercise and sport are inherently good things and are supposed to make us feel good both physically and mentally and in turn provide a sound role model for our young people. When money takes over though, like it does in every other aspect of our modern lives, the sacred sportsmanship is converted to a betting field which recognises no moral limitations whatsoever and it turns something so beautiful in principle to a contest of the biggest cheats. We send our children to sport so they can develop good physical and mental health; what happens though when the heads of the sport are so corrupted? Sport is another commercialised form of entertainment so the participants must meet targets for publicity, either by optimal performance or bad conduct. Good or bad publicity is publicity after all and that is what most sponsors and advertisers look for in the first place.

Sports' betting is another subset of sport entertainment and it is one of the factors responsible for the decline of sports morals. There are very large sums of money at stake for many sports matches; sometimes it is impossible for these matches to remain un-fixed or -tampered with. In recent times we have heard of massive-scale match-fixing across the board at an international level. Governments have allowed betting organisations to sponsor certain teams directly; if that is not scandalous, I really can't think of what is. We have taken something so special and we have converted it to a piece of junk.

The result is that we are exposed to fake sports, fake movies, fake scenarios, superstars with fake anatomy and lifestyles, fantasy and non-existing worlds through movies.

*The boundaries of entertainment content have been pushed too far and so has our perception of what is normal.*

Another form of popular entertainment is magazines. The ones which target women show other women whose photos have been photo shopped, some of their features having been altered to enhance the way they look. As a result, readers tend to feel bad about the way they look and hence seek ways to make themselves feel better. Apart from such magazines being a total waste of time as their content at the best of times is useless, they are also a massive waste of precious natural resources such as the forests used for their printing. The very same principle applies for magazines targeting men or magazines of any type for that matter excluding technical publications and journals.

Radio stations belong in this group also and it is needless to say that radio stations are the most easily attended/listened to in terms of ease of access by spectators and it is needless to state that most of them play the same music all over every day and the level of commentary in most is cases laughable...in fact the more popular the radio station the more annoying it is to listen to.

Last but not least is the written media/press where we are told on a daily basis that the economy is the number one factor, we need more GDP growth, you must work hard to make this work even at the most difficult of times so you can buy more and enjoy your life less. And of course if any of these media outlets don't like what I am writing, they can say something about it ... we would all like to see their defences ...

The very fundamentals have been severely compromised because we are all entitled to the fundamental right of freedom of the press, as it is the only way to control governments. However the concentration of media ownership is very frequently seen as a problem for contemporary society<sup>3,4,5</sup>. When media ownership is concentrated in one or a few individuals, a number of undesirable consequences follow, including the following:

- One-sided, commercially driven, ultra-powerful mass-market media is primarily loyal to sponsors, i.e. advertisers and high profile customers, rather than being objective towards the public interest.
- Only a few companies representing the interests of a minority élite, control the public airwaves and once again it is natural that the one-sided effect takes place. Here I am not arguing whether this situation exists or not; it does and the fact is that the rest of us have allowed this situation to unravel... right in front of our very eyes...

Hence the healthy, consumer-centred competition is absent, leading to slower innovation, glorified cheap repetitions and increased prices for anything new that is innovative and useful. Another very beautiful example which demonstrates how well corporate media manipulates us; we are more than happy to subsidise the fossil-fuel industry, but we cry, when money is to go towards education and proper public health ... we are so truly backward that it is not even funny ... rather than debating who is to receive a Nobel prize for inventing the way to bring peace to this planet, we are debating whether climate change is real and if humans are responsible at all for the mess that our planet is in today. Those of you that don't know what a Western movie is, I suggest you go on YouTube and search for one because you need to be able to picture what I am saying: the only difference between now and then is that instead of guns and horses we use mobile phones and cars. That is the main difference ... all the rest is fluff ... we are still lacking fundamental knowledge, however we consider ourselves as advanced.

Knowledge makes a man unfit for being a slave; hence reliable, unbiased and multifaceted sources of information provide us with the power to know, and hence to be free and this right is be guarded by all of us.

One explanation for the cause of the concentration of media ownership is a shift to neo-liberal deregulation policies, which is a monopoly or oligopoly-driven approach. Deregulation effectively removes governmental barriers to allow for the commercial exploitation of media and the messages portrayed. Following the fundamental laws of our current market system, motivation for media firms to merge includes increased profit-margins while reducing risk and maintaining their competitive edge. In addition there is less noise from others .... In addition to this, those who support deregulation have argued that cultural regulations and trade barriers actually harm consumers, and their domestic support in the form of subsidies hinders countries from developing their own strong media firms. It is also claimed that the opening of borders is more beneficial to countries than maintaining protectionist regulations.<sup>6</sup>

Critics of media deregulation and the resulting concentration of ownership fear that such trends will only continue to reduce the diversity of information provided, as well reducing the public accountability of information-providers. But the ultimate consequence of consolidation, critics argue, is a badly informed public, restricted to a limited array of media options that offer only information that does not harm the media oligopoly's growing range of interests.<sup>7</sup> Increased concentration of media ownership can lead to the censorship of a wide range of critical thought.

Concentration of media ownership is a process whereby progressively fewer individuals or organisations control increasing shares of the mass media. Already recent research demonstrates

increasing levels of media firms consolidation, with many media industries that are already highly concentrated and dominated by a very small number of firms.<sup>8,9,11</sup>

As of 2012, The Walt Disney Company is the largest media conglomerate in the US, while News Corp, Time Warner and Viacom rank second, third and fourth respectively.<sup>10</sup>

There have been notorious examples of fundamental conflicts of interest between news corporations, what they ought to publish and what is published. Roberta Baskin was the chief correspondent for CBS News from 1992-97. She was assigned to write a story about the factories that Nike owned in Vietnam and the apparently dismal working conditions and pay that the factory workers had to endure to make a living. For the Vietnamese factory workers apparently the word Nike had become a verb meaning: 'to abuse your employees'. To cut a long story short, the whole subject became very ugly; however Baskin's story was submitted for prestigious awards. As a result of her story, there were widespread boycotts of Nike's products. In defence the company refuted all the claims and Baskin was assigned for a follow-up story. The company had an annual profit of \$795,800,000 in 1997, while the average payment was \$0.16/hour on average for the Vietnamese workers. As she was putting together the follow-up report, Baskin's executive producer contacted her and told her that the story was not going to be aired. CBS and Nike had come up with a deal and CBS was to cover the 1998 winter Olympics while all CBS correspondents had to wear a huge Nike logo on them. Of course when Baskin complained, she received a stock-standard corporation answer: 'breach of professional etiquette'. Soon afterwards she was demoted, while the company sent a firm message to the employees and soon afterwards she resigned.

There are many other similar examples, including flight disaster TWA800<sup>15</sup> on July 17 1996, which was allegedly an aircraft crash caused by friendly Navy fire however this story was totally denied by the US government. How about Garry Webb's story called the 'Dark Alliance', which is about the massive narcotics industry? In August 1996, Gary Webb began publishing the results of a year-long investigation that traced the money fuelling the horrific U.S.-backed 'contra' war against Nicaragua to the profits from Los Angeles' 1980s crack epidemic. The CIA led its contra army to spend the entire decade terrorising the Nicaraguan people and their Sandinista government, happily allowing the contras to flood Los Angeles and other North American cities with cocaine to fund their efforts. Webb provided extensively documented evidence that poor communities in L.A. paid the price of the crack explosion. Gary Webb was effectively vilified and marginalised by the massive media pressure that was exerted upon him and he ended up committing suicide. How about all the reasoning behind the wars on terror in Afghanistan, Iraq, desert storm, all about privatisations around the world? I could write a book just on this topic. In nations described at the very least as authoritarian by most international think-tanks and NGOs like Human Rights Watch, (China, Cuba, Russia), media ownership is generally something very close to complete state control over information in direct or indirect ways (see Gazprom Media<sup>13</sup>). In fact 80% or more of what you see and hear from 99% of mainstream media is tampered with and does not reflect reality, sad to tell you ... at least we still have reliable, independent internet sources available for anyone that is keen on reading what is really going on<sup>12</sup>.

I will not call all of the above conspiracy; however I will call this plain human nature. The more undeveloped an individual human is, the more emphasis this individual will put on everything coming his/her way. A two-year-old child thinks that it is the centre of the world and will demand everything. Would you ever consider that a two-year-old child would be fit to lead or govern? Unfortunately every day of our lives we come across people who biologically are well advanced compared to a two-year-old, but mentally they have progressed very little. These people don't need to develop like you and I to survive; the only thing that they need is to believe that they are it .... In monarchy the natural heir still is a family member; this very process does not ensure the fittest to be

in power, but the most advantaged in terms of family status. We have all read history and it is more than evident that this practice is flawed most of the time. Of course now we don't accept kings and queens per se to be our governors and for that reason most kings and queens have evolved and rather than leading nations they lead media, industry and corporations of any kind. We are lead to believe that we have democracy, however these are the neo-royals and the more we listen to and support them the more powerful they become. When money and power is transferred from one family member to the next<sup>14</sup>, so are mentality and long-term goals and the result is the current situation where 300 of the richest people are worth as much as 4,300,000,000 people. Does this whole thing that is happening right now sound right to you?

## 8. Corporations

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The main thing to remember about the corporatocracy is that it looks after its own. Such people will bribe or threaten their opponents; they will walk over anything along the way just to make profits. They will donate money to philanthropies in order to appear thoughtful while they will steal opportunity from potentially thriving individuals. They have also probably taken over the government of your country as they have close ties with all key personnel and via legal donations, control of the government has been established by the donors. Effectively the expression: 'donation to a political party' is a legal translation of the word bribe.

Yes, there are some benefits derived from corporations and they are welcome; however if you take everything that makes a corporation work and put it on the balance scales you will discover that it heavily leans towards damage.

'Corporate wealth translates into political power through campaign financing, corporate lobbying and the revolving door of jobs between government and industry; and political power translates into further wealth through tax cuts, deregulation and sweetheart contracts between government and industry. Wealth begets power, and power begets wealth.' – Jeffrey Sachs, *The Price of Civilisation*

One of the ways in which corporations influence our daily lives is through their dealings with governments with the aim of bringing about a new order through privatisations of public utilities. Public utilities of every country have developed through generations and have been financed through taxpayer contributions over the decades. Recent history has proven that privatisations occur to the detriment of the society. In various countries such as Russia, East Germany, Italy, Greece, France and the UK just to name a few, since the early 90s there have been examples that no-one in their right mind can ignore. In order to save time and since a documentary is already there describing the IMF's and World Bank's actions, I strongly suggest you put aside 90 minutes and type 'catastroika-multilingual' on your Google search box to watch this really interesting video.

It is evident that these dealings are in most cases, to say the least, unethical because a government by default should look after and promote the interests of its citizens rather than selling off utilities to vested private interests.

*We have come to an age in which everything has become a commodity; the only exception in many cases at the moment is the air we breathe. When I say everything else, it includes morals, souls and consciousness of humans who give themselves up to become soldiers of the corporate cancer which is killing our world as it mutates from one country to another via the globalisation scourge.*

It is not uncommon, in fact it is a rule, that when a media personality advocates passionately the cult of neo-liberalism, they are receiving huge rewards for spouting someone's corporate line. Free-to-air media has been hijacked and so have our thoughts.

Ironically, neo-liberalism is a term for describing liberalism of actions between appointed governments and citizens; however, governments are in turn controlled by corporations whose only objective is to strip all rights from civil societies. You could ask; why are you so sure that governments are run by corporations? And my answer is: It would be very hard not to believe so, judging by what has been happening over the past 50-60 years, which has hardly furthered collective

freedom, intrinsic well-being and collective collaboration. Instead, people are encouraged to 'look after number one' irrespective of the consequences for other people and the environment.

*We ought to love ourselves and serve ourselves, but we can't do that to the detriment of someone else.*

As I really do believe in the 'inherent' good of human nature and that a good person would not harm another, at a personal level and/or a more collective one, it is hard to believe that a good person would sign off on environmental disaster or selling off of their beloved country just to benefit the ruthless sharks of global corporate capitalism, whose reach is already too strong. It is also honestly very hard to believe that almost all of us, one good individual after the other and one generation after another, sing and dance to the tune of corporate greed. We're either dumb, mean or have been bribed. Though how can we, supposedly smart and good individuals, actually tolerate being governed like that, instead of being governed by smart, good and altruistic leaders? Certainly, the general description of 'a good individual', in terms of the chronic behaviour that has led to the current state of affairs at most levels, does not fit in with the developments that have occurred over the past 50-60 years.

What started in Turkey in May 2013 over a small park that the government wanted to demolish and replace with a new shopping centre, in my eyes is a true statement of people having had enough of tyranny. As I discuss in the next chapter, on democracy, people should be allowed to protest and they should also be taken seriously by their government as it is the function of a government to look after its citizens. What happened there? Almost the whole Turkish police force was deployed against its citizens to stop the protests. Their prime minister said that for every one protestor, he would deploy ten police officers. Who do you think that the government was helping out? Its citizens or a big fish? It is time for all the big fish to realise that at a certain point a single straw will end up breaking the camel's back. For whatever reason we have tolerated most of these activities described above. Tolerance is a simple decision; and our Turkish brothers and sisters have changed their tolerance to intolerance of the tyranny. One day when most of us decide to ignore what corporations have to 'offer', their might will crash and burn as their money and perceived power will be worthless.

And if we assume that here and there we are bound to get the odd lemon deal, how come most, if not all, deals that politicians and governments make have been so lemon-like? Not just locally, but collectively all around the world for such a prolonged period? Is it perhaps on the night of the inauguration of a government that everything changes? Is it when they say that they will serve the people ... do they need to specify which people they are really representing/serving? The other question is: how can they even get away with all of that for such a long time? Why are lowly citizens always faced by the brutal claw of the law while some people don't even know what punishment from the law means?

One can make money and obtain power both by doing good or bad things. But the ultimate question is this: Why have our leaders chosen oppression and environmental destruction over collective freedom and intrinsic well-being, collective collaboration, and the development life propagating technologies? And how is it possible for the future of whole ecosystems to be in the hands of one person? (See Greg Hunt – and the Great Barrier Reef, Australia). But of course, why should we spoil the party that corporations have and stop devastating environmental changes instead of the benefits of a thriving, wise, civilised and mindful society? Why is dark so compelling? Is it maybe because we actually are run by the dark? And how is that possible? A mass-production factory will produce the same product over and over again. The materials used to produce these identical products are varied and seasonal. Our politicians, just like the natural resources, are variable and

seasonal; their appearance, that is. I must state here, that I strongly believe that the aspirations of the vast majority of people who become politicians were altruistic before they joined the upper ranks. Just like the factory production system though, through the methodical application of engineering and chemistry, products are produced at predicted intervals, rates and specifications; so the politician brainwashing system operates methodically to create politicians who 'serve' the people.

Every day on radio, TV, or in newspapers or other media there are segments about the performance of the global financial markets. They review the performance that global markets had the day before. In addition they try to predict what will happen during the next sessions. It is really interesting to observe on a daily basis the reasoning as to why markets performed well or underperformed. It almost sounds like commentary taken from a horse race. Companies and countries are like the horses or the dogs or the sports teams or whatever else, where their performance will reflect on a gambler's (shareholder's) bottom line. The expectations from shareholders for the forthcoming performance of a sector or a company are just like the odds for winning or losing. It is all too common for one not to think that our world is suffering from gambling addiction at all levels. It is no wonder that we are in that state because anyone that is ruthless can attain huge levels of power, leaving no room for the humble person. It is no wonder that we are prepared to gamble for our very future, just like a gambler would put his house on the line. For example when the markets are heading downhill, it is because Greece is about to default and when the opposite happens it is because Greece somehow won't. The Greece example is analysed further in chapter 13.

Effectively what is said by the reporters that when some major investor did not sleep well, that very thing caused the market to dive and vice versa. Let's assume that the commentator is not a real expert and that what he/she says is just for public consumption. Interestingly enough in the current financial system, an investor with a lot of money can effectively destroy a company in just one day. Nothing stops an investor from buying up as many shares as he/she wants, hence driving the price up and then at the right time all of the shares can be sold strategically, driving the price down to the ground and effectively destroying that company. Apart from affecting the share price and the peer investors that have invested in it, the company itself is really vulnerable to these types of attacks. A recent example of such a situation is when Gina Rinehart acquired a large number of Fairfax Media Limited shares, hence an increased stake in the company – a move that has raised several questions about the nature of control in listed companies. The mining magnate wanted a commanding number of seats on the board of the news company in order to be able to influence what is published, hence being able to manipulate public opinion about the actions of her mining interests. In no time the share price of the news company was within budget range for the mining magnate. What this demonstrates is that capitalism along with the great things that it has done for our society, in terms of certain aspects, inherently has a built-in property that is unfair for the vast majority.

It is also worth making the point that male leaders have shown historically that they simply are mostly responsible for what has happened so far and it really makes me wonder why women have been so methodically kept off limits from key governing roles. When some women do manage to make it to the main political arena, many times they are up against fierce opposition presented by their male counterparts. I find it very interesting to see that even female voters were so against their female prime minister (ie: Julia Gillard – former Australian prime minister). I would love to see a lot more women involved in the political arena; not as mere extras, but as protagonists. I am stating this because historically males have been in charge and we are where we are now because of it; we need to foster deep change and enlightenment for our world and I feel that women have the primary role here.

By default though whoever is in power, either a man or a woman, who is sensible and has half-decent plans for the future and the collective interest is effectively stoned down just like Judas was, or even killed. We, for some reason, are not allowed to grow and become civilised. The word 'civilisation' by the way, needs thorough elaboration as it is grossly misused to characterise the current human race.

During past decades there has been a wide-ranging consolidation process between companies; a large company puts in a take-over bid for its smaller competitor. Two things could happen:

1. The take-over is successful, hence making the larger company's position in the market more prominent. This process though can be repeated a number of times so in a matter of a few years an oligopoly is created and before we realise it, we have a monopoly in this particular market segment. This phenomenon is opposite to natural selection of species, where there is an ongoing evolution of all species sometimes through consolidation as well. Evolution started with single-cell organisms and through trial and error it has created millions of combinations/species. What happens in the capitalist system is fundamentally different. Its inbuilt function is basically cannibalism, because as certain companies become more and more powerful their leverage increases continuously, enabling them to make more and more acquisitions by devouring all competition, resulting in a mono-species/company environment: the so-called merging. I can't project in terms of timeframe; however in the future there will be only one company selling fuel, only one supermarket chain selling food and only one news outlet and so on if we all keep on going with the current state of affairs/mentality/financial system structure and the current form of operation of the share markets. Imagine what would happen if the single supermarket chain decided not to sell food for a month. It could be running the next government just because the directors decided to starve the country, just because they can. It is a bit far-fetched, however not very far from reality. Simply because the current financial system aims towards that which is the ultimate goal: domination.
2. The take-over bid is not successful and the large company starts a price war and very soon the small player has no more resources to stay in the game. Either way the small company has no chance, unless we the consumers decide to support small businesses, support the local producers and effectively support diversity.

In the meanwhile we live in the 'free society' and 'free market' where anyone can invest anywhere. Everyone is 'given' the equal opportunity to make money in the share market-place however winnings for everyday people are mostly random and comparatively insignificant, if any. Let's look at the superannuation system which was established during the 80's in Australia to initially supplement government paying pensions. The employer pays a percentage of the gross income of each employee to fund-management companies in order for these funds to be invested in a professional manner. An employee has the choice to 'invest' more money in that fund in order to ensure higher returns and ultimately a bigger lump sum of cash at the maturity of the investment. As these fund investment companies invest people's savings effectively, there are three things that can happen. Investments go up, down or remain at the same level. During the recent years most investments have performed negatively. No wonder because our money is invested into the globally affected share market. Our invested money, which is totally out of our control, can end up in any big investor's credits, so he or she can play their next move in their company take-over monopoly game. A game which has no consequences for the big players; they can either play and win and pass a small profit margin to us, or lose and pass all the losses to us! In fact either way they are paid bonuses. It seems as if the more collateral damage is caused by their actions the more extravagantly are these executives compensated. How many times have we heard that companies are doing badly but their protected and special executives receive bonuses of value that some people couldn't even dream of earning throughout their whole working career? One thing is for sure; big investors are not stupid

and definitely they would not hand out money unless they've achieved something, even if that is not readily seen by us, as our perspective of the game is very limited. The powers of big companies are already more widespread than the ones that governments have. For example when the Reserve Bank of Australia reduces the cash rate, the only thing that the government can do is to plead for the banks to pass the cash rate cuts to their customers. That is the only power that the government has, which is effectively none. What is sadder and tragic is that more and more public utilities are being sold to private hands. Our 'leaders' rather than forcing the big banks to follow suit, are sitting passively like mere puppets just making noise, feeding empty headlines and distracting us with useless issues. Reforms that have long-term positive prospects for the community are rare and heavily fought against by vested interests.

*The financial prosperity of our system is based on continuous growth, something which is by definition wrong, as we live in a planet with finite resources.*

Apart from total selfishness, immorality and pure greed I can't see any other drivers, unless at the educational institutes, universities as they call them, they teach fairy tales – that somehow there will be a miracle and the planet earth will somehow expand, the resources will somehow multiply, the trees, animals and all of this magnificent planet's wealth will somehow survive the senseless raping that we do to it 24/7 so we can buy and throw away items at an astounding rate. You can look up on Google a short video showing some very disturbing truths, called: 'Story of Stuff'. It is so ingrained in our society that new is always better. It is also astonishing to see how material objects just lose their value so quickly. Let's take a car as an example. At the showroom it is worth \$100,000. The moment this car is driven out of the showroom for a day it has already lost 10% of its value! Five years later that same car is worth \$20-30,000. I call that madness! And the claim is that new cars are efficient and environmentally friendly. In some ways that is probably correct, however I would like these claims to take in consideration all the energy and resources required to produce new cars in order to replace the old. Coupled with the fact that cars are made to have fewer serviceable years compared to the ones that were manufactured in the past, the claimed fuel savings are being used up by replacing cars at an ever accelerating rate. In technical terms since the mid-90s the car industry has not progressed in real terms at all. Yes, new cars have more useless gadgets (anti-this, anti-that etc), however the environmental aspect is not being addressed effectively. Unless we see hybrid or pure electric vehicles using super-capacitors as their power source in the main stream market arena, real progress is still far from here.

In my view as I have already mentioned, perspective is a must have capacity in order for one to be able to walk the path of life in a way that reality, rather than fiction resonates. Perspective on things is a skill which demands courage and clear thinking not influenced by propaganda TV channels, time-wasting social media and empty-fake idols. The noise that has been induced is so loud that it is impossible for many to counteract it. The reason that we, as a race, have excelled and reached our current level of evolution is through the law of natural selection. Some have decided that this law is no longer valid. In fact quite the opposite is taking place. We protect big banks that they cannot fail, big businesses that they are just too big to go down, so the whole economic system can keep on running the way it does; and for some reason human life is more valuable than the whole ecosystem which contains and supports human life itself. When we hear about natural disasters the main concern is whether homes were lost and if any humans have died; and all that is taking precedence instead of focusing on the tragedy of the loss of devastated ecosystems.

Another aspect of this argument is that governments regard people mainly as taxpayers and consumers rather than citizens and individuals who in turn need full support from their leaders. If the latter occurred then companies that produce GM food and companies that sell it regardless of the consequences would simply not exist. In fact bad food is promoted, instead of good and healthy

food, resulting in poor health, which makes money for the sick (called health) industry and people operating at a much lower than optimal level both physically and mentally. Someone who operates at a low physical level by definition has a fraction of the potential energy to perform various activities. As natural selection commands, survival is our number one priority. Food and shelter are the primary concerns.

As most people have to work for longer hours, there is less and less time available for their family, children and ultimately time for thinking and evaluating our direction as individuals, but most importantly as a community as a whole. And that is the very point where everybody is only looking out for themselves and not the general good. As a result we are all open to manipulation of the direction we are taking as we don't have time to look at the compass of Truth; a compass whose North should be fixed towards our society becoming a host of Utopian life. Instead the magnetic poles are tampered with and the north is never at the same relative position, causing us just to spin our tyres while going in circles and choking from the smoke in the meanwhile. As parents don't have energy and time to spend in a quality way with their children, they plant them in front of the TV for the daily and life-changing media brainwash. No wonder we have an obesity epidemic and so many other epidemics! In my time as a child, I used to play for hours outside the house with all the neighbouring children/friends. I had the chance to develop social and physical skills by experience. That also allowed me to exercise both mentally and physically. I could make my toys with my own hands and I was allowed to fall and hurt myself, fight and be-friend again and again. I will always be grateful to my parents for that.

Looking at the general pattern of events I would say that we are actually ruled by psychopaths or at the very least the outcomes of decision-making appear to be psychopathic. Once again I insist that corporations are pulling the strings, so why do I say we are ruled by psychopaths?

By a generally accepted definition psychopathy is a personality trait or disorder characterised partly by enduring anti-social behaviour, a diminished capacity for empathy or remorse, and poor behavioural controls. Psychopaths are cool under pressure and lack empathy for others; these are useful traits in moderation as you don't want a surgeon worrying how you feel as he or she takes a scalpel to your brain. The best leaders just like psychopaths appear to be calm when subjected to a stressful scenario.

Often corporate leaders are accused of actually being psychopaths. A 2005 study by two researchers at the University of Surrey compared the psychopathic profiles of business managers with psychiatric patients and hospitalised criminals. 'Their analysis revealed that a number of psychopathic attributes were actually more common in business leaders than in so-called "disturbed" criminals ...', wrote Kevin Dutton, in his book called: *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*.

The main difference between our business leaders and the criminals or insane, the study concluded, was the level of 'antisocial' feelings.

Dutton claims that we can learn lessons by studying the qualities exhibited by psychopaths and he travels the world talking to researchers and various experts, including psychopathic criminals, in order to investigate his theory.

The report demonstrated that psychopathy occupies a kind of a sliding scale. In some cases, we can see certain attributes in terms of mental stability, but once the psychopathic tendency tips past a certain point, the psychopathic individual is lost in a swirl of moral vacuum, resulting in the loss of any concern for his/her victim.

The analogy: 'leaders are already closer in behaviour to psychopaths than most' may appear discomfoting, however when CEOs were asked to complete a self-score psychopathy test, they managed to top the list of those on the plus-side. In fact CEOs were followed by lawyers, then television and radio presenters, followed by salespeople, surgeons, journalists and finally police officers.

Everyday people would feel very uncomfortable with the scenario of a game with high stakes. It's really quite hard to make a psychopath sweat since the higher the stakes and the risk, the more they thrive on that game. In a study, when a mix of participants gambled \$20 that they were given, the psychopathic participants won easily. Winning the game resulted in \$2.50 winnings but a loss cost the players \$1.00. Normal people became increasingly cautious as they experienced loss. Psychopaths on the other hand thrived on the risk and enjoyed the game.

Persuading followers to do what must be done requires charm, and an ability to understand what motivates and drives individuals. By the way, many people claim that they feel a high degree of discomfort when they talk face-to-face with a real psychopath. Despite them being brilliant at covering their complete lack of feeling, normal people, mostly women, have feelings of disgust and/or repulsion, or that 'they might be their next lunch'.

The vision of the best leaders normally is way ahead of others', not only in terms of just being able to foresee the best path, but to also communicate their vision with clarity and passion. They are able to attain the support of everyone around them as they are able to stay focused on the goal and thrive on making all the risky and tough decisions in order to get there, just like Adolf Hitler did.

As the father of economics, Adam Smith, argued entirely mathematically almost 240 years ago, that capitalists actually have an interest in deceiving and oppressing the public in order to achieve their goal, wouldn't then psychopaths make the perfect managers after all? Why then, after all this time, would anyone find this scenario surprising?

Pay attention to what is happening around the world: the shrinking middle class, the widening gap between rich and poor and the increase of poverty. Something is wrong; somewhere along the line collectively we are failing. Is it maybe time to start contemplating what it is that we might be failing on?

To find the origins of today's feral incarnation of wealth we have to go back to the 1980s.

In order to determine what has happened over the past few decades in terms of wealth distribution let's look at the points below:

- The free market ideology was adopted by conservative governments around the globe; they privatised public utilities through changes of regulation thus allowing and opening up the gates of new business opportunities for the already rich
- Wages only managed to keep up with the rate of inflation, while top executive pay packages started racing ahead
- Worker union powers were eroded all around the world, while the up-coming globalisation mentality enabled multinational corporations to outsource manufacturing/production to the countries that offered the cheapest deals
- By the successful accomplishment of the above points, profit margins skyrocketed benefiting shareholders while their incomes were protected by fierce tax reforms for the corporations and high earners

- The fact that the financial markets were deregulated, initially in London and New York, created a fertile environment for sector pay scales to go through the roof, the notorious bonus culture went crazy and being greedy was a good thing
- Ironically the trouble-makers and creators of the financial mess leading to the well-known 2008 crisis were bailed out by our elected politicians, who then decided to cut public spending to offset, showing how rigged the financial game is. The trouble-makers came out of it unscathed while the rest of us were severely punished with austerity measures (see Europe and the US).

Even government efforts to stimulate growth have lined the pockets of the already prosperous by pushing up share prices and other assets. In Britain, the richest households were \$561,000 better off as a result of the Bank of England's quantitative easing programme; the average increase for the poorest households was \$1,900.

Everyone knows that the financial sector needs a radical overhaul. But reforms to make it safer keep getting sabotaged. The crime scene is strewn with clues as to why. Example number one: the \$150 million mustered by the British financial services industry to lobby politicians and regulators when the Barclays Libor rate-fixing scandal was provoking renewed calls for tougher rules.<sup>1</sup> Example number two: the \$355 million the US finance industry spent on political lobbying in Washington in 2012, second only to the health industry lobby.<sup>2</sup>

Politicians and regulators still persist in arguing in favour of light-touch self-regulation, saying that otherwise the high-finance 'talent' will leave their jurisdictions, with a resulting loss in tax revenue. The same argument is used in support of low taxes on corporations and high earners. The corporate rich, especially those linked to finance, have governments in their pockets. To compound the problem, many in government are themselves millionaires and have close links to the industry.

Ironically, there are even indications of tensions between the millionaires and the billionaires, because the latter have become so much richer, so much faster, than the mere millionaires who are struggling to keep up. Equality is a buzz word that has entered all spheres now, including elite gatherings of business and world leaders at the World Economic Forum and in the pages of *The Economist*. Widening inequality is seen as a danger, a source of social unrest that disrupts the workings of capitalism.

This is where hope lies: in disruption from below. Today's inequality is the result of years of deliberate action to crush unions, drive down wages and create a self-serving elite of plutocrats. Mouthing nice words about greater equality is not enough. It has to come with serious redistribution of wealth and a dismantling of the institutions and practices that are perpetuating privilege and inequality.

The mobilisation around corporate greed and aggressive tax avoidance in various parts of the world is revealing a long list of culprits – Apple, General Electric, Vodafone, Starbucks, Google, Amazon, PepsiCo, Goldman Sachs, Facebook – and generating widespread feelings of anger and revulsion. The mood has changed. In Greece, a country where tax avoidance was previously the social norm, the journalist who was put on trial for revealing the names of 2,000 high-level tax dodgers is viewed as a hero by the people.

The coming years will see more austerity measures, as governments try to convince the people that the national deficit is their fault and they must pay for it with their jobs and their public services and their pension and their savings. Such governments must under any circumstances encounter a lot more resistance than they expect. What we all need to remember is that the political class, like the

rich, are in the minority in terms of numbers. The plutocracy, and those in power who do their bidding, need the co-operation of the 99.9999%, even if they think and behave as if they don't. They detach themselves from the rest of humanity at their peril. And we ignore them, or accept their hideously distorting power to our detriment.

Be alert, see what is coming, act accordingly while having the future of our planet and your intrinsic well-being in mind.

## 9. Democracy

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Is democracy working the way that it is supposed to do? Is there one political system that can be considered perfect? Is democracy as we know it today the best form of governance? Are there any areas for improvement? If there are, which of these are the most pressing today? What can we do to alter the state of these areas? Is that really what should mainly be concerning us? And if they need improving, are we actually concerning ourselves with these areas?

While democracy was in its flourishing state within its birthplace, Greece, political figures had to pay back the state for any poor decisions affecting the finances of the state and if they did not have sufficient funds, they had to work for free for the state until all debts were paid back! That is the only way a representative democracy can really work for the benefit of the state and its subjects.

There are around 18 voting systems used around the world in order for governments to be elected democratically. I am not a voting system expert but one would think that out of the 18 systems 2 or 3 would be the fairest. So why are there so many voting systems in the first place?

We hear about political parties receiving 'donations' (I call these, bribes) from various companies and individuals. Why is that acceptable when we all can understand that 'donations'/bribes to political parties are not usually altruistic? Why is that type of conduct allowed in the first place? Is it maybe because in one way or the other we all kind of accept this behaviour? Are all of us so corrupt and weak that we don't have the power to say no to such behaviour anymore?

In my view all donations to political parties should be deemed illegal and all advertising promoting political parties and agendas should simply stop. Don't tell me how you are in other words, but rather show me... Broadcast all the parliament proceedings uncut on TV without the 'help' of political editorial colouring; in my view that would be a good way for citizens to see what is happening and then be able to make up their minds themselves. Why do we need to have commentators about political issues at all? Let politicians talk and I will make my own mind from uncut, unedited speeches; no need to interfere with the message itself.

In many cases people from the corporate world move into politics for a number of years in order to be a part of the government. During that time these individuals still maintain very close ties with the corporate world. As our representative, a politician, one would think they would spend time with people and communities from the electorate in order to be able to determine first-hand what the electorate wants. Maintaining relationships with the private sector is necessary providing they maintain their integrity. Judging from history, very often government-private sector relationships do not maintain their integrity, the results of which are evident all around us.

Maybe to fix this situation there should be a simple rule that does not allow an individual to be able to do both professions in their lifetime; like an ex-prisoner is not allowed to become a magistrate. The previous example does not intend to stigmatise either a corporate professional or a politician as such, however these two disciplines do not mix well for most of us. Just like for most cases an ex-prisoner would not become a good judge.

Since a member of parliament is a representative of the interests of the people, conversely the same person cannot act in the best interests of both the corporations and the citizens he or she represents.

You may also think that there is an oxymoron that is happening right now. Governments around the world have the 'big brother' mentality: cameras are installed everywhere; our transaction data is kept for a number of years; our movements are monitored through mobile phones and GPS devices in new cars. Our phone activities are being monitored. Why do governments have to maintain such close control of their citizens?

And why isn't the opposite happening instead? The impact of the actions of which group would you think would be the most critical? The group that runs all of us (ie, politicians), or you and I, whose decisions and behaviour have little influence and limited impact?

As the many elect the very few to do the job of representing the public interest, it would make a lot more sense if all movements of politicians including conversations, transactions and effectively whatever they do 24/7 were monitored instead. One could argue that this is crazy! Maybe some politicians are transparent so why do you want to have everyone under the same banner? And my contra question is: why do you have all citizens under one banner and monitor everyone in order to catch one per cent or less of the bad guys? All I am talking about is balance. Same rules apply to EVERYONE; otherwise have no rules at all as they are one-sided and useless.

Conversely, the responsibility and influence of a politician does not end when their term in parliament is over. As some politicians establish very close bonds with the private sector, in my view their conduct should be closely monitored after their job as a politician is done. Rules about conflicts of interest as well as confidentiality clauses should be effective and be enforced for periods of maybe a decade and breaches should be seriously punishable.

When the representatives of the people are in the parliament and a bill is to be voted on, it is expected that all members of a party will have the same vote. As the government holds most seats in the parliament by majority and party members are expected to vote along party lines, then technically speaking, whether the bill is good or not it can be passed either way. In fact an MP who has a different view usually gets reprimanded by the party leadership and sometimes if the numbers allow, the MP is expelled from the party. So while we have a democratic process to elect governments, in my view the governance is not conducted in a democratic fashion. If it was purely democratic, any MP of any party could vote for what he/she believes, rather than just following the rigid party line. Usually government and opposition have very little to agree on, however in many cases I think that if a conscience vote was allowed, the interests of citizens could possibly be represented in a lot better way. At the very least though, the process would be a lot more democratic.

The word democracy is derived from the Greek word: Δημοκρατία – Demokratia. It is a composite word comprised by δῆμος (dêmos) 'people' and ἐξουσία (kratos) 'power'.

So democracy in effect means power of the people.

Politicians and corporations are introducing invasive policies into our lives and their only purpose is to remove power from the people. Under the current format it is not possible for people to exercise any effective power whatsoever into the governance of their country.

A very good example is what happened very recently in Italy where private consortiums wanted Italy to privatise all water utilities of the country. Since for obvious reasons water is a really sensitive issue, the then prime minister Berlusconi held a national referendum so people could make the decision. 95% voted against privatisation. It was an almost unanimous decision by the Italians and when Berlusconi relayed the news to Troika; Troika made him privatise water utilities very quickly.

What does that example demonstrate to you? By the way the word Troika is derived from the Russian language (тройка), meaning "a set of three", or tripartite, or three of a kind. In this case, Troika was the tripartite committee led by the *European Commission* with the *European Central Bank* and the *International Monetary Fund*, that is also organised loans to the governments of Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus.

*Does the power of people really count for anything or are elections just a mere publicity contest between puppets?*

The previous example has shown that our opinion does not count and the governance of 'democratic' countries is just a camouflage for what the real rule is: aristocracy, 'rule of the elite'; or oligarchy: which has a very similar meaning, a form of government where power is vested in a few, or a dominant class or clique.

In fact if democracy did exist, there would be referendums a number of times each year, where it would be the people, and not their representatives, making decisions. It probably would be a great idea in fact if representative democracy was replaced by direct democracy at least for some time. That would be the most direct way for 'us', the people, to define where our path is. In fact participation of the citizens in these decisions should be considered as a given if we go by the sheer volume of votes accumulated when people are asked to vote on who is going to be the next X factor! Right? If not, why would people rather vote for the next X factor rather than a real issue?

Why can't we do the same for all our major issues? Is it because we are not smart enough? Is it because we don't care? Is it because we are too trusting? Is it because corporations are scared that their agendas will fail? And why don't we demand more control? Who on earth are corporations to dictate whether we want our environment to be destroyed or not?

Most importantly, the sheer test of a democratic system is the tolerance and acceptance that a government shows when the people decide to go to the streets and demonstrate. People have the right to show their thoughts; one way of doing this is a public demonstration. Why is that channel frowned upon so much? When people demonstrate in a peaceful manner police should not even be there; instead in most cases police provokes demonstrators, violent episodes start and as a result the corporation owned media condemn vigorously any kind of demonstration. Armoured police forces are just like soldiers; just a different-coloured uniform is there just to give an appearance of difference. Instead of people being free to demonstrate, they are being bullied and black-listed; another very effective method of fear instilment in order to force the masses to be quiet.

Instead the 'manifestation' of our democracies takes place only during the day of the election, after everyone has been bombarded with skilfully targeted propaganda by the most financially powerful – those that can afford to run the 24/7 propaganda that is, and usually they are the winners of each election.

And there is nothing democratic about holding onto secret files, and very sensitive information whose release would cause upheaval in the nation, because these things should not have been happening in the first place. It is a self-protecting and regulating system, which allows games to be played above our heads, keeping us in the dark while long-term agendas are being developed and implemented. Once again I refer you to the frog analogy in the preface.

I urge you to look for contrast, as well as to try and put events that are unfolding right now in perspective and I urge you to be honest with yourself while you are trying to decode what is happening around you.

Ultimately, would you ever keep a secret from your friend unless the information was hurtful or detrimental to your friend; if the latter happens, this person is most likely your opponent rather than your friend. If the information is harmless it simply is not kept secret, however harmful information is carefully tucked away nicely so no-one (the victim) has access to it because there will be reactions; and when people do react, as I already mentioned, police usually out-number the number of demonstrators. And that is why whistle-blowers like Julian Assange and Edward Snowden are being hunted and that's why whatever I have mentioned above in this chapter happens. Some democracy...

## 10. Obsolescence by Design

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Designed, built-in or planned obsolescence used in industrial design is a technique used to plan and/or design a product with a limited useful lifespan, in order to become obsolete, either by being unfashionable or simply by no longer being functional after a certain period of time. Built-in/designed obsolescence ensures a continual stream of sales of products as these products need constant replacement and the consumer is under pressure to purchase again and again, either from the same manufacturer or a competitor which also relies on planned obsolescence. Either way the consumer is forced to buy a new product. An ever-increasing demand for exploitation of the environment and natural resources is required to update products which are obsolete even the day they are initially sold, hence artificially keeping the dead-by-definition financial system alive.

There are significant differences between products built 50 years ago (I will call them 'old-tech') and items being manufactured nowadays (I will call them 'new-tech'). At first glance it is likely that you will notice that the old-tech items are maybe bulky, look old-fashioned and their capabilities are somewhat limited compared to new-tech items which are probably sleek-looking, are compact and have many functions. As technology has progressed a lot over the last century in terms of making things smaller and smarter, so has the cost of manufacturing due to efficiency improvements coupled with smart electronics.

Although old-tech items were sold so that their manufacturers and sellers would make profits, the concept of consumerism hadn't yet developed to its current sophisticated form. Because GDP is linked very closely to the financial performance of a country and more sales bring more profits to manufacturers and salespeople, a system that would enhance that situation was invented and further developed, resulting in today's marketplace full of products that are either are dead on arrival, break down very fast, cannot be repaired economically, or are just useless soon after purchase because newer and non-compatible products are being produced hence superseding the older ones. Such products which are designed to be obsolete both by design and by durability are being manufactured so that they will become landfill in a few months from the time of purchase. Designed obsolescence influences decisions about product engineering at every level. Such decisions are part of a broader discipline known as value engineering.

As designed obsolescence stimulates demand by encouraging purchasers to buy sooner if they still want a functioning product, it has become a mainstream practice for all kinds of manufacturers: from car manufacturers, to computer, TV and related gadgetry, to mobile phones, toys, clothes manufacturers, etc. The result is well known as we are all forced to replace faulty items rather than repairing them, costing us a lot of money; it is even more expensive, due to the way they are designed, to repair them, even if they can be repaired. The practice of throwing away items that perhaps previously could have been repaired is placing great stress on our planet and the available natural resources. It should be clear by now that we live well above and beyond our means in terms of sustainability and our very long-term existence; we are stealing the future from future generations since all of the resources on this planet are finite. It is at the very least a totally unethical and irresponsible and absolutely short-sighted practice.

There are two sub-categories of planned obsolescence: obsolescence of desirability and obsolescence of function. *Obsolescence of desirability*, also referred to as *psychological obsolescence*, is basically the marketers' efforts to wear out a product in the owner's/consumer's mind. Industrial designer George Nelson<sup>1,2</sup> wrote: 'Design ... is effectively an attempt to make a contribution through change. When no contribution is made or can be made, the only process

available for giving the illusion of change is “styling!”, just like the car industry has done for the last 25 years.

The rationale behind the strategy is to generate long-term sales volume by shortening the time between reoccurring purchases, (referred to as shortening the replacement cycle). Manufacturers that use this practice believe that the additional sales revenue it creates more than offsets the additional costs of research and development. The rewards are by no means certain: in a competitive market place, this can be a risky strategy to take up, because consumers may decide to buy from competitors instead.

Shortening the replacement cycle has many critics as well as supporters. Critics, claim the process is wasteful and exploits customers. Finite resources are used up just to make cosmetic changes often that are not of any real value to the customer. The supporters of this practice claim that it drives technological advances and contributes to material well-being. But they also claim that a market structure that embraces planned obsolescence and rapid innovation is preferable to long-lasting products and slow innovation. In today’s fast-paced competitive industry market success requires that products are made obsolete by actively developing replacements.

Synoptically various sub-types of obsolescence of desirability and obsolescence of function are:

- **Style obsolescence**  
Marketing very often is driven primarily by aesthetic design. The products in this case display a specific fashion cycle. By an ongoing cycle of cosmetic design alterations, and via retargeting or discontinuing designs, a manufacturer can ‘ride the fashion cycle’. These categories of products include: mobile phones, TV’s, clothes, cars, mostly following an annual schedule of new models (style obsolescence); the mobile phone industry which constantly introduces minor restyling and feature enhancements and the almost entirely fashion-driven clothing industry (riding the fashion cycle).
- **Programmed Obsolescence**  
A notification for replacement may be combined with the deliberate disabling of a product to prevent it from functioning, thus making the buyer purchase a replacement item. In this category fit the inkjet printer manufacturers that use smart chips in their already expensive ink cartridges in order to prevent them from being used after a predetermined threshold (time, number of pages, etc), even though the cartridge may still contain ink or alternatively could be refilled.
- **Planned Functional Obsolescence**  
This is a type of obsolescence by which manufacturers introduce new-technology which replaces the old. The older products do not have the same capabilities or their functionality is more limited compared to the new ones. A good example of this principle is; vinyl records, evolved to CDs, then to DVDs, then to MP3 and so on. The interesting thing that is happening now is that vinyl records are coming back as analogue is always better than digital when it comes to sound fidelity.

Other styles of obsolescence include systemic, technical or functional, expensive replacement parts, obsolescence by short durability, scheduled obsolescence, planned obsolescence of computer software and obsolescence by depletion. As you can see there are many ways in which we are forced to buy replacement products over and over again at ever increasing rates as technology becomes more advanced and predictable.

Consequently planned/designed obsolescence has a number of negative consequences and environmental implications:

- Resource depletion – The faster a product fails, the more quickly we need a new one, and hence the more resources are needed in order to fulfil demand.
- Greater electricity and water consumption – manufacturing requires copious amounts of energy and water resources, hence the more we need to manufacture, the more energy and water we need to use.
- Increased pollution – in the form of greenhouse gases, toxic by-products derived by manufacturing etc.
- Exploitation of workers – competition for manufacturers and marketers to sell more and more products at the cheapest price, leaves little room for wages, especially in countries that unions are very weak.
- Waste generation – as products reach the end of their lifecycle either through use or designed obsolescence, their disposal generates waste.
- It creates a wrong mentality – the idea that something can be used, abused and thrown away only acts to perpetuate an unsustainable, disposable mentality in society, and will take a lot of effort to undo.
- As we buy products multiple times we ultimately increase our living costs.

### **What can we do to make a difference?**

Things that we can all do to mitigate certain impacts of planned obsolescence include:

- Buy long-life products – We can choose to buy products that have extended warranties, or that are guaranteed for a reasonable period of time.
- Buy quality products – Rather than buying the cheapest, look for products that are built to last. Everyone has a budget to meet, however we should be practical about it as well, because cheaper isn't always better for you or the environment.
- Recyclability – Buy products that are made out of recycled material, or recyclable material.
- Good quality materials – Always look for products that are made out of durable and quality materials.
- Buy good service – Buy products with take-back or recycling or buy-back programmes as a part of their service.
- Repairs and/or upgrades – Look for products that can be repaired under warranty, but also ones that are compatible with other, newer parts.
- Maintenance and attention – By taking care of your belongings you are more likely to increase their life. Maintain them and keep them in good working order.
- Purchase second-hand goods – Purchasing second hand goods can potentially save you money, and definitely saves on raw materials and reduces pressure on landfills.
- Fulfil the lifecycle – Always make sure you use a product until it is completely unusable and then recycle it and avoid succumbing to marketers' campaigns to buy something new. Only replace an item when it is absolutely necessary.
- There is a significant difference between green and sustainable products. A product which is green, does not automatically qualify as a sustainable product. For instance, bamboo flooring is surely green as it comes from a natural-green source, however the end product must be shipped across continents to be sold. All the related green house gas emissions either caused by transport, manufacturing or other part of the product's cycle are to be taken in consideration and in many cases the bottom line is that green products are non sustainable products.

While planned obsolescence is appealing to many manufacturers, the impact to society is great in the form of negative externalities. By constantly replacing products, rather than repairing them, it creates more waste, more pollution, and a lot more natural resources are used, and the end result is more cost for consumers. We all need to become more informed and savvy about what we buy, before we buy.

At the end of the day, if we buy products that we don't really need all the time, on one hand we support the economy and our jobs, but on the other hand we destroy the environment by proxy, and we need to work more to be able to buy more, which leads us to having lives of potentially lower value. The industrial revolution was meant to make our lives easier; in some cases it has done so, but what are we actually achieving by it?

## 11. Credit

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‘You can have this item right now and you can pay for it later! (and it will cost you soooo much more ... ah-ha ... another sucker)’.

That very sentence is the ultimate enslavement tool that has been clawing into our western world and has manifested in many aspects of our daily lives. Ask yourself ‘How often do I buy on credit?’ Every time you do use it, you are paying ... indirectly that is ... otherwise how could banks have achieved record-breaking profits one year after the other? And how audacious are they for example; when the Reserve Bank of Australia does eventually reduce lending costs and all major banks refuse to pass the savings onto their beloved customers either partially or totally? Who is actually in charge: governments or the heavy-weight bankers and their close associates? Debt has been hailed as the solution to our financial problems by banks and related institutions and has allowed our economies to grow at unprecedented levels, at lightning fast rates; at the same time debt has risen accordingly. In fact debt-fuelled booms have created personal debt levels of crazy proportions and people in the western world have to work harder and longer to support their families, as well as their crazy obsession with buying and throwing away more and more cheap items just to keep the rope spinning around a fixed pole. One day will that rope run out of length and crash into the pole that supports it?

Four or five years ago you spent a fortune buying the latest plasma TV and now, has it been put out for garbage collection? Have you just spent another small fortune to buy the latest model just to repeat the same process in five years’ time? Has debt actually been working like a local brain anaesthetic so that the pain of working sixty hours a week, week in and week out, all of a sudden doesn’t matter and it’s just OK to be disconnected from the most important person on this world – yourself – just for the sake of owning the latest gismo?? One thing is for sure: the same insulting rubbish that was on the last TV unit will be on the new one as well, just with better resolution. And the list of course goes on and on: cars, clothes, clothing accessories, sporting equipment, furniture, other hi-tech ‘devices’, alcohol, cigarettes etc.

Credit has caused housing booms, pricing booms, insane consumerism booms, vast increases in personal debt and has also created susceptible governments. It is a great tool that has worked for very few and has caused massive problems for the many. Its creators have leveraged on our immaturity and, in most cases, apparent lack of ability to judge whether what we are looking to obtain has any real value or not; however since we can obtain it by credit, we obtain it anyway, hence creating a need that was not there in the first place. Credit stress, along with misleading marketing and advertising campaigns, has contributed to the creation of monstrous corporations which control our governments, the vast majority of private media and ultimately our lives and environment.

Beyond this, credit is a trap and a great tool for manipulation. There are several ways by which people can have trouble through credit. Let me explain by comparing two individuals: the first is debt-free and the second one is indebted and must work every day possible to meet debt payments. Who do you think is in the strongest position? Let’s also assume that both of these individuals work side-by-side. If the need for strike action were to arise because of a work-related dispute and both were opposed to the new measures, who do you think that would be more likely to take action? If all workers were debt-free and would not risk their house by striking what do you think that would happen if a new set of ugly working conditions were to be introduced? When people are only one pay cheque away from bankruptcy what do you think their resilience levels are? Are they able to fight for their rights or are they more likely to put their heads down, keep working with the new unfavourable reforms just to have the cash coming in? Another parameter of debt is the payment of interest. I remember looking at

my annual mortgage statements; they were depressing because out of the tens of thousands of repayments, only a really small fraction went towards paying the principal off. I soon realised that I was working for the bank and not my family.

It is also worth mentioning that money is created by debt and as Marriner Eccles, governor of the federal reserve bank of the US in September 30<sup>th</sup> 1941 said: 'if there were no debts in our money system, there wouldn't be any money left'.

Every dollar that we hold in our hands is a dollar that someone owes to someone else. Our current economy is nothing more than an indentured servitude to an endless cycle of debt. We are working in a bankrupt system. A proof of this would be the impossible scenario of synchronising all bank customers universally to go to their banks and withdraw all their money on the same day. In lay terms, the banks' excuse would be that the money isn't there because it's invested and is located in someone else's account; they would be breaking a fundamental law of the monetary system: that money lent should be reflected in the bank's reserves at any given time, something of course which is not happening.

The big question is though; if our current financial system is so good, how come in almost every western country a large portion of the population is in financial difficulty? How come many people have to work insane hours every day just to make ends meet? Imagine if you were the manager of a store/workshop/restaurant or any establishment for that matter and the customer satisfaction levels were 3% good and 97% not very good on average (3% of the population are the ultra-wealthy, with crazy disposable income while others in the same system are homeless). What do you think would happen to you as a manager? So why do we put up with such a system in the first place? Surely we are smart enough to work out a system that would score better, right? What is holding us back from doing so? Surely if most of us are not having a great time with this system why are we supporting it?

Or is *status quo* the accepted method, with no-one able to lift their head up, knowing that we are all moving incredibly fast towards a reinforced concrete wall? What are we so scared of? The drastic changes needed to the way we live? One thing is for sure; change is certain, however the outcome of this coming change is in your hands alone. The result is certain to be the one that you choose. There is one and only condition to this: you will need to make personal change, regardless of the changes that your peers make. You do what you need to do and everything will follow suit. If grass seeds waited for one another to pop out of the ground, no green fields would ever have existed.

Is it through being exposed to more credit that we tend to lose our freedom incrementally? Again I think it is appropriate to use the frog analogy, mentioned in the preface of this book and I think it is totally appropriate to use it again here. Can we for one moment imagine how our grand-grandparents used to live compared to ours? Can you notice distinctive differences, or subtle ones? This argument is not limited to the aspect of love, but also the areas of growth, freedom, health, and social life, the intimate and emotional sides. These sides are the ones that have been traded off for our current lifestyle and habits. It is worth asking ourselves: is this what we were really promised at the beginning? Is this really the story that everyone has fallen for? Do you think our grandparents would have been so stupid as to buy into a scenario like that? So what about us, their descendants? Why has this rat-race lifestyle become so compelling to us?

I really can't get the fact that we are truly willing to trade off:

- Time and relationships with parents, villages, surroundings, country and what we ever really stood for.
- Our health. For example; who in their right mind would now go to work in coal mines/underground black holes, as many people previously had to, just to make money? But

let's not forget how many thousands of people now sacrifice themselves for their dream, to make money that is. Ask yourself. Apart from money, what would make me go and leave behind family, home, friends etc. and willingly work at a mine completely isolated in the middle of the nowhere in the scorching heat, in a very dusty environment, and in coalmines where explosive methane is present?

- A healthy environment. Just think that 200 years ago an overwhelming proportion of the planet was virgin. I could easily say now that we have exactly the opposite scenario. Everyone knows what is happening around us, the weather pattern changes are universal with weather extremes rapidly becoming weekly headline news articles. Can we all think how the weather was 10-20-30 years ago depending on your current age? Should that alone just make us think what we are really heading for? For example, the latest developments in the geo-engineering field: for those who don't know about it read *Earthmasters* by Clive Hamilton. In a very few years our respected leaders will be announcing to us 'we are really sorry for making this big mistake and did not listen to the 95% of the scientists who for decades have been warning us about human-induced climate change'. I wonder if they are also going to tell us that they were confused about what was going on, due to the generous they donations they had received? Or are they just about to announce to us that spraying sulphates into our troposphere is the only way to revert worsening climate disasters? Have you heard of the cascade effect or the snowball effect in terms of the frequency and severity of these extreme weather failures? A few years back we were experiencing extraordinary weather effects that were spaced 3-4 or more decades apart. And now the same anomalies occur several times within a decade...
- Loss of close bonds with immediate family – children, and friends. Most of us claim how much we love spending time with family and friends. But how much of it are we really doing? How much quality time do parents spend with their children? How many important developmental milestones are being achieved by children from childcare workers? What would possibly drive a parent to deny these moments to their children and themselves? Is that what we call love these days? Why do we really like playing with words just to make us feel better rather than actually calling things by their name? Or is this not the accepted norm anymore and anyone with a strong view has a name with an 'ist' attached to them?
- Loss of family. Ultimately we are a social being and most don't want to be alone. How come we have such high divorce rates? What is it that would make a person hurt their soul mate, the one, just to be able to earn more? Why has money become more important than all of the above factors? Is it a pretty thing? Or is it tastier than food and clean water? What is the real value of money? Or is it just a perception?

Why would humans want to live without any natural ingredients in their food? Or being so far from nature during their everyday lives? The closest that some of us are to nature is having a forest photo on their computer screen as wallpaper. No wonder a large proportion of the population is depressed and is on prescription drugs and most of us are into drinking, smoking or taking recreational drugs. Why can't we stand reality anymore? Why do we need to see what others are doing on the TV via the sports, movies and reality TV channels? Why do we read so much fiction? One hardly ever hears of scientific research or a spiritual book being a bestseller! Where are we putting our values?

Just by looking at these points it is not hard to see that almost everyone has been totally fooled. No-one would leave their traditional self-employed lifestyle to enter a rat-race employee lifestyle unless the trade-offs were really tempting. And if they really wanted that, what they were promised is not there anymore. It couldn't be, because who is going to choose a 10-14 or more hour day, 7-day-a-week lifestyle just to get ahead in life, over the natural and traditional lifestyle? I really think that no-one in their right mind would go for something like that. Somehow, though, many seem to be in that cul-de-sac.

The question is though; how can we do away with debt and live an enlightened life instead?

Since the new style of democracy is at its strongest position right now where most leaders stand for corporate profit rather than the common good, rather than trying to initiate change via the politicians that we vote for, we can do it by adjusting our habits. It is that simple actually. If you don't want Monsanto's GM products, buy organic fresh food. If you want clean air and water use chemical-free products, and fewer of them. Go for 100% renewable energy and surely there will be investment in new technology, making the fossil-fuel hunger a thing of the past.

Rather than implementing the law of supply and demand, we could use the alternative one: demand and supply. In other words we ask for what we want to be produced: does that sound like democracy? It certainly does! What does supply and demand (consumption is a more suitable term) stand for? I would say: not democracy, as the supplier dictates what you will use.

We can use the new style of democracy and our collective power to chisel out the exact future that WE want and not the one the multi-national corporations plan for us. As they say, 'if you won't make plans, someone will make plans for you'.

Getting back to credit and the way people are manipulated by it: the 'buy now and pay later scenario' removes a big barrier from the prospective buyer buying an item, resulting in the buyer purchasing on the heat of the moment, where the financial side was not really considered as it was not required to complete the transaction. We are very susceptible to this principle and the effects of it are all around us. Coupled with cutting-edge marketing and orchestrated advertising campaigns via free-to-air TV and radio, people have become consuming drones where the consequences of their habits are deferred to a later stage. Similarly, environmental consequences are being deferred for our children and grandchildren to pay for. How so very nice of us!

*Evidently the objective view about whether something is really attainable by us is determined by the readiness of its affordability in monetary terms and only if it is an absolute MUST sustainability is considered...And that is exactly where our mistake is...we need to reverse this sequence of decision making...*

## 12. Food

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I am about to state the obvious: *food is our fuel and our pleasure and without the right food our body does not function the way it is supposed to.*

You will wonder why I just made this obvious and cliché statement; my answer to this is that although it is an obvious statement, it appears that most of us do not really feel what this statement truly means. I used the word ‘feel’, because food is meant to be an intimate experience. When we eat any food, we intimately connect with it. It is our choice of what we want to connect with. Similarly to connecting with people who are good or not so good for us with all the relative associations, the food that we eat affects our mood, well-being and ultimately our psychology. I was listening to a talk-back show on the radio and the topic of thanksgiving was brought up. The guest pointed out that thanksgiving is about thanking God/the Universe for the food and the goods that we have available. Even more so, it means that we connect with the source of the food; a point that is of great importance. When we are connected with the food source, whether it is a veggie patch, an animal, or a wheat field, there is an intricate relationship and a sense of respect for all that has taken place up to this point for the food to be produced and end up on the plate in front of us.

If there is a single ingredient that is missing from the majority of our modern society today it is the lack of a close (if any) relationship with our mother earth. Rather than being connected and working with our lifeline (planet earth) for the continuation of what we have inherited, we have decided to disconnect from her and treat her like a garbage tip. Most of the food that we produce today is made under conditions that are disrespectful of any life form, where the only purpose is to produce more and more of it. The means do not matter. It is very similar if not the same as the principles of the unlimited growth economy model that most of us adhere to and blindly support.

I am pretty sure that you have already paid attention to what is available as ‘food’ at supermarkets, shops, takeaway shops, restaurants and the like. The question is, have you been able to make the distinction between what is or isn’t really good food for you?

In addition I would like you to pay attention to whether you or others around you eat seasonal fresh green stuff (ideally pesticide free organic), fresh fruit, meat and natural dairy products. Before we move on, I would like to state the obvious and define fresh food: in the purist state, it is a vegetable or fruit that is picked from the garden or tree, is cleaned and consumed within a few hours. In terms of meat, that would be killing the animal, skinning it, cutting it and cooking it and all of the above would happen in a time scale of a couple of days. In terms of dairy, fresh means collection of milk from the animal and serving it for consumption. Anything else cannot be classified as fresh and/or very healthy food excluding nuts, honey and similar which have a long shelf life naturally, as well as food which is processed naturally – dried or fermented for example – so that it can be stored and eaten later, such as cheeses, dried meats, kefir, etc.

All the way till the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, that is what fresh meant. In the traditional food production methodology artificial fertilisers and synthetic additives were not used in any of the processes of producing food. In addition no form of artificial pesticides was used either. Everything was the way that evolution has made it right to be. Food, water and clean air are the basis of our lives; we have evolved to eat clean food and that is how it is. That cannot be changed. When I am referring to food as described above in this paragraph I am referring to the edible natural matter, which is in its natural state and will spoil after a few hours or days, or it is processed naturally for storage. Everything else is

not food in the pure form of the word and the way nature intended and for the purposes of this chapter I will call all the other edible matter, that is, manufactured food, food-like.

Nowadays the meaning of the words 'fresh' and 'natural' food has changed; what these words really mean now is fruit and vegetables that have been grown by the use of synthetic fertilisers, that have been treated with pesticides, that have been picked unripe, then placed in freezers for months or maybe longer, and when required for consumption, are being gassed in order to promote their ripening. In many cases these foods are treated by irradiation (see Google) in order to make them 'safe' for consumption, by killing bacteria, and then they are waxed so they look attractive. There is nothing fresh or natural about any of that by the way..

Up to this point I have covered foods which are fresh-like and I haven't discussed pre-packed, pre-prepared, pre-cooked, food-like matter that one can find at the supermarket shelves and fridges and deep-freezers; this stuff has been modified and treated by food technologists to look like food and to have a really long shelf life. The real nutritional value of the food-like matter is extremely poor and its long term consumption leads to degenerative diseases which nowadays are all too common. I remember supermarkets 20–30 years ago used to have refrigerators in order to conserve milk, cheese and cold meats; in fact refrigerators used to occupy only a really small portion of the whole shop. Nowadays refrigerators occupying nearly half the floor space of a supermarket and are used to preserve food-like matter which is ready to be eaten after it has been reheated in the microwave oven. I am not going to go into details as they are not within the scope of this book; however it is your duty to yourself and your loved ones to do your own research about this subject.

Below I have outlined certain categories which at the very least I think are worth mentioning. I have no medical or other relevant qualifications; however, I have done some research and do have an opinion. I am flagging these categories because I think that they are important and, based on personal experience with food. The food that is good for us, is food produced as it was intended by nature and that is the only real deal. Anything else is a far lower-grade by-product of the modern food production process and in many cases rather than doing good, the opposite is likely to take place.

(A) Genetically modified foods (GMOs)

I think that most of us are aware of GMOs and have at least an opinion about them. There are many arguments on both sides (Pro and Anti-GMOs). Unfortunately though, and very similarly to what is going on with the climate change arguments where 5% of scientists argue that it is not happening and 95% argue that it is; for some reason the 5% portion gets more publicity than the 95% does and we hardly hear objective arguments about the real deal and effect that GMOs have upon us and the environment. Because of our flawed financial system which seeks annual growth no matter what, the powerful players within the GMO industry will do whatever it takes on an ongoing basis to achieve growth. Just as with most financial sectors where efficiency is a must in order to achieve maximum profits, the farming industry has a very challenging game to live up to, because of weather patterns, pests, soil degradation, water supply issues, soaring demand etc. Because of all of the above factors, intense farming was created and currently is being intensified even more via the cultivation of GMOs. The idea for introducing certain properties into a plant so that it becomes more efficient, robust etc. is not necessarily a bad one; however the way it is currently done is. See below:

- The GMO industry fosters an environment of owning the seed and patent rights for the seed that we all need to survive, and it is dominated by very few corporations. Since the capitalistic system promotes strong companies to become even stronger thus allowing them to buy up weaker companies, hence making the market playing

field an oligopoly and ultimately a monopoly, I ask you this: Do you want food to be owned just by corporations? Do you want not to have the right to plant your garden because it is illegal to do so? Do you want to eat simply what you are given without choice? There are already many examples in which farmers have been sued by GMO-producing companies because their farmland had been accidentally contaminated by GMOs. Traditional farmers are driven to extinction, losing their land resulting in loss of diversity of growers and yielding a very strong hold over our food supply by the very few.

- And because GMOs can cross-contaminate other conventional and organic farming practices, we are all losing control of what we eat since the laws do not punish GMO establishments enough for contaminating other properties.
- Since we mostly live in democratic societies, the right of choice is supposedly a given. When our democratic governments oppose our demands to have comprehensive labelling on our foods, it is clear that we have no choice, and something in me tells me that governments are doing the bidding for powerful companies. Instead of having full transparency of what is distributed in our food supply we are told that we can't have labelling.

*Rather than us having a choice of what we eat and who we support we are told ... eat that, no matter what!*

Without any stretching of reality, I claim that this is a pure form of fascism and rather than having the choice to do and eat what we want, we are told. Fascism and democracy by definition are two opposites. How can these two principles co-exist within the same system of governance? Or is democracy really what we think we have in the first place?

- Testing is a fundamental part of science and experimentation; very thorough testing, that is. The genetic code of planet earth has evolved for billions of years through the simple process of trial and error. The genetic code is very complex in its making and its formation along with its interrelationship with other elements. If there are changes to be made to the genetic code which is, by the way, equally owned by every living organism on this planet and not just us, humans and more specifically a few GMO corporations, these changes should be made tentatively and very responsibly. Any changes to the genetic code should be made only for the improvement of life (although I think we have no idea how to do that, based on our past performance collectively) and the improvement of life only. If there is even a hint that what we do is harmful in any way, we are to stop and examine really carefully what is going on. Many tests have clearly shown that various GMO-fed lab animals have experienced a drastically higher infant death rate, and their surviving infants were smaller and less fertile than the offspring of rats fed on a non-GM soy diet. For instance, male rats fed the GM soy had their testicles change from pink to blue, and the GM soy was also observed to damage the DNA of sperm and embryos. Animals consuming crops that have been genetically modified to produce the pesticide Bt (approved for human consumption in the United States) have died by the thousands, while animals grazing on a non-GM version of the same crops remained unharmed. Upon autopsies, researchers have found black patches in the animals' livers and intestines, internal bleeding and other signs of Bt poisoning. In addition to these risks, GM soy and corn contain significantly higher concentrations of allergens than unmodified varieties. Evidence also suggests that the genetic abnormalities of GM foods may transfer to bacteria in the human gut, thereby exposing people to their detrimental effects long after a food has been consumed. There are a lot more indications at the very least about potential dangers that GMOs pose to everyone, however governments

(especially the US) turn the blind eye and instead enhance the laws which allow GMO corporations to take over our food supply.

The fact that I am even writing about GMOs in a book shows a massive concern about the way we are treating our planet and our very future altogether.

## (B) Normal Food

In recent times we only cultivated and ate what grew in our immediate vicinity. There were many benefits associated with this practice as it created a unit of sustainability and local sense of cohesion; it encouraged the honouring of the land and consumption of only foods that grew within a radius of the community set-up. Some of the benefits of locally growing food are:

- People develop the ability to digest what is readily available to them.
- Food is seasonal, which nourishes differing needs of the body for different seasons.
- Food has real value as we honour and conserve what is produced (that is, no overproduction/ consumption as there is a limit to what the land can provide).
- It creates self-sustainability and it doesn't rely on any external sources to provide sustenance (like we rely on giant food supermarkets).
- There is practically no waste as by products like faeces from humans and animals are used as manure thus promoting a complete ecosystem.
- Food packaging is eliminated.
- Transport requirements for food are minimal.

Bringing it back to our current community and how we are living now, we have:

- Transport costs.
- Impact on the environment from transport.
- Reduced availability of fresh fruit and vegetables due to long transport time.
- Food that is picked unripe and then placed in refrigerators till the time comes for it to be sprayed with ripening agents.
- Massive amounts of waste because of the required packaging.
- Money going back to large corporations rather than local community.
- Heavy reliance on external entities for our most basic need.
- Many more issues that you can research yourself.

Food in its natural state contains no artificial chemicals and in its pure form it nourishes our body, souls and spirit. In order to have food close to its origin in terms of purity we need to take steps and consume foods that are not/don't have:

- processed foods
- preservatives (anything that contains a number)
- sugar
- yeast
- heated and rancid fats
- chemicals, pesticides and residues (see below more information).

More generally you need to be aware that:

1. Sugar and products containing sugar are harmful for not only our waistline, but also for our brains. Long-term sugar consumption can create a variety of neurological problems and may also affect memory. Also a diet steadily high in fructose slows the brain, hampering memory and learning while omega-3 fatty acids can counteract the

- disruption<sup>1</sup>. For all of these reasons we should avoid pre-cooked foods, products with sugar and corn syrup, and foods that are rich in fructose.
2. Alcohol is known to damage the liver and causes over the long term what is called 'brain fog'. As the name suggests this phenomenon is a feeling of intellectual confusion that acts like a cloud that affects clear thinking and memory. Have you noticed that sometimes you do not remember the names of some objects or you cannot remember certain facts or decide whether actually you said something or if it happened in your dreams? This may be due to consuming large amounts of alcohol thus affecting the balance of the brain, however, these symptoms are reversible if you stop or limit alcohol consumption to one or two drinks a week.
  3. Recent studies have revealed that fast food can change chemicals in our brain<sup>2</sup>, causing symptoms associated with depression and anxiety. Foods high in fat cause withdrawal symptoms when consumption is discontinued<sup>3</sup>. These foods affect the production of dopamine, an important chemical that contributes to the feeling of happiness and general well-being. Furthermore, dopamine supports mental function, cognitive ability, awakening, mobilisation and memory. For all these reasons, such foods are best to be avoided if not eliminated.
  4. Almost all processed foods contain chemicals, additives, artificial flavours, preservatives and the like, which affect behaviour and mental functioning<sup>4</sup>, which causes hyperactivity in children and adults. Fried or processed foods slowly destroy nerve cells in the brain. However, certain types of oils are more dangerous than others, with sunflower oil to be considered among the most toxic oils<sup>5</sup> that we can use. Just like fried, so processed or pre-cooked foods affect the central nervous system and increase the risk of a degenerative brain disorder such as Alzheimer's disease later in life.
  5. We all know that salty foods affect blood pressure and are very dangerous for the heart. However, as shown by surveys, foods that contain large amounts of salt can also affect mental function and minimise the ability to think<sup>6</sup>. In other words, salty foods affect our intelligence! Also, it has been shown that consumption of salty foods has the same effects as drugs; stopping consumption causes withdrawal syndrome and a strong desire for extra salty foods.
  6. Proteins are the food of muscle and are very important for proper body function. Meat is the major source of high quality protein, but highly processed forms, such as hot dogs, sausages, salami and other cold meats should be avoided. Unlike vegetable proteins that help the body to protect the nervous system, processed protein does just the opposite. Seek to eat fish, especially sardines, dairy products and nuts, which are sources of protein of high nutritional value.
  7. Artificial sweeteners like aspartame<sup>7</sup> are used by humans to replace sugar when they want to lose weight. It is true that artificial sweeteners actually contain fewer calories, but they cause more damage than whatever good they bring and apparently when used for an extended time periods, they can cause brain damage and weaken the mental ability, especially if used in large quantities.
  8. Bisphenol A (BPA) is a widely used chemical that apparently can behave like oestrogen. It is mainly used in the manufacture of polycarbonate plastics and various epoxy resins. BPA is present in many consumer products, such as plastic food packaging, dental sealants, the lining of food and beverage cans, paper receipts and even water pipes. Studies on animals and humans have shown links between BPA and hormone-sensitive cancers<sup>8</sup>, including prostate and breast cancers. Also a recent study concluded that exposure to BPA may be a risk factor for a type of brain tumour called meningioma<sup>9</sup>. The participants with the highest urine BPA levels were about 1.6 times (160%) more likely to be diagnosed with meningioma compared to those

with lower concentrations. BPA is found in the urine of 95% of adults. Interestingly, research from Harvard University as reported in JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) found that eating canned soup can spike your urinary (BPA) levels by 1,200% compared to fresh soup. Canada lists BPA as a 'toxic substance' and has banned it from being used in baby bottles. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in March 2012 blocked a ban on BPA in the United States despite its well-proven links to cancer. It is best to avoid plastic products and use glass instead. This is yet another reason to avoid bottled water.

9. Farm workers who apply certain pesticides to fields are twice as likely to contract melanoma compared to farmers producing pesticide free food as reported by Gordon Shelter on environmental health news. Yet we are told that non-organic foods are safe to eat. In addition, researchers find higher levels of common household pesticides in the urine of children with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, a cancer that develops most commonly between three and seven years of age<sup>10</sup>. The lingering effects of DDT pesticide use include increased rates of cancer.
10. Dental amalgams are the primary source of mercury exposure in humans. A single dental amalgam filling releases as much as 15 micrograms of mercury per day<sup>11</sup>. The average individual has eight amalgam fillings and could absorb up to 120 micrograms of mercury each day. Comparatively, eating mercury-tainted seafood will expose you to about 2.3 micrograms of mercury per day. Mercury in any form is poisonous, and it most commonly affects the neurological, gastrointestinal and renal organ systems. It has been shown that mercury rapidly depletes the immune system and that it may have the capacity to induce auto-immune diseases.
11. Microwave ovens are used to quickly heat or cook food. Yet the adverse effects of microwave ovens on human health have been repeatedly highlighted by many studies conducted throughout the world. Actually microwave ovens are considered so dangerous that they were banned in Russia from 1976 to 1987 following twenty years of thorough research by Russian scientists convinced them that the dangers of the devices. A recent nine day experiment showed that water heated in a microwave oven, cooled and then given to a plant causes the plant to wither and die within days; however, an identical plant was watered by water boiled conventionally grew normally during the same time period (posted by EU Times on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011). Therefore, microwave ovens very likely to destroy your food as well.
12. Pasteurisation was discovered by Louis Pasteur in the mid-1800s. Pasteurisation destroys vitamins, enzymes and interferes with their absorption. When a liquid, is boiled bacteria in it are killed while making that food sterile. The pasteurisation process affects the taste and nutritional value of food. Pasteurisation is the process of heating a liquid to a high enough temperature to kill certain bacteria and disable certain enzymes<sup>12</sup>. We must realise that we cannot detach ourselves from nature – bacteria – enzymes etc.
13. Food irradiation is a controversial method used to extend the shelf-life of food. Industry insists that irradiated food has been thoroughly tested and is absolutely safe. However, the governments of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and New Zealand, as well as some US states, have prohibited the sale and distribution of irradiated food.

### (C) Water

Drinking water is one of our most important resources if not the most important one.

We need water for almost everything we do. Drinkable water is less than five per cent of all water available on the planet; however judging from our habits in mainly rich countries, it would appear that we perceive to have infinite clean-drinkable-fresh water available to us.

Our economic system is doing very well with externalising costs including the scarcity of fresh, drinkable water. These UN reports projecting that by 2025 two-thirds of humanity will live in 'water-stressed' areas. Other claims include that the flow of water along the Jordan River is down to only 2% of its historic rate, that the demand for water in China will exceed the supply by 25% by the year 2030. According to the UN, the world is going to need at least 30% more fresh water by the year 2030. It has been estimated that 75%!!! of all surface water in India has been heavily contaminated by human or agricultural waste and that far more people in India have access to a mobile phone than to a toilet. In China, 80% of the major rivers have become so horribly polluted that they do not support any aquatic life at all at this point. Once upon a time, the Aral Sea was the 4<sup>th</sup>-largest freshwater lake in the entire world; at this point, it is less than 10% of its former size, and it is projected that it will dry up completely by the year 2020. Total global water use has quadrupled over the past 100 years, and is now increasing faster than it ever has before.

Even if a small part of these reports were to be correct, we are facing major water issues, however we still want to have private pools, water our lawns and golf courses so that they look really green, and we take really long showers; that includes myself. We are all so oblivious to what is going on around us ... as if we don't live in reality as it exists right now, but live in this untouchable world where nothing is ever used up and where we can discard whatever we please at incredible rates....

Water fluoridisation<sup>15</sup> is used very widely on the pretence that is really good at preventing tooth decay. Toxic sodium fluoride/hydrofluosilicic acid is added to our tap water. After years of denial, the US federal government finally admitted that fluoride harms children<sup>16</sup> and on January 18, 2011, NYC Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr<sup>17</sup> introduced legislation (Int 0463-2011) 'prohibiting the addition of fluoride to the water supply'. But instead of removing the toxins, the US federal government called for a reduction in the amount of fluoride added to public water supplies, citing its negative effect on teeth (dental fluorosis). Since our governments are so concerned about the health of our mouths, rather than adding fluoride to our water (thus making us ingest something without real choice), they should ban all soft drinks that are known to cause tooth decay. But rather than doing that, giant soft drink corporations are so strong that they have begun to claim fresh water sources, wanting to capitalise on OUR natural resource and instead of leaving it in its natural state, they add fluoride and they package it in bottles and charge more than we pay for petrol!! If that is not insane, I really don't know what is. Below is a list of known effects that fluoride has on us:

1. Increases lead and arsenic exposure of fluoride compounds<sup>18</sup> that are put into water as it is often contaminated with lead, radio nuclides and arsenic since the fluoride compounds are toxic waste by-products which largely come from pollution scrubbers of fertiliser plants.
2. Certain studies<sup>19</sup> show that fluoride compounds are ineffective in water and in supplements and do not provide any significant cavity-protecting effects.
3. It is believed that fluoride changes bone structure and strength as fluoride gradually builds up in the bones and causes adverse changes to the bone structure. Many studies have shown that fluoridation leads to increases in hip fractures<sup>20</sup> as the tensile strength of the hip bone is reduced by long term fluoride ingestion.

4. Independent research has shown that fluoride impairs the functioning of the immune system.
5. Fluoride is an extremely poisonous substance at exceptionally low doses and has caused a large number of acute poisonings and this is why a poison warning is now required on fluoridated toothpastes sold in the US.

Once again, even if a small part of these claims were to be correct, full cessation of fluoride use should be implemented until further testing is done.

Chlorine, which has been used to disinfect tap water supplies for 100 years, also raises important health issues. Apparently low levels of chlorine in tap water used for bathing can almost double the risk of bladder cancer. Researchers found that those living in areas with high-chlorine content water, who bathed in it regularly, were a lot more likely to contract cancer than those not exposed to chlorine. Those who drank high-chlorine tap water were more likely to get bladder cancer<sup>13</sup>. Swimming in public pools can also present a risk because chlorine levels are much higher. Absorbing chlorine through the skin is thought to be more dangerous because it bypasses the liver<sup>14</sup>, which filters out many harmful chemicals when water is swallowed and I hate to imagine how much chlorine has been absorbed by my body during the seven years of intensive swimming training that I undertook as a teenager.

#### (D) Gluten

Gluten sensitivity is another example of a health issue that is related to the changes in our diet as farming has become more intensive. Foods such as wheat, barley, oats etc that are considered as healthy options for us, may not be that good after all. There is a lot of research that has taken place in regards to this topic and the views vary, however there seems to be a correlation with many studies.

‘It seems astounding that a disease that is so common, is nevertheless, fairly obscure. Despite the fact that it was originally described in 1888, we still don’t hear much about it. Standard medical text books typically describe celiac disease (gluten sensitivity) as being primarily a gastrointestinal problem. Celiac disease is generally characterised by abdominal pain, abdominal distension with bloating and gas, decreased appetite, diarrhoea, nausea, unexplained weight loss and growth delay in children. Newer research indicates that celiac disease can have a profound effect on the nervous system.

‘Dr. Maios Hadjivassiliou of the United Kingdom, a recognised world authority on gluten sensitivity, has reported in the journal, *The Lancet* that “gluten sensitivity can be primarily and at times, exclusively a neurological disease.” That is, people can manifest gluten sensitivity by having issues with brain function without any gastrointestinal problems whatsoever. Dr Hadjivassiliou indicates that the antibodies that a person has when they are gluten sensitive can be directly and uniquely toxic to the brain.

‘Since his original investigations in 1996, the recognition that gluten sensitivity can lead to disorders of brain function has led to a virtual explosion of scientific papers describing this relationship. Researchers in Israel have noted neurological problems in 51% of children with gluten sensitivity and further describe a link between gluten sensitivity and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As authors in a recent issue of the journal *Pediatrics* stated about their research, “This study suggests that the variability of neurologic disorders that occur in celiac disease is broader than

previously reported and includes softer and more common neurologic disorders including chronic headache, developmental delay, hypotonia and learning disorders or ADHD.”

‘The link between gluten sensitivity and problems with brain function, including learning disabilities, difficulty staying on task and even memory dysfunction, is actually not that difficult to understand. Gluten sensitivity is caused by elevated levels of antibodies against a component of gluten, gliadin. This antibody (anti-gliadin antibody) combines with gliadin when a person is exposed to any gluten-containing food like wheat, barley or rye. Testing for the antibody can be performed in any doctor's office. When the antibody combines with this protein, specific genes are turned on in a special type of immune cell in the body.

‘When these genes are turned on, inflammatory chemicals are created called cytokines, which are directly detrimental to brain function. In fact, elevated cytokines are seen in such devastating conditions as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and even autism. Basically, the brain does not like inflammation and responds quite negatively to the presence of cytokines. Another problem with anti-gliadin antibody is that it can directly combine with specific proteins found in the brain. Specific brain proteins can look like the gliadin protein found in gluten-containing foods and the anti-gliadin antibody just can't tell the difference. This direct role of anti-gliadin antibody in combining with specific proteins in the brain, has been described for decades and again leads to the formation of cytokines, the chemical mediators of inflammation. This is an example of turning on genes that ultimately function in a negative way in relation to brain health and function.’ – David Perlmutter M.D., ‘Gluten Sensitivity and the Impact on the Brain’<sup>21</sup>.

Emmer flour (*Triticum dicoccum*) is an ancient type of wheat and, like other ancient varieties of wheat, it is high in protein, fibre, and minerals. When combined with legumes it makes a complete protein. It also has a gluten structure that is different than modern wheat so people with gluten allergies can usually eat it without any problems.

I come from a place of love for one another; these truths can frighten people greatly, but I want you to know there is NO PROBLEM with what is in the past, as empowered beings we can change ourselves, our families and improve our health with small and steady steps.

It really is as simple as ‘you are what you eat’ and it really is time for humans to look at what they are consuming on a daily basis. We need to look at the contrast between the traditional way of farming and eating food that has been there and worked perfectly for thousands of years and the food that is produced for profit by food corporations using unsustainable methodologies and extreme science such as GMO to maximise profits. We should also look at the perceived medical advancements and the percentage of the population having a chronic disease. We need to start thinking about the impact that we have on ecosystems with our practices and habits, for example in many western societies a third of food produced ends up in landfills. We should prioritise solutions at the very least, and the first one would be to eliminate food wastage<sup>22</sup>.

Food is your fuel; good food fuels your body to allow you to feel energised, clear, free and empowered. There is extensive research into food and its ability to switch predisposing genetic blueprints on and off. The power of food is beyond our minds.

*Disclaimer: Nothing contained in this chapter should be considered medical advice. This chapter is purely for informational purposes. Do your own research and ultimately make up your own mind.*

## 13. Ellada (Greece) – Europe – the World

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Dictionary for this chapter: Ellada / Ellas = Greece, Ellines = Greeks, Elliniki = Greek

Being of Elliniki descent I feel that I am obliged to carry on the Elliniki language and culture for various and personally compelling reasons. Elliniki language has evolved over millennia and when used correctly it functions like a mathematical formula. It is the language of science and is thoroughly used in that context around the world. It is so well conceived and expressive that it is impossible to describe it in other languages that have borrowed words from it; these languages simply lack the depth to do so.

However since the early 80's the Elliniki language has experienced erosion through simplification and degradation of its grammatical rules. Even more so, lately Ellines misuse their language throughout the spectrum of social media via the implementation of Latin characters used to write Ellinikes sentences; the so called Greeklish.

*Fewer rules, equals less structure, less structure leads to vulnerability and erosion.*

When the Spaniard scholar Juan Jose Pujana Arza put a motion forward to the European parliament with the aim of reinvigorating the teaching of classical Greek in Europe his pledge was not supported by the Greek governments. In fact there were four such efforts (1987, 1995, 1997 & 2001); interestingly, none of them were supported by the Greek officials. Below is the motion that was lodged in 1995:

'31 March 1995 B4-0507/95

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION  
pursuant to Rule 45 of the Rules of Procedure  
on the teaching of classical Greek language and  
culture

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the continuous and alarming decline in the  
teaching of classical Greek language and culture in the  
curriculums of the various countries,

A. whereas Greek language and culture are the fundamental basis of  
Western culture, especially European culture,

B. whereas classical Greek trains the human intellect and is a  
proven way of encouraging thought and criticism,

C. whereas in Europe, classical Greek has been the language of  
science par excellence,

D. whereas it is essential to reassert the identity of the  
European Union by restoring and reinforcing the specific  
culture and system of values on which it is based,

E. having regard to the need to restore the full humanist meaning of European culture,

Calls on the Commission to draw up a study plan for classical Greek language and culture to ensure that they are at least taught at all levels of compulsory education in all Member States through the respective curriculums, and that Greek becomes the shared language of all cultured Europeans.'

In my view this motion was an honor for all Ellines, however since the people in charge of this country hardly serve this country, they did not support the motion and Ellada lost its chance to have its language protected and promoted. Interestingly enough, while Greek politicians are currently campaigning for the Ancient Greek language not to be taught at all, the government of England is considering introducing more foreign languages, including Ancient Greek, into the curriculum of their schools!

While so many words from the Elliniki (Elliniki sounds a lot more authentic than Hellenic or Greek) language are used by so many European descendant languages, the word Greece itself came about as a derogatory term possibly by the Romans:

'Horace used it admiringly, *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio* (The defeated Greece conquered the victor and civilised the peasant Latins). But Virgil coined the expression, *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, which became known as 'fear the Greeks who bring presents'. Cicero gave the coup de grace by coining the truly derogatory term, *Graeculi*.' – Wikipedia

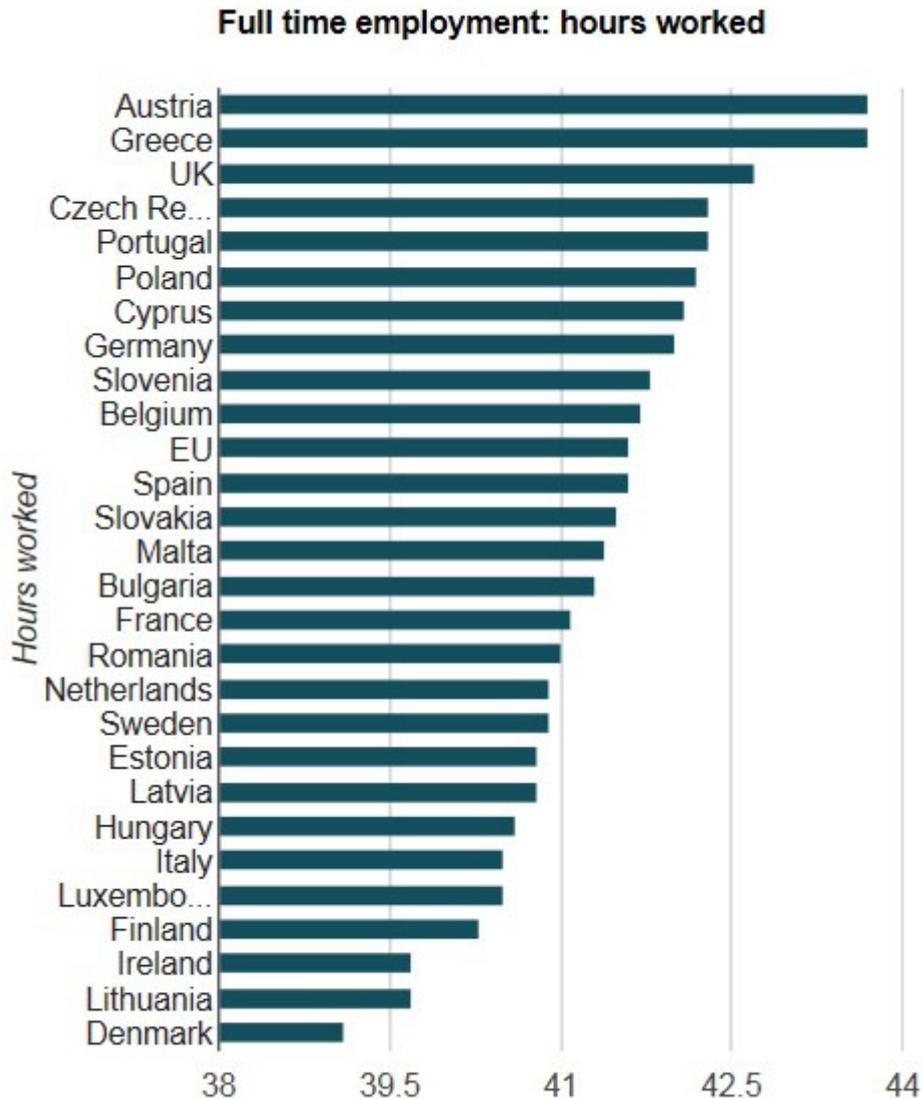
The English version of the word *Ελλάς* is Hellas and ironically it is a compound word: Hell – as. So Hell as, or like hell. Looking at the news for the past few years, certainly life in this country is like hell financially for most people who live there; in fact they can't get out of (H)ellas fast enough. This country has been generating one great brain after the other (possibly via the learning of Elliniki language); however these brains have been forced to escape from their mother land, towards 'developed' countries and rather than Hellas reaping the benefits, other countries do instead. It is a country where people actually know how to live; this is more evident with Ellines that live in non-urban areas. Urban areas are the ones that are susceptible to the financial rules. Rural areas operate largely under their own rules: their economic activity is fairly limited as food and other basic necessities are locally produced. Celebrations in Ellada though, especially in non-urban areas, for any sort of occasion are well and truly as alive as they ever were! And it is no wonder that some European counterparts can't stand the fact that after all the austerity measures, Ellines are still having parties like never before. There is a lesson here for all of us that live in large cities: we should really take into account all the associated lifestyle impositions we need to live with, just to be successfully part of the financial system.

The current political and economic status is at the very least unworthy of the people living in Greece, who have higher aspirations and have worked harder than anyone else in Europe, but instead they are being called 'lazy bastards'!

The article quoted below was posted on [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) on Friday 9 December 2011 with title: 'Who works the longest hours in Europe?'

'As Europe's leaders gather to discuss how to rescue the Mediterranean economies and safeguard the single currency, it's tempting to resort to crude national stereotypes of prudent, hard-working Germans and lazy Greeks.

'But the Office for National Statistics seems to be on a mission to rescue us from our own prejudices. New data published this morning shows that Greek and Austrian workers actually put in longer hours than anyone else in Europe — 42.2 per week, compared to just 35.6 in Germany.



The Guardian'

The current financial situation is a result of the chronic mismanagement that political leaders and many Ellines citizens have exercised for the past few decades. This problem has been heavily exasperated by the heavy 'borrowings' over the past decades, the repayment of which is nearly impossible via conventional methods.

I used quote marks for the word borrowings for a very simple reason. When you and I decide to make a purchase and for that purchase we require a bank loan, we simply go to a bank of our choice and ask for a loan. The bank, in turn, will make sure via the evidence we provide, that we will be able

to meet the payments no matter what, before a loan is issued. What the financial gurus that lent all these billions to Ellada claim is that they were duped by the governments of Ellada, time and time again! In my eyes that is absolute bollocks to use a kind word .... When a government shares the same currency as the rest of Europe, buys really expensive weapons from Europe, when everyone knows that the public sector is simply gigantic and largely unproductive, that manufacturing has ceased to exist, that tourism has taken a big dive, that Ellada spends a lot more than it earns, that it has had a trade deficit spanning a period of some decades ... when all that is known, how can it possibly be said that financiers were 'duped' by governments of Ellada, even though they have been trying to polish the numbers?

Furthermore, a fundamental condition of banking was broken time and time again, each time that funds were approved for release to Ellada; I am talking about the condition of: 'if you simply appear that you can't afford to repay your debts, you cannot get a loan'. This very condition is applicable to every single one of us, even for the smallest loan that we want to obtain. We are not talking about a few thousand or hundreds of thousands of Euros here; we are talking about billions upon billions that were released to the Elliniki economy. Seriously, if an individual is barred from taking a home loan because his/hers numbers are not looking that promising, how can the central bank of Europe possibly lend money to their counterpart knowing that they will never get their money back in money form? And when a country like Ellada is buying into the story of the united European front, its borrowers are obtaining real estate and infrastructure at bargain prices ... in other words lenders are 'legally' repossessing by stealing land and sovereignty from Ellada. And stealing it is; because none of the lending rules were followed by any European financial institutions. All of that could not have happened unless there was full co-operation by the Greek political leaders for the last forty years. Nothing can convince me that the financial EU experts were duped so badly by the Ellines. The result is the taking over of Ellas, its infrastructure, its prime land by foreign private interests in exchange for unpaid debts. In other words, despite the successes of Ellada's fighters during WWII, now via artificial means Ellada is losing its sovereignty really fast.

Almost always these games are limited between elites and not the people, so my comments do not reflect on any of my fellow humans that are a part of the mass. In fact the mass of people never want to go to war, never want to have problems, are never really responsible for the decisions that their leaders make. However if you go to chapter 7, you'll see that political leaders and their bosses use mass control methods to shape public opinion for any given situation and in any given area of our lives. The trick is for us not to buy into these stories; whether they are stories about, for example, our neighbouring country, the car you buy or the way you should look.

I am very lucky to have lived in two great countries: Australia and Ellada. Although these two countries are geographically so far apart from each other, in my heart they are side by side. The truth of the matter is that Ellada and many other EU countries have become a laughing stock for other richer countries based on their financial credentials. The reasons behind today's situation are complex; however I will outline my views on why it has happened. I also feel that what is happening today in Australia almost happened in Ellada 40 years ago, in terms of government size, imposition of direct or indirect mega-taxes for manufacturers (workers compensation, skyrocketing insurance premiums, very expensive real estate) as well as the lifting of international trade barriers thus making them uncompetitive, hence out-sourcing of all manufacturing, leading to merely short-term planning for the economy.

In 1978, as Ellada was about to join the European Economic Community (EEC), its per capita GDP was just 5% below the European average PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) basis. In 2000, the gap was 30%. In retrospect, Ellada's entry into the EEC has been seen as a political gesture, and in many ways it was; but the gap between Ellada and Europe was much narrower at the point of entry than ever

since. Ellada was close to Europe when it joined the EEC; it was only later that Ellinika living standards stagnated and fell relative to the rest of Europe. Europe moved on and Greece was left behind.

Major contributing factors to this situation were that manufacturing in Ellada effectively ceased to exist, imports kept on rising resulting in massive trade deficits, catapulting Ellada's foreign trade deficit to today's dimensions. The 1981 elected Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu and his son George that was elected in 2009 were both educated in the US. Is that a coincidence? Maybe, just like the planted prime minister of Afghanistan: trained in the US and so many other similar scenarios.

In my view all the political-financial events and decisions that have taken place since the beginning of the 80s in Ellada have led towards a single direction: the current financial situation. And I think that it is absurd to think that all political-financial events and decisions that were made were random. There is no way that a full government cabinet, government after government could be making the same random mistakes, while leading the country towards financial disaster. The pattern is far too clear and consistent to ignore, hence my conclusion is that today's situation has been manifested from a long time ago – around about 40 years.

And while life is unpredictable for most of us, people in charge of our politics and finances, have forty, fifty, a hundred or more year plans, and for them to succeed, they must ensure that they have a system where nothing will stop their long-term plans of totalitarian capitalism. The idea has been sold so well, has been cooked and chewed up for us so perfectly that we all effortlessly swallow the notion that capitalism is the only solution for everyone. As uncontrolled capitalism progresses in the time scale, some companies turn to corporations and some corporations turn into mega-corporations that swallow all the small guys like you and me. Hang on a minute – we are supporting a system in which the big guy will swallow the little guy; yes I get it now. If I was in my right mind, why on earth would I ever support a system that ensures my demise? But that goes against nature! Which other known animal would ever support its enemy? Can you make any sense out of this? Because I honestly can not. And corporations have done such a stellar job convincing everyone that there is absolutely no other way: just exist and keep on ignoring what is really happening while you are heading towards the cliff-edge or the concrete wall really fast.

That is only one side of the coin. The other one is: corporations are so strong they can control governments; and that is precisely what they do. Everyone knows about it but most of us are doing nothing about it. How is that so? Going back to the word corporations, it turns out that this is another compound word corp (corpse) – oration. I was fiddling with my English-Greek dictionary (interestingly enough) and I discovered that the word oration stands for speech. In other words the word corporation means 'dead speech'! Of course the latter meaning could not be sold very easily so we went for the more refined current meaning of corporation. Apart from dead speech it also rhymes with the speech of the corpses.

So by attacking Ellas, which happens to be the origin of our modern civilisation, we directly experience an all-out attack on our civilisation as a whole; and attack is all that humanity is experiencing: our family values, morals, health, willpower, through information gathering, erosion of working rights, globalisation of everything, credit, blending of all cultures hence loss of identity, but the bottom line is the environmental destruction. Each and every one of the above words and their repercussions are seriously important. Being the origin of our modern civilisation does not grant special treatment as such, however receiving special treatment in a detrimental manner should not be the case either.

Looking back at history this tiny nation has been the target of other civilisations a number of times. Geographically it is located at the most strategic crossroad of the region: for Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. While this has been the major reason for everyone else interfering with the life as usual of Ellas, its magnificent landscape and climate has been like the muse of everyone visiting this powerful place, who want a part of it one way or another.

Recent history has blurred our vision even more via the out-of-control financial games that have been playing out on a global scale. Most situations, rather than having a win-win outcome, have a win-lose outcome. The big and rightful winner for the past few decades has been Germany which used its strong/robust economy and the 2008 crisis to consolidate economic sovereignty in Europe.

The process which led step by step to the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the economic meltdown around the world in 2008 and created the biggest economic crisis since 1929, owes the its extent of effect to the bubble of sub-prime mortgages that were totally unregulated by governments in many countries; the bubble consequently popped and the extent of CDO (Collateralised Debt Obligation) and CDS (Credit Default Swaps) revealed the levels of corruption in the banking and government systems. Banks benefiting from fuzzy to non-existent legal frameworks, played table tennis with CDOs and included in the game other loan types such as credit cards, student and general other 'go for a holiday', 'buy a new car' style loans. Securitised derivatives were combined with insanely complex mathematical and legal tools sold in the market and managed by the so-called Hedge Funders, in order to reuse investments with even greater credit risk.

When mortgages and money ran out and the financial cycle-spiral was broken, the bubble eventually popped and consequently borrowers could not afford their loan obligations, caused the housing market to turn into deflation mode, while banks were experiencing the nasty effects of the greed of capitalism. Some banks such as Goldman Sachs and the inventors of CDS, JP Morgan and openly conducted blackmail: 'If we are not saved, we will drag the economy of the whole planet down with us'.

In the post-Soviet, capitalist era, state intervention in the operation of investment institutions is considered as 'felony by treason'. Given the state of its financial system, there was no other way for the US to save the situation than by intervening, even for a while, with the absolute freedom of the *supreme free economic-political system of values*. Ironically the practice of intervention in the financial system was a norm on the other side of the Atlantic, in the *absolutely evil USSR*, as the US called it, just a couple of decades ago.

The Bush administration took the 'felony by treason' one step further and turned it into a humanitarian crisis. The then US Treasury Secretary, Hank Paulson (who had also served as the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Goldman Sachs), opened the silos of the US Treasury in an effort to rescue institutions called financial markets (which had created all the problems in the first place!!). That briefly gave 'cart blanche' to financial institutions to basically use the deposits of American citizens in order to save themselves.

The saga did not stop there. Investors desperately looking for new ways to invest started even more complex and dangerous investments, putting safety aside; risk was very high. Hundreds of billions of dollars started to flow from the American public coffers to the near-bankrupt financial institutions. As logic would entail and since the US government rescued them, rather than nationalising these institutions (because of course these actions are considered communist), the US government nationalised the incalculable financial damages instead, once again impacting on American taxpayers. The project 'stimulate the economy' had no limits and in order to stimulate the economy, the Americans did what the Japanese did, knowing that this method had failed in the 90s. They

released huge amounts of cheap money in the markets, in a process called Quantitative Easing. The situation worsened even more, despite the fact that banks in the US lent money to small businesses, which in turn did not show growth because 'the problem is the loss of confidence in trade and not the cash flow', according to the CEO of the polling firm Gallup, Jim Clifton.

Consequently, these events further polarised the political climate in the US. In the light of four years of failed administration, Obama's re-election was in danger: he almost lost to the Republican hawks, Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin and the ultra-right-wing 'tea party', a party whose rhetoric dwarfs the Elliniko 'Golden Dawn' party, which is considered an 'ultra-right-wing party' by US governments.

On the other hand so-called 'profitability' is, was and will be different in the German banking system, compared to the American way. The banking system of Germany has three main working members: private banks, public and the so-called co-operative banks. A study by the OECD<sup>1</sup> concludes that the majority of German financial institutions do not operate by the profit maximising principle; which brings us to the first point: Why do these financial institutions not aim for profit? US banks went all out to support the profit maximising principle and the results speak for themselves.

The second point is that private banks comprise only a tenth of the banks in Germany, while the other nine-tenths of them belong to the state. The state banks are called Sparkassen and Landesbanken. The latter are the centre of gravity of the German banking system and are heavily reliant on deposits. In order to give the German banking system a touch of the free western economy, since 1998 the German government, through legal proceedings, has partially lifted the economic protectionism that the Landesbanken originally enjoyed from the state. The government guaranteed that these conditions would be removed by 2015. As the Landesbanken were exposed by the financial crisis of 2008 and because parts of their assets were toxic derivatives they were eventually 'cleaned' by the German public, hence the complaints from Germans started.

While the Anglo-American model is based on deregulation, namely the strengthening of the private equity sector, the opposite is true for the German economic system. Both economic systems reflect principles and social doctrines. Namely the Anglo-American system reflects excessive 'freedom' while the German Lutheran mentality emphasises work, saving, low risk and adherence to traditional moral social principles. As we will see below, this is the fundamental difference that eventually judged the better financial system and maybe the better model of society.

The exposure of German banks to toxic derivatives seeded the condemnation of the operation of the global financial system by the Germans. For the Germans, the attitude of not only the European South, but the entire western world toward management of the global economy is absolutely reprehensible. They also rightfully seized the opportunity to complain: 'Why should we pay for the financial mismanagement of the US, and its wars?', 'Why bail out EU institutions and countries that are tailor-made to follow the deregulation doctrine of the US system?'

Many argue that it was the financial crisis of '29 that brought Hitler to power and caused WWII. Much has been also said about the inflation of the Weimar Republic that brought into the political scene the man responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of people.

To cut a long story short, the situation in Germany was as follows. The then Reichsbank (current Bundesbank), which was privately owned, flooded the market with Deutsche Marks (DM), giving the opportunity for speculators to play shorting games with DM. Shorting is a financial game in which the speculator borrows something that has value (eg DM), sells in the bond market and makes money buying it back at a lower price. Shorting was possible because the then private Reichsbank (it wasn't under Nazi control yet) printed DM at crazy rates and when demand for DM was soaring,

other private banks began printing DM as well. The end result was an unhandled debt and inflation ratio which almost touched the stratosphere. One needed a trolley full of cash just to buy a loaf of bread.

As history tells us, Hitler did the unthinkable and the unforgivable by the bankers. He nationalised the Reichsbank and made things tougher. Part of his regulatory framework was that only the state bank could print money for borrowing. Most important though, was the adoption of the so-called treasury certificates that were used to build giant projects such as the huge highways, flood-control dams and other structures falling within the infrastructure category. The cost of the infrastructure was estimated at 1 billion DM and a basic rule was applied: 'For every DM to be issued by the bank, it is required that the corresponding value of work worth one DM or goods valued at one DM be produced.'

Bankers swore to destroy Hitler after this and began sabotaging even Germany's exports; however the government had a solution for that as well. The state swapped goods and equipment directly with other states, bypassing interbank intermediaries. A joke from that time was the dialogue of Hjalmar Schacht (a Rothschild man, who served for some time as the head of the Federal bank and was stubbornly opposed to the financial innovations mentioned above). According to the dialogue, one American banker speaking to Schacht said the following: 'Dr Schacht has to come to America, where banks are full of money and that's real banking'. His answer from Schacht was monumental: 'And you have to come to Germany; there is no money trail, and that is what real banking is all about'.

The rest is history; bankers did not tolerate Hitler's disobedience and led the whole of the world into war<sup>2,3,4</sup>.

What is the common factor between these events and what is happening today? Germany is blamed again for power projection in the European area. It tends to be isolated from the international community because of the austerity measures it has imposed on Ellines which have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Athens and thousands of suicides in Ellada, Spain and Italy. Furthermore Germany insists now more than ever on assuming sovereignty and creating the Brussels-based United States of Europe<sup>5</sup>.

We all support a financial system that is based on an ever-expanding economy (GDP growth) and production. In order for that to be achieved the means are not important, hence the system by principle is immoral. The US economy is heavily based on weapons manufacturing and in order for the US economy to be always in motion, wars must be created. History shows how many wars have been instigated by that country. For the economy to move forward, factories must keep on producing items that must be sold (see chapter 10), new homes must continue to be built irrespective of whether there are any buyers or not (that was a major spark for the US economic problems). In order for this system to be functional, techniques such as CDO, CDS, Quantitative Easing, Credit and so many more, need to be in place just to keep things moving artificially and projecting the wrong picture. Currently the US economy is in big trouble however the Dow Jones index is at an all-time high.... I find this highly controversial and disturbing. It is no different than supporting the life of a brain-dead person at the hospital with artificial breathing, blood circulating and other types of machines for years, only for the person to die when the equipment is unplugged. The latest financial meltdowns, the dire economic situation in Europe, are only symptoms of a very problematic system.

On the other hand, economic war has broken out between the bankers (once again) or so-called 'financial markets' and the Germans, while Ellines sit in the background as recipients of punishments

received for the irresponsible if not criminal games that financial markets and its main players such as investors and politicians have been playing and still play today around the world at the expense of financially vulnerable people. There is a plan for the creation of the United States of Europe and Ellada has rightly so gained its geopolitical status quo in this New World Order in the absence of any credible politics from the other side of the Atlantic!<sup>6</sup>. But that has to be stated directly to Ellines instead of coercing them into accepting it through means of sadistic austerity.

Based on history and the current situation we must push the markets with respect to the humanitarian crisis and social imbalance around the world; and people from everywhere – from Canada to Australia – must rise up against the bankers, by simply asking for a lot more control over them<sup>7</sup>.

## 14. Environmental Compromise

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Apparently 5% = 95% – that is what they are telling us...

Anyone equipped with any common sense will agree with the following statement:

*Unless our planet is able to sustain the current conditions which are conducive to life as we know it, we all die.*

Environment and environmental protection are by far the hottest issues that we are facing right now, and will be for at least another 200 years, even if we decide to listen to science/reason right now. This topic has earned its massive status because we have gone all out systematically doing our best to sacrifice this oasis called planet earth for the exchange of money.

The fact is that Climate Change Science is clearer than ever<sup>1</sup> about the dangers and catastrophes that we are currently facing and those that we are heading for, however our actions do not reflect these warnings. As a result, despite the common belief that sits among the majority of us, the system that we all rely on has simply ignored any logical argument, committing itself instead to the financial dogma of unlimited growth. The fact of the matter is that collective inaction earns money for a very small pocket of humans while they are licensed by our governments to destroy the environment with their business-as-usual practices.

There are two reasons why they are speeding up their destructive work; the first is pure greed and the second is that within ten or so years, fossil fuels and other environment-destructive technologies will soon be out of the picture. Our reliance on fossil fuels is directly implicated in major environmental damage such as changed weather patterns, natural disasters and modified ecosystems which threaten to cause mass extinctions. In lay terms a system like our planet's operates in time-scales which we cannot really comprehend, even though we can quantify them. Since time for our planet is not of the main essence, its development and survival has been based on a very simple principle – exhaustive testing over tens, hundreds, thousands or more years or decades of each scenario of life before it progressed to the next stage of development or simply vanished. Unless an external factor such as a meteorite occurred, changes took place over a much longer timeframe than the half to one century that we are talking about today. The irony here is that humans are an integral part of this planet; however rather than acting like an integral part of this planet by promoting its health and lifespan, we are acting like an external one, thus promoting changes too rapid for the slow-reacting-by-default earth system to cope with.

I would like to demonstrate the sheer ignorance and apathy about consequences that is driving medical corporations, biotech companies, climate engineering companies and associated disciplines. If you were the team owner of a Formula One (F1) team, would you ever let a toddler go behind an F1 car in order to win a grand prix? I would guess that 95% of the respondents would say no and the remaining would say yes. Why would 95% of the respondents find this such a ridiculous proposition in the first place? It could be maybe because the toddler is not tall enough, or able to receive stimuli from the environment like a grown-up person does, maybe because the toddler hasn't acquired any driving experience yet, or just because it is just wrong as toddlers are better off with a bottle of milk and toys in their hands. The opposing 5% would of course deny all of the above and would just simply bend the rules in any way possible to put the toddler behind the wheel of an F1 racing car to win the grand prix. That is the situation that we are currently in. Human ability, experience, growth

and understanding of the cosmos in general and everything in it, is at the level of a two-year-old toddler. How can we possibly make calls about things when we only understand a small fraction of them? Why are governments and law-makers so blinded and duped by these bio-corporations that they just simply give them the licence to kill?

Unless we fully and comprehensively understand the workings something of paramount significance, in this case living organisms, we simply cannot tamper with it as one thing is certain – we will stuff it up one way or the other. When we allow companies to play with the genetic code of our very life, effectively we are giving them the licence to kill. I really cannot understand how the sheer desire to make money is driving certain individuals to do something like that. As per chapter 2 acts that we do on a daily basis are totally fragmented and our activities may appear to be benign, however when we put all the pieces and work functions together we can understand what the outcome may be. So my friend, if you are working for, you are a supplier of, you are a customer of or have any association with a biotech company, just stop doing any of the above and move and make a living from something else. Even if you can't understand the retroactions just now, you will in the future.

To further stress the point about our lack of full understanding of the basic operation of life I will demonstrate by comparing the understanding of mechanical and aerodynamic principles in the F1 game. F1 teams design and build from scratch these cutting-edge machines called F1 cars. Thousands upon thousands of hours are spent designing, building, testing and optimising these cars and the price tag is astronomical. It is not uncommon at all, for team engineers and drivers to mention time and time again that even after they have put so much effort into these cars 'we are still trying to understand the car ... there is a lot more potential in this car but we need more time to understand it ... we have aerodynamic grip but we are still trying to work out mechanical grip and we need more time to understand the car'. How on earth can we claim that we can understand how the genetic code fully operates when we can't understand how an F1 car fully operates and interacts with the road and wind at any given time, even though we are the creators of these cars?

Next time you hear about something new, instead of jumping on it, think first.

Corporate media/high priests of ignorance, including neo-liberal politicians, economists of 'infinite financial growth' along with dirty corporations with their vested interests are successfully deluding society; at least the main players (certainly in the USA, Canada and Australia) with their weasel words, their insulting news and views, are leading us towards our eventual demise including the destruction of much of the biosphere.

I am a positive person by nature; however a positive outlook without any application of logic and truth is simply a delusion. Whoever thinks that infinite growth can actually take place or that the environment has infinite tolerance for our activities is simply deluded. Because we live in a free world and everyone has a right to their opinion as long this opinion does not impact on anybody else, you are entitled to be deluded; conversely you are not entitled to impact my life, or anyone else's for that matter, in a negative way. As I like putting things into context I will explore an extreme situation to make a valid point. Firstly, a disclaimer: I am dead against both criminal actions. My point is this: a rapist faces a long time behind bars for raping one person, but what about someone that not only 'rapes', but destroys whole ecosystems, affecting the lives of millions? Why is the abuse of one person valued so much more highly than the destruction of life itself?

Coming back to the argument about whether climate change is real (which is analysed further down) and the debate about causes: why do we have universities? Why does science exist? Is science of any value? If so, why don't we seriously take science into consideration and stop giving the benefit

of the doubt to the corporations? In fact, once again scientists are brutally ignored in lieu of the lies that various corporations keep on pumping in the media, as per chapter 7. And why do we give equal media coverage to only 5% of scientists, at best, who are climate change deniers? Why does only 5% of the total research, which does insist that climate change is not our doing, get so much more exposure in relative numbers? All being equal, if everyone had the same right of say, then we would hear 5% about climate change that simply isn't true and 95% would be about us heading towards the wall really fast. Instead we have 50-50% voicing of opinions. Yet another solid proof that the media is far from being objective. Why is everyone so dazzled by the lies? Why do politicians, who are supposed to look after their citizens, constantly make decisions with such grave consequences for our future and support them with pre-cooked news feeds? And why are politicians above the law and not accountable/punishable for their ill decisions? Why have we never seen a politician in jail (except in Greece by the way) after they have committed crimes against their country in an economic and environmental sense? How come travelling 45km/h above the speed limit is considered a crime but selling your environment to the vested interests of corporations isn't? Have we just lost the plot completely? I so think so.

The above arguments are not limited to environmental issues and are applicable to all aspects of politics.

Maybe it is because we are taught that we should live for today only. Tomorrow ... who cares what's going to happen? Maybe the way we are used to living via credit is not limited to finances, but has transformed the way we treat the environment as well. Maybe in order to change our minds we need to hear that we will not be able to buy a gadget tomorrow because of climate change; because the temperature of the planet will increase up to six degrees Celsius in the next ninety years. What is driving us so blindly? Why are we exploiting children in third world countries in order to sustain our lifestyles? Why are westerners so much better than everyone else? You see, by blending all races such exploitation doesn't even appear to be racist! What an ugly word.... Exploitation is what happens to the others: the lesser ones.

But lately we have arrived at the next level. For instance now we are talking about natural gas exploration (such a nice word to describe the destruction of environment), even in areas where aquifers are present and where it is very likely that great environmental damage will occur through the proven-to-be-damaging fracking method of gas extraction. Why do I get fined if I spill petrol on the road accidentally and these companies are allowed to pollute and potentially destroy our water supply with deadly chemicals?

So, since we are not getting the objective picture from the media our views consequently are out of touch with what is really happening right now. And because we are out of touch, the impact of our daily actions is not really comprehended by the majority of us. And that is the very point: we need to understand the way the current globalist system is working and how it is affecting our planet. In my view at the very least, each one of us should sit down, feel and understand what is really going on. Depending on the result of your inner search, act accordingly. The point of this book is not to make you do anything, but to see something that you may have not seen yet.

Good resources of that you may want to tap in for information and news are: [grist.org](http://grist.org), The New Internationalist, Greenpeace, Collective Evolution etc. These outlets report on real and burning news; they are mainly US-based, however their content has universal resonance, the information released is applicable for many parts of the world.

Of course if you are the type of person who gets some sort of pleasure by denying facts or by being oblivious to them, then good luck to you; because the laws of evolution are always applicable to all, including the ones that refuse to evolve hence becoming extinct.

Since only an ignorant person would allow themselves to be lied to consistently we must then become aware of the problem and act upon it really quickly, and fully ignore anyone that is trying to convince us that science and evidence (weather has been so unstable the past few years) don't really matter.

Or maybe we are waiting for the "Perfect Storm" to happen before we decide to move from our complacent, blind and denying mind-set.

Or maybe we are waiting for the huge insurance premiums to kick in to compensate for adverse weather conditions before we panic about things. Actually that is a likely scenario...

It might be that all the hard work that you put yourself through, such as personal development like body health, health of mind, health of soul – or family and interpersonal, artistic, financial or other – may be just for today ... not tomorrow, since that is the precise way our global economic system is currently functioning. There is nothing wrong with living for today, however we cannot steal anyone's future by doing so.

Adding to all of the above, what we do today will reflect on the next generations in 20-30 years from now, just like the 80s did. How we live today has been heavily influenced by the aspirations that we had in that decade and the things that we did and invented back then. Some examples include: the adoption of VCRs, CD players, computers and PCs, and home entertainment systems; the invention of mobile phones, TV games, Arcade games; the music and art from that period, which is being recycled today; and so on. So much creativity! What we see around us today is the mere refinement of the 80s technology.... So we have to look deep inside us and wonder: what are we really aspiring to as a species; what are we inventing now or what are we doing to our environment to get what we have today? What is it that we do today that will benefit the future generations, i.e. our children? Is this the best that we can really do?

I will try to demonstrate with some facts.

The irony is that no one denies that the climate is actually changing (in fact, the most common climate myth is the argument that past climate change is evidence that current global warming is also natural). What is really the issue being denied? The argument is all about whether the *scientific consensus* that humans are causing the current climate change is right or wrong.

In the scientific world you need a *consensus of evidence* before a conclusion can be drawn; if many different measurements point to a single consistent result, then a conclusion can be drawn. As the consistent evidence accumulates a near-unanimous agreement among actively researching scientists is reached: a *consensus of scientists*. Two very recent studies utilising different approaches have arrived at almost identical results. A survey of over three thousand earth scientists concluded that as the understanding of climate increased, so did the consensus about human-caused climate change. There was over 95% agreement.

It is like going to the elections and one party receives 5% of the vote and the other the remaining 95% but still both parties have the same power in the parliament; interesting isn't it?

Universities are the highest level of education institutions available to us. All of the latest trends of science are being taught there and sometimes students spend more than ten years in order to attain

their masters and doctorate status. We consider these people as industry experts and the ambassadors of progress. When we, the society, disregard blindly what 95% of the expert climate scientists have been warning us for at least 40 years now, effectively we disregard their qualifications, experience and ultimately the validity of universities. Here is the twist. By doing all of the above, since we like generalisations, all degrees obtained through universities are invalid. By totally disregarding a branch of science so bluntly, who is to say that your degree has any value? That is what happens when a set of industries whose sole way of survival is effectively the destruction of the planet earth have so much leverage on governments and media that they can effectively make 5% equal 95% of the opinion. Maybe I am missing something out with this equation; could a mathematician help me out here please?

*If anyone has the power to deem invalid 95% of the opinion because of financial means, then no opinion against financial means has any chance of survival.*

In other words we are totally being dominated and controlled by the less than one per cent of the population that is holding all financial power. Money can buy opinion, souls, bodies, countries and it can also destroy everything, just because we let that situation happen. By default all that our society stands for is deemed invalid despite all proof being there that climate change is happening in front of our very eyes, just because we let some clowns with money dictate what we think and do.

All the 'make us feel good and free' activities, actions and education are a sham; we sit there and swallow what is served to us, despite the simple fact that the dangling carrot stands for nothing.

*Instead of saying a big NO and starting to support only small businesses and stopping being so materialistic, they have put both of our feet in one shoe.*

They know it; we know it but no one wants to do anything about it. Everyone has conveniently ignored all of the signs simply because only today is deemed to be important. As long as we make the buck for the day, nothing else matters. I would like to know why people with the most power are also the greediest. How many billions of dollars is enough? And why is no-one is feeling guilty about this situation of environmental destruction? There is only one liveable planet that we know of – it is called planet earth. Why are we destroying it? Would you set fire to your house? If not, why don't you care about the best house out there?

There is so much scientific literature out there such as on climate change science:

- *A Modern Synthesis* by G. Thomas Farmer & John Cook
- *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand* by Haydn Washington & John Cook
- *Earth Masters: Playing God with Climate* by Clive Hamilton
- Website: <http://theconsensusproject.com/>



I will not be technical in this chapter because numbers are tiring; what is important though is to look at what is really going on out there and then connect all the dots together. If you want more technical and scientific proof refer to the above resources.

Fake climate experts are called those who appear to be highly qualified while not having published any actual climate research. Fake expert campaigns are unfortunately regular occurrences which misinform public opinion. In 2012 a group of NASA retirees issued a press release<sup>2</sup> rejecting the 95% consensus. While they are not climate experts, they hoped to capitalise on the NASA branding.

Ian Plimer is a prominent Australian expert that certain political leaders<sup>3</sup> and fossil fuel billionaires<sup>4</sup> use as their man of substance. Ironically he hasn't even published a single peer-reviewed paper on climate change.

Another way at looking at the whole argument if you disagree with almost the entire group of climate science experts is that they may be conspiring to deceive you. We are talking about thousands of climate scientists all over the world that have different forms of education, however because of logic, they all converge to the same result; therefore making it impossible for it to be a conspiracy. Even when more and more compelling evidence surfaces due to scientific research, conspiracy theorists are still in denial. Even when climate scientists were accused of tampering with data, even after nine independent investigations<sup>5</sup> by universities and governments in two countries found no hard evidence of the like, conspiracy theorists reacted by claiming that each investigation was just a whitewash and a mere part of the whole conspiracy. Consequently, as conspiracy theorists claimed fresh cases of whitewash, the conspiracy theory against human-induced climate change grew larger, encompassing more governments, universities and various organisations.

Despite all of the hard evidence, governments rather than targeting the abolition of environment-devastating fossil-fuel technologies, actually subsidise them at an unprecedented annual expenditure of 1.9 trillion dollars globally. Rather than expending 1.9 trillion dollars annually on new and sustainable technologies, they, on behalf of us, are fighting against them. Is that not crazy; I

really can't find a better word to describe this situation. The IMF report<sup>6</sup> may be even too conservative as the report also adds that, if carbon were responsible for half the indirect subsidies, and the SCC<sup>7</sup> (social cost of carbon) were \$83 instead of \$25, the eye-popping grand total of *annual* global fossil fuel subsidies would rise from \$1.9 trillion to around \$3.5 trillion. And in the meanwhile almost every citizen on this planet is being squeezed by their government to pay taxes, huge taxes<sup>8</sup>... our hard-earned taxes that subsidise fossil fuel mega-corporations to earn astronomical profits via the degradation of our environments, rather than investing in education and clean technologies. I do hope you see this point clearly and next time you want to invest in these technologies, think forever.

As enviro-hero Paul Hawken is fond of saying, 'we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it GDP<sup>9</sup>.' I can't think of a better description of these fossil fuel subsidies. And when we use a more realistic cost for carbon damage, we get a better sense of just how *much* we are stealing from our children – trillions and trillions of dollars a year. The heedless radicalism and grotesque immorality of it are simply breathtaking.

Thanks for reading this chapter.

## 15. 99 Choices

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If you were tempted to flick through to this chapter you may come across elements which do not make sense. Hopefully everything will, once you read the rest of the book

So far we have seen the main ingredients that comprise our world in terms of the way it functions. You probably agree with some of my views and probably disagree with some others; that is absolutely fine as we are all entitled to our opinion.

As Leonardo da Vinci once said:

‘There are three classes of people:  
Those who see.  
Those who see when they are shown.  
Those who do not see.’

*Apart from having a choice to be able to see, it is also the capacity that one allows oneself to have to see.*

‘Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.’ –  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Although governments are supposed to be running our countries, it is more than evident that corporations are the ones that do so. There is no doubt that some governments have tried in the past to do the right thing by their people, however other nations and corporations have either overthrown these governments or assassinated their leaders. Latin America and the Middle East are full of these stories. Since most governments have chronically allowed themselves to become subservient to the corporations, they have become increasingly corrupt and the result is today’s situation – what this book is all about. You will also find that many government representatives have either been working for a big corporation before they got involved with politics, or they get involved after their term, or both. Effectively governments in many cases are merely a board of directors of corporations, disguised as governments. And that is a very important point as we are told all the time that we have democracy and many wars for that matter take place in order for democracy to be installed in natural-resources rich underdeveloped countries; see Afghanistan, Iraq and so on. The word ‘democracy’ is grossly misused like so many others by our beloved leaders. Of course I expect no backing-off from corporations and the way they conduct the agenda of their destructive business.

The very purpose of this book is to synchronise as many of us as possible so we can bring change from the roots; we owe that to our children and their children. I would much rather see newborn children and everyone else on our planet have ‘on tap’ what our planet has been providing for us since the beginning of times. Abundance, there is; it is in our hearts, minds and in the whole cycle of life that we must maintain for the sake of our very being and the very reason that we are on this planet right here, right now. Whatever has happened so far is in the past and there is nothing that we can do about that. However despite all the unpredictable turns that life brings us, we can have a positive influence via our daily choices, as I suggest below. We cannot change what others do, however we are very capable of making choices; the profound thing is that any choice we make will ultimately take us somewhere. The outcome is not fully predictable; however the context is. Choice for life will be within the context of living and life expansion in all levels; that is the key for all of us to remember. Most importantly, we must remember that all possessions that we control are temporary and so are our lives. Our objective is to be happy, healthy and complete as individuals, never forgetting though that we all have equal

rights in this life and we should never live at someone else's expense. Rather than competing against each other we need to co-operate.

Throughout my journey while writing this book, I have engaged in countless conversations about it with lots and lots of people from all different walks of life. There has been consensus most of the time when discussing various points around where are we going and how are we going about it. Most of the responses that I gathered have been in the line of 'we are not heading towards where we are supposed to, but we are powerless to do anything about it'.

I realised that most of the people I was talking to have really high hopes for the future, however are very confused about how to make things happen; that very point made me even more determined to get this book right in front of your very eyes.

It is said that a war has many battles. What we have now is frankly a war caused by the very few mega-rich: apparently 300 of the richest people in the world have as much wealth as 4.3bn peoples' wealth put together.... So really it is a war between these 300 and the rest of us. If you saw a fist fight between a person vs 100 other persons of similar physical capacity, who would you pick as a winner? Now seriously, there is one mega-rich person for every 20<sup>1</sup> million persons and as far as I know, comparing people with people is like comparing apples with apples, right? So why do you think that one single person is better than you by 20 million times and what chance would this person have to carry out their agenda if 20 million people were against them? Do you get my drift here?

Instead, we are made to work a lot longer for a lot less. Effectively we have become slaves of these 300. That is the very reality and if we do nothing about it, our environment, families, health, personal relationships and all that we know about this planet will be in the past tense a lot sooner than you think.

One could argue that we have to do what we have to do to survive ... and I would say, 'for most of it, this theory is fine' however here is the point. Can you remember how possible it was for your parents or grandparents to own their home? Can you compare that with the current state of affairs? And if you can afford one, how about the people around you? How many hours do people spend working these days? Does 50+ hours per week sound familiar? How about six-day weeks? Does the quality of your life reflect your hard work? What is happening to all your hours that you are working? The issue with the above is that we all working a lot harder with a lot less security because we have traded it for some short-term benefits over many bargaining situations. The loss of workers' rights has occurred over a few decades and the effect is universal. As there is more and more unemployment and more hunger for material things, each person working has become dispensable because there are another five waiting for that very job; hence people will do whatever it takes to retain their current job even if that means working a lot more for less.... There is not much work security plus there is more unemployment plus personal debts are at record levels = slavery. Think of the slaves of the ancient times and compare them to our current situation; probably the only difference is that you are responsible for your accommodation and food while your employer pays for your sick leave and holidays. I know this is an extreme comment; however I want to demonstrate that most people have no choice but to work all the time as they are one pay cheque away from bankruptcy. It may not be you, but there are many, many people out there that suffer financially.

Ladies and gentlemen we live in an age masked by the wonderful technology of computer screens, mobile phones and glamorous sport and glitz media to keep us asleep/entertained! We need to really wake up and reclaim what is ours and that is our freedom, our health, our environment, our family, our relationships, our souls. We have traded all of these for some dollars that are not even enough to keep us going. Beyond that, we destroy our wonderful home – earth – for money. Last time I checked,

money was not edible or drinkable. See for yourself. No matter what investment is made, no matter what jobs are lost, no matter what financial meltdown we'll have to face, nothing will be as severe as losing our environment. This is not a science fiction scenario and I am not making any personal gains from these statements. What I want for all of us is to stop supporting these 300 and work towards the well-being of us and our descendants.

The proposed alternative choices that I have outlined below are meant to remind and show you another point of view. We live in a kind of a cold war if you like, between a number of corporations and the rest of humanity. There is no need for blood to flow and there is no need for police to go against their fellow citizens. The principle is very simple. To kill an animal without physical violence it has to be starved of water and food. Sooner or later it will die. How is that a solution for the above problems? Imagine the animal being the corporations and vested interests, while food and water are our financial support for them. The more you and I buy their products and services, the stronger they become. The opposite will weaken them. Sounds simple? Maybe not, but it is doable. It will require effort and some changes in our everyday lives.

#### **Examples:**

1. We are all complaining about unemployment and that manufacturing is not strong anymore because everything is being manufactured in China, India and Bangladesh etc. So why do we buy these products in the first place? If governments allow the stripping of manufacturing in our countries, why do we allow them to? Solution: do not fully support these products and instead pay more for in-house products, hence support our country.
2. Food corporations: we have all heard that these corporations are effectively setting prices that farmers have to accept. They have such massive buying power and control over the market, that they can make farmers go out of business if they want or drive them to the ground. Buying from big supermarkets is very convenient and can be cheaper at times. However doing so affects everybody down the line. Apart from externalising costs<sup>2,3</sup>, they also promote more unemployment by introducing self-service cashiers. They do their best to maximise profits and that is fair enough in a free market; but is it good for everyone else? Solution: buy from the small corner shop and local health food shop instead.
3. Fast-food corporations: apart from externalising the costs to the staff via ridiculously low pay, and suppliers via pricing dictation, these fast-food giants are externalising all the associated medical costs derived from the consumption of their food by their customers. When you purchase food from these giants for a third of the price that you would pay in a normal takeaway shop for instance, you are simply deferring payment. Read that again: you are simply deferring payment. You will pay the full bill via ailments and through increasing taxes to support medical care. By the way all the unpaid bills from our credit-for-everything system will be paid by our children and grandchildren. Does this sound like a selfish thing to you? To this day I really cannot understand why governments don't impose a junk food tax. Apart from health concerns, the way takeaway food is packaged creates tremendous amounts of waste and demand for natural resources. Solution: buy fresh food from your local supplier then cook it; and never set foot on these junk food giants unless they are prepared to supply you with good food.

Dissonance and cacophony are what we currently have; and we need to somehow synchronise everyone's voice and actions into the harmonious change of direction that our world needs so desperately. There are so many high profile people out there advocating the good things that we all need and must aspire too. The good news is that almost every problem has a solution. Some solutions are easier than others to apply, however we can't always go for the lowest hanging fruit. We need to work hard together to make the changes work. Over the past chapters I have posed many questions and I have raised lots of issues, as I am firm believer that to move forward in the

right direction we need to be united while singing the same song.

Are you being true to your destiny? Does your everyday lifestyle actually satisfy you? Do you like the changing weather patterns around you? Do you like being lied to by your leaders? Do you like to see money being wasted on 'freedom' wars and fossil fuel subsidies? How about the loss of government control over utilities that you, your parents and grandparents have paid for, through taxes, for such a long time? Do you like being served unsafe food and on top of that not being able to choose because labelling is incomplete, illegal or non-existent? Do you like the linking and intertwining of governments and private interests at your expense?

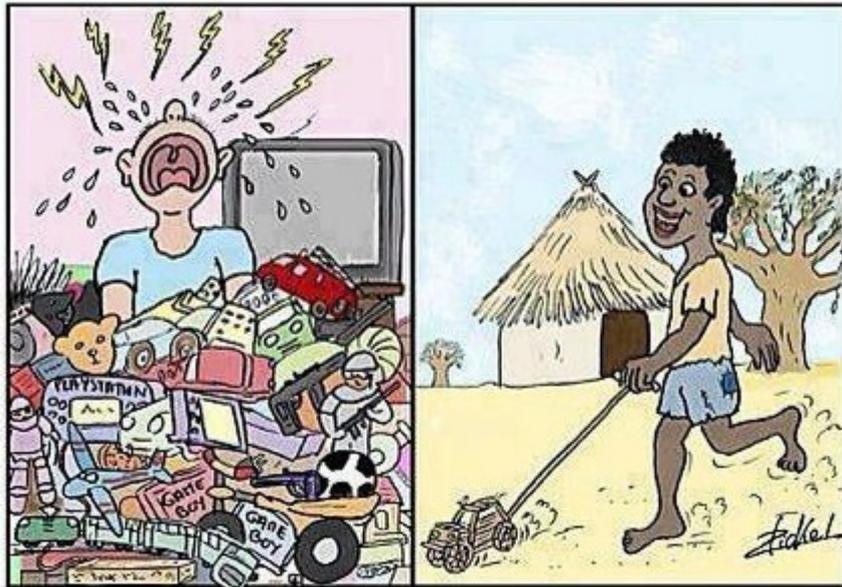
The way we affect the environment is also a really complicated matter because over the years, almost every aspect of our lives is associated with pollution. Almost every product we purchase is packaged; things are manufactured with designed obsolescence, hence we need to buy the same thing over and over again; GDP indicators dictate that we need to buy more in order for the economy to survive; many products are toxic. More or less everyone knows that what he or she does affects the environment; however the focus of this chapter is the solutions.

Some of these 99 choices/ways in order to make the much needed in my view change of direction of the way we deal with our planet are really simplistic, however they do work. I have divided these choices into different categories depending on their level of simplicity and level of applicability. Most can easily be incorporated into our everyday lives.

### **Category A**

This is the starting point as by answering these questions sincerely you will know exactly where you stand and the solutions hereafter will be a simple pathway. You actually need to think in terms of what does really make you happy and what really makes sense pursuing. As an indicator see the photo below; it is a metaphor and can be applied to all sorts of scenarios. You will need to answer these five questions firstly as they will form the basis of your personal quest towards improving our world and encouraging others to do the same.

1. What is the world that I am living in like? In other words, is this world going in the right direction in terms of the state of the environment, animal welfare, human welfare, human physical and mental health, the current global financial state, political affairs and crises within them, terrorism, violence, natural disasters, widening of the gap between rich and poor, personal debts, government debts, dislocation of societal morals? This is a really important one and you really need to think about it.
2. What kind of world do I really want to live in? You really need to put some serious thought into this one as well.
3. How will the future of the world be influenced by my daily habits; will my lifestyle go to impact on future generations negatively, and if so in what way?
4. What steps will I take in terms of basic actions in order to achieve the world imagined and desired as per question 2?
5. What do I think is the number one challenge we are facing? Try to address this problem in your own way. Be creative.



### Category B (Personal Level)

These are the actions that you can implement directly through your daily routine, however their effect is really strong because our world and economy are linked very closely and each incremental change of individual habit will affect the way things work. I remember very recently I went to purchase organic meat from my local supplier; there was no organic meat left as other people bought it. I thought that it was great news as more people are demanding organic meat. That's the spirit.

6. There are so many beautiful things that we can spend our time with, rather than spending our very short time on this wonderful planet watching TV. Our goal should be to get involved with real life and be productive rather than wasting time in front of a screen; it is very hard to get away from the media claws, but we all must be vigilant about it. You have a life of your own, use your time effectively and live life without interference from the artificial lifestyles of stars and TV shows of any type. They are ALL fake and a big smokescreen and what is real, is your life and your heartbeat. What is mostly projected via TV screens is part of the problem and not the solution. Refer to chapter 7.
7. Also limit your time on the internet; it is a great tool when used correctly and a huge waste of time when used incorrectly. The internet is great for researching news and valuable information if that is what you are looking for; probably the rule of 'ask and you shall receive' is fully applied in the vast majority of times with it. The internet is probably the only mass media channel that is mostly censorship free and it is our duty to treat it with respect and as a tool for the information that we need to make better decisions.
8. Most things in moderation are OK and that includes quality TV shows, however refrain from spending time watching reality shows and the like; they are there just to waste your time and prevent you from thinking about real issues. Face it: either a person will lose weight, win a singing competition, be the best chef or not, and it will not affect you in any way. What is the point of spending time on things that do not affect you and hence are irrelevant? Use your time wisely.
9. Have a computer-free day or two per week. It is great to be connected, however it is fantastic to be disconnected from the whole web thing for a few days per week, hence allowing you to connect with the moment and the people around you.
10. Allocate time for thinking; spending time with yourself alone is of paramount importance and

is really the only way you can reflect on whether you are happy with your life or really need to change something. You will be amazed with the results as you will feel centred and relaxed, making your everyday life more meaningful and less stressful. There is nothing worse than just getting into the non-thinking mechanical mode and just plodding along with everything. One day it will become clear to you that quiet time is absolutely important and hopefully that day will come sooner than later for you.

11. Read more about realistic/scientific stuff and less about the fantasies of other people. It is nice to read and watch a fantasy story; however reality is a lot more relevant. Imagine if we read mostly about realistic/scientific stuff, how differently we would think and act. We would be engaged with real topics and our brainpower would be used constructively rather than being wasted on pointless reading, at least for most of the time.
12. Playing sport is great as we can keep healthy and vibrant. Watching and talking sport is another story. Once again the rule of moderation comes into play and there is nothing wrong with spending a bit of time watching/talking sport.
13. Look for positive and empowering news rather than consuming your time with trivial issues. If you can't find any objective news, then no news is better. If you start ignoring the censored and irrelevant news, news outlets will realise that you don't bite anymore and they might consider changing their tune. When watching or reading news, make sure you check on the sources and that no self-interests are being served by what you see; and always 'read between the lines'.
14. Be social and open to new acquaintances; go and knock on the door of your next-door neighbour and introduce yourself and invite him/her for coffee. Rather than Facebook messaging, go out and meet with your friends.
15. Learn the names of people who you deal with on a regular basis. There is nothing better than bumping into people that you know. I live in Sydney and the 'good-morning and hello' thing is happening in the big cities as well, provided that you want to participate in it. It is a great feeling and gives you a sense of connection with your surroundings.
16. Exercise your mind and body; a healthy mind and body tends to desire and do positive things. I cannot over-emphasise enough the importance and the great benefits from being active and healthy.
17. Speak and think positively as we are what we think most of the time. As trivial as it might sound, it is a fundamental principle which must be exercised on a daily basis. A good thought will make you feel good and will make you want to act accordingly and the opposite happens by thinking bad thoughts. It is another way of improving our lives and thinking in a more collective way.
18. Say no to irresponsible share market investing; support positive new and environmental technologies only, and do your homework first. Everyone has been sold the story that by being a shareholder you are part of the group; that may stand true for some, however it is the basis of problems that most uninformed people have had by entering the share market. Apart from the associated financial risks (which can be calculated), the main issues arise from backing companies with dubious environmental and social ideologies and philosophies.
19. Use your mind and personal judgement about what you are wearing and refrain from following the latest fashion trends. Fashion is great and it is good to be 'in'; however it is not the most important thing out there and by doing so (buying) you may be supporting unscrupulous clothing manufacturers, like those employing the poor factory workers who were killed in Bangladesh recently. Rather than consuming your effort and funds embracing the latest fashion trends, embrace or at least be aware of the latest unbiased scientific research. How do you determine whether research is unbiased? One example is the research whereby 95% of climate scientists claim that our planet is warming up due to human activity. If the vast majority of a group of thinking people says the same thing over and over again then you can be quite certain that the information and research is objective.

20. Talk about new and progressive ideas; speak philosophy, engineering, new discoveries, politics rather than sports and silicone-filled and super-temporary and fake stars of any kind (movie stars, singers etc.). The real star is you as you are trying your very best to do the best you can for you and your life.
21. Limit as much as possible the use of your phone other than as a phone (talking and texting). Time allocation is the key once again in this point.
22. Walk, exercise and live your life without headphones unless you are a music composer or something similar; be present at every moment, be alert, hear the sounds around you and be part of your surroundings at any given time. You live life by being tuned-in both physically and mentally at all levels. Apart from the need to be in the present, by disconnecting yourself through your hearing sense from your surroundings you are putting yourself in greater danger as you are not directly aware of what is happening around you.
23. Walk/exercise without your mobile phone. We all live in a so-called 'connected' world; however it is imperative to disconnect as well. Just imagine that twenty years ago there were no mobile phones or internet but somehow we still managed to survive, socialise and meet and we actually evolved for millions of years without them. So at the very least we can spend a few hours here and there while awake without these attachments on us. As I mentioned before living in the moment is really important; whether you are alone or with friends a mobile phone is a disruption and you cannot fully engage if you are fiddling with it. Occasionally detaching will help you relax and disconnect from what's going on elsewhere and will help you connect with the moment.
24. Good sleep is a pillar for your good physical and mental health. Ensure that your sleep will remain uninterrupted during the course of the night by blocking potential annoying sounds; turn your phone on silent and have it charging in another room. Apart from ensuring a good sleep that way, the last thing you want near your head while asleep is a microwave-emitting device.
25. Limit or stop reading useless gossip magazines as they are simply a waste of time and natural resources; most of the time they send negative or irrelevant messages. Instead do something better with your mind rather than thinking who from the superstar arena has had plastic surgery, got divorced or remarried or got busted in a very embarrassing state: who really cares and what for?
26. When meeting with friends rather than talking mostly about celebrities, sport and business, talk about health, politics and the current state of affairs; exchange opinions and frustrations. It feels a lot better when you speak your mind about burning issues rather about than someone's shoes.
27. Enjoy your natural surroundings; check out a sunrise and/or a sunset once a week and embrace nature by being around it – breathe it, look at it and listen to it. I really can't stress the importance of this point enough, as most of us are completely disconnected from our original and natural routes and it is no wonder that we are so unhappy in general.
28. Meditate on a regular basis.
29. See the good side of your daily life, even if it is hard at times, and try not to use the excuse that your life is too much and you need a break by living someone else's life through movies, sitcoms and the like. Like the ocean waves our lives have peaks and troughs, and every state can be a great lesson as long as we are open-minded and really want to learn from life. In fact by actually living your daily life as per the points described here one thing is certain: you will be happier than if you didn't. I am not a life coach, or a licensed expert in coaching, psychology or any other related discipline, but I can tell you with certainty that when you do embrace every aspect of life and you really walk out of the bubble that you have been living in, you will get my point. It is your journey; you can read a lot about self-improvement and that is a must, but you need to do it. You need to be able to observe things around you carefully and systematically. The image below demonstrates part of my point.

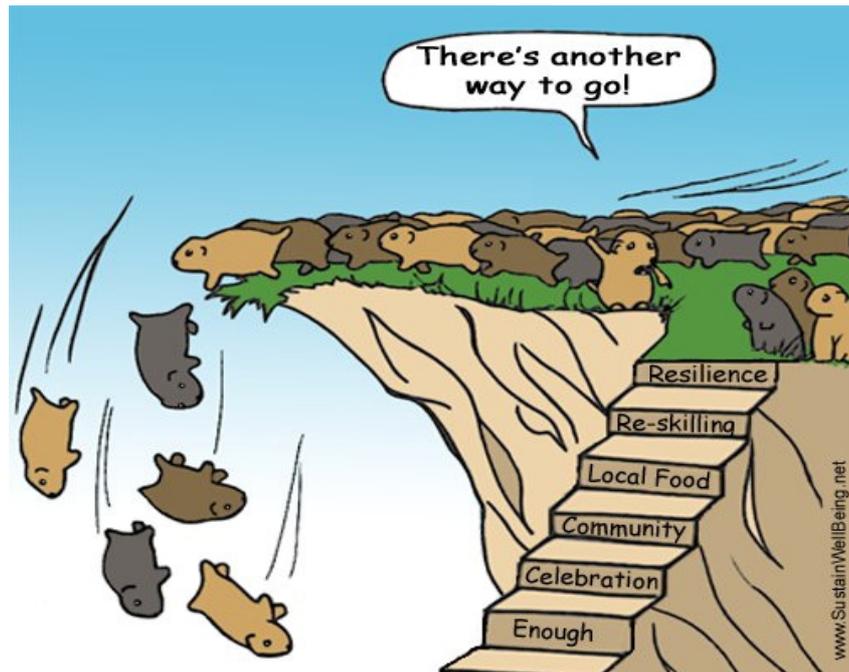


Image from: <http://www.sustainwellbeing.net>

30. Many supermarkets use self-check-out machines and more and more of them are becoming available as we use them more and more. Every time you use these machines, someone is losing their job and the corporation is making more money. Instead, ask the assistance of a human.
31. When you are selecting fresh food, purchase items that even have some imperfections as well, rather than discriminating against it.
32. Buy products from Fair Trade Shops like the New Internationalist Shop and other similar outlets.
33. Eat healthily. Healthy food promotes a healthy body, mind and spirit.
34. Probiotics are very beneficial for the internal health of your gut. Do some research.
35. Get involved in political issues rather than being apathetic and ignorant. The main reason we and our planet are in this state is because we show no interest, hence giving corporations and politicians free reign. They don't want us to get involved because if we do we will spoil their game; hence all the distractions with media and superstars. In my view that's why all super-(whatever) get paid so much because they are part of the propaganda to keep you really thought-neutral.
36. Raise your voice when you don't like something. I am not only talking about your friends or your partner; mainly I am talking about serious and real issues that affect your and everyone else's life.
37. Buy from local food producers and shops and research whether they use local suppliers.
38. Buy all your goods from small shops: this way you will be able to support the local economy rather than faceless and money-hungry corporations.
39. Refrain from buying all the latest gimmicks as they serve no purpose; correction ... they do serve one purpose and that's GDP growth. On the other hand you must sacrifice your life working very long hours to obtain these gimmicks.
40. There is no need to purchase garbage bags for domestic use as you can use biodegradable shopping bags.
41. Keep your mobile phone until it stops working and don't let marketers convince you that your mobile phone needs replacement every year. This applies to any other device or equipment

- that you have.
42. Join and participate in various organisations like Greenpeace, Avaaz, Get-Up and the like as in they are good channels for making positive change and people can use these channels to express their views en masse.
  43. Join mailing lists that advocate Truth such as *Grist* and e-magazines such as *New Internationalist*. As the mainstream media is just a façade for corporations, we all need to be informed via alternative channels.
  44. Try and form a car-pooling system and if possible a shuttle bus service. It could prove to be a really good solution to both traffic congestion and travel expenses.
  45. In order to conserve energy, when cooking use low heat on the stove; you will never burn a thing and everything will taste really good too. Your saucepan should be equipped with a lid and it should remain in place during cooking. Allow residual heat to cook your food. For instance when roasting; once the first side is nice and brown, turn it over and leave it to heat for another 15 minutes and then turn the heat off. It will cook for another hour as long as you don't open the oven door. When cooking eggs, place them in a saucepan with a lid and in cold water. The second the water reaches boiling point, turn the heat off and leave the eggs for 3–4 minutes for soft-boiled and more for hard-boiled. You will love the colour of the yolk by using this method. Turn all lights and appliances off (refrigerator excepted) when not at home. The same applies for all office environments. What a gross waste of energy when whole office levels are left with all lights on even when no-one is there.
  46. Whenever possible use renewable energy. It may be more expensive but our lives are not just about instant economics; in the end only sensibility will prevail. At the end of the day whatever seems cheap today is in most cases a mere payment deferral.
  47. Try incorporating walking whenever possible for your day to day activities rather than using mechanical transport. It is good for your silhouette, your pocket and the environment as you won't use vehicles as often.
  48. In summer time whenever possible try not to use air-conditioning and instead use pedestal or ceiling fans to cool down.
  49. In winter time use more clothing to keep warm rather than turning up the heater; only heat rooms being used.
  50. Keep and maintain your car and don't let car manufacturers sell you the idea that they are making better cars every year – because they don't. See chapter 10.
  51. Only buy quality and well-engineered products as they will last the distance and will save your time, energy and even money, and ultimately reduce landfill demand.
  52. When something breaks and you think that it is repairable, go for it! Try your handy-person skills as it is a lot of fun!
  53. If you need to use something to do a specific job just once, try and borrow it rather than buying it. For instance if you need a drill to put up something on the wall, try to borrow it, rather than cluttering your house with unused things and wasting money.
  54. Whenever possible, try composting your organic waste, rather than disposing of it in the trash. People living in apartments are unfortunately not in the best position to do that, however new business opportunities for organic matter collection and processing could arise.
  55. There is no need to wrap presents, so don't waste paper on that.
  56. Aqua-ponics is a way one can grow food in-house. To be more specific, one can grow fish in the backyard or roof-top of the house. It is a very low-tech system and it is also very effective way to grow fish and vegetables as one feeds the other. The only external input in most cases is power required to pump the water and water to replace the evaporated portion. Solar power could be used to power the water pump as well.
  57. Imagine growing a large portion of your food at home either on a vegetable patch, or pots placed on balconies and window sills.
  58. This step is a bit more complicated but effective and can be a key one. Purchase or convert

your car to electric; the technology is available, and by coupling the charging of batteries with renewable energy, big energy corporations automatically have lost a big part of the game.

59. Whenever the city water is fluoridated, you will need to use reverse osmosis filtering systems as the traditional carbon filters have no capacity to remove fluoride. If you don't already know, fluoride is a very toxic substance and the justification of its use is its claimed ability to prevent tooth decay and cavities. Natural fluoride probably does, however the artificial does not, and it invariably has other effects. If you want to prevent your teeth from decaying, don't drink soft drinks, avoid sugars and brush your teeth a couple of times a day. In order to save your body from exposure to toxic chemicals such as fluoride, use natural toothpaste to brush your teeth. Just think: when a product supposed to be used on your body that has an emergency hotline number on its packaging, it is basically stating that this product will not kill you at once if you expose yourself to it in small doses, however it will do so if you use it excessively or swallow it. How can something in the ranks of personal care be good for you if you can't swallow it?
60. Do tell people about this book and your personal action; spread the word. Rather than advertising to your friends the latest gossip or the latest gimmick or clothing that you bought, enrich your conversations and talk about the change you would like to happen for you and every other living being on this planet.
61. Get involved on a bigger scale by creating various focus groups. Be part of the group pioneering change because the changes that I am talking about are already happening!
62. Start implementing pilot programs and involve as many stakeholders as you can. Each stakeholder will be regionally responsible, for example a local council; and via these pilot programs all stakeholders can meet and learn from each other, hence accelerating the process of positive change. An idea for a pilot program would be how to segregate waste to organic and not, suitable for composting and recycling respectively.

'Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.' – Martin Luther King, Jr.

'The hope of a secure and liveable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace and brotherhood.' – Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Category C (systemic changes)**

63. Printed magazines, newspapers, flyers, and junk mail material should simply be phased out while being mindful of non-technology literate individuals. The paper used comes from trees and it is not justifiable to cut a tree for someone to read an article, gossip or especially advertising. Paper used for our printers currently is too cheap: its price should be increased by at least 50-fold.
64. Takeaway, fast food and junk food outlets should be banned from using disposable packaging and serving material; instead of paper boxes pizza shops should use washable, reusable stainless steel boxes on a pay bond/exchange basis. In fact the takeaway system is very environmentally demanding so it probably should be banned or packaging should become really expensive. By using the right pricing signals, habits will change and the demand for single-use items will diminish
65. Coffee shops should provide takeaway coffee in non-disposable containers, again on a pay bond/exchange basis, unless customers bring their own washable cups.
66. Wine, beer and spirits can be bottled in glass bottles as they are today, however bottles should be returned for washing and reuse rather than melting-and-remanufacturing. I remember very clearly in the early 80s whenever people used to buy beer, they would return the bottles to the point of purchase; they were placed in crates and later were sent for

- washing and refilling.
67. Soft drinks, sparkling water and all related water-based beverages should only be served via kegs, similarly to the way that they are currently served in pubs and bars.
  68. Water should be provided only via the traditional method – the tap. Bottles create so much waste and the energy embedded in a single-use plastic bottle is ridiculous.
  69. Ultra-packaged food such as ready-made meals and canned products should simply be banned and everyone should be encouraged to cook instead.
  70. Food should remain in the area where it was produced and should be seasonal, thereby eliminating transportation and storage environmental costs.
  71. All food should be organic. There are many reasons for that. Organic food does not contain chemicals; your body does not need to process these chemicals. In addition farmers and animals will not have to be exposed in the toxic pesticides, fertilisers and hormones. Toxic chemicals leach to groundwater, rivers, streams and aquifers. By using traditional farming techniques, arable land always remains arable; modern chemical techniques destroy and kill all life of the soil in a matter of a few years.
  72. Products apart from food should be manufactured to last for many years rather than months and designed obsolescence for manufactured products (see chapter 10) should be fully controlled and monitored by legislation.
  73. Everyone should have a flight hours per annum budget, just because we all have equal rights on this planet. If I choose not to fly, someone else should not be able to pick the benefit up, i.e. flight hour budgets should be non-transferable. Business trips can be greatly reduced; we have the technology to do conferences with people from the other end of the world from our computer. If the technology is not good enough, we should improve it. We must stop criss-crossing the earth for meetings and similar activities. We all know that flying is the most inefficient form of travelling in terms of fuel use.
  74. Motor racing is useless and should be banned. It is a great spectacle; however having vehicles running around in circles burning valuable fuel is not logical. Only championships that foster new and progressive ways such as electric, hydrogen or other technologies that our muzzled scientists have come up with should be allowed to take place. We are still using 200-year-old technology masked by electronic controls. We can do a lot better than that. Apart from the lack of incentive to change technology by the current motor-racing culture, fuel used during motor racing collectively around the world reaches millions of litres per annum. We also must consider fuel used for all practice sessions, fuel used to transport teams, fuel used for fans to arrive at venues, fuel used to manufacture tyres that only last a few kilometres, and so on. I did a search on the net and I came across some numbers from NASCAR car racing. NASCAR uses special Sunoco 260 GTX fuel. It's not street legal; it's about 98 octane. In a 500-mile race, each NASCAR vehicle would require about 530 litres of fuel. If 43 drivers qualify, that's 22,790 litres of fuel for the race. If we assume that the race is only a small portion of all driving that takes place, for each 500 miles of racing probably another 1000 are run. For this exercise I will assume that for one mile of racing there is one mile of practising, which would bring the fuel used for each race to 45,580 litres just for the race cars. If we assume that there are about 100,000 fans, which is at the low end of the attendance scale, and if we assume that they carpool in average groups of 5 (which they don't), and that each vehicle travels 75 km to the race (which would be a low estimate), the fans use 150,000 litres of fuel just getting to the race. Say that at best scenario 175,000 litres of fuel are consumed per one NASCAR race, let's multiply that number by the 36 races that take place every year; 6,300,000 litres just for NASCAR. Here are just a few motor racing championships – you can make your own assumptions: F1, F3000, F2, European touring cars, sports car racing, production car racing, cart racing, historic car racing, drifting, WRC, drag racing, monster car events, Moto GP, boat races and aircraft shows etc. Can you imagine how much fuel is wasted for just motor racing? Do we have the luxury to do so? You are the judge.

75. GM foods should be totally banned. Evolution has done an absolutely fantastic job for the last millions of years; however some power-hungry scientists and their bosses want to undo what evolution has achieved – they should be locked up including anyone working for them and investing in them since we are talking about crimes against ecosystems throughout the planet. GM technology is like another form of weapons of mass destruction. That is how they should be considered and that's how they should be treated. Board members, investors and anyone involved with such organisations should be considered a criminal of the worse type. If you like to define the word terrorism, you can define it by using these organisations as an example.
76. Renewable energy sources should be adopted for mains power supply, with coal-fired power stations used as a back-up only.
77. Houses should be built with best passive design principles in order to minimise artificial heating and cooling requirements.
78. Materials which require little or no processing should be used to erect buildings. A great example of that is The Gateway Building, which was built for the University of Nottingham's agriculture campus at Sutton Bonington. This building features 3100 square metres over two storeys and it is externally clad with straw. The straw was grown on the university's farm just 200m from the site and was also processed in a temporary factory near the site. The straw has excellent thermal performance capabilities resulting in great energy savings while keeping the building thermally comfortable. We just need to look outside the box and it is certain that we can find such solutions.
79. Gas exploration by using the fracking method should be totally banned. When we have the proper energy solutions in place fossil fuel extraction for energy use of any type should be banned.
80. Oil should be preserved for use in the manufacturing of essential plastics and other materials whose base element is oil.
81. Permaculture and other organic methods of growing food should be areas of investment as they are the only sustainable ways to grow food.
82. Cities should be using rain water for all park watering, public toilets and washing of external areas. I haven't done any calculations in terms of the volume of water generated during a rainy period; however it is more than enough to cover all of the above needs, without using underground water supplies and precious drinkable water.
83. Cities should be treating waste in order to capture various gases and composting organic waste at the same time.
84. Dedicated bicycle lanes should be introduced into cities; however adequate separation between riders and drivers should be provided both for health issues from breathing fumes and mechanical safety.
85. Light rail systems should be built in all major cities in order to alleviate traffic and pollution issues.
86. In my view 20-30% of drivers that drive on our roads today should not even have a driver's license. The state claims that safety is achieved through reducing speed limits; that is true up to a degree, however it is not the main cause of deaths on our roads. The main cause is lack of experience and ability to drive correctly. If safety is the main concern, everyone requiring a driver's licence should undergo defensive driving tests and pass them successfully every five years. I guarantee that the number of accidents would be dramatically reduced, firstly because of the improvement in collective driving skills and secondly because there would be fewer cars on the road. A nice side effect – fewer traffic jams.
87. There should be incentives for people to work from home or very close to home. Seriously, imagine if instead of spending 2-3 hours daily on the road, how much more time you would have for any of the above Category A items.
88. Ultra-high-speed trains should replace many aircraft routes. Maglev or similar-type trains

could be used in a very high speed transit (VHST) system operating in its own rarefied atmosphere in evacuated tubes in underground tunnels. It is claimed that, using such a system, the Atlantic Ocean crossing could take less time to go coast-to-coast (e.g. 21 min) than it takes an aircraft to climb to an efficient operating altitude. New technology exists and we must implement it. We should all make this happen and destabilise think tanks that want to keep us in the dark. Obviously studies on embedded energy to adopt these technologies as well as life-cycle calculations should be meticulously performed in order to determine their sustainability status.

89. Minimum quality standards for the built quality of motor vehicles should require that they are able to be overhauled every 10 years, as happens in the aircraft industry. There is absolutely no reason, apart from fashion, for a car to be considered out-dated five years after it has been manufactured. The embedded energy used in building motor vehicles is far too great to waste every few years, and the collective energy saved by small fuel efficiency gains are totally being outweighed by the destruction and remanufacturing of vehicles within very small time intervals.
90. Packaging of products should be reconsidered and made as minimal as possible.
91. Rules around material compositions in terms of toxicity and harm should be much stricter. We can't afford any more toxic and harmful waste material anywhere in our homes. Let's stop here, change the page and start producing stuff that does not harm the environment or our health.
92. Minimum quality standards and minimum life expectancy of products of all types should be set so that the continual burden of extraction of natural resources is limited. Within this point there are many other hidden advantages such as:
  - when products last longer, we won't be spending our money replacing inferior products constantly
  - when products last longer, we won't be spending a big proportion of our spare time shopping, hence saving a lot of time
  - traffic congestion at ports, rail and roads will be reduced significantly as transportation requirements will be reduced
  - air quality will improve because there won't be as many trucks and similar vehicles on the road transporting inferior goods
  - there will be fewer greenhouse gases emitted during manufacture, transportation and disposal of fewer goods
  - noise levels will decrease since there will be less traffic on the road
  - stress levels will drop because fewer working hours will be required from us
  - landfills will not be expanding at the explosive rate that they do now
  - there will be a lot less toxic waste at the point of extraction, manufacturing and finally disposal of these products
  - there will be dramatic savings in materials used to package products.

It is estimated that 95% of the products that we purchase end up in landfill just six months after we purchase them. That really must change!

93. Trading certain items from one continent to another should be banned as there is no sense in it. Example: Once at a friend's restaurant I noticed that the pre-cooked frozen chips (French fries) were imported from Belgium. My friend's restaurant was in Sydney. When I asked my friend why he buys these chips, he replied that the imported ones are half the price of the local brands. I am not sure how something like that is even possible.
94. We need urgent systemic changes that will penetrate deep into the educational system, not in terms of infrastructure, but in terms of the most important job in the world: the job of the teacher. Teachers are the link to knowledge and their role is sacred. We trust teachers with our children and we expect them to deliver good education for them. If the profession of a teacher is not highly regarded and their pay scale reflects that, it is more than expected that

the brightest and keenest people will not opt for a career in teaching. In addition, for someone to become a fully qualified teacher they should have to spend time under a well-established teacher for quite some time before being given full responsibility to deliver education.

95. You see in our world pay scales and regard for professions that are exactly upside down. As discussed earlier in the compensation chapter, teachers, scientists, nurses, engineers, doctors and tradespeople should be in the highest pay scales and professionals like financiers, bankers, lawyers, actors, sports players and related media people should be at the lowest pay scales. The reason once again: that is the order of actual and real contribution of each profession in our world. Our skewed system that we have now allows non-contributors to run the world. In a natural selection system that model would fail within a generation.
96. Governments that pay unemployment or other benefits to citizens should make mandatory employment arrangements for at least part-time work in the fields of gardening, road maintenance, cleaning of parks and other jobs. At least then people will be working for the money that they receive, plus they would have a real incentive to get a real job.
97. 'Donations' to political parties should be deemed illegal and be banned completely. Political parties should be funded by government coffers on an annual per head basis. A political party is there to serve the people, just like schools do, hence a similar way of funding for active political parties should be adopted.
98. Illegal drugs should be made legal. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the '... manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States ...' were prohibited. 'Congress passed the 'Volstead Act' on October 28, 1919, which created a laughably understaffed and underfunded agency called the Prohibition Bureau, but most large cities were uninterested in enforcing the legislation, leaving an understaffed federal service to go after bootleggers. Although alcohol consumption did decline as a whole, there was a rise in alcohol consumption in many cities along with significant increases in organised crime related to its production and distribution. The sale of alcohol was illegal, but alcoholic drinks were still widely available. People also kept private bars to serve their guests. Large quantities of alcohol were smuggled in from Canada, overland, by sea along both ocean coasts, and via the Great Lakes. The government cracked down on alcohol consumption on land within the U.S. It was a different story on the water where vessels outside the three mile limit were exempt. Legal and illegal home brewing was popular during Prohibition. "Malt and hop" stores popped up across the country and some former breweries turned to selling malt extract syrup, ostensibly for baking and "beverage" purposes.' (Wikipedia).  
A similar scenario is now taking place with all illegal drugs. Apart from the crime rates generated by drug users in order to support their habit, large parts of our judicial system and police force resources are consumed by drug-related crime. Wars, both civil and international, take place over drugs,. By legalising drug usage, there will be an increase of users; however it is the job of every one of us to educate ourselves and become aware of the dangers of using these drugs. No-one can really help self-destructive people in the first place.
99. Before you read the 99<sup>th</sup> solution/suggestion/proposal, I would like to point out that it was a very interesting exercise to come up with 99 points for improving the world. The interesting thing, though, is that I haven't even touched on so many more solutions that exist in people's minds or that they are doing right now. Just think, if every one of us could come up with just one new solution! We have limited our scope for improvement dramatically. By the way, the above solutions have been listed with some logical order but without any loading on their significance. Every solution is a solution with its own merit.

Ok, the 99<sup>th</sup> solution: *open your mind and think outside the square box, think of ways you can make this world a better place; invent, aspire to a better future.*

- *Our life is supposed to be simple; keep it that way!* -

## 16. Final thoughts and messages

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‘Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.’ – Martin Luther King, Jr.

We need to stop denying the current state of the planet right now. We can’t keep on pretending that we can afford to sustain our current ways, especially in the west for any longer.

Genetic engineering scientists – I am referring to those scientists who call themselves experts in genetics, DNA modifications, food engineering, animal engineering and the rest via test tubes in crazy lab work – I have a challenge for you, seemingly a very simple one since you claim you can do all these weird and wonderful things in your ignorant way. Let me explain. If a scientific team can create a fully functioning fly which can reproduce for 31 generations without any problems and further input from you while it still remains a fly and does not become something else, then you might claim that you have some understanding of the massive complexities of the genetic code and how it works. You can’t claim that you know what is really going on, when you create something and only one finger of its whole body moves. Once you can artificially produce the insignificant fly from scratch and it is fully functional, just like the real one, then you could probably move on to a lizard. Get the basics right first before moving on to something more complicated. Any argument on this is just a cover-up for your lack of knowledge; leave everything else untouched and stop destroying our world.

Climate ‘engineers’: It appears that all major climate change deniers support your research on so-called climate engineering. Before you commit to destroying the climate as we know it via your climate engineering panacea plan you need to do a simple and necessary thing first: if you can predict what the weather will be like exactly for two weeks in advance for every single region in the world, then you may have developed algorithms that can do that. Then do the same thing another ten times. When every single result for every single region in the world has matched your forecast 100% then move to a three-month period and see how you go with that. Once you have succeeded with the three month challenge, move to the twelve month challenge. Not only are you not even close to doing that right now, you will not be for a few more decades. The reason is simple: the complexities and interrelations between various climate systems, and their interaction with oceans, solar radiation, cloud formations, local atmospheric conditions and so many other parameters and variables, are so complex in terms of the vast amount of information and calculation power required that even if all computers in the world were to be simultaneously connected to perform these calculations, they still would not be able to do so. We must be humble and you must understand that money is paper at best. Without clean oceans and air to breathe nothing has value. Only when you come to the point that you understand EVERYTHING about the workings of the climate you may consider tinkering with it if necessary; absolutely in no other case and by doing so if the investors lose their money in the meanwhile, so be it! They won’t be the first or the last to do so..

A holistic approach: Let’s assume that planet earth is a cruise ship called Earth-Liner and let’s also assume that we are all travelling in time and space towards X destination. An cruise ship before it commences a cruise must be packed with supplies and fuel so that all passengers can be accommodated during the cruise. Earth-Liner is effectively a really big ship and it has its own capacity to replenish food items because it has space for big gardens for vegetables to grow and animals to graze. In the case of the cruise ship all catering operations require careful planning and vigorous monitoring of supplies in order to last; Earth-liner is no different and in order for the

supplies to last the distance (potentially millions of years) they too need to be monitored very closely and efficiently. All passengers must be mindful not to waste food and overuse the ship's energy resources, simply because they need to last the distance. Effectively there is a fundamental difference between the two: Earth and cruise ship. The difference is that a cruise ship can be resupplied with food and energy; however Earth cannot externally, apart from the solar power that we refuse to use in a mass scale in order for us to meet our soaring energy needs of course. This very point in my view needs to be made crystal clear to everyone on this planet. We have the best host in the known universe and instead of appreciating its gifts to us; we simply thrash it so that a handful of people can make profits. Is that the best we can do as a civilised society? And why do we perceive to have greater value than all the other animals and species collectively? If brain power is our main claim for our superiority compared to the other animal species, what are we really doing with it? And how come ALL the other brainless species have the capacity to live in harmony with Earth while the civilised and sophisticated humans simply do the opposite? Is buying the latest mobile phone more important than our children's future? Are we so selfish that we can only think today for today only?

We simply need to stop denying the current state of the planet right now. We can't keep on pretending that life can go on just the way it is.

We can have the future that we and our children deserve; we need to act now and must be united. We can have a UTOPIAN future and present. We need to really ignore the dinosaurs that keep on drumming our ears with out-dated scenarios and ideas. There are so many people out there who want the collective good. We must lift them up so that everyone can hear them. As they say: *we are what we think most of the time*. And one may add to this:

*We are what we think, do, aspire to and dream most of the time.*

Our technology has brought us many good and bad things. Let's all choose and promote the good things, study and learn our mistakes made in the meanwhile, and move on looking for, and by developing even better ones. Let alternative energy and propulsion inventors do their jobs uninterrupted and fund them accordingly. Let teachers teach our children about life, history and future aspirations. Let scientists do their work without any timeframes, as knowledge is not obtained by setting sales targets; it takes time. Dollars and cents are just a work of fiction when it comes to funding people to invent new and progressive technologies. Life has no price tag.

Live the life that you were put on this planet to do. Learn from nature because after all, nature is our home and nature is our mother and teacher. We must be vigilant and keen to learn from our mistakes; that is the beauty of life: to actually learn from mistakes. We have made many mistakes, so the lessons that we should obtain are immense in number and seriousness; we must use them now without burying our heads in the sand ignoring all the signs around us. First you hear the sound of an incoming aircraft and then you see it.

Lastly, be part of this movement, spread the word, and contribute with your mind, heart and spirit. Smile, be happy, respectful and thoughtful, kind to yourself and people around you, clear your head, spread the love and all useful knowledge, so that each one of us may be proud on our very last moment alive knowing that we have lived to our full potential and that we have done all that we could have done to make the human species legendary and its technological progress an uplifting epic story.

Thank you for reading!

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