

“Remember Your Humanity, and Forget the Rest*”

Notes toward an Integral Response to Our Converging Crises
With Emphasis on New Mexico and Nuclear Disarmament

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“... [T]he problem of our time, the problem that holds a key to every other issue, is to bring Caliban back once more under the control of Prospero.”

Lewis Mumford, “The Uprising of Caliban,” 1954

The nuclear beast must be chained, its soul expunged, its lair laid waste.

General Lee Butler, former Commander in Chief, STRATCOM



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*Russell-Einstein Manifesto, 1955

I was not very well prepared to become an adult and had to figure out many things for myself with no guidance. It took me a little longer than average. The younger generations today are less prepared than I was. **Their elders, in particular leaders and authority figures, have made a point of not telling them the truth. My generation especially, the baby boomers, has engineered a systematic misunderstanding of reality.** That “hologram,” as the late and great Joe Bageant called **the hallucinatory globe of falsehood that envelopes us**, is crumbling but something else is moving in to take its place.

James Kunstler, *Too Much Magic: Wishful Thinking, Technology, and the Fate of the Nation*

What is that “something else?”

How can we “remain awake during a great revolution” (ML King, 1965)?

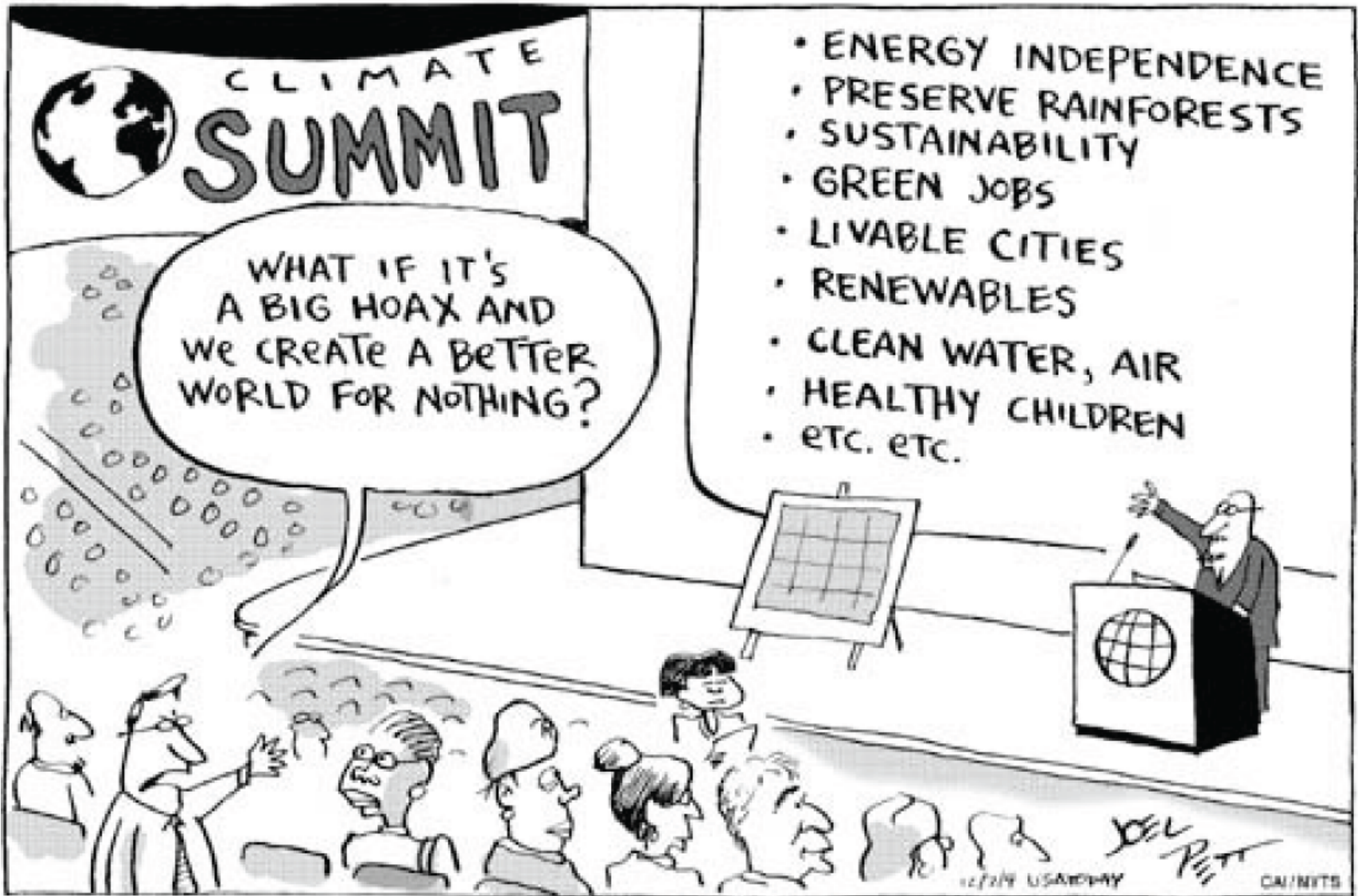


This is not an ordinary talk

- We are not trying to convey information so much as trying to raise pointed questions. We know you can find lots of information on your own. Secrecy and ignorance are no longer serious barriers in our society. The open-source intelligence revolution has fully arrived. We will try to make a few helpful suggestions.
- We aim to affirm deep values, and the intuitions and promptings which come from them. We want to pivot there.
- We want to probe our assumptions as to means, and to question some aspects of the “hallucinatory globe of falsehood” that surrounds us. We won’t have final answers or blueprints.
- Questions are more important than abstract answers; we each, in our lives and relationships and the promises we make, are the only integral answer to all the questions, the only answer we can ever have.
- We hope this little meeting will help foster the connections between all of you, so whatever good we can accomplish here can grow, protected from the winds of distraction and decay. The relationships here are precious.

JOEL PETT
USA TODAY

[Pascal's wager, redux]



Cartoonists International: www.nyfsm.com/cartoons

This talk in a nutshell

- Liberal issue-progressivism has been an increasing net failure since the 1980s. Humanity and the whole living earth are threatened as never before.
- We are in a great revolution that is sweeping away American empire and our way of life – our *personal* empires. No one can escape this history-in-the-making, or protect their family from this revolution. We will all participate, either in conscious freedom or in bewildered victimhood. In the public realm, the only truly functional response is to awaken to this historical moment, stand up wherever we are, and accept our obligation there to “save as many as we can.”



"Yes, but what are your goals?"

Yes, but what are your goals?

- There are “issues,” but to be awake means “remembering our humanity,” to be fully awake and responsive to the development what Dr. King called the “coalition of conscience.” We will acquire power to the exact extent that we “forget the rest.” The “issue” frame of reference is largely the creation of institutions and individuals bent on maintaining the political status quo and their controlling role in it.
- Everyone should stand for office always – even if, as sometimes it must be, as a scarecrow in the field. Otherwise, expect nothing from the election-industrial complex but lazy fellows, clowns, oligarchs, lackeys, and oppressors.
- The only hope for this state and this nation lies in nonviolent political revolution. We are already in a violent revolution, which will rapidly get worse.



An example of “meme convergence.”

The New York Times

Crises Cascade and Converge, Testing Obama



A mosque in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip. As President Obama tries to corral Europeans on Russia, he must manage discontent over Israel’s ground invasion of Gaza. Credit Sergey Ponomarev for *The New York Times*

JULY 22, 2014

...Rarely has a president been confronted with so many seemingly disparate foreign policy crises all at once — in Ukraine, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere — but making the current upheaval more complicated for Mr. Obama is the seemingly interlocking nature of them all....



© AFP/Getty Images

Street scene in Damascus: Palestinian refugees at a food distribution point, Feb. 26, 2014



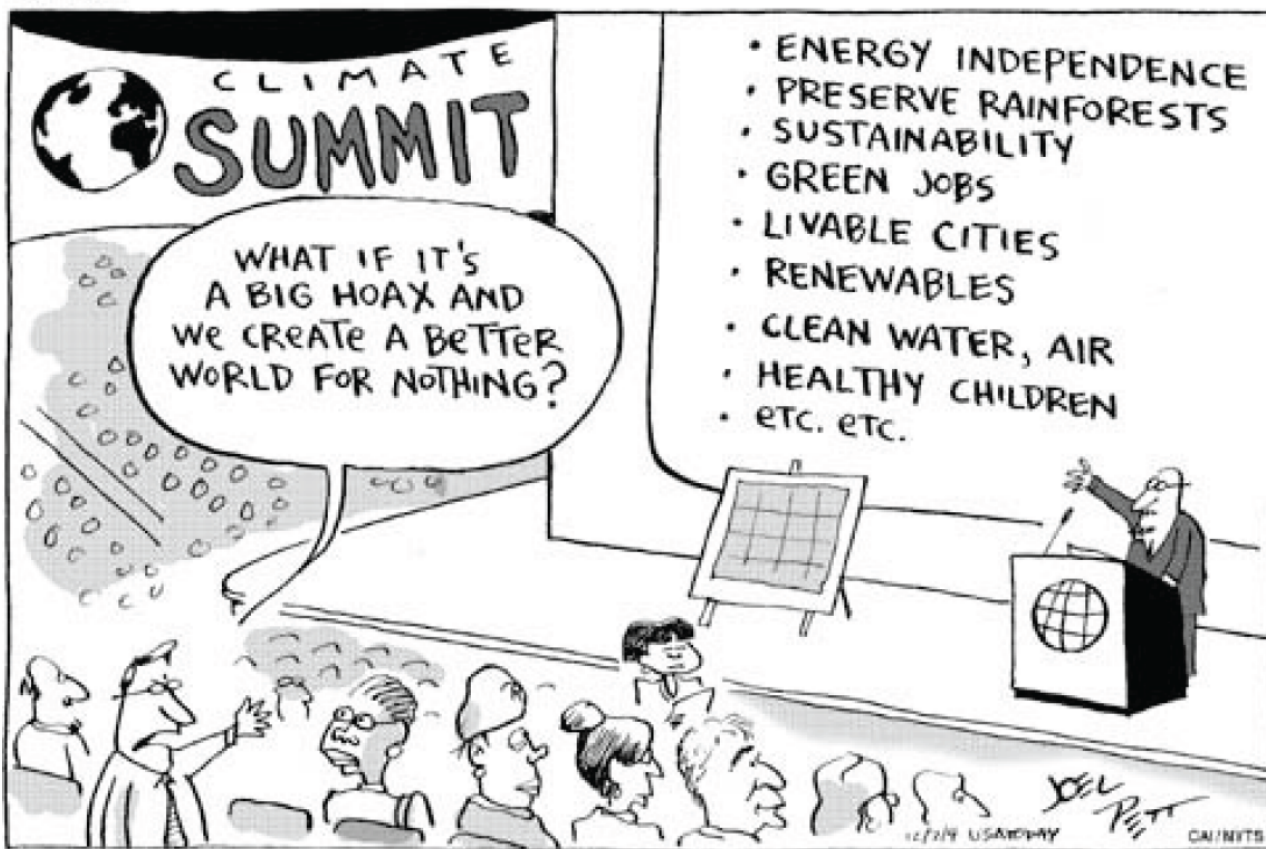
June 12, 2014: Mosul residents fleeing from what is now the Islamic State, crossing the Tigris River towards the East (from Matt Mushalik, <http://crudeoilpeak.info/worlds-untested-assumption-on-6-mbd-iraqi-oil-by-2020>).

Overall, our thesis is going to be something like this:

- Our converging crises will not be solved by piecemeal reform, whether sudden or gradual. We need, and for better or worse *we will get*, sweeping, synergistic, revolutionary economic, social, environmental, and political change. Politically speaking, there are no easily separable *issues* or *solutions* any more.
- The problems at hand are now far greater, and more coercive and urgent, than the system which created them can solve, understand, or even admit to exist. This may not change.
- Nevertheless, small improvements in government and corporate awareness and choice can have great positive effects on the margin and throw coming events across “watershed” boundaries into significantly different futures. A 1% improvement in a 96% delusory situation adds 25% light. Even one candle can light a cave enough to get out. So we must not despise all true 1% improvements.
- Great changes are imminent and underway, but they are coming to different people and places unequally and often invisibly to us. What comes to the poor and to the Third World now will come to us later – but not much later.
- “This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.” (King, “I Have a Dream”) Change needs to be, and for better or worse will be, abrupt. Stability is illusory. Wile E. Coyote is over the cliff.

How can we – responsible human beings, citizens, parents, having some degree of personal agency – approach the welter of historical crises we face – some of which are unprecedented in kind, scale, and severity?

JOEL PETT
USA TODAY



There can be no final answers, let alone general ones.

Nevertheless confidence, clarity, and simplicity are needed for communication, mobilization, and for most effective action.

Part I: Goals, Limitations, General Thesis

With your help, our goals in this talk and discussion are to:

- Explore intellectual groundwork for work a) inside, b) engaged with, and c) outside government;
- Lay groundwork for ourselves and our friends to be “leaven” in other organizations, churches, businesses, and educational institutions;
 - For example, every church should have a full-time climate and energy organizer, however named, which will tamping down the cheap comfort;
- Inspire people to greater faith and action if we can;

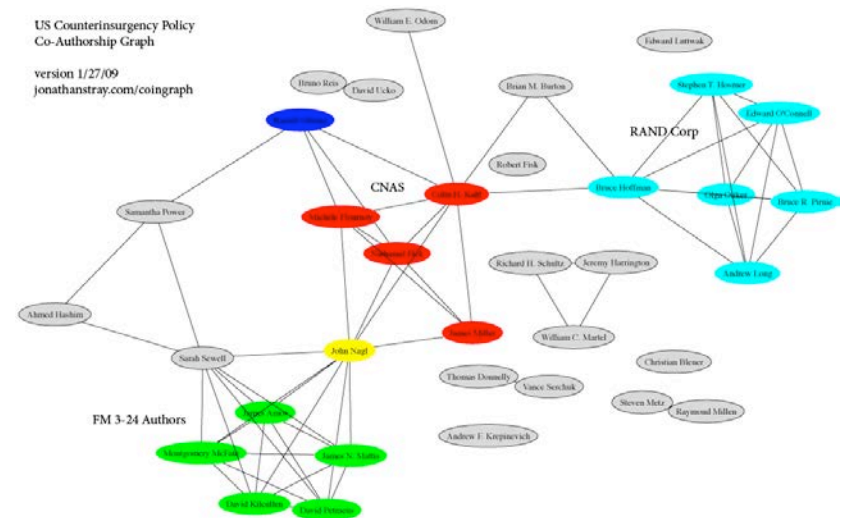
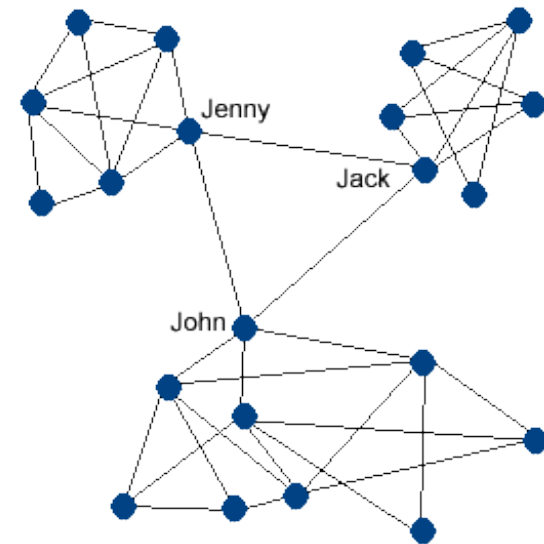


"Yes, but what are your goals?"

Yes, but what are your goals?

- Find people who want to be more involved with the Los Alamos Study Group;

- People who will reach out to others, on behalf of this organization;
- People who want to learn more, volunteer their time, or otherwise assist others who want to volunteer or help;
- People who will recruit interns and other valuable near-volunteer, or paid in-kind, staff;



- Organize following up meetings and meetings in other venues, of this type and others we have in mind; expanding our reach in this state, the capital, and internationally; and
- Raise modest sums of money to sustain and expand these efforts. This is a crucial decade for every issue. None of us are getting younger. Younger activists are precious and need mentoring and support, which baby boomers are in general not providing. (Cf. [“Boomers failed us,”](#) Tim DeChristopher, 2014)

We must reorient our society,, through our own lives and acts. No action is too small or too large. Simone Weil: “I can, therefore I am.”



Some our limitations tonight include these:

- This talk is not very entertaining. What is abstract is boring. Our enactment is however endlessly creative, as socially rich as we want, and will be completely fulfilling.
- We will be considering our common, objective situation and conditions, and practical action in the public sphere – for ourselves and for the various civil society groups we are members of, including the Study Group.



Simone Weil



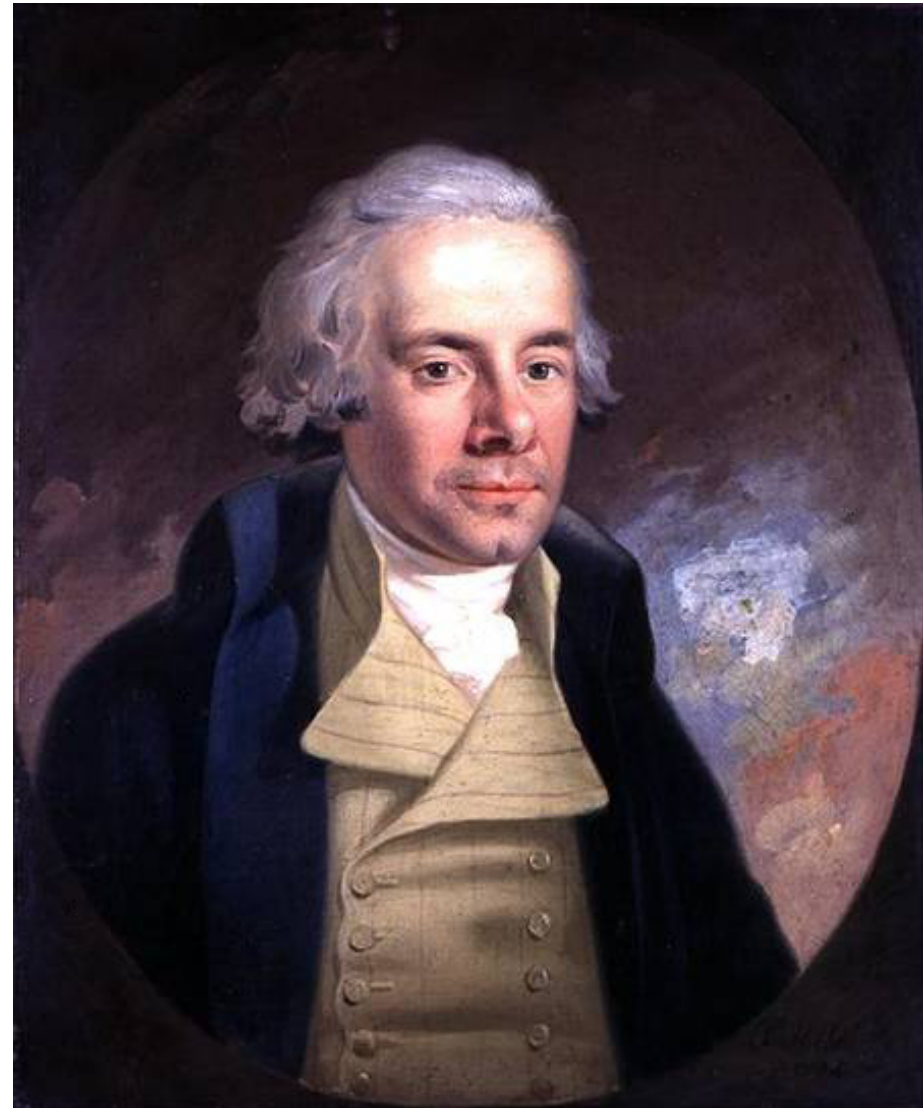
Hannah Arendt

- Some actions will aim at better government policies. Others say “No!” Others demand and brook no delay. Direct constructive action outside government is another kind of action. All are necessary.
- We are far more interested in our responsibilities and obligations than in our own desires, “needs,” or rights. Robert Aitken: “Rights are interesting – in the second person, not the first.” This is not about “me.”

- The obligations we consider here are those outside and complementary to the private sphere of our families and selves. They pertain to the public sphere of our communities, civil institutions and organizations, the living landscape including its diverse life, and the ecological health and overall climate of the planet. This is about other people, other species, habitats, and the planet.
- Nonetheless we hope that this meeting is part of a periodic process of personal discernment in which we seek insight into how our responsibilities can be best balanced, fulfilled, and apparent contradictions resolved. In particular, those with children at home have conflicted responsibilities. Above all we need full-time people – vocations. We need to nurture an ethos of full commitment.



- We won't be overtly engaging much with emotions here, though we hope we notice them. Feelings can be guideposts. They can reveal. So we want to pay close attention to them but not be carried away. Here, we want to understand. We pay homage to Apollo here; Dionysius awaits.
- We don't know ourselves as well as we might. We have little idea of what we are capable of, or what undiscovered destiny sleeps in us. "I made no vows but vows/Were made for me." (Wordsworth)
- We will be considering the challenges at hand mostly in the first and second grammatical persons. We have to lead. There will be others later. At least for now, we are the ones we have been waiting for.



William Wilberforce

The quantum of political action is the individual. “Does the individual know,” Jung said, “that he is the makeweight on the scale?”

- Intensifying, interacting crises are already impacting our lives, independent of our choices. “You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.” (Trotsky). Each of us will have a total response, one way or another. The unavoidability of history may not be apparent to post-Vietnam generations.
- Given that we are political anyway, some of us might run for elected office.
- Many people are swamped with personal responsibilities and will not be active. That is fine. No compromises should be made to include them. A tiny number of people are enough. Action must not fall to the lowest common denominator.
- Decline and selective collapse of the present economic and political order is more or less inevitable. However it comes, it will have great costs but also some benefits. The existing order provides crucial services, and could provide others. Some can be more-or-less replaced (e.g. police); others perhaps less easily (future arctic cooling?). In the U.S. there is a dangerous vacuum of humane ideas, institutions, and power. All forms of breakdown raise the specter of right-wing politics.
- “Black swans” are gathering just over the horizon. Our economy and society is subtly losing resilience. Natural hazards, negligence and unskilled acts, and malevolent acts, may have outsized consequences as we have seen. In a related phenomenon, large, slow, expensive or complex projects may never be completed.

- The present time is excellent. We have no other. It is the *kairos*. Especially given the present *forces majeure*, bold action now can find “a success unexpected in common hours (Thoreau). We must get in the swim, but we need not push the river; it flows by itself. Merely “connecting the dots” for powerful others may help or act. If they see that they are camped on a train track they will move.
- Just as we generally underappreciate what we might be able to do, we generally overestimate the stability of the world, as geographers have repeatedly found. “It couldn’t happen to me.” “We” exceptionalists will get a huge gravity lesson.
- Much of what we think we know about activism isn’t true any more, if it ever was true. If it were, we’d have won by now. For all these reasons we need “cognitive political therapy.” But there are too few success stories out there. So we are going to have to learn things first-hand, in what amounts to a very different country than we had in the 1970s, 80s, 90s, or 00s. Like Coyote, we’ll change.



- There are many ways to say it, but the American Imperium, and globalization in general, and its microcosm in our personal empires of luxury and relative stability, are eroding very quickly. Neither military force nor soft power will avail long to uphold the former. The broad middle class fantasy is being eroded. Former U.S. intelligence officer Robert Steele, as [reported by Nafeez Ahmed](#):

I see five major overlapping threats on the immediate horizon. They are all related: the collapse of complex societies, the acceleration of the Earth's demise with changes that used to take 10,000 years now taking three or less, predatory or shock capitalism and financial crime out of the City of London and Wall Street, and political corruption at scale, to include the west supporting 42 of 44 dictators. We are close to multiple mass catastrophes."

...[Ahmed reports that] For Steele, the open source revolution is inevitable, simply because the demise of the system presided over by the 1% cannot be stopped...

- Revolutionary changes in society imply revolutionary changes in our lives, either leading (in consciousness and freedom) or lagging (in bewildered victimhood). Change means change. Our personal empires will sooner or later fall. There is a great hunger for salvific, dramatic change. We need to have faith in what we see – the data – and humanity's core values, which means faith in imminent revolutionary change, and to invest personally in it.

- Investment in one thing means, and is possible because of, disinvestment in others. “When one side is light the other side is dark.” We are called, as in 1955 and with even great urgency, to “remember our humanity, and forget the rest.”
- There are more than adequate resources for to support dramatic change. Unfortunately, the “I am helpless” meme is pervasive. It must be rooted out to reclaim those resources. Our collective personal resources of all kinds and social networks are completely adequate, though mostly wasted in society at present.
- To liberate these revolutionary energies we must highlight and convey, concretely and in words, the vibrant core of a explicitly different and deeply resonating, political and moral philosophy. This is the opposite of liberal accommodation and gradualist reform, which are usually the “near enemy.” Those weak, isolated, and typically fraudulent efforts and policy prescriptions are parasitical. They move much slower than events, as we see for example in most climate and energy policy reform as well as in nuclear disarmament.
- Most liberal foundations, professional nonprofits, and academics are on the wrong side of these changes, even though some are real experts. They are mostly sea anchors, not sails. Current systems of knowledge production are failing. To lead, rather than follow, our efforts and actions must match the scale, and exceed the speed, of the crisis. We need to hit the core aspects of the real situation hard, and from a solid stance, on our own two feet.

- Only concrete successes count. “Doing our best” is very much the wrong measure for we in today’s coddled generations. The poor do not care if we feel their pain. All this and much other claptrap has to be weeded out of our discourse and action.
- We will each see the core integrative issues somewhat differently, and we stand in somewhat different places. Politics differs by locale. The first test might be, “If we are not successful in this matter, can we be successful in anything else?” Not all threats are existential. Or perhaps, “How closely will this matter bear on the resolution of existential threats?” Trivial things will take care of themselves, or not. By definition, it doesn’t matter.
- Without solving the climate issue, which is also the energy issue, which is also the physical envelope within which economic issues will be resolved in industrial and modern agricultural society, life will be mostly extinguished on earth. If we fail in this, most if not all humans will die, and most species will become extinct. This would happen in the present century, with temperatures continuing to rise and species extinctions continuing in the centuries to follow. We have already doomed much of humanity and much of our planet’s endowment of species, the plants and animals which have been our companions for tens of thousands of years.
- Therefore we must undertake radical, i.e. deep, experiments with truth. We have quite literally nothing to lose.

- Our present political alignments are obviously (to most people?) inadequate and are shifting chaotically at the level of individuals and organizations. This is yet another sign that the present power structure is unstable, and of widespread yearning for substantive political values and actions, in what is to many a terrifying time. Allies are appearing in unusual places. Many “friends” are not friends.
- We must immediately slash greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, foster the capture of atmospheric CO2 by natural processes (e.g. reforestation and associated soil development), and decrease arctic and subarctic temperatures, both to increase albedo and to decrease methane emissions. We do not know if our efforts, even if stunningly quick by today’s measures, can be successful.
- The “creative destruction” (Schumpeter) implied by this implies a total effort. It will be the moral, economic, and social equivalent of a war, but the harvest will be life, not death. Such efforts are incompatible with today’s hierarchy of control.
- Coincidentally, oil is leaving us right now, an eventuality for which we are utterly unprepared. There is little good news in this. One piece of news is that first-world standards of living will decline and selectively collapse, so it will be easier to abandon them. And with the decline of oil-based standards of living and industrial society generally, the supply of and demand for other fossil fuels is likely to drop as well. However it will be difficult to build alternatives, difficult to stay alive, difficult to avoid war, difficult to cooperate, and difficult to learn some skills, and to remember.

- We must leave oil before it leaves us. Small increments of preparation will be greatly helpful, since we are not preparing at all now.
- We must abandon militarism before it consumes us. We need the resources it consumes, the devotion it steals, and the attention it hoards.
- We must “Ban The Bomb before It is used again, and as part of our efforts to dismantle apartheid and the politics of disposability at home and abroad. “The nuclear beast must be chained, soul expunged, lair laid waste.” (General Lee Butler, STRATCOM, ret.) In New Mexico, this is one of our jobs. The nuclear beast lives because we allow it to live. We have life and death power over it.
- We must redirect massive resources now, while we have them, to investments in ways of life which are compatible with keeping the earth and our children and grandchildren alive. There is less real capital than meet the eye. Numbers deceive.
- “Save as many as you can.” (*The Day After Tomorrow*). This earthly garden is under assault from the consequences of knowledge. Adam’s descendants can and must rescue what and who they can. We were born for this.