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American stupidity ascendant: 1945-2016

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ABSTRACT

From the Cold War to the Google mobile, the history of American stupidity conforms to and confirms the behavioral model that stupidity is the learned inability to learn. Specifically, stupidity is a normal, dysfunctional learning process which occurs when a schema formed by linguistic biases and social norms acts via the neurotic paradox to establish a positive feedback system which becomes first self-sustaining and then renders behavior irrelevant to the environment by carrying detached actions to maladaptive excesses.

Keywords: Cold War, Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, Watergate, Iraq 9/11, George Bush, modern art

1. INTRODUCTION

With the Allied victory in 1945, surprisingly little changed. Two great evils the scourge of the swastika and Nipponese aggression had been eliminated, but all the basic human problems of injustice, corruption, ignorance and stupidity remained. Taking this as a challenge, and with the war between the superpowers on "Cold",¹ Americans renewed their commitment to find what archetypically intelligent, industrialized Westerners thought to be sensible, moral resolutions to enduring pragmatic problems of diplomatic ineptitude, political corruption, social injustice and technological desecration of the natural environment. Put another way, the our real enemies do not carry guns or knives, fly bombers or shoot missiles, they subtly rob us of

1. Ferguson. op. cit. Chap. 2.

our health, dignity and hope² by treating us like idiots and taxing us for their efforts. Intellectually, they are insouciance, apathy and our continued inability to predict human behavior accurately³ because of disruptive belief systems i.e., stupidity.

2. DISCUSSION

In affairs of state, military and political stupidity proceeded apace in the forms of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Vietnam War debacle and Watergate scandal. Although Vietnam and our various “Gates” have eclipsed The Bay of Pigs fiasco⁴ in the unpopular mind, it is justly stashed away in the bottom drawer of the pleasure chest of American stupidity. As the classic example of groupthink, the decision to attack Cuba was pure, clear, quality stupidity. Despite the passage of time, for the connoisseur of presidential blunders, this gem has lost none of its luster as the perfect failure.⁵ We were all most fortunate that the stakes in this little misadventure were so limited.⁶ Sadly, based on the given information, President Kennedy was justified in ordering the invasion.⁷ The fault was not in the stars, dear Brutus, nor in his decision as such but in the data presented to him and the climate in which discussions were conducted.⁸ It is important to note that his advisors were all shrewd, astute and as capable as anyone under neutral conditions of objective and rational analysis. Nevertheless, collectively, they led themselves into an unmitigated debacle.⁹ The first error was the belief that a reasoned decision was possible, whereas any conclusion was merely a guess built upon wishful thinking¹⁰ by biased advocates rather than objective analysts. The basic problem was that the leaders of the CIA had become emotionally involved with the plan to the detriment of their ability to judge it objectively.¹¹ Not only could they not be objective about it, but they did not want anyone else to be objective about it either, so they culled out data conflicting with their commitment to disaster, and limited consideration of the plan to a small number of people so that it would not be too harshly (i.e., fairly) criticized.¹² When the time came, they did not so much present it as sell it to the White House,¹³ which unfortunately bought it, to everyone’s regret especially that of the president, who later repeatedly muttered to himself, “How could I have been so stupid?”¹⁴ He spent months wandering around the white House wondering how a reasonable, responsible government ever could have become involved with such an ill-starred misadventure.¹⁵

2. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 649.

3. Bush, Pres. G. H.W. Diary. Feb. 24. 1990.

4. Clarke, T. JFK’s Last Hundred Days. Penguin; New York. 2013. p. 24.

5. Draper, T. Cited on page 183 of Caro. 2013. April 23, 2017

6. MacArthur, Gen. D. (Ret.) Apr. 1961. Personal comment made to Pres. Kennedy including a warning not to repeat the mistake in Vietnam. (Quoted in p. 839 of Herman. 2016.)

7. Kennedy, R. June 1, 1961. In a memorandum quoted in Robert Kennedy and His Times by A. Schlesinger, Jr. 1978. Ballantine Books; New York. 477. (Bobby may have been covering for his brother’s team, but it seems those making the decisions were indeed given partial and biased information.)

8. Reeves, R. 1993. President Kennedy: Profile of Power. Simon and Schuster; New York. Chap. 6.

9. Janis. op. cit. p. 19.

10. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 255.

11. Hilsman, R. 1967. To Move a Nation. Doubleday; New York. p. 31.

12. Jacobsen, A. Area 51. Back Bay Books; New York. 2012. pp. 160-161.

13. Janis. op. cit. p. 46.

14. O’Reilly, B. and M. Dugan. Killing Kennedy. Holt; New York. 2012. p. 59.

15. Hersh. op. cit. p. 218.

The answer, of course, is that it was not a reasonable, responsible government: It was the constitutional government of the United States. To make that realization that much worse, the K-team had come into office thinking they were going to change things.¹⁶ However, Kennedy was but an elected leader who relied on experts who sold him a phony bill of goods and then, in the analytic aftermath, called for group loyalty over objectivity lest outsiders come to know what happened, so the emerging consensus was that the debacle was Castro's fault. He would not make that error again in Nam where he relied less on experts and more on secrecy.¹⁷

The second error was that the plan stank. The whole turned out to be considerably worse than any individual part, proving Flanagan's Precept: That Murphy¹⁸ was an optimist. Although the data presented to the President may have indicated the advisability of invasion, he certainly did not get a balanced picture of the situation. The information provided was selected by CIA leaders who chose to ignore reports of Cuba's military strength by experts in both the State Department and the British intelligence,¹⁹ so the 1,300 invaders would be pitted against 200,000 Cuban troops.²⁰ Further, the original small-scale landing of some guerrillas morphed into a D-Day style invasion with tanks an invasion which one CIA agent characterized as "Madness".²¹ The final, fatal, error made was that the Cuban people would arise in support of the invaders, according to a specially fabricated National Intelligence Estimate²² made up just for the White House. Worse yet, the entire plan was not presented to the White House. The CIA figured once the force was on the ground, the neophyte president would then be asked to provide air support to save the situation and would accede thereto.²³ However, when the time came, he would not

16. Ibid. 220.

17. Ibid. 221. The secrecy was especially operative re JFK's hyperactive social life. At one point while the president was on the road, a local sheriff* informed two call-girls he had provided that they would be incarcerated in a mental institution if they told the truth about their activities. (Hersh. 1997. p. 227.) This reminds one of the Russian practice of packing critics of the Communist regime off to insane asylums. Tell the truth and they call you in-sane.

*One of the sheriff's underlings asked a secret service agent if this went on all the time. He answered, "No. Just at night." (Ibid.)

18. Murphy, E. Capt. (USAF) 1949. ("If anything can go wrong, it will.")

19. Janis. op. cit. 23. Stupidly enough, the confusion and indecision which allowed if not led to the establishment of a leftist regime in Cuba in 1959 were repeated twenty years later in Nicaragua. (Hayward. 2009. p. 566.)

20. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 256.

21. Phillips, D. The Night Watch. 1977.

22. Ibid. p. 260. See also: Kirkpatrick in an interview with Leitch. 1979. (Quoted on page 318 of Knightley.)

23. A year and a half later, the Cuban Missile Crisis provided an example of the world of PR spin in which we live. The Russians did indeed back off militarily, but JFK* not only publically guaranteed we would not invade Cuba but secretly removed some obsolete missiles from Turkey. Thus the PR- savvy JFK appeared triumphant whereas the over-reaching Khrushchev's image was so badly damaged he was forced from office a couple of years later. (Hayward. 2001. p. 268. See also: Bohn. Chap 3. and Allison and Zelikow.) *After the summit in Vienna, in June, 1961, Khrushchev dismissed JFK as "Too intelligent and too weak". (Ghaemi, p. 177.) [Italics and underlining added. JFW.] Btw, it is easy to overemphasize facts and logic in tense human affairs.^ During the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States launched a missile from California toward the Marshall Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean: Officials duly reported that Tampa and Minnesota were under attack. (Stone and Kuznick. p. 309.) ^Or even daily affairs now: see endnote 108.

As a subtle wrinkle, a post-Bay of Pigs agreement not to invade was contingent upon Castro allowing UN inspectors into to Cuba to check for weapons of mass destruction. This Fidel did not do, so JFK had a plan in place to reinvade as of Dec 1, 1963, upon his return from Dallas. (Waldron. 2009. p. 9.)

In Iraq in 2006, no was one held accountable for Gen. George Casey's failed war plan because everyone involved was deemed 'A great guy', and they probably were. However the war was not about how likable but how effective the generals were in combat. (E. Cohen cited in Woodward. 2008. p. 279.)

be sucked into the shock and dismay of the honchos at the CIA who thought he would just fall into line because they set him up to do so.

Among the President's advisors, groupthink had taken over as members of the in group became cohesive and suppressed deviations from the golden mean belief in the plan to the point that no one would level with him.²⁴ The goal shifted from hammering out an effective plan²⁵ to that of obtaining group consensus. When Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. expressed opposition to the plan to Robert Kennedy only days before the invasion, Bobby's response was that it was too late for opposition.²⁶ There is a time to debate, a time to decide and a time to act. The questions thus arise: When is it too late to oppose a faulty plan? When is it too late to recognize an error and correct the mistake? When is it better to go with a faulty decision than to improve it or scrap it? Is it more important for people to be together in a pending disaster than for them to know they are going down together and take corrective actions to fix a plan or drop it?

To his credit, Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles was one of the few members of the State Department who was critical of the invasion plan as presented.²⁷ It is a sad commentary on the political process that he was therefore the first to be fired after the fiasco—that is, getting canned was his reward for being right when everyone else was wrong.²⁸ Dean Rusk, however, who had suppressed Bowles' justified and vindicated doubts, was retained as Secretary of State because he was so nice (which he probably was) and a group thinking team player²⁹ to the point of being a deliberate non-thinker.³⁰ On the other other hand, JFK did trim the renegade CIA³¹ down to size³² by dismissing its leaders,³³ but that was not enough: The CIA,³⁴ the Mafia³⁵ and

24. Ibid. p. 46.

25. Hinckle, W. and Turner, W. *Deadly Secrets: The CIA-MAFIA War Against Castro and the Assassination of J. F.K. Thunder's Mouth Press*; New York. 1992.

26. Janis. op. cit. 40.

27. Schlesinger. 1965. op. cit. 250. In addition, Senator Fulbright and historian Schlesinger himself opposed the plan, but they were all fringe players. (Goodwin. pp. 261-262.)

28. Janis. op. cit. 44. Caro. 2013. p. 240.

29. Ten years earlier, Theodore White had lost his job at Time for being right about Mao's triumph in China. (Halberstam. 1979/2000. p. 87.)

On the other hand, forty years later, an unidentified Mike, who prevented the passing of disturbing info about Bin Laden from the CIA to the FBI was promoted after the at-tacks on 9/11. (Mayer. p. 16) For a general pitch of wall building between the agencies, see G. Jackson. p. 32.

30. Shenon, P. *A Cruel and Shocking Act*. Henry Holt; New York. 2013. p. 378. Quotation of D. Slawson.

31. As the CIA learned the hard way in Vietnam, it is better to be wrong on the inside than right on the sideline. (Knightley. p. 334.) According to Washington, Vietnamization in the mid-'70's was working so reports to the contrary were not permitted any more than were reports about corruption in the Vietnamese army, (Stockwell. p. 64.) but occasionally the truth slipped through. (Knightley. p. 335.) Generally, it was inconceivable that the United States could not impose its will on a fourth-rate country. As is often the case, power was substituted for strategy, (Herring. p 2.) except that it just did not make Vietnamese want to be like us.

32. Scott, P. *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*. University of California Press; Berkeley, CA. 1993. (A detailed examination of JFK and the CIA—but see also, Douglass and Hancock.) Bobby played hatchet man, leading to a commonplace bumper sticker in Langley, "First Ethel. [Bobby's wife] Now Us". (O'Reilly and Dugard. p. 151.)

33. *The New York Times*. C.I.A.: Maker of Policy, or Tool. Apr. 25, 1966.

34. Douglass, J. *JFK and the Unspeakable*. Touchstone; NY. 2008.

35. Waldron, L. *The Hidden History of the JFK Assassination*. Counterpoint; Berkeley, CA. 2013. The Warren Commission was a whitewash designed to reach its preordained conclusion, which it did, (Shenon. op. cit.) setting a new low standard for corruption and a willful disregard for the truth. (Jeffries. p. 10 and Tague, J.) In its efforts, it was aided immeasurably by the feeble-minded assistance of the gullible American public who would have found any suggestion that the Vice-President had with the connivance of the FBI and CIA the President murdered flat-out, absurdly unthinkable. How naïve i.e., dumb we were. Not only was the public naïve and dumb, but the pols presumably overseeing the CIA were even worse i.e., deliberately ignorant. As Senator Leverett Saltonstall

Vice-President LBJ and his supporters in the finest Roman tradition staged a coup d'état and eliminated him in Dallas in November, 1963.³⁶

Any doubt about the validity of this statement can be dispelled by considering the fate of Eugene Dinkins a cryptographic code operator working for the U. S. Army Ordinance in Metz, France. In the course of his duties, he discovered, a month before the assassination, the plot to kill the president. He duly informed his superiors of his discovery only to learn that, as a result, he was going to be locked up as a psycho. He went AWOL instead and made his findings known to a number of reporters in three European countries before turning himself in.³⁷

One might think the ensuing events which validated his discovery would have exonerated him as well, but by December, 1963, he was in Walter Reed Hospital receiving drugs and electro-shock treatments. Feigning cooperation, he acknowledged his exceedingly rare, newly minted clinical, mental condition "Schizoassassination prognostication".³⁸ Needless to add, this little episode did not make it into the disgraced Warren Commission Whitewash.

That alleged "Report" was as intellectually insulting as anything ever written.³⁹ Indeed, it is difficult to find a worse case in history where *investigators started with an answer and then went back to find if not create support for it to the deliberate exclusion of truth* when necessary. It did, however, serve its purpose of providing a myth the media could accept regarding the assassination of the president engineered by the CIA with the able-mobbed assistance of the conniving Vice-President Johnson, the Pentagon and the FBI. Some 75% of the public were unconvinced of the shambling, official account of the event, but with a few notable exceptions, the people were too benumbed by the tragedy to question what really happened.⁴⁰ Not until the Watergate scandal ten years later prompted Americans to take a second look at public pronouncements of their revered political leaders would there be serious challenges mounted to the PC myth of the lone, nut gun-man killing JFK.

As horrific as the Kennedy assassination was, it cannot compare in scope to the debacle in Vietnam. American policies and actions there have long been acknowledged a mistake,⁴¹ but

admitted in 1966, "It is not a question of reluctance on the part of CIA officials to speak to us. Instead, *it is a question of our reluctance ...to seek information and knowledge which I personally, as a member of Congress and as a citizen, would rather not have*". (Frum. p. 39.) If there ever was a recipe for stupidity, this is it.

36. Nelson, P. LBJ: The Mastermind of the JFK Assassination. Skyhorse Publishing; New York. 2011. And, Stone, R. with M. Colapietro. The Man Who Killed Kennedy. Skyhorse Publishing; New York. 2013. p. 2. For the other Oswald acted alone take, see: Ayton, M. Beyond Reasonable Doubt. Strategic Media; Rock Hill, SC. 2014. Then read Chap. 1 of Jeffries.☺ Hersh, S., (1997) is all over the place on the matter.

37. Twyman N. Bloody Treason The Assassination of John F. Kennedy. Lural Publishing; Rancho Santa Fe, NM. 1997. pp. 522-525.

38. Ibid. p. 526. Sadly, this case was paralleled by that of Grace Walden, who, for insisting the man she saw running from the alleged sniper's nest in the Martin Luther King slaying was not James Earl Ray, spent ten years in a mental institution. (Jeffries. p. 76.) In a similar vein, South Carolina Judge J. Waring was deemed crazy by some for acknowledging blacks' right to vote in primary elections. (J. Rankin.)

39. Hurt, H. Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation into the Assassination of John F. Kennedy. 1985.

40. Nelson. op. cit. pp. 483-509. Anyone who still believes the Warren Commission should bear in mind the commission's counsel Wesley Liebeler's comment, "... if we do find this is a conspiracy....we have orders from Chief Justice Warren to cover this thing up." (Jeffries. p. 42.)

41. Kerry, J. (Former Lieutenant and Senator) Apr. 22, 1971. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Cited in The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam by T. Wells. 1994. University of California Press; Berkeley, CA. 495. On Clark Clifford's anti-war stance see Wicker, T. "An Unwinnable War". New York Times. June 12, 1991. On Robert McNamara's position see Mirsky, J. "Reconsidering Vietnam". New York Review of Books. Oct. 10, 1991. p. 44.

the whos, hows and whys⁴² remain as debatable as ever.⁴³ Basically, our involvement in Vietnam was a case of compound stupidity, with ignored warnings interlaced with wishful groupthink and systems analysis designed and dedicated to supporting predetermined if misguided policies.⁴⁴

The infamous “Pentagon Papers”,⁴⁵ to our national chagrin, chronicled a twisted story of three decades of government bungling, deliberate deceit and outright lies in pursuit of this foreign policy fiasco based on flawed interpretations of poor intelligence, errors and delusion. They undercut presidential infallibility by revealing for all to read “....that people do things the President wants... even though it’s wrong”.⁴⁶ In a summary statement of war, it was a classic case of young men sent to fight by old men trapped in their errors⁴⁷ characterized by arrogance, ignorance and self-delusion with the least powerful and most innocent paying the greatest price for the woefully stupid decisions⁴⁸ of their leaders. Specifically, this war was revealed to be unwinnable and a wonton waste of American and Vietnamese lives⁴⁹ and resources in an effort to thwart the development of democracy in Asia.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, in the cause of retaining what it never had, the American government was determined to be misled by misinterpreting events in Vietnam. The war was really about what the war was really about—that Americans were fighting Communism while the Vietnamese were fighting colonialism. During WWII, FDR insisted the country not be returned to the French⁵¹ because they had done nothing in their nearly 100 years rule to improve the lot of the Vietnamese people,⁵² so a decision was made that the French should not return.⁵³ Starting in November, 1945, an OSS Deer Team originally determined that Ho Chi Min was more a nationalist than a Communist, so in exchange for “Economic privileges” we proceeded to arm and train the Vietnamese in the skills of infiltration and demolition.

From 1945 onward, however, we did not ignore facts but perceived them in the limited European oriented Cold War context of a consciously planned Communist conspiracy to rule the world.⁵⁴ Accordingly, we came to misconstrue all evidence of nationalism and the fervor

42. Clifford, C. and Holbrook, R. 1991. *Counsel to the President*. Random House; New York. 612. Kissinger, H. *Years of Renewal*. Simon & Schuster; New York. 1999. 546.

43. Lamb, B. *Booknotes: Stories from American History*. Penguin; New York. 2001. p. 410.

44. Gertz, B. *The Failure Factory*. Crown Forum; New York. 2008. 15.

45. Ellsberg, D. *History of the U.S. Decision Making Process in Vietnam*. The New York Times. June 13+, 1971. (Published by Beacon Press; Boston, MA.)

46. Leuchtenburg. *op. cit.* p. 507.

47. Goodwin. *op. cit.* p. 710.

48. Davis, K. *The Hidden History of American at War*. Hachette Books; New York. 2015. p. 357.

49. Axelrod. *op. cit.* pp. 193-194. This also characterized the process of our involvement in Afghanistan in 2002-2003.

50. N. b. Murdering and lying about it were pathways to medals and promotions. Telling the truth about them was a crime, (Alexrod. p. 196.) if not treason. When telling the truth is a crime, it is time to rethink things and maybe even speak up. ☺

51. Gardner. L. *Approaching Vietnam*. Norton; New York. 1988. p. 25.

52. Roosevelt, Pres. F. Quoted on page 277 of W. Louis’s *Imperialism at Bay*. Oxford University Press; NY. 1977.

53. Odinson, E. *Drugs and the CIA: From Ho to Hasenfus. Paranoia*. Fall, 1993. #2.

54. King, L. *Machismo in the White House*. American Heritage; XXVII, #5, p. 12. Aug. 1976. Wicker, T. *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream*. Random House; New York. 1991. p. 124. Kennedy, Sen. J. 1956. *Speech to the American Friends in Vietnam*. Quoted in Herring’s *American’s Longest War*. p. 43. There was also an undercurrent of the need to avoid the label of “Appeaser” a la Chamberlain at Munich. (Goodwin. p. 547.)

for an independent Vietnam.⁵⁵ During the Cold War, we needed the French in Europe, so we ceded them Vietnam in Asia. On the eve of the French defeat in 1954, they asked us to intervene on their behalf militarily, but an assessment of the situation ordered by president Eisenhower presciently concluded that bombing alone would not suffice that a ground army of several hundred thousand troops would be necessary but would still not guarantee success. Being a realist, Ike wisely demurred, opining “[He] could not conceive a greater tragedy for America than to get heavily involved in an all-out war in any of these regions, particularly with large units.”⁵⁶ With such prudence wasted, we would eventually find the Vietnamese using the skills we had taught them against us when we later squared off against the re-perceived “Red” Ho.⁵⁷ The flip side of this was that we had to *unlearn* the lessons which had led to our victory in WWII,⁵⁸ and we were not particularly good at unlearning.

Nor were we good at facing the fact that our commitment to democracy was a sham. We supported not only Diem in Vietnam but Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, Seko in Zaire, Chiang in Taiwan and the Shah in Iran. In this context, it is senseless to paraphrase FDR’s observation that they were *our* dictators.⁵⁹ In the Cold War era, the difference between and Com-munist dictators and friendly dictators faded into pink insignificance: It was not about political forms but spheres of influence. We just used labels to deceive anyone who, like ourselves, used them.

In 1961, George Ball warned President Kennedy that within five years the United States would have 300,000 troops in the rice paddies and jungles and never find them again.⁶⁰ Kennedy assured him that would never happen as long as he was president⁶¹ and it did not, but the estimate proved to be low by some 243,000 troops, which was well within the normal standard: Estimates in Vietnam were routinely off by as much as 1,000%⁶² meaning we really had no clue as to what was going on there.⁶³

In May, 1962, JFK asked Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pierson for his advice on Vietnam and dismissed his answer “Get out” as stupid because he knew he should: His focus was already on “How” to get out.⁶⁴ JFK was even more focused thereon after reading a report on Nam written by Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield upon his return from that hapless land. In it, he warned about the damages of further escalation, saying it would require essentially going to war and establishing a neocolonial regime in the country.⁶⁵ Thereafter, JFK was

55. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 376.

56. Goodwin. op. cit. pp. 538-539. His chapter 20 is excellent on Namstup as is the next chapter on LBJ’s deteriorating mental condition.

57. A lesson wasted when we made the same mistake of arming future adversaries in the Mid-East some sixty years later.

58. Boot. 2014. op. cit. Chap. 13.

59. Ibid. pp. 280-281.

60. Ball, G. *The Past Has Another Pattern*. Norton; New York. 1982. p. 366.

61. Schlesinger. 1978. op. cit. p. 761.

62. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 537.

63. The Quakers were opposed on not only moral but also pragmatic grounds. In 1954, the American Friends Service Committee warned it was “Profoundly disturbed with the pressures for the United States military intervention in Indo-Chinanothing but disaster lies down that road.” (Medsger. p. 410.) Btw, the Quakers are the least hypocritical of organized religious sects. That is, they are truest to their expressed faith. (Forsyth.) Unitarians do not constitute an “Organized” sect. ☺ JFW.

64. Chalmera, M. *First Rough Draft*. Praeger; New York. 1973. pp. 195-196.

65. Mansfield, M. Sen. Department of State, Vietnam Working Group Files: Lot 66 D 193, 22.1. Mansfield Visit to Saigon. December 1, 1962.

privately committed to withdrawing our troops after he was presumably reelected in 1964.⁶⁶ This policy was characterized by the avoidance of terms which accurately described what we were doing as well as by the invention of labels to justify our self-defeating cause. In the summer of 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff fell all over themselves concocting a plan for the removal of American forces from Vietnam without using the term “Withdrawal”.

This was partially in response to the real war about Vietnam that between the American military and the American press. In January, 1963, the South Vietnamese army (ARVN) got shlonged at the battle of Ap Bac, but our military leaders, for the sake of their image, would not have it that way. The media knew better, came increasingly to discount official pronouncements and eventually won their war with their negative, coverage of the failed Tet offensive⁶⁷ in February, 1968.⁶⁸

As the Pentagon/CIA’s quid pro quo for supporting the assassination of JFK, withdrawal from Nam was replaced by escalation when LBJ took office. Congressional authority for the build-up was granted following claims of a North Vietnamese attack on two American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 4, 1964. This would have been reasonable except for one minor detail: There was no attack. Nevertheless, in the fog of war a psychological condition which besets military minds with more power than knowledge the gunners on the ships fired if not back at something. Upon reading the official report, LBJ commented, “Hell, those dumb stupid sailors were just shooting at flying fish”.⁶⁹ Claims to the contrary were doctored up by the NSA (National Snooping Agency), which selected fifteen out of 122 intercepts to provide the president with what he needed and wanted: a skewed, shared misperception which rationalized carte blanche loosening of the dogs of war on the North Vietnamese⁷⁰ the achievement of which he facilitated by withholding relevant details from Congress.⁷¹ Negating “Stimulus/response” psychology, this was a response without an actual stimulus,⁷² and the battle of the CIA vs the Pentagon vs the media vs LBJ was on. Central to the battle was LBJ’s contention that his generals were shitheads, dumb shits, and pompous asses. Using the f-word liberally, he characterized them as idiots who gave him stupid advice.⁷³ He might have said they were FOK. ☹

In the mid-1960's, the president faced strong warnings about his policy reversal from practically everyone who was concerned and powerless. Naturally, these were lost on those in positions of official irresponsibility. We once again find conscientious statesmen ignoring both experts and everyone else voicing justifiable concern and warnings over the military, political

66. Fawcett. op. cit. p. 338. Kennedy, Pres. J. An undated off the record comment to Bartlett. In *Rethinking Camelot*. N. Chomsky. (Quoted on p. 156 of O'Reilly and Dugard.)

67. Snatching defeat from the jaw of victory, we replaced a valid view with a self-generated misperception.

68. Finn, T. *America At War*. Berkley Caliber; New York. 2014. pp. 260-261.

69. LBJ. Aug. 1964. Quoted on page 390 of Karnow.

70503. Davis, K. op. cit. pp. 277-278. Shane, S. Vietnam Study. *New York Times*. Oct. 31, 2005. This was the model used on June 8, 1967, when LBJ tried to get us into the Israeli/Arab war by having the USS Liberty attacked by Israeli jets—the idea being that the attack would be misattributed to Egyptian planes and we would bomb Cairo in retaliation and maybe start WWII. (Nelson, P. 2014. Chap. 8.) See also: *Spotlight, The. Cordite Fidelity*; Washington, D.C. It dwelt on this topic. JFW

71. Finn. op. cit. p. 263. It was not until 1967 that Senator J. William Fulbright realized he, Congress and the nation had been duped. Herring. op. cit. pp. 6-7.

72. Nelson, P. LBJ: From Mastermind to “The Colossus”. Skyhorse Publishing; New York. 2014. p. 339.

73. C. A Marine’s Story of Combat in Peace and War. Trafford Publishing Victoria, Can-ada. 2002. pp. 3-5. (Note it was published in Canada.)

and moral consequences of deliberately planned idiocy.⁷⁴ Faced with catastrophe and capitulation, Johnson chose catastrophe.⁷⁵ Both official planning and public opinion were based on false premises carefully compounded by mistaken assumptions.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, criticism within the American political community was easily stilled because no one wanted to be responsible for losing Vietnam to Communism.⁷⁷ The fact that Vietnam was never ours to lose was a detail itself lost on nearly everyone as was the subtlety that it did not matter to anyone if we had a plan to lose something we never had.⁷⁸

This plan became increasingly obvious as the South Vietnamese Army persisted in killing the wrong people. One of our advisors, Lt. Col. John Vann, prepared a briefing for the Joint Chiefs to the point that we could not win the “Hearts and minds”⁷⁹ of the people unless and until we got the killing bit right⁸⁰ that is, kill the ones who needed and deserved it. Stupidly, the Chiefs would not listen such sanity, so the briefing was cancelled.

Inevitably, labels took over, and the “Commitment” to the “Vital interest” of “National security” became a positive feedback system which took on a life of its own leading to “Strategic persuasion” via “Prompt, adequate, measured” or “Fitting” bombing, as those in power came to believe in and be prisoners of their own verbiage and rhetoric.⁸¹ A major breakthrough may have occurred in the fall of 1967 when LBJ conceded, “Eisenhower may be right..... the enemy must be regarded as the enemy”⁸² Well, Duh! Imagine that: Regarding the enemy as “The enemy”, of all things.⁸³ What is the world coming to?—the cognitive consistency which psychologists hype and predict but which is so obviously missing in pressing matters of conscience? In keeping with this theme, the grunts who killed Buddhist-at-best gooks were “Sending them to Jesus”.⁸⁴ On the mega level, the stupidest tactic of the war was the restriction on bombing the only two targets that really mattered in North Vietnam the capital

74. Janis. op. cit. p. 97. For an updated version of this phenomenon as applied to the war on terror, see: Scheuer, M. *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*. Potomac Books; Washington, D.C. 2004.

75. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 334.

76. American Friends Service Committee. *Peace in Vietnam*. 1966.

77. Ellsberg, D. The quagmire myth and the stalemate machine. 1971. In the spring issue of *Public Policy*. p. 246. Marshall, G. Feb., 1947. Quoted by R. McMahon, “Toward a Post-Colonial Order: Truman Administration Policies Toward South and Southeast Asia” in Lancy (ed.), *Truman Presidency*. pp 339-365. President Johnson quoted on page 176 of *America in Our Time* by G. Hodgson. Garden City, NY. 1976.

78. McNamara, R. Secretary of Defense. In an interview with R. Goodwin. Late Jan., 1966. In Goodwin. p. 660.

79. Clinton, Sir H. *Henry Clinton Papers*. William L. Clements Library. University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI. Conversation with Lord Drummond. Feb. 7, 1776.

80. Vann, J. Lt. Col. Quoted on page 84 of Krepinevich. As Gen. Hugh Shelton observed in a later war, regarding killing people, “You’ve got to..... make sure the ones you kill are the right people.” (Quoted on page 55 of Scahill.) When we went into Afghanistan in 2001, we killed a lot of people, but it was not always clear why or even who they were. (Scahill. p. 94.)

81. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 374. Berman, L. 1989. *Planning a Tragedy*. Norton; New York. p. 42. Bundy, W. Cited on page 187 of McMaster, H. 1997. *Dereliction of Duty*. Harper Collins; New York.

82. Berman, L. *Lyndon Johnson’s War*. Norton; New York. 1989. p. 84.

83. But Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara disdained doing so. (Hayward. 2001. p. 114.) The flip side of this was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld chiding a general for using the term “Insurgents” to describe some hostile Iraqis after the 2003 invasion of their homeland: They were to be called “Enemies of the legitimate government of Iraq.” (Rumsfeld. 2005.) President Obama likewise refused to call jihadists what they call themselves holy warriors of Islam. (Gorka. p. 37.)

On the other hand, Abe Lincoln called slavery evil, which it was. He was not going to mince words the way others, as slave-owners Madison and Jefferson had. (Schweikart and Allen. p. 304.)

84. Vaughn, Capt. E. Oct. 13, 2016. 1:09:36. PM. Personal e-mail.

Hanoi and the port Haiphong. We did not bomb the targets that did matter but would bomb⁸⁵ everything that did not or might matter: For example, we detailed sixteen bombers, five SAM suppressors, two jammers, eight tankers and eight fighters for protection from MIG's to bomb fifty barrels of possible oil.⁸⁶

As it turned out, all the power committed in the name of "National interest" was spent in, at best, a dubious cause.⁸⁷ Richard Nixon hyped that if we lost the war in Nam, the right of free speech would be lost throughout the world and the Pacific Ocean would become a Red sea.⁸⁸ Well, we lost the war, are still free to say so, and the Pacific is still blue at least on sunny days. Alternatively, we went into Southeast Asia in general for tin, rubber and oil,⁸⁹ but whether or not we got such tangible assets or not is moot because no one in the corporate sponsor-controlled media mentions anything about this aspect of our involvement in the area. A third synthesis is that truth, democracy and freedom were merely covers for our quest for tin, rubber and oil. It does not really matter which explanation you chose because all anyone could see at the end of the tunnel was darkness⁹⁰ i.e., a Vietnamese, Communistic Vietnam.

As leaders nevertheless came to believe more and more in their own clichés about the success of American policy toward Vietnam⁹¹ in the late '60's, phoney, invalid optimism was replaced by genuine, invalid optimism.⁹² With LBJ's views rooted in the superficial policies of Washington rather than the grim realities of Vietnam,⁹³ there was a decided amount of unrealistic planning due to over ambition, over optimism, wishful thinking⁹⁴ and paranoia in the White House.

85. Paraphrasing military strategist W. Shakespeare, doth a bomb by any other name sound as sweet or destroyeth as completely? (Romeo and Juliet which was misnamed, being really much more about Juliet than Romeo.)

86. Rasimus, E. Undated. Quoted on page 266 of Finn.

87. It was actually our credibility which was on the line. (Hay-ward 2001, p. 79) As if anticipating criticism of our invasion of Iraq in 2003, it was our credibility in matters of rationality, political maturity and legal and moral responsibility which were at issue. *When our rationales for invading proved false, we made up others to rationalize staying.* (Ghaemi, p. 239.) Our credibility and honor would be restored if we would but abandon our clearly calamitous policy of reliance on military means to achieve obviously impossible political ends. (American friends Service Committee quoted on p. 410 of Medsger.) In fact, our record is consistent if not credible, honorable and enviable in predicting the outcome future wars—we have been correct exactly 0% of the time.

88. Nixon, R. Quoted in McWilliams, op. cit. pp. 296 (free speech Oct. 27, 1965) and 659 (Red Sea Oct. 15, 1965).

89. Pentagon Papers. Quoted by H. Zinn on page 322 of Medsger. See also Bundy, M. *Danger and Survival*. Random House; New York. 1988. p. 244.

90. Carver, G. A CIA report. 1968. Snepp, F. *The Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnam*. p. 56. Part 1 in H. Salisbury (ed.) *Vietnam Reconsidered*. Harper & Row; New York. 1984.

91. k Much as Herrs Hitler and Goebbels came to believe their own propaganda during the invasion of Russia. (Goebbels. II/I. pp. 30-39 July 9, 1941.) Bill Donovan of the OSS like-wise believed his own propaganda, (Knightley. p. 227.) and Nouri al Maliki, believed his own press releases in early 21st century Iraq. (Bolger. p. 271.) Others did not. (Fearon.)

92. Ellsberg. op. cit. p. 262.

93. Newman, J. *JFK and Viet Nam*. Warner Books; New York. 1992. p. 92. As a specific example, Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara was ordered by LBJ to underestimate by at least 50% the costs required for military actions in Nam. (Goodwin. pp. 398-412.)

94. Johnson, L. *The Vantage Point*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston; New York. 1971. p. 63.

If such wishful fantasies were grounded on anything, it was the President's perception of Vietnam as an Asian Alamo⁹⁵ and his Texan need to appear strong.⁹⁶ As always, the key to stupidity lay in the discrepancy between what was believed and what was actually happening, and not only was the official American schema out of sync with Vietnamese reality,⁹⁷ but it was programmed to remain out of sync.⁹⁸ Hence, the government never really knew and could not understand what was going on there.⁹⁹ Willful ignorance warped comprehension in two ways: some advisors entertained doubts but usually withheld their reservations because they did not feel qualified to assert themselves on the given issue;¹⁰⁰ others ignored their ignorance and plowed on over deferential colleagues heedless of unknown but still very real, potential risks.¹⁰¹

As the Vietnam debacle developed during this period, the sycophantic Johnson administration turned inward, hiding from Congress and the American people decisions based not on realities in Vietnam but on the need to keep them from becoming a campaign issues. So closely guarded a secret was our strategy that even those carrying it out often did not know what it was,¹⁰² although it basically was a matter of consulting more and more with military experts to whom there was invariably only one solution to any problem escalation,¹⁰³ when what was needed was restraint.¹⁰⁴

However, escalation became a positive feedback mechanism going to uncontrollable excess as there was no mechanism within the administration which could check the policy

95. Chafe, W. *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*. New York. 1991. pp. 274-275. Whether LBJ's perceptions were rooted in anything is questionable. He was a walking compendium of mental disorders. (Nelson, P. 2011.) In fact, on Secret Service agent observed, "If he [LBJ] wasn't president, he'd be in a mental hospital."* (Tague. p. 319.) Likewise, Mark Twain, who met Theodore Roosevelt twice characterized him as "Clearly insane", and maybe he was. When he was twenty, after an argument with a girlfriend, he went home and shot and killed his neighbor's dog. (La Feber. p. 15.) When he killed his first buffalo and Spaniard, he abandoned himself to whooping and shrieking in complete hysteria. (E. Morris.)

* Texas Governor Dan Moody had a different take on him, based on LBJ's role in stealing a 1948 senatorial election from Coke Stevens: He averred, "If the district attorney had done his duty, Lyndon Johnson would now be in the penitentiary instead of the United States Senate". (Ryter.) So take your pick: Jailhouse, nuthouse or White House. Or, put another way, if you liked Robespierre, you'll love Johnson.

96. *The Presidential Recordings: Lyndon Johnson*. Edited by the Miller Center. Norton; New York. 2005. Vol. II, pp. 757-775. 9:55 PM, Dec. 23, 1963.

97. Mislearning played a role in turning the infamous Tet offensive into less of a defeat for the North than it could have been. Intelligence expected another Dien Bien Phu, with the brunt of the attack falling on the isolated outpost of Khe Sahn and other battles staged as mere diversions. So sorry, Joe: Khe Sanh was the diversion and the other battles were what Tet really was all about. (Hayward 2001 p. 183) Worse yet, the Tet Offensive should have been anticipated in the context of those in 1789, 1944 and 1960. (Durschmied. p. 314.) That is to say history repeated itself for those doomed by their failure to learn from it. (Santayana 1905.)

98. McNamara, R. *In Retrospect*. Vintage; New York. 1996. pp. 32-33.

99. Janis. op. cit. p. 129. Goldman, E. *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*. Knopf; New York. 1969. p. 404.

100. As did the normally deferential Clark Clifford, who warn-ed in 1965- "We could lose more than fifty thousand men in Vietnam. It will ruin us." (Clifford and Holbrook. 419-420.)

101. Clifford and Holbrook. op. cit. pp. 425-426.

102. Caro. 2013. 535.

103. Thomson, J. How could Vietnam happen? An autopsy. *The Atlantic Monthly*. April, 1968. Sad to say, this occurred in the face of the Sigma Series of war games which had correctly forecast the flaws in the Vietnam strategies, only to be ignored by the people who had conducted them. (Woodward. 2010. p. 244.) For the failure of the Joint Chiefs to give LBJ honest guidance, see McMaster. op. cit. To see how crudely he reacted when they tried, see Cooper. p. 4.

104. Boot. 2014. op. cit. p. 415.

accepted by its incestuous members.¹⁰⁵ Dismissing intelligence reports he did not want to hear,¹⁰⁶ in July, 1965, LBJ threatened to fire everyone who did not agree with him.¹⁰⁷ This was largely an empty threat due to the selection of “Yes men” to the inner circles of government¹⁰⁸ and the president’s insistence on *loyalty*,¹⁰⁹ but Hans Morgenthau was dismissed in 1965 for his strident opposition to the war. In November of that year, the president himself finally had to draw the escalation line when the Joint Chiefs called for excessive uses of air and sea power in North Vietnam, which could have led to the politically inexpedient WWII,¹¹⁰ so the C-in-C exercised personal control over the specifics of the individual bombing missions.¹¹¹

However confused the matter was, the Vietnam war was not accepted by citizens who found the more they questioned and learned about it, the less they understood¹¹² because they were invariably trying to square reality with lies the government had been telling about it since the mid-’50’s. What they were told was a combination of wishful thinking, ignorance-based numbers, ill-founded predictions, falsehoods¹¹³ and vaporings¹¹⁴ of foolish old men.¹¹⁵ Otherwise, it was spot on.☺. The truth was that it was not a civil war; it was a war of American aggression. We were not on the wrong side; we *were* the wrong side.¹¹⁶ With truth falling into the yawning credibility/reality gap,¹¹⁷ a gnawing doubt became a growing awareness of the absurdity of the Johnsonians’ attitude that the war was a means of communication,¹¹⁸ and bombs were bargaining chips.

105. McNamara, R. Aug. 7, 2007. Former Secretary of Defense quoted on page 435 of Bob Woodward’s *The War Within*. Simon and Schuster; New York. 2008. See also McNamara, R. In *Retrospect*. 1995. McNamara was truly one of the best and brightest but ironically best known for his failures the Edsel and Nam. (Nelson, P. 2014. p. xlvii.) Sad to say, having learned nothing from the “Nam” experience, the government under Carter repeated the same basic mistakes in the Iran-hostage crisis in the late ’70’s. However, to be fair, it is difficult to predict the specific outcome of various, independent events which in fact lead to a disaster. (Hayward. pp. 549 and 552.)

106. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 330.

107. Goodwin. op. cit. pp. 402-403. (July 22, 1965. Goodwin’s diary.)

108. Rusk, D. *As I Saw It*. Norton; New York. 1980. p. 467.

109. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 335. Butler-Bowdon. op. cit. p. 213.

110. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 334.

111. Finn. op. cit. p. 266.

112. Murrow, E. Undated remark cited on page 16 of *D. Brinkley’s Tour of Duty*. William Morrow; New York. 2004. (“...anyone who wasn’t confused didn’t really understand the situation there.”) Marder, M. Cited on p. 1286 of *The Glory and the Dream* by W. Manchester. 1973. Little, Brown; Boston, MA.

113. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 671.

114. Secretary of Defense McNamara had read people out of management in favor of numbers, (Freedmann. p. 546.) and withheld from his assessments any suggestion that ground forces would be needed to accomplish what bombing alone could not. (Goodwin. p. 548.) The president compounded problems by failing to be specific when conveying decisions to the Pentagon brass. (Goldstein.) Now the danger is that high tech computers tell us how computers should be used.

115. Sheehan, N, 1988. *A Bright Shining Lie*. Random House; New York. (Quoted by Aron. p. 376.)

116. Ellsberg, D. *Secrets*. Viking; New York. pp. 255-260.

117. Patterson, J. *Grand Expectations*. Oxford University Press; New York. 1996. p. viii. The term was coined by D. Wise of the *New York Herald Tribune* and is discussed in S. Kutler’s *The Wars of Watergate*. 1990. An earlier, specific manifestation of this general phenomenon occurred in the late 1950’s when the USSR had 85 long-range bombers which could reach the USA; We raced into production to close the “Bomber gap” as we had at the time only 1,769 bombers which could hit the Soviet Union. (Thomas. p. 182.) Equally threatening was the non-existent missile gap which was generated by counting storage sheds, monuments and medieval towers as ICBMs. (Freedman, L. *U.S. Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat*. Macmillan; London. 1979. p. 71.)

118. Hayward. op. cit. p. 43. When Nixon’s turn came, he regarded the war as a way to make a point that he had to look good. (Locker. p. 17.) During the 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon touted a secret plan to end the war: It turned out his plan was to sell out the South Vietnamese. (Ibid. p. 15.)

His chief general in Nam, William Westmoreland, a spit-and-polish throwback to World War II and Korea,¹¹⁹ considered the war an exercise in (mis) management¹²⁰ and had at hand a simplistic answer to insurgency firepower.¹²¹ The fact that we did not know whom or what we were shooting at nor how effective the shooting was did not seem to matter much but was inherent in the new reality that previous experience and history could be misleading and deceiving relative to current realities.¹²² With the Secretary of Defense McNamara obsessed with numbers which could not be gathered accurately, estimates were substituted make that “Grossly inflated”. Worse yet, the numbers referred to people, and we were opposed by an Asian culture which placed no value on human life¹²³ whereas, thanks to Jesus, ours does. It was a numerical formula for disaster. The counter-productive result of applying conventional strategy to an unconventional war¹²⁴ led to the creation of a lot of casualties and alienated refugees.¹²⁵ Worse yet, LBJ’s mind was impervious to all signs of his strategy’s obvious failure.¹²⁶

Gradually, the uneasy realization spread throughout the country that the establishment was out of its alleged mind¹²⁷ which it was because its leader incrementally lost the ability to distinguish reality from wishful beliefs as his eccentricities detached into paranoia, narcissism and a manic, sociopathic flight into irrationality.¹²⁸ As a living contradiction of the theory of cognitive dissonance, he much preferred his beliefs to reality, although he knew they were wrong to the point of being delusional:¹²⁹ To wit, in November, 1967, Vice-President Hubert Humphry boasted on national TV that we were beginning to win the struggle at the same time that members of the Senate Armed Services Committee were learning our bombing campaign was having no practical effect whatsoever. The government basically indulged in erroneous claims and conjured up facts to counter the rising domestic demonstrations of opposition to the war.¹³⁰ Convinced the Communists were behind the developing anti-war effort, the president directed the FBI to ferret them out¹³¹ to no avail. In addition, the CIA formed a Special Operations Group which conducted a massive surveillance program of anti-war activists. Johnson hoped it would prove his case, and after seven years of *illegal gathering of information*, it amassed a computer index on 300,000 individuals and organizations along with extensive files on 7,200 citizens without proving Communist influence on any of them.¹³²

119. Sorley, L. Westmoreland. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Boston. 2011. p. 67.

120. Davis. op. cit. p. 265. He wanted to apply the strategy which had won WWII. Un-fortunately, it did not work. (Boot. 2014.)

121. Sorley. which had won WWII. Unfortunately, it did not work. (Boot. 2014.) p. 218.

122. McDougall, W. ... the Heavens and the Earth. Basic Books; New York. 1985. p. 333. Another wrinkle on this is the old saw that the latest aircraft is obsolete by the time it rolls off the assembly line now its by the time it gets off the drawing board. On a more personal note, a ten year old showed me how to use my phone, and its not even a smart phone.☺

123. Schweikart and Allen. op. cit. p. 722.

124. Boot, 2013. op. cit. p. 425.

125. Krepinevich, A. The Army and Vietnam. John Hopkins University Press; Baltimore, MD. 1986. p. 205.

126. Boot. 2013. p. 34.

127. McNaughton, J. A memorandum written in 1967 for the President in the Pentagon Papers: History of United States Decision Making on Vietnam. Senator Gravel edition. 4 Vols. and Index Vol. Boston, MA. 1971-1972. Vol. IV. p. 478.

128. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 573. Nelson, P. 2014. op. cit. p. 354.

129. Ibid. pp. 578 and 582.

130. Jacobsen. op. cit. p. 270.

131. Leuchtenburg. op. cit. p. 460.

132. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 335.

It was indeed fortunate for the country that the detached insanity of its leaders¹³³ could be democratically checked by the common sense of millions of skeptics and scores of committed writers and reporters. It turned out the war was not for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese but of Americans, and after the Tet offensive,¹³⁴ we lost our hearts: After news of the Mei Lei massacre, we lost our minds.

If proof of that is needed, consider President Nixon's move in 1970 to get us out of Vietnam by invading Cambodia. This was dismissed by an assertion that we did not wish to violate the territory of neutral nation, except that the army had already crossed that border more than 600 times and the air force had conducted more than 3,000 bombing missions there with Pentagon officials falsifying records about them. Doing it was OK, but saying so was verboten. OR, it could be and has been said he or at least someone was lying.¹³⁵

As sad and bad as the events in Vietnam were, it is still sadder and worse that we learned nothing from them but continued repeating the same mistakes in the future now our recent past. We are haunted by and paying for our failure to learn the price of supporting corrupt dictators who stifle cries for justice from their oppressed people.¹³⁶ *Such wars are fought as long as they are perceived by the financial establishment to be profitable.*

Leaders do not usually create self-imposed limitations nor appreciate this built-in restrictions on their power to wreck the system, and Richard Nixon was one who became increasingly vexed as the descent of his administration to new depths of political immorality was made evident by the media and finally halted by public outrage and Congressional power. Consistent with Nixon's penchant for self-delusion,¹³⁷ he insisted the CIA provide intelligence which conformed to and con-firmed his desired policies.¹³⁸

Psychology included, in a political sense, the irony of Watergate was that it was so unnecessary: he was an absolute shoo-in and, if he could have risen above himself, could have focused on the grand issues of the day. In a legal sense, the irony of the Watergate fiasco was that Nixon ran on a "Law and order" platform in 1968, although four years later, his campaign was characterized by burglary, bribery, forgery, obstruction of justice and perjury.¹³⁹ Compounding irony, these crimes would have come to naught politically had sessions in the Oval Office of an administration based on deception and secrecy¹⁴⁰ not been taped and the

133. Hershman, D. *Power Beyond Reason*. Barricade Books; Fort Lee, NJ. 2002. p. 291.

134. Braestrup, P. *Big Story*. 1977. Westview; Boulder, CO. Our military victory was converted into a PR defeat by journalists who rarely had "Veered so widely from reality": To wit, we had been bombing Cambodia since 1965, but no one but the Cambodians and our brass knew it. (Nelson, P. 2014. p. 121.) It remained a state secret until revealed by Pres. Clinton in 2000. (Ibid. p. 353.) So much for democracy based on an informed public, which we were trying to foist on the world. And where were the media? In Washington, dutifully spreading government-sponsored lies. Time was, when a government official made a statement, reports checked its veracity; now they parrot the statement was made.

135. Leuchtenburg. op. cit. p. 502.

136. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 395. President Carter vowed never to repeat the "False statements and sometimes outright lies" his predecessors had made and used to rationalize our invasion of Vietnam. (p. 403.)

137. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 112. For a general review of Nixon as a political sleazebag, see Chap. 13 of Johnson and Johnson.

138. Locker, R. *Nixon's Gamble*. Rowman & Littlefield; Guilford, CT. 2015. Chaps. 6 and 9. Case studies thereof.

139. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 370. Locker. op. cit. Chap. 15.

140. Locker. op. cit. pp. 73 and ix. The impetus may not have come from Nixon. H. R. Haldeman was obsessed with Teddy Kennedy and may have wanted to get any dirt he could on the senator in case he decided to run for the presidency. (Butler-Bowdon. 74.)

tapes¹⁴¹ retained.¹⁴² It was the coupling of the crimes themselves with these incredibly stupid blunders that eventually led to the President's downfall, disgrace and resignation.

As might be expected, groupthink played a major role in this debacle, and members of the White House staff did indeed seem to share the over optimism and sense of invulnerability common to group thinkers. As usual, when people are caught up in a positive feedback system and committed to their plan, cause and the selves, clear warnings of impending disaster were ignored.¹⁴³ This failure to heed warnings occurred because the President's noted intelligence¹⁴⁴ was shaped by his hatred of people¹⁴⁵ particularly the press, Ivy Leaguers, the CIA, liberals and Jews¹⁴⁶ and undercut by his lack of scruples: i.e., that any creepy (pun) means could be employed to manipulate the image of the ethically hollow administration. This was the subconscious guide for strategy and behavior which was shared by the Nixon staff and which led them to perceive the Watergate scandal as merely a public relations problem. In doing so, they were at least consistent: They perceived everything as public relations problems¹⁴⁷ which were induced by a president who was describe as insecure, self-pitying, vindictive, suspicious, paranoid, angry, resentful¹⁴⁸, ambitious and vengeful.¹⁴⁹ The validity of this assessment was revealed when the president informed his aide Charles Colson what he had in mind for his opponents: "One day we will get them...down on the ground where we want them. And we will stick our heels in, step on them hard and twist ... crush them, show them no mercy".¹⁵⁰

Realization of this nightmare was fortunately obviated by the persistence of the President's staff in adhering to the dysfunctional schema despite its obvious flaws. At every stage of the Watergate disaster, there was a consistent failure of those involved to face irrefutable facts¹⁵¹ even when they were known to be irrefutable. With all signs indicating impending failure, staff members in the political cesspool known as the Nixon White House¹⁵²

141. President Nixon twice directed his chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman to destroy the tapes, but he failed to do so (Dean. 2014. pp 365-366.) probably so RN would have proof he, not Henry Kissinger, was the architect of his foreign policy. A slightly different take is that Nixon wanted to destroy the tapes and Haldeman talked him out of it because, presumably they would prove his side of the story. (Kesler. p. 63.)

142. Patterson, J. *Restless Giant The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore.* Oxford University Press; New York. 2005. p. 1. Colodny, L. and T. Shachtman. *The Forty Years War.* HarperCollins; New York. 2009. p. 191. Oddly, for all his tawdry, banal and worse remarks, the President thought the tapes would guarantee his place in history as the guiding force of his administration, and they did. (When. op. cit. pp. 35-36.) However, he failed to perceive them as a smoking gun which could do him in, which is how they did it.

143. Janis. op. cit. p. 220.

144. Friedman, M. and R. *Two Lucky People.* University of Chicago Press; Chicago, IL. 1998. p. 375.

145. Horne, A. *Kissinger.* Simon & Schuster; New York. 2009. p. 25.

146. Bohn, M. *Presidents in Crisis.* Arcade; New York. 2015. p. 98.

147. Nixon, R. R.N.: *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon.* Grosset & Dunlap; New York. 1978. p. 773. Morgenthau, T. *President Nixon's alter ego.* Newsweek; CXXII, #21, p. 49. Nov. 22, 1993. White, T. *Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon.* Antheneum; New York. 1975. p. 118.

148. Leuchtenburg. op. cit. p. 474. (Source: Elizabeth Drew.)

149. *Ibid.* 476. (Source: Leonard Garment.)

150. Nixon, Pres. R. Undated but probably ca. 1970. Quoted on page 475 of Leuchtenburg. Nor was this just rhetoric. When, in the spring of 1970, the president learned Colson was planning to hire hoodlums to assault peace activists, he said, "Go in and knock their heads off". (Leuchtenburg. p. 506.)

151. Haldeman, H. (with J. DiMona) *The Ends of Power.* Dell; New York. 1978. p. 62. Turner, Adm. S. *Burn Before Reading: Presidents, CIA Directors, and Secret Intelligence.* Hyperion; New York. 2005. p. 124.

152. Butterfield, A. Undated, but probably 2014. Quoted on page 136 of Woodward: 2015. This was not necessarily a total condemnation of Nixon's presidency. As Butterfield implied (p. 158.), a cesspool could be a good, effective cesspool.☺

worked to validate the signs.¹⁵³ Problems were raised but no solutions could be found because no one wanted to face reality¹⁵⁴ and find them.¹⁵⁵ As Haldeman noted, “It was almost like *we* have a death wish and *never learn*”,¹⁵⁶ (italics original) and Nixon never did accept any responsibility for the debacle, attributing it instead to “Well intentioned stupid people”.¹⁵⁷ This was an insult to stupidity but partly due to the nature of the staff itself: There was selection pressure when picking members to exclude anyone who might show the least sign of intellectual integrity and object to rather than revel in the shady dealings. This was manifested when the White House tried to enlist the IRS to go after Nixon’s enemies and leave his friends alone: It is comforting to know the underlings at the agency refused to go along with the all but criminal requests.¹⁵⁸

On a grander scale, there are still some who try to make sense out of and thus validate all the signs we see around us. These must be very stupid indeed. Philosophers generally gave up trying to solve their word games and amused themselves with theories of sets and games¹⁵⁹ of mathematical analysis,¹⁶⁰ Bergsonian, poetic, intuitive knowledge and the anguished futility of subjectivity courtesy of Heidegger and Jaspers. Not to be outdone, physicists have come up with a theory which shows that the universe should not exist.¹⁶¹ In a throwback to Hume, nothing is really known with certainty, especially if it does not exist, so the only thing we are absolutely certain about is nothing. On the other hand, probably there is no other hand. But we cannot even be sure of certainty, can we? Or as psychedelic indulger Stephen Reid put it, “...I

153. Stone, R. and M. Colapietro. *Nixon’s Secrets*. Skyhorse Publishing; New York. 2014. p. 30.

154. Dean, J. *The Nixon Defense*. Viking; New York. 2014. p. 327. Dean tended to overemphasize his role in the affair. Btw, the word “Stupid” is used repeatedly throughout the text.

155. As incredible as it sounds, at another level, the presidency was brought down because the burglars were cheap. They used cheap tape, which was easily spotted, to keep the door un-locked, and the man entrusted with the walkie-talkie to listen for warnings from lookouts across the street had turned down the volume to save the battery, so he did not hear warnings that the cops were closing in. (Sturgis.) By one calculation, three of the burglars made some twenty-one errors, meaning it would have been a miracle if they had not been caught. OR the burglary was a CIA plot deliberately designed to fail and bring down Nixon, and it worked. (Stone and Colapietro. Chap. 14.)

156. Haldeman, H. R. Quoted on p. 263 of Dean; 2014. Mar. 13, 1972.

157. Kutler, S. *Abuse of Power*. Free Press; New York. 1997. p. 407.

158. Luce. op. cit. p. 132.

159. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*. Basil Blackwell; Oxford, England. 1958. p. 109.

160. Russell, B. *A History of Western Philosophy*. Simon and Schuster; New York. 1945. p. 829. I sense that these efforts deserve much more space in a book about stupidity, but I really do not understand what they are all about, so I will leave it with one quotation: “Nothing exists except insofar as it does not exist.” (Lacan. *Ecrites*. p. 392.) This, in turn, calls to mind the last line of a nonsense song I wrote “Don’t Think Negative”. It ends, “To know what’s good, you need not know that nothing cannot be” (Welles. 1970.), which demonstrates Pierre de Beaumarchais’s (1776) insight that anything too stupid to be said is sung. OR, as Aristotle (Ca. 327 B.C.) so clearly stated: “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and what is not that it is not, is true.” (Jay Newman. p. 181.)

161. Ghose, T. *Freaky Higgs Physics Suggests the Universe Shouldn’t Exist*. Live Science. June 24, 2014. 8:45 AM EDT. Now, if they could prove it *does not* exist, then we would really have something—or nothing. They probably will not because everything is relative whether it exists or not, so, at most, they have proved God is an underemployed nonethical agnostic but not a dice-throwing atheist. To take it a step further, I would change Voltaire’s comment, “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him” (Nov. 10, 1770.) to, “God does not exist, but we pretend She does”.* Put the other way, God does not believe in atheists, therefore, they do not exist. (AOL. Feb. 4, 2016. From Reader’s Digest.) If they do, it may be because the difference between God and Santa Claus is that there is a Santa Claus. (-) So, as God puts it, “Ho, ho, ho.”

* This same kind of analysis can be applied to our current favorite cultural myth—our belief in freedom. (As a scientist, I have to be a determinist, but I allow political freedom in the sense that people can say what they want and travel where they want, etc. JFW.)

don't understand it. Maybe that means I do understand it."¹⁶² That is, we are not meant to understand whatever it is consciousness? Life? Understanding? Whatever?

Building on a deconstructed foundation, the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust led, for some reason, to a loss of faith in logical positivism.¹⁶³ This was expressed in Martin Heidegger's cheery observation that "Thinking is the mortal enemy of understanding"¹⁶⁴ which, in turn, echoed Bertrand Russell's optimistic comment, in 1912, that "Thought is the gateway to despair".¹⁶⁵ In passing through the gateway, Heidegger (1889-1976) stretches one's credulity, philosophical tolerance and intellectual sense of horror. He was intensely absorbed with the meaning of being and the meaning of meaning, but whereas Kant claimed there was no proof of the external world, Heidegger thought it scandalous if not idiotic that anyone ever sought such proof. He then turned around and concerned himself more with who was seeking the proof than the proof itself and ended up with all kinds of disenchanting angst.¹⁶⁶ Worse yet, he made a mockery of Niels Bohr's cautionary comment to Werner Heisenberg that he could be clear or accurate by being neither.¹⁶⁷

Perhaps Heidegger was deliberately unclear because, as a Nazi party member,¹⁶⁸ he spoke publically, favorably about Hitler¹⁶⁹ and, while Hitler rose to power, Heidegger analyzed the essence of nothing and embraced the greatest horror in history, eventually dismissing the Holocaust as unimportant.¹⁷⁰ His foray into politics was likewise dismissed by a one-time mistress and long-time intellectual companion who referred to him as an *Idiot*, which is Greek for someone who is out of his element in this case, politics. That is, he was a super bright guy and a very deep thinker, but he just did not get politics.¹⁷¹

To the extent he was clear about philosophy, he was fundamentally wrong when referring to man having been thrown into a world which is alien and hostile to him.¹⁷² Man was not thrown into such a world: He created it and there was something terribly wrong with all the violence and the murderous dictatorships of Hitler, Stalin and Mao despite occasional lapses into hopes and unanswered prayers by the mere people to McGod, our divine psychotherapist.

If our nominal God provided limited help, the Catholic Church did its best to abort attempted reforms threatened by the Second Vatican Ecumenical council in the early 1960's. The idea was that the Church should get more involved in community life, but theology, as usual, stood in its sacred way. The Church committed "The single greatest defeat for

162. Reid, S. Quoted on p. 150 of Stevens.

163. Thomson. op. cit. pp. 861-862. This point was made vivid to the American soldiers who stumbled upon the Mittelwerk in Nordhausen on April 11, 1945. They found rows of V-2's lined up like sentinels from Mars. They had been produced at the rate of nearly thirty per day by slave laborers whose bodies lay around like so much garbage begging to be picked up and improperly discarded. This was the legacy of a totalitarian technocracy in which human life mattered only in so far as it contributed to producing powerful weapons. (McDougall. p. 44.)

164. Magee, B. Men of Ideas. Oxford University Press Oxford, England. 1978. pp. 59-60.

165. Monk, R. Bertrand Russell. Free Press; New York. 2001. p. 245.

166. Erickson. op. cit. 2; pp. 88-89. Heidegger seemed to specialize in creating problems for himself and everyone else.

167. Ibid. p. 104.

168. Ibid. p. 115. He joined in 1929. (Ibid. p. 121.) At best, he was a bad person who was a great philosopher. (Ibid. 115.)

169. Ibid. p. 121.

170. Rosenbaum. op. cit. p. 220.

171. Erickson. op. cit. p. 122. Quoting Hannah Arendt. To his credit, he had a mental breakdown after the war. (Ibid. 126.)

172. Heidegger, M. Sein und Zeit. (Being and Time.) 1927.

intelligence”¹⁷³ by refusing to modify its position on birth control: Divorce rates climbed and women took reproductive matters into their own....ah.... hands for lack of a more “Fitting” if unseemly image.☺

Intellectually, the torch passed to scientists,¹⁷⁴ who are certain they cannot be certain of any-thing. Nevertheless, based on what we do know, our scientific triumphs have been inspiring if sobering DNA, organ transplants, the quantum, space travel, electronics are awesome but impose an unacknowledged moral ambiguity on everyone: e.g, by splitting the atom, science converted a tiny bit of matter into a great deal of anxiety about potential abuses of even peaceful atomic power. Yet, as impressive as our technological triumphs are, they do nothing to relieve our inter-personal difficulties. Nor do they clarify our relationship to nature because they do not elucidate who we are and how we can better structure our environment. Unfortunately, neither the social sciences nor arts offer much toward resolving or clarifying the underlying philosophical issues. The social sciences give muddled if not contradictory answers which create as many problems as they solve while art devolved/regressed hopelessly in demoralizing phases from the primitive to the infantile to the inane if not insane. In our paranoid, self-constructed, post-modern, fragmented, relativistic, subjective, deconstructive apparent world¹⁷⁵ in which nonsense seems somehow relevant¹⁷⁶ if and when packaged as targeted nonsense.¹⁷⁷

Symptomatically, poet Henry Longfellow was dismissed by 20th century critics as a 19th century windbag for lacking ambiguity, paradox, difficulty, anxiety and obscurity¹⁷⁸—as if these were criteria for qualifying as a great modern poem or poet: Saying something simply and clearly in rhythmically and rhyming imagery is considered poetically jejune if not idiotic. Culturally and politically, “Nothing” had found its voice¹⁷⁹ it meant everything, and versa vicea. Indeed, culture is a nonsense machine,¹⁸⁰ and the power of meaninglessness is infinite.¹⁸¹

In Europe, this came to shape in the 1906 slam at Victorianism in the form the “The Bridge” a movement away from motion, reason, the past, sanity, you-name-it to Modernism. Beginning in an age when a bull was referred to as “A gentleman cow”, diners order turkey “bosom” for dinner¹⁸² and pianos were covered to the floor so as to not expose their sexless legs, imagination and creativity, anticipating WWI, led to fragmentation, disunity and chaos at the expense of beauty, harmony¹⁸³ and grace. It was not necessary to mean anything in order to

173. Blanshard, P. Paul Blanshard on Vatican II. George Allen & Unwin; London. 1967. pp. 132-134.

174. Watson, P. The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century. Perennial; New York. 2000. p. 2.

175. Derrida, J. Undated reference to Deconstruction on page 469 of Hecht, J. Doubt: A History. Harper One; New York. 2003. For a presentation of how this attitude plays out in music see: Golea. In that vein, contemporary music was anticipated some 300 years ago in Congregational churches, of all times and places. Commonly, when the parishioners burst into song, they all did so anarchically in their own keys, tempos and styles in striking contrast to the rational order of over orchestrated cultural life in the age of reason. Emphasizing words over music, each sang to suit himself producing a horrid, confused, cacaphonic, disordered, discordant, atonal/pantonal dirge proudly termed “Rote (vs. note) singing”. Tin-eared New Englanders, in their defiant, independent way, inexplicably found it moving, and all efforts to improve it were strenuously resisted. (Haraszti. pp. 61-71.) Such wailing and post-modern, beyond-alleged “Music” constitute an example of cultural convergence—how totally different psychosocial circumstances can lead to the same result. Hallelujah, man.

176. Scruton. op. cit. p. 174.

177. Ibid. p. 189.

178. Lepore, J. The Story of America. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ. 2012. p. 221.

179. Scruton. op. cit. p. 16.

180. Ibid. pp. 174-175.

181. Lucan, J. 1966. Thirty-four volumes of seminars conducted in 1953. (Cited on p. 177 of Scruton.)

182. Dwyer. op. cit. p. 238.

183. Kershaw. 2016. **op. cit.** p. 167.

contribute to the emerging revolutionary unconsciousness, in which there was no “I”, nor team because the subject was missing.¹⁸⁴ Nudity was acceptable if it embodied Platonic justice, truth, virtue or wisdom,¹⁸⁵ although how a nude got associated with virtue and wisdom is surely a tribute to man’s imagination: a nude can be associated with a number of things, but wisdom and virtue are not among them. A decade later, Cubism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Futurism and Surrealism everything but Ismism gave shape and texture to the irrationality of the subconscious mind being revealed by Freud and Jung, the insensibility of the stream of incontinence produced by James Joyce, the bewilderment of Franz Kafka and the atonality of that enemy of harmony and promoter of musical dissonance and injustice, Arnold Schoenberg.¹⁸⁶

Via shock and chance, symbolism and suggestion, surrealism expressed the sometimes vio-lent, uncontrolled absence of reason aesthetic or moral standards extending beyond conscious-ness¹⁸⁷ or conscience. In a rare instance of intellectuals leading the artists, naysayers Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s reduction of meaninglessness to a vacuum of emptiness presaged Giorgio de Chirico’s *Piazza d’ Italia* 1913 rendition of the void of the loneliness of the 20th century’s defining nothingness.¹⁸⁸

This nothingness is but an empty echo of the public reaction to the “First German Autumn Salon” exhibition in September, 1913. Most artists who were no one were represented: the Futurists, Cubists, Expressionists, Etc. its and reactions ranged from fury to outrage. A kind critic suggested there was something developmental on display but then referred to pretensions being presumptuous. Others referred to rough fiddle-faddle, a great mass of absurdities and ludicrous scribbles which might have been produced in an insane asylum,¹⁸⁹ although that was insulting to the residents of our lesser insane asylums as well as our more talented finger-painters, who may use two or three different colors at once.☺ If there was anything left of realism, it was really out of focus.

Crazier still was Ludwig Meidner’s “Apocalyptic Landscape” or “Visions of the Trenches” first shown in his Berlin studio a month later. His motto was, “Paint your grief, your entire insanity and sanctity out of the whole of your being”. Overcome by visions of horror, he wrote, “A painful impulse inspired me..... to spread ruin, destruction and ashes across all landscapes. My brain bled amid these awful visions. All I could see was a thousand-strong roundelay of skeletons prancing around in front of me....” The landscape is torn apart by bombs and war. His friends who viewed the painting worried that he was losing his mind¹⁹⁰ not that he was a psychic anticipating the carnage unleashed less than a year later by intensely sane Western uncivilization. That would be charitably characterized as an exercise in cubism in which human bodies and the country side were rearranged in grotesquely curious, dysfunctional new ways.¹⁹¹ Reality imitating art was soon to follow.

184. Scruton. op. cit. p. 180.

185. Axelrod. op. cit. p. 220.

186. Kershaw. 2016. op. cit. p. 168, Schoenberg and 172.

187. Roberts. op. cit. p. 946.

188. Illies. op. cit. pp. 147-148. Another example of “Artist-lag” was the Anti-Vietnam War movement in the mid-to late 1960’s. (Schweikart. 2010. p. 130.)

189. Illies. op. cit. pp. 196-197.

190. Ibid. p. 208.

191. Léger, F. Autumn, 1916. Quoted on page 48 of Jeffery. A literary work, John Buchan’s Greenmantle (1916) prefigured the reality of spies fomenting a Muslim uprising in central Asia against the Allied powers. (Jeffery. pp. 192-193.) Not to be outdone, 9/11 made death an art. (Al-Banna.)

Not to be outdone, at the Futurist Congress in Finland in 1913, Kazimir Malevich introduced the world to “Suprematism”, which meant the beginning of a new if not better civilization. He discarded the burden of representational art and progressed to a state where nothing is needed not color, form, shape nor reality. His rejection of all demands made of art or the artist and the complete lack of judgmental standards made it the greatest assertion of artistic autonomy ever. Specifically, his “Black Square”¹⁹² It was also an end point for art and a Big Bang starting point for something new if cataclysmic,¹⁹³ i.e, WWI as a work of art. At this point, not only were people abstracted out of art; objects, purpose and art were abstracted out¹⁹⁴ as well¹⁹⁵ by over-analysis of the irrelevant. Composers responded with music which was written, performed but unheard¹⁹⁶ but could individualistic jazz be far behind in the streets of the dispossessed? Most emphatically abstracted out of art and everything else was enlightened rationalism. That had led to soldiers in trenches confronting one another across no-man’s land with everyone ensconced behind machine guns and barbed wire. Einstein’s theory of relativity (1905) had pulled the physical basis for security out from under civilization which was splitting culturally into pragmatic chaos. This was indicated by the oxmronic statements symbolic realism and artificial realism which are needed to describe what painters were trying to portray. Nevertheless, when push came to shove, every patriotic maniac would wrap himself in his nation’s flag and defend to the death whatever it was he thought it represented.

Slightly more realistically, in a 1924 artistic manifesto, André Breton defined surrealism as “Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupationsIt leads to the permanent destruction of all other psychic mechanisms”:¹⁹⁷ In his second manifesto (1929), as a latter-day Rousseau, he laid waste to the family, country and religion. If the enemy of art is the absence of limitations,¹⁹⁸ there were a whole lot of enemies reigning in the guise of advertising, electioneering and stupidity.

If an absurd example can be used to make the non-existent point, consider the phalanx of characters nominated by the Democratic Party’s for its vice-presidential slot in 1972. As a case of liberal equality gone amok, someone from every subgroup of the political spectrum had to be and was considered up to and including Mao Tse-Tung and Archie Bunker.¹⁹⁹ This may have made everyone one included feel good, but the whole process was rendered irrelevant with the selection of Senator Thomas Eagleton, who then had to step aside due to his personal history of mental health problems that being, for some reason, considered a disqualifier for high government office despite the transient if imposing successes of leaders like Hitler, Stalin²⁰⁰ and LBJ.

192. It really would have been neat had it been labeled a Black Hole. ●

193. Illies. op. cit. p. 245.

194. The only thing not yet abstracted out is the artist, but paint-ers are already down if not culturally out. (Prendeville. p. 212.) What if you take a selfie, and there is no one there?

195. Watson. 2001. op. cit. p. 65.

196Cage, J. 4' 33". (Cited on page 161 of Prendeville.)

197. Gaunt W. The Surrealists. G. P. Putnam’s Sons; New York. 1972. While lost artists led the way breaking down the doors of perception and releasing subconscious images usually accessed only in dreams, In literature, it usually meant writing a lot of nonsense. (Hodgkinson and Bergh. p. 351.) Starting in the late 1930's, this movement had its relativist counterpart in the judicial realm’s “Legal realism”, which hyped the indeterminacy of the law. (Urofsky. p. 221.)

198. Welles, O. Comment to H. Jaglom pre-1988. The Independent Film Maker. The Movie Business Book. Squire, J. ed. 2nd Ed. Simon & Schuster; NY. 1992.

199. Hayward. op. cit. p. 355.

200. Hershman, D. and Lieb, J. A Brotherhood of Tyrants. Prometheus Books; Amherst NY. 1994.

In concrete terms for schizoid Western civilization in general, a formula of “Technology x beauty = K” covers the history of the development of scientific progress²⁰¹ and the inverse degeneration of art for at least the past two centuries. That is, while scientists were conscientiously overcoming biases inherent in subjectivity, artists were reveling in them. To wit: Two hundred years ago we had the steam engine and the Hudson River school of painting; one hundred years ago, we had the dynamo and the Ashcan school. Now we have computers and the Fucked Up school,²⁰² which does petty accurately characterize the essence of our commitment to as well as our festering, undefined attitude toward each other, nature and our mutual, self-degenerating future.

As for the plight of music vis-a-vis art and culture in general, barbershop and marches sufficed for the 19th century, when people tried to make sense of their world or find some common functional relationship between what they said and did. The syncopation of the rags was the first hint at fragmentation: It was like being deliberately late for a business appointment; it corrupted the moral fiber of the country. This was followed by blue notes and then deliberate dissonance flattened fifths, major sevenths, ninths, elevenths, thirteenth and sounds for which only irrational numbers would suffice. The Modernaires of the '50's and 60's pop to mind as representative of music of the over-populated. There just were not enough notes to go around. Someone always had to be and was off. If they hit a perfect chord, something was wrong. It was music of discomfort and dissonance for the insane. Not only did it not sound nice, it was not supposed to, and no one wanted it to. Generally, all that remains steady is the most basic element of music—tempo: *When we are doomed, constant rhythm will go haywire*. Wait for it. Listen forward to it. ☹

In international relations, neither power nor safety was a paramount issue of the business-at-any-price, pro-China “Panda Huggers” of America’s intelligence community. Policies of accommodation naturally followed from the blatantly biased analysis of information by people who were committed to warping conclusions so as to promote commerce over national security. In 2005, this intelcum policy clique was outed and had to admit they blew a number of basic calls including, for example, the deployment by the Chinese of a new attack submarine that they missed until photos of it appeared on the internet. Of course, the insiders immediately blamed their sources the field agents whose reports they had systematically down played if not ignored. A government report detailing this debacle was locked away lest someone in Congress see it and, in a fit of righteousness and cognitive consistency, demand reasonable reform of the system, which to everyone, except those responsible and nominally in command, was obviously very much in order.²⁰³

As for the tragic disaster of 9/11, the first element of failure was the inability of Cold Warriors to adjust their thought patterns (i.e., schema) to a new and different kind a threat terrorism:²⁰⁴ Linguistically speaking, Cold Warese was out; Terrorese was in. Another failure was that of the CIA to share relevant info with the enemy the FBI. Finally, in the nine months prior to the attack, the administration had been *warned at least forty times* of the very real threat

201. Ikeuchi, S. “Science’s Arrogance”. The New York Times. Mar. 20, 2011. Sunday Opinion in “The Week in Re-view.” p. 12.

202. First recognized as such by the eternal anonymous who, upon viewing a surunreal work of alleged art, remarked, “That is a great painting. It’s just like modern life all fucked up”. (2003.)

203. Gertz. op. cit. pp. 181-182.

204. Bobbitt, P. *Terror and Consent*. Knopf; New York. 2008. pp. 146-147. (Actually, the whole book.)

posed by Osama bin Laden, but that was not what they wanted to hear, so they did not listen.²⁰⁵ Specifically, on July 12, Thomas Pickard, acting director of the FBI, tried to get Attorney General John Ashcroft to comprehend the imminent threat of terrorism to the country, only to be told, “I don’t want you ever to talk to me about al-Qaeda, about these threats. I don’t want to hear about al-Qaeda anymore”²⁰⁶ and he did not for exactly two months.

He might not have heard of it then had FBI agents Coleen Rowley and Harry Samit of the Minneapolis office been successful in their early efforts to obtain search warrants for the computer of Zacarias Moussaoui.²⁰⁷ Samit had learned Moussaoui was a recruiter for extremists allied with Osama bin Laden and had just completed a course in flight training for commercial jet-liners. Counter-terrorism officials at FBI headquarters rejected their requests for search warrants until the morning of 9/11, after the fourth plane crashed in Pennsylvania.²⁰⁸

Sadly, this was not a case of failing to connect the dots. It was *a failure of those in charge to listen to agents who had connected the dots*, understood their significance and who had repeatedly tried to push through the cultural inertia at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.²⁰⁹ To the extent that connecting the dots was recognized as *the* major problem, the response was to go out and gather more dots, the problem then becoming TMD too many dots.

Sadder still, efforts to reform the Bureau ran into that same sclerotic attitude which had remained unchanged since the days of Hoover.²¹⁰ The problem was compounded by the fact that those in charge in the 1980's failed to appreciate the role computers would play in intelligence analysis so the Bureau had to struggle just to get out of its own, self-induced Dark Age of cyberdom.²¹¹

Saddest of all was the fact that we missed the point of the attacks. They did not attack because they hate our freedom, our way of life or our Big Macs. They attacked because of our secularism and our pro-Israeli foreign policy in the Mid-East.²¹² Unfortunately, with the Zionist lobbyists such as they are in Washington, we are not likely to give Palestinians a fair shaikh☺ in the near future, but we were rudely shaken out of our sentimental regard for individual liberty and freedom to the extent that we now need heed civil libertarian William Shakespeare’s admonition, “You all know, security is mortals’ chiefest enemy”.²¹³

If success rather than security is the goal, terrorists would be well advised to find another way to make their point, because *terrorism does not work*. Indeed, there is no case in history of

205. Powers, T. Secret Intelligence and the “War on Terror”. New York Review of Books. Dec. 16, 2004. (See Stone and Kuznick. pp. 497-498 and Chap. 9 of Jeffries for the offbeat suggestion that the event was staged by the Pentagon.)

206. Ashcroft, J. Attorney General. At a meeting with Thomas Pickard. July 12, 2001. Quoted on page 502 of Medsger.

207. On Aug 29, 2001, an FBI agent was denied authority to use the full investigative resources of his office to locate soon-to-be suicidal skyjacker Khalidal Mihdhar because he was not then under criminal investigation. The agent’s response was, “Someday someone will die.....and the public will not understand why we were not.....throwing everything we had at the problem.” The “Someday” was Sept. 11th, 2001. (Babbitt. p. 301f. See also: Clarke. Your Government Failed You.)

208. Shenon, P. The Terrible Missed Chance. Newsweek. Sept. 4, 2011.

209. Medsger, B. The Burglary. Vintage Books; New York. 2014. p. 503.

210. Shenon, P. The Commission. Hachette; New York. 2008. Quoted on page 504 of Medsger.

211. Medsger. op. cit. p. 505.

212. Awlaki, A. Sermon. Sept. 18, 2001. (Scahill. p. 42.)

213. Shakespeare, W. Macbeth 3; 5. Ca. 1606. This being a poetic version of Anonymous’s timeless observation “...the most common beginning of disaster was a sense of security.” Ca. 10 A.D. (Quoted on page 225 of David.) Iraq had at least 100 billion barrels of proven reserves. (G. Jackson. p. 181.)

terrorists achieving their long-term political goal by the methods they typically employ. The anarchists of the 19th century, *Sinn Fein* in Northern Ireland, Basques in Spain, and Hezbollah in Israel have all proven that, however gratifying it may be for the bombers to blow up things, random bombing of citizens just makes the survivors madder at them.²¹⁴

Nevertheless, in the name of security, the “Oilgarchy” of the Cheney/Bush administration invaded Iraq²¹⁵ presumably as an example of 43's expressed hope that the USA would be a “More humble country”.²¹⁶ This act was not based on faulty intelligence but on lies and manufactured facts that supported the preconception of invasion²¹⁷ by leaders with a comic book mentality who ached to in-vade Iraq since the get-go of the administration eight months before 9/11.²¹⁸ Ill at ease with the ephemeral enemy of terrorism, leaders of that era who grew up with the vocabulary of hostile nation-states felt comfortable combating an evil but identifiable country.²¹⁹ Further, as a means of reducing criticism of W's predelection to outdo his father²²⁰ and please Zionists into supporting his re-election, his team opined that to wait for all the actual, valid facts would be to wait too long.²²¹ Ever loath to admit a mistake,²²² 43 dispensed with people who presented him with inconvenient facts²²³ or told them to go out and find some that were convenient.²²⁴ Conservatives who denounced post-modernism and moral relativism now imposed their version of events on the media.²²⁵ Critics of his administration were dismissed by his supporters as living in a “Reality based” world, whereas W, as a contemporary artist, created his own, baffling, preferred world²²⁶ of schema-based cherry picking²²⁷ which an intelligence officer characterized as “Lunacy”.²²⁸ In a land where politics and tragic humor were difficult to distinguish, one critic of government by slogan suggested the Veep's favorite company Halibuton be paid \$13.8 billion to construct a nation-sized sign saying, “Plan for Vic-tory”.²²⁹ Thanks to a PR/image mentality gone amok by taking itself too

214. Sass. op. cit. p. 370.

215. Baker, R. *Family of Secrets*. Bloomsbury Press; New York. 2009. p. 3. Baker, P. *Days of Fire*. Anchor; New York. 2013.

216. Simms. op. cit. p. 510.

217. Mayer. op. cit. p. 177. Medsger. op. cit. p. 516. Davis, K. op. cit. p. 342.

218. Suskind, R. *The Price of Loyalty*. Simon & Schuster; New York. 2004. p. 86. (Quoted on p. 113 of Rich.)

219. Washington's bureaucratic response to the attacks on 9/11 was the Department of Homeland Insecurity—an underfunded concoction of sixty federal agencies housed, fittingly, in a former insane asylum. (Hampton.) Structured on the principle of “Reorganization”, it created the illusion of progress grounded on confusion inefficiency and demoralization (Ogburn.) but to the delight those who love to move boxes and arrows around on charts. (Clarke. 2008. p. 205.) Its weakness was exposed for all to see in 2005, in the aftermath of the de-vastating hurricane Katrina. (Ibid. p. 204.)

220. Baker, P. op. cit. p. 190.

221. Draper, R. *Dead Certain*. Free Press; New York. 2007. p. 175. (Based on a remark attributed to Veep Dick Cheney.)

222. Baker, P. op. cit. p. 432.

223. Suskind, R. *Without a Doubt*. *The New York Times Magazine*. Oct. 17, 2004. p. 44.

224. Clarke, R. Sept. 12, 2001. Quoted on page 14 of Scahill.

225. Rich, F. *The Greatest Story Ever Sold*. Penguin; New York. 2006. p. 163.

226. Suskind. op. cit. p. 51. Mishra, P. *Age of Anger*. Ferrar, Straus and Giroux; New York. 2017. p. 6. Rich, F. *The Greatest Story Ever Sold*. Penguin; New York. 2006. p. 3.

227. Rich. op. cit. p. 105. See also R. Clarke's *Against All Enemies*. 2004.

228. Shaffer, A. Lt. Col. *Operation Dark Heart*. St. Martin's Press; New York. 2010. p. 19. Col. Shaffer thought the decision to invade Iraq allowed Osama bin Laden to operate for most of another decade. (Scahill. p. 139.) For an excellent, thumbnail sketch of the debacle, see Sass, pp. 371-375.

229. Rich. op. cit. p. 210. (Suggestion by Andy Borowitz.)

seriously and shaping intelligence conclusion to fit policy,²³⁰ the poor grunts in the Iraqi streets paid the price for 43's "Humility". Put another way, the Bush²³¹ effort to link al-Qaeda with Saddam Hussein rivals the Warren Commission Report as a deliberate effort to find support for a predetermined conclusion clearly at odds with the relevant facts.²³² Taking the travesty one step further, virtual patriot Veep Cheney set up his own intelligence organization to establish an al-Qaeda/Hussein link which, to no one's surprise, it did,²³³ perhaps helped along because it was run by Douglas Feith, whom Gen. Tommy Franks diplomat-ically called "The funky stupidest guy on the face of the earth".²³⁴ To put a book-length consideration of this disaster in a paragraph, *every rationale proffered for the war was invalid*,²³⁵ because they were based not on what was known but what the analysts wanted to confirm.²³⁶ Cheney's invention aside, Saddam Hussein had no direct ties to al-Qaeda in-deed, if they were anything to each other, they were enemies;²³⁷ there was no link between Iraq and international terrorists; he no biological weapons factories on wheels as falsely reported by congenital liar but semiaptly nicknamed "Curveball" (aka Rafid Ahmed Alwan Al-Janabi)²³⁸ he should have been named "Screwball"; and a sizable military effort was needed to occupy Iraq for more than a decade. Iraq was certainly not training members of al-Qaeda in the use of WMD²³⁹ which he did not possess,²⁴⁰ nor did Saddam²⁴¹ have the capability to deliver the nonexistent weapons²⁴² to

230. Dickerson, J. Confessions of a Washington Insider. Time. Jan. 19, 2004.

231. W's Sec. of State, Colin Powell, did not regard him as stupid just easily manipulated. (Mayer. p. 125.) Alternatively, the problem was not that he was stupid but that he thought everyone else was. (Rich. p. 13.) German official Uwe-Karsten Heye was less charitable: 'We noticed that the intellectual reach of the president ...was exceptionally low. He had no idea what was happening in the world. He was so fixated on being a Texan...' (Harnden.) W's Rambo like image was of the worst stereotypic macho American: Incautious, blood thirsty and stupid. (Samuelson.) One of the worst examples of this was 43's "Bring 'em on" comment on July 2, 2003 re: Iraqi insurgents. He later concede it was a gaffe in that statements have many hearers who interpret words their own way for their own various purposes. (Baker, P. Days of Fire. Anchor; New York. 2013. pp. 277-278.)

232. Moore, M. Dude, Where's My Country? Warner Books; New York. 2003. p. 56. See also pp. 54-55.

233. Scahill, J. Dirty Wars. 2013. Nation Books; New York. Chap. 7. Borger, J. The Spies Who Pushed for War. The Guardian. July 17, 2003.

234. Rich. op. cit. p. 188. It is nice to know who deserves that honor. I thought I did. JFW.

235. Riechmann, D. Senator: Bush misled nation in run-up to Iraq War. AP. Dec. 11, 2104. 3:47 PM EST. Btw, the senator referred to was Carl Levin. To find consideration of the war put into a chapter, see Clarke (2008), Chap. 5.

236. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report available at the National Security Archive. See Clarke. 2008. p. 130.

237. Ibid. p. 141.

238. Collins, H. Iraqi defector 'Curveball' says he lied about WMD. AOL. Feb. 15, 2011, 3:35 PM. Drogin, B. and Goetz, J. Germany Warned U.S. on Faulty Intel. Chicago Tri-bune. Nov. 20, 2005. See also: Clarke. 2008. p. 112.

239. Ensor, D. Prewar CIA Report Doubted Claim That al Qaeda Sought WMD in Iraq.

CNN. Nov. 11, 2005. This claim was based on an admission made by some poor soul to get Egyptian torturers to stop. (Clarke. 2008. p. 112.)

240. Nakhleh, Dr. E. Sept., 2001. Quoted on p. 15 of Scahill.

241. Saddam did not help, living in an intellectual bunker in which no one told him the truth. (Chircac.) As bad as we were in misunderstanding, him, he was much worse in misunderstanding us. (Suskind 2008 p. 195)

242. W evinced a "Witch hunt" mentality regarding WMD. (Blix. pp. 156-157.) When finally confronted with irrefutable evidence that Iraq had none, he said, "Fuck it. We're going in." (Suskind. 2008. p 184.) If he lied us into war, he was following the venerable tradition of President Wilson in WWI (Stone and Kuznick. p. 74.) when "We were lied to and de-ceived into going into war..." by Wilson, House, Lansing and Morgan (Villard) and Johnson in Vietnam. (Goodwin. p. 60.) Three years after the invasion of Iraq, 43 still *claimed* he be-lieved Saddam had WMD (Draper. p. 388.) although *he knew* even before the invasion there were none. (Suskind. op. cit.) This

international targets.²⁴³ In the early stages of the non-war, frantic but futile efforts were made to provide justification for it, so interrogation of “Unlawful combatants” was designed *not to get the truth* but statements which would rationalize our intervention. Further, the methods used in the process were so extreme that the CIA withdrew its interrogators from the project. The operative principle was secrecy: Brutality and criminality were acceptable as long as nothing about them reached the nosey media.²⁴⁴ To legitimize the tail wagging the dog, in 2004, Porter Goss, explicitly stated that his agency’s mission was to support the president’s policies²⁴⁵ facts to the contrary notwithstanding that being one if not the best way to get and keep the job as head of the CIA.

Knowing all of the above was deliberately concocted to create a public war psychosis with the media playing Walter to the Pentagon’s Jeff Dunham,²⁴⁶ our military acquiesced in converting a flawed policy into a contrived war²⁴⁷ which detracted from our avowed war on terror.²⁴⁸ The Pentagon focused its efforts on crushing an insurgency which it denied existed,²⁴⁹ and if that sounds new, consider the following quotation: “Responding to international terrorism, governments reintroduced torture [and] resorted to military courts” As apt as it is in describing how we react to ISIS today, it is a description of Western countries reacting to the challenges of anarchists in the late 19th century.²⁵⁰ As for how we handled the problem, our euphemisms were “Enhanced interrogation techniques”, which included water boarding, and “Extraordinary rendition”, which meant farming the subjects out to less squeamish countries like Egypt,²⁵¹ Romania and Poland.²⁵²

went beyond innocent self-deception (McClellan. p. xii.) and stupidity. It was an intellectual crime committed while possessing facts which refuted his publicly stated policy. *THIS IS EVIL* dissonance with the prevailing code of ethics: a sin of the soul. Specifically, in this case, we went in for oil (Greenspan. p. 467.) and to support our fifty-first state, Israel. More to the point, *it detracted from our war on terror*. In the context of stupidity, invading Iraq was the biggest mistake of his presidency; his second biggest was not recognizing the first. (McClellan. p. 210.) Ironically, he was at his best clean-ing up messes he created. (P. Baker. p. 651.)

243. Webb, J. Sen. A Time to Fight. Broadway Books, New York. 2008. p. 155. See also: Woodward, B. Obama’s War. Simon and Schuster; NY. 2010 and Bacevich, Chps. 6 and 7.

244. Scahill. op. cit. pp. 150-151 and 160.

245. Drum, K. The Death of Policy. Washington Monthly. May 7, 2006.

246. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. pp. 521-522. Barstow, D. Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand. The New York Times. Apr. 25, 2008.

247. Newbold, G. Gen. Editorial. Time. 2006.

248. McCrystal, S. Gen. HBO History Makers Series. Interview with Tom Brokaw. Oct. 6, 2011. (Scahill. p. 196.) See also: Homeland National Intelligence Estimate. 2007.

249. Scahill. op. cit. p. 145. This was Fantasyland: We insisted there were WMD which did not exist and engaged in a protracted battle against a presumably nonexistent insurgency. (Urban. p. 40.)

250. Mishra. op. cit. p. 21.

251. Baker, P. op. cit. p. 194. I have always wondered about waterboarding and the people who conducted the sessions. One Abu Zubaydah was subjected to waterboarding 83 times in one month. (Ibid.) Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was waterboarded 183 times. (Ibid. p. 486.) My question for the water boarders is: What did you expect to gain from the procedure on the 183rd application that you had not already obtained in the previous 182? Alternatively, if a procedure has not produced satisfactory results after 182 applications, why do it again? Or, why did they not do it a 184th time? I suspect they did it just for the fun of it and because they could. The reinforcement in this scenario was not information, because they got none. It must have been the sheer satisfaction of doing it which kept them at it. At this time, W insisted the United States did not torture anyone, which is true as long as he and we got to define what constitutes torture. But, suppose we ask the victims? Also, why did we keep the specifics secret? If it was not torture, why not announce what was done? JFW. ●

252. Ibid. p. 429.

Like the WWI generals on the Western Front, our military leaders knew what we were doing was not working but had nothing new to suggest, so we just kept doing it.²⁵³ This was fine, if you ignore the overall cost of \$2 trillion spent destroying WMD which did not exist,²⁵⁴ the monumental waste of our \$53 billion reconstruction efforts²⁵⁵ and about 4,500 destroyed and 10,000 wrecked American lives.²⁵⁶ From this Marx Brother's war²⁵⁷ turned deadly, the Iraqis got an Iran-leaning authoritarian regime.²⁵⁸ On the other hand, Israel was protected and American companies did gain access to Iraqi oil, which was what the war was really all about anyway that and W's legacy to corporate America.²⁵⁹ His legacy to American was the Patriot Act, which all but repealed the Bill of Rights. Prominent among its provision was the identification of potential terrorist targets which grew in number until, in 2007, 300,000 were listed. These including petting zoos, doughnut shops, popcorn stands, ice cream parlors and the Mule Day Parade in Columbia, Tennessee.²⁶⁰ And the legacy lingered on as Presidents Obama and Trump found to their dismay when dealing with troop numbers for the war in Afghanistan. The common theme of miscue after miscue which characterized our efforts in Vietnam and Iraq prevailed again the president being surprised, not getting into the details, not being clear about preferences and not understanding the implications of his decisions and actions.²⁶¹ As Dorothy noted, this is not Kansas. We are in a war where nothing is called by its correct name and, not only the Lone Ranger, but everyone wears a mask.²⁶² In a nut shell, W thought the undeclared war bestowed so much power on him that he was above the law.²⁶³ Something no one understands is that changing hearts and minds of Muslims is not like selling toothpaste or camels. We should refocus our Arabic-language satellite which televises news programs no one watches²⁶⁴ and replace them with publicity about what al-Qaeda has done that is offensive to Muslims.²⁶⁵ President Obama resolved not "To be like these other presidents (meaning stupid

253. Bolger. op. cit. p. 233.

254. Niles, D. Page 417 of Fawcett. 2016.

255. Sly, L. \$53B later in Iraq, lessons learned. Tribune Newspapers. (Sun-Sentinel. Ft. Lauderdale, FL. 3A.) Aug. 30, 2010. The Iraqis picked up on only 20% of the projects. The others were deemed irrelevant/unnecessary. All this was an expression of Donald Rumsfeld's explicit policy of imposing our reality on the Iraqis (Suskind. 2008. op. cit. p. 380.), although he was a Cold Warrior who knew nothing about counterinsurgency. (Boot. 2013. p. 538.) In keeping with that, our reality included non-existent WMD and was furthered by forgery of a letter designed to justify the unjustifiable invasion. (Suskind. op. cit. p. 371.)

256. Rick, T. Fiasco. Packer, G. The Assassins' Gate. Chandrasekaran, R. Imperial Life in the Emerald City.

257. The hostilities spilled over into Pakistan where our relationship with the military there was based on mistrust, dishonesty, backstabbing and necessity. (Scahill. p.168.) That is, we were on relatively good terms with them but these are not likely to get any better soon. The curriculum of their Islamic schools was designed by Aurangzeb Alamgir, who died in 1707. Critical thinking is not encouraged as indicated by the presence of a single shelf of science books from the 1920's in the library of one of the schools in 2001. (Friedman, T. Nov. 13, 2001.) In another, similar school there was half a shelf of science books which were seventy years old. (Friedman. 2002. 319.) It is fair to say Islam is not big on science.

258. Bolger. op. cit. p. 276.

259. For a dismissal of the oil explanation see Chap. 7 of Clarke. 2008—i.e., we wanted to show how tough we were.

260. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 505.

261. Woodward. op. cit. p. 313. This was due, in part, to the deliberate policy set by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to keep the White House uninformed about the details of military matters. (Bohn. pp. 244-245.) On Trump—Woodward. 2018. pp. 259-260.

262. Friedman, T. Beware of Icebergs. The New York Times. Nov. 9, 2001.

263. Baker, P. op. cit. pp. 435-436.

264. Harb, M. Foreign Policy. May-June, 2004.

265. Byman, D. The Five Front War. Wiley; Hoboken, NJ. 2008.

like LBJ and W) and stick to [failure] based on my ego or my politics...”²⁶⁶ So, at least he intended not to be stupid but to adapt to developing conditions such as they were perceived to be on the ground²⁶⁷ in a cultural battle between those who question and wonder versus those who impose their religion on everyone they can. Generally, he should have run on a platform that, “Things Could Be Worse” so we elected him, and sure enough....☺

Specifically, one must question President Obama’s intentions when dealing with the case of Private Bradley Manning, an army intelligence analyst in Iraq. He was accused of conveying classified documents to WikiLeaks, including a video which showed U.S. troops gunning down Iraqi civilians. In the Barack-in-Wonderland world of skewed up cybervalues, Manning was indicted for *revealing* non-war crimes: Those who *committed* them got off scot free, but Private Manning was prosecuted for *showing* what they did²⁶⁸ that is, for making the truth about the criminal misconduct of others available to the public.

Manning also allegedly turned over 250,000 not-so-diplomatic cables to one Julian Assange, who then released them to the public through WikiLeaks. What they revealed was embarrassing to the State Department to the point of revelation, and WikiLeaks received Australia’s equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize for intrepid reporting. However, in the United States, Julian feared the threat of prosecution for the heinous crime of “Conspiring to commit journalism”.²⁶⁹ Meanwhile, as the war on terror²⁷⁰ unfolded, unfounded blame games reigned extreme. When Umar Abdul Mutallab failed to detonate his underwear on a flight to Detroit on Christmas Day and was detained by the passengers, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano at first crowed, “The system worked”²⁷¹ despite its obvious failure. Two weeks later, deputy national security adviser John Brennan came up with a report which placed the blame as far down the ego-chain as possible. Director of National Intelligence, Adm. Dennis Blair, would have none of it, democratically blaming everyone DNI, CIA, NSA, FBI, the state Department, National Counterterrorism Center and the White House for failing once again to connect available dots. Continuing the charade, he then grandly took responsibility himself,²⁷² but he was not fired because everyone knows no bureaucrat who grandly takes responsibility and falls on the PR image of a plastic sword is ever held account-able for anything.

266. Obama, Pres. B. Nov. 29, 2009. Woodward. 2010. p. 324.

267. Gates, Sec. of Defense R. Nov. 30, 2009. Ibid. p. 331.

268. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 562. In a similar vein, law student Timothy Maguire, who worked part-time in the administration office at Georgetown, had legal action initiated against him for publicizing the fact that the school had been admitting blacks with test scores dramatically lower than whites’. This was known to everyone, and the practice apparently continued, but he was legally “Attacked” for telling the truth about what the administration did. (J. Taylor. p. 181.)

In the same vein, PR conscious American pols objected in Jan., 2016, when the Iraqi government released videos of U.S. naval personnel on their knees with their hands behind their heads after being briefly detained for having strayed into Iraqi waters. There was some objection to the treatment itself, but most was directed to the embarrassing release of videos showing the sailors in that position. (Collinson.) It is mostly image.

269. Timm, T. Cablegate One Year Later. Electronic Freedom Foundation. Nov. 28, 2011. This calls to mind the police roundup in New Orleans in 1890, after the chief had been gunned down presumably by elements of organized crime: Some citizens feared being arrested on the suspicion of being Italian. (Krist. 2014. p. 35.)

270. Echoing the “War on terrorism” declared in 1881 after Tsar Alexander II was assassinated. (The New York Times. Apr. 2, 1881.)

271. Napolitano, J. (Sec. of Homeland Security). Dec. 27, 2009. CNN. Candy Crowley’s State of the Union.

272. Woodward. op. cit. p. 341.

After our wars on Limies, Redskins, ourselves, Filipinos, Krauts, Nips, Gooks, rag-heads, poverty, drugs, literacy and terrorism, might we wage a war on war? We might wage peace if we could get over ourselves. As a psychotherapist observed, “What are we denying about war making? We deny our own complex human nature, including our capacities for greed, evil and doing harm, clinging instead to the Christ-based belief in our innocence and goodness.”²⁷³ The problem is further confused by labeling: The same people can be termed terrorists, guerrillas, insurgents, criminals, bandits, traitors, deadenders, freedom fighters, holy warriors, patriots or soldiers,²⁷⁴ depending on who does the labeling and why they are doing it.

Nor is such confusion limited just to war. In 2013, as the country fell over the fiscal cliff into the straits of sequestration created by publicly posturing “Off budget” pols, the people might have recognized as descriptive of their plight the observation that the whole jerry-built structure guaranteed paralysis.²⁷⁵ This referred to the inept Congress under the Articles of Confederation—or the gridlock in 1790 which prompted Thomas Jefferson to comment, “Congress met and adjourned from day to day without doing anything, the parties being too much out of temper to do business together”.²⁷⁶ That, in turn, calls to mind the observation “Look at the exhausted Treasury; the paralyzed government; the unworthy representatives of a free people;the intrusion of the most pitiful, mean, malicious, creeping, crawling, sneaking party spirit into all transactions of life” made by Charles Dickens describing the political cloaca, Washington, in 1842²⁷⁷ and echoed forty-five years later by scholar Woodrow Wilson, who noted, “Not much impartial scientific meth-od is to be discerned in our administrative practices. The poisonous atmosphere of city government, the crooked secrets of state administration, the confusion, sinecurism and corruption ever and again discovered in the bureaux at Washington....”²⁷⁸ Twenty five years thereafter an astute, anonymous wag presciently noted, “....the old parties are flimflamming us all the time”.²⁷⁹

And the new as well, as in Obamacare a wealth program set up by the government not for the hard workers who vote but for the enriched corporations which gloat. With premiums set to deter the healthy young people whose participation is necessary, the government steps in to tax those who fail to sign up. It is bad enough if Americans were going to be taxed for drinking tea, but now their “Owned” government guess who owns it—tax citizens for NOT doing something. President Trump, who has no understanding of how government functions,²⁸⁰ failed in his initial attempt to reform the system because some die-hardly-at-all Republicans of the Freedom Caucus insisted that insurance premiums be lowered to the dismay and chagrin of the insurance companies and their dutiful Congressional lackeys.

If there is a lesson to learn from all this, it is that our parties today are just conducting government as usual. While it is fashionable for contemporary pundits to decry our current

273. Tick, E. War and the Soul. Cited on p. xxiii of K. Sites’s *The Things They Cannot Say*.

274. Boot. 2013. p. xxiii.

275. Chernow, R. *Alexander Hamilton*. 2005. Penguin; New York. p. 172.

276. Jefferson, T. (1790.) *The Anas of Thomas Jefferson*. Edited by F. Sawvel. Da Capo Press; New York. 1970. p. 32.

277. Dickens, C. A letter to W. Macready, April 1, 1842. In *Letters of Dickens*. 3:175-176. N.b., the timeless lament, “What times are these? What morals?” of Cicero. Ca. 50 B.C. (Quoted on p. 34 of Cahill.)

278. Wilson, W. *The Study of Administration*. *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol. 2; #2; pp. 197-222. 1887.

279. Orth, S. Is socialism upon us. *World’s Work* 24. p. 453. May-Oct., 1912.

280. Woodward, B. *Fear*. Simon & Schuster; New York. 2018. p. 262.

corruption, greed, indifference, ignorance²⁸¹ and stupidity, they are merely denouncing our modern versions of time honored, characteristic American political misbehavior.²⁸²

With our post-WWII commitment to internationalism, such misbehavior went global. Hence, our self-righteous objection to Russian interference in our 2016 presidential election is somewhat hypo-critical. To the CIA's credit, after it was founded in 1947, it did not meddle in foreign democratic elections for a full six months probably because there was none to meddle in in that period. Immediately thereafter, however, Americans actively partook in the democratic process in Italy (1948), the Philippines (1951 and 1953),²⁸³ Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) and undemocratic process in Guatemala, Iran, South Vietnam and Indonesia.²⁸⁴ When the Guatemalans frustrated our efforts, we arranged the removal of the democratic victor and the installation a capitalist-friendly successor.²⁸⁵ In 2006, we glumly accepted the victory of Zionphobic Hamas in Palestinian elections.²⁸⁶ Although we have focused here on the nebulous field of human relations in the 20th century, we now revisit our technological expertise because we need to bear in mind the dangers inherent in our determined efforts to impose ourselves upon "Our" environment in the 21st. The danger is currently unclear because, although the Industrial Revolution changed our historic belief in belief to a belief in knowledge, we really do not know who we are or what we are doing. For all our vaunted power, we are culture-bound by our commitment to our increasingly powerful machines and computers. We have lost the feeling of security, assurance and self-confidence which historically was part of schematically limited, ethical, small town, 19th century life. Thus, for all our ability to do things, and although the potentials we create for disasters demand that we be inhumanly perfect, we remain un-comfortable and uncertain as to just what it is we should be doing, uneasy as to how we should do it²⁸⁷ and unhappy about some of its consequences.

If there is one thing we are sure about, it is that we should not extend stupidity into space, and despite the long public record of successes of the American space program, the tragedy of the space shuttle Challenger disaster on January 28, 1986 revealed the arrogance of those who believe not so much in knowledge as in technology. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's program for controlling development of the space shuttle was euphemistically entitled, "Success Oriented Management", and the basic assumption underlying this management technique was that everything would work unless someone proved otherwise, which in turn meant that everything was designed to cost and prayer. It was bad enough that this system led to whole scale deferrals of work, embarrassing accidents, expensive redesigns and erratic staffing, but worst of all, it lead to the illusion that everything was running AOK. The net result was an absence of realistic planning, inadequate understanding of problems and an accumulation of invisible efficiency deficits and visible scheduling difficulties:²⁸⁸ Otherwise, everything appeared to be just fine meaning ZOK. Sad to say, all these problems

281. Goodwin. op. cit. p. 620.

bb Sadly, they will continue to do so until leaders turn the pledge "We shall overcome" into a concerted attack on the mechanism by which our values keep us from realizing our ideals. That is, we will have to overcome ourselves—i.e., stu-pidity inherent in our schematically based, bio-cultural com-plex.

283. Boot, M. *The Road Not Taken*. Liveright; New York. 2018. pp. 136 -137 and pages 160-162 for 1953.

284. Wise, D. and Ross, T. *Invisible Government*. Random House; New York 1964.

285. *Ibid.* p. 153.

286. Baker, P. op. cit. p. 439.

287. Diamond, J. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Viking; New York. 2005. Chap. 14.

288. Smith, R. Shuttle problems compromise space program. *Science*. Nov. 1979. pp. 910-911. Note the date!☹

were known more than *six years* before the Challenger destroyed itself, NASA's invincibility complex and the fantasy that those in charge knew what they were doing.²⁸⁹

The mechanics of the decision to launch the Challenger provide a prime case study in administrative stupidity. The basic arrangement was that each contractor had to disapprove its own product and *show NASA authorities why it disapproved*, although company executives were understandably reluctant to admit their hardware was suspect or dysfunctional and would not if it were possible to find some way (i.e., relabeling) to avoid doing so. Further, in this particular instance, the shuttle had already been delayed the two previous days, so NASA officials were strongly committed to getting it off the pad so as to polish their slightly tarnished public image and keep the whole program on schedule. Everyone connected with the launch knew this and knew they were expected to fall into line, meaning no one was to hold up proceedings unless it was absolutely necessary.²⁹⁰

The fact that a freak cold snap sent temperatures plummeting well below freezing the morning of the launch was not considered a deterrent by those nominally in charge. The only hitch came from the Morton Thiokol engineers who were responsible for the rubber seals (O-rings) which covered the joints between the segments of the rocket boosters. The engineers were uncertain how these seals would function at low temperatures because they had never been tested under such conditions:²⁹¹ The seals might freeze up, get brittle and leak highly flammable fuel, which, when it trailed back and reached the open flame of the engines, could ignite, leading to a predictably devastating explosion, as an internal Thiokol memo on July 31, 1985, to a vice-president stated. Naturally, the author of the memo was shunned and despised after the disaster because a.) he was right, and 2.) the truth could cost the idiots their jobs.²⁹²

The astronauts were doomed when Morton Thiokol management caucused with the engineers and blithely overrode their legitimate reservations.²⁹³ With contracts up for renewal, executives were determined to avoid any immediate embarrassment: It would look bad if the company was responsible for further delay, so they imposed the chance on the astronauts/program that the launch would not bring on disastrous consequences. Apparently, the possibility with an *unknown probability* of total catastrophe did not enter their calculations despite the strenuous objections of the project engineers who vainly continued to protest intransigent management's baseless decision to go.²⁹⁴

For company executives, the world had become one of industrial politics, forms and rubber stamps, and their working assumption was that the seals would function properly if someone simply said on paper that they would. Thus, in the meeting between management and

289. Sadly, all the was reminiscent of the work done by NASA leading up to the fatal fire of Apollo 1 on January 27, 1967. (Shepard and Slayton. Chap. 16.) All victims may have owed their fate to the shoddy workman ship which characterizes Florida: the state motto being, "*El estado donde nadie hacer su trabajo*". Translated into American, this reads, "The state where no one does his job", as hanging chads revealed to all in 2000. We really are lucky there have been only two disas-ters in space thus far. ☹

290. Kolcum, E. Morton Thiokol Engineers Testify NASA Re jected Warnings on Launch. Aviation Week and Space Technology. Mar. 3, 1986. p. 18.

291. Ibid.

292. Clarke, R. and Eddy, R. Warnings. Harper Collins; New York. 2017. pp. 12-13.

293. This kind of inverted thinking evinced itself about twenty years later in another context when an associate director of the Texas Forest Service stated: "Global climate change is a fact because the policy makers say it is..." That is, they do not say it because it is true; it is true because they say it. (Bonner. 2007.) Now, THAT is power. Such hubris was aired earlier by CNN's Lou Dobbs when a stat used was challenged by 60 Minutes' Leslie Stahl: "If reported, it is a fact" (Dobbs.) not the other way around. (Baker. 1989. 79)

294. Ibid. p. 19.

technicians, unfounded belief dominated the deliberations as there really were no experimental data/data upon which to base the decision. In the face of their own ignorance, officials should have said, "We don't know. Don't go!" However, management's groundless assumption and wishful thinking that the seals would function under the untested, existent conditions prevailed, the Vice President in Charge of Disasters signed a recommendation for launch, and the Challenger took on the status of a very expensive test case unfortunately, a test it failed.²⁹⁵

Not only have we extended our technological arrogance to outer space, but we have also applied it to the tiny atom, and the idiotic overkill of the arms race aside, the peaceful use of the atom should concern anyone who hopes for any future at all much less a safe one.²⁹⁶ Sad to say, even the 98% success rate of the Space Shuttle program would be considered disastrous in the nuclear power industry. Worse yet, those committed to the cause of nuclear power are so convinced of its safety that even the monumental proportions of the disaster following the meltdown at Chernobyl in Russia on April 26, 1986, failed to convince them that the industry in and of itself poses a danger. That accident was conveniently dismissed as one that could not happen in reactors of a different design, but if it could not, one just as bad or even worse certainly could. If all who point their fingers at everyone else are right, the accident occurred because of design flaws, faulty equipment, poor planning, inadequate training, lax management and a good dose of bad luck. Despite all the official regulations, there were planned safety violations, inept supervision and departures from plant operating rules in efforts to gain more electricity from the generators.²⁹⁷ In fact, nothing serves better to illustrate the problems of people interacting or failing to interact with their own technology, and the overwhelming lesson must be that very improbable events with very serious consequences can become tragic realities. The Russians could have learned this from the Challenger or even the Titanic, but apparently this is a lesson people are ill-disposed to learn, so each industry and generation has to learn it for itself the hard way. Although those who run our high tech culture are alert, intelligent and generally or at least presumably on the ball, they refuse to recognize that all the safety designs and official regulations in the world will not eliminate the incalculable factor of stupid errors as long as people remain human.

Thus, the public can hardly derive any assurance from the sanctimonious pronouncements of industry spokes mouths that nuclear power is safe. In the words of one official, "The odds of a melt-down are one in 10,000 years. The plants have safe and reliable controls that are protected from any breakdown with three safety lines, which operate independently without duplicating one anotherThe environment is securely protected, as hermetically sealed buildings with closed cycles for technological processes.....preclude any discharge into the external environment." Reassured? You should be until you learn this statement was made by Vitali Sklyarov, Minister of Power and Electrification of the Ukraine and appeared in Soviet Life in February, 1986, just two months before the disaster at Chernobyl, which resulted in over 8,000 deaths.²⁹⁸ To be fair to Vitali, he was right in a way: The reactor will not have another meltdown in the next 9,999 years probably pretty much guaranteed since it is abandoned. In the same article, Nikolai Fomin, the chief engineer at the Chernobyl plant, expressed his belief that both man and nature were completely safe. According to him, the huge reactor was housed in

295. What was learned? Seventeen years later, seven astronauts died when the shuttle Columbia broke up upon reentry. However, NASA's safety record remains perfect on paper. (Spear.)

296. O'Neill, G. 2081. Simon and Schuster; New York. 1981. pp. 89-91.

297. Greenwald, J. Judgement at Chernobyl. Time; 130, #3, p. 45. July 20, 1987.

298. CNN News. Apr. 12, 2011. Stone and Kuznick. op. cit. p. 450.

a concrete silo and had environmental protection systems, an emergency core cooling system and many other technological safety features. Even if the incredible should happen, the automatic control and safety systems would shut down the reactor in a matter of seconds²⁹⁹ and probably they would have had the operator not dismantled the automatic shutdown system and shut down the emergency cooling system in order to run an unauthorized test.³⁰⁰

As shocking as the catastrophic consequences of the accident were, they were evenly matched by the government's callous PR efforts to conceal the event from the vulnerable public. After the explosion, did officials caution residents to remain indoors? No. Did they evacuate the support city of Pripyat that day? No. Did they warn the people to take precautions when preparing their food that night? No. Did they issue potassium iodide tablets, which would have prevented thousands of cases of thyroid cancer to the general population? No. Did they cancel a soccer match in progress less than a mile from the reactor? No. What they did was cut almost all phone connections to the outside world and run a news story that sixteen couples had been married in the city that day.³⁰¹

An unauthorized, one-two punch courtesy of Mother Nature on March 11, 2011, created yet another crisis for the international nuclear power industry at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan. The low lying, back-up generators, which were to power the safety program, survived the shock of an initial earthquake but were flooded by the ensuing tsunami, the risk of which had been under-estimated by a factor of two.³⁰² The disaster was then compounded by a delay in getting cooling water to the melting reactor core in part due to the workers' oddball assumption that the cooling system was working despite several warning signs it had in fact failed.³⁰³ Such as it was, the face sensitive Japanese themselves ranked this catastrophe at the level in severity of the meltdown in Chernobyl.³⁰⁴

In the United States, the problem with the attitude of the proponents of atomic power is revealed by the double standard they use to judge the potential effects a disaster at a nuclear power plant may have. When considering insurance coverage, industry officials concede that were a meltdown to occur, it would be so bad that any insurance companies covering it would be wiped out so a limit of \$7.1 billion on liability was established by law³⁰⁵. However, when considering public safety, the same officials assure the general public that a meltdown is so improbable that no one need worry about it. It would be more convincing if such spokes people maintained one credible, criterion on both issues: If a meltdown would be so severe that ensuing claims would wipe out insurance companies, they would do so precisely because it had devastated the surrounding, insured communities. On the other hand, if such an eventuality is so improbable that the general public can be forced to risk it, so can insurance companies. One is driven to the conclusion that all atomic officials demonstrate by their double standard is that

299. Legasov, A., Feoktistov, L. and Kuzmin, I. Nuclear Power Engineering and International Security. Russian Life. Feb. 1986. p. 13. Kovalevska, L. Literaturna Ukraina. Feb. 1986.

300. Marples, D. The Chernobyl Disaster. Current History; Vol. 86, pp. 325-328. Oct. 1987.

301. Bernstein, W. Masters of the Word. Grove Press; NY. 2013. pp. 254-255.

302. Had the generators been built on a nearby hill, there likely would have been no disaster.

303. Kageyama, Y. Japan Fukushima disaster: Probe finds Response Failed. Associated Press/Huffpost/AOL. Dec. 26, 2011-5:57 AM ET.

304. Nakashima, R. and Y. Kegeyama. Japan Equates Nuclear Crisis Severity to Chernobyl. AOL. Apr. 12, 2011. For an excellent account of the event, see chap. 5 of Clarke and Eddy.

305. This still off by an order of magnitude as the Chernobyl accident was generally acknowledged to have cost over \$100 billion.

the well trained corporate thinkers value insurance company money than they do of their gullible customers' petty, inconsequential, trivial little lives.

Sad to say, the nuclear power industry is dominated by an attitude which may fairly be characterized as the "Titanic mentality". Whereas the Titanic believed it could not sink, we all know there could be a meltdown of any nuclear reactor. Still, those who believe the risk to the public is acceptable for the sake of profit to themselves and cronies continue pushing nuclear power while mouthing soothing platitudes about nuclear safety to the rest of us.

Public relations aside, indifference to safety protocol also contributed to if not caused the fire on the British Petroleum oil rig leading to the disastrous spill in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010. With workers under pressure to get the job done and move on, a culture of urgency rather than safety prevailed. Some fatal risks were not identified, and those that were identified were not taken seriously.³⁰⁶ With BP and its contractors missing and ignoring warning signs, an insufficient consideration of risk led to the predictable and inevitable result.³⁰⁷

Finally, Google's self-driving car does not itself qualify as stupid although its designers might warrant the honor because it is an example of a *programmed* inability to learn, so a look at it is nonetheless instructive for us. The car performs well as long as human drivers around it do the same, but when a driver does something improper, the Googlemobile gets befuddled, occasionally leading to an accident. For example, another vehicle speeding the wrong way down a one-way street freaks the program out. To its credit, it has caused only one accident,³⁰⁸ but it needs to be programmed to learn from humans who, as some historians have noted, do not follow their own, set script.³⁰⁹

3. CONCLUSIONS

The Age of Arrogance was transitional from the Age of Industry to the Age of Misinformation.³¹⁰ That being so, a case can be made that contemporary arrogance is an accentuation of tendencies already present in ages past but now somewhat liberated from our conscience and streamlined by our reliance on emotionally indifferent computers. The overwhelming material success of the West in the past century nevertheless seems to justify our characteristic, overbearing confidence that we can do anything except maybe get along with God (i.e., Mother Nature) and each other.

Our current, neo-Renaissance mentality would be expressed, if Hamlet had tweaked in our vowel challenged world, as, "2 b or nt 2 b? Tht s th ?" However, no one seems to notice that the question went explicitly unanswered then and remains moot today: An age characterized by posing impostors and experiences adjudged by attitudes leading to contradictory truths unconfirmable by reason, challenged religions or arbitrary, civil authorities

306. Banerjee, N. Series of errors cited in Gulf spill. Tribune Washington Bureau. Nov. 10, 2010. (Sun-Sentinel. Ft. Lauderdale, FL. p. 3A.)

307. Cappiello, D. Experts ignored warning signs on doomed well. Daily Finance. AOL. Nov. 17, 2010.–10:57 AM.

308. WFOR (Miami). Google admits its car caused an accident. Mar. 1, 2016. Noon news-cast.

309. New York Times, The. Google to program self-driving car to be more aggressive. Sept. 3, 2015. 2:25 PM. (On AOL.)

310. For an example of what negative blogging can accomplish, see Novak, R. The Prince of Darkness. Crown Forum; New York. 2007. p. 610.

all of which also characterized the Renaissance.³¹¹ It is this same mentality which permits tyrants and despots to pose as unifying liberators and their crimes to be rationalized if not justified by such villains as necessary, although certainly something less than noble.³¹² Miscalculation, short-sightedness, rage and hatred all play their part in the human drama³¹³ as do innocence and decency, but they all may inhibit perception of the unthinkable.³¹⁴

The problem kicks back to Descartes, who, as a naturalist, based knowledge on doubt, which he took to be intrinsic in the human mind because it developed in his. However, he missed the fact that most people do not doubt what they know and believe: They just know and believe it.³¹⁵ Nurturist Locke trumped him with experience as the source of knowledge and virtually founded the subject of subjectivity by emphasizing the fact that different people have their own unique, particular, personal experiences. With God³¹⁶ a stand-in for ignorance, modern artists and musician did their empty-hearted best to say nothing as shapes and tones shifted to space and noise. Eventually, they reached the omega point of being impossible to spoof; any attempt of *reductio ad absurdum* could easily be taken as a serious effort to lap the field. The answer is that there is no answer the message is that there is no message nor a messenger who failed to deliver it. To find THE answer or get THE message, we need a starting point for the cycle of history and life, The Enlightenment, which was an intellectual movement designed to scrutinize everything, neither resolved nor reconciled anything to anyone. While nothing was sacred and everything was on the table and analyzed and evaluated, it all came to naught because when we finally we got around to analyzing and evaluating analysis and evaluation, we embraced scrutiny only to find that it, reason, doubt, experience and facts do not give us what we need. Indeed, the best model we have is an eternally repeating expansion/contraction of universes leading from one silent Big Bang³¹⁷ to the next with ages of Humesque uncertainty humorously placed in between.³¹⁸

The lesson of the twentieth century is that science and technology will not save us from ourselves: Indeed, they seem to be leading to the self-destructive exploitation and industrialized despoiling of our life-supporting environment.³¹⁹ Nor will we be saved by divisive spiritual

311. Hecht. op. cit. p. 305.

312. Lilla, M. *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*. New York Review of Books; New York. 2001. p. 198.

313. Hett. op. cit. p. 232.

314. *Ibid.* p. 237.

315. Science is now based on ‘Degrees of certainty’ so both those who believe the world is flat and those who believe it is a perfect sphere are wrong, but those who believe it is flat are wronger than those who believe it is pretty sphericalish. (Asimov. p. 170 of *Livraghi*.)

316. Theologian Woody Allen put the existence of God in the range of the probability of getting a plumber on weekends. (Allen. 1978.) Atheist Stephen Fry has asked “Why should I respect a capricious, mean spirited stupid god who creates a world which is so full of injustice and pain? (P. Vala. *Huffington Post*. Jan. 30, 2015. 19:57. GMT. [AOL]) Because He is the best God we have, even if intellectually limited—His IQ being probably about 70*—does not exist except in the minds of His devotees and stands in the way of every intel-lectual advance by humans. *Forest fires in the west and rains and floods in the northeast? Come on God, get it together. Move the fires to rainy New England or the rain to the west coast or put them both in Kansas. ☺

317. Christian, D. *Origin Story*. Little Brown & Co.; New York 2018. Chap. 1.

318. Heraclitus. Ca. 500 B.C. (Quoted on p. 318 of *Everitt*.)

319. Junger, F. *Die Perfection der Technik*. 1953. Hegel would be pleased to note that the advocates of growth have engendered a counter-culture of “Degrowthers” who denounce the greed of capitalists and push to have us live within our environmental limits. (Levin. 2015. Chap. 7.) The synthesis will probably be growth under a new, “Ungrowth” label.

superstitions and arbitrary religions.³²⁰ If there is to be salvation, it will come from a soulful appreciation of the pitfalls of our subjective nature and be based on universal human rights, international law and a Shintoesque respect for the natural environment—i.e., our unforgiving, intellectually challenged God,³²¹ who has retired on Social Insecurity but apparently still works at least part time to counter fanatics who go to excesses in Its holy name.

The danger we face is that short-term technological development will continue to enrich society without being balanced by a long-term commitment to the arts and humanities. We will be able to do more and more better and better while forgetting why. If we cannot educate ourselves to social goodness and a love of objective truth³²² we will not share our cultural advances and advantages with everyone: Rather, we will just be making more trouble for the long suffering world. Our focus must be on the total human environment for the simple reason that if we insist on evaluating everything simply in terms of immediate technological ability and monetary worth, we will fashion for our-selves only a very efficient and expensive decline if not demise.

The only certainty is that, now, as always, facts and things are whatever people make of them,³²³ and hand-in-hand with this insight is the attitude that everything is relatively equal to everything else. In an absolute sense, this is true: Nothing has intrinsic value, but a function of culture is to place values on things, actions and people according to the standard of the task at hand. Thus, a hammer is intrinsically just as good as a saw, but one may be better suited than the other to a given, particular human generated job.

It is understandable that people want to feel competent and that Westerners feel technology makes them superior. However, the commitment of the West to make the world safe for corporate computers has meant that some problems in human relations have been neglected and others created precisely because our pride in our technological expertise makes us stupidly callous to such issues. We cannot admit that machinery will not solve labor disputes nor reduce racial tension, nor that teaching machines do not educate, nor that birth control devices do not control population growth. While technology has made the world better in some ways and may make it better in many others, we are left confronting ourselves and the fact that we do not understand how to overcome our special interests and work with one another to the advantage of all, and no computer has developed a con-science and taught us how to do that.

Basically, people want to feel in control of their lives, and although the twentieth century saw incredible advances in the development of means to control nature, we cannot bring ourselves to admit what the problem is. This is primarily because our inherited beliefs and built-in, linguistic biases continue to shape our own particular brand of the universal cultural blind spot which is located where "Understanding ourselves" should be. As we strive to "Survive our time"³²⁴ while easing our fantasy God aside, one can only hope that we can learn to live with our technical expertise and concomitant understanding of ourselves so that, some years from now, someone perhaps you will write an amusing, short, fluffy article about the trivial role of stupidity in the twenty-first century.

320. Proofs of UFO's (Klass), Bigfeet and God being about equally convincing to dis/nonbelievers. (Goad. Chap. 7.)

321. Wright, F. Undated citation on p. 413 of McWilliams.

322. Berrigan, D. Undated citation on p. 769 of McWilliams.

323. Oakeshort, M. 1962. "On Being Conservative". *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*. Liberty Fund; Indianapolis, IN. 1991. p. 436.

324. NASA message carried by Voyager 1 and 2. 1977.

BIO: James F. Welles

If I had grown up, it would have been in a suburb of New York, but I never did get the hang of reality. My misspent youth led to ivy league colleges, a stint in the Peace Corps and a doctorate in biology. After teaching for a few years in Germany and mastering German, I played the piano for a few years in piano bars before coming to the realization that people go to bars to drink. Thereafter, I settled on being a writer, cranking out books and articles on the topic I know best—stupidity.

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