

The Best Possible World

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Over my 73 years of living in America as a “peaceful dissident,” many differing perspectives have been embraced by people I considered friends, beloveds, clients, and extended social family members within my demographic subculture of society, politics, and spirituality. All of these individuals qualified as like-minded to one degree or another — sometimes more, sometimes less — but, despite considerable similarity of opinion, intention, and sympathy of belief, there has always been significant divergence in our respective world-views. That is, of course, to be expected, and mostly was not a serious problem. I don’t require my compatriots to be cookie-cutter clones of myself. In fact, given the litany of unsolved problems, contradictions, and paradoxes woven into the fabric of my own life, I’m very glad that other people are not replicas of me.

The main friction I’ve felt between conflicting beliefs or orientations has tended to occur when the respective viewpoints devolved into exclusive cliques that were infected with a presumptuous false superiority. The hard-core political activists sometimes looked down on or were derisive toward those who espoused a more universal spiritual bent. Such judgments cut both ways, however, with the spiritual types often feeling similarly dismissive toward the mundane politicians. From where I sat, this was the typical human failing of *“my philosophy is better and more valid than yours.”* While I’m pretty sure that I too succumbed to that self-aggrandizing egotism on occasion, I can state with certainty that I never liked the subtle (and at times not-so-subtle) arrogance that played out.

Seeing that the world of modern civilization was not as we would have liked it to be, each of us did whatever we could to improve it. Here as with every other endeavor, a bell curve of efforts existed. Many of us devoted at least some time and energy to making the world better, but this took various shapes and forms. For some, the efforts were overt. They worked for the greater good in obvious ways that involved an element of self-sacrifice. Others worked mainly to feather their own nests. Some of those people believed self-centered pursuits to be the best way to increase collective joy, while other people had no awareness of anything but their own self-interest. In fairness, condemning selfishness is a pretty cheap shot. Some people who seem devoted to improving society may be mainly ego-attached to appearing virtuous. Certainty about anyone’s true

motivations are often elusive and not transparent. Even our own motives can be mysterious to us or change over time.

Differing strategies sometimes reflect the stereotyped philosophies of Right versus Left. But not always. Regardless of the individual approach, though, nearly everyone I knew agreed that the human world was definitely screwed up, and that society was often unfair or even cruel. Those sentiments had seemed consistent throughout most of my life — in childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and right into the initial years of my elder hood.

Having been born right at mid-century (November, 1949), I missed the first half of the 20th century, which was arguably the most violent 50 years of human history. Humanity had seemingly descended into collective madness. I came into the world as humanity's next chapter was bifurcating — America was putting Humpty Dumpty back together again with fair success, but the Cold War with the Soviet Union was gearing up in ways that continued the tragic insanity of our species.

While I didn't approve of all the ways America went about the reconstruction of the modern world, I agreed that it needed to be done, and that the task naturally belonged to America, since we had been so blessed. Even my lifelong study of American history, which revealed to me how terribly misguided we had been at almost every turn, didn't alter my basic feeling that responsibility for rebuilding the world correctly fell to America.

Over the past four decades or so, however, my attitudes have shifted. It looks to me like every decision America has made over that time has been wrong, sometimes subtly and despite good intentions, but more often egregiously and with clearly corrupt design. American Exceptionalism has typically meant that we see ourselves as "the good guys," even when that is clearly not true.

As I've lived through the last 40 years, my philosophy about the world has gradually lost its certainty. Recent years with the Covid Pandemic and the increasing insanity of politics have led to my questioning whether the world can be improved at all.

Now, moving deeper into my 70s, and having suffered yet another difficult personal health crisis, I find myself at a crossroads. Astrologically, I am one year into a potentially life-changing three-year period. My natal chart is undergoing an almost apocalyptic turn: Pluto is conjunct my natal Ascendant after already having conjoined ten major natal positions, including every planet but one. The sheer amount of major Pluto transits in my chart is highly unusual. At the same time, Uranus is passing the Meridian by conjoining my Lower Heaven. Having these two dramatic and potent outer planets simultaneously activating both natal Angles is a rare, special, and frightening event. The vast majority of people

(probably 95%) will never experience two outer planets crossing angles of their charts at the same time.

I saw this coming in my chart years ago and have worried about it with great apprehension. Given my age, my history, and the overall symbolism of my chart, these two transits could conceivably indicate my literal death. When the period initially achieved full critical mass at the beginning of 2023, my health declined noticeably. Now, eight months into that 30-month passage, I've suffered a serious brain episode followed by major and dangerous emergency surgery. With almost two years still to go, what will happen next? Is there a way I can honor the symbolic meaning of the two transits and yet not succumb to fear and suffering?

I've never been shy about expressing any of my radical opinions, whether they're about astrology or anything else. Heck, I've been writing about civilization for 40 years and civilizational collapse for 20. My only hesitancy has been that I often feel insufficiently talented or skilled as a writer to express what I see and feel with the eloquence it deserves.

That's where I find myself once again. I'm not at all sure that I'm mature enough to write this commentary. But I'm out of time. I've been kidnapped by two dramatic outer planets, and everything is changing with dizzying speed. So, let me jump directly to the point of this brief essay. I want to question the orientation I've had — along with many other people — for what amounts to my entire life and consider a profoundly different possibility.

The spiritual perspective I wish to discuss is not my own invention. I didn't make it up, but I've been aware of it for a long time. I didn't like the implications when this perspective first floated past me, and I don't much like them now. But, given what's happened in modern civilization over the past 40 years and what's happening now in America, liking the implications or not doesn't matter. I can no longer dismiss this possibility out of hand.

OK, so what is this perspective?

What if the world we see around us now, as it is — with all its horrible, cringe-worthy flaws, failings, and fuck-ups — is, both in truth and in reality, the best possible world that humans living now can create? What if modern society is already maxed out in its goodness and cannot be improved, repaired, or fixed?

More and more as we stumble further down the road toward obvious failure or perversion of the social structures and group norms we've depended on since the end of World War II — institutional, political, governmental, economic, etc., all of which are corrupted now far beyond any hope of renewal or correction — I find myself seriously considering the possibility that this rather harsh perspective (namely, that the damaged world of modern civilization is as good as we can

make it, and nothing we do will improve it further) is objectively correct and truly the way things are.

The presumption of this orientation is that ideas about what we might do could vary from the sublime to the ridiculous, but nothing we could propose has even the slightest chance of being implemented effectively. We're too far gone. The road to (and through) collapse has become necessary and, at this point, pre-ordained. There is no avoiding it. However painful and overloaded with suffering such a fate may be, modern civilization has reached a point where it must fundamentally fall apart before it can be rebuilt from the ground up. That rebuilding has less to do with circumstances, and more to do with the attitudes and beliefs of future (and perhaps as-yet-unborn) humans who will do the hard work of actual reconstruction — civilization's phoenix-like rising from the ashes. Neither the leaders of society nor most of the rest of us possess a sane vision of the world. The status quo is too damaged by warped self-interest. We will need new human beings with saner attitudes and more loving beliefs to create a society that isn't toxic to all life.

If it's true that we live in the best of all possible worlds, and that thinking we can repair or improve the world is folly, then that leaves me with many vexing and unanswered questions. What do we do now? Where should we stand as collapse overtakes us? How shall we approach the coming years and decades?

I don't have any easy answers to those questions. I imagine, though that the most likely answers are pretty much common sense: Do whatever feels right for you to do. Now, when I say "feels right," I don't mean doing whatever we want. Acting from the basis of desire is invoked far too often and is mostly the advice offered by manipulative marketing, craven advertising, and people whose sole motivation is to make us buy whatever they're selling. I'm not saying that desire is bad; at this point, however, it's untrustworthy and a very slippery slope.

No, when I write "do what feels right," I'm talking about something that probably isn't a "feeling" at all — it's more a combination of thought, emotion, perception, sensation, and intuition. Taken together, these constitute *right action*, or one might say *practical wisdom in action* that can reduce further trauma and limit unnecessary suffering.

Let the world collapse. It needs to collapse if our species and its coming generations are to have any viable future. What we currently understand as "human nature" and believe to be permanent is not. Yes, biology is indeed destiny, but the content of our biology only seems fixed and unchanging. The dictates of the amygdala and the mid-brain are not cast in stone. A new kind of human being is possible, but not from within the stale and poisoned assumptions of our current society.

More about this later.