Praise for the author

'Julian Faifield' is a thinker. He asks what is an optimal functioning human being and what is an optimally functioning society in our contemporary world.

Every argument and every word is directed with a passion for realism and a desire to give his readers maximum traction in the project of living a good life, perhaps even building a better society."

Graham Long - Pastor and CEO Wayside Chapel

Drawing from many of the greatest contributors throughout human history to the disciplines of science, philosophy and religion, Julian has produced a challenging but highly rewarding perspective on what it is to be human and what it is that governs our thinking and behaviours. It is his ability to integrate the many different fields and to maintain the very highest levels of abstraction that make his work unique. I'm sure that every reader will have more than one ah-ha moment and for some of us it might even change the way we live our lives, for the benefit of ourselves and our communities.

Mark Joiner - Chief Financial Officer, National Australia Bank

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WHO IS IN CONTROL OF YOUR BRAIN?



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WHO IS IN CONTROL OF YOUR BRAIN?



A Guide to Understanding Nature vs. Nurture, Knowing Yourself & Sculpting Your Reality

JULIAN FAIRFIELD

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All the information, techniques, skills and concepts contained within this publication are of the nature of general comment only and are not in any way recommended as individual advice. The intent is to offer a variety of information to provide a wider range of choices now and in the future, recognising that we all have widely diverse circumstances and viewpoints. Should any reader choose to make use of the information contained herein, this is their decision, and the contributors (and their companies), authors and publishers do not assume any responsibilities whatsoever under any condition or circumstances. It is recommended that the reader obtain their own independent advice.

First Edition 2016

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National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Creator: Fairfield, Julian Lawrence McLeod, author.

Title: Who is in Control Of Your Brain? : A Breakthrough Guide to Understanding Nature vs. Nurture, Knowing Yourself & Sculpting Your Reality / Julian Fairfield.

ISBN: 9781925288339 (paperback)

Mind and body.
Brain - Physiology.
Belief and doubt.
Self-actualization (Psychology)

Dewey Number: 128.2

Published by Global Publishing Group
PO Box 517 Mt Evelyn, Victoria 3796 Australia
Email info@GlobalPublishingGroup.com.au

Printed in China

For further information about orders:
Phone: +61 3 9739 4686 or Fax +61 3 8648 6871

This book is dedicated to my wife Misako.
She explores the edges of the visible and spiritual.
Bringing back gifts to us all.

Julian Fairfield

Acknowledgements

I am a product of several cultures, a rich life and a lot of study. Everything in this book has been thought of before. My role has been to draw together ideas that are often separated by the high walls of specialisation. So I have to acknowledge help from many different disciplines. A few writers that have recently influenced me…

Animal behaviour; Jane Goodall, Conrad Lorenz, Desmond Morris, Edward Wilson, Charles Darwin, Robert Winston, Elliot Jacques.

The Brain and its plasticity; Arrowsmith Young, Norman Doidge, Jane Bolt-Taylor, Steven Pinker, Noam Chomsky, Robert Kegan, Oliver Sacks, Charles Duhigg, Martin Seligman, Dan Siegel, Joseph Ledoux.

Religion; Karen Armstrong, Scott Atran, Thomas Cahill, Eckhart Tolle, Alain De Bolton, Yogananda, Naas Baum, Pierre De Chardin, David Richo, John Dickerson. Graham Long.

Philosophy; Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Hume, Ken Wilbur, Adam Smith, Julian Huxley, Fredrick Nietzsche, John Rawls.

History; Ferdinand Braudel, Robert Cahill, Jasper Ridley, Caldicott, Peter Ackroyd, A Daron Acemoglu, James Robinson, Samuel Huntington, Theodore Zeldin, Arnold Tonybee, Daniel Boorstein.

Economics; Nail Ferguson, Adam Smith, Lord Keynes, Paul Samuelson, Jeffry Sacks, Paul Krugman, Allan Greenspan, Irvine Fisher, Thomas Pickerty, Joseph Stiglitz, Milton Friedman.

Politics-Sociology; Thomas Paine, Amarataseyn, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Gandhi, Max Weber, Francis Fukuyama, William Beveridge, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

Psychiatry/psychology; Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Bill Glasser, Amos Tversky, Daniel Kahneman. John Grindler, Elliott Jacques, Erick Berne,

In addition to these writers this book would not have happened without Libby Harkness who helped immeasurably in bringing my stilted, dyslexic writing to life; Paul Beaumont who worked endlessly as I modified the exhibits and Paul Harnisch who gave me ongoing encouragement.

To everyone my sincere thanks.

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As you read the overall storyline you will see there are repetitions back sightings and fore sightings of what's to come. You will also see that some key ideas are bolded and separated out. This is purposeful, it's how our brains absorb information.

Introduction

My aim in writing this book is to open your mind to promising new choices that can give your life more fulfilment and purpose. What you choose will also change the lives of your children and may even lead to a better society.

The focus of *Who is in Control of Your Brain* is primarily on you as an individual. However, to achieve this, it's necessary to take into account the culture in which we live. While we can recognise what very different people we would be if we had been brought up in say, Afghanistan rather than in the USA or Australia, it is hard to recognise how our behaviours and the choices we make are driven by our own cultures.

A good analogy is to liken ourselves to a fish swimming in a river. The fish has free choice – it can swim up, down, right or left; but in reality it is controlled by the river. The river may or may not be polluted and may or may not be going in the direction we want, but the reality is that we are going to end up wherever the river takes us.

So, until we understand the flow of the river, our free choice is just an illusion.

The river has forced me to think beyond the individual to society itself. For instance, if you are able to swim to the river bank, jump out and see if the river is polluted and where it's going – you will have a range of choices and freedoms that were not available while swimming along with the flow.

More specifically, I believe it's important that we understand the pervasive impact of globalisation on our societies – and therefore on our individual lives; how globalisation has allowed an alpha elite the freedom to improve their lives while unintentionally limiting the lives of others.

Once you understand this, you can make better choices. In other words, you can transform yourself and even change the river in which we all swim. Perhaps we may even be able to change not just ourselves but society as well.

This book has ten ideas, starting with the three Building Blocks of human behaviour:

1. Building Block 1: All life has built-in instinctive survival behaviours. We have six DNA-survival behaviours/predispositions. Each of which can be expressed either positively or negatively.

2. Building Block 2: Your brain can be seen as a rational, emotional, conscious problem-solving machine.
3. Building Block 3: The brain can also be seen as a quirky habit-forming and loving machine; it forms habits of action and habits of belief. I call habits of thinking "*felt truths*".
4. Religions and cultures all do the same thing with religion-specific *felt truths* – they draw out our positive predispositions and manage our negative predispositions. They make us better human beings.
5. One of our six predispositions is to form alpha-led, competitive hierarchies; these hierarchies form the basis of human organisation. The key challenge of society is how to realise the energy and capability of an alpha-elite without being exploited by them. If unconstrained, alphas will always exploit the population to improve their privilege. Fully functioning, distributive democracy is, so far, our best answer to this problem.
6. Unconstrained alphas exploit the majority through physical violence or the control of ideas – *felt truths* that advantage the alphas, while exploiting the majority. Paradoxically the majority may often believe in the very felt truths that are the source of their exploitation.
7. The global explosion of free markets in products, services, finance, labour and tax policy, supported by the *felt truth* of extreme rational economics, has lifted previous nation-state constraints on alphas. The result is that they now enjoy an increasingly disproportionate share of national wealth. And fully functioning distributive democracy is at risk.
8. Uneven distribution of wealth is destroying the dream of a better life through education and hard work for the majority. In the extreme, this results in the corrosion of society from within.
9. On an individual level, understanding how your brain works, and understanding the river, explains what is going on around us and creates previously unavailable choices of how to live our lives.
10. With this understanding, and daily practices, you can overcome your adult brain's immunity to change, and sculpt a more fulfilled and purposeful life for yourself and your children. Maybe even change society.

There are three sections in this book which explore the ideas above.

Section One: An explanation of the three building blocks of human behaviour.

- Our six DNA derived predispositions
- Our emotional, rational, conscious, problem-solving brain
- Our brain as a quirky, pattern-making, habit-forming machine

Section Two: Explains how the interaction of the three building blocks has created the history of our species – enriching and validating section one. This section concludes with the idea that we are returning to an old historical story – one in which elite alphas, if unconstrained, maintain and improve their privilege at the expense of the majority, thus corroding society from within.

Section Three: Here we see how the ideas expressed in Section One can be put into practice to create a better version of ourselves, how we can be more fulfilled and how to expand the lives of our children and grandchildren – and even think about how we can create a better society.

SECTION ONE

Introductory summary of Chapter 1

The first building block: Our six DNA-survival predispositions

All living creatures must act to survive; if they didn't they couldn't. All life – horses, dogs, spiders – has built-in DNA-derived behaviour to keep them alive. Humans too must have built-in survival predispositions, or we wouldn't be around. Given that our modern civilised behaviours are a mixture of DNA-survival predispositions and behaviours derived from culture, the question then is: what are our human DNA-driven survival behaviours, as against our culturally derived behaviours?

There is no perfect way of unravelling this nature/nurture problem but, as chimpanzees have about 96.5 per cent of the same DNA as humans, they might be a good place to start a comparison. Reading up on chimps, in particular Jane Goodall's work – she has written about a dozen books – it is easy to recognise their six core social survival predispositions common to all

chimp troops and which therefore would seem to be DNA derived, innate to all chimps.

1. Constant alertness to danger/threats
2. Male, alpha-dominated, competitive hierarchy
3. Constant sexual activity and competition
4. Small group bonding, typified by altruism, affection, fairness, tit-for-tat trading
5. Large group troop membership with a recognised *"US"* resulting in negative stereotyping and fear of the *"THEM"*
6. Ongoing problem-solving

In human terms these innate survival behaviours can be expressed as having either a positive or negative effect. For example, a predisposition to creating alpha-led domination and submission hierarchies can be either good or bad – good if it leads to the protection and advancement of the troop, bad if the alpha and his allies exploits the weaker members of the troop.

Alphas enjoy privilege. They get the best food, the best sleeping places and often first access to females in heat. Unconstrained alphas, together with their allies, will always strive to maintain and extend their privilege.

Understanding the good/bad alpha dynamic is essential in understanding society because without constraint, alphas set the rules to maintain their privilege. These are the rules within which you live your life (the river in which you swim).

When ready, young and upcoming alphas will compete to depose the existing alpha. Being an alpha is not without its drawbacks; they have to fight to retain their position and have to lead their troop in combat with other troops.

In my career, I have worked with more than a hundred diverse organisations – from advising CEOs of Fortune 100 companies, to building an intraocular lens plant in Eritrea, one of the poorest countries in the world. I observed these six predispositions within every single one of those organisations. The negative expressions of these predispositions may have been constrained; nevertheless, they were still there. Constrained alpha-led hierarchies can

be seen in fully functioning democratic nation states; less constrained hierarchies can be seen in less developed countries and in the extreme, in ISIS or the Taliban.

Introductory summary of Chapter 2

The second building block: Our emotional, rational, conscious, problem-solving brain

Here's a simplified description of our brain. The brain has evolved with three layers; starting at the top of the spine, it has the lizard brain which manages many automatic bodily functions. Above this is the limbic system; this is a centre of emotions, especially fearfulness that keeps you alive. On top of this is the neocortex where complex thought takes place.

Humans have a much larger neocortex than chimps. As a result, we are conscious, super-smart chimps, with imagination. We can solve problems of survival beyond the concrete physical world, beyond present time. We can imagine better lives, talk to each other and share ideas and solutions.

To better understand our behaviour, there are five areas of the brain that it's useful to be a bit familiar with:

1. *The reticular activating system* (RAS) which tells us what to watch out for. We constantly scan our environment, checking out what's important. The RAS is hyper sensitive on how to get pleasure and avoid pain.
2. *The amygdala* in the limbic system is the area that controls our fight, flight or freeze response. Once triggered by the RAS, the amygdala overrules and swamps other brain activity; its job is to keep you alive.
3. *The prefrontal lobes* (PFL) of the neocortex are where "thought" takes place.
4. *The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC*) is an area in the PFL where **slow** rational thought like planning seems to take place.
5. Last, still in the PFL, *the ventral medial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC*) is where **fast** thought seems to take place – where you already know the answer without thinking it through. This is where, I argue, *felt truths* probably reside.

Introductory summary of Chapter 3

The third building block: Our pattern-making, habit-forming, self-observing quirky brain

We are constantly solving problems – simple physical problems such as how to get food, how to avoid danger, where to sleep and how to procreate. Then there are more complex conceptual and abstract human problems, such as how to live a good life and how to build a worthwhile society.

Our problem-solving brains use about 20 per cent of our daily energy budget (e.g. a Big Mac). Because the brain doesn't want to use more energy than it needs, it prefers **fast** decision-making in order to conserve energy, as **slow** rational thought – A leads to B leads to C – uses a lot of energy. If you are in an environment in which food may be limited, it is survival-smart to conserve energy.

So the brain's default operating mode is to make sense of the world using **fast** patterns and sticking to them, because it doesn't want to have to solve the same problem repeatedly. Nor does it like uncertainty – it's a waste of energy. So we form patterns of action, or what we recognise as habits, and patterns of thought, usually called beliefs. These are what I call *felt truths*. We have many **fast** *felt truths*: Christianity is… Muslims are… Democrats are… McDonald's is… Ford cars are… Gun control is…

To make life even easier we tend to cluster **fast** *felt truths*. Using politics as an example, the two clusters are Progressives and Conservatives. Presented with a problem such as same-sex marriage, either cluster will tend to come up with a predictable **fast** response.

Habits of both action and thought – the *felt truths* – create "grooves" in our brain which cause us to behave in ways, either positive or negative, that we repeat without thinking. Once we create these habits we tend to stick to them. The adult brain is very resistant to change.

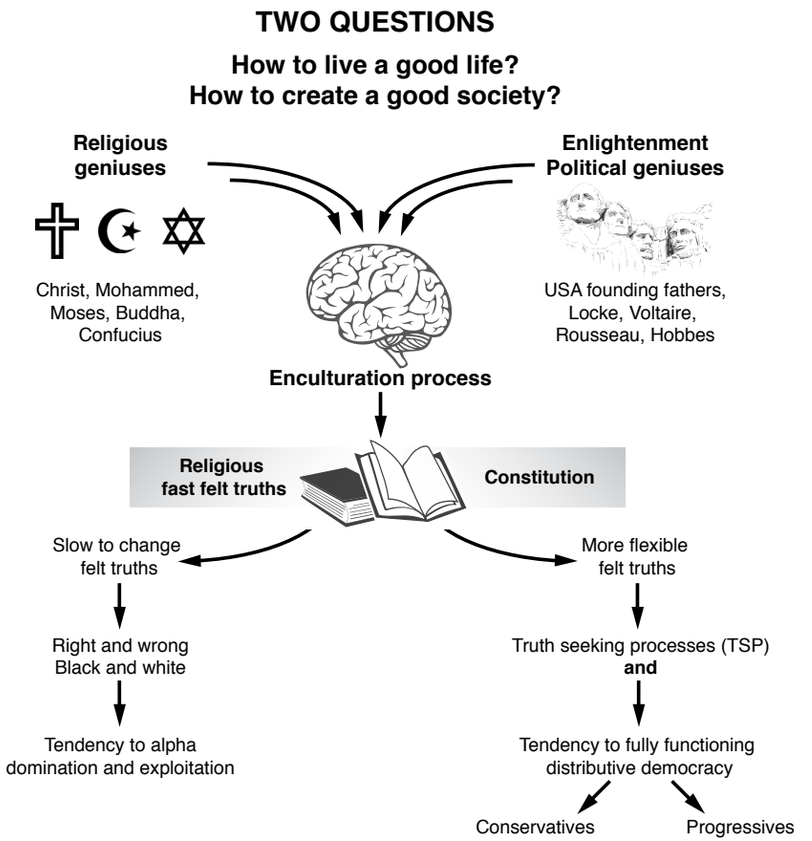
But never underestimate the power of the brain. It is able to perform an extraordinary trick – consciousness allows us to stand outside ourselves and listen to both our **fast** quick-decision voice and our **slow** rational voice. Having this **third observer** enables us to choose our behaviours. In other words, we are able to ask ourselves if we should act according to our **fast** voice or our **slow** rational voice.

This triple conversation – rational, emotional and third observer – in one single head is how we sort out our good and bad predispositions. It is the source of our ideas about good and bad, and ultimately our morality, as we choose the good road in spite of the possibility of choosing the bad one. The tension we feel in restraining ourselves from the often pleasurable bad gives our actions value.

The third observer thinking process was used by the great sages of religion – Christ, Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, as well as the extraordinary thinkers of the Enlightenment and the men who wrote America's Constitution. They asked themselves two questions; attempted to solve two problems.

- How should I/we live a good life?
- How should we structure a good society?

Their answers, in different ways and to different degrees, do the same thing: they draw out our positive DNA predispositions and manage our negative DNA predispositions. Their solutions became the cultural norms and the supporting institutional processes for Christians, Muslims, Jews etc., that many of us have taken as truths. Once taught to us in childhood they become our **fast** thought patterns. In this way over thousands of years, **slow** rational thought combined with trial and error can be turned into **fast** *felt truths* forming cultures and identity that improve with time. I call this, truth seeking process TSP, the washing machine of time – the good ideas get brighter in the wash, the bad fade away.



Nevertheless, our fast/slow, habit-forming, third-eye observing, problem-solving brain has a number of quirks. Some examples:

Our problem-solving brain demands answers. It will make up *felt truths* that are not **THE** truth.

Our brain doesn't know the difference between an attack on a *felt truth* like, say, Islam or extreme rational economics, and a physical attack. If confronted with either the conceptual or the physical it will respond with survival (amygdala) vigour as if our lives were at risk.

We are easily amygdala-triggered into **fast** fearfulness when rational **slow** thinking would help us be much less fearful. Alphas use our fearfulness of the THEM, our need to belong, and our predisposition to submission, to assert control, maintain their own privilege and take us to war.

We are more **fast** thinking than we recognise; we decide **fast** and rationalise **slow**.

We avoid **slow** thinking by clustering our felt truths. In politics this is typified by Progressive clusters verses Conservatives clusters.

Lastly, encultured, educated adults are almost immune to change; change can be achieved but it takes daily practice.

This is the conceptual part of the book.

Here I want to stress that what I am explaining is not just an interesting theory, it relates to you and me and everyone you know, no matter what their culture or status. It is practical information to change your life.

SECTION TWO

Introductory summary of Chapter 4

The idea of *felt truths* expanded

The idea of felt truths is a tricky one but understanding it is essential for both self-development and societal development. I am going to use the ongoing multi-millennia War on Women (WOW) to explain the concept and how *felt truths* originate and change over time. Then I'm going to look at the war between nations and our preoccupation with war since the beginning of history. War changes people's personalities, behaviours and the societies they live in, simultaneously drawing out both our positive and negative predispositions, so it's important to understand the issues that war raises and its impact on our *felt truths*.

The evolution of felt truths is a six-step process. In the case of WOW, the steps are:

1. Unconstrained male-dominance DNA predispositions lead to primitive *felt truths*: women are weak, unintelligent, sexually manipulative, overemotional, best suited to raising children and need male guidance and protection.

2. These primitive *felt truths* (all of which advantage the dominant male) become built into customs and social institutions. Consequently, women are

not educated, do the housework, raise the children, cover up their bodies, are required to be faithful and are considered "property" owned by men.

3. These exploitative customs and social institutions confirm, even create, the primitive *felt truths* held by both men and women. Uneducated women are unintelligent, are overemotional, their weak position requires them to be manipulative and they are good at raising children and doing the housework. Paradoxically, at this stage most women agreed with these **fast** *felt truths*. Experience becomes self-confirming for both men and women, even when the *felt truths* are rampant nonsense.

4. Eventually a group of women from the alpha class or the progressive left find enough space and energy to demand fairness and respect. They contest the commonly held primitive **fast** *felt truths* and demand change to laws and institutions to embody their right to equality. This is a hard fought process that is taking years and has to fight the self-serving, slow, "rational arguments" of men who did not want to lose their dominant position and privilege (remember – it's in their DNA). Eventually men are forced to act differently by law but biologically they hate their loss of power and their ability to exploit.

5. Gradually a new set of *felt truths* supported by more advanced institutional forms emerge. Laws change; women vote, they have property rights, can initiate divorce, can work, take the contraceptive pill and terminate pregnancies. The next generation of men and women see these new **fast** *felt truths* as normal. What was all the fuss about? It's obvious women are just as smart as men, should have equal work opportunities, should have control over who they marry and when they do or don't have babies. The river is changing its course and it's less polluted.

6. The final step is where these more equal **fast** *felt truths* and institutions, with modifications, spread to other cultures. If the modifications are better, they can flow back to the originating culture. However, in the case of WOW, biology still lurks; women still are the ones who have the babies and men are still DNA disposed to dominate – continuing high levels of family violence perpetrated by men attest to this.

This six-step process making the *felt truths* brighter through the washing machine of time applies to all unfairness and inequity. It's an example of a

multi-generational long-term Truth Seeking Process (TSP). Our current *felt truths* are a useful way to confirm our identity and get us through the day, but they are **not the truth**. We can always come up with better *felt truths,* particularly if we cotton on to the idea that we can change a *felt truth*. Had we been born in say 1900, our *felt truths* about women would be very different to those we have today.

Once we recognise where we are in this process we should be able to more directly confront exploitation and self-justifying rationalisation for what they are and arrive at better felt truths and their supporting institutions more quickly.

Introductory summary of Chapter 5

Religious culture

In this chapter we look at religion in a more detailed way. We see how each of the main religions across the world answer the same six core religious questions/problems that humans are impelled to solve:

1. Is there a God?
2. Where do I go when I die?
3. What is my purpose in life?
4. Why is there so much suffering?
5. How do I live a good life?
6. How do we create a better society?

Each religion answers the last two questions in the ways that draw out our positive and manage our negative predispositions – an incredible advance for humanity.

However, religious culture has two inherent problems associated with the quirks I described in Chapter 3. First, the great religions inculcate in their followers **fast** *felt truths* that are very powerful in helping people live well together, but they create an *"us"* against a frightening *"them"*. This can slide into negative stereotyping and religious-based conflict. Negative stereotyping is a two-way street and, as in the case of WOW, becomes self-confirming. A bit of self-knowledge could help.

The second problem is that alphas can easily use religious *felt truths* to sustain their privilege and position while exploiting a compliant mass. Paradoxically, the mass often colludes in its own exploitation (see Step 3 in WOW). It's not difficult to recognise these problems in today's world. Saudi Arabia uses Wahhabi Islam to maintain the power of its elite, Shia Islam is similarly utilised in Iran while Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, is increasingly using religion to his own purpose.

I'm not suggesting in any way that I am anti-religious – quite the opposite I go to church every Sunday. It is a highlight of my week. Our great religious figures like Christ, Muhammad, Confucius, Buddha and others have had their teachings put through the TSP of the washing machine of time. To totally deny the teachings of religion is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. What I'm against is the use of religion to create negative stereotyping or support alpha exploitation. I deal with this issue – what's good and what's bad – in Chapter 8.

Introductory summary Chapter 6

Medieval England – a case study in alpha-authorised felt truths that maintained alpha dominance which were finally overthrown by the Enlightenment, which laid the ground for Modernity

In this chapter I give an example of how a small group of alphas captured nearly all England's wealth through *felt truths* which supported their privilege, and how this slowly changed. I'm including this because I want to go back to *felt truth* supported alpha domination.

I will give you a snapshot of society where the church and the aristocratic alphas controlled and exploited the population with both *felt truths* and physical force, thus maintaining alpha dominance for more than one thousand years. Conscious rational scientific problem-solving was largely blocked by religious dogma. If you already have the answer and the answer is used to support the religious and aristocratic warrior alphas, there is little likelihood of innovative thought.

The alphas, who were less than one per cent of the population, owned about 80 per cent of all the country's wealth (sounding familiar?). Without science, productivity gains were close to zero. If alphas wanted to further improve

their privilege, they had to go to war. The difficulties of alpha competitive succession meant that this was often.

The average person's life was awful; it lacked freedom, fairness, education and material improvement. It was a life of poverty and violence. The alpha-authorised *felt truths* of absolute loyalty to a squire, lord or king and a belief that by following the teachings of the church you were ensured of a wonderful afterlife, enslaved the population. That said, the combination of (DNA-supported) hierarchical subservience and religious belief gave real meaning, energy and fulfilment to people's lives. Evidence of this can be found in the many thousands of beautiful churches that were built in every English town and village during this period.

This alpha capture was undermined by multiple events that created the physical and mental open space for the Enlightenment. It was this period where the inherent positive aspects of our DNA predispositions – empathy, altruism, fairness, belonging – were given scope to blossom and in the process freeing more and more people from exploitation. These mind-freeing events also led to the rediscovery of the scientific method – lots of **slow** thinking about better ways of doing things.

The scientific method led to huge productivity gains and the creation of enough wealth for people to be kinder to each other, potentially decreasing the need for war which destroys wealth.

The shift started with the Black Death in 1350 that changed the balance of power between serfs and lords, and hinged around Martin Luther's rejection of Catholicism in favour of individual conscience in 1521. It was at this point in history where the dogmatic **fast** religious thought that was supporting the one per cent aristocratic and religious alpha class became open to question and rational thought.

An extraordinary problem arose:

If the aristocracy and the priests are not to rule us, then who should govern and how should we be governed without being exploited?

This question was to occupy the best **slow** thinking rational minds for several hundred years. Its ongoing resolution has resulted in Modernity. And our fast almost consciously forgotten felt truths about fully functioning distributive democracy.

Introductory summary of Chapter 7

Modernity and the changing felt truths of the USA where the majority are beginning to become more conscious of the unintended exploitation of unconstrained global alphas that can now choose where they operate

In this chapter we will explore two periods – 1945–1975 and 1975 to the present day. I have focussed on the USA, as its cultural trends tend to influence the rest of the Western world.

The first period starts with the post-war years where the "American Dream" was alive and well; the American *felt truths* which revolved around a better world for one's self and one's children through education and individual hard work became a reality, via the distributive power of unions and a fully functioning general right democracy.

The economy of each nation in the world was largely domestic. The Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 allowed global trade but put sand in the wheels of trade, to slow down the excesses that had led to the Great Depression, by obliging countries to adopt mutually sustainable trade and monetary policies.

Democracy was characterised by reasonably respectful dialogue between Progressives and Conservatives who, in effect, had to come to some compromise as they "couldn't leave the room" – they were bounded by the nation state. The resulting nation state legislation realised critically important alpha energy and intellect while constraining alpha self-interest through the law and by *felt truths* around national interest, social responsibility and citizenship. There was reasonable wealth distribution, and the life of most Americans improved. They worked hard, paid high taxes (75 per cent plus) and in return had general access to medical benefits, new universities, new schools, new roads, new airports and new and affordable housing. The American dream was real – children had better lives than their parents.

In the second period – from 1975 until today, the American dream is under duress. The cause of this pressure is globalisation and the financialisation of the economy – an explosion of debt. This has freed the alphas to do what they are inclined to do – improve their privilege and exploit everyone else. They can now cherry-pick where they want to do business and what taxes and regulations they want to operate under.

The **fast** *felt truths* of extreme rational economic and extreme individual competition have created global free markets in trade, wages, foreign exchange, investment, interest rates and taxation – and one could even argue, the making of law. Alphas and corporations can now choose where to pay taxes. The nation state has lost the levers of control of its own economy, and subsequently of society. Politicians are pretending they have control but in truth the extreme rational economics of the global market is in control. Economic theory focuses on economic efficiency; it ignores the distribution of the wealth that efficiency creates. The Alpha self-interested global invisible hand is now in control.

The truth-seeking process of a Fully Functioning Distributive Democracy (FFDD) is now at risk. When constrained, alphas are an essential part of creating a vibrant society, but in a globalised world the alphas have become unconstrained and are exploiting the rest of society.

They do this by supporting the felt truths of extreme competitive individualism, extreme free markets and extreme consumerism that improve their alpha position and wealth while limiting the improvement and potential of the majority.

It's the alphas who have reaped most of the gains in economic growth over the past thirty years. As a result, inequality – the root cause of the high rates of incarceration, drug use, mental health problems and self-sustaining ignorance – is getting worse by the day. While we address these issues separately, one by one, we have little success because we are addressing the symptoms rather than the root cause – unfairness, inequality and humiliation, the destruction of the American dream.

The strange paradox of this is that many of the exploited middle class majority believe in the *felt truths* of extreme competitive individuality and extreme free markets which are exploiting them (see Step 3 in WOW.) The financial crisis and how it was handled is just one outcome of alpha exploitation; bankers continued to get bonuses while the middle classes and socially disadvantaged had their houses repossessed or were placed into serfdom with "zombie mortgages" in which the bank refuses to foreclose, making the owner part of the living dead.

Alphas are now global citizens, able to cherry-pick and dictate laws to suit themselves. They do this without realising they are contributing to the corrosion of their own societies because they believe in their own self-serving *felt truths*. I know this as a well-practised global alpha. I can argue the rational, self-serving, alpha case for extreme rational economics with great skill. It's stimulating to be right and wrong at the same time. LOL

Coming to the end of Section Two: you can see that I have emphasised the need for society to manage alpha chimps and the *felt truths*, laws and institutions that support and sustain their privilege.

We need to develop a different set of *felt truths* that allow the alphas to maintain their energy without exploiting us. The new *felt truths* will challenge the ideas around extreme competitive individuality and extreme rational economics; we will need more "*and*" – e.g. thinking, economic efficiency *and* societal capital building.

More sand in the wheels of global finance will be required to slow globalisation down. Global governance is unlikely, so the nation state will have to recapture its levers of control. We need to again become citizens not just consumers. How the balance between alpha self-interest and common interest pans out will be an interesting story.

Keeping in mind how the river is evolving, the final section is about personal character development. Understanding the evolution of the river is critical to the fish swimming in it. Furthermore, if enough of us fish understand what is happening, we can even redirect the river.

SECTION THREE

Aims, preconditions and practices to enable change

This last part of the book is important because it contains the most practical information. Here I show you how to apply the ideas I have outlined in the first two sections so you can put yourself in charge of your brain and thus create a more fulfilling and happier life. You will learn how you can use this information to give your children a better chance in life with richer choices.

I also cover the importance of self-awareness in managing change in our lives; re-sculpting ourselves and our realities, becoming what we want to be and

living in a world more aligned to the way we want it to be. Basically it's about drawing out our positives predispositions and managing the negatives ones.

The daily practices I list work because everyday life is treated as on ongoing learning process; each success building new neural pathways in your brain.

Introductory summary of Chapter 8

My attempt at understanding good versus bad

Without some moral and ethical rocks to stand on, the third observer in your head has no way of knowing what to do – act **slow** and rationally or act **fast**? In the modern world our feelings are given too much weight in this debate; it's worth remembering that we are often at our best when we are feeing at our worst. It doesn't necessary feel good to restrain our (DNA) impulses and vice versa; the SS were probably feeling good as they sent Jews off to the gas chambers. The young financial wizards lending money to people who could not pay were certainly feeling good. We need some time-tested rocks to stand on. They come from religion.

I recount my own search for the answer to the age-old religious question of what it means to be a good person and what are the moral rocks I can rely on. My journey took me from committed Christian to atheist and back to a highly engaging interpretation of Christ's teachings that keeps the baby but throws out the dirty bathwater.

I found a pastor who refreshingly says that God is not interested in theology, Biblical quotes, discussions about the Trinity (God doesn't understand it either); God is only interested in what you do. What a relief to hear that! I now go to church every Sunday – it's the highlight of my week.

After recounting my lengthy quest, I share my new understanding of love. Ridiculously, it took me 60 years to realise that love is not a feeling, it's a verb – an action. This was a significant insight for me. I can't manage my feelings but I can manage my actions.

I can do love. I see it very simply. Love is a thousand small acts of kindness day in, day out. Love always comes with risk and disappointment but that's okay. Incidentally, love also confronts the *felt truths* of extreme competitive individuality and extreme rational economics.

LOVE demands an "AND".

Introductory summary of Chapter 9

Aims and preconditions for change – implementing the ideas to change your life

Adults are almost immune to change so we have to create the circumstances where change can take place.

First, you need to review where you begin, and then you can decide your aims. I will share my starting point and my aims with you but they will be different from yours. I split my aims into personal aims and relationship aims. Relationship aims were a priority for me as I'm pretty lousy at them.

The four preconditions for change are:

- The need to be able to self-observe so you can make the "third observer" a way of life.
- The need for quiet time in your head. You can't fill the bucket if it's already full with noisy ideas crashing around.
- The need to understand your fears and walk towards them. If not, you will be trapped in your nearly always self-constructed fearfulness. You will be immune to change.
- The need to undertake a review of how you handle your own DNA positive and negative predispositions and what are your own *felt truths*. Without this you are swimming along with apparent "free will" but in reality going where the river takes you, which for the majority is not a good place.

These preconditions take effort – and time. You don't have to address them all at once or quickly. However, if you engage with them honestly, you can redirect your life. I can tell you it's amazing and exhilarating but you must also be able to laugh at your own human frailties. Becoming a good person will always be a work in progress.

Introductory summary to Chapter 10

Daily sculpting of the character you want to build

Having taken on the work in Chapter 9, you are now in a position to build the character you want to become by using daily practices. These practices are a mix of preconditions and aims. I'll share my own list (yours may be

different) – I select one a day and consciously work on it. In the morning I also plan how I will respond to events in today's schedule, especially if I know they will potentially "amygdala" trigger either me or anyone else.

Once you engage with this daily, event by event, process of building a better version of yourself, your perception of life will change. You will be presented with more choices, and experience much less anxiety; you will also feel less self-centred and more connected to others. These pleasurable feeling are created by a number of different endorphins and will encourage you to continue the journey with diminishing effort – even fun. It will become a delight – you have become your own experiment. How good will that be?

In the next chapter we look at the aspect of passing this knowledge onto your children, expanding their life choices and chances of fulfilment.

Introductory summary to Chapter 11

How to use these ideas with your children

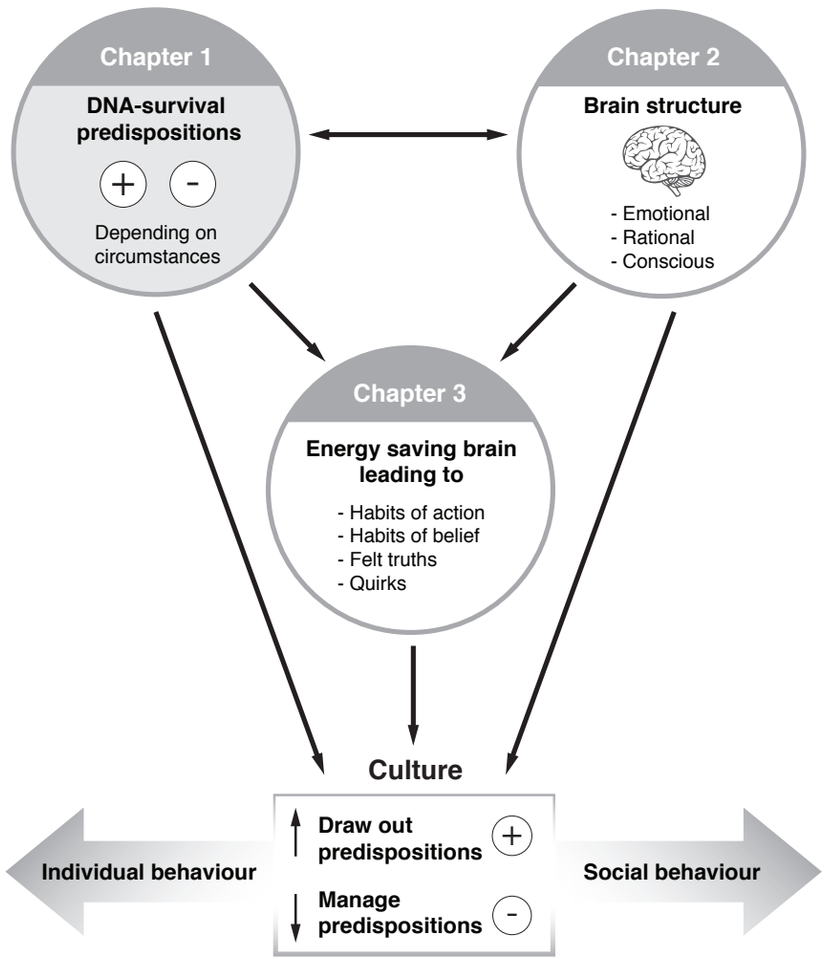
Throughout this book I touch on the idea that an understanding of our DNA predispositions, the way our brain functions and our habits can be very helpful in raising our children. Most parents I speak to about it can see its potential application for theirs.

As it happens, an extraordinary school program called MindUP™, developed under the leadership of the American actress Goldie Hawn, has been using similar ideas about how the brain works with children of all ages in hundreds of classrooms for several years.

Rather than reinvent the wheel, I will give a brief summary of the MindUP™ approach. Anyone interested in the MindUP™ syllabus can obtain a copy as it's readily available and quite inexpensive. You can contact them directly for the name of a school that uses it in your area.

Finally, I'd like to return to my analogy of the fish and the river. Let's have a go at changing the river. I suspect that self-knowledge, if not a precondition, is at least very helpful. This book is my small contribution. We must reboot democracy so it meets the needs of all citizens.

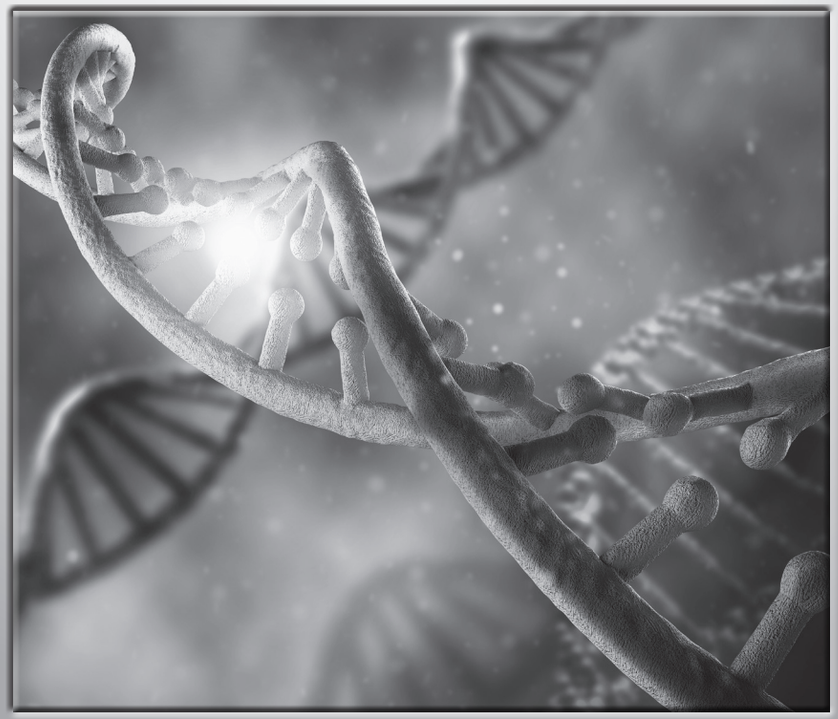
Three building blocks of culture and societies' individual behaviour





Chapter 1

The first building block:
Our six DNA-survival predispositions



Chapter 1

The first building block: Our six DNA-survival predispositions

First let me expand on the idea that humans have survival behaviours.

Anything that lives, from a frog to a human, must have built-in DNA survival behaviours or it wouldn't survive. There are what I call three-plus-one core needs for survival:

1. Food/energy.
2. An ability to avoid not being someone else's food too often.
3. Sex (in some form or another) to continue the species.
4. Lastly, the plus one:

If like humans you are born incomplete and frail, you need attachment/ belonging/love or you die.

Without some way of behaving that allows you to realise these needs, you and your species die. It's therefore reasonable to suspect that we too have DNA driven survival predispositions.

We do, but it's tricky to identify them because human behaviour is a result of our DNA-survival predispositions AND our consciousness. Consciousness allows us to create cultures that draw out our positive predispositions and manage, or keep in check, the negative ones. So what we see in humans is a mix of DNA-driven behaviours and the conscious management of those behaviours. The result is called culture. Our multiple cultures are an elaboration on our DNA predispositions interacting with conscious problem-solving. All human cultures have consciously addressed the problem of "how to live a better life together". They have done this in many different ways but that's the root of what culture does.

Cultures draw out our positive predispositions and manage the negative.

Chimpanzees are a good place to start to gain an insight into our specific, "DNA only" predispositions separated from culture because they have 96.5 per cent of the same DNA as us. The behaviours of chimps may show us our own underlying DNA-driven survival behaviours. At the end of the day it will be up to you to judge if this is a good approach or not, after all, this is about you.

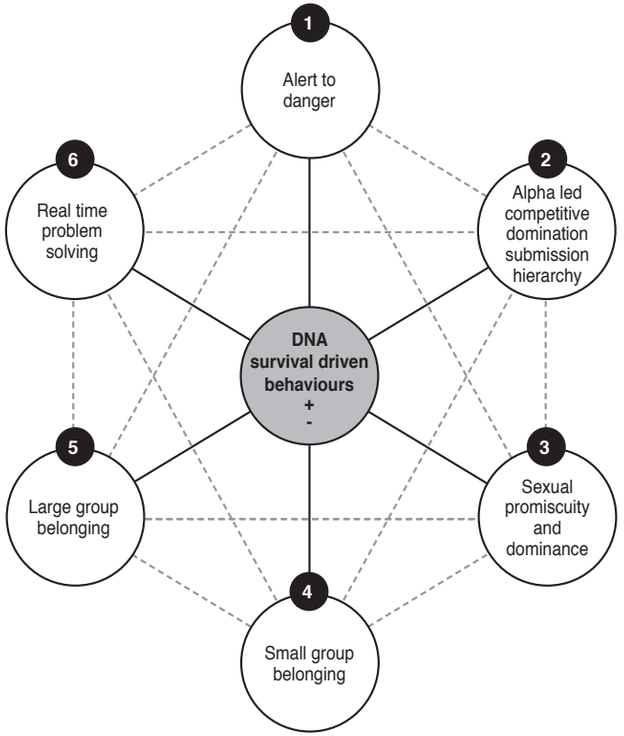
Although chimps had been studied extensively in zoos, it was the early work of world-renowned primatologist, Jane Goodall, which recognised the similarity of human and chimp behaviour. Goodall gave particular chimps names such as Flo and Greybeard and started talking about them as if they had human emotions and motives. She and her researchers documented the lives of a Gombe chimp troop in minute by minute detail. Her ideas were at first heavily criticised by specialists in the primatology community, who clung to the academic belief (*felt truth*) of the time that animals were instinctive machines without feelings and emotions – you certainly didn't give them names or endow them with personalities! Fortunately, being, like myself basically uneducated, Goodall didn't know better, and pressed on.

I understand comparing humans to chimps can be quite confronting for many people, because we are accustomed to seeing ourselves as living in civilised cultures. Our negative DNA behaviours have been culturally covered over and have become invisible, maybe unacceptable to us.

Reading through Goodall's work, you can see that chimps display many behaviours similar to our own including jealousy and deceit. For the purpose of this exercise I will focus on social survival behaviours. There are six:

1. Fearfulness and alertness to danger.
2. Alpha-led competitive domination and submission hierarchy.
3. Male sexual promiscuity and domination over females.
4. Small group belonging and altruism.
5. Large troop belonging.
6. Real-time observational learning and problem-solving.

Six survival predispositions



I'm going to look at each one of these DNA predispositions one by one.

- First, I'll explain the behaviour, then show both the positive and negative aspects of the behaviour (depending on circumstances).
- Second, I'll examine how humans have learnt to manage their DNA predispositions drawing out the positive and suppressing the negative.
- Third, I'll follow this with every day positive and negative (+/-) examples.
- Finally, I'm going to ask you to look at your own real life experiences of the DNA-driven predispositions.

And as a summary point, I am going to suggest that for both humans and chimps, the availability of resources plays a big part in whether we behave positively or negatively. Hopefully all that should convince you that there's a lot of chimp in all of us. But we are smart chimps. Now let's get started:

1. Fearfulness and alertness to danger

Fearfulness is a powerful predisposition and very sensible. The world has not been designed for us to prosper with ease, so if you live in a dangerous world and your main aim is to survive, being alert to danger is survival smart. Chimps are constantly on guard, alert, to anything that might threaten them.

Positive and negative aspects of fearfulness

Fearfulness is **positive** for self-preservation if it keeps you alive. You recognise predators and are able to respond with fight, flight or freeze as appropriate; it's also useful to be fearful of a dominant male if what you are about to do will result in their aggressive rage. Fearfulness can be **negative** if it excludes others, inhibits cooperation and stops the uptake of opportunities. It can emerge as selfishness and unwarranted aggression and has the potential of reducing rather than increasing the safety of the **US** group. Fearfulness impels us to promote our own **ME** survival, but sometimes at the cost of others.

How humans manage the positive and negative aspects of fearfulness

On the **positive** side, modern cultures manage fearfulness through religion, democracy, wealth creation and education.

- Religion helps to answer perennial anxiety-creating questions: Is there a God? Where do I come from? Where do I go after death? How do I live a good life? Why is there so much suffering? What is my purpose in life? (This will be covered extensively in Chapter Five.)
- Wealth-creation helps provide for our needs and wants by removing the scarcity of resources which is a major source of anxiety and fearfulness. Scarcity, unmet expectations, quickly draws out fearful behaviour.
- Belonging to a democratic nation that manages the aggressive self-interest of alphas and provides communal resources such as healthcare, pensions and a fair legal system, helps soften many anxieties.
- Education eliminates many superstitions – anxieties about things that are simply not real. Witches are no longer around to put curses on me! Illness is caused by viruses, not magic.

On the **negative** side of fearfulness:

- Alpha leaders can also use fearfulness to draw us into war to protect our *"us"* tribe from the dangerous *"other"* tribe that we actually know little about and may not be a threat at all.
- Alphas also use fearfulness to keep us in line with group think/*felt truths* of "nationalism". Exclusion from the group is a dreadful punishment. Not following group think-*felt truths* can be a dangerous in times of national stress.

Everyday examples

When I observe myself and other people around me, I frequently see alertness to danger. Danger may be too strong a word but, in the workplace for example, the relationship between managers and subordinates is often infused with anxiety. I was often in a state of anxiety when I had to make board presentations. Public speaking causes many people to hyperventilate; even attending a cocktail party can cause anxiety.

Danger/anxiety is often related to alpha domination, a potential loss of status, or loss of membership of a group. I have felt them all**.** At a biological level, such losses threaten my survival; in reality they do not but my brain doesn't know the difference between a conceptual threat like loss of status and a tiger around the corner. We live with artificially constructed conceptual anxiety.

In Sydney we have a Murdoch newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*. Each edition features, usually on about page 14, a full-page called "Street Watch". This section covers all the unattractive things that happened in the city over the previous 24 hours; there's generally about a 10–15 items ranging from the serious, such as a home invasion to the banal – panties missing from clothes lines. This page is designed to sell more newspapers by triggering our FAST DNA predisposition of being alert to danger, i.e. Sydney is such a dangerous place. This confirms our fears, plays off our DNA alertness to danger.

However, changing perception by standing back and looking at this objectively, *slowly*, you get a different story. To me, the fact that in a city of five million people of all different shapes, sizes, cultures, beliefs and economic status went to bed the previous night and only three or four came to harm is a miracle! Wonderful! It screams to us that in times of plenty, humans

can be incredibly cooperative and kind. Nevertheless, our DNA-survival predisposition of alertness to danger triggers us to focus on the negative and ignore the positive reality.

Your own situation

How much of your own behaviour and beliefs are the result of fearfulness which has no basis in experienced, actual reality?

- Do you worry about crime rate? Statistically crime is at its lowest rate in years.
- Are you worried about terrorism? Much less dangerous than getting in your car.
- Are you reluctant to travel to the developing world or other places (an unjustified fear of the "other")?
- Are you manipulated by the fast pace of "cuts" on TV and videos designed to keep you glued to the screen by triggering your alert response? Flood your brain with cortisol?
- Do you feel anxious about public speaking (you may be rejected by the tribe)?
- Are you uncomfortable around blacks, whites, Jews, Muslims (the unknown "*THEM"*)?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you are experiencing your own "alertness to danger" DNA predisposition just the same as chimps or any other living creature that wants to stay alive. The difference with us humans is that with consciousness we make up fears that are not necessarily real.

2. Competitive domination and submission hierarchy

Chimps have a hierarchy that typically ranks an alpha male and his allies at the top of the troop, followed by other male sub-groups in changing alliances. Next come the senior females and their families followed by lower ranking females and their families, and last come the infants attached to specific maternal groups – infants are allowed great social license by all troop members. Infants from other troops will be killed and maybe eaten.

Position in the hierarchy is important – high ranks survive better than low ranks; they have status and privilege, the best food, the most food, the best sleeping spots and more than their fair share of sex.

Being smart and strong combined with the ability to form and sustain alliances with other influential chimps appears to be the way a chimp attains alpha rank.

Hierarchical, competitive, re-positioning causes ongoing conflict, especially among lower ranking maturing groups of young males, striving to improve their place in the ranking. The alpha chimp constantly and sometimes viciously asserts his authority while the omega chimp is abused by everybody – they die early. It's important to note that, other than the alpha and the omega, all other chimps are *both* dominant and submissive, creating a recognisable domination and submission hierarchy. Interestingly, in our modern Western modern of freedoms and human rights it seems to me that we have a reduced ability to recognise our inbuilt submissiveness. Nevertheless, it's still there. I can easily recognise myself fawning on rank, even on celebrity.

Positive and negative aspects of a competitive alpha-dominated hierarchy

The **positive** aspects of hierarchy are the result of competition. The smartest, strongest, best-allied males get to make troop decisions. This sets the group up for the likelihood of success when competing with other troops; in times of scarce resources this ensures the survival of the fittest troop.

Additionally, chimps appear to prefer a calm atmosphere that comes from a strong alpha. From a survival perspective, this is positive; the umbrella shelter of a strong leader reduces anxiety in the troop because the troop is better protected from predators and rival troops and, in this case, the alpha is less likely to have his leadership contested.

However, although the submission to a powerful alpha is a positive survival instinct, it can have significantly negative consequences for those being dominated, including having to accept violence, poorer conditions and less food. While domination and submission hierarchy uses alpha-energy for the benefit of the group, it's often at the expense of those at the bottom of the pile. So a negative aspect to alpha-dominated competitive hierarchy is that

it can result in the exploitation of the rest of the population. Hierarchy has been our most common form of organisation. Alpha-dominated hierarchy can also result in a classic "alpha doom loop" (see box) but perhaps the worst consequence of alpha-domination is the competition it creates between groups, city states, nations. This produces outright war, the worst of our behaviours.

The alpha Doom Loop and the alpha Virtuous Cycle

A note here on alphas and the alpha class: if an individual alpha or a whole alpha class/aristocracy is DNA-driven to sustain its status and privilege, then we have a core problem How can we tap into the energy, capability and sometimes protection of alphas without being exploited or enthralled by them? If we don't have processes to remove alphas or an alpha class with honour and grace, we will get into what I call the "alpha doom loop". If we do have ways of replacing them without conflict (fully functioning democracy) then we can get into an alpha virtuous cycle.

What's an alpha doom loop? Let's focus on a single king, dictator, politician or military ruler who is enjoying the privilege and status that being the alpha entails. What happens next? Competition. Competitors want his (it's nearly always a male) position and privilege. The alpha slaps the challenger down; in slapping one challenger down, more anti-alpha factions emerge and strengthen.

In the modern world, the alpha under threat will then resort to rigging the judicial system, managing the media, show trials, incarceration, torture and non-judicial killings (sound familiar?). At this point we are well into the doom loop. The alpha knows he will be killed (in reality or psychologically) if he steps down – Shakespeare's King Lear tried it and it didn't work. The alpha has no alternative but to get worse and worse until there's a break point.

The break point is often initiated by external intervention and/or chaos. The resolution of the chaos is often little better than the original alpha rule, because those who take advantage of the chaos are usually the best organised and most ruthless of the opposition, not always the most democratic, e.g. Lenin, the Chinese communists Even more worrying is when the chaos

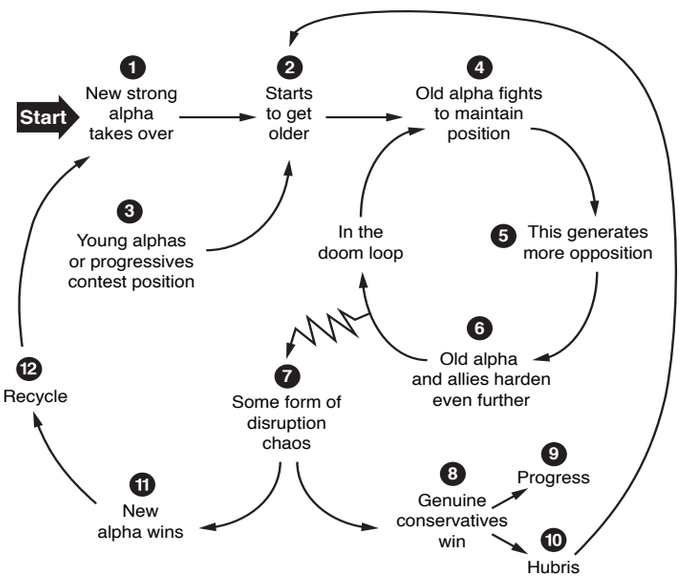
makes the masses so anxious/fearful that they are ready to "submit" to any alpha who can offer calm and stability regardless of their alpha exploitative, dominant tendencies e.g. Mussolini, Mao, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Franco, El-sisi, Suharto, Putin, to name a few.

The opposite of the doom loop is the alpha virtuous cycle. Here, through democratic process in the case of politics or director/shareholder power in the case of business, alphas can be replaced with dignity without conflict. After his second term, President Obama is being replaced with due process and dignity; this did not happen with Saddam Hussein, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Hosni Mubarak, Ali Abdullah Saleh and Abidine Ben Ali.

Replacing alphas with dignity is one of humanity's great inventions, as it allows us to get the energy, intelligence and activity of the alphas without becoming exploited by them. This process is also important in business, enabling managers and CEOs to be replaced without bloodshed; golden handshakes are often obscene in their size, but they are part of a way of retiring leaders with dignity enabling peaceful alpha transitions and new dynamic leadership.

The alpha doom loop

Once an alpha gets into a doom loop it is hard to get out



How culture manages the positives and manages negatives of an alpha-dominated hierarchy

Modern society (culture) realises the usefulness of the alphas without risking enslavement through two meta systems – democracy and commerce.

Democracy manages alphas in well-recognised ways:

- The splitting of church, state, law, politics, police and the armed forces, creating a balance of alpha power and interests.
- Freedom of speech allows alpha critique and new ideas.
- Freedom of association allows the exploited voice and power.
- Freedom of movement – I can leave.
- Regular voting and full enfranchisement churns alphas with grace.
- Equality in the eyes of the law; alphas have to obey the law too.
- Legal support for unionism a powerful voice for redistribution and equality.
- Taxation allows equitable redistribution of national wealth forming the basis of future productivity.
- Social safety nets lift up the excluded, especially their children.

These democratic ideas – *felt truths* – didn't just come out of nowhere. They have evolved due to the need to constrain the alpha predisposition to dominate and maintain privilege at everyone else's expense.

Commerce is not just about economics. Commerce is also a little recognised aspect of how modernity uses alpha energy but dilutes alpha power to dominate.

- First, it provides non-military forums for the exercise of alpha energy; historically alpha energy was used in warfare, progress through theft. With the development of thousands of commercial businesses, all structured as alpha dominated competitive hierarchies; multiple alphas have a much more constructive role. They can follow their self-interest in a way that created wealth rather than destroying it.

- Second, commerce creates a class of alpha managers and owners mostly interested in order and peace rather than chaos and war. The interests of this powerful commercial class drives politics towards order and wealth creation.

In Chapter 6 you will see how in the 18th century a newly emergent, energetic commercial class resulted in the reduced power of the Church and aristocratic alphas.

An emerging issue in the USA is not about the alpha president but whether an alpha class – the top one per cent of the population – is increasingly able to make up the rules and beliefs – *felt truths* that lock in their privilege and effectively reduce the prospects of everyone else. The alpha class keeps us captivated today not with weapons but with the authority of its own set of self-justifying, self-sustaining beliefs – *felt truths* around extreme rational economics, extreme consumerism, and one that is especially difficult for me, the over emphasis of a belief – a *felt truth* in extreme individualism, "I am wealthy because I worked hard and am worth it". It is an illusion that the individual stands separate from society; it's an illusion that individual achievement is only the result of individual hard work. In reality, success is not only the result of individual effort but effort within the context of a very supportive society. Even though he's one of the smartest investors in the world, Warren Buffet would not have had the same life opportunities if he had been born in an unsupportive society like Afghanistan.

In the last 30 years, most of the USA's GDP growth has gone to the elite alphas; this alpha class has been able to capture the economy and *felt truths* of the people and in doing so is increasingly impoverishing the remaining and disillusioned majority of the population.

An everyday example of dominant hierarchical behaviour

As I mentioned before, I have lived and worked all over the world. I have never seen a non-hierarchical village, work group, company or society. I have even participated in a social experiment at one of Rio Tinto's mine sites, Woodlawn, where we tried seriously to operate the mine without hierarchy – no front line leaders or supervisors for five years; it was an abject failure. One of two things happened. Either an unofficial unpaid illegitimate leader

emerged and the group managed well for a time, or no leader emerged, this resulted in confusion and low productivity. Legitimate alpha leadership where the alpha adds value layer by layer is essential for wealth creation.

Similarly, in terms of benefits of being an alpha – alphas always have privilege and always work to sustain that privilege. I have never seen a situation where being the alpha didn't confer privileges and status that the alpha didn't actively try to increase and maintain. I'll give you an unattractive personal example of which I am a little ashamed.

As a young 16-year-old mini-alpha prefect at a semi-military boarding school, I had a problem. Prefects were responsible for school discipline. It was common for prefects to quite violently cane boys. Caning was not to be taken lightly. A normal caning resulted in large welts on the buttocks and legs sometimes blood ran down the back of your legs. I had been caned frequently but had a problem in that didn't want to cane other boys. The problem was that if I didn't cane, I believed that I would lose respect and discipline would go out the window. This would result in me being demoted from prefect, with the resultant humiliation, loss of face and privilege.

Prefects had a full range of body services provided by knaves, first-year students. They had their beds made, their army kit polished immaculately, their food cooked for them anything they wanted. So what does Julian, the threatened mini-alpha do? I decided to cane one boy so viciously that nobody would disobey me again for the next two years. The opportunity soon presented itself. At lights out, Edwards, a senior boy, back-chatted me. I told him to get out of bed and I caned him so badly that blood soaked his pyjamas and trickled down his legs. I told him to go to the nurse. He refused. We were tough kids. I had done the same myself several times.

Nobody messed with me from then on. I tell you this because it highlights for me three points.

- First, how badly an alpha is prepared to behave when they are threatened.
- Second, how *felt truths* change. It was an everyday belief that it was normal and okay for 16-year-olds to beat other children, caning was condoned by my culture. Edward's insubordination (what a great word) was not acceptable. It challenged the hierarchy and had to be stamped on;

the smallest insubordination simply couldn't be tolerated. Alphas often stamp on insubordination with a violently disproportionate response as insubordination threatens the whole edifice of their power.

- Third, I really enjoyed caning Edwards; I had the inbuilt capacity to enjoy domination, inflicting pain.

Your own situation

Here again, stand back from yourself and reflect on these questions:

- Do you work in a competitive hierarchy led by an alpha individual/alpha class?
- If unconstrained does this hierarchy act largely in its own interests?
- Are you part of that alpha class? Are you an alpha yourself?
- If you are a mini-alpha, do your *felt truths* reinforce your privilege or support the continuity of your privilege? (A hard one for most of us.)
- On the other hand, do you see your subordinate's position as normal – it's their place? They should obey your direction.
- As a subordinate, do you obey the alpha? Submit to their authority?
- Is doing your job a justification for immoral behaviour? (Another tricky one.) Police brutality and torturing terrorists are two things that come to mind. Selling tobacco is another one. "I was doing my job" was Adolf Eichmann's defence.

If you answered "yes" to some of these questions, then again maybe there is a little chimp in you too!

3. Male aggressive promiscuity and dominance

Female chimps begin reproducing at about 12 years of age; after giving birth, the female chimp doesn't come into season again for another three or four years, and will then conceive within about a year. Sex is a pretty serious business – an average troop of 30 chimps may only have ten mature females, only a handful of which will be available for mating. Males compete, and sometimes fight for sex but the alpha gets the most sex – they dominate the females. Sex is often on the mind of the average male chimp.

Positive and negative aspects of aggressive male sexuality and dominance

From a Darwinian point of view, having the biggest, strongest, smartest males get the most sex is **positive**; as a consequence, they add more than an average amount of their DNA into the gene pool, progressively making the species abler to survive.

There are several **negatives** to this. A female being raped and forced to have sex with a dominant male isn't positive. Also if you are a non-dominant male you may be unable to have sex at all. If you are an up and coming young alpha, sexual opportunity can become a basis of competition, usually in the form of fighting and aggression.

(A technical note here: in the animal world, plant eaters – vegetarians, tend to be more promiscuous and less possessive with their sexual partners. Hunters are more possessive. They leave home to hunt and want mum there when they return. Chimps and humans are a bit of both. Chimps are largely vegetarians but will on occasions hunt and kill for meat. Their sexual predispositions reflect this mix of some promiscuity, some possessiveness.)

How cultures manage alpha sexual activity to draw out the positive manage the negative

Cultures draw out the **positive** aspects of male need for sex and manage the **negative** in various ways. In almost all cultures male dominance is **positively** channelled into marriage relationships where the male becomes a monogamous "protector-provider" and is responsible for children. Once women were believed to be the legitimate property of men; they had few rights. However, modern societies are modifying these beliefs-*felt truths*, and 21st century women don't need as much from men – less protection and less providing for; in the Western world, most divorces are initiated by women. While the negative aspects of this male predisposition relate to rape and molestation they are managed with the increasing enforcement of new progressive *felt truths* about women.

Managing the **negative** aspects of this predisposition now involves politically correct language and workplace behaviour – I no longer use the word "girls" when referring to my female employees. There are now laws against sexual

harassment in the workplace and a whole new business has arisen to teach managers how to ensure compliance among their employees.

Everyday examples of male aggressive promiscuity

Male sexual promiscuity, rape, the "ownership" of women and viewing them as sexual objects has a long history. It is moderated, not eliminated, by cultures in the modern world but raises its head regularly when social norms break down and men become unconstrained. Contemporary examples are the rapes committed in places like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and the kidnapping of schoolgirls in Nigeria. The Christian crusades are historic examples of rape as part of the booty of conquest. For an even more ancient example we can go back to 450BC Greece – Socrates, Aristotle, Plato (possibly the world's greatest ever philosophers) would all be seen as rampant sexists today. They saw young slave girls as sexual objects. This was a normal culturally accepted felt truth. The sexual peccadilloes of alpha political and religious leaders are legendary – the tip of the alpha iceberg.

Your own situation

Males: The question for male readers in particular is that in spite of the cultural and legal setting of boundaries around male sexual aggression, how often is your mind filled with thoughts of sex?

- Have you seen a beautiful woman and want to possess her in some way?
- Have you been tempted to have an affair based on little more than sex?
- Are you usually the initiator in a sexual relationship?
- Do you tend to dominate sexual activity/positions?

For female readers, the question is how often you've sensed the vibe of sexual domination in the males around you?

- Have you felt male dominant energy?
- Have you felt the urge to submit to alpha male energy?
- Do you see other females flirting with male alpha energy?

How much chimp is there in you?

4. Small group belonging and altruism

Chimps are sociable and cooperative; they form tight friendships and enjoy each other's company. Small group activity within the group can be based on political alliances, relationships between mothers and offspring and between siblings, males hunting together and just plain friendship. Chimps demonstrate what economists refer to as "tit-for-tat" altruism where good deeds are returned in kind – a sort of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" bargaining system. They inherently understand what we would call fairness. The return gestures don't necessarily take place immediately; chimps appear to keep an internal tally of who owes what to whom, the size of the gesture and who has behaved selfishly. Chimps also engage in a lot of small group emotional bonding, demonstrating pleasure at seeing each other after an absence and engaging in all sorts of affectionate behaviour such as hugging, touching, stroking the odd wet kiss and grooming. Attachment is important; it ensures the survival of helpless infants, the species.

Positive and negative aspects of small group belonging and altruism

When looking at chimps' small group and altruistic behaviour from a survival perspective, you can see these behaviours are **positive** while they are increasing the health and happiness of the individuals in the small groups as well as creating harmony in the larger group.

Small group altruism and tit-for-tat trading builds group cohesion and redistributes resources amongst those who belong to the *"us"* group, but sometimes it is to the detriment of those who are excluded. Small group belonging within a larger group can also be **negative** when it results in one group or gang attacking or dominating others. This is seen in humans as bullying. Chimps will bully others to the point of killing them. Low ranking mothers can have their children stolen and eaten.

How culture manages small group belonging drawing out the positive and managing the negative

*S*mall group belonging draws out the **positive** in all cultures; it underpins a sense of identity, reduces anxiety and is a way of sharing resources. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the structure of the family but it is also built into modern commercial activity with an emphasis on teams.

The **negative** aspects of small group belonging, such as the bullying of outsiders and family vendettas, are today controlled by law. The law in modern societies is backed up with a monopoly on legal violence. The negative side of group belonging in commercial teams is known as siloing, where there is no cooperation across teams – this is countered by promoting ideas around common goals and values and using modern management team building techniques (all only partially successful).

Everyday examples of small group belonging and altruism

Is there anywhere in the world where family is not the building block of society? Why is this? Why do we organise ourselves at work into small teams located together? How is it that millions of people follow the Manchester United football team and get their identity from belonging to this particular "family" – proudly wearing the club colours and barracking at matches as if their lives depended on Manchester United winning? IT'S Biology!!

We are small group social animals from birth; ever noticed how babies see other babies and small children and follow them with their eyes? At my school we were organised by year and "house" (the houses had names, colours and house songs) and the importance of belonging to your house could not be underestimated. Additionally, it may be that tit-for-tat trading – "I give you this you give me that" – is the biological basis of commerce, negotiation and trade? This will be further explored in Section Two.

Your own situation

Test your own experience of small group belonging and ask yourself some questions:

- Do you belong to a family, work team or club?
- Are team members easily identifiable?
- Do you help each other out without keeping a detailed score?
- Do you know what constitutes fairness?
- If you help out, does it make you feel good?
- Do you protect the group from other groups when criticised?

If you answered "yes", you are exhibiting some of the same survival behaviours as our chimp cousins.

5. Large troop belonging – the "us"

A chimp troop has a defined membership and a geographical territory; chimps demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the troop as a whole. If someone gets excited about something – a new source of food for instance – everyone gets excited; if the alpha is fearful about danger, the whole troop gets fearful.

When acting as a large group, outside threats can be vigorously defended against and intruders attacked, hunted and killed. Instinctive fearfulness of outsiders, territoriality and group belonging brings with it a strong tendency towards negative stereotyping, that is, a heightened awareness of the stranger as bad, dangerous. Outsiders are assumed to pose a risk and initially greeted with fear and aggression. It took many months before the chimps at Gombe allowed Jane Goodall near them.

The extent to how far this behaviour goes appears to be related to the availability of resources; if there's an abundance of food the chances of survival are good and the aggression to outsider's decreases; if there is a shortage of food chimp genocide can and does take place.

Positive and negative aspects of large group belonging

The **positive** side of belonging to a large group is the security it provides; the group as a whole is always alert to strangers who might have bad intentions – this is survival smart behaviour. Without a sense of anticipated rejection by other groups, in tough times individuals might look for new groups, in which sticking with the troop is a positive survival strategy for everyone. Staying within the group is good individual survival behaviour. Group solidarity strengthens the group.

Perversely, from a purely survival perspective, warring with other troops can be seen positively as a way in which the species selectively survives via a stronger gene pool. However, this instinctively aggressive negative stereotyping of other troops also has **negative** consequences; inter-troop warfare may result in injury, even elimination of the troop – violence is a two-way street. Improvement of the troop's circumstances through theft (war) doesn't always work – sometimes it results in chimp genocide.

How human culture manages large group belonging, drawing out the positive and managing the negative

Cultures draw out and reinforce **positive** aspects of group belonging in many ways such as with flags, clothes, awards and anthems through beliefs – *felt truths* about honour and loyalty that put the group before the individual. Taxation and redistribution of wealth is "large group" altruism and fairness. The idea of citizenship is an idea based on troop *"us"*. The **negative** aspects of group belonging in modernity, such as negative stereotyping, are increasingly managed with laws against racism, homosexuality, ageism and discrimination of many types. This is a quite recent phenomenon. It is a result of economic surplus produced by science-based productivity. We can be much kinder to each other when we are not fighting over resources. Unmet expectations or scarce resources would reverse these trends in a flash.

Everyday examples of large group belonging

Again, what is nationality all about? Why do people die in war for an artificial boundary that nature doesn't know about? Why do I instinctively feel nervous around gays, African Americans, Papua New Guineans and Eritreans? Enculturation and experience modifies these responses but they are still there. On the other hand:

Why do I immediately feel comfortable with English people, or say the ex-McKinsey & Co guys? Why do people worship Manchester United and the Dodgers? Why does my pulse lift when I hear my national anthem (even though I am very doubtful about the monarchy)? Why do I feel proud of the Australian Special Forces when they fight bravely in Afghanistan while at the same time I think we have no reason to be there? It's all down to my predisposition to group membership – a good survival strategy

Your own situation

Here's a few questions to help you reflect on your own large group belonging:

- Do you feel proud of your nation?
- Do you know your national anthem?
- Do you identify with your nation? American, Australian, British?
- Do you feel proud of your country's elite forces?

- Would you die for your nation in the right circumstances?

If the answer is "yes", then you are responding to deeply-embedded survival drives. Survival is much more certain within an *"us"* group than without – we submit to the group, we submit to the alphas, we rely on the group to survive.

6. Real-time problem-solving

It is self-evident that survival requires solving problems; life wouldn't survive unless it solved the daily problems of getting food, avoiding predators and procreation. Chimps are good but – in comparison to humans – limited problem solvers.

Chimps appear to live largely in the physical present with a span of attention and intention limited to minutes or maybe hours. They live largely in the world as it is, not a conceptual, abstract world; problem-solving skills are largely acquired by direct observation.

Jane Goodall in her research on chimps noted that complex learned behaviours differed between troops of chimps, making it likely that they'd been taught within the troop. Goodall found chimps could solve the problem of food through cracking nuts with rocks, washing potatoes, levering open banana boxes and poking long sticks into termites' nests to get a termite snack. Using tools such as rocks and sticks means that chimps are able to invent ways to solve short-term problems better than most other animals. But there is little evidence that they can solve long-term abstract problems – such as, how to build a good society? – in the way that humans do.

Positive and negative aspects of real-time problem-solving

The ability to solve problems is value neutral, that is, it does not presuppose the acceptance of any particular values – problem-solving therefore can be **positive** or **negative**; Hitler and Pol Pot were both good problem-solvers. The CEO of Enron had great problem-solving capability. The real issue is how cultures direct their problem-solving abilities to **positive** or **negative** purposes.

In contemporary societies, problem-solving has involved science and technology; the outcome has been a surplus of consumables which have given us the ability to be kinder to each other. As I have said before, the core human problems of how to live a good life and how to create a good society are more easily addressed with surpluses than scarcity.

How cultures manage real-time problem-solving

Cultures, especially modern cultures, draw out the **positive** aspects of problem-solving through education and commerce. This has created an environment where an increasing number of people can gain higher levels of problem-solving capabilities and have more ways to contribute usefully to society. Education also helps to manage the **negatives** of problem-solving. The alpha *felt truths* can be contested by equally well-educated non-alphas. The alphas are no longer smart enough to impose their privilege by outsmarting everyone else (I hope). More recently, in historical terms, commerce and trade also creates and uses up alpha problem-solving energy and capability in benign ways.

Culture encultures us with **fast** solutions to everyday situations that help us live in harmony with each other.

An everyday example of modern problem-solving

Problem-solving is part of everyday life. What to have for breakfast? How to get to work? How to pay for the kids' swimming lessons? The level of problem-solving capability can be quite different in different individuals. But we can all get better at it.

In my early thirties, a guy I was working with in a big lead–zinc smelter asked me quite genuinely, 'How come you are so smart Julian?' After thinking about it and remembering my difficulties at school where dyslexia kept me struggling, I replied, 'Well, I have been working flat out 12 hours a day, seven days a week, solving business problems for the last 15 years'.

My idea was that the more practice you get at something, the better you get. All of us solve problems; some of us are addicted to it and get better at it. The key issues are education and opportunity. I have worked with many guys on the shop floor in the USA and in the developing world that were inherently much smarter, had better "brain machines" than me, but they had never had my chances to develop. In the modern world different levels of problem-solving capability are seen in the managerial hierarchy. Quite simply, a manager should be a better problem-solver than a subordinate or the relationship will be illegitimate. This is why we see the universal pyramidal hierarchy everywhere around us. A legitimate hierarchy is a reflection of different levels of value-adding problem-solving.

Your own situation

Some questions for you to reflect on about problem-solving:

- Does your everyday life present ongoing problems to be solved?
- Does your work life have most interest when you are engaged in problem-solving?
- Does your boss have to solve more complex and difficult problems than you?
- Do you "fast solve" problems using the same old habitual routines?
- Do you rationally solve problems that take months, years to get to resolution?

If you answered "yes" it means you are a problem solver just like a chimp; however the complexity of your problems is different. Chimps solve concrete real-time problems e.g. the banana problem – how do you get lots of them? Right now? Humans do this too, but they also solve long-term abstract/conceptual problems.

Now to a point about resources which I have touched on only lightly before. *History suggests we tend to express positive predisposition in times of plenty and express negative predispositions in times of scarcity.*

Supported by economic wealth we have become able to be more kind to each other. However, imagine stopping the flow of energy/oil to a country for a year and pretty soon you'll have group violence, rioting and looting – typical negative chaotic individual survival behaviour (the theme of several current movies). In times of chaos when alpha leadership goes unconstrained we see the emergence of dictators like Hitler, Mao, Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin. (Note, they are nearly always men). Chaos impacts everybody in that society.

Summary

In summarising this chapter, I feel I have started to make a case for:

1. All life forms, including humans, have DNA-survival predispositions.
2. These predispositions can be expressed either negative or positive.
3. Much of our behaviour comes from our DNA-survival predispositions, so you are less control of your brain than you thought.
4. Culture is the result of trying to solve the problems of how to live a better life and how to create a better society.
5. As a result, all cultures do the same thing – they draw out our positive predispositions and manage the negative, they just do it differently.
6. The bias towards positive or negative behaviour is driven by either a resource surplus or a resource scarcity, chaos or stability.

Finally, two exhibits pull all this together:

The six DNA innate behaviours are "Darwinian smart"

Behaviour	Key Points
1. Alert to danger	*Good Darwinian practice to identify, respond quickly to and remember perceived threats if you want to survive.* • Constantly on guard to potential threat
2. Alpha led competitive domination submission hierarchy	*From a Darwinian perspective, hierarchical structure provides a competitive filter to ensure strongest gene pool and troop protection and cooperation.* • Chimp troops have a defined hierarchy – alpha males, other adult males, alpha females, other females, adolescents and children • Alpha status achieved through strength, intelligence and alliances • Positioning in the hierarchy defines prime access to sex, food, best locations to sleep and eat • Position in hierarchy constantly under dispute as normal lifecycle trajectories of adolescence, young adult, adult and senior are expressed through competition • Chimps seem to be not only predisposed to domination of others but also to submission to the boss • Competition for status/position basically coercive is realised through threats or actual physical brutality • A stable, strong alpha chimp seems to promote harmony which is enjoyed by the whole troop
3. Sexual promiscuity and dominance	*Good Darwinian practice for a species to be interested in sex and for the strongest gene pool to go into the future.* • Chimp life is highly sexual • Alphas try to dominate • Exclusivity sometimes achieved • High level of overall promiscuity
4. Small group belonging	*Chimps are born incomplete, they are not mature for 5-6 years. As such they need at least maternal love to survive. From a Darwinian perspective groupings are useful as a mechanism to share the burden of watchful fearfulness. Furthermore tit-for-tat reciprocation in a group can be shown through genetic maths to promote survival.* • Chimps enjoy friendships • Friendship even love is often based on family relationships. Mothers – children – siblings • Male hunting groups also a basis for friendship • Within small groups tit-for-tat operates. i.e. a good deed like sharing of food is reciprocated while a bad deed is likewise reciprocated • Groups also form as alliances in the ongoing struggle for power and position in the hierarchy
5. Large group belonging	*From a Darwinian perspective inter troop rivalry again promotes the survival of the fittest and troop membership aids in survival against predators.* • As well as small group friendships, chimps have a strong sense of the troop with clear membership and definition of geographical boundaries • Outsiders will be threatened or even killed. However females are sometimes allowed to cross troops even though this disrupts the female status hierarchy
6. Real time problem solving	*Learning from a Darwinian perspective can be critical to species survival especially if the species is born incomplete.* • Chimps learn through direct observation, learning in a largely concrete, present physical world • Learning seems to be mainly predisposed, like being fearful of snakes, not a bunch of flowers. But some new learning does take place like nut cracking with rocks, termite fishing and potato washing

The six behaviours and their potentially positive and negative aspects from a human perspective

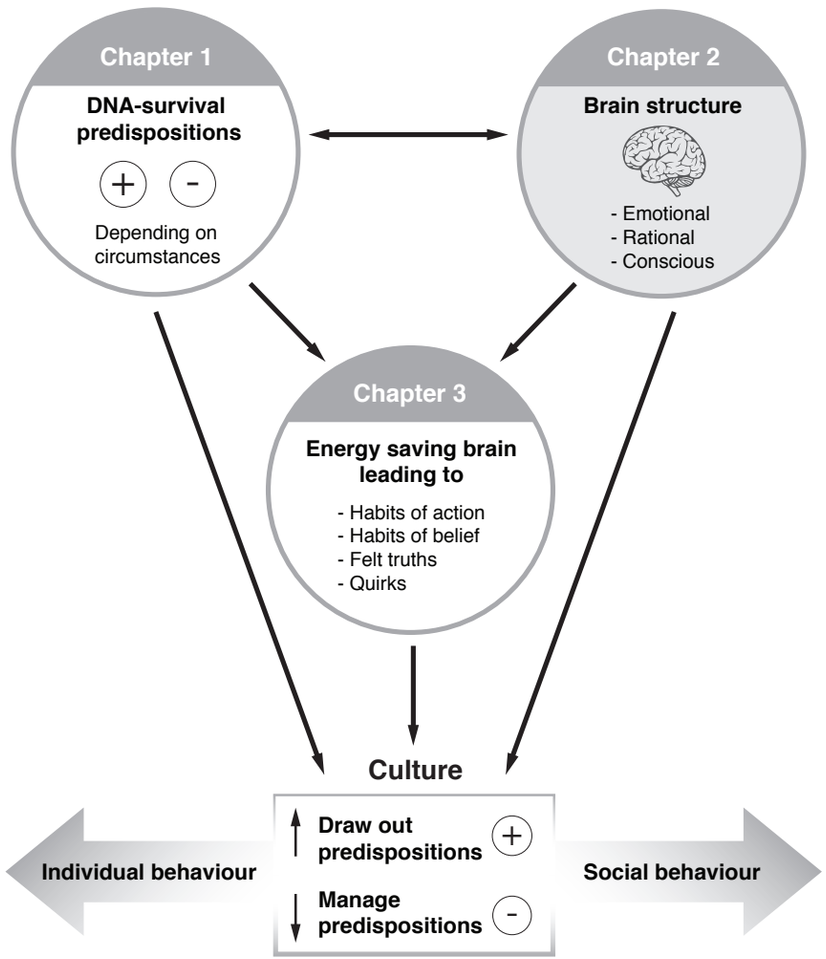
DNA Behaviour	Positive	Negative
Alert to danger	• Keeps you out of danger; keeps you alive	• May make you act aggressively to perceived threats that are not real
Alpha led competitive domination submission hierarchy	• Uses alpha energy and smarts to benefit of the whole • Creates order • Gets work done	• May end up in the alpha doom loop • Alphas create 'felt truth' stories to sustain their privilege · Individualism · Capitalism • Promotes violent alpha competition • May end up in forms of slavery
Sexual promiscuity and dominance	• Improves the gene pool with alphas getting more procreation • Great if you are an alpha	• Not so great if being raped • Males' physical strength makes subordination of women possible • Leaves females to child raising
Small group belonging **Tit-for-tat altruism and co-operation**	• Shares resources within small group • Protection within the larger group • Promotes what is in effect trading • Extends love	• Can result in bullying • Can result in a dominant enslaving clique • Factional decision making difficult
Large group belonging **Troop affinity**	• Provides safety • Provides identity • Shares resources • Builds resources	• Results throughout history in 'war'; the pursuit of progress through theft • Nationalistic belonging is easily manipulated by alphas to sustain their own ideas and privilege
Real time problem solving	• Produces wealth that allows us to be kinder to each other • Focuses alpha energy positively (commerce) • Allows for defense	• Problem solving capability is value free. So it can be directed to evil outcomes · Killing Jews · Pol Pot, etc. · War

Understanding chimp behaviour and comparing it to our own is useful, because it allows us to realise how much we are on autopilot, and in so doing provides us with different perceptions about our own behaviour – a starting point for "Know Thyself". But obviously it's not the whole picture. We aren't chimps; our brain has undergone another few million years of evolution, allowing us work out ways to create democracy, build 100-floor skyscrapers, mega ships for 6,000 passengers and manufacture millions of products to sell in giant supermarkets.

And more importantly, it allows us to modify our own brains.

This leads to the next chapter where we look at our **fast**/emotional and **slow**/rational, conscious, problem-solving quirky brain.

Three building blocks of culture and societies' individual behaviour





Chapter 2

The second building block:

Our emotional-fast and rational-slow conscious, problem-solving brain



Chapter 2

The second building block:

Our emotional-fast and rational-slow conscious, problem-solving brain

We are not just chimps; we are super smart chimps with consciousness. I'm now going to give you a simplified brief on our extraordinary brain. In our quest to know ourselves, it is worth understanding a bit about how your brain works and to practise observing it, because you can then view your +/- DNA predispositions and quirks in action and decide how you want to behave. It's not quite as simple as that, but read on. In this chapter I will concentrate on describing some functional components of the brain; in the next chapter we will see how these components interact. In this exploration of the brain I will cover three areas.

- Our brain's three-level structure and some sub components.
- Conscious problem-solving through time-shifting and abstraction.
- The incredible ability to stand outside ourselves and watch our own thinking and chose our actions.

Our brain's three-level structure and some sub-components

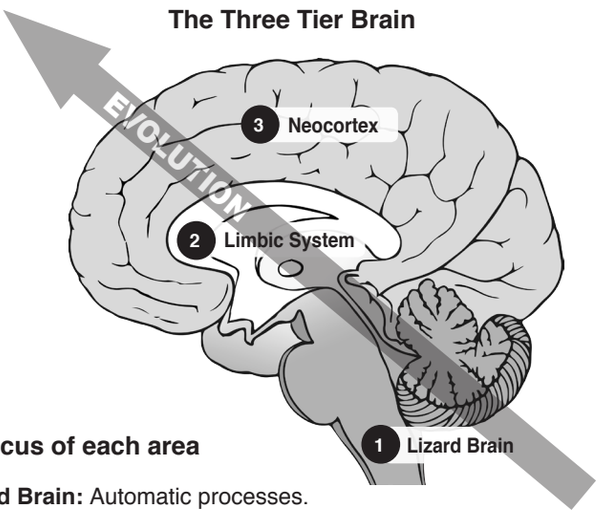
Brains are the result of evolution. Evolution doesn't start all over and create something from scratch; it builds on and modifies what is already in existence. It's much more like a house renovation rather than starting to build a new house on a bare block of land.

From a human perspective this evolution has resulted in a three-tier brain. To simplify things, I will explain how the brain works by emphasising the main roles of each tier. In reality each of the multiple areas of the brain are highly interconnected and may play a part in multiple activities.

The three-tier brain

A simplified view of the human brain

From a structural perspective "brains" evolved through three stages. Each evolutionary modification building upon prior foundations. Evolution being more like the renovation and extension of a house rather than building a house from scratch.



Broad focus of each area

1. **Lizard Brain:** Automatic processes.
2. **Limbic System:** Positive emotions and the fear system.
3. **Neocortex:** Questioning, problem solving to improve physical and emotional security.

The mammalian brain can be seen as a three-tier structure. The **lizard brain** is associated with automatic functions; the **limbic system** with emotions; and the **neocortex** with thinking. In the case of humans, the further development of a part of the neocortex – the **prefrontal cortex** – has allowed us to manage our behaviour more rationally with a longer-term perspective of outcomes.

The first tier is called the **lizard brain** and is the part that controls the autonomous biological functions of our bodies; snakes, turtles and lizards have this type of brain exclusively.

The interesting things about these animals is they are born complete. They are fully functioning miniature copies of their parents. Often their parents are not even around when they come into this world. Turtles hatch out of warm sand without any motherly input. Mum may be in the ocean hundreds of miles away. These early species therefore do not need love and attachment to survive childhood. We do! Love/attachment is part of being human – it ensures our survival. As the lizard brain controls our basic functions, it is possible to live in a coma with only an undamaged lizard brain. But you would not be fully human.

The second tier of your brain is an evolutionary extension of the lizard brain called the **limbic system**. It is the centre of "emotional experience" especially a small almond-shaped area called the amygdala (Greek for almond). This is the area of the brain that gets active when you perceive danger and you are triggered into fight, freeze or flee response.

The third tier of your brain is again an evolutionary extension; it is the **neocortex**, a thin multi-folded layer above the limbic system responsible for many brain functions. However, our interest focuses on a particular area of the neocortex – the **prefrontal lobes** which appear to be the integrating executive control centre for thought. Within the prefrontal lobes are two areas of interest. The ventral medial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) which is associated with **fast** problem-solving, and the dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) which is associated with *A leads to B leads to C leads to D* – **slow** rational problem-solving. We therefore have two distinct modes of problem-solving – **fast** and **slow**. The large size of our neocortex and prefrontal lobes distinguishes us from chimps.

The three areas of the brain and their prime functions

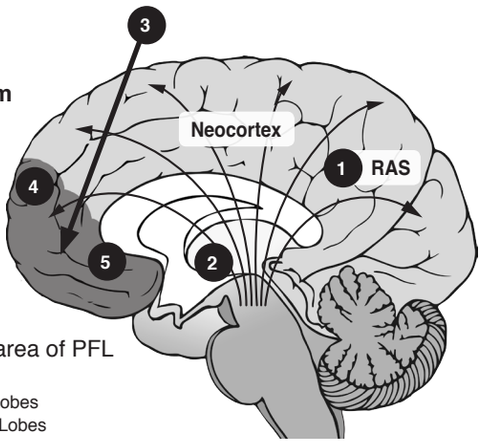
Area	Comments
Lizard brain	• Controls autonomic bodily functions. • Animals that only have the lizard brain are born complete therefore do not need attachment. • Could live in a coma (if fed) for long periods if lizard brain is okay in spite of other brain damage.

Area	Comments
Limbic system	• Offspring born incomplete, need attachment and nurturing to survive. Humans are the least complete of all animals at birth. • Seems to be the centre of attachment. • If limbic system damaged, judgement is impaired, decisions made very difficult. • *The limbic system contains amygdala which responds to memory of threat. Once triggered it can swamp the neocortex activity cutting it off from behavioural control. Connections from the amygdala to the neocortex are much deeper than from the neocortex to the amygdala.*
Neocortex and prefrontal lobes	• Location of complex activity in humans like speech, reading, maths, reasoning, music, artistic ability etc. • Prefrontal lobe seems to be the executive control that manages the three multiple roles of the brain. This is somewhat exclusive to humans. • Prefrontal cortex seems to be able to push us out in time and understand future consequences of present actions. The basis of morality?? Pleasure versus happiness?? Complex problem solving? • PFL contains the fast and slow regions of the brain

The sub-structures of the brain

Broad focus of each area

1. **Reticular Activating System**
2. **Amygdala**
3. **Prefrontal Lobes**
4. **DLPFL*: Slow** questioning, problem solving
5. **VMPFL**: Fast** / Emotional area of PFL



* DLPFL: Dorsal Lateral Prefrontal Lobes
** VMPFL: Ventral Medial Prefrontal Lobes

All regions of the brain, including these three tiers, are interconnected. One of the interconnecting systems is called the reticular activating system (RAS); this drives what we pay attention to. If the RAS tells us to pay attention to say, a snake, then it tells the amygdala to get into action. If the amygdala is triggered in a fight, freeze or flee situation, it, together with the limbic system, overrules the other parts of the brain, basically blocking information flowing to the **slow** areas of the prefrontal lobes. It demands that you pay attention to what is causing your fear, nothing else. It blocks **slow** rational thought in favour of **fast** decision-making that ensures survival: Is that a snake or not? Yes, get out of danger right now – let's not debate the possibility that it could be a twisty twig.

When the amygdala is triggered, the brain is marinated with neurotransmitters such as adrenalin, cortisol and testosterone. A **neurotransmitter** is a chemical messenger that carries, boosts and modulates signals between neurons and other cells in the body. Once generated, these neurotransmitters take some time to dissipate. A good example of a brain flooded with these particular neurotransmitters would be road rage, a common triggering of the amygdala (again, usually male).

One very important thing to remember about the amygdala trigger system is that it was designed to keep you alive in a primitive dangerous world. And yet in our basically safe world the amygdala can be triggered just as powerfully by events that don't have anything to do real survival.

Referring back again to my school days, sometimes when I was caned I was determined not to be dominated. My way of doing this was to calmly stand up after the beating, which hurt like hell and turn to the prefect that had caned me, look at him directly and very deliberately and calmly say 'Thank you, Sir'. This almost certainly triggered his amygdala survival response. His power and status (i.e. the survival DNA predispositions of alphas) was being threatened in his biological world but not in the real world. His survival was in no way at risk even though his biology thought it was. My carefully planned insubordination must have infuriated those prefects. Of course they got me back later but it was worth it.

Consciousness and complex problem-solving

Consciousness is a slippery customer – nobody really knows what's going on or how to define it. How do we measure it? Where is it? What produces it? I am going to focus on a single aspect of consciousness, that of **slow** rational problem-solving to create better futures.

The discussion on chimps was an example of how all living creatures solve problems. Keeping alive in a dangerous world presents a continuous stream of problems to all life. Humans, however, are especially good problem-solvers because we have **consciousness**. Consciousness allows us to think outside the present physical world to create a better world.

I will cover three aspects of problem-solving **slow** consciousness:

1. We can time shift, we can plan: remember the past and thinking of better possibilities for the future.
2. We can create abstractions, think of things that don't exist in the real world but are useful in creating a better world.
3. We can codify learning so as to pass it on and cooperate with others.

This is really tricky so let me look at each of these ideas one by one.

Planning – we remember the past and think of better possibilities for the future

I am a golfer; I can think about how I played golf last week (e.g. screwed up a number of bunker shots) and then project myself forward into the next time I am going to play and plan to practise my bunker shots, to score better for the upcoming competition. (Improvement – seldom.)

This simple ability that we take for granted is extraordinary. Smart though my dog Bella may be, she can't do this – she lives largely in the concrete physical present. She responds to my, present-time physical cue of reaching for her lead to take her for a walk – but I don't think she pre-plans the walk to create a better future nor does she plan to become a better dog.

To be fair, chimps, dolphins and maybe crows can plan for the future to some degree but only over short time frames and quite simple problems. Some

chimps have figured out how to use specially-engineered sticks to get more termites out of a nest, but not how to farm termites to provide an ongoing food source year round. Their problem-solving capability doesn't compare with ours. Animals are largely trapped in the physical world as it is, whereas with conscious thought, humans can change the world and themselves.

Here are another couple of more complex examples of planning that involved lots of **slow** rational thought.

When I worked for Rio Tinto, the world's second largest mining company, I was responsible for the top to bottom reorganisation of 40,000 jobs. This project had, from its start to its successful conclusion, a planned timespan of ten years. At the beginning of this project we had a reasonable idea of how the company would operate ten years from then. In a strange way we were living and thinking as if a better future was present. Another **slow** rational project I was involved in as plant superintendent was the design, building and operation of a telephone cable plant at Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. This project had a completion time of about five years.

This human ability to imagine a future, to use our **slow** problem-solving capability and draw the future into the present is one of the major things that distinguishes us from other animals. It's the way cultures draw out our positive predispositions and manage the negative ones. It is the basis of science and technology that provide our wealth.

That – in order to enhance our problem-solving capability – we create abstractions and think of things that don't exist in the real world but which help us to change the world for the better, is really mind-bending. The ability to create concepts – abstractions which don't exist in physical reality – come so naturally to us we have to think a bit about it.

I'll give you a few examples which demonstrate why this ability puts us ahead in problem-solving. We have created a concept/abstraction called "citrus fruit" but citrus fruit doesn't actually exist – you can't pick up citrus fruit; an orange exists as does a grapefruit or a lemon, but not citrus fruit. We have created an abstract classification called "citrus fruit" under which grapefruits, oranges, and lemons sit. The abstraction "citrus fruit" is useful because it allows us to develop knowledge about this class of fruits that is different from other fruits, say bananas, and therefore lets us operate more

efficient orange and lemon groves. Similarly, lots of every day concepts such as agriculture, cars, fuel, don't actually exist; they're useful in that they help us manage in the world but they are not part of the physical world.

Other examples include concepts like economics, Gross National Product (GNP) or a "tax regime" – they are constructs that we have made up. Take interest rates for example; in the modern world the management of interest rates has assumed great importance because they seriously affect a country's economy. But interest rates are actually an idea we have made up. If you go to, say, Papua New Guinea, and tell a mountain villager that you're going to lift interest rates, he'll just look at you blankly – what's an interest rate and so what anyway?

Together, these two things – planning through time shifting and abstract thought – allow humans to live in a better world than chimps; they allow us to leverage our common predisposition to problem-solving – and we are getting better at it.

The ability to plan and to create concepts enables us to identify and solve very complex problems. For instance, we have solved the problem of food by growing vast wheat fields and other crops which we fertilise, irrigate and machine harvest. (Incidentally, food in general is another abstract concept while "a grain of wheat" is actually real.)

The real point about problem-solving and creating abstractions like trust, fairness and belonging is that it helps us think about balancing our positive and negative DNA-survival predispositions. If we can shift time and think of future abstract consequences, we can ponder such issues as the rights and wrongs of torturing people; it may seem incredible to us today but torture was a form of entertainment for the masses in the Middle Ages – an enthusiastically accepted **fast** *felt truth* of the time.

Codifying learning so as to pass it on and cooperate with others

We do this in two ways one obvious and the other less obvious. In today's world we are able to codify our accumulating knowledge in writing, even in mathematical formulae, to pass it on to others and in that process cooperatively build on knowledge to be more and more useful. The internet is our most recent invention of this sort and will have unimaginable outcomes. Just as

the invention of writing about 5000 years ago and the reinvention (China got there first) of printing in Europe in 1450 has changed the world, by allowing more and more people to usefully absorb and contribute knowledge.

The less obvious way of transmitting knowledge is through childhood and tribal enculturation. Our customs, practices and many of our *felt truths* are loaded into us by our family and society. These encultured **fast** *felt truths* such as telling lies is…… owning up is…… racism is…… being lazy is…… not making your bed is…… good grades are…… boys are…… Chevrolets are…… Fords are…… etc., become part of our **fast** thinking. Enculturation is the way the original **slow** high cognitive load thinking of our elders can become our **fast** thinking.

Our self-observing brain

We have the incredible ability to stand outside ourselves and watch our own feeling and thinking and choosing our actions. In being able to do this, the brain can even physically change itself; if we can change our brains, then we can improve our lives. Standing outside ourselves and watching our slow–rational mind and our fast–emotional mind we can decide which course of action to take.

There are potentially three people in our one head.

With the ability to self-observe, the way we respond emotionally to things need not be the way we actually act. The modern idea that feelings are a good test of whether something is good or bad is highly suspect. I know that I am often feeling bad when I am at my best and I often feel good when I am acting at my worst. For example, when an employee stole from me I wanted revenge, to send him to prison. Thinking about it I recognised this could destroy his life. So I softened my approach, but I still felt the need for revenge.

The self-observational brain, together with our ability to time shift and create abstract concepts allows us to construct better selves and a better world. I'd like to give you a simple example to enrich this idea a bit. I help fund and volunteer with an Australian charity called One Heart, that works in Vietnam. The purpose of One Heart is to get bright but very poor children through

school and even into university. The families of these children live on less than US$10 a day – probably less than US$2 per person. The people are rice farmers or fishermen living in the farthest reaches of the Mekong Delta. Without One Heart's help, the children simply wouldn't even be able to get to school, because the boat fare costs 20 cents a trip (40 cents a day) and school uniforms are out of the question.

One Heart was established by a Vietnamese woman called Mua, who came to Australia as a refugee in the 1970s. She's quite a remarkable woman who lost an arm in an attack by pirates, who killed her father and stole their boat. I had talked to Mua about my ideas about the brain and one day when was visiting she asked me if I would teach my "brain stuff" to her Year 12 students and their parents. I was flattered but a bit concerned that they might not be able to understand the ideas I was talking about – particularly the parents, few of whom could read or write, their lives having been totally disrupted by the war and its aftermath.

Eventually, Mua bullied me into it – she's a 5'3" dynamo – and I stood in front of a class of 15, mostly girls, and about 15 very shy parents, who sat up the back of the room. It was probably the first time most of them had been up close and personal with a "white man". Anyway, I talked them through the three-tiered brain structure and added an extra twist – the fact that humans were special as we could stand outside ourselves and listen to what our amygdala was saying and separate it from what our prefrontal cortex was saying. In doing this we could hear our rational response to an event as well as our emotional response. In other words, there were actually three people in our single head – the Rational the Emotional and strangely the Observer.

I asked them if my explanation made sense. One of the girls spoke up.

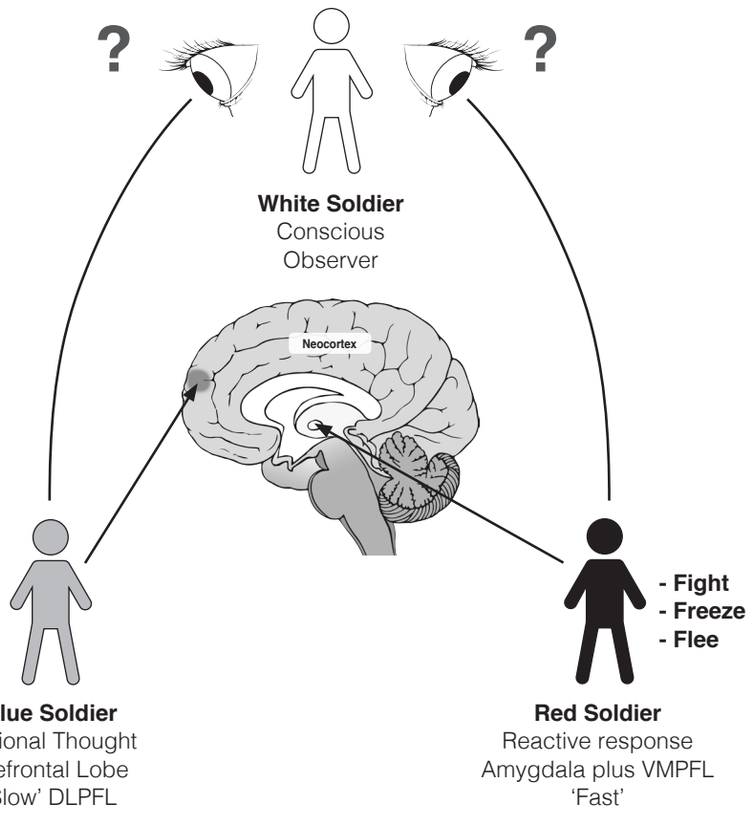
'It's easy,' she said. 'There are three soldiers.' (They are Vietnamese after all.) And she explained it this way:

- A red soldier is the amygdala; it overreacts, gets angry and upset and sometimes says and does stupid things.
- Then there is the blue soldier who is a more rational calming voice which says "no" if you get upset, answer without thinking, get angry and walk out – that may not be a good thing.

- And then there is a white soldier standing outside the red and blue soldiers who can listen to both and decide ‘what to do’.

Self observation is a special human ability

The Three Soldiers



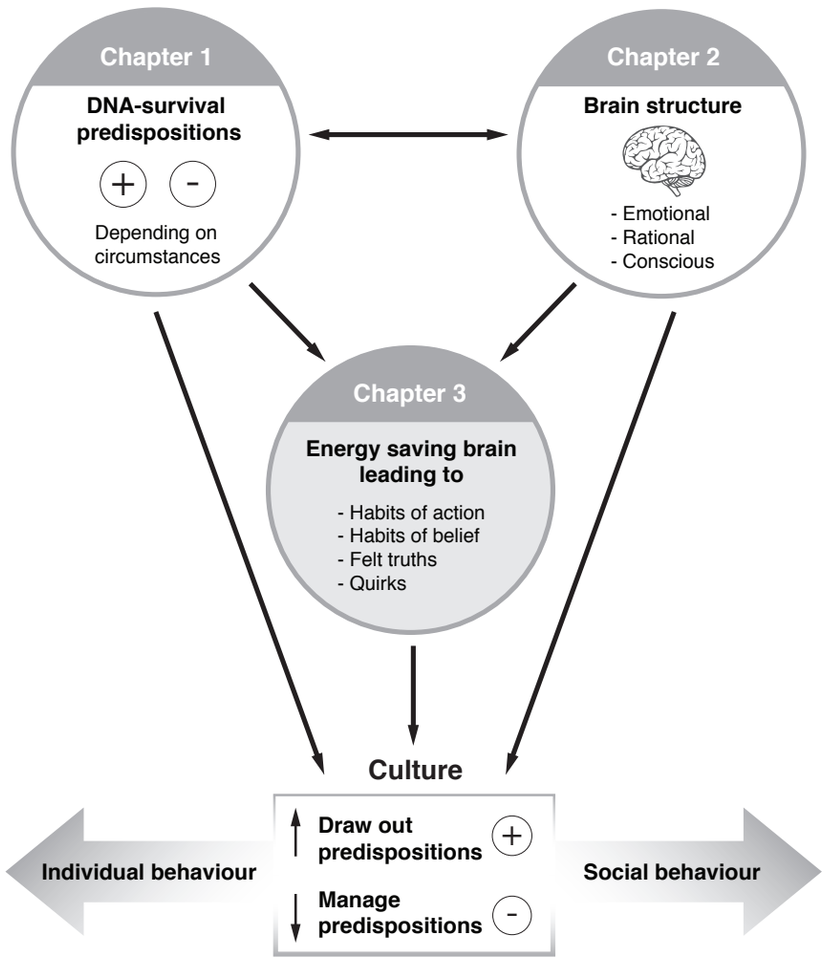
I loved it. Mua, quick to seize the moment, said, ‘Let’s do some red, blue and white role plays.’ We asked the group to suggest some high energy, amygdala/red soldier situations. One of the shy parents ventured that she had a 16-year-old son who arrived home and said he wanted to get married; this mum had lost it – screaming and yelling that such an idea was totally impossible and the most stupid thing he could do. (Vietnamese mums can be world class at “losing it”!)

We played out that particular scenario with three students each playing the red, blue and white soldier; it was hilarious and even better when we got them to change roles. At the end of a long day, I asked them all what had they learned and how they might be able to put into practice what they had learned.

Surprisingly several of the shy, probably illiterate, parents put up their hands. I asked one woman what it was: ‘I am going to spend much more time in my white soldier,’ she replied. The children beamed proudly at their parents; it was a lesson well-learned. I left it at that because it had been a long day.

Now to move on to our quirky habit-forming brain.

Three building blocks of culture and societies' individual behaviour

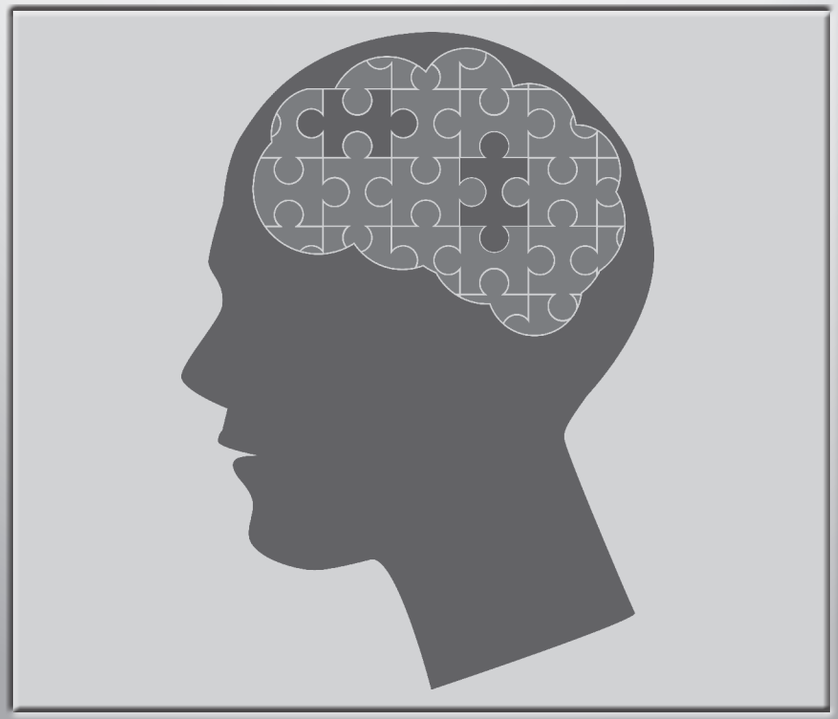




Chapter 3

The third building block:

Our pattern-making, habit-forming, quirky brain



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To enable you to get a better handle on your brain, I am going to first look at the role habit plays – habits of action and habits of thinking (felt truths) – and then start to explore the integrated relationships between our DNA predispositions, our brain structure and our predisposition to habit.

Our brains use about 20–30 per cent of our daily calorific intake. Energy inefficient brains are at risk during times of drought and scarcity so brain efficiency is selective for our survival. How does the brain become efficient? It certainly isn't thinking everything through from scratch each time something new happens – that would require huge amounts of energy. Instead it forms patterns. Patterns are an efficient way of helping the brain to use the minimum amount of energy, as our brains are inherently lazy.

Please have a go at the following experiment.

What is 3x12?

The answer: 36 Really easy – no cognitive load because you practiced learning your three times tables for hours (at least I did). And the answer is now built into your cluster of **fast** thinking about multiplication, no problem.

Now what is 19x36? Oh no!! This is not going to be **fast** thinking!

There are several ways you (your brain) can respond to this question:

- Shut down, basically saying this is too much cognitive load and I won't do it. That's called being lazy and no brain reinforcement or restructuring takes place.
- Using a procedural trick (also a learned pattern) i.e. 19 is close to 20 so *20 x 36 = 720*; now subtract one lot of *36 = 684*. That's still quite a cognitive load because you have to keep *20 x 36 = 720* in your memory and then subtract 36 – but it's not so bad.

- The last response is to do long, hard multiplication. Now that's serious cognitive load. You are probably solidly in **slow** thinking mode.

Of course some of you will use their phone calculator – but beware! If there's no cognitive load, there's no learning and no synaptic connections being built or being re-formed in your brain. A potential negative for the internet generation.

Cognitive loading demands energy so the brain is designed to minimise energy use by sticking to the patterns it has created regardless of the quality of the pattern's message. It sticks with patterns to avoid cognitive load. We call patterns "habits". Once the problem-solving pattern is proven to be successful then the brain doesn't revisit the situation. It doesn't debate again whether or not what it sees as a snake is a snake. Or if it's a nice snake. No, it says, 'Wow, that's a snake pattern, I'm out of here' (the amygdala – fight, freeze, flee). Or quite equally you might see an old friend (that's a pattern) and say, 'Oh there's Sam; let's go over and talk to him' (nice endorphins).

This means that of the two modes of thinking, **slow** and **fast,** we have a very strong bias to **fast** thinking. Concentrating, paying attention to one problem for extended periods of time i.e. **slow** thinking takes cognitive load. Furthermore, the brain once presented with a problem wants an answer. It doesn't like ambiguity. It likes black and white, right and wrong, clarity and will make up an answer come what may, even if the question is unanswerable.

There are two types of habits: habits of action (things we do every day) and habits of thinking (beliefs–felt truths). Let's look at each of them.

Habits of actions

The behaviourists, Skinner *et al.*, basically concluded that all behaviour was habit based on stimulus – response – repetition. They had under-played DNA driven predispositions and the modification of habit through reflective consciousness and choice but they had a point: habits are incredibly important.

Check out your own habits. What sequence of things do you do as you:

- Get up in the morning?
- Get dressed?
- Drive to work?
- Arrive at your destination?

Personally, I follow an almost fixed, habitual, routine because, when I think about, it's brain efficient with no cognitive load. Getting dressed for me involves an exact sequence (got to laugh, it's pathetic).

- I lay out my clothes for the day by the bathroom door.
- After first cleaning my teeth, then shaving and finally taking my shower (another set of habits in the shower), I first put on underpants (left leg first, right leg second).
- Then I put on my socks (left leg first, right leg second).
- Then my trousers.
- After that, in winter, I put on an undershirt, then a shirt, buttoning it from the bottom to the top, and then tucking it in (not very fashionable).
- Tighten my belt to the last hole on the belt (lost some weight).
- Put on my shoes, right first left second.

If I change this habitual routine or happen to be interrupted by my wife, Misako, I get grumpy (that's cognitive load taking place). However, now that I have recognised the "third observer" and the power of habit, I laugh at myself and I apologise to her which she accepts with laughter as she too knows what's happening.

Habitual actions infuse my day.

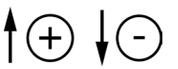
Most of the time we only talk about bad habits which can range from leaving dirty dishes in the sink to the habits of pessimism, victimhood, obsessive eating, as well as a whole lot of other habitual addictions. I have some suspicion that some of things that present as illnesses are actually closer to habits; the brain has formed a pattern and that has grooved itself into a habit. These are mental habits.

Habits of thinking *(felt truths)*

Felt truths, our beliefs about the world, just like habits of action, save energy. If you didn't have them, you would have to spend all your time in rational **slow** mode working out everything situation by situation. We think we are rational, but, in reality, much of what we believe – maybe most of what we believe – has been **fast** encultured into us and is useful to get through the day, make sense of the world but it's not **the truth**.

Where do these habits of action and thought come from? I may be wrong but I don't think Our brain inherently knows the difference between good or bad habits. It enjoys repeating good and bad habits; that's where culture comes in.

Our individual reflective, rational, **slow** brain could work out good habits as against bad habits. We could individually work through that being honest, generous, optimistic, grateful and loving is a good idea. But that's quite a task – I know because as a onetime atheist, I tried it. Realistically, enculturation is the most important creator of good habits. The role of parents and society when raising children is largely the creation of clusters of good habits and the avoidance of bad ones. Bad habits are when we let our negative predispositions run free of constraint. That's the role of culture. In the modern world it's also what large well-run work places achieve.



During our upbringing, in our families, throughout our educational years and in our workplace, we are continually being enculturated. We are taught how to live in our society and everyone around us is reinforcing that particular way of seeing the world – American, British, Maori, Indigenous Australians, Chinese, African, and so on. Our habits of action and *felt truths* become commonly held. This becomes our identity – our culture! If you have never lived in another culture this common way of being–thinking is so pervasive that it is difficult to imagine that there could be another way of being. Fish can't see the water in which they swim, nor know where the river is taking them.

This is especially true if you are an alpha fish or part of an alpha culture. You are a winner in life – nothing can be better so why care be about other people's lives or what could be different?

Difference for alphas is often a threat to privilege.
That's why they are conservative.

Culture is important but it creates problems as well. When we see someone unrelated to our culture – a stranger, a *"THEM"*, our DNA predisposition to a sensible fear of strangers kicks in and we often automatically take the **fast** least cognitive load route – we negatively stereotype, have a negative cluster of **felt truths** about that person: too many white people, (including at one time myself), Indigenous Australians are lazy drunkards who beat their

women and live off welfare, even though we don't have any real experience of Aboriginals or their lives at all. It's called racism.

I am certain that I am a racist in biological terms

What I mean by that goes back to what I covered in Chapter 1. I was born fearful, to keep myself alive; I was also born into a particular *"us"* group of people and when I see a different group of people *"them"* who don't look or act like me it's almost biologically certain that I will negatively stereotype them. If I treat them badly, they will react by treating me badly, confirming what I already believe, and I will have confirmed what they believe about me – we have created our own doom loop realities about each other. Two stereotyped minds have interrelated with each other to create a poor outcome. This is initially biologically determined unless you are "fast" encultured not to be racist, or you personally break the biology and choose to reverse the process with experience of the *"THEM"*.

Fortunately, modern society is becoming multicultural, with laws requiring us to keep quiet about and tolerate (tolerate still implies superiority), even sometimes rejoice, in other cultures. Rejoicing in other ways of being is helped by experiencing the *"OTHER"* and find out that they are not really frightening at all. The ultimate result of tolerating or embracing each other is that cultures become modified to everyone's benefit. Dead right cultures become dead cultures.

Unfortunately, our DNA predisposition to both domination and negatively stereotyping the "other "can get in the way of this process – my alpha culture is better than yours, so why should my culture change? We don't actually say it, but we often operate in the West with the underlying assumption that,

"You would be much better off if you were more like me".

Sometimes this would be true sometimes not. Sometimes the reverse would be true. In any event, it's not our decision. In Australia, Aborigines and mainly white immigrants are wrestling with this problem. Australia's indigenous population – the *original owners of the land* – are severely disadvantaged and it's getting worse. (Note how complicated this is – ownership of land is a modern abstraction, a modern *felt truth* quite different from aboriginal ideas about country, yet we are now using the idea of legal property ownership as if it was an aboriginal concept).

Now to explore the dynamic interaction of the three building blocks, DNA predispositions, brain structure and habit, I am going to share a number of stories that show their interactions in bite-sized chunks.

Felt truths **can be silly or very serious; management of them is helped by the three soldier process.**

Misako and I laugh about our mutually bizarre felt truths around table manners. As children, we were both brought up (i.e. encultured) by parents that had firm ideas about table manners. If I waved my knife and fork around while eating I was severely rebuked, even sent to my room. Misako, who is Japanese, was equally disciplined if she used her chopsticks to spear her food – an approach I think is quite efficient. Both our red soldiers are triggered if we sit at the table with anyone who transgresses our secret *felt truths*. Our red soldiers have concluded that these people are uncultured and probably do all kinds of other evil things; we are literally so disturbed that we want to leave the table.

The fascinating thing is that even though we know these felt truths are nonsense, just cultural conventions, they still trigger our amygdala response. One of my closest friends waves his knife and fork around when eating and I once embarrassingly admitted my hard-wired aversion to his awful table manners. He now does it just to trigger my reaction – fortunately I am now able to laugh at myself in spite of my biology, my cortisol-marinated brain. Laughter not taking yourself too seriously seems to be one of the best mechanisms for happiness. But you can't do this unless you have got hold of the three soldier process.

I have spent a lot of time writing while in McDonald's. Sometimes people clear up after themselves, sometimes they don't. One of my *felt truths* is we should try to make life easier not harder for others. So, when I see people walk out leaving their rubbish all over the place, it equates as disrespect. My amygdala is triggered and I sometimes interject, sometimes not. My daughter Jamie is acutely embarrassed when I do. You are a grumpy old man, she says. This is trivial, won't change the world. But I still get triggered and can now laugh at myself because I know all this brain stuff.

There are clearly non-trivial *felt truths*. For example, there were two reactions to the financial crisis each was based on different *felt truths*.

The progressives followed Keynesian economic *felt truths* and argued for government expenditure to reignite demand. The conservatives were much more hard-edged, if a bit confused. On the one hand, they said let the rational free market do its work while minimising government intervention, and on the other hand they happily took advantage of government bail outs. These opposing *felt truths* persist. They have polarised and gridlocked politics in the USA and have impacted millions of lives – hardly trivial.

When problem-solving we are much more FAST–emotional than we think

Behavioural researchers have developed experiments that demonstrate our fast–irrationality time and time again. We instead use **fast** thinking to reduce complexity and to express our DNA predispositions. (A bit disturbing when classical economics is based on the rational "fast felt truth" that well-informed individuals will always act with rational self-interest.) Researchers have, by my count, identified at least 20 ways that we regularly act irrationally rather than with **slow**, high cognitive load, rationality. Here are a few of them:

- Expert bias: we believe what TV talking heads tell us. – *Submission to alphas.*
- Confirmatory bias: we listen agree with and search for information that confirms our felt truths. – *Don't want to self-contest; it's too much cognitive load.*
- Latest information bias: we give much more credibility to the last thing we heard that may or may not be as important as prior information. – *Limits to our memory recall system and our RAS paying attention to the immediate.*
- Loss aversion bias: we will hold onto loss making situations way beyond what is sensible. – *Combination of territoriality and losers lose status.*
- Story bias: tell me a story as against statistics and I will go with the story not the real numbers every time. – *We are social animals and understand stories about people much more easily than numbers which take cognitive load.*
- Touch bias: if a person touches you while telling you something you are more likely to believe them. – *Touch, subconsciously signals being part of the small "US" group therefore I can trust you.*
- Wealth bias: if a wealthy person advises you to do something then you will much more likely believe them and follow them. – *Alphas are smarter than the average bear and provide protection; the submission reflex.*
- Group bias: do what the group is doing – *Stick with the group and you survive better.*
- Favour bias: you will be more likely to buy from somebody you have done a favour to than someone else. – *Assumed tit-for-tat exchange will occur within a small US group.*
- Trend discovery bias: give a totally random series of numbers to people and they will find a trend. – *We can't stand ambiguity; we make up answers even when there are none especially if you are an expert.*

Each of these irrational ways of thinking are the result of a combination of our DNA-survival predispositions and our bias to **fast** easy thinking. Here a couple of examples of our emotional bias more fully explained.

"Ownership bias" – which means whatever you own, you emotionally overvalue significantly. An example: Take a room full of people at a conference who were each asked to buy a coffee mug to use for the conference. The mugs available ranged in price from $4 to $8; a latecomer arrives (secretly one of the researchers) and there is only a selection of $6 mugs left which he says he doesn't like. The latecomer then offers to buy someone else's mug, even offering to pay $10 for a mug that cost the owner $6 and there is a replacement for his exactly similar $6 mug sitting on the table. Amazingly, the $6 mug owner will almost never sell. People will hang on to their original purchase even when they can buy the exact same thing for a $4 profit. Ownership of the mug has suddenly made the mug more valuable to the owner (territoriality may be at play here).

Another experiment demonstrating that we are not nearly as rational as we think is even weirder. Prior to an auction of wine (could have been anything), people were asked to write down the last three numbers of their driver's license; it transpired that those people whose three numbers were higher,

bid significantly more than those whose numbers were low. In a room full of 50 people, the pattern of the bidding will always reflect the numbers on the driving licence. It's not rational, but the person with the higher numbers will be primed to think about higher numbers and the person with smaller numbers will be primed to think about smaller numbers and bid accordingly. This may be due to our RAS again paying attention to what's happening now.

The clincher to these sorts of studies is that if you do these experiments on highly qualified statisticians they still often irrationally decide **fast** "emotionally" – even when they know the math and have made a stupid decision.

In summary; We are much less rational than we recognise. We are biased to **fast**-clustered solutions;

Fast felt truths and emotions are powerful drivers of behaviour unless you have developed the third observer which then opens up much more choice.

This leads into an understanding of where our FAST "draw out the positive manage the negative" felt truths came from.

Our great thinkers, Maimonides, Jesus, St Paul, Confucius, Buddha, Muhammad, Locke, Franklin and the founding fathers of the USA used **slow** problem-solving to come up with values, *felt truths*, and institutions that drew out our positive predispositions and managed the negative. These ideas then became **fast** *felt truths* through the enculturation process.

This is such a big subject that I need to narrow it down to a couple of examples that express the common principles. From time to time the world is blessed with thinkers who literally improve the world. With different degrees of emphasis, they addressed two problems:

- How can we as individuals live a good life?
- How can we create a good society?

My apologies to those of strong faith, but I am going to suggest Jesus, Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad and the founding fathers didn't just wake up one day and have their ideas fully formed. They had to work hard, they had to SLOW think. And relate their thinking to their own historical context. Jesus,

for instance, did not spend much time on institutional design of the church and its structures because he was a Jew living under the violent authority of Roman institutions. His teachings went above and beyond institutional design. It wasn't till 300 years later that Jesus and St Paul's **slow** thinking became the basis of Christian institutional enculturation. I went through it myself. I went to church three times a day on Sundays and every day before school on weekdays. I could recite large portions of the bible, knew the New Testament inside and out. Through systematic enculturation, Christian values have become the **fast** thinking *felt truths* for millions of people, myself included.

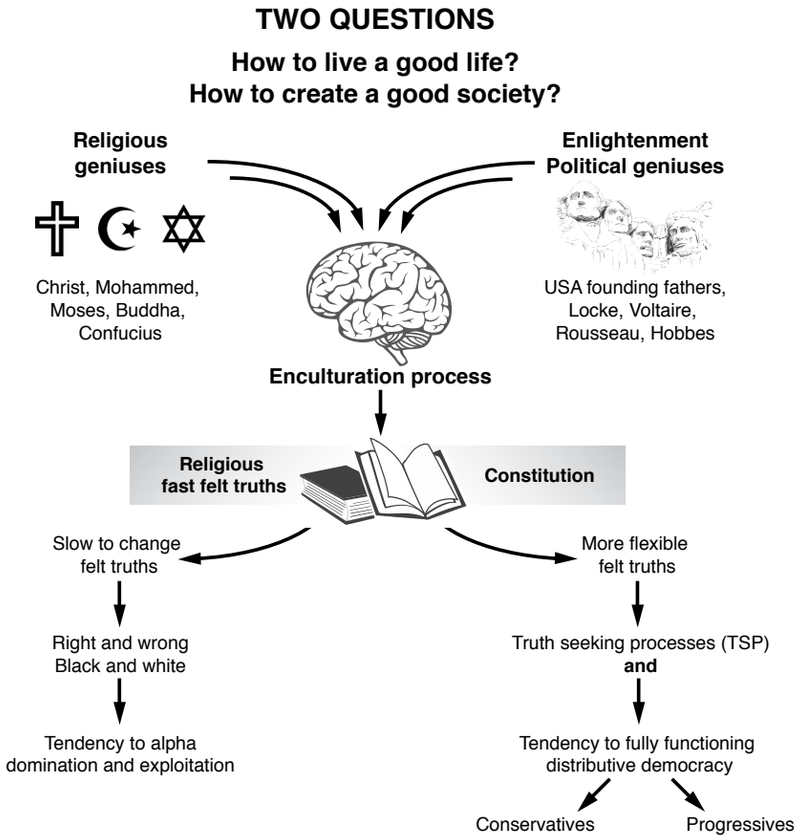
Confucius on the other hand spent years thinking about institutional design in a way that related individual behaviour to societal structure. His context was continual warfare between multiple Chinese states and its devastating consequences. His detailed institutional thinking resulted in a set of very specifically described hierarchical authorities and reciprocal responsibilities for the family which were to be mirrored in larger political institutional forms. His encultured teachings are still the cluster basis of Chinese *felt truths* even after two-an-a-half thousand years and past attacks from Mao's communism. Amazingly, because of Mao, most Chinese don't have a clue as to the source of their culture. Just like the rest of us. My Chinese friends think their cluster of Confucius-derived felt truths are natural, self-evidently correct.

The founding fathers of the USA were faced with a different context. They had a two-dimensional problem. The Christian problem of personal salvation – how to be a good person – as well as how to answer a new question.

"If the king and the church are not to rule us, then who will rule without exploiting us?"

They worked hard, had lots of meetings and conventions, and produced letters and pamphlets using **slow** rational thinking alongside their encultured, **fast Christian cluster of** *felt truths*. God is written into the constitution. They came up with the values and institutional designs, such as the separation of alpha power sources, and embedded them in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This was extraordinary. Their ideas now contextualise the law and political institutions of the USA. They have in their turn become

the source code behind the everyday **fast** *felt truths* of Americans. For the past couple of hundred years their exceptional idea of democracy has resulted in freedom for millions of people, not just Americans. But now democracy may be at risk as globalisation releases alphas from constraint. (Covered fully in Chapter 7.)



Even within a single culture, *felt truths* usually cluster into Conservative and Progressive biased beliefs. Either way they are genuinely held. However, they can't both be right. Respectful dialogue is the way forward. Some form of compromise emerges, is trialled, and then adjusted depending on the reality outcome.

How to address crime is a good problem for examining some of the many *felt truths* we have.

- Progressives will argue that crime is caused by inequality. So the solution is better education and wealth distribution.
- Conservatives will argue that crime is driven by bad people and rational economic motives. So the solution is to deter with heavy policing and harsh sentences.

The truth of the matter is probably a mix of both these ideas. But remembering our bias to **fast** single unambiguous answers and also our bias to looking for confirmatory data, even experts tend to cluster around Conservative–Progressive positions.

When you take experts in the field and get them to argue their positions, you get one of two outcomes, respectful debate or amygdale-triggered "I am right you are wrong" assertions. Without strong social constraint, the interaction can become quite aggressive as each defends their position with what I call survival vigour. Respectful debate may get somewhere. Amygdala debate goes nowhere – each party learns nothing.

Our identity is the sum total of our *felt truths*

Our brain doesn't know the difference between a physical attack and an attack on our identity. An attack on identity can trigger the amygdala as if it was a physical attack. This is especially prevalent in alphas as they fight to maintain privilege. But it is also prevalent an underclass fighting to retain its dignity in the face of humiliation.

Clearly not everyone can be right. With use of the third observer, I have come to realise that my *felt truths* are useful but not *the* truth. To get at a better truth we need the truth seeking process (TSP) of respectful dialogue. Aggressive, disrespectful and dogmatic argument can be observed daily. Cultivating ones' white soldier is essential to get to better answers and live a more balanced calm life.

I remember one particular event when I was visiting a copper mine in a

remote part of Australia. It had a guest house with visitor bedrooms and breakfast was communal at a big long table – quite formal. At the time I was a young, but very senior manager at the mine's parent company. Unbeknown to me, a divisional CEO was also visiting the mine. Anyway, when I went in to breakfast I saw my friends were sitting either side of the head of the table so I sat at the head of the table to be near them (maybe). Slowly, the other seats filled up, leaving just one vacant place at the bottom of the table. When the divisional CEO walked in he looked at me and literally went purple in the face. I knew he was thinking 'That's my chair and you, from head office, are disrespectful enough to sit in it'. Reality check – it's actually just a chair.

He sat at the bottom of the table and, believe it or not, moved progressively up the table as one by one people finished their breakfast and left. Hell has no fury greater than the scorned alpha *felt truth* of "I'm the boss". Our relationship never worked after that – it's quite incredible to realise that we can be biologically triggered by a *felt truth* that is no real impact on our lives. Authority gained by sitting at the head of a table is only a perception a *felt truth*, not a reality. So it can be changed.

I have owned several businesses. For fun I will sometimes deliberately sit in the omega chair – it causes all kinds of disquiet. Remember, we are all both dominating and submissive and disrupting submissive patterns is as disquieting as disrupting dominant patterns. You can find the disruption red soldier response operating in a surprising number of domains.

An important thing to remember about the amygdala trigger system is that it was designed to keep you alive in a primitive dangerous world. And yet in our basically safe world the amygdala can be triggered just as powerfully by events that don't have anything to do real survival. This misinterpretation or misperception of what is real as against a biological interpretation of events is useful to understand. If you are in the business of being happier and more in control of your life you must understand and watch for this.

To put it another way, our biologically driven fear, alert-to-danger response is often triggered in the modern world by events or challenges to our felt truths that rationally have actually nothing to do with our survival.

Without understanding the idea of felt truths and our biological reactions to

confrontation of our felt truths we can be:

- manipulated by alphas (going to wars that we should not be in at all);
- manipulated by marketing (be part of a high status group if you wear this brand) and
- continually in a state of mild anxiety (terrorist are going to kill us – highly unlikely).

Felt truths are so powerful that we need to have some way of examining them and developing better ideas. This is hard, because they are literally grooved into your brain and supported by the river in which you swim, polluted or not.

Two ideas: first, seek out the opposite to your beliefs. Second, recognise that many *felt truths* are held in place with fear. One of my strong *felt truths* is that our climate is being changed by human greenhouse gas emissions. I had spent a year carefully studying the science; I concluded that climate change is probably real and that this is either the most dreadful or the most wonderful issue confronting our species. It is dreadful because it could lead to millions of deaths, mass displacement, isolationism and war.

On the other hand, it could be wonderful because the impacts of climate change cannot be resolved without properly functioning global institutions and global cooperation. If you think about it, such cooperation will require us to address not only climate change, but also global inequality. China and India are not going to address climate change unless the approach is fair to them. (Chimps know all about fairness – so do we.)

After concluding climate change was probably real, I talked it through with some of my mates who were senior executives in the coal mining industry. Without any scientific evidence, they basically said I was full of the proverbial (alpha self-interest is very resistant to any threat to their privilege). My normal response would be to say *they* were full of the proverbial and dig in. I could even have got into an amygdala state over such an important issue. However, using my third observer, and the concept of respectful dialogue, I decided I might still be wrong. So I went out of my way to read as much as I could from the climate sceptic's perspective; they had a few good points, especially about ways of adapting and managing the changed conditions *if* they happen, something I had not considered. Still, on balance, I feel that climate change is happening but I'm not as sure as I was of this particular *felt*

truth and I still have good friends in the industry.

Here's example of confronting my fear based "felt truths" about Muslims and amygdala triggering. This occurred just after Muslim jihadists bombed a nightclub in Bali killing 202 people, 82 of them Australians. It highlights the interplay of fear and how *felt truths* lead to negative stereotyping of the "other" and the three soldiers approach. I was red soldier about the Bali bombing and as a consequence, I had strong cluster of *felt truths* about Muslims – they were crazy, bad, acted outside civilised norms and were liars.

Anyway, two weeks after the bombings, I was catching a flight to New Zealand and I arrived at the gate a bit late where I was confronted with a palpable air of tension among the boarding passengers. The reason – off to one side was an immaculately dressed Muslim couple, the woman wearing a hijab. My instant red soldier reaction was, 'Stupid bastards, its right after Bali, why don't they tone down their dress'. My prefrontal blue soldier said, 'Don't be dumb Julian they aren't going to blow up the plane, they're just normal people trying to get to New Zealand'. The other, mostly Anglo-Saxon passengers were glaring over at the Muslim couple with a mixture of fear, hate and confusion. My white soldier practice for the day was not to make judgments but I didn't feel like that at all. These were members of a culture that had killed dozens of my own.

Rationally, I didn't know what to do but my feet did; they walked me over to the couple and I said to them, 'Wow, you make me feel frightened. Are you frightened too?' They paused, looked at me for authenticity, and the man said, 'Yes, this is very frightening'. The three of us let out a collective sigh of relief and we laughed together with apologies, after which we struck up some a small talk about visits, family and children. The atmosphere at the gate relaxed. Direct experience instead of false fear won out – a good cure for an irrational but real felt truth and a mind restructuring endomorphic burst.

Once you understand the three building blocks, your DNA predispositions, how your brain works and its bias to **fast** habit, you can undertake five unusual activities:

- First, be aware that you know much less than you think. You live the best you can in the everyday world but much of what you think you know (your *felt truths*) are not **the truth**. They are useful stories; stories can be changed for better stories. (So damned hard.)
- The second is to practise self-observation; this will help you to be in your white soldier much more and gives you much more choice.
- The third is to be aware of the power of respectful engagement with opposite arguments.
- The fourth is choosing to confront fear; be ready to experience things that make you frightened walk toward your fear.
- Lastly, be so fully aware of your quirks that you can laugh at your own inadequacy.

Brain quirks summary
• The brain is a problem solving machine that wants answers. It will make up 'felt truths' good or bad of high or low quality
• Children are loaded up with their particular culture's endowment of 'felt truths'. These become their 'fast' thinking solutions to everyday living exhibit 1
• We are way more 'fast' thinking emotional than we know. We decide 'fast'/emotionally, justify 'slow'/rationally
• 'Felt truths' often split along a '**conservative**', usually alpha cluster of felt truths and a '**progressive**' cluster of felt truths. If you know a person's cluster you can usually forecast a person's response to any social issue
• If your 'fast thinking' felt truths are confronted, contested; you can easily react with amygdala survival vigour F^3. This wipes out **slow** thought processes and behaviours unless consciously controlled by your 'white soldier'
• The brain can't differentiate between a physical attack that genuinely threatens survival and a conceptual attack that threatens your identity, your particular cluster of felt truths
• The brain probably doesn't have a sophisticated conceptual understanding of good versus bad like "love your neighbour as yourself" and all that that entails

The brain is surprisingly quirky

In the following chapter I will expand the idea of *felt truths* using the "War On Women" to show how our beliefs can be changed for the better. I will follow this with a look at "war between nations" through the perspective of the three building blocks. Alpha generated warfare is the impediment to progressive change.



Chapter 4

The tricky idea of felt truths further explored using the war on women (WOW)



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The tricky idea of felt truths further explored using the war on women (WOW)

If you have got this far, you are at least hanging in there, giving me a chance to expand on the previous concepts. The ideas in the building block chapters are possibly exciting and also confrontational to you; your *felt truths* may have rejected them outright. So I am going to use the "war on women" and the "war between nations" to more develop the idea of "felt truth".

The war on women (WOW)

WOW is a great example of the concept of felt truths in practice, one that we all live with and experience daily.

The progressive evolution of any *felt truth* can be seen as a six-step process – a cycle that hopefully keeps repeating itself. There is no end point to this Truth Seeking Process (TSP). For simplicity, I'm going to present this six-step process as if it was sequential i.e. 1 to 2 to 3 etc. This isn't how it works in reality – it's messier than that; there are advances and regressions and some components of the shifts get ahead of others.

Step one: Our unconstrained DNA predispositions take the lead. We unconsciously hold primitive and only moderately constrained alpha-dominant DNA-based *felt truths*.

Step two: These primitive *felt truths* become expressed in culture and social institutions. They become part of the enculturation process – part of out **fast** thinking beliefs.

Step three: Culture and supporting social institutions ensure the primitive *felt truths* are justified and confirmed by reality. An accepted equilibrium is achieved, even though it might be exploitative.

Step four: Step three can last for thousands of years until "change agents" emerge. These can be in the form of alpha enlightenment, a new class that has enough power to confront the old *felt truths*, technology – even, strangely

enough, war. Thought leaders come up with more progressive *felt truths* such as more respect, more freedom for an enlarged *"US"* that slowly becomes institutionalised.

Step five: The fully-institutionalised cluster of *felt truths* become the new reality. The new felt truths become invisible to the current generation. Isn't this the way it always was? NO, they need protecting.

Step six: The *felt truths*, institutions and cultural norms developed by a lead society get taken up by other societies with, two-way, cultural modifications, expanding to a greater, more inclusive *"US"*.

Now to the war on women. Males have dominated women for thousands of years. Why? From a raw biological DNA perspective, it's about our predisposition to dominance. In other words, it's our adherence to competitive dominance and submission hierarchies and the ability of males to realise dominance and privilege. This real world ability comes from several sources:

- Males are physically stronger than women. Female Olympic gold medallists would rarely be able to qualify for male Olympic competition. My daughter Jamie is a strong female who works out with weights four times a week but, at the age of 69, I can still easily beat her at arm wrestling (her boyfriend crushes me). Family violence is a male problem, not a female one. Males can get their way through violence.
- After the agricultural revolution, work became physically hard, and women were not strong enough to do things such as ploughing or cutting down large trees. Family survival depended on the "provider male" which gave men serious leverage over women. Do it my way or you starve.
- Similarly, another nasty leverage men have is that men will abandon their children. Women very rarely do this.
- This ability to dominate results in male privilege. Women do the cooking, washing, cleaning, child-rearing and are available for sex. This is pretty hard for men to give up and as a result they gang up and create a meta male *"US"* to maintain their position. I can remember a notice at the front of my father's men only club in London: "Dogs, baggage and women to the rear entrance please". It says it all really, even the order of the words is instructive.

- Finally, and more complex: heterosexual males are enthralled by females. Knowing other males feel the same, they need to protect their females from other males. So females need protection – the perverse origin of the male protector role.

If challenged, males react with amygdala-fuelled aggression resulting in the maintenance of male dominance over females at all social levels right up to the recent past.

Now I'll going through the six-step process in more detail specifically for: The WOW.

Step one: Primitive male and female DNA predispositions result in a cluster of primitive male and female *felt truths*.

Women are physically weak, unintelligent and sexually manipulative; they need protection; they are over-emotional, not rational; their role is to bear and raise male children; they are to be told who to marry. So women are not part of the dominant male *"US"* group.

Step two: These primitive felt truths then manifest themselves in everyday customs and institutions.

- Women will have their *marriage choices* made for them; – they are my property and too dumb to make the right decision for the family.
- Women have no legal rights over their own *children*; – children are my male property.
- Women should *dress* to cover their bodies; – they are my property and I don't want them attracting other males, because I'm a male and I know how other males will respond.
- Women are excluded from participating in community *decision making* forums or as voting citizens; – why would I include them they are not too smart and add no value?
- Women don't need to be *educated*; – why bother, education just makes them more difficult.
- Women should only *work* in *menial poorly or unpaid jobs*; – not smart enough for anything else and anyway I hate cleaning up. Plus, money gives them freedom.

- Women should not own *property* and rarely inherit; – too much potential for trouble and freedom.
- Women are to be almost invisible in the eyes of the *law*; – certainly not be equal to men.
- Women should stay barefoot and pregnant at home looking after my children because – that's what they are *good* at.

In summary, they have no education, low- or no-paid work, no wealth, no participation in decision-making, and are required to following male direction in terms of dress and marriage. However, they can be fully occupied with pregnancy, children and the household.

Step three: Women become the primitive fast *felt truths*. They confirm the primitive male and female *felt truths* as set out here.

- Women are dumb – well, you will be if you are not educated.
- Women are unable to hold responsible jobs; – they have no education and no experience of complexity.
- Women are manipulative; – the weak have to be manipulative.
- Women are over emotional; – it's one way of being manipulative.
- Women are dependent and in need of protection; – their dependency is wired into the structure of society.

In this way, the primitive male felt truths are confirmed as being true, even though they are flat wrong. I will repeat here:

Felt truths are essential to get you through daily life, create your identity but they are not THE TRUTH.

Women believed in these primitive fast *felt truth*s as well. As children, they have been enculturated to understand that this is a world for the male. They accommodate to this situation, seeing it as a normal and inevitable reality. They find purpose, status and meaning in raising children and building a thriving family. If young women complain that this situation is wrong, it is often their mothers and sisters that tell them to pull their heads in. Early thought leaders, such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1753–97), had extraordinarily difficult lives without a strong sisterhood to support them.

Step four: Eventually circumstances, over a very long period, change in multiple, mutually reinforcing, ways. Remember, it took at least 40 years for England to abolish the slave trade (1807) and then another 50 years to abolish slavery. Demands for female emancipation came from several sources. Women from the upper classes such as Emily Pankhurst started to argue for equality, the progressive working class argued for change; work became less physical; war required women to work in paid employment (and they demonstrate that they are just as capable as men); the contraceptive pill freed women to choose when they do or don't have children. Intellectuals like Simone de Beauvoir supported the arguments.

Women started to be heard, in part because they took almost terrorist action. They blew up letterboxes and minister's houses, they broke windows, held large public demonstrations and became fearless in the face of power. Emily Davison famously committed suicide by stepping in front of the king's racehorse in the 1913 Epsom Derby. Men didn't take this threat to their self-authorised, privileging fast, *felt truths* quietly; they are amygdala-triggered. The early suffragettes in England were spied on, beaten up, jailed, force fed and lost their jobs. Not all women agreed with the pioneering suffragettes and very few men agreed. Men saw little benefit in losing their privilege. Nevertheless, the ball starts to roll. It takes a hundred years but institutions are slowly modified.

Step five: Through the power of the law and new felt truth enculturation women in the West are now in **step five** of the felt truth modification process that moves to more freedom more equality.

They have:

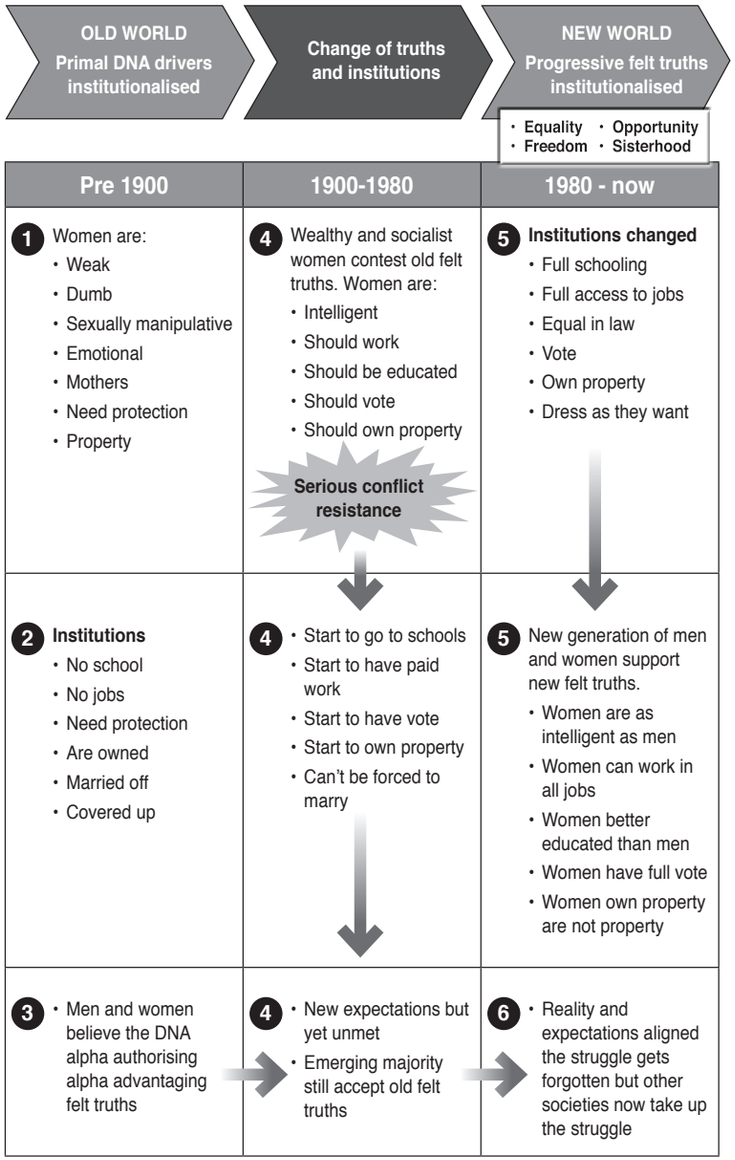
- Equal education (100%+)
- A move to equal pay (80%)
- The right to work (100%)
- The right to child care (50%)
- The right to own property (100%)
- The right to choose their own husbands (100%)
- The right to vote (100%)
- The right to dress as they choose 80% (office dress code)
- The right to choose whether or not to have children 60% (USA)

Now in the West we have a totally different set of emergent fast *felt truths* about women. Even from my male perspective women are:

- Still physically weaker than men but this is irrelevant.
- Just as smart/competent as men and are often better educated.
- Still in need of protection but not as much as the past.
- A bit confused with the freedom to dress as they want.
- Sometimes more emotional than men but that's okay (even a good thing).
- Able to choose the role they want – motherhood or profession or both (not fully realised yet, even in developed countries).
- Still not paid the same as men but should be.
- Equal in the eyes of the law to own property, inherit and marry who they want.
- Able to add special value to men as they see things differently.

Step six: The *felt truths*, institutions and cultural norms developed in the West get taken up by other societies, expanding to a greater more inclusive *"us"*.

The six steps applied to the War On Women



Step five hasn't yet reached its full conclusion in the West, but it is still having a significant impact on the rest of the world. The West's new *felt truths* about women can be especially confronting to traditional Islamic fast, *felt truths*.

This six-step process is not just a mechanism related to feminism. This process of good or bad *felt truths* supported by institutions and culture and then being proved correct, is universal. It's gone full cycle with slavery in the West; it's still working its way through for African-American equality in the USA. China will at some point have to face the challenge of democracy.

Most males will find this chapter pretty confronting (including me). It highlights the DNA basis (nature) of our relationships with women. More importantly, it forces on us a disquieting and wonderful insight:

Much of what we believe and are ready to defend with survival vigour is not THE truth but are instead useful felt truths. Felt truths can be changed for the better.

I hope this analysis is a challenge. Challenging us to stand outside ourselves with the white soldier, encouraging us to think about not only our gender-based *felt truths* but other *felt truths* like extreme competitive individualism, extreme rational economics and extreme consumerism, and how they are reinforced by our institutions, culture and alpha self-interest. How they may be working against the interest of us all.

The war between nations

In the first three chapters I offered you ideas that you can use to understand yourself, re-sculpt your character, help in your children's development and even help reshape society. However, there is one massive impediment to positive change – war. War changes people's personalities and the societies they live in, simultaneously drawing out both our positive and negative predispositions, so it's important to think through the issues that war raises.

We have looked at the war against women. Now let's look at the wars between nations. War has been a human preoccupation since the beginning of history. England/Britain has been pretty well continuously at war for more than a thousand years. And the USA has been consistently at war, or played the role of invader for one reason or another, for at least the last hundred years. On the surface, neither seems like a warlike nation but nevertheless both are extremely good at war. Check it out on Google.

War is simultaneously beautiful and dreadful. On the one hand, there is the spiritual beauty of young men (and sometimes young women) going to war and laying down their lives to protect their loved ones, their fellow

soldiers, and their country; it is a supreme human act, deserving of honour and gratitude. On the other hand, the destruction caused by war cannot be overstated; the coffins returning home from war contain not only the bodies of heroes, but endless sorrows that can't be buried and will stay with the living like a gaping wound. I find it unbearable to even think about losing a child, a sibling or a close friend to war.

The wounded, disabled and traumatised survivors live on with the memories of what they left behind. And that's just talking about the people on "my side". The enemy also have the same sorrows, wounds, distress and destruction. If you want to experience the feelings of the "other side" I recommend you read *The Sorrow of War* the 1990 book by Bao Ninh about a teenage North Vietnamese soldier who was one of the few survivors of a youth company of Vietcong.

I'd like to relate a story that illustrates both the beauty and dreadfulness of war. In 2005, I decided to walk what is known as the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea; this is a north–south track of about 100 kilometres and the site of one of Australia's battles against the Japanese. In 1942, the Japanese landed about 12,000 troops at Gona on the north side of the island, their goal being to cover the 100kms to the PNG capital of Port Moresby in about three or four days; after capturing Port Moresby the plan was to establish a possible springboard to Australia's north.

Australia had assembled some reservists to hold off this assault – they were not first line troops. The first line troops had been sent to Europe to defend the alpha British. These men were called "chocos", the joke being they would melt in the hot tropical sun. The Japanese of the 141st battalion were tough veterans having already fought in places like Malaysia and China. The Australian strategy was to delay and exhaust the enemy through an ordered program of retreat – take up positions at night and hold them during the day then retreat to the next line of defence a couple of miles back and then repeat. The combat was face-to-face in dense mountainous jungle.

Unknown to me, the group I was walking the trail with were there to honour this particular battle. I was sharing a two-man tent with one of them, Bob, who had lost his father to Kokoda. Bob's father was evacuated back to Australia after being badly wounded. He had enough energy to see Bob conceived but not enough to live, dying just two years after he returned home.

Bob had also been a soldier, having been conscripted for the Vietnam War in what was the Australia Government's bizarre ballot which drafted 20-year-old men into two years' national service based on their birthdates. After twelve weeks' basic training in Australia's northern jungles, Bob was shipped off to Vietnam; looking at photos of him at the time you see a typical young Aussie male – tall, bronzed, muscled and smiling. Being strong he was assigned the job of machine gunner – a weapon of destruction with which he could cut down large trees with a continuous spray of bullets and just as equally shred human bodies. His platoon operated on a two-week cycle: Come in from patrol on Friday. Cut off your rotting gear, rest up till Sunday, new gear, new ammunition, leave base to go into the jungle and make contact with the enemy; they slept rough while they were in the jungle.

I asked him how he could stand the anxiety of being constantly close to contact with the enemy, with death, or worse. He told me his platoon sergeant was an experienced and gifted soldier; every morning somebody would ask him if they would have contact with the enemy that day and he would answer yes or no without giving any explanation; he was always right. This enabled the platoon to either relax or get ready for combat.

On average, the Australians made contact once every two-week cycle. They had a novel approach to contact with the Vietcong, who were usually not as heavily armed as they were, running straight at them firing everything they had. Bob killed at close range dozens of enemy soldiers and other people; several of his mates were killed or wounded. Although Bob was not wounded he and his platoon were sprayed with the defoliant, Agent Orange.

When I met Bob he was, like me, in his early sixties; he was no longer the fabled "bronzed Aussie", yet while he still had the torso of a body builder he had the legs of a young child. Bob and most of his platoon suffered what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); some had committed suicide, some had become alcoholics and several had children with disabilities or deformities. Almost none of them had been able to resume normal lives.

There was I, trained from the age of twelve for war in a military school founded for the Duke of Wellington, but never having to actually go, hearing the stories of a man whose life had been given over to protecting my future. I was humbled but troubled.

After finishing the very exhausting trek we returned to Port Moresby. The following day Bob, as a former soldier, was going to speak at a Remembrance Day service and everyone in our group was going to honour the soldiers' sacrifice. I told him I couldn't go. He didn't react, just asked why. I told him I was confused; while I had tremendous respect and gratitude for those that had fought for my future and wanted to cry when I let those thoughts flood over me, there was simply no way I wanted to either glorify war or endorse the politics that led us into war. The remembrance ceremony was both important and dangerous. To my surprise and relief Ian said, 'Julian, that's exactly how you should feel. I am going for my mates, not the politicians'. We both had tears in our eyes as we shook hands.

If you Google "Causes of War" you get directed to a raft of websites with academic and military analyses that tend to focus on the rational aspects of why we go to war, the economic interests and the reasons that negotiations break down. The literature also examines in detail the conduct of war.

Before the take-off of productivity in the 19th century, war was the main way an alpha could improve life – war was improvement through theft so prior to about 1900, war was to some extent rational because it made a profit.

Governments today have "Defence Departments"; in England when I was growing up the Defence Department was rightly called the War Department although it could have been called the profit department. In 1900, Britain ruled about 300 to 500 million people in India and Africa with about 2,000 civil servants and less than 200,000 troops (mostly non-British). Britain's huge wealth was derived from the control of its empire's markets; the cost of control was less than two per cent of GDP.

After 1900, war became a loss-making proposition; the few people who made money out of the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Yugoslavian conflict, Iraq and Afghanistan, were those who supplied the combatants from the sidelines. The combatants wasted wealth.

In short, there is no longer any economic rationality to war other than defence. And defence is essential. Winston Churchill is quoted as saying: 'We sleep soundly in our beds at night because a few hard men stand ready to do violence to those would hurt us'. He was right and pretty well always will be. Rogue alphas will rise up from time to time and they have to be dealt

with. Former US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld was also quoted as saying, 'Weakness is provocative'; that too can be true.

But if war is not rational, what's going on; why are we still continuously at it? A partial answer can be found by looking at our predispositions and seeing the brain as a rational, conscious machine with its love of habits – habits of belief and habits of action. This approach may not get the total answer but I think we will arrive at a useful perspective on war – certainly different from the rationality of war.

Alpha predisposition to warfare

Let's first look at the start of war from the viewpoint of alpha predispositions as distinct from that of the masses; then we'll look at what happens when we are fully engaged in war.

The specific circumstances for the start of a war are numerous. I'll just deal with alpha predispositions as they apply to warfare and how they are able to manipulate the masses that go to war for them; I'm not saying this is an answer to the cause of war but suggesting that a set of additional questions should be used when thinking about the ways wars start and their resolution. For once we are engaged in war it is very difficult to disengage; we need years of grief before we can exit.

Alpha individuals and alpha nations will always try to maintain or increase their privilege. The ability of alpha national power to achieve this is relative to the size of the population and the available resources. Large countries can dominate and exploit smaller ones; enlargement has its own gravitational pull, as size provides both power and protection. How power is expressed is a function of alpha *felt truths*. Four *felt truths* have evolved about alpha power as it relates to war.

1. *Might is right*. My power allows me to exploit those less powerful; Alexander the Great, the Assyrians, Hitler, Australian and American colonists.
2. My relative size and power is so great you little states should submit to me and *pay me a tribute let me have my way* and I will protect you from your rivals. I have no rivals because I am so powerful; China for hundreds of years. The USA today.

3. I am powerful and I have an idea or philosophy that's better than yours; adopt my ideas and allow me to moderately exploit you and I will offer you protection. Russia with communism; the USA with democracy; Islam in the 7th century; the Roman Empire; Napoleon in the 19th century. If you don't engage with me I will punish you.
4. The power of alpha nations needs to be *balanced* with alliances, respected borders, and diplomatic processes to defuse potential problems as power bases and interests shift (The Treaty of Westphalia in Europe, NATO today).

The move to war is started by the alphas manipulating the masses using our DNA predispositions to negatively stereotype, to follow leadership, to defend territory and to belong: Some false atrocity is often the trigger, spiking fearfulness and revenge; alpha nations must respond to being disrespected or lose respect. The smallest insubordination must be punished with extreme vigour. For years the USA was ugly to New Zealand for refusing to have nuclear warships in its ports.

1. Fear of the *"other"* is exaggerated.
2. The enemy alpha leaders are character-assassinated.
3. Male sexual aggression is raised because men must "protect women and the family from the aggressor".
4. Small and large group belonging is utilised with multiple symbols of belonging.

When we are at the point of full engagement in the war, then it's time to more completely stereotype the enemy with now justifiable negatives:

- We must fight otherwise the enemy will kill us, rape our women and enslave our children (those were Middle Ages realities).
- The enemy is Godless and without morality.
- The enemy is inhuman (especially if they another race e.g. the Japanese, ISIS today).

Once we're at war we actually quite like it because it triggers profoundly-embedded DNA predispositions. War bonds the home community in extraordinary ways usually only seen in times of national trauma. The Nation comes together –

- Young men are dying for us and we must band together.
- We must work day and night in the factories of war to defend ourselves.
- We must give special place and respect for those killed or maimed in the fighting.
- War provides a purpose outside of ourselves.

My mother was in her mid-twenties during the Second World War and she often said it was the best time of her life; it was a period of equality, friendliness, sharing and a common goal, and she lived every day to its fullest purpose. This was in spite of the daily reality that many of her close friends and work mates in the Navy and Air force left on missions each week and never came back. The beauty of war is that it can draw our positive DNA predispositions towards supporting, even dying for, each other.

But what happens in the cases of war that can't be completed, such as, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq? The community energy associated with war has to be dissipated, leaders have to be changed, and a rational voice has to replace the propaganda the media spin. Eventually reason rules, but it can take about ten years with the spin doctors still work overtime using fear to keep the population in line.

In the modern world of asymmetrical, terrorist warfare, the ability to "win" a war outright becomes more and more unlikely. Osama Bin Laden died at the hands of a Navy seal and our hearts are lifted, when in reality it makes little difference. There will always be someone to replace an Osama. In any event *Osama wins while he has still captured our fearful, revengeful minds*.

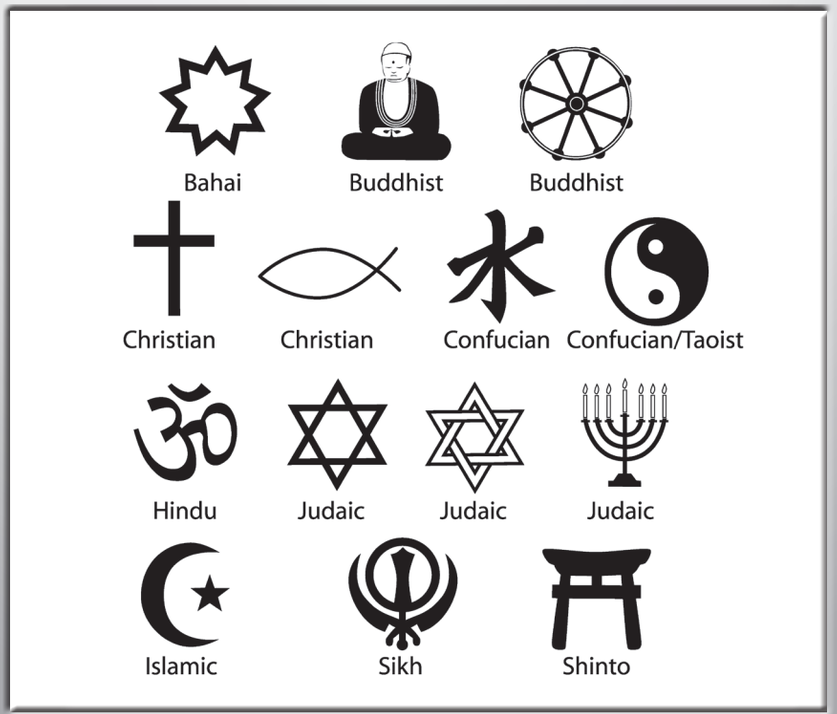
The point of this commentary is that the rationality of war is suspect. The DNA-driven alpha call to war needs to be recognised for what it is – a call to maintain alpha dominance. Sometimes this is justified, often not. We also need to recognise our mass DNA-driver response to this manipulative call. High level national politics and diplomacy are much more akin to the schoolyard with its cliques, hierarchies, territories, theft and bullying than we give credit to.

Now to religion and religious felt truths. The most important creation of our species next to science.



Chapter 5

Religious society



Chapter 5

Religious Society

I was brought up in a Christian family and well enculturated into fast Christian "felt truths" but then I turned atheist for several decades. I have now returned to Christianity. I decided it was plain arrogance to assume I could figure out how to live a good life when much smarter people than me had already shown the way.

I needed some rocks to stand on otherwise my white soldier observer would have a difficult time deciding what to do. This required me to address the "baby with the bathwater" problem. There is a lot of dogmatic alpha protective bathwater in religion but there's also a beautiful ageless wise baby. I discovered The Wayside Church, situated in Sydney's Kings Cross, an entertainment precinct known for its colourful characters, drugs and seedy past. This is a very different place of worship and I find the sermons delivered by its pastor, Graham Long engaging; after the sermon he will say with a throaty laugh, 'I just want to remind you God is not interested in Theology; God is not interested in what you think, God is only interested in what you do… "move your feet"'.

Furthermore, Graham will say he feels uncomfortable talking about God at all. To describe God is missing the point – what we call God is beyond language. What a relief it was to hear that. So what follows in this chapter is not in any way anti-religion. It is trying to explain how all religions work and suggesting that the BABY in every religion is needed by all of us. The problem of course is deciding what's the baby? What's the bathwater? And not assuming that we are right and the "others" are wrong. To my way of thinking the answer can only be derived from a respectful truth seeking process, not dogma.

So let's start.

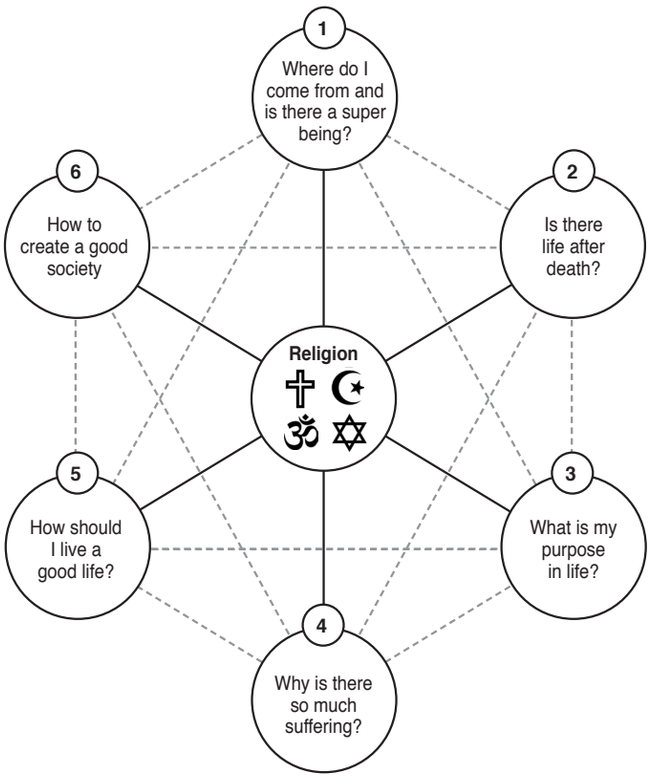
Throughout history people see lightning, thunder, earthquakes, good harvests, bad harvests, kindness and viciousness, love and hate, good leaders and bad leaders, birth and death. Their problem-solving, answer-demanding

conscious brains need explanations, answers, even meaning and purpose. At the base of this wondering are six core questions.

Our consciousness has demanded answers to these same six core questions for thousands of years:

1. Is there a creator/God?
2. Where did I come from/go to when I die?
3. What's my purpose in life?
4. Why is there so much suffering?
5. How do I live a good life?
6. How do we create a good society?

The cluster of six core religious questions



Every religion/culture answers these six questions in its own way. For me, the last two questions boil down to, "How do we draw out our positive DNA predispositions and manage the negative ones?" First, let me first give you an overview of the way Christ, Buddha, Confucius and Mohammed provided a cluster of answers to these questions, after which I'll put a bit of meat on the analysis by comparing Christianity and Confucianism against the six DNA-survival predispositions, explaining how they both draw out the positive and manage the negative often using fear to motivate us.

Each religion has its own answers to the six core questions of life

	Question	Christianity	Islam	Buddhism	Confucius
1	**Where do I come from and is there a super being?**	God made the world and man and causes all things in the world	Allah created the world and all things and all actions	The cosmos just is and is purposeful	From your long line of ancestors. Not a God per-se
2	**Is there life after death?**	Yes, heaven or hell depending on faith	Yes, Allah awaits you for judgement	Yes, you return to be born again in many potential forms	You go to live with your ancestors who await you
3	**What is my purpose in life?**	To overcome my weakness through faithfulness to God	To accept the will of Allah – his purpose through me	To move through the stages of life reaching increasing levels of development	To honour ones' ancestors relatives and Emperor living or dead
4	**Why is there so much suffering?**	It's God's unknowable plan – don't resist	It's Allah's will	Suffering is due to worldly illusions	Suffering follows disobedience to form and rites
5	**How should I live a good life?**	Follow high level principles of the ten commandments, Beatitudes, Corinthians etc.	Follow the four prescriptions and the detailed instructions of the Koran and other religious texts	Meditate regularly opening yourself to the truth that there are no absolute truths	Follow the detailed roles set out for you as a son, father, daughter and follow the rites exactly
6	**How to create a good society**	Christ himself did not address this. Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's to god that which is God's. Ecclesiastical power came 300 years later	Create a Caliphate that is directed by religious law (sharia)	No reference to overall society	Detailed rites and rituals up and down the hierarchy with well educated and tested civil servants running the state

☐ Detailed prescriptions

Exhibit 16

Exhibit 16 is meant only to be a "centre of gravity" summary of beliefs and *felt truths*. Humans are so inventive that each of these religions has fragmented, creating many sects within each religion; each having its own interpretation of what the master source said or meant. For Christianity and Islam, these differences in *felt truths* have resulted in hundreds of years of warfare. So I don't expect scholars to agree with my summation – it's a movable feast. That's good. Part of a TSP.

Reviewing the exhibit one can see:

The idea of God varies from an individual, to the cosmos as a whole, to Confucius not seeing God as being that important. In Islam and Christianity, God is seen as the ultimate alpha that must be obeyed. This is one way of controlling the human alpha predisposition to exploitation; unfortunately, it doesn't always work out that way.

The versions of life after death are equally diverse but all religions have the idea of good place versus bad place. This is one of the religious control mechanisms that encourages us towards our positive predispositions and against our negative. There is also in the foreground or background a sense of membership, a large and exclusive *"us"* and a separate *"them"*.

In regards to *purpose in life,* all religions have concepts of how to live a good life, and making progress in living that way is your purpose in life. You are to improve. This is linked to the good and fearful aspects of the afterlife, so as to encourage good behaviour in this earthly life.

Suffering is seen as a mysterious way of learning and or a way of punishment for bad living. Again, this is a control mechanism to draw out the good manage the bad in all of us. Be bad, suffer more.

How to live a good life tends to have one of two approaches. Either very high level ideas like "love thy neighbour", or a much more specific approach such as "don't eat pigs". Both these approaches are attached to ceremony and study which in turn lead to habits of action and habits of thought. These in turn are a way of drawing out our positive predispositions and managing our negative ones.

The "how to create a good society" answer is very variable. In the case of Christianity and Buddhism, it's assumed that a good society will emerge

from the actions of good people. There is not a lot of detail on societal structuring rules and laws. In the case of Islam and Confucius and, for that matter, Judaism, societal rules and roles are much more clearly defined and required.

This leads to the insight that the inherent flexibility of a religion is a function of its degree of its rule specificity. The more specific and comprehensive the rules, the less flexible it will be to changing circumstances. Love thy neighbour as one's self is a very high level idea that can be interpreted in many ways. What is love? Who is thy neighbour? Even more extreme – who are you? Don't eat pigs is not flexible – you either do or don't. This degree of flexibility is a measure of how amenable each religion is to being a truth-seeking process (TSP) rather than **the truth**. As the world changes and we become wealthier and can be kinder to more people (we are less afraid), and as technology presents new moral dilemmas like birth control or genetic engineering and as we are more exposed to "others", we need some prescriptive flexibility within high level moral guide lines. As the world changes, so too does the baby/bathwater balance.

Too much irrational bathwater and some people will reject religion. Others insist on keeping the bathwater and want to force it on to others i.e.:

"You would be much better off if you were more like me."

is the message from most religions. So what's baby and what's bathwater? This is killer question. It can only be answered slowly through respectful dialogue and trial and error and historical experience.

Now, moving to a lower level of detail by comparing Christianity to Confucianism, we can see the different ways each has drawn out the positive aspects of our DNA predispositions and managed the negative ones. Each approach to the core questions uses a mix of our DNA positive and negative predispositions to organise a society that works.

How Christianity and Confucius address and use the 6 predispositions

DNA Predisposition	Christianity	Confucius
1. Fearfulness	Reduces fearfulness by: • Providing laws from the super alpha God that even earthly alpha chimps must obey • Provides an all-knowing all-loving God to care for and love you • Provides the path to a good life after death - heaven Uses fearfulness, threatening hell and damnation to: • Give power and wealth to the theocracy • Discipline the masses	Reduces fearfulness by: • Providing a set of roles and rites that if performed ensure acceptance by ancestor and community • Teaching that you will rejoin your ancestors, mother and father in heaven Uses fearfulness by threatening rejection from the community and shamed ancestors to: • Ensure status of scholars and emperor • Discipline the masses
2. Competitive hierarchical organisation with level by level domination and compliant submission	• God and Christ become the super alpha chimp that everybody must obey and provides role models for responsible authority • Church has competitive hierarchy with strong delineated status and symbols • Church truth dominates rationally till 16th century	• The ancestors are watching behaviour of the living to ensure they are not shamed • The family is the basic building block of hierarchy with sex and age defining position and rank. • The Confucian scholars were the backbone of the states' bureaucratic structure having great status honour and responsibility appointed through intense competition
3. Sexual aggression and promiscuity	• Disapproval of sexual relationships and children out of marriage • Approval of abstinence • Sexuality and guilt aligned for control • Promises all kinds of retribution if rules disobeyed • Rejoice in the concept of love and marriage which is blessed by God as are the children	• Sexuality not seen as a guilt creating activity • Methods of sexual release allows for concubines • Marriage and children taken very seriously as roles • **Role** of father and husband very specifically detailed and assumed to be continuous come hell or high water

DNA Predisposition	Christianity	Confucius
4. Altruistic behaviour in small groups	• One of the tenets of the Christian church is that of giving and working for charity • This supports the power base of the church • Direct or indirect absolution. Payments made to reduce fearfulness	• Altruism is largely focused on the family and is seen as the responsibility of the family leadership. Leadership and responsibility are closely aligned • General altruism seen as puzzling
5. Troop group affinity	• Rituals of baptism, confirmation, daily and weekly services • Community extended to include any faithful person regardless, therefore increasing the size of the "us" affinity group "if you believe"	• Father / son loyalty cascade right up to the emperor • Loyalty reinforced through roles and rituals specified in micro detail
6. Problem solving	• Christianity was a prime source of learning but about only those felt truths that supported its theology, so it supported education that was limited in scope and in who could be educated • Takes science as a competitor	• Confucian tradition is based on education, roles and rites • Furthermore not being theological, it was not threatened by technology or scientific learning

You can see from this overview that each set of the six questions and the six predispositions are managed in different but constructive ways. This, together with the reality that religions also tend to have a historically ethnic bias fuels our predisposition to group belonging and the negative stereotyping of the *"other"*. This has resulted in hundreds of years of warfare, provided the rationale for colonisation, and the enslaving of black people by white people.

Religion helps us to cluster our FAST beliefs around different groups of people. Believers, *"US"*, and non-believers, *"THEM"*.

Positive and negative cluster stereotyping of "US" versus "THEM"

Positive stereotype "us" – that person is	**Indifference** tolerance	**Negative** stereotype "them" – that person is
Cultured	◄——►	Violent
Loving	◄——►	Is callous
Trustworthy	◄——►	Is a liar
Never steals	◄——►	Steals anything that isn't nailed down
Generous	**They are not part of my experience so I don't know and don't really care** ◄——►	Never gives without calculating benefit
Charitable	◄——►	Is mean
Understanding	◄——►	Just see their own position
Forgiving	◄——►	Holds a grudge and will never let go
Jews to Jews Palestinians to Palestinians Maoris to Maoris	USA to Iceland	Palestinians to Jews? Jews to Palestinians? Australians to Aboriginals?

On the other hand, we can quickly think people in the other groups are just "the opposite", often when we haven't had any actual experience of them at all. A blend of our DNA-predisposition to fear and our predisposition to belonging, results in racism. Modern society has to consciously make antidiscrimination laws to override this. Not discriminating is becoming, with difficulty, part of our **fast** encultured thinking.

This brief analysis of religion confirms to me:

- The six predispositions are real and observable across all races; they are derivatives of our DNA-survival behaviour.
- Our conscious problem-solving mind has worked out not only answers to spiritual questions but also how to live together, and to justify wars.

- The different answers mixed-up with different ethnicity trigger our "be afraid of strangers" response which we call racism.
- Religions are the source code for how we should live well with each other – the baby. They have got mix up with alpha supporting dogma – the bathwater.
- Religious beliefs are powerful, often extremely useful but they are felt truths not THE TRUTH – they can't be or we condemn billions to badness. However, we have been prepared to defend our religions as if our very lives depended on it. We need to learn from religion and expand religious understanding to meet contemporary conditions but not let it end up in stereotyping arrogance.

I now want to move onto a very religious period – Medieval England where a small group of religious and aristocratic alphas exploited the remaining 99 per cent of the population through violence and religious *felt truths* that supported alpha privilege and also gave some meaning to the exploited.



Chapter 6

Medieval England – and the seeds of change that finally led to the enlightened thinking of modernity



Chapter 6

Medieval England – and the seeds of change that finally led to the enlightened thinking of modernity

I am drawing attention to this period because it can teach us something about our current predicament where alphas are using their alpha authorised felt truths to sustain their privilege and we the masses are complicit in this exploitation.

We are now going to take a trip back to England in 1300 and explore how a religious and aristocratic minority of alphas managed to dominate and enslave the majority of the population. The locked-in, self-interested *felt truths* of those alphas ensured society had made little progress for a thousand years. You will see alpha-authorised felt truths in action. I will then cover the seeds of change that allowed the Enlightenment to blossom, laying the ground for today's modernity.

Around 1300, European/English society was dominated by an alpha religious–aristocratic coalition. Semi-slavery was the predominant way of living for most. We will have a look at the hierarchy, property rights, education, the law, progress, thinking and commerce.

The hierarchy

England had a population of about four million in 1300. God was at the top of the hierarchy – at least the alphas had to obey him; next in line were the Church and aristocratic alphas of about 1000 families. The Church had ascendancy over the aristocracy by way of a forged document, the Declaration of Constance, which in late Roman times had apparently given *all* the land to the Church (quite a useful *felt truth* for the Church). The super alphas were made up of the king, bishops, dukes, barons and lords; the king or his forefathers had fought his way to the top of this group. Under these super alphas were thousands of knights and their ladies. So in total probably less than 10,000 people ruled four million people – that's less than 1 per cent of the population (sounding familiar?).

Within the four million people there were about 800,000 freemen, including an emerging commercial class centred in London; the remaining three million people were serfs tied to their lords and their lands. Serfs/villains had almost no freedom of movement or bargaining power – they were tied to the land.

Property

Property was very unevenly distributed, with the alpha classes owning about 75 per cent of all wealth-creating land. Women rarely held property but freemen owned some, generally in the cities. There were thousands of churches across the country; even the smallest village had a church. The church owned about 40 per cent of all property; the church was the centre of community and ritual that satisfied the biological need for belonging. The knights and lords always had the best seats the best burial plots. My parents are buried in the back of a graveyard of a small 12th century church.

Education

Education was limited. About one in a hundred males were clergy; most, not all clergy could read and write, usually in Latin, and were the main teachers. Most of the aristocracy could read and write and could probably speak a couple of languages – French and Latin. There was a tiny number of books, all handwritten, most in Latin some in Greek. A few freemen were able to read and write, an essential for trade. So in total, probably less than 10 per cent of males could read which meant 90 per cent of the population had to rely on the local priest for their thinking, because they could not read the Bible or anything else for themselves. This gave the Church a lock on thinking – free thought was heresy and got you tortured and burnt at the stake. This reminds me of when I was in Russia, where I was basically told to stop asking questions. Free thought was seen as treason – free thinkers ended up in the Gulag.

The law

There were two sets of law – church law and civil law. The Church had the ability to punish anyone who questioned or disobeyed its teachings. Civil law was reasonably even-handed in disputes between freemen but not when an aristocrat was involved.

Progress

Improvement in living conditions was minimal. A slow climatic warming period had improved crop yields and made more land available for cultivation but the gains were largely absorbed by population growth. For about 1000 years prior to 1300, gains in per person productivity had been about 0.1 per cent – nothing like modern expectations of 1.5 per cent. Science and scientific process had not yet taken off; science needs freedom of thought to flourish.

Additionally, the sources of productive power were minimal.

There were three sources:

- human 0.1 Horse power,
- horses 1 HP,
- water mills and wind mills of up to 50HP.

To put this in perspective, if the whole population of 1300 England worked on the same task at the same time it would be the equivalent to the power developed by three 747s taking off from New York's La Guardia airport. With so little energy, to underpin progress, alpha progress was limited. They resorted to punishing taxes and theft – more commonly known as war. The alpha aristocracy was essentially a warrior class.

War however was a negative sum game as it destroyed wealth rather than creating it. Of course, that didn't matter to the victorious alpha. It also fed into the alpha male dominance predisposition. It still does to the present day, even when the winner in a war suffers massive economic loss.

Thinking

An individual's thinking, both alpha and mass, was dominated by the Church. It was very prescriptive; it was spiritual with little logic or rationality. There had been attempts to reconcile Aristotle's logic (his form of deductive reasoning) with Church teaching but it was impossible; in 1277 the church actually banned his books. In St Augustine's Doctrine of the Two Truths – the spiritual and the everyday – the spiritual was always to be the superior. Its saving grace was that the Church supported to some extent the interests of the serfs, softening the extremes of the warrior alphas. The Roman Catholic Church also inherited the organisational brilliance of the Roman Empire – this helped to maintain a functional state.

Trade

Trade and commerce in Medieval England were quite vigorous. The establishment of a vibrant wool trade between England and the Continent saw the emergence of a third alpha class of merchants and bankers. This new alpha class had different interests to the old alphas and new alpha competition was emerging; the new alphas were also becoming powerful with some even starting to employ their own armies. Jewish bankers were lending money to the kings. Commerce was naturally despised by the aristocracy – a disdain that continued until the 1970s; people who had made their money through trade were often still prevented from joining elite clubs.

In summary: during this 1000-year period, society did manage our predispositions, mostly drawing out the positive and managing the negative – I say "mostly" because it was at the cost of mass exploitation and little innovative free thought – free thought was threatening to the privilege of the ecclesiastical and aristocratic alpha class. Consequently, not much human progress was made in Europe for 1000 years.

Now let's look at each of the DNA predispositions in turn and how they were used to both sabotage free society and reinforce the privilege of the alphas.

1. **Fearfulness and alertness to danger.** Fear was used to keep the population under control. Purgatory – a half-way house between heaven and hell – was invented by the Church and only the Church could get

you out. Excommunication was a real threat – you'd go straight to hell if that befell you. The idea of "original sin" from the time of St Augustine (354–430) enabled the church to dictate that your purpose in life was to compensate for original sin i.e. the sin you were born with. A major fear was that without the absolution of the Church, you would die "sinful" – a master control mechanism. (NB. My Buddhist wife finds it extraordinary that Christians can have a *felt truth* that says a baby is born bad.) A positive side to this is that the fear of hell also controlled some alpha excesses.

2. **Male sexual domination and promiscuity**. Women were seen as the cause of man's fall from grace (in Genesis 2, Eve is the cause of original sin because she ate the fruit first). Women were second class people; however, they were to some extent protected by marriage laws, and divorce was not easy. Lords had the right to deflower new brides before they married. Aristocratic women were used as the tools of diplomacy when male alphas were creating alliances.
3. **Domination and submission in a competitive hierarchy**. The tiny alpha classes continuously competed among themselves to improve their position (just like Syria and North Africa right now). Subordination cascaded down the hierarchy with each layer requiring an oath of loyalty. Serfs were so well-conditioned to their serfdom that they no doubt thought it the natural order of things. Taxes were extortionate – best described as theft. The barons could to some extent control the king by the threat of withholding troops when the king wanted to defend the realm or fight a war (the Magna Carta was drawn up in 1215 by feudal barons in an attempt to limit the king's power and protect their rights). All competitive hell broke loose if the king died without a competent heir.
4. **Small and large group belonging**. Belonging was sustained by the paraphernalia of association such as uniforms, complex ceremonies, flags, titled ranks, awards, songs, dance, common enterprise – often war. (Does all that sound familiar?)
5. **Problem-solving was relatively limited.** If you already had the "truth" then free thinking was seen as heretical and unwelcome. As a result, from the period 300–1400 – a thousand years – there was surprisingly little philosophical or scientific thinking. Any thinking was kept within the umbrella of the Church's teachings. If you Google a time line of philosophy or science you can see how little activity there was up until to the 15th century after which there was an increasing tsunami of philosophical and scientific ideas.

In summary, the mediaeval period in England was characterised by:

- Felt truths that supported the alpha classes.
- An alpha class that exploited everyone else.
- Little scientific thought.
- Slow progress and little change.
- Poor productivity underpinned scarce resources that often brought out the dark side of our predispositions.
- Regular alpha warfare as a substitute for progress.

This was all about to be challenged. The seeds of the Enlightenment were sown in just 200 years. After 1650 there was an explosion of philosophical and scientific innovation bringing about revolutions in wealth creation, governance and freedom that led to modern life.

The seeds of change leading to the enlightenment

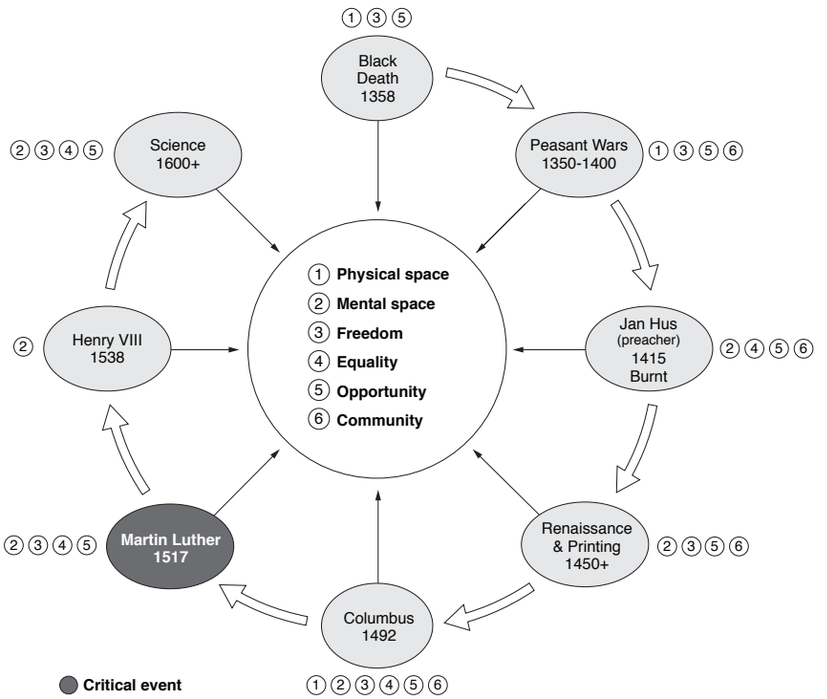
Here are eight interactive events that together seeded extraordinary change. Each event promoted one or more of six shifts in western thought.

Over a period of centuries freedom from alpha domination started to emerge triggering the enlightenment – "the eight seeds of change".

They promoted an increase in:

1. Open physical space to do things differently.
2. Mental space to think differently.
3. Freedom from alpha felt truths.
4. Equality not aristocracy.
5. Opportunity to create one's own wealth and life.
6. Community of like-minded people.

Eight seeds of change



1. **In 1350, the Black Death** was just about finishing its destructive course which had wiped out about 35–40 per cent of the population. It was a major shock to alpha power; there were not enough serfs to work the land and those providing the labour suddenly had more bargaining power. Serfs started to demand a higher share for their efforts and labour mobility increased considerably. People gained more physical space. In addition, the validity of the Church's teachings began to be questioned because the Church was unable to explain or stop the plague. The best the priests could come up with for a reason for the plague was that it was a "punishment from God". A bit ironic as priests tended to die at higher rates than the general population, and definitely not a rational explanation.

2. **The Black Death was followed by multiple peasant revolts** across Europe. In England, Wat Tyler (1341–81) assembled thousands of peasants who marched on London demanding to see Richard the Second,

the fourteen-year-old King, to request better treatment. (They were sure that the King would look after them. It was the King's bad advisors that were exploiting them, they believed. Remember we all have a predisposition to subordination, a desire for somebody powerful to look after us.) Of course this was nonsense, the King was the main beneficiary of the exploitation. The young King finessed the situation by saying he would make council with Tyler, and the crowds dispersed. Tyler was then taken captive and publicly executed. He was half-strangled; and while still alive, his intestines were ripped out and burnt in front of him after which his four limbs were each tied to a horse which were then driven to tear him apart. His body parts were distributed around the country to be placed on the gates of each of the major cities as a reminder that alphas didn't take kindly to threats to their privilege. Nevertheless, this, and other riots, could be seen as the very early stirrings of a labour movement, an attempt at more fair distribution of wealth.

3. **A Czech priest called Jan Hus** started a serious military-styled protest movement against the Roman Church. He taught that there was no need for the Church to act as an intermediary between man and God. He was accused of heresy and invited to Constance to appear before the Ecumenical Council of the Roman Church. He stupidly went. He was convicted of heresy and burnt alive in 1415. Prior to his death Hus predicted, a hundred years' later, the coming of someone who would make real changes to the way people worshiped God – it sounds very much like Martin Luther. This burning signalled that people were starting to think for themselves. The heresy of free thought was starting to emerge.

4. **Following the German reinvention of the printing press in 1450** printing started to emerge across Europe. Affordable Bibles started to circulate – slowly at first because they were in Latin and therefore had limited readership. But distribution increased when the local language versions were published. William Tyndale translated the Bible into English in 1526. He was strangled and his body burnt at the stake for challenging the doctrines of the Roman Church with his "heresy and anti-clericalism" in 1536; his last words were purported to be: 'Lord! Open the King of England's eyes'. His translation of the Bible was another opening to free thinking; for the first time in Christian history people

could check out what the clergy were telling them and have their own interpretations of the Bible. Church's felt truths, customs and rules were now open to question.

5. **In 1492 Columbus discovered the Americas.** This discovery provided an escape route for England's radical free thinkers and entrepreneurs who would eventually form the core of the American Revolution. It's a lot easier to create a new society in open space unrestrained from an entrenched alpha establishment determined to maintain its privilege, its alpha supporting felt truths, customs and laws. Trade also opened up with America and the commercial entrepreneurs within England were becoming another class. A merchant class that had different interests than the Church or the Aristocracy. A new power base was emerging.

6. **In 1517 Martin Luther,** the German scholar and Augustinian monk, was incensed when Pope Leo X, needing cash to build St Peter's, sent out a sales team to sell "indulgences" to the people – indulgences were a sort of "get out of purgatory free" card. Luther wrote his *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* (known as The Ninety-Five Theses) criticising the Church, and delivered it to his local bishop by nailing it on the church door at Wittenberg Castle.

   To my mind Luther's written heresy was the hinge point in European history; the point in time where the common people/the masses had a chance to grab their freedom. Of course, Luther was seen as the Church's enemy; the local bishop sent Luther's Theses to the Pope and somehow copies were made, printed and distributed. This started a firestorm of protest against the Roman Catholic Church, the like of which had never been seen before. Luther was ordered to appear before the Imperial Diet of Worms to recant his writings. His friends warned him not to go but after some consideration he went as a matter of conscience. A brilliant scholar, Luther ran rings around the prosecution. The Church had secretly decided to burn him but before they could, he was virtually kidnapped by a German prince and hidden in one of his castles at Wartburg. Here Luther got fat and depressed and decided to use his time to translate the Bible into German. It was printed and widely distributed, causing another explosion among the people; when for the first time they could read the Bible for themselves they saw the self-serving spin that the Church had

been using. *Purgatory didn't exist!* The Protestant movement was born, jeopardising the authority and legitimacy of the alpha class of the Church and the aristocrats, as people started to think for themselves, live their lives based on personal individual conscience not alpha authorised alpha privileging rules created by Rome.

7. **In 1532 Henry the VIII** enacted a series of laws to separate England from the Roman Church. His 1534 Act of Supremacy declared the King was the "only Supreme Head of the Church of England"; to disagree was treasonable, punishable by death. Many died. Henry then confiscated all property belonging to the Catholic Church in England – about 35-–40 per cent of the productive land – bringing huge wealth to the King and his allies. When Henry was excommunicated from Rome and people saw nothing happened – he didn't explode in a ball of fire – Rome's power base was further eroded. Henry and Luther had set the stage for decades of religious wars – wars based on the insistence of my *felt truths* being better than your *felt truths*. "You would be much better off if you believed what I believe". (Sound familiar?) Alternatively, I will kill you if you don't.

8. **Scientific thought**, the process of seeking the truth through rationality, logic and experimentation started to take off. Scientific method became more widespread. In the Medieval period the world was essentially seen as mystical and spiritual, not rational. A rational approach to understanding the world started to re-emerge. (The Greeks were way ahead of the game.)

   - The world was seen as real not mysterious.
   - Matter and time could be consistently defined and measured.
   - The world operated with consistent laws.
   - These laws could be discovered through the process of experimentation.
   - Once discovered, laws could then be represented mathematically.

   This rational understanding of the world could then be used to improve physical life, design better approaches to agriculture, machines, weapons and infrastructure. The idea of universal rational laws also started to be used in terms of our last two religious questions (5) how to live a good

life and (6) how to build a good society. The disciplines of sociology and political science started to emerge, although early scientists such as Copernicus 1473–1543, Francis Bacon 1561–1626 and Galileo 1564–1642, still faced restrictions the ground was being laid for a future based on scientific truth-seeking – the source of the productivity that gives us the physical life styles we currently enjoy.

Those combined eight events over several centuries encouraged people think about the legitimacy of the ruling aristocratic and Church alpha elite and their alpha-authorised self-supporting *felt truths*.

The core questions arising were totally startling, incredible!

If God and the King are not to rule, how then is society to be organised?
Who does rule? How are rulers to be constrained?

One set of exploitive rulers should not be replaced by another. Furthermore, if the Church does not provide an answer to "How to live a good life", then what is the rational answer?

What followed was an explosion of philosophical thought not seen for a thousand years, in a period known as the Enlightenment. A forward-looking note here—the Enlightenment was focussed on creating and maintaining freedoms *from*: freedoms from exploitation, from poverty, from ignorance, from alpha-privileging *felt truths*. "How to achieve freedom from…" is a much easier question than "Freedom to…". What do you do once you have freedom? If you become freed from poverty, from ignorance and from limiting *felt truths*, what are you free *to* create? This is the key problem we face in the modern world. We will look at this *freedom to* question in Section Three.

The list of Enlightenment thinkers is impressive:

- Thomas **Hobbes** (1588–1679) was the English philosopher who laid the foundation for modern political philosophy and is widely regarded as one of a handful of truly great political thinkers. He also contributed to other fields including history, geometry, theology and ethics. One of his major concerns was about who should rule. He could not see democracy working because his *felt truth* was that mankind was essentially violent and exploitative. So you needed a powerful and potentially violent alpha/hegemon to keep people under control essentially through fear. Thankfully others disagreed.
- Rene **Descartes** (1596–1650) was a French philosopher and mathematician. He has been dubbed the father of modern philosophy, and his *Meditations on First Philosophy* is the founding document of Western philosophy and can still be found in the philosophy departments of most universities. To the modern non-religious mind his views of the world can be quite convoluted because he still had to find a place for God in a rational world, which is quite tricky.
- John **Locke** (1632–1704). Known as the Father of Liberalism, Locke's work affected the development of epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and political philosophy. It is almost certain that his writing heavily influenced Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers as they worked on the constitution of the USA. He introduced the idea of inalienable rights and equality of man.
- Baruch **Spinoza** (1632–77) whose philosophy encompassed nearly every area of philosophical thought including metaphysics, epistemology, political philosophy, ethics, philosophy of science and philosophy of the mind.
- **Voltaire** (1694–1788). Considered one of France's greatest Enlightenment writers, historians and philosophers, Voltaire advocated freedom of religion, freedom of expression and the separation of Church and State. All later built into the constitution of the USA.
- David **Hume** (1711–76) the British historian, economist and essayist who believed in the theory of empiricism i.e. all knowledge comes primarily from sensory experience. An extreme advocate of rationality.
- Jean-Jacques **Rousseau** (1712–78) one of many writers whose political philosophy influenced the French Revolution. The central premise of Rousseau's theory was that humans are **basically good by nature** but corrupted by the complex historical events that resulted in present day society. Quite the opposite of Hobbes.
- Adam **Smith** (1723–90) was a Scottish social philosopher and political economist. He wrote the first study of political economy, *The Wealth of*

Nations, published in 1776, considered the bible of capitalism. A very simplified version of Smith suggested that hard working self-interested individuals would through the "invisible hand" automatically promote the welfare of everyone. (We are still wrestling with how to balance this powerful idea, especially in the USA.)

- Immanuel **Kant** (1724–1804) who published his critical philosophy of the human anatomy in three famous critiques – *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781-1787), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). He also elucidated the hierarchical nature of problem-solving capability the basis of our hierarchical organisations.

These and many others were using rational ways of problem-solving/thinking that were totally and utterly different from a medieval semi-mystical, alpha-controlled, understanding of the world.

New felt truths started to emerge. They were yet to be institutionalised

- People were equal and essentially good, not evil.
- People should be free to think for themselves and not have to believe what their lord or church told them.
- Ordinary well intentioned people/citizens were perfectly capable of organising their own affairs and the affairs of the State — no need for hereditary lords to run the country.
- The state should be designed to limit the ability of alphas to assume and maintain power over the people.
- Government activities should be limited to allow people to pursue their own happiness.

Revolution was the natural outcome of new emerging felt truths. But Alphas don't give up without a fight**.** Three important revolutions straddled the 17th and 18th centuries:

1. The English Revolution of 1649–60 in which King Charles I was executed and free men took to running parliament (although not without a few problems with Oliver Cromwell – a dictator).

2. The American Revolution (1765–83) which succeeded in bringing together all the best thinking of Europe and America and which was crystallised in the United States Constitution.
3. The rolling French Revolution of 1789-99 which saw King Louis XVI executed and the people try a republic.

The US Constitution was designed specifically to prevent an alpha class from re-emerging to exploit the majority, and was a beacon to the world. The preamble stated:

We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Jefferson's words are still mind-shaking:

We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable.
That all men are created equal and independent.
That from equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable.
Among which are the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

From these ideas, the Constitution of the USA entrenched a doctrine, the separation of powers, which divided the state into branches, each with separate and independent powers, arranged so the powers of one constrained the powers of another – a system of checks and balances; in 1789 an amendment added a Bill of Rights offering specific protections to individual liberty and justice and placing further restrictions on the powers of government.

The felt truths of modernity had been put in place for a population of largely white commercially-oriented, male property owners:

- Freedom of thought.
- Freedom of association.
- Freedom of speech.
- Freedom to elect their representative government.
- Equality in the eyes of the law.

Simultaneously, the new freedom of thought in England, Europe and the USA led to a ballooning of scientific discoveries and innovations, by far the most significant being the harnessing of fossil fuel energy, coal, to run machines. By the middle of the 19th century this, combined with other scientific inventions, enabled productivity to take off. Suddenly, the reduction of poverty was possible; people saw the economy could grow.

Wealth would eventually allow "US" *to be kinder and more fair to each other.*

This chapter has not meant to be a history lesson. It is meant to draw attention to three ideas.

First, that if you had been a fish born into the Medieval "river" of Western Europe you would certainly have believed the *felt truths* of that period. Your day-to-day life and thinking, your FAST common sense, would have been Medieval and that had those ideas been contested you would have reacted with violence.

Second, when circumstances require and permit, we can come up with new ways of thinking, new beliefs, new world views, new *felt truths* and new FAST common sense.

And third, that today we live as individuals and as members of specific cultures which operate with *felt truths* (extreme rational economics, extreme competitive individualism, and extreme consumerism,) that may need rebalancing. In the next chapter, I will look at the *felt truths* of modernity, focusing on the USA as it is the global alpha that influences many parts of the globe for good and sometimes not so good.



Chapter 7

The modern era in the USA



Chapter 7

The modern era in the USA

Modernity and the changing felt truths of the USA, where the majority are beginning to become more conscious of the unintended exploitation of unconstrained global alphas that can now choose where they operate. A new form of alpha dominance is emerging.

I now want to jump a couple of centuries to the period from 1940 to 2016, breaking it into two. First, I'll look at 1940–75, a period of general rights and fully-functioning distributive democracy. This was a time when political activity was focussed on areas such as roads, schools, hospitals, fair wages and the building of social capital, things that were of general importance to everyone. Alphas were largely constrained by national regulation of the labour, trade and finance markets, and wealth distribution was reasonable and fair due to high taxes and strong unions.

Second, I'll look at the years from 1975 to the present day, a period of special rights non-distributive democracy. A society can focus on special rights when its general rights have been satisfied and the political landscape becomes open enough to look at specific interests such as women's rights, gay rights, legal abortion, anti-discrimination – the sort of ideas that wouldn't have been accepted during a time when general rights took up all the political mind space.

The trend to special rights took place at the same time as the strong trend towards globalisation and financialisation. Financialisation is where consumers, companies and governments take on previously unheard of amounts of debt. This growth in debt has allowed banks to grow at three times the rate of GDP growth. Their size has allowed them to have unwarranted influence. Globalisation, together with financialisation, has freed the alphas from nation state regulation of trade, finance, labour and environmental laws; alphas can now globally cherry-pick what regulations favour themselves. Taxation has also become a free market choice. Alphas can pick the domicile of their companies and for themselves. This has resulted in wealth distribution being

continuously skewed to the alphas. The middle classes have not improved their economics for about thirty years.

If you look at both periods through the lens of alpha-interest and alpha-authorised *felt truths* you'll understand why the USA is at the risk of letting an alpha class of bankers, financiers, senior executives and entrepreneurs (a tiny percentage of the population) control the distribution of the nation's wealth to their advantage. They do this by supporting alpha-authorised and alpha-advantaged *felt truths*, just like the alphas of 14th century Europe. But this time it's not the *felt truths* around religion but the **fast** *felt truths* around extreme rational economics which are now accepted by the population. The population has accepted these felt truths even though the result is uneven wealth distribution and the corrosion of society. The recent Trump phenomena is a chaotic response to this unfairness and humiliation. The response is chaotic because people feel the pain but can't fully verbalise the cause. It goes back to the fish analogy:

We are fish swimming in a river. We think we are free to choose but, in reality, we are limited by the flow of the river, or perhaps the pollutants. The river is actually flowing towards the interest of the alphas. If you don't understand the dominant felt truths of your society, you are swimming blind. You only have the illusion of free choice.

Understanding your river significantly expands the choices available to you in creating a better version of yourself and helping your children choose a better, more fulfilled life. If enough of us understand what's gone wrong, it's possible that we can return to a fully-functioning distributive democracy. Change the river.

General rights democracy 1940–1975 +/-

The road the Americans travelled in the 1940 to 1975 years, from an economic perspective, could be considered golden – a few potholes along the way but overall smoothly sealed. In 1941, the USA entered World War Two which became a catalyst for lifting the country out of the Depression. The population went to work to support the war effort, with women doing many of the factory jobs previously reserved for men, discovering in the process that they could do them just as well, often better.

Millions of young Americans, with a typical American "can do" attitude fully engaged in the War; they had a purpose and achieved extraordinary results. The Normandy landings and the subsequent defeat of German, Italian and Japanese fascism was a miracle of bravery, smart manufacturing and logistics. Young men and women could, and did, do almost anything.

When the War was over, the returning generation was full of self-confidence and a justifiable belief in what good government could do. There was a huge investment in infrastructure – roads, hospitals, schools, airports were built all over the country on a massive scale. The Government introduced the GI Bill which provided a range of benefits for returning veterans including low cost mortgages, low interest business loans, paid tuition to attend university or other educational institutions. All this was socialism at its best. Women went back into the home and were encouraged to have children for the sake of the country; such high-energy optimism naturally resulted in a baby boom (my own generation). Early family formation is a time of peak consumption and consumer demand took off.

Unions by this time had battled their way through the 1920s and 1930s to semi-respectability and what amounted to special and protected legal status. They forced reasonable wealth distribution. As a manager of a US manufacturing plant in the 1970s I remember negotiating with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the process of which had an undercurrent of threat and even intimidation but, in my heart I knew unions formed an essential part of society; without them managers would exploit the workforce. As an alpha plant manager, I certainly would have done so.

Wages, health benefits and productivity steadily improved; consumption increased in tandem with the wages of the middle classes and a "virtuous cycle" had begun. Higher wages for the middle class funded higher consumption, which in turn funded higher wages; a few economic dips but still a good solid road. The cycle was enhanced by the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 in which the USA assumed the privileged role of becoming the world's official reserve/trading currency and the world's financial centre.

The Bretton Woods Agreement kept national markets separate to some degree from globalisation through tariffs, managing exchange rates and managed "hot money capital flows". (Hot money is short term investment seeking high interest rates that can be withdrawn quickly as soon as these returns are seen to be at risk. This is what happened in the Asian financial crisis of 1997.)

Bretton Woods put sand in the gears of the financial markets without actually stopping them turning. It slowed down the potential hot money volume and velocity of the system. Prices and capital flows of savings/investment moved more like molasses rather than today's speed of light. Banking was a controlled and regulated stable industry; debt creation was very limited.

The USA became a global investor; it lent money to help the rest of the world recover from the devastation of war, becoming the global alpha with the accompanying privileges and responsibilities to keep hegemonic order. It defended democracy against communism and reduced minor alpha squabbles among smaller nations, especially in oil-producing Arabia.

Paying for the country's burgeoning infrastructure and social underpinnings required very high taxes (in today's terms); the marginal tax rate was in the 70 per cent range. The general population accepted high taxes knowing it would benefit from the redistribution of wealth – people drove their new cars on the new roads to attend college on the GI Bill, thus validating a redistributive society. Expenditure on welfare was low. The mass of the GDP was consumed by the mass of the population; CEOs were paid well but not exorbitantly, usually around forty times the wage of the hourly worker, who was increasingly productive.

There were bumps in the road during this "virtuous cycle", the Vietnam War being one and a period of stagflation – slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment (economic stagnation) accompanied by rising prices or inflation. But American exuberance overcame rode over the bumps – even successfully overcoming the looming threat of the Japanese taking over manufacturing.

In 1964 the Democrat President Lyndon Johnson judged the country strong enough and optimistic enough to try and reconcile and recompense the African-American community for decades of discrimination, violence, unfairness and humiliation. Johnson did this knowing the Democrats would suffer a backlash as a result and lose the Southern white vote for years.

I know this picture paints a rather idealised period, and I haven't forgotten the shooting of students at Kent State University, the Selma marches, the

assassination of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King, but on the whole, this was the America I lived in and loved for many years. They were for many, including myself, wonderful years.

The *felt truths* that drove this golden period are recognisable and powerful. They included beliefs around regulated free market economics, regulated banking, unions, competitive individuality, progress, work, debt and consumerism, fairness, government, corporations, education, religion and purpose in life. Let's look at these things separately:

Rational free market economic theory was seen as an important driver of progress but free market thinking was not taken to the extreme. Free markets promoted alpha energy and self-interest but alphas had to be regulated or they would form monopolies, rig prices and exploit labour. Economic efficiency *and* social benefit needed to go in tandem, something that could be achieved in a largely national economy.

Banking was seen as a regulated and largely domestic utility. Regulation following the banking disasters of the 1930s did not allow deposit-taking banks to speculate. Banking laws also limited interstate banking thus limiting their size (not too big to fail) and a mix of supervision and morality reduced bankers making loans to friends and themselves.

Unions were seen as an essential part of the distributive democratic process. They funded and supported the Democratic Party; in doing so they underpinned progressive thinking, balancing the conservative Republicans.

Competitive individuality is something Americans have an unusual mix of beliefs around. They are very individualistic, believing that those that make an effort succeed and therefore, by definition, those that don't, have not made the effort. In other words, failure is an individual's fault and deserves little assistance. Yet Americans are extraordinarily generous when confronted with specific face-to-face problems. They support their civil institutions more vigorously than any other nation; they give more to charities and perform more hours of community service than anyone else.

However, they have a negative **fast** thinking reaction to the word "socialism" – they hate it without having a clue what it actually means. Nor do they recognise that the golden years in their own country were indeed very socialist with high

taxes, major benefits and even wealth distribution. At the same time, spending on welfare was small because most people were participating in the economy.

Progress was possible, and people believed in the American dream because they were living better than their parents, and they legitimately believed their children would go on to live better lives than themselves. The American Dream was a basic expectation.

Work was hard and demanding but union strength ensured a fair days' pay for a fair days' work. I saw firsthand how tough factory life was when working on the shop floor in California, Kentucky and Texas; work was physically exhausting and men often worked a twelve-hour day, sometimes doubling back after only an eight-hour break. But a belief in hard work was justified – people believed it would get them ahead, and it did.

Debt and consumerism. People the government and corporations were reluctant to take on debt. Total debt was about twice gross national product. Individuals consumer debt was very low credit cards were a novelty. People's identity was much more than the products they consumed; their identity related to their character and place in their community.

Fairness was centred on the belief that hard work was rewarded and that nobody took more than their fair share according to their effort and education. Yes, the big corporate CEOs were paid about forty times more than the average worker but that was considered fair because couldn't their own children, who were getting a better education, be a highly paid executive one day too?

Government set high taxes that provided services and infrastructure that everyone used and enjoyed. People could see what they got for their taxes and believed it was a fair deal; the law was even-handed (except to African Americans). The Democrats and the Republicans engaged in respectful dialogue to find the middle ground on many issues. Government debt could be covered by growth.

Government was seen to be meeting the *general* needs of the population as a whole and not captured by the needs of special interest groups.

The way government regulated the markets released alpha energy while reigning in their potential excesses and ensuring reasonable distribution of the nation's wealth.

Corporations were respected. People believed corporations were looking after national interests as well as their own – they were predominantly USA-focussed, they paid their taxes, as did the CEOs. In rational economic theory, the prime focus of large corporations is making profits for their shareholders – but, in reality, they also looked to the national interest. It was necessary to deal with the unions which were seen as a difficult but legitimate part of society. As I mentioned before, one of my most unattractive jobs as a plant manager was the three-year negotiation with the IBEW.

Religion played an important but low-key role in people's lives; it was believed to be a private matter. Religion supported the idea of fairness and a way of contributing to society but it was not heavily political or publicly dogmatic. At the plants where I worked, the number of born-again Christians was a few per cent.

Purpose in life was a simple belief everyone had – that their kids should have more opportunities in life than they had. This was believed to be possible because it was happening; expectations were being met. And in this context, people were kind to each other. I will never forget the generosity of Americans; when I was living in a small town in Kentucky people would see me in the street and recognise that I was a stranger, introduce themselves and then invite me home to dinner. Psychologically the nation was in good shape and people felt in control of their lives and optimistic.

The USA's role in the world was that of a benign global alpha; Americans saw themselves as the leader and protector of the "free world". The world owes a lot to the benevolence of America during this period; it broke the back of colonial exploitation, funded the regeneration of Europe and Japan and fought both fascism and communism. The USA truly was exceptional. Furthermore, they were the global alpha hegemon that kept little nations in line, stopped internal revolutions and infighting.

These vibrant, can-do, optimistic *felt truths* of hundreds of millions of proud Americans have been the very life force of the US. The average citizen had realistic expectations of improvement and wished other citizens to have the same chances. This optimistic reality and psychology showed up in numerous social markers: education levels were improving; obesity and diabetes were rare; incarceration rates were low; drug use was minimal; intergenerational welfare dependency was limited and mental disorders were the exception.

However, the American Dream and these social markers were to be tested by new emergent realities in the coming years – not defeated, but certainly tested. And virtually all the social markers took a vicious turn for the worse.

After about 1975, a range of slowly emerging global economic and societal shifts brought this cluster of beliefs about the nation into question. While Americans still wanted to live with their golden years' *felt truths* intact, the realities were making it increasingly difficult to do so. This caused a deep disquiet and a self-centred and polarised, fruitless crashing about.

I have tried to summarise this golden period with two what I call two "ugly charts".

Exhibit 20 is a summary of the "sand in the wheels" approach to trade, and shows the USA operating as a nation state where the government was in control of its own economy.

The Bretton Woods 'sand in the wheels' approach to trade provided effective nation state governance and domestic constraints on alphas.

A thirty year golden period 1945 ~ 1975

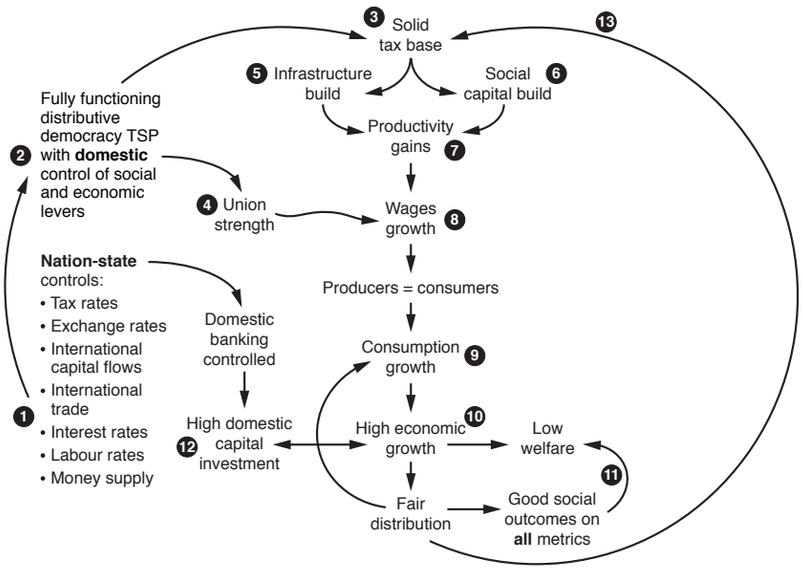


Exhibit 20

The second, Exhibit 21, looks at the financial world under the Bretton Woods agreement which enabled the nation state to constrain its alphas.

Nation state Financial / Banking world 1944 - 1971

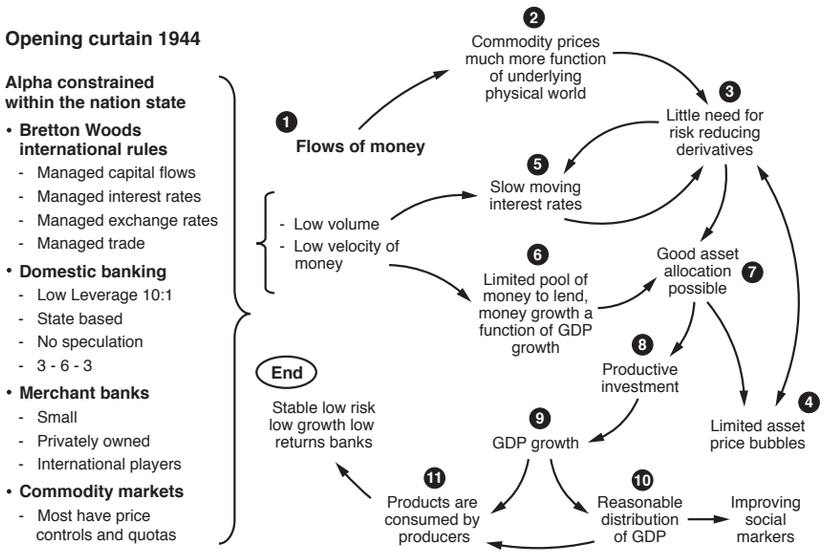


Exhibit 21

My apologies to readers that are not familiar with economics, but I included these complex "uglies" because the root cause of our current problems lie in the breakdown of the Bretton Woods agreement. The resulting extreme rational economic philosophy of most governments has created wealth for alphas and has lifted a billion people out of poverty in Asia. But the cost of this has been paid for by the middle classes of the developed world. Americans have exchanged the American dream for Walmart's wonderfully cheap socks. Cheap socks in exchange for constant anxiety. Anxiety about keeping your job, the cost of educating your children, the cost of being sick. Don't wonder at Mr Trump's ability to energise the dispossessed the humiliated.

Special interest democracy

The overarching shift in the last forty years has been from general rights democracy to special interest democracy and from nationally-regulated economics to globally- unconstrained economics. Alphas are now able to do what they are DNA-programmed to do – improve their privilege at the expense of the majority. In simple terms this means "If you constrain me, tax me, regulate me on my home turf, I will shift my activity to somewhere else

on the globe that doesn't". They justify this with the alpha-authorised and alpha-advantaging *felt truth* that extreme rational economics is the best and the only way to order society.

Alphas can now choose where they do business, where they pay taxes and what domestic laws they will pay for. Political decisions are now made mainly in terms of economic efficiency and not, as previously, a balance between economic efficiency and social benefit. Low taxes benefit alphas but prevent the government from spending money on social capital, education health and infrastructure – the building block of the nation's future.

Conservative alpha felt truths have taken over: Exhibit 22.

Conservative felt truths	Issue	Progressive felt truths
Keep it as it is. Don't change if it is not broken i.e. maintain my position	Core belief	Let's try to improve. This means change and sometimes being wrong
Good	Free trade	Careful
Good	Free financial markets	Be very careful
Bad news	Unions	Important to society
Should be minimal and based on consumption	Taxes	Should be substantial and progressive
Creates dependency	Welfare	Needed a safety net and educational change agent for children
Keep it in the market	Health care	Needs cost regulation and insurance for all citizens
Minimise or eliminate regulations other than those to my advantage	Regulation	Use regulation moderately to balance alpha behaviours
We will innovate our way out of pollution, climate change	Conservation	Must conserve the planet
Needs controls and laws "you should be like me"	Marriage/sex/ abortion	Should be personal choice

Exhibit 22

During the golden years, America's political energy was directed towards providing the infrastructure and services that the whole population would benefit from, i.e. schools, roads, hospitals, universities and the necessary utilities. The problem then becomes, where does the government place its energies once the general interests of the population are largely satisfied, especially in a competitive individualistic society? (NB. Women's rights are still one general rights issue still outstanding.) The open space now available, left room for special interests to gain attention.

There are two broad types of special interest – those orientated towards social/political areas such as women's rights (not really special interest), gay rights, anti-discrimination, the environment and so on, and those focussed on the financial interest of a specific group such as the fossil fuel industry, the finance industry, the medical profession, and the tobacco, pharmaceutical, defence and insurance industries – the list is long.

Just like our brain, the political machine is there to be used and if you don't give it something to do, it will find something else to do. So, it shifted from the activities that benefitted the general population to smaller, focussed interest groups. This shift, together with globalisation and financialisation, enabled the alpha class to do what it always does, given a chance. Exploit the rest of us.

Now I'd like to summarise some important changes that have taken place over the last few decades that have resulted in the emergence of a very different America and which has tested the *felt truths* of the majority of Americans.

First, in the early 1970s, the Bretton Woods Agreement broke down.

Nation States including the USA have lost control of their economies and their Alphas (Exhibit 23).

Area of potential control	Pre 1970	45 year shift	2016
	Nation state control Bretton Woods	→	**Global system of extreme rational free markets**
Deposit taking banks	Highly Regulated		Less regulation Fully global
Merchant banks	Partners liable	→	Corporations, no personal liability
Foreign exchange flows	Controlled		Uncontrolled
Exchange rates	Controlled		Uncontrolled
Interest rates	Controlled		Referenced internationally
Investment	Mainly national	→	Global choice
Unions	Strong		Depleted
Cost of labour	Union based		Referenced to China
Environmental controls	Strong	→	Global choice
Personal tax	High		Referenced to lowest competitor
Corporate tax	High		Referenced to lowest competitor
Capital gains tax	Significant		Referenced to lowest competitor

Exhibit 23

Financial markets became global and unconstrained. Exchange rates were floated and exchange controls and tariffs were reduced. Global flows of money accelerated and the price of money varied by the second. Banking became difficult to regulate in a globalised world. Deposit-taking banks began leveraging themselves to extraordinary levels and gambling and speculating with other people's money. They were doing this in spite of the fact that they borrow from us (you and me) short term – and lend long-term. This is fundamental source of banking instability and forces governments to support banks, come what may. Bankers know this.

Simultaneously, global trade exploded. In the early 1980s, China began its entry onto the world financial stage. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping made his famous statement in a poverty-stricken town called Shenzhen: 'It doesn't matter if

a cat is black or white; if it catches mice, it's a good cat'. This was meant to mean that it didn't matter where the idea originated as long as the idea helped China. Capitalism with Chinese characteristics was okay – some should get rich before others Deng made an official visit to the US the following year; by 1990, after China had fixed its agricultural policy, the starting flag for China's industrialisation had been waved.

China progressively became the price-setter and manufacturing centre of the world, sustained not only by the Chinese people's Confucian obedience to authority and incredible work ethic, but also by its low, controlled exchange rate and controlled capital flows (sounds like Bretton Woods). Competition in globally tradable manufactured goods first hit basic industries such as clothing and shoes It then started to creep up the value chain into electrical goods and computers. Autos will be next.

This, together with a right wing conservative attack on regulatory and union excess, led by Ronal Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, created a power shift in labour markets away from the manufacturing unions. The new corporate labour negotiating message was simple: if you don't play ball and accept stagnant wages, lower manning levels and lower benefits, we will move offshore. And they did.

The next industries to move off-shore – this time to India and the Philippines – were the service companies, who shifted simple business processes such as call centres and help desks. Together this had the effect of suppressing the price of labour for middle class America, which in turn suppressed the wages of even lower paid workers. On the other hand, corporate profits took an increasing share of national wealth. The unions, which had paradoxically saved capitalism from its 1920s rampant self-interest, were now gutted – the mass had lost its democratic distributing champion.

Producers no longer had the wages to consume what they produced.
A fundamental economic relationship had been broken.

By 2006, the finance industry accounted for about 40 per cent of the total profits of the whole nation; this was even after paying exorbitant, staggering bonuses to their exploitative, gambling staff. The role of the domestic finance industry should be very simple – handling transactions, payments and receipts and, through prudent risk assessment, helping allocate money across

different investment opportunities. However, once finance is deregulated and globalised, banks become the financial gatekeeper for an incomprehensible high risk, high volume, high velocity global economy.

Annual global trade is around twenty trillion dollars; daily global trade in currencies is around three-and-a-half trillion dollars. So financial markets are a hundred times bigger than the underlying physical real markets. Now financial markets are driving price and risk, not the underlying physical markets. Furthermore, the derivative risk instruments, meant to manage risk, are actually doing exactly the opposite, as speculation overwhelms real market pricing. Financial alphas are now positioned to clip the ticket and speculate on financial transactions that nobody fully understands – this perilous state of affairs is, of course, justified with the *felt truth* of extreme rational economics and market liquidity.

The debt economy was also well supported by a vibrant tech sector; however, the problem with the tech sector is that it creates "share price" wealth but few jobs, certainly not enough to replace the well-paid union jobs lost to China and India. New job formation is now focussed on the bottom end of the service sector and is often part-time. It was actually impossible for Apple to manufacture the new iPhone in the USA due to a lack of manufacturing capacity.

Something had to give. The USA couldn't keep borrowing; the poor couldn't keep borrowing and buying houses at prices inflated by predatory lenders funded by derivative packages that literally nobody understood. Everyone was in the game. The CEO of one bank was quoted as saying 'Once the music starts you must get on the dance floor or lose your job'. Simply translated this meant, 'If I don't follow other banks in lending to people who can't repay loans I will get fired'. (So much for competitive individualism.)

November 2007 was the breaking point – the music stopped. The global financial system was on the verge of collapse; nobody knew the financial robustness of even their own balance sheets let alone anyone else's. A lending freeze ensued. A huge insurance company I worked with in Australia was within days of going into administration. The solution to this crisis – flood the market with cheap money to stop the banks going bust – would be funny if it wasn't so serious. The term "too big to fail" entered the language.

Actually, the government propping up the banks was, realistically, the only solution. Paradoxically, while the government floods markets with money cures the immediate problem, it rewards the banks as the value of their assets increases and management bonuses go up. In other words, it rewards the banks for, words fail me – stupidity? Criminality? Immorality? Going along with the pack? Who knows.

With all this financial influence and profitability, the alphas were now also starting to control politics. The cost of elections had become so high that politicians were forced to beg for donations. Big money corporations lobbied to get the Supreme Court to legally treat corporations as "people". This is patently absurd as people can be held to account for their actions and go to jail; corporations don't go to jail! Anyway, the net effect has been to enable individuals to give unlimited donations to political parties and individual campaigns through PACs. The alpha foxes have been given the keys to the political hen house.

Whatever politicians and donors say, billions of dollars are not given for free – there is an expectation of payback that advantages the alpha donors and disadvantages and exploits the majority of the population. It could be argued that the Republican Party is now a subsidiary of the fossil fuel industry.

Politics has become a free market where the highest bidder can buy the law.

An example of this is Obamacare. The USA is the only developed country in the world that doesn't have reasonably inexpensive universal access to good health care. Recently I was in a store in Australia when an elderly man collapsed; one of the store employees dialled 000 and within minutes two young female paramedics arrived all geared up for any eventuality ECG, defibrillator – the lot. These professionals quickly assessed him and got him off to emergency. I saw him two days later and he was fine – the experience had cost him nothing. Not in America. Competitive individuality works against the idea of national insurance for randomly distributed medical disasters that could happen to any citizen.

On the one side of the medical debate was Obama; he was trying to bring in legislation to make health care affordable to the majority of people and on the other, the American Medical Association, the pharmaceutical industry, the insurance companies and the hospital industry who joined forces to lobby

to try and defeat it. Talk about alphas ganging up to protect and expand their interests! Their lobbying efforts were able to persuade politicians and many voters (some no doubt afraid of losing their own privileged positions) that reasonable free access to health care was a bad "socialist" thing, whatever that means, and Americans were better off with a largely private health care system.

Seen from afar, the arguments are patently self-interested and don't even touch on the real issue – that of the extraordinary remuneration of multimillionaire doctors and the super profits of the medical industry. This is what happens when free competition is permitted in a market comprising of medically dumb customers (e.g. me) and insatiable demand. It is little understood that USA's medical costs are around twice that of other developed counties and their health outcomes are generally worse. The medical alpha lobby partially won and Obama's health care reforms were diluted significantly and may still be at risk under a Republication government.

My final examples of special interest democracy relate to how the alpha class has figured out three additional self-supporting personal wealth-enhancing tricks.

The first one is how to get wage increases to such an extent that $5m, $10m, $25m even $100m annual salaries for CEOs are not uncommon. The mechanism that enables this is transparent: the CEO picks the board and heavily influences board fees; the CEO is often also the Chairman (crazy); the board sets the CEO's salary, backed up by the self-referenced circularity of comparative salary reviews, they inevitably ratchet upwards; the recipients of these salaries even think they are, to quote from a famous advertisement, "worth it".

To be fair, some of my highly-paid friends admit that their remuneration is absurd, but still go along with it. Why wouldn't they? (Come to think of it, so are my consulting fees.) Tax law has also become part of the free market. The basic idea is again, just like union negotiation. You must reduce taxes or we will invest elsewhere and live where taxes are lower. And they do. This guts government budgets and dooms them to deficits without some complete new thinking.

Next, alphas receive a significant part of their extraordinary remuneration as capital gains, which only attract a 15 per cent tax rate, while the average middle class worker pays more than twice that.

Finally, the really smart tax lawyers have figured out how to avoid corporation tax all together by collecting their revenues offshore while keeping their costs in the USA. IT companies are especially adept at doing this.

So now we have an indebted middle class with reduced prospects of a high paying job and an alpha elite which has managed to rig the system to the extent that they've received nearly *all* the gains in national wealth creation for the last thirty years or so.

The alpha elite don't consume much. The middle class can't consume much and the poor are poor. This combined with the low consumption of the baby boomers who are now retiring, results in low growth and low taxes so no way to get out of national or personal debt other than default or inflation – neither a happy solution.

The alphas continue to party in gated communities that might as well have seceded from the union of states. The other 95 per cent of the population is peeking over the fence while working two jobs. The bottom 20 percent of this group is becoming an underclass where all expectations of a better life have been crushed by the reality of unemployment or poverty trap wages, limited health care, underfunded schools and living environments that look like the third world. There are large parts of America that are corroded, rusted war zone dumps, which most Americans, let alone alphas, never visit.

The truly middle class is angry and confused about to what to do. We now have an increasingly uneven distribution of wealth and the relationship between uneven wealth distribution and social markers is becoming clearer. Societal markers go negative; relative educational levels fall, the proportion of poor unmarried mothers grows, abortions increase, incarceration levels explode, drug use increases, mental health problems in children increase, obesity increases, diabetes increases and intergenerational unemployment becomes common.

Of course, this is just like in the War on Women example, where the lack of education and opportunity resulted in women that were dumb, emotional, and weak. The humiliating realities of the underclass also justify the institutionally justified, felt truth that they are dumb, lazy, parasites on society.

This relationship between uneven distribution, disdain for the underclass, the dashed expectations of the middle class and the corrosion of society has yet

to be fully developed. (A seminal exploration of this subject can be read in *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson.) But it feels more and more likely that uneven wealth distribution results in the humiliation of an underclass, who then respond with anger, reluctant compliance, crime or depressive behaviours which show up in dreadful social markers. If so it has huge implications for social and economic policy.

So, what does this mean for the cluster of *felt truths* around extreme free markets, banking, unions, competitive individuality, progress, fairness, government, education, big corporations, religion, and the purpose in life? Strongly-held *felt truths* are resistant to change. Many people wish the world to be the way it once was; the Tea Party for example. Others look to a better future without being able to sketch it (the Occupy Wall Street movement); either way old *felt truths* are no longer aligned to the current globalised reality. How they evolve will impact individual lives – your life.

Letting a small percentage of alphas have it all is not sustainable; it's the stuff of revolutions or dictatorships. It is staggering that while European youth unemployment is around 40 per cent and there has so far been no real kick back

Here are the emerging *felt truth* shifts I sense:

Free markets – people, especially the laid-off worker or the guy that has just taken a pay cut to get back into employment, have sensed that unrestrained free markets for goods, labour and finance are not good. However, these complicated areas are outside of most people's understanding and, as a result, they are confused. While they are influenced by alpha self-interested promotion of the importance of extreme free markets, at a gut level they feel that all is not right. My own gut feel is that nobody, literally nobody, can understand this level of complexity, including me. Simplification – some sand and in the wheels – is required to slow the system down to de-risk the system, even if that means we lose (short-term) some of the genuine advantages of free markets. Getting cheap goods in Walmart in exchange for a minimum wage job doesn't seem to be a good deal.

Banking now dominates the economy. Bankers – the masters of the universe – are now seen as untrustworthy and needing regulation. Governments are

taking some steps toward global regulation but as you would expect, the bankers are being lead screaming and yelling to the party. I don't hold up much hope – we need some brand new thinking.

Unions in traded product industries have been eviscerated. We are left with protected public sector unions that are still pushing for their self-interest while the majority non-union workforce suffers. This is losing them the respect of the majority.

Competitive individuality is still alive and well in America – there's no real change in the population's individualism. Americans still cares for their neighbours but not the perceived slacker. If anything, competitive individualism has increased. This is to be "biologically" expected in a time of fearful uncertainty and stress.

Work is still an important source of satisfaction and identity, although it has become increasingly difficult to earn a good living with only one job, let alone as a single breadwinner. But the real result of uncertain employment and underemployment is that it creates anxiety.

Progress for the middle class has taken a reality hit. While progress should be possible, it does not seem to be as attainable as it once was. Progress used to help define purpose in life but it is now unrealistic for many. This is a major shock to the system. The American Dream is turning into a nightmare of unmet expectations.

Fairness is no longer seen to be part of the system. The wealth gains of the small percentage of alphas and their ability to fix the game in their favour is increasingly felt to be unfair. Bankers got special treatment after the global financial crisis – while some of the middle class were being forced into bankruptcy, the bankers were collecting bonuses. The sense of unfairness is in conflict with the *felt truth* that the individual has a right to whatever they earn i.e. earnings are a result of effort.

The idea that the way national wealth is distributed is a choice has not yet got any traction.

Furthermore; the idea that unfair distribution of wealth corrodes society from within has yet to be understood.

Government is not doing much to help the middle classes and its trust in the government is at an all-time low. There is a growing feeling that taxes are poorly spent on no-good, lazy, dependent, freeloaders, and an imposition. People can also see government has been captured by special interest's alphas and no longer meets the general needs of average people; it spends its fragmented time on vocal special interest groups and listening to the alpha lobbyists who fund the political parties' campaigns. Respectful debate and compromise – arriving at the mid-point of honestly held Conservative *and* Progressive opinion has stopped; gridlock results.

Education is still felt to be very important but in a free market it is getting increasingly expensive to obtain. This leaves young adults entering an uncertain work force with debts and no certainty that they will be able to repay them.

Corporations that were once admired are now being questioned about their behaviour. As now purely profit maximising entities, they take advantage of globalisation and their increasing political influence. Corporations pursue off-shore profit, cut labour costs, cut benefits, minimise taxes, lobby for laws to sustain and improve their own interests. Lobbying is now a profit generating activity.

Somehow this doesn't seem right. There is a *felt truth* conflict – the free market idea of vigorous competition and the winner takes all does not sit well with the idea of national and social responsibility.

Purpose in life – the idea that working hard would ensure you and your kids can have better life is now seriously questioned by the majority and has been abandoned by the underclass. This increases anxiety and tension and kindness goes out the door.

Religion, once something that used to take an important but low profile role in society, has taken on increased importance. This has happened as anxiety increases. To my great surprise, several of my friends have become born-again Christians; had I been told this thirty years ago I would have said 'no way'. I do not recollect presidents during the general interest democracy period regularly saying God bless America. It's now customary.

Religion and the state used to be separate, but that is now increasingly untrue**.** But the importance of the separation of religion and state is still important.

Religion says 'I believe this, so should you' or 'You would be much better off if you were more like me'. It does not allow for compromise or debate or much progress. However, religion is still critically important in finding our way (see Chapter 8).

Again, I have tried to summarise these changes – a comparison of the two eras (Exhibit 24) and in two "ugly charts" (Exhibits 25 and 26).

Comparison of the two eras

Criteria	1945 - 1975	1975 - 2015
Government	Trusted and competent	Distrusted, semi-competent
Corporations	Trusted	Not trusted
Banking	A regulated utility	Masters of the universe
Unions	Strong	Weak or self serving
Religion	Personal and important	Important and political
Rational free markets	Markets are managed	Free market thinking dominates
Competitive individuality	Strong but balanced	Very strong "dog eat dog"
Debt and consumerism	Low debt, strong consumerism	Hyper consumption paid for with debt
Progress	American Dream real	Longed for but not real
Work	Very important	Important but not delivering the dream
Purpose in life	The American dream	Empty consumerism, individualism, I am my wealth
Fairness	Fairness for all citizens important	Economics rules; fairness is not part of the equation
USA's role in the world	Highly respected	Regularly questioned

Exhibit 24

Exhibit 25: Extreme rational free markets resulted in a financial crisis, government impotency and alpha advantage.

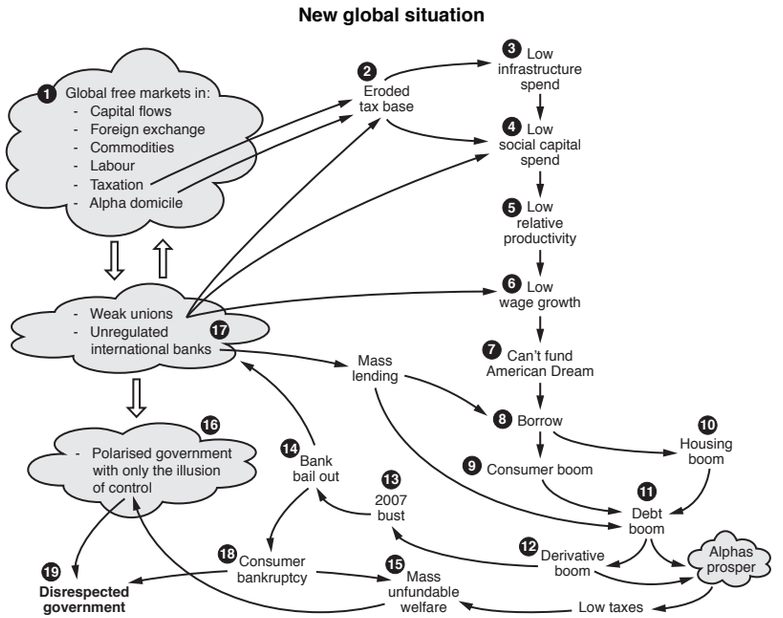


Exhibit 25

Exhibit 26: Financial alphas are now unconstrained the new global situation where alphas are free to roam.

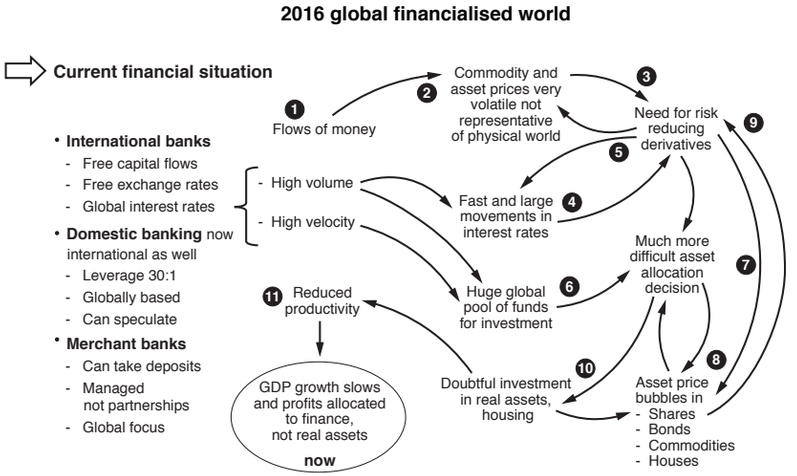


Exhibit 26

The shift in towards extreme rational economics, globalisation and unconstrained alphas has changed the economy and society in extraordinary ways. Following is a list of the ways the levers of the nation state have been eroded.

- A nation's productive system is now international; goods and services come from all over the world.
- A nation's labour market pricing – wages are now heavily influenced by India and China.
- A nation's financial system is now a part of a larger global system with few controls on either capital flows exchange rates or even interest rates.
- The ratio of assets and debt to GDP has quadrupled giving extraordinary power to the banks and financial institutions, which now account for up to 40 per cent of national profitability for doing very little in the real world.
- The volatility of prices and the velocity of money have exploded. This required risk management products that instead of reducing risk almost certainly increased risk, further lowering nation state control over their finances.
- A nation's tax system must now take into account the global tax system; people and companies move around the world to the lowest tax locations and argue their own government into matching others. This is a doom loop if ever there was one. We now have a free market in tax systems.
- Politics is now largely about economic efficiency. Not efficiency *and* social consequences. Conservative felt truths have taken over.
- The cost of TV campaigning has made politics a money game. Politics has polarised into right and left with little respectful dialogue. Politics in the USA is now in the free market. The cost of running for office has become so high that corporations can and do buy laws that favour them not the nation.
- The organisational form with most power and flexibility are the large amoral stateless multinational banks and global corporations. These are run and owned by super alphas that can and do change domicile to suit themselves.
- Politicians, who have in reality lost control of the levers needed to manage a nation, are pretending. They pretend they have control but they don't. The population have intuited this and despise them.

- Loss in control of the tax base decently paid work and reduced spending on social capital has resulted in a welfare doom loop and corrosion of most of the measures of a decent society

A welfare doom loop has started in some developed nations (Exhibit 27) with commensurate changes in social markers (Exhibit 28).

A welfare doom loop has started in developed nations

Welfare doom loop

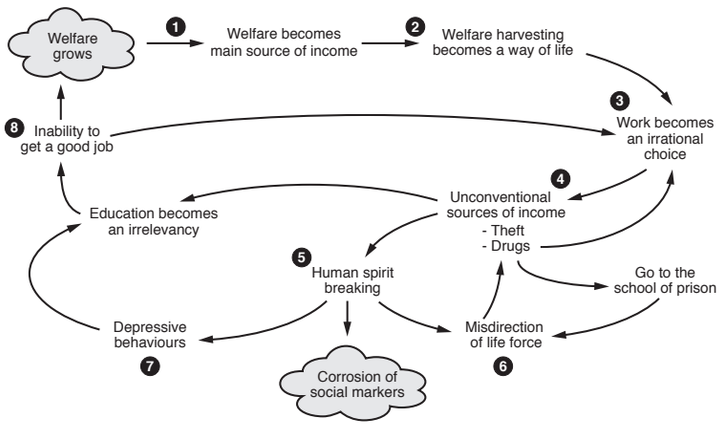


Exhibit 27

Commensurate changes in social markers

Change in societal markers in USA and other English speaking countries after "rational economics" *felt truths* shifted economic gains to the top 1-5% wealthy.

USA societal markers		
'Social markers'	**1965**	**2015**
Obesity	Very low	Epidemic
Mental illness	Low level	Massive increase
Education level	World leader	Polarising
Teenage births	moderate	Now 35 – 40%
Imprisonment	Low	Very high
Social mobility	Good	Declining
Drug use	Minimal	Very high
Homicides	Bronze medal	Gold medal
Dependency	Low	Many 2nd generation welfare recipients
Underclass	Small and racial	Large and growing

Wounds on the body of society

Exhibit 28

What a mess. There is a longing for the golden era *felt truths* that made America great, especially the one that said individual progress was made through individual hard work. However, this is in tension with the global reality – it's now only true for the alpha class busy fixing the game and establishing *felt truths* to support their enduring privilege.

Understanding the shifts may help in finding a new equilibrium. In any event, if you wish to improve your own happiness and that of your children you need to have a perspective on the flow of the river – in other words, what's going on around you. Maybe you can contribute to creating a new distributive society.

Having completed Sections One and Two and before going on to Section Three, it would be good to recap the ideas in Section One and then pull it all together by summarising "the advantages and disadvantages of being the smart chimp".

First, a quick summary of ideas:

DNA based concepts

- Like all other life, humans have DNA based survival predispositions that can be expressed positively or negatively depending on circumstances.
- We need to be fearful, alert to danger in order to stay alive (RAS).
- Sex is an important part of making sure the species survives.
- We organise ourselves into *"us"* groupings.
- These groups are organised into a competitive hierarchy.
- At the top of the hierarchy there is an alpha and alpha class that, if unrestrained, will exploit others to improve and sustain their privilege.
- In protecting their privilege alphas can get into doom loops that get worse and worse.
- Within the main *"us"* hierarchy there will be smaller *"us"* groupings that compete with each other.
- Within these *"us"* groups there will be ideas of fairness, altruism, tit-for-tat relationships, especially if the group is face-to-face.

- The idea of *"us"* creates a fear of *"them"*.
- To *"them"* we are also a *"them"*, and *"thems"* naturally negatively stereotype each other.

Concepts related to the brain "as a machine"

- The brain is designed to solve problems (keeping alive) in an energy efficient way.
- To conserve energy, we develop habits of action and habits of thought.
- Our problem-solving-brains operate in both a **fast** mode and **slow** rational mode. Its default mode is **fast** because **fast** mode uses less energy and keeps us out of danger.
- We have two core problems – how to live a good life and how to create a good society. (You and I have not had to think much about these core problems due to the cultural inheritance from our great religious and political thinkers.)
- Conscious problem-solving, a form of **slow** thinking, allows us to stand outside of ourselves acting as an "observer" that can choose to modify our behaviour and cultures (the three soldiers process).
- Our great religious and political thinkers have come up with religions and political institutions that, in different ways, draw out the positive in our predispositions and manage the negative. This becomes the encultured fast thinking cluster of *felt truths* that form our cultures – our habits of behaviour.
- Without enculturation, the brain doesn't inherently know the difference between good habits or bad habits. It can easily go off the rails.
- We are way more **fast** *felt truth*-thinking than we recognise.
- This leads to *felt truths* that are useful to get you through the day and to be part of a community, but they are not necessarily *The Truth*.
- *Felt truths* become grooved in the physical structure of the brain and are difficult to change.

Three building block dynamics

- Because of their privilege, alphas tend to be Conservative, not Progressive. In modernity, they conserve their privilege through a cluster of alpha-authorised and alpha-privileging *felt truths*.
- Alpha-authorised *felt truths* privilege the alphas and exploit others.
- If our *felt truths* are confronted, we can respond (amygdala) as if our physical survival is at risk when in reality we are trying to preserve our identity, not our lives. Our brains simply don't know the difference between a physical attack and an attack on our identity.

How does change take place?

- The most obvious way is through resonance to the teachings of our great religious and political teachers. In addition, change is often originated by an emerging class that can contest the self-interested *felt truths* of the current alphas.
- If successful, law and institutions are modified to reflect the new *felt truths*.
- The new ways of thinking then get acculturated into subsequent generations becoming **fast** *felt truths,* invisible in their familiarity.
- Given the fact of genuinely held differences between Conservative and Progressive *felt truths*, change is achieved in modernity through respectful dialogue along with trial and error. This is called democracy.
- Fully functioning democracy is a truth-seeking process (TSP) where two steps forward and one step back we progressively improve on the critical process of drawing out our positive predispositions and managing the negative across larger and larger *us* groupings.
- Regression is where we revert to black and white "me" thinking and impose our views on others. Without respectful dialogue.

You may want to score each of these ideas 1 to 5 as to the level of sense they make to you, corresponding to your own experience. When reading the manuscript for this book, my friends have found this a useful way of forcing them into real brain engagement. When they score low they have been challenged to think harder about the proposition. (Sometimes they concluded that I am flat wrong, great!)

Now to the advantages and disadvantages of being the smart chimp.

There are several advantages:

- *We are able to draw out our positive predispositions and manage the negative, not perfectly but pretty well, especially in the developed world.*

  All societies have, to some degree, been able to moderate male aggression and alpha dominance. Most have been able to draw out love for each other, family and children. At a minimum, cultures require a "live and let live" approach to community and this is done in different ways with different effectiveness. A Jewish community operates in a different way than say, a Muslim community. But the end game is similar. Furthermore, we are shocked when this process breaks down as it has done in the case of ISIS in Iraq or historically where one group of people refuse to acknowledge the common humanity of another, resulting in Auschwitz, Rwanda, Bosnia or the Cambodian genocide.

- *Our problem-solving capabilities together with our cooperativeness has led to the creation of unbelievable physical wealth.*

  Our inherent co-cooperativeness goes largely unrecognised. I wrote this chapter in a coffee shop opposite a supermarket, Woolworths. It has around 20,000 line items all at reasonable prices and immediately available. To achieve this miracle (and it is a miracle), hundreds of thousands of people have cooperated with each other to bring these products to the store. Hundreds of people get up early each morning to make possible my random desire for some cornflakes. This is awesome. Some would use the rationale (and the cynical idea) that it's just the employment system working, its "Adam Smith's invisible and selfish hand at work". I think not. There is something else going on. The inherent cooperative nature of humans together with advanced problem-solving capability and institution building results in this miracle. The key institution we have created is that of fully functioning democracy. This is a truth-seeking process that must be guarded against alpha corrosion.

- *Wealth reduces want, which in turn reduces conflict.*

  You may not believe it, but we are living in the least violent era ever. Our fear predisposition, along with the instant disaster reporting of the media, tend to create a *felt truth* that we are living in violent times and believe the world is much more dangerous than it actually is. Statistically, we are living in the least violent period of history the world has ever known (see for instance *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity* by Steven Pinker). This is due our advanced problem-solving capability, both in terms of wealth creation and how this wealth should be reasonably distributed. When we have progress, we have less reason to steal and more to lose. When we distribute wealth more evenly and fairly, the potential for conflict is further reduced.

  WEALTH SHOULD ALLOW US TO BE KINDER TO EACH OTHER

- *Science and technology*

  These two things not only allow for more wealth creation, but travel and the internet are enabling us to experience each other and other cultures with wider and wider access. People are able to see instantly how others live and to question why their alpha leaders do not govern in a way that leads to wealth, fairness and equality. This in time will surely lead to the duplication and development of more freedom and opportunity-creating societies.

However, there are also several, mostly unrecognised, disadvantage to being the smart chimp.

- *Our brain searches for problems and answers – it won't give up*.

  As a result, answers to the unanswerable are produced and we accept them as *felt truths* even when they are just ideas we have made up. This is a tricky one. We have a strong predisposition to accept FAST acculturated truths or think about something and come up with an answer and then stick with it. Take for example the attitude of the two political camps, the Progressive camp and the Conservative camp in relation to universal access to health care versus market-based health care. With nearly all complex problems like this, the answer lies somewhere between the Conservative position and the Progressive position and requires compromise from both sides. Choosing the middle ground allows us to

try something out, see if it works and act accordingly. This is called the *truth-seeking process of democracy*. However, because the brain does not inherently understand the difference between an attack on an idea and a physical attack, conflict can trigger the amygdala to marinate the brain in cortisol and adrenaline. This potent pickle ensures that no rational or compromise solution can be developed for testing. Current politics in the USA operates like this – it's the direct opposite of respect for free thought. The "I'm right, you're wrong" position inhibits progress; little truth seeking experimentation, the basis of progress, takes place.

- *Different felt truths across different cultures often result in racism and/or exploitation.*

  Different cultures are trying to achieve the same thing – to draw out our positive predispositions and manage the negative ones. The problem is, they do it in different ways which then trigger two other fearful predispositions and to negative stereotype the *other* and to dominate the weaker. This is racism.

  BIOLOGICALLY I AM A RACIST

- *We are always exposed to the risk of alpha dominance*.

  Alpha dominance can be achieved through physical force or through *felt truth* capture i.e. *felt truths* that support alpha interest at the expense of the majority. Unrestrained alphas will always try to structure the world to improve and ensure the continuity of their privilege and this urge is so hardwired that they often won't even know they are doing it. It was the downfall of communism, and if unaddressed, will probably be the downfall of China. This may come with lots of collateral damage as the alphas at risk play the patriotism card to maintain their position. Alphas all over the world have a fixed belief that their position justifies their pursuit of more wealth. The aggregation of wealth and power to the top five per cent of each nation is capturing a larger and larger proportion of wealth. This is justified on the basis of rational free market thinking and competitive individuality, both of which were prime causes of the recent global financial crisis. This will stop. How and when it will stop is an open question. Nature abhors unrestrained power – it eventually develops countervailing power.

- *The enlightenment freedoms could be characterised as freedoms* from *exploitation not freedom* TO

  Freedom from something is easier when compared with gaining freedom to do something. Working towards "freedom from" exploitation, poverty violence, ill health is not simple to achieve, but self-evidently required. Once these freedoms have largely been achieved then we get to the much more difficult question of "freedom to do WHAT?" Our broad aim for happiness is a neither realistic nor helpful goal. The expression of our negative predispositions can often make us happy. Members of ISIS are probably happy; the Boston marathon bomber may have been happy to become a martyr for his cause. Happiness is overrated – we are often at our best when we are unhappy. We need more developed goals and this is where it's important to have an understanding of the three building blocks and daily practices to develop new habits so we can create a better version of ourselves. Happily, getting what we want can have an empty outcome. The never-ending challenge of sculpting yourself to be a better person offers more fulfilment and purpose. The core of all the great religions is character building.

- *Technological advance produces outcomes that may not be in our best interests. But they drive ahead regardless.*

  Science is in itself value free. If it makes life easier and more fun then, like the iPhone, we adopt it and its use expands. However, we don't always consider the secondary impacts, such as what is wealth creation doing to our environment? Or what is the internet doing to our children's brains? Or what will be the impact of genetic modification of food? These questions are valid and valuable but answers are not vigorously sought. This problem is made more difficult by tipping points – the points of change from which there is no turning back. Nuclear weapons is one, climate change another, and artificial intelligence another. Our massive problem-solving brain actually ends up creating problems that we may not be well-equipped to solve.

- *It's difficult to be aware of our own felt truths – we tend to hold on to what has previously been proved valuable even though circumstances have changed.*

  Hard won *felt truths*, like fully-functioning distributive democracy, becomes normal and devalued. We tend to quickly forget where we came from and how important of our institutions are in maintaining our freedoms; to forget is to put both our society and us as individuals at risk. In an ever-changing world, we must be vigilant to protect the institutions that support freedom of choice for all of us, not just an elite class. We must be careful not to be misled by seductive but destructive or empty ideas that limit our choices. By being open to choices, we can build a better version of ourselves. Doing this is an important part of the next section.



The following chapter is the start of **Section Three**. Here we wrestle with the idea of good and bad and see how these ideas can be put into practice to create a better version of ourselves, how we can be more fulfilled and how to expand the lives of our children and grandchildren and even think about how we can create a better society.



Chapter 8

My attempt to understand good versus bad



Chapter 8

My attempt to understand good versus bad

So far, I have talked about good and bad casually without any explanation of what I think they mean. It could be seen that as a consequence of taking the idea of *felt truths* to the extreme – that our beliefs are just stories we've made up – there's no such thing as good or bad. That's not actually what I'm suggesting. The idea of good versus bad is very important. You can't even start to think about redesigning yourself, creating a better version of yourself if you don't have a starting point and direction.

The white soldier needs some rocks to stand on, or it doesn't know how to decide what to do.

I'd like to explore the idea of good and bad and take you on my personal exploration of this problem. That's not to say that I feel I have come up with perfect answers; it's an ongoing work in progress TSP, but hopefully my journey will have some correspondence with your own.

It's a journey with five stages:

- Initial strong religious belief, in my case Christian.
- Rejection of Christianity in favour of rationality.
- A not-very-successful exploration of rationality and other sources of potential insight.
- A partial return to Christianity in an attempt not to throw out the baby with the dirty bathwater.
- A crystallisation of both the rational and the irrational – the idea of religion not as **the truth** but as a successful truth-seeking process.

Strong religious belief

My family was not very religious; we said grace before meals but my parents did not go to church. However, when I was five they did choose to send me to an actively religious boarding school; we went to church every day, three times on Sundays and I often read the lesson. Bible studies were taken seriously and we learnt large sections of the Bible off by heart. Boys took turns to lead a Latin grace at the start and end of every meal.

However, the Christian ideas of love thy neighbour as thyself, the Ten Commandments, and the beatitudes all had great emotional appeal to me; I was serious about those things and in my demanding black and white, childish way tried to live a righteous and good life.

Rejection of religion

As I slowly learnt more about thinking rationally as well as studying science, doubts began to creep in; I started to question the validity of what I was being taught. There were major inconsistencies in the Bible; for instance, "an eye for an eye" didn't sound much like "turn the other cheek".

I began to feel our Bible teaching was quite literal. For example, the parable of the prodigal son was interpreted as a lesson in forgiveness and how you should forgive others (not easy). However, it could have been interpreted as an example of how God loves us all, regardless of any sin and that he will always welcome us; in other words, God thinks we are okay regardless of what we think of ourselves i.e. he doesn't keep score.

There are lots of ways of reading the same Bible or Koran passage.

The violent history of the Crusades and the religious wars of the 17th century didn't sound too Christian; burning and torturing people who disagreed with the Church did not sit well with me; the choir master masturbating choir boys behind the church organ did not feel right; making the world in seven days was explained as a metaphor – a story. Additionally, we have four different gospels – which is the definitive version? How to sort metaphor from reality and choose which version of the gospel?

I also questioned the belief we were born bad and that only good Christians went to heaven and the rest of the world went to hell – why would a God who loved us want us to burn in hell? Stuff like that simply didn't make sense. So, like all good converts to a new faith, in my case "rationality", I took extreme action and threw the baby out with the bathwater – in other words, I rejected the good things about Christianity along with the questionable ones. I became a committed atheist at the extreme end of the spectrum. (With the benefit of hindsight I can see that anything extreme seems to lead to unattractive even ridiculous behaviours.) Fundamentalist Christianity has the same problems as fundamental Islam.

An unsuccessful exploration

I carried on searching for a way to live a good life for more than three decades; I'll cover my search as if it happened in sequence because it makes it easier to explain. In reality, the search activities overlapped, started and stopped, were revisited and reframed, so it wasn't a neat and tidy process. It was also carried out with different levels of intensity at different times. When my work was totally absorbing, using up all my head space, then searching pretty well stopped; when I had more time, it resumed. As I write this I'm reminded that in our time-poor world we often simply don't have time to think and reflect a precondition for change and development.

I started to study and experience all kinds of modern approaches to wellbeing: Gestalt therapy, transactional analysis, reality therapy, NLP, the possible human, Campbell's mythology, Jung, Freud, EST meditation – you name it I had a go at it. Without exception, they were all fascinating and stimulating; but my sense was that they only represented partial truths.

Then I moved onto the hard stuff – philosophy. I read Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Luther, Descartes, Spinoza, Bentham, Kant, Hegel, Smith, Hobbes, Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine and Marx. All that reading made me see how both incredibly insightful and incredibly limited philosophical thinking really was; by following a time line you could see that each era built on and denied or modified the thinking of the previous era. For example, once the religious era was under question, then humanist thinking and insight began to emerge. But the limitations of philosophy were shown when these scholastic and then humanist philosophers, the brightest guys on

the planet, still felt obliged to give the Christian concept of God some room in their philosophy; the result was incredibly convoluted arguments which made little sense if you took God out of the picture.

Unfortunately, these great thinkers did not inspire me emotionally. I agreed with rational philosophical concepts like:

- Act in such a way as to do the greatest good for the largest numbers – Bentham.
- Act as if your action was a universal law for everyone – Kant.
- Act with only ends in mind never only means – Kant.
- Intention is only the true measure of an action – Hegel.
- Self-interested action will produce the common good – Smith.

While each one of these is rationally sound, in no way did they inspire me to get out of bed with enthusiasm and act differently. For me it was just a head trip.

Having little success with the philosophers I moved on to checking out other religions; I read up on Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and had another look at Christianity. I was struck by their basic similarities. For example, most religions have a version of "Do unto others as you would wish to be done unto"; Confucius gave it a special twist by turning it into – "Don't do unto others things you would not like them to do to you"; the same but different. By this time, I was starting to see where the good versus evil issue came from because I was having a look at the relationship between primate behaviour and consciousness in relation to the organisational work I was doing for large corporations. Chimps don't know good from bad but, as Hamlet says, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so". And we can think.

I was reading Jane Goodall's detailed studies on chimp behaviour in Tanzania. Jane's work was extraordinary; early every day she went into the bush and literally noted every activity of her troop of chimps, writing up her notes in the evenings. She did this for years, eventually inspiring dozens of other scientists to adopt her approach.

At the time I was living a super alpha corporate life, and I was struck how similar it was to that of a chimp troop. In the chimp world there was always an alpha chimp all the other chimps submitted to. He got the best food, the best place to sleep and decided where to go in the morning. He also had the most sex. In the corporate world there is always an alpha chimp with a corner office, a cute personal assistant, the best car and parking spot – even a private bathroom. He is called the president or CEO. In a family situation, dad gets his chair.

In Jane's chimp world the alpha always had a bunch of allies, often younger, that supported him, at least for a while. However, they were always on the lookout for a chance to replace him. In corporate life this is called the "C-suite", a slang term collectively referring to the most senior executives because their titles tend to start with the letter *C*, for chief. The C-suite is considered the most important and influential group of individuals in a company and membership of this group comes with high-stakes decision making, a more demanding workload and high compensation. C-suite competition is not usually physical but it is as equally apparent and vicious – and why wouldn't it be? The size of the prize is significant, financially and socially.

The chimp troop is always subdivided into smaller sub-groups; the smaller groups, led by mini-alphas, hang out together and look out for each other. In corporate life we have divisions each led by a divisional alpha or a vice-president. The chimp troops' competitive hierarchy seems to be directly mirrored in human society; the concept of troop itself is mirrored in the corporation or the nation.

Reading and reflecting on chimps, started me thinking about DNA-driven behaviours and the interplay of consciousness. Clearly we were not chimps, but we could not ignore the similarities. About the same time there was a plethora of books on the brain, fuelled in part by the brain scanning technique of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) – a technology that enables researchers to identify the parts of the brain which are active when somebody is *thinking*.

At the same time, researchers were also exploring the new science of behavioural economics; hundreds of experiments confirmed we are not very rational, even when it's about economics and numbers, an area in which you'd

assume rationality would play a very active part. The conclusion is that we are not just rational creatures but very emotional, without even knowing it.

Reading about the brain gave me a better understanding of the way the brain worked and I decided it worked a bit like a machine; there were things that it was good at and others it was not so good at. You can't ask a rice cooker to grill steaks.

It appeared that what it was good at was making patterns and sticking to them; what it's less good at is changing patterns. It also seemed to be value neutral in choosing its patterns. As a machine, the brain doesn't know the difference between a habit of alcoholism and one of going to church every Sunday; it just loves to repeat the pattern. Clearly pattern choice, formation and change are important issues when facing the question of how to live a good life or how to bring up your children.

I also started to recognise the need for a good behaviour carrier; a structure that helped you live a good and life and nudge you in the right direction when you went off track. As I explained in Chapter 1, we have negative and positive predispositions and we need help to keep the negative ones under control. It was beginning to dawn on me that I now knew intellectually a lot about good and bad behaviour; but intellect was not enough. *We are way smarter, rationally clever, than we actually behave*. Ask anyone addicted to anything they'd like to stop – they know they *should* stop but is pretty damn hard to break the pattern because the brain loves patterns. Personally, I have been addicted to masturbation, work, exercise and a depressive mind set – fortunately not at the same time. My best addiction is to persistent, pervasive inquisitiveness.

Decades of search began to come together through some chance readings and meetings (although I now doubt it was chance – there is a lot of mystery in life).

Emerging answers

At this point it would seem quite reasonable to assume I might become a born-again Christian. Several of my friends had returned to Christianity. Who was I to keep pushing, pushing? Why? Why? Why? The cosmos started to provide.

The first revelation came to me when I picked up a copy of *Love is Letting Go of Fear* by Jerry Jampolsky. Jerry had come to Christianity late in life through a study of a modern Christian text called *A Course in Miracles* that the author believed had come straight from Jesus himself. (NB. The Church is not keen on this idea.)

Jampolsky addresses the question of how to be a loving person in a very practical way; he suggests twelve practices that will, if done daily, lead to a more loving and happier life. Within these practices were the ideas I had already started to form about people having different *felt truths* (or perspectives), along with our DNA predispositions, and our overemphasis on individuality when we exist both as individuals *and* in relationship. Indeed, in the West we have come to the point of almost ignoring the fact that we can't survive separately from others, that we become ourselves only through relationship. Competitive, competent, aloneness is a very bleak place to be.

Jampolsky's practices also reinforced the ideas I was developing around the need for daily routines to help us gradually change our habits. I modified his list of twelve and put them on my bathroom mirror, picking one to practise each day. The result was very positive; I was leading a life with more purpose and equanimity, regardless of the difficulties it might throw up**.**

The next bit of serendipity came when my children had bought me the full works of Robert Cahill, an outstanding historical scholar who attempts to get into the minds of people in different historical periods rather than just record the events of the time. Cahill tries to plot the history of thought. In one of his books, Cahill translates and reproduces St Paul's message on love in his First Letter to the Corinthians 13: 3-4. This resonated…

Unlike hard-edged rational philosophy, it had huge emotional appeal – I was totally brain-smacked. Love has been examined, raised and praised throughout literature, but to be frank I had never really understood love until I read St Paul. My god, suddenly it came to me

Love is not a feeling, it's a verb; it's something you do!

St Paul's letter to the Corinthians on love's twelve verbs that can be practiced each day

1. Love is patient.
2. Love is kind.
3. It is not proud.
4. It does not boast.
5. It does not dishonor others.
6. It is not easily angered.
7. It keeps no record of wrong doings.
8. It does not like wrong doing.
9. It enjoys the truth.
10. Bears all things.
11. Trusts all things.
12. Hopes all things.

Wow, if love was something that you did, I could start doing it; I could attack love with a process. Furthermore, I knew from my corporate organisational design work that good processes created good behaviour.

Then I typed out St Paul's letter point by point and put it on the other side of my bathroom mirror. In my mind I now had an emotional cluster on the left side and logical one on the right side; together they did not seem out of place – rather they formed a whole. What I chose to practice each day could either come from the Jampolsky approach or the St Paul's list. I modify these lists as appropriate over time.

Earlier I mentioned attending the Wayside Chapel in Sydney's "red light district", King's Cross. My involvement with the Wayside came about after I heard the chapel's pastor Graham Long talking on radio and he mentioned a book he'd recently published called *Love Over Hate*. I thought I had better get a copy; it made inspiring reading.

King's Cross is where many Americans serving in Vietnam hung out on their rest and recreation stops in Sydney – and where many young American men graduated to adulthood. Today the Cross is a mix of brash life, the young elite, and distress. The visitors who go to the Wayside are living out all kinds

of distress – any addiction, mental issue, health issue or economic problem you can imagine. Usually all at the same time. After visiting the Wayside, my overwhelming impression was of a group of people separated from humanity; they are so trapped in their separateness their brains can wander anywhere their imagination and habits take them and then leave them in an awful space.

The Wayside's approach to helping visitors to re-join the community is extraordinarily special. It *acts* love doesn't talk or intellectualise or problem solve.

It doesn't even Christianise it.

- Love is not interested in what you think.
- Love is not interested in theology.
- Love is not interested in biblical quotes
- Love has no rules

So the Wayside doesn't:

- Fix problems.
- Have a preconception of you, knows you as…… or as…… or as……
- See visitors as patients.
- Encourage dependency.
- Act as knowing specialists.
- Talk Christianity – it only *acts* Christianity.

What it does is:

- Requires you to be absolutely present to the relationship not stuck in your ego
- Be accepting and kind.
- Provide an opportunity for self-respect, self-responsibility through work.
- Provide a safe, clean environment where you can shower get some new undies and self-respect.
- Provide routines/activities that draw people together.
- Set rules that must be obeyed if you want to stay in the community.

- And most of all, it lies in wait for the random moment that may occur when a visitor has the feeling that they may want to re-join the community. When this happens, they have gentle programs to assist.

The Wayside's value system is Christianity at a very high level – no dogma. The people who run the Wayside believe:

- There is no such thing as the individual; we only exist in relationship.
- Relationship best exists when people experience it without any preconceptions about the other.
- In relationship, we somehow become a little bit of each other.
- Relationship has no place for the specialist's "I know you" thinking.
- A relationship is impossible to sustain continually; just as life has ups and downs so does relationship – its natural.
- We learn the most with the downs, not when we are riding high.
- The wish to keep riding high is the behaviour of an addict and likely to end up with the usual difficulties of addiction.
- Feelings alone are a poor guide to behaviour; we often are at our best when we are uncomfortably resisting our impulse to indulge in good feelings but bad behaviour.
- Evil does not exist – it is a false fear; evil is an absence of love.

The visitors to the Wayside are the wounds on the body of society, ourselves.

This is a deeply inspirational and aspirational list – you may have noted there's no mention of God or Christ on it. Pastor Graham and I talk about our different perspectives; he amusingly says that in pursuit of answers I am "spinning my wheels". By this he means if I had "faith" I'd have all the answers. Sure, faith sounds attractive but it's not yet for me.

However, nor am I going to throw the aforementioned baby out with the bathwater. Instead, I am beginning to work on a way forward for myself that unites rationality AND emotion – after all humans are both.

These are my emerging ideas – a cluster of interacting ideas that form the basis of the practical section to follow in the next chapters.

1. We are defined by the confluence of our biological DNA predispositions and our conscious minds.
2. Cultures and religions all do the same thing – they try to draw out positive aspects of our predispositions and manage the negative ones.
3. We are both rational–slow and emotional–fast, and it's important to pay homage to both.
4. Our bodies and minds tell us we are individuals; we *are* physically individual but we cannot exist in isolation from our community – being present to others in relationship is just as important as food.
5. Most of what we believe felt truths, are useful stories. Once we realise this we can make up different, better stories.
6. Black and white, right and wrong stories are comforting, but choice limiting. You need to search for the *and* that sits between black *and* white
7. Life has ups and downs. Downs are good news as learning takes place in the downs; not the highs, the desire for a continual high is the desire of an addict.
8. All events can be framed in multiple ways; people are guaranteed to frame them in different ways, often believing their way is the only way. Deeply respectful dialogue is the only way forward. The basis of progress through a truth-seeking process.
9. To restructure our brain, we need to be our own experiment; this can be done with daily, intention-full, practice.
10. Daily practice is a truth-seeking process; TRUTH is a horizon that keeps moving.
11. The only way to deal with such an absurd level of life's complexities is to love and laugh – mainly at yourself.

What, then, is the answer to that original question – how to act as a good person? Sorry, no answer, only the daily guided re-sculpting of your character. In the following chapters you can see how to implement these ideas through daily practices. But before we go there, let's have a brief reflection on character. Prior to the Dale Carnegie era which began around 1936, with

the publication of his first book *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* society worked on the idea that you and your children could develop into a decent human being by building character. Character had little to do with wealth, professional expertise or even education, it was a project all of us could and should take up. That shifted with Carnegie.

Carnegie's persuasive idea (or *felt truth*) was that you could create a superior "good at things" personality through self-improvement. This led further to the *felt truth* that your worth was defined by your professional performance and related income, consumption and possessions. You were a better person if you had a good job, drove a better car, lived in a better house, and possessed a trophy wife. We know in our heart of hearts this in nonsense it doesn't pass the tombstone test – but billions of advertising dollars are spent daily telling us this. It feeds into our DNA-driven needs to belong and have high status. We become possessed by our possessions and consumed by our consumption. We have to work long hours for bosses and companies that we may not admire, in order to buy stuff that satisfies these empty wants. It's called the rat race.

Lately, in the modern-era of social media, a new felt truth has emerged. You are your synthesised cyber image. You are a photoshopped creation in cyberspace that has little to do with your actual reality, your actual character. The cult of the individual as a "brand" or mini-celebrity, which may have little to do with a person's real character, is rather worrying. The psychological tension inherent in maintaining a false cyber personality in the face of a different daily realty has to be damaging.

As you have probably gathered, I feel a need to get back to the idea of character-building, not image-building. Reality over image, is the theme of the next three chapters – how to create a better "real" version of yourself and your children. In short, it's about getting back to the lifelong project of character development.



Chapter 9

Aims and preconditions for change – implementing the ideas to change your life



Chapter 9

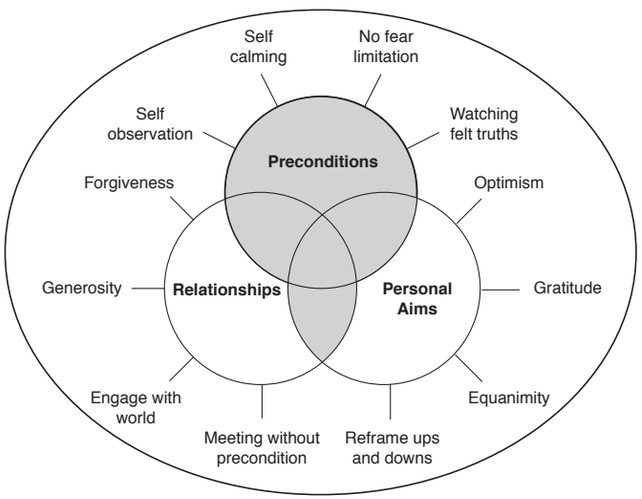
Aims and preconditions for change – implementing the ideas to change your life

We are nearing the end of this journey and have now arrived at possibly the most important of part of the book – how you can implement the ideas I have presented to change your life. This chapter is about setting the preconditions for substantial personal change and character development.

This is the process of drawing out the positive and managing the negative in yourself. The process of managing your/my potential for fearfulness, dominance and subservience, black and white thinking, racism, blind nationalism, and living by uncontested fast felt truths that are common to the river of your/my culture.

We begin with how I was – my characteristics – at the start of this process and move on to preconditions for change; we then travel to, first, the individual characteristics, and second, the relationship characteristics that I would like to sculpt in myself.

Preconditions and aims to change/sculpt myself



This chapter is, in effect, an operational summary of the ideas in the preceding chapters with an emphasis on what they mean to me personally. I will explain how I keep my eyes open in order to be able to manage my own brain. It requires a certain amount of questioning, vigilance and self-monitoring.

It is important to stress here that I'm going to be telling you about aims I have set for myself, and in no way do I want to suggest that you should be striving for the same aims. Each of us has had different life experiences and are probably in different stages in our life cycles and expectations. The re-sculpting of a 69-year-old's reality will be different from someone thirty years younger; the pressures of daily family life and work may mean younger people don't have the same amount of head space to concentrate on major change.

Additionally, I don't want to suggest I've reached some sort of perfection; quite the reverse in fact – it's my faults and regrets that have kept me engaged in this quest to explore and remould my own mind. What I'm about to share with you is still a work in progress and, to some extent, specific to me; you have to choose what you want to focus on.

In my quest to re-sculpt myself, I took an inventory of where I was starting from. Not totally pretty but here goes:

- I have a very strong predisposition to being the alpha. My rationalisation for this was, not that I wanted to be an alpha, but that alphas get more freedom. The reality was that I also enjoyed the privilege of being the alpha.
- I also have a predisposition to being the smartest guy in the room. My rationalisation for this was that "I was the smartest guy in the room" – if only they would listen to me they would all be better off. This is not very helpful if you want to build relationship or get new solutions. Plus, I was very smart in the small domain of business but pretty dumb in more emotional domains. Smart in the unimportant, dumb in the important.
- I also wanted to be helpful, as a result I often leapt into problem-solving mode. People were problems to be solved, not people to be met.
- As mentioned before I had no idea as to what love was all about. At best, I had some confused ideas about love being a feeling. Not a clue that love was actually a verb, it was what you did.

- I was from the beginning pretty fearless. As you know, I had been sent off to a strict, even violent, boarding school at the age of five. You had to confront your fears or get broken down.
- Last, and luckily because of severe dyslexia, I had to think hard and slow about what things meant, whereas other kids seem to just get it. This had taught me to be very reflective.

In summary, a helpful, alpha, smart-arse, focussed on ME. So I had plenty to work with!

Now to preconditions. There are four: self-observation, self-calming, walking towards your fear, and the ability to critique commonly held *felt truths* (check out the river).

1. *Self-observation:* This goes back to the idea of the three soldiers. It is essential that you are able to stand outside yourself and watch your reactive (amygdala) self, your fast self and your more rational slow self (prefrontal cortex). This comes from practice. As soon as I feel myself over-energised, either positively or negatively, I ask myself what's really going on here? A silly example – today driving to work, I had left a nice safe two-car space between me and the car in front, we were all going along nicely. All of a sudden a learner driver roared up from the inside and slotted himself in the space. My amygdala was triggered into "Stupid little shit", pulse rate up, adrenaline flowing. Pathetic but true. Biologically this little jerk had invaded my territory and disrespected me all in one go. In reality he had cut in front of me causing no real harm. My prefrontal lobes said "don't be so dumb, Julian". The question was, who was going to win? I am really working on equanimity; calmness of mind. I absolutely don't want my mind full of destructive negative thoughts. This allowed the prefrontal lobes to win and as a consequence I actually felt good about the incident. The young man in practice, was doing me a favour. This constant awareness, self-observation turns dozens of little daily events into learning opportunities, the way you handle them can slowly change you.
2. *Calmness* is the next precondition. You are not going to change if your mind is already full up, rattling away on lots of stuff. If the glass is already full you aren't going to be able to add to it. As mentioned before the mind is a machine that loves to do stuff, be operational. If it's operating all the time on the wrong things, no change is possible. You need to calm the mind to settle it. Meditation is good. There are lots of books on meditation – pick one up and try it. Two things can happen. Stuff that was bothering you, filling your mind, can become less relevant and take up less space, and issues that seemed difficult even impossible to resolve somehow become resolvable. My wife Misako meditates regularly every morning; she calls it her golden time. I use the time just before getting up to observe my mind at play, sometimes calm it, sometimes just watch it. This helps me frame the coming day positively.
3. *Have no fear* is the next precondition. We are biologically predisposed to being alert to danger; in the real jungle this keeps us alive. In the conceptual modern jungle this fear predisposition is triggered way too often. It can be triggered by a boss walking past your desk without saying good morning (he just had an argument with his wife). It can be triggered by not wearing the right sneakers (they are nothing like as important as you think). It can be triggered by watching the news or reading the newspapers (seven out of ten stories are fear creating and designed to trigger your fear response – if it bleeds it leads). Fear can be triggered by a real-life event like a friend being killed in a car wreck (the odds are still very low). It can be triggered by Osama Bin Laden, who simultaneously affronts the USA alpha hegemon status and kills over 3000 of *"us"*. The West's response to this was biologically honest but has ultimately caused endless grief to the West and the rest of the world. Revenge and dominance is a two-edged sword.

   I was in the USA soon after 9/11 and I was having a great conversation with a big black Muslim cab driver from the Sudan; I reached the point where I felt it was alright to ask him what he thought of Osama Bin Laden. He gave a deep laugh and said, 'I hate the man but he has already won'. I asked him what he meant and he said Osama's victory was to capture our minds. The cabbie was right. After 9/11, several of my American friends refused to travel for months. Their minds had been captured by unreasonable fear. Yes, 9/11 did happen but it should not drive the way we think and live.

   A more personal example is the emotional dynamics of my e-commerce furniture business start-up. As with all start-ups, it's an emotional roller

coaster and it has looked as if it may go bust a couple of times. On the face of it, the worry should be giving me ulcers and sleepless nights but as I coach myself to work through what an actual bankruptcy would mean to my life, I have seen my anxiety is more about ego, status and embarrassment – "I am a high level management consultant – what will people say" – than I care to admit. The reality is that liquidating the business can be carried out with too much grief to anyone. And that's what's important, not my ego; not all new business ideas work and that's okay. Try again.

When I feel fearful, I ask myself if my fears are justified, they are nearly always unjustified. They are biologically real but I refuse to be ruled by them. I analyse what is the worst reality that this situation could produce? Often it's not much nor very likely.

We need to walk towards our fears not react to them. When our mind is fearful we become survival self-centred. I am paranoid, I refuse to be unreasonably frightened, I will not allow my mind to be filled with fear. Fear closes down the size of the box you live in traps you in a small dark corner. I want to live in an expanding, light filled – not shrinking – box.

4. The last precondition is to be able to *critique your **fast** felt truths* that you have been encultured/loaded with. There are many we could talk about – I have already overdone extreme rational economics, but I would like to reflect on just two that impact nearly all of us. Extreme competitive individualism and extreme consumerism. Both need to be tempered.

Extreme competitive individualism

As you would now expect, this *felt truth* has pros and cons that I argue need balancing. We are individuals with individual bodies – we think, we have our own thoughts. There is no getting away with the fact of individuality or competition (it's built into our DNA – we need to express our individual position in the hierarchy).

On the other hand, we were born of another person and completely dependent on that person. We learn language through our interaction with others. We live in groups and are totally dependent on these groups. We go mad in isolation. It is a form of extreme punishment. We go to the supermarket and

buy a packet of cornflakes that has arrived in our hand only because of the cooperation of thousands of people. We have inherited an intellectual and physical endowment that makes our lives possible. So we are both individual and communal. As individuals, we work hard, compete hard and improve our lives and capabilities. There can't be much wrong with that you say. Absolutely, but there are pros and cons.

The pros of extreme competitive individualism

The felt truth of extreme competitive individuality is very powerful, and useful. It:

- Satisfies the need to define your status and identity.
- Validates and legitimises merit based leadership.
- Drives ongoing personal improvement; sport is a good place to see this. Without competition, no records would be broken. Little progress would be achieved.
- Creates a sense of personal responsibility for outcomes.
- Promotes high level of energy it promotes ambition.
- It allows alpha expression in arenas that are constructive like business, rather than destructive arenas like war.

On the other hand, extreme competitive individualism needs some constraint as it tends towards an approach to life that is short term and *"me"* focussed, as against long-term and *"us"* focussed.

- All sports have rules of restraint. Even in extreme combat sports there are rules to limit injury. Business sports also need limits. Without alpha constraint, you can end up with "wolf of wall street" behaviour or Tour de France cheating. Individual success can become so important that it leads to cheating, crime, moral corruption, fixing the rules.
- Competition requires you keep score. Keeping score, in part, leads to salaries that are 400 times that of the ordinary person, and $50,000 dollar watches.
- High performing alphas mindset can be influenced by their success. High performers, in a very limited field, say business, can come to think they

are better human beings, than everyone else. This idea of superiority is confirmed daily by fawning assistants and the status symbols, wealth and practices of high office. (I have been there – it's great. I have multimillion dollar friends that think their extraordinary financial success defines them as better than everyone else. I don't think so.)

- High performing alphas can become isolated in a clique and out of touch with the daily lives needs and aspirations of ordinary people. As with the war on women example they can come to believe that the poor are poor because they are dumb, lazy, dependent and won't get off their butts and work. The behaviour is real but viewed from the long-term and *"us"* it's the social system that produces this behaviour.

Finally, alphas, the masters of competitive individualism, can genuinely believe support and spread *felt truths* that support their privilege without realising how exploitative they are. I have a billionaire friend who moved to the UK to minimise taxes. He will argue very convincingly that rational economics is the only way to run a country. He just doesn't see self-interest. This is inadvertent exploitation, just like the alphas in the Middle Ages prior to the Enlightenment they believed their own self-supporting stories. So in conclusion; we need a strong sense of competitive individuality *and* it needs to be moderated to reduce its negative effects on the alpha mind and the community as a whole.

I am, because we are, is a useful idea to keep in mind.

Extreme consumerism

Consumerism is where we enjoy the things that our advanced economies can produce. On examination extreme consumerism also has pros and cons that need to be balanced. In this case, consumerism can be balanced by self-knowledge and laughter at how advertising leverages our DNA predispositions to status, belonging and expectations of fairness.

The pros of consumerism

On the plus side, consumerism started out with things that made life a lot easier. Washing powder and dishwashing liquid genuinely made things cleaner. We could buy fridges that kept food longer so we did not have to keep going to

the shops. We got cars that allowed us to travel to places we would never have been without cars. All this was fantastically useful. Advertising mainly concentrated on improved utility of products. Proctor and Gamble brands were built on this idea of improved features and benefits. More recently we have been able to buy useful electronic gear like mobile phones and laptops. No argument these things make life much more easy, even fun.

Now some cons

Now branding has moved from utility – the usefulness of the product – towards social positioning in terms of status and belonging. All consumer markets are segmented into value: mass market – premium – super premium. The premium message is that I am a better person if I have XYZ, I belong if I have XYZ, you deserve XYZ. Furthermore, I am better than you if you don't consume XYZ. Even more amazing, I am of less value as a person if I don't consume XYZ; I don't belong, I don't have status. We are becoming identified by the products we consume, not by our character. Not consuming in the appropriate branded way leads to feelings of humiliation. Humiliation corrodes the human spirit.

Brands become a false, synthetic identity.

I remember I was staying with friends in California, Mary and Alex. It happened that Mary's car, a BMW, had broken down and needed to be in the shop for two days. I had rented a Toyota and could easily get around for a couple of days without it, so I offered to lend it to her while her BMW was in the shop. No way; she quite straightforwardly said, 'I am not going to be seen driving a Toyota'. She rented a Mercedes instead. (DNA in action – I am a high-status alpha and belong to that group.)

A couple of thoughts went through my mind. Wow. Mary doesn't have a strong enough sense of herself, and her own value, to drive a Toyota and be damned what anyone else thinks, even though she is a capable professional and a wonderful, generous, loving mother. Also, I knew that Alex and Mary were both struggling with a lot of credit card debt. I knew this because I watched them do a quick family cash flow statement at least once a week. So they were working to pay off their possessions. They were in effect possessed by their possessions – possessed by their need to be seen to be consuming at least at the same level of branding as their community. Today, in the era of

Facebook and Instagram and a dozen other platforms, this dynamic is even more powerful as people are under constant "social surveillance" to conform to meet the markers of success and belonging. If not, the dreadful expression of "loser" comes into play.

This consumer branding has become laughable – think about shoes. Sports shoe manufactures found that they could sell a pair of shoes with a Chinese manufacturing cost of about $10 –$15 for $100+ if they paid a small fortune to an elite alpha athlete to endorsed the product (again a DNA predisposition – ride on the coat-tails of the powerful alpha). Taking the shoes example even further, we used to be able to live with two maybe three different types of sports shoe. Now we have "a shoe for all occasions". Today we have even got to the point of buying the non-shoe running shoe. Just a slim expensive sole.

The treadmill of branding is endless; the advertising industry spends hundreds of billions of dollars a year pushing our DNA buttons to buy the next new thing. This keeps most of us in the rate race…

A rat race that limits the choices available to "how you live your life". Why do we succumb to this manipulation? Because we don't have an understanding of how our brain works and how we are being manipulated. Once you get this you can laugh at yourself and have broader choices. It might be that I buy that new car but at least I know I am being dumb and manipulated and buy it without debt.

In summary, extreme consumerism is pretty damn wonderful; it's great to have new toys and be part of the tribe, even to be the alpha. But it has some unattractive spinoffs.

It leads to:

- people being valued in terms of their consumption not their character.
- thinking I am better than you.
- thinking I am not worth/valued as much as you (humiliation, extraordinarily destructive).
- being possessed by your possessions.
- excessive debt.
- having to work in jobs or for bosses you don't like.
- globally unsustainable resource depletion.

This is quite a list, yet we keep on buying for good DNA reasons. We would not like government to regulate against these problems, so it is up to us to moderate ourselves. The first step is to recognise how our DNA predispositions are being used against us. How this limits our life choices. From this point, we can then moderate our consumerism and expand our life choices with a good dose of humility and laughter. Consume, but consume less *and* laugh at yourself.

Aims

Having addressed the four preconditions, we can start working on aims. As I said before, these are my aims – yours will be different. You will have to spend time working out your own aims. The tombstone/eulogy test is a useful technique to use.

"*What would you like to be said and thought at your funeral, and who would you like to attend."*

I have broken down my aims into personal aims and relationship aims.

My current personal aims: optimism, gratitude, equanimity and an acceptance of the ups and downs of life (note I have been working on this for about five years so my original aims have changed over time, as I get better at some things and so have time to focus on new things).

Optimism. With conscious effort I find I can reframe most situations to find the positive by seeing events as just that – events. The trick is to not see the difficult event as personal or pervasive; instead of seeing myself as a victim of the event I look for ways I can learn from it (Martin Seligman). I strive to *create my own positive reality.* This is a bit tricky and sounds like magic but it isn't. I have found that if I practice my aims, then my daily reality changes for the better. Let me give you an example. I was recently having coffee with my friend David and I had parked my car across the road from the café in a one-hour zone. We were having an intense conversation and I lost sense of the time. I looked up and, disaster, there was a parking meter man about to give me a ticket. I was exactly two minutes over the limit. As he started to write the ticket my red soldier amygdala response kicked in: "What a cretin; he must love doing that". The problem I had was that my soldier practice for the day was connectedness and love. I had looked in the mirror that morning and told myself to act only with love to everyone I met for the day.

My three soldiers were all in action: my red soldier was enraged; my blue soldier saying, 'Hey Julian today's word is love'; my white soldier was amused by the conflict, having a bit of a self-deprecating laugh at the problem of being human. I hadn't a clue what I was going to do next so I started walking over to the meter guy who was continuing to fill in the ticket; I reached him and without thinking said, 'Wow, it must be horrible having to do that all day'.

He looked at me for a full ten seconds, searching my face for authenticity or sarcasm. He decided I was authentic and replied, 'Yes this is the worst job that I have ever had; I hate it'. Then it was perfectly natural to ask him why he had to do it. It turned out that he had a sick wife and three young children and this was the only job he could get. I told him I understood and how much I admired him for taking on the work he had – that it was extraordinary. After that he told me his name was Vincent and we chatted about family stuff, swapping proud father stories. During the conversation he stopped: 'Look mate, I would love to tear up this ticket but they check the sequences back at the office'. I told him not to worry as it was my fault not his and it didn't matter.

By this time, my red soldier had calmed down; I was getting a good dose of endorphins and I was feeling good. I liked Vincent and felt a connection to him; when I was about to leave, he leaned in a little closer, looked around, flashed a smile that lit up his eyes and said, 'I feel so bad giving you a ticket but I tell you what, I have your license number and you can park here from now on as long as you like. No worries'. I laughed and said I would take him up on it. We shook hands and as I climbed into the car holding a $128 ticket I felt great – what a strange world, I thought.

Practising mind management had worked. Furthermore, the more practise the more it was restructuring my brain. The brain loves pleasure; it loves laughter. It's safe to assume I was not only reinforcing happy human connections but also synaptic connections. Remember how I explained how the brain worked as a habit-forming machine? Well, the brain will seek a way to get the same connections again.

Love – the verb – was letting me create a better reality.

Had I gone across the road with my red soldier blazing, what would have happened? I would have been in *fear, fight* or *freeze* mode; in that particular case it is more likely I'd have chosen freeze and stood icily beside him as he filled out the ticket. In all probability, I'd have then snatched the ticket from his hand and driven off with a brain marinated in cortisol and adrenaline. It's important to remember that a particular brain state can take an hour to wash through; and longer if you keep going over in your head the reason for it being in that state in the first place.

It's also important to remember that the red soldier brain state also likes habitual repetition and would do the same thing again and again in similar circumstances.

On the other hand, Vincent would also have had a different reality. Feeling my suppressed anger and my will to dominate, he'd have thought I was a perked-up little jerk. Given his position, he would have probably submitted to my anger, triggering his own red soldier. The next ten tickets he wrote out would have given him a perverse pleasure and that night he'd have been able to tell his sick wife what a bunch of pricks the public were. Sympathetically she would have agreed, sharing his anger.

I have just given you an example of two very different realities. We have the power to choose the one we want once we know the game. My mind enjoys this positive reality; it gives me connectedness; I practice it relentlessly in most of my daily encounters.

Other times I am just plain lazy and treat people as objects that are there to be of service me. Payment terminates the relationship.

Gratitude is to me a prime source of happiness; I can't see how I can be happy without it. There are so many things to be grateful for if we open our eyes to what's going on around us. Think of just a few things – a sunset, a child's laughter, a good day's work, friendship, six green traffic lights in succession, a supermarket, a lovely parking meter person – and as you can see, endless possibilities.

My next aim is ***equanimity*****.** I want to live a reasonably calm existence. I don't want to be whipsawed by my emotions, either good or bad – too much sadness, too much joy. I value being in a reasonable state of calmness even

though the world around me can swirl with turbulent and random events. However, I have learnt that most events even difficult ones can be reframed into a positive light. Take global warming for instance; it can be seen as a disaster or a wonderful opportunity – a disaster if it leads to war and starvation, an opportunity if it leads to global governance that makes war much less likely.

Last, I want to ***manage the ups and downs of life*.** The world is not designed for our ongoing benefit; we will experience ups and downs in health, relationships and finances – even random disasters. To believe we can avoid or insure against this is an illusionary and empty felt truth. I'm hoping to live another 25 years and I expect at least one, maybe two, major financial crises and maybe a war in this period, of which the timing is unknowable. If we accept these things as probabilities, then we come to an initially counterintuitive understanding. It is during the up periods in our lives when we learn least – indeed, as I explained in Section Two, trying to maintain a high is the behaviour of an addict. On the other hand, it's when things are difficult – divorce, bankruptcy, even the untimely death of a loved one – that we learn the most. It's our despair that forces us to reconsider the purpose of life, to rebuild and to re-engage. Most difficulties can be reframed to form the basis of personal development.

Now to the aims that are more about connection relationships – I am looking to be more connected to people, more engaged with life, more generous, more forgiving. I am working towards a life of loving connectedness**.** As I indicated in my introduction, loving connectedness is a special challenge for me. When I was younger, I was too individualistic – too self-centred. I now take connection very seriously but I have to learn how to do it. My view is that individualism is an over-done *felt truth*. The concept of the individual succeeding separately from society, without the context of that society doesn't make sense; we only exist in our connectedness with others we live in and are part of the body of society.

I have come to the understanding that individualism *and* connectedness are both represented in our DNA predispositions. The individuality predisposition is expressed though competitive hierarchy and the connectedness cooperative predisposition is expressed in our need to belong to a family or other small groups. In biological terms, this sets up a tension between the two predispositions.

The issue then is finding a balance between them; personally, I need to work towards being a more connected individual. St Paul is a great help.

Engagement is another mental state I practice. As people get older there is a common *felt truth* that they should take it easy and retire. The idea that it was okay for my family to look after me for the first twenty years of my life, that it was okay for somebody else to do the same for to last twenty years has never made sense to me. Why should I be entitled to freeload for forty of my seventy or so years? Being active in a number of projects keeps me alive.

I also feel that if I am not engaged with life in some meaningful way then I will rapidly run downhill and die badly and early. My solution is to have a number of projects going at the same time, such as writing this book, starting up a retail furniture business (may or may not work but still a way of engaging), investing in financial services in China and running a management consulting business. Yes, I know it's possibly a bit over the top and I can't do everything as well as I should, but it does keep me engaged with life. Even when some of the activities present real problems, I accept problems as part of being alive and kicking. No problems, no life.

Forgiveness isn't always easy when people do bad things to you. I had a trusted employee steal just under one million dollars from me but I decided it would have been self-destructive to let this theft and destruction of trust fill my mind. It takes two to tango, so I spent some time reflecting on how I had contributed to the problem by not supervising her closely enough. Forgiveness came more easily when I took responsibility. In fact, it went away as an issue once I recognised that I did not want revenge filling my mind space.

Generosity – I try to make a habit of opening my wallet without keeping record. My *felt truth* is that money should circulate. But generosity is about more than money; when you're forgiving and gentle to people, you show generosity of spirit. Generosity is a quality a bit like unselfishness – you are happy to help others and give more than is expected. I try to give people my time and money without expecting anything in return or defining what the gift should be used for.

I would like to share with you an example of how these preconditions and aims operate together to form a whole, a cluster, it is the story of how I was

able to deal positively with a potentially difficult health condition simply through better mind management.

A few years ago, I was flying back to Australia after working on an assignment in Canada – a 14-hour flight and a seven-hour time difference. The day I arrived home, a Saturday, I went bushwalking with my family. At the end of this walk is a very steep hill climb back out of a deep valley – a climb that had never been a problem for me before. But that day it exhausted me and I had to stop every five paces as if I was in the Himalayas; my heart was beating fast and erratically. I eventually had to ask my daughter, to carry my backpack (so much for male ego). When I finally reached the top my breathing and heart rate settled a bit and I calmed the family down by telling them it was just jet lag. It wasn't.

By Tuesday my heart rate had not returned to its normal 55bpm, and after a bit of Googling I decided it was serious so, without telling anyone, I went to the emergency room at the nearest hospital. The triage nurse was visibly anxious and asked why I hadn't come in earlier. I jokingly said 'I'm a guy what do you expect?' After an ECG, I was quickly diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (AF) which is a problem with the heart's electronics causing the top chambers of the heart to flutter and not pump much blood; instead, the blood pools and can clot. The clots then enter the blood stream and when they get to the brain can cause a stroke. The potential for clotting and stoke is time-related and after about two days you are at serious risk, thus the panic. I was immediately given a clexane injection in the stomach to stop the clotting and then sent off for x-rays and CAT scans to see if any clots had already formed; I sensed the doctors thought this a real possibility. The treatment for AF is to reset the heart's electronics by rebooting it with a substantial electric shock – 150 joules. Unfortunately, rebooting can dislodge an already formed clot which will go straight to the brain. Not good.

No clots were found and I was taken into resuscitation (not an encouraging name), told I would be given a general anaesthetic and then rebooted and I should be fine. During all this I was working on equanimity, connectedness and gratitude. I had made a point of making a connection with each of the nurses and doctors I encountered – something that turned out to be easy as most of them were from England so we could compare notes and indulge in some small talk. This kept me calm, perhaps them as well. I was determined

not to let my natural fearfulness invade my mind. I joked with the nurses and played with the heart rate monitor discovering I could change my heart rate by about 20bpm at will which impressed the nurses.

I woke up with a 54bpm rhythm and, other than feeling as if I'd been hit by a truck, I was okay. Misako, who was not very happy about only being informed *after* the event, came and collected me and I went home with thirty clexane injections to self-administer twice a day to break down any rogue clots.

Before I left the hospital, I made a point of thanking each of the doctors and nurses who had treated me and expressed my gratitude that they were there that day, fully-trained and equipped to treat me. You can't but help acknowledge that having all that medical sophistication available when you need it is a miracle; not only that, in Australia it's totally free of charge.

But life had changed; from being a physically confident person I now had to confront a real health problem – that physical fragility was a possibility. What should I do about it? First, I Googled more information and found an outstanding cardiac specialist. I wanted to know what caused AF, how to manage it and crucially, would it happen again? The cause is not well understood; it's a combination of age and a mix of other things such as alcohol, caffeine, MSG, and, in my case due to the amount of international travel I do, time zone changes which disrupts the body's circadian rhythm. AF is not dangerous as long as you take a blood thinner – the same chemical used to kill rats – not good stuff but it does stop clots. I did not like this idea and so I decided not to take it.

I started to have AF events about every three months during which time I worked out how to manage it; I cut out caffeine, alcohol and maintained my exercise routine. When flying to North America I usually broke my journey in Hawaii. The AF still happens now and again but I don't let it impact my mind or life.

Once I had an AF event shortly after arriving in Canada. I had arrived on a Friday and had agreed to meet with my client the next morning for a project update. After breakfast I decided to walk up the stairs to my room – not a good decision as it turned out – halfway up I tripped into AF. Okay – now what? I knew that if I went to hospital I wouldn't be rebooted until four hours

after eating (throwing up in resuscitation is not ideal) and that would take me till at least midday. I also knew that I'd be alright for clots for two days. So, the answer was to attend the briefing until noon and then get my client to drop me off at the emergency centre. On arrival at the office I told Kim, my client, that I was having a heart problem and could we cut the day short so he could drive me to the hospital emergency at midday. He was a bit taken aback but he knew me well and said that would be fine. He offered to wait until I was ready to leave but I said I'd be okay and would catch a taxi.

The processes and anaesthesia were a little different in Canada; you didn't go to the resuscitation ward for the procedure, it was done in your emergency bed and the anaesthetic they use was ketamine, which would have made me woozy for days after. So we chatted had a laugh and I persuaded them to use propanol, the anaesthetic I had in Australia. Nor did they use clexane, assuring me it was not needed as the event was only a few hours old.

Again, I consciously worked on optimism, calming, no fear, equanimity, connectedness and gratitude. I joked with the medical staff debating the strength of the charge they'd use and whether to put the pads both on the front of my chest or front and back. They won. It all worked out well and I caught a cab back to the hotel had a good sleep. I woke at 5pm and in spite of the hit by a truck feeling, made a purposeful decision to walk to the nearby golf driving range to hit some balls.

I had noticed that after rebooting I suffered minor depression; the general anaesthetic and the reboot were obviously not good for my dopamine levels. Recognising the need to make sure it did not become a full-blown depression, I had previously laid out a plan. I would be gentle on myself for two days after reboot and then return religiously to my normal exercise and work routines – normal habits, normal exercise, normal eating and practicing a gratitude mind state. Exercise was the most challenging of my usual routines because I was afraid of triggering another AF event. I decided to push the boundaries and return more quickly to my vigorous exercise routine and if it triggered an event, so be it – I would get rebooted; if I backed off I would never know. So, in spite of my fear, I increased my reps and luckily all was well.

Over the past three years I have had ten reboots (only one in the last year) and by reframing the way I think about AF, I have turned it into a positive. I see

it as a message to take more care of myself; I have lost weight, increased my exercise regime and become more conscious of my diet and mind state. My health has actually improved due to my response to AF. This is directly due to an understanding of who is in control of *my brain*.

Let's have a look at an alternative response to AF: I have the first event, take the blood thinner and follow the doctor's advice to take it easy and reduce my exercise level. The blood thinner requires weekly blood tests; in my case the tests would indicate too high cholesterol levels and then the doctor would prescribe a cholesterol lowering drug, which in turn may have led to multiple side effects, including a counter reaction with the blood thinner. By placing myself in the hands of the sensibly risk adverse medical profession, I enter a medical doom loop. I lose confidence in my physical abilities and become mildly depressed. I may then be prescribed anti-depressants; I try a few with various side effects. I've become a person defined by illness. My dopamine circuits are now on life support – they don't know how to work naturally. My mind would have been captured; I would have lost control of it.

This is not a fantasy; I have witnessed it. Several of my friends have become their illnesses. Realistically, this is a possibility for me too. I have no idea if or when a random black bullet may arrive but I shall be prepared to address it as well as I can.

Observing your felt truths

Monitoring the *felt truth* and habit-repeating brain is more difficult because, almost by definition, *felt truths* and even habits tend to be hidden from us.

With this in mind the things I watch for and question are:

- What beliefs am I operating with and are they useful? I am now very flexible. One of my current mantras is "can we see this from a different perspective?"
- Do I actively search out opinions or felt truths which are the opposite of my own? Always a great source of insight.
- Do I immerse myself in different cultures and observe their solutions to "living a good life" as against my own? Praying five times a day seems to be a very good habit (but I can't do it yet).

- Do I look at my day and see how habit infused and horribly repetitive it is?
- Do I work to change habits of thought and action that are not useful?
- Do I consciously listen harder when I hear somebody in the media taking a position that I instantly (**fast**) disagree with?

These questions are all tough, especially as we are in some ways immune to change unless we make inquisitiveness a habit and change a habit in itself. I am getting better at it. I feel challenging my *felt truths* is getting much easier.

Self-monitoring and self-questioning initially takes cognitive load, and you have to make an effort to do it. Over time it does become easier because you develop a positive feedback loop. Change creates an endorphin burst which then encourages more change and re-alignment. When it gets to this point, re-sculpting yourself becomes enjoyable.

Now to the important activity of day-by-day practices in the next chapter.



Chapter 10

Daily sculpting of the character you want to build



Chapter 10

Daily sculpting of the character you want to build

The process that I am going to share with you comes from the premise that we, as individuals, and the societies that we live in, are a work in progress. Cultural and religious truths are both very important because they have stood the test of time AND can also be limiting and block progress.

As I discussed earlier, the 1000 years between AD300 and AD1300 were pretty limited in societal, social and economic development. The reason for the lack of development during this period was because it was imbued with fixed *felt truths* that supported the alpha religious and aristocratic class. Once those truths were contested we entered into a truth-seeking process (TSP). The TSP is about trying new ideas and if they work we keep them; if they don't we modify them or get rid of them. A quicker version of the washing machine of time.

Take recent politics in Australia for instance; when the left-biased Labour party was periodically in power over the past forty or so years, it introduced a number of progressive ideas such as higher minimum wages, pensions for single mothers, universal free medical care, free university education and multiple labour laws to protect the workforce from overly aggressive managements. More recently, it introduced a hugely expensive disability management and payment program aimed at improving the lives and contribution of the disabled. Such costly initiatives blow the budget and not everyone agrees with them. So, in the next political cycle, the conservative right-biased Liberal party wins the election. The conservatives go about balancing the budget and in so doing, reshape some of the initiatives of the Labour party, keeping what works and eliminating what doesn't.

This winnowing process of try it, keep it if it's good, get rid of it if it's not, is the basis of progress. It is something that has been going on for thousands of years; it's how our *cultures* were developed. The difference today is that the process is accelerating, becoming global and the scope of TSPs has expanded to include fully functioning democracy, commerce, science and the law.

TSPs should also happen at the individual level; we have different ways of thinking, depending on the era into which we were born e.g. Baby Boomers, Gen Y, Gen X, the millennials and so on. The practices that I am going to share with you are a personal TSP. Your development is never complete and there is no end-game; these processes are a way of observing, questioning, acting and reflecting that allow you to sculpt yourself as you go. This is an intentional, active, persistent process. The brain doesn't like to change but it will with pleasurable practice.

Every interaction you have during the day – at work, at the supermarket, with the family, or just hanging out – is an opportunity to sculpt. This is not new. All religions – Christian, Muslim, Judaism, Buddhism – have a sculpting process embedded in them; regular prayer, meditation, confession, reflection on holy scripture or sermons are all a sculpting process. Where the process differs with religions is they have particular sets of values and are relatively slow to changing felt truths (e.g. gay marriage, abortion, infallibility, forms of punishment, permitted foods, specific dress codes). They are also potentially infused with the self-interest of the alpha clergy.

The advantage formal religions have is thousands of years of the washing machine of time, and a community of practitioners who act as carriers to support each other's self-sculpting. This is the reason I now, with great enthusiasm but some intellectual discomfort, go to a Sunday service. (I still haven't managed to overcome my reluctance to read the lesson. I feel a little inauthentic but that's okay, I'll get over it soon, and be happy to read the lesson.)

Building one's own character is a project that has lost energy in the world of "look at me" consumerism. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram's falsely perfect personality projections only help create illusions and absorb head space which could be more usefully applied to something else. Fake cyber images also block the human need to connect properly with another – connecting with a falsehood is not possible. The idea of oneself as a "brand" is very dangerous. Personal engagement in a well-aimed process of character development is much more likely to engender connection and happiness.

I would like to outline my approach to character building. As I shared with you earlier, I have modified lists on my bathroom mirror – St Paul's list the verbs of love and my own new three-component list on the right they to some extent overlap but that's OK.

My list is a result of my own starting point and a synthesis of my understanding of our DNA positive and negative predispositions, our emotional rational conscious brain (our three soldiers), our bias to holding on to habits of thought (our felt truths) and habits of action.

It's worth noting that the list changes over time as you change and see a need for a different emphasis – it's a work in progress. Each morning I read over both lists and select a practice for the day. If my pick is "connectedness" I make myself conscious of this throughout the day and view most of my interactions through this lens as they happen. This could include:

- A visit to the supermarket.
- Phone calls.
- A business meeting.
- What I am reading.
- How I see the media.
- Even a visit to the dentist.

Let me give you a week's sample of how this works.

Monday the verb is "*patient*". Today, one of the people who works for me does a cash flow analysis and even though I have taught him several times how important accuracy is, he has still made some glaring errors that I pick up instantly (I am very good at this stuff). My amygdala is triggered, we are in a tight situation and I am anxious to have accurate numbers. So what does the prefrontal lobe say? 'Julian, Brian is young, new to the job, totally dedicated to doing his best. He isn't doing this on purpose or because he is dumb, or lazy – he worked till eight last night. Guess what? The cause of this is your deficient direction; you think he is as familiar with this stuff as you are.'

So, what do I do? I laugh and tell him how pissed off I am, not at him but at myself. I recognise how hard he has tried to get this right. It's my own fault so I show him again how to do it, this time much more slowly. He is a bit taken aback but the relationship is preserved and learning is taking place, both ways. I feel good, so good that my brain will want to do this again.

Tuesday the verb is *"kind*"; Barbara an ex-employee has got herself into all kinds of trouble. She is a fantastic sales person but like many top sales

people she can be unstable, up and down. She has resigned from her job, "not treated fairly", is on valium, has no money for rent, and is about to lose her apartment. My red soldier says it's her own fault – it will teach her a lesson; she had resigned from me unexpectedly as well, leaving me in a difficult situation. Blue soldier draws on my experience at the Wayside Chapel. Once people go off the rails and become homeless, they can quickly go into a disastrous doom loop. Homelessness leads to physical sickness, leads to mental sickness, leads to being unemployable, leads to isolation loss of language and sensible thought. Survival takes over. Once in this cluster it is hard to get out of it.

So again, what do I do? What's the white soldier answer? What would St Paul advise? I ended up giving her four weeks rent and making sure she got to the social services. I knew she had potential to bring herself around. She swore black and blue that she would repay me. I insisted that it was a gift. Rationally, I knew it would never be repaid. So it was more constructive to let her see it as a gift that a loan. Again, what happened to my feelings? In this case I didn't feel that good which required some reflection; I was a bit ambivalent and Misako certainly was. Nevertheless, on balance I thought (not felt) it was the best thing. It transpired that Barbara did get her act together and is now doing well.

Wednesday the lesson is: *don't boast or think highly of one's self*. Well as it happens, that day I win a very good consulting assignment. David, who has been working with me, did all the proposal presentation and fact-finding work. The proposal was very good; very few people could have come up with the approach that I arrived at. Time for self-congratulation says the emotional mind. No says the rational mind. Without David's input, you, Julian, couldn't have put together the ideas or the proposal. It needed both of us. White soldier solution? Go to David and have a celebration together making it quite clear that this was absolutely a joint success – a minor victory for the brightest guy in the room.

Thursday the lesson is "*don't take offence*". As I often do, I am writing in MacDonald's, another regular, a guy weighing about 150 kilos, has noticed that unlike himself who often buys two meals, I only buy coffee, never a meal. As he walks past he makes some comment about me having short arms and deep pockets, this is Australian for "you are mean". Red soldier says,

"Fat slob, he needs to control his eating habits too, he is personally out of control"; blue soldier says hold on Julian, this guy has some way or other destroyed his normal metabolic processes and is stuck in habit doom loop. He will die soon if he doesn't get out of it. So again, what does the white soldier do? I brushed off the remark and determined that next time I saw him I would make connection with him. Later on in the week I went over to him asked how he was going? What had he planned for the week? We got chatting. I could tell he was a bit sheepish about his earlier comments. He now watches my computer for me when I take a bathroom break.

Thursday the word is *"equanimity, calmness"*. I do some quick shopping at the supermarket. I have six big bottles of mineral water and the checkout lady (who is super grumpy) refuses to check them unless I lift them one by one across the scanner and put them in my own bag. She says that lifting them (about one foot) would hurt her back. I jack up, amygdala blazing. This is absurd, it's her job not mine. I grumpily comply and grumpily hand over my money. I walk out, pissed off, ignoring any potential blue soldier conversation that might have been available. I can't win them all – just have to laugh.

Friday the lesson is to take myself *"out of the centre and connect"* with people. I have to go to the Wayside to talk with Graham. When I get there, I see Herman, a visitor who comes to church who has literally fried his mind with all kinds of mind-altering drugs. I know he needs help, he has problems. However, Graham insists that as soon as you see that somebody as a problem, somebody to help or somebody to "solve", you have lost all opportunity for connection because you are the centre and your ego is in the way. So I go over to where he is sitting and ask if I could sit with him as I don't know anyone else there. He nods and then we start talking. While he is talking, I actively avoid talking about myself; I see he has the most beautiful eyes. His spirit is still alive and well within his destroyed body. What a gift to be with him. We are now brothers, brothers from different planets, but still brothers, that's how I feel. I look forward to seeing this wonderful but life-damaged person on Sundays. The following Sunday he comes over to hold my hand. Previously he was like a startled animal and would avoid me. How good is that?

Saturday the verb is *"gratitude"*. Once you get the habit of this, it's easy – there is so much to be thankful for. Gratitude is my antidote to consumerism.

On our daily bushwalks I make a conscious effort to pay attention to the tiny Australian native flowers can be small but exquisite. They are awesome. But they are only beautiful if you give them your attention. If you do you can't help but to be grateful for their gift. A tiny flower brightens up my day.

If you shift your mind to gratitude, not rights and entitlements, you can enjoy the wonderful cooperation that we give each other in our day to day interactions and work. Without this cooperation, we would each one of us be in a world of strife; Nothing, literally nothing, would work. The arrogance of pure competitive individualism annoys me. I was once flying across the States and started to reflect to my neighbour, poor guy, how wonderful it was that we could get to New York Just when we wanted to; that this was only possible because thousands of people had got up early to make it happen and to make our lives easier. He grunted a bit in some agreement and then said, 'Yeah, but I paid for my ticket', a real gratitude buster. Good luck. I feel so much better being grateful than feeling entitled. Entitlement often leads to grumpiness, gratitude leads to happiness and connection.

Sunday the practice is "*don't be fearful*". Well, after church I happen to go shopping in a Muslim neighbourhood. We have just had a whole load of media around Muslim terrorists in Iraqi coming back to Sydney to blow us up. So I decide to test my fear. A Muslim family, mother, father and late teenage brother and sister are sitting in a coffee shop. I go over to them and say would they mind if we talked, I am confused about Islam. They are a bit surprised but happily say yes, join us, the father wants to buy me coffee; yes, please. The whole family wants to engage with me. They tell me that the extremists are the worst thing for them, that they totally disagree with what is happening, it isn't their idea of Islam. I have studied a bit of Islam and say I understand, but what is going on? They are as confused as me. Frankly, they come up with some weird viewpoints. That's okay; why would any of us understand such craziness. Even without any conclusion, we all felt better after a respectful conversation. Nothing was solved but goodwill was created; my amygdala would be less triggered and my rationality would have a bit more evidence to work with.

You can see that life regularly throws up opportunities for practice and practices are not isolated, they tend to interact to form a cluster. Practicing is especially pertinent when I do things or travel to places that are not part of

my usual routine. It is also very useful when preparing for a meeting that I already know has potential to trigger my red soldier. I pre-frame the meeting with optimism and gratitude and seriously work on not being the centre, the brightest guy in the room. This results in much better meetings.

To pull this all together, I will give you a recent example of how I handled the discovery that one of my young employees was stealing from me; by charging fake furniture refunds for clients to his own credit card he stole around $8000. He is 23 years old and surprisingly bright but addicted to gambling. I had three possible courses of actions:

1. Fire him and not press charges, let it go.
2. Fire him and press charges.
3. Give him the chance to ask forgiveness, recompense me and change his life. NB. I can't tell him how to do this; it's his issue and I am powerless.

I was now in the position of having a major influence on this young man's life. The choice I took would change his own choices, possibly for the rest of his life. I reread St Paul's letter to the Corinthians and reviewed my red soldier DNA-responses about belonging and trust in a small group – how well I had previously treated him; I had a strong need to negative stereotype him. I needed to balance my emotions with my practices (especially St Paul) and the specific pros and cons of each course of action.

The first option, to let it go through to the keeper, was really a no go; pretty gutless I thought. I would be setting him up for future failure and setting up someone else for future theft, which might be even bigger the next time. The second option was interesting because in Australia he would immediately get access to considerable professional mental help at no cost to himself. He would have also been under threat of prison if he at least didn't play along. However, he would have a criminal record for the rest of his life and may have been forced to associate with people who saw crime as a life choice.

The third option was to get him to:

- Ask forgiveness from the whole team.
- Make restitution (in theory).
- Make a list of the things he was going to stop doing e.g. gambling, borrowing money, socialising with some key bad influences.
- Make a list of the things he was going to start doing e.g. working out, going back to school.
- Keep a diary of his activities.
- Check in regularly with his progress.

This had the advantage of keeping him from a criminal record; it also had the disadvantage that he could just play me along without any real commitment to change. I went back and forth with my red, blue and white soldiers, ending up with St Paul. I knew what he would do. I went for the last option giving it a 20 per cent chance of success. (It worked out reasonably well after lots of ups and downs over the following six months.)

Although I'm not always successful in achieving my daily aim, I keep going; when I fail, I accept that I failed and laugh at myself knowing that it's a work in progress. As a way of keeping track of progress and regression, about once a month I score myself from one to ten on both my lists. On the whole I make some progress and allow myself some leeway when I don't. I discard and add aims as appropriate. I am now pretty good at preconditions and still appalling at making connections.

Another trick is to deliberately place myself out of comfort zone situations and then observe my own reactions. I spend a lot of time in China and visit Vietnam, Japan, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. I also talk regularly with Muslims and Jews. I find this makes me much more able to respect diversity, uncertainty and ambiguity. It helps me appreciate other people's view points and be aware that they have their own felt truths. Stepping outside my own felt truths allows me to see their and my own societal issues through a different lens.

In this whole area of practice and learning I have a secret weapon, Misako. We walk together in the bush nearly every day. During the walks, both of us will bring up tricky issues for discussion. We always use the three-soldier framework. Misako is way smarter than me. I know lots about stuff that has little value; she knows lots about things of value. So I have a great teacher. I can't imagine embarking on this journey without her help.

These daily walks are also great opportunities to embed and expand learning. If I have read a new and interesting book I will summarise it as we walk and she will make comments that enrich my understanding. This way learning takes place. I am certain that if I did not do this most of what I read I would not retain. I suspect that we need partners in this game. It's such a help.

Well that's the process. It may be helpful to understand the dynamics of what I think is happening to my mind. Once you get the three soldiers idea working, you are up and going and change starts to flow. One way to get the observer process happening is to ask yourself what would St Paul do in these circumstances whenever you are triggered or go into **fast**. Pull out the letter to the Corinthians and have think about it. It works.

Once you embark on this sculpting process it becomes apparent that nearly every interaction can become a learning opportunity. With persistence, pleasurable change starts to take place. The brain likes pleasure, so it will repeat what is pleasurable so it's important not to make this a battle. This is not about black or white, right or wrong progressive or conservative it's about AND, that's a huge release.

As I said before, having somebody to do this with is a great help. It is 100 per cent easier and quicker and more fun. My relationship with Misako is so much stronger because of our mutual sculpting. Finally, you will experience a lot less of some things and a lot more of others. You will experience less anxiety, less concern about brands and consumerism, less concern about individualistic winning less of a need to be in the centre. On the other hand, you will be more fulfilled, more in control of your life, abler to flow through the inevitable ups and downs of life. You will have more choices. Your children will benefit immeasurably.

Now to the last chapter which builds off Goldie Hawn's work at MindUP™. I suggest some ideas around how we can help create more fulfilled children.



Chapter 11

How to use these ideas with your children



Chapter 11

How to use these ideas with your children

After 9/11 large numbers of children in New York were suffering distress and anxiety could not sleep, showed signs of depression, didn't want to go to school and couldn't communicate their distress easily. Goldie Hawn, the famous comedienne and actor, responded to this. She set up a group of scholars and practitioners from fields of psychology, neurology, and education to see what could be done to help the children to come back.

Out of this work came a school based programme called MindUP™.

MindUP™ has some strong similarities and differences to *Who is in Control of Your Brain*. It has an emphasis on understanding how the brain works but has little discussion of DNA predispositions and the "baby with the bathwater problem". This way it appropriately avoids the difficult issue of religion.

The MindUP™ syllabus is readily available, grade by grade. And is built into the normal school day – it's usually not treated as a subject in itself but infuses the day.

It starts with an understanding of the brain. Covering the three evolutionary layers of the brain, Then the Reticular Activating System, the Amygdala, the prefrontal lobes and also the hippocampus where memory originates. It even goes into the dynamic interactions of each brain region explaining the role of neurotransmitters like serotonin, cortisol, adrenaline and dopamine. The role of the Amygdala is given special attention. The children are taught that once the Amygdala is triggered then memory and learning is not possible.

The children are even taught a way of showing when their triggering has taken place. Each child has a bottle of coloured water with tinsel in it. When triggered they grab the bottle shake it up and put it on their desk as a visual signal that they are upset and in a non-learning state and won't be able to learn until the tinsel has settled, their brain has settled.

This is incredible. Think about it. The teacher, the child and all other students are aware of the "upset" brain state of the child. This leads to "what was

the cause of this?" and then how to calm down so that learning can take place. All the children are learning the three soldiers process as it applies to themselves and to others. And the importance of self-calming and reflection. They are explicitly taught how to practice mini meditation and do it regularly as part of the school day. In this way, self-constructed fearfulness becomes more recognised.

Having taught the brain basics, the syllabus goes on to help the children become more mindful of themselves and their environment through mindful seeing, smelling, moving, hearing, tasting. These practices help the children to live and appreciate the present, beautiful real world. Hopefully a counter to the totally absorbing seductive cyber world.

The syllabus then moves on to what most people would agree were "good' mind states/behaviours. It covers a number of areas that I have been working on for myself. The idea of gratitude, optimism, kindness and understanding others perspectives i.e. different felt truths. All these activities are backed up with the keeping a daily journal to help in the process of self-reflection and therefore self-sculpting.

From my own perspective, the syllabus could be enriched if a few additional ideas were covered especially for the older children. Older children could be taught about the alpha predisposition to dominate, the need to have answers and the way we defend our answers with survival vigour. All ideas that would help them in the everyday world.

That said, MindUP™ is extraordinary. Think of it – the impact of MindUP™, not just on an individual, but also on a group of students that all understand and are together practicing mind management. Mary is likely to be aware of Julies stressed mind state. She will be impelled to question whether or not she played a role in upsetting Julie and why? She might be impelled to enter into respectful dialogue with Julie to see what can be done to realise a better relationship. Or she and Julie can work out its just Julies problem and her own responsibility to work it out. We are all laughingly a work in progress.

Self-knowledge and self-sculpting starts with the individual but think what could happen if everyone was taught these ideas, if a whole group of people are mutually, consciously practicing mindfulness, self-calming, kindness, gratitude, optimism, seeing other people's perspective. Suppose adults had

a common understanding of positive and negative DNA predispositions, our brain quirks, the idea of "felt truths".

This would lead to an understanding of our RIVER, where it is going.

This book has been about leadership, leadership of ourselves, which hopefully then reflects in how we run our politics.

The world could change for the better.

About the author



"Julian has always been different."

"Julian has always asked lots of questions – and he's often come up with some amazing answers – and then even more interesting questions!"

Perhaps it's some legacy of living in different cultures (UK, USA, Japan, Netherlands, Australia, Africa…). Perhaps it's a challenging life lived interestingly. Perhaps he was just born that way?

But whether labouring on the factory floor with the workers, or employed as a high flying international management consultant for McKinsey & Co, or contributing to international aid projects as a concerned individual, Julian somehow helps people see things about themselves and the world that sometimes surprise even Julian!

From the brutal harshness of a British boarding school, to the factories of middle America, to international management consultancy, to humanitarian aid worker to successful business entrepreneur, Julian Fairfield is very much a practical "doer" who also just happens to keep thinking about things!

Including what's right and what's wrong… he has always been guided by a sense of common justice, which he expressed even as a boy: "If it's not fair, and it's not right, then I'm just not doing it!"

Julian is just as happy working with his hands as well as his intellect – and he has plenty of experience doing both. His work and personal experiences have also exposed him to an enormous diversity of people from many different cultures and walks of life.

Whether he's talking to an audience of one or thousands, he makes you laugh while you're thinking… even about those big questions.

Throughout it all, he seems to have a knack of helping people surprise themselves and become aware of all that they – and everyone else, can be.

Now in his 60s, Julian can not only reflect upon a full life, but on what is possible for us all.

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