

A Conservative Manifesto

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Introduction: A profound crisis of meaning currently afflicts, destabilizes and demoralizes the sovereign citizens of the West and the social institutions upon which we depend. That crisis has increasingly spread to the remainder of the world's people, generating confusion and sowing distrust; producing a counterproductive discord in place of the peaceful, voluntary cooperation and competition that could instead reign over and unite us.

That crisis is in the first place the consequence of a corrosive doubt sowed not least by the careless intellect regarding the value of the principles of value, aim and action that have heretofore inspired, guided and stabilized us.

That crisis is in the second place the consequence of the historically unprecedented realization of our ignorance about the ultimate source, nature and reality of those principles, and our resultant inability to formulate and communicate a clear moral justification for their existence.

That crisis is in the third place the consequence of the presumptuous, premature, and finally narrowly self-serving insistence, arising from that doubt and ignorance, that nothing but the will to power—the willingness and desire to dominate and exploit—motivates all individual perceptions and actions and gives rise to and maintains all social institutions.

That crisis is, finally, use of the frustration and resentment that necessarily arises when doubt, ignorance and intellectual pride combine to demonize, divide and exploit; to insist upon an impossible and final conceptual certitude; and to demand recognition of a false and unearned moral virtue.

That crisis manifests itself in the idolatrous battles, simultaneously petty and terrible, that currently divide our world—in the disputes about identity that lead astray and render hopeless; in the stoking of suspicion between men and women, in the insistence that enmity must divide black, brown and white; in the subjugation of the education that should enlighten to the ideologies that possess; in the cycle of accusation that threatens the trust upon which peace and prosperity necessarily depends; and in the panicked, antihuman, apocalyptic doomsaying that undermines the spirit of our sons and daughters.

What can those who attempt to abide by and manifest a courageous faith in the traditional values of our past offer, in such times? Not the thoughtless and instrumental appeal to cynicism and bitterness, associated with the insistence that our social and political institutions are fundamentally unreliable, corrupt and untrustworthy. Not the harsh and condemnatory exhortation or demand to accept and uphold a moral code noteworthy only for its joylessness, sterility and tendency to forbid and damn. Instead, the confident and forthright transmission of the abandoned eternal verities to all of those who currently wander, thirst and starve in their absence.

What are the values, of paramount importance to the conservative temperament, currently crying out for rediscovery, reconsideration, and discussion? An inevitably incomplete but crucially necessary list might include humility, liberty, autonomy, truth, agency, identity, merit, responsibility, tradition, community, stewardship, justice and unity. To that list might be profitably appended a set of propositions about the true nature and source of absolute privation, the inevitability of economic inequality, and the practical realities of the individual competence upon which psychological integrity and social contract equally and mutually depend.

Humility: Humility is the opposite of the prideful, authoritarian arrogance that insists upon the possession of comprehensive and final skill and knowledge. To reverse humility is to accept the insufficiency of current presumption; to acknowledge the value of attending to what is not yet known; to listen to, value and attempt to truly understand the opinions of others (no matter how ill-formed); to strive to gain further knowledge; and to convince and invite instead of insisting and compelling. Humility is therefore a fundamental precondition for learning; for the revivifying, meaningful engagement that learning produces; and for the maintenance and renovation of what has already been validly learned, established and universally valued.

Liberty: Liberty is valuable not because it enables the hedonism that heedlessly sacrifices the future and the community to the narrowly conceptualized present and the impulsive needs and wants of the individual. Liberty is valuable because it allows all free and unique people the opportunity to best confront the potential of the future; to engage in the voluntary, productive reciprocal interactions that make peaceful, mutually-sustaining social life possible; to speak the truth that redeems and renews; and to adopt the responsibility of citizenship and ethical endeavour. Liberty enables people to think authentically and without arbitrary constraints, privately and publicly. Liberty allows people to employ that unconstrained authentic thought to imagine a diverse set of possibilities; to singly and jointly assess, criticize, prioritize, and improve them; and to choose from those diverse criticized and improved possibilities the most evidently valuable, compelling path forward.

Autonomy: The emergent problems that constantly beset us and simultaneously offer new opportunities can only be addressed by the continual provision of equally unpredictable and variable set of solutions. Such provision is best ensured by valuing and encouraging development of the widest possible range of productive activities and enterprises, from which variation might be drawn the most appropriate solutions. Autonomous citizens can bring the individual differences of their temperament, experience and skill to bear on the problem of adaptation itself. Autonomous people and institutions—as widely distributed as possible—are free to vary in their response to the particularized demands of their local environments. From that variant pool, all individuals free to communicate and assess can derive the solutions most apt and efficiently matched to their current situations and problems. Widely distributed autonomous local activities allow for the establishment of resilient, large-scale, unified systems, optimally resistant to the rapid and dangerous spread of any given unpredictable emergent problem, optimally able to respond with timely and particularized solutions. The principle of autonomy therefore enables abundant provision in relation to the necessities and luxuries of

life; maximal choice regarding the manner in which that provision will occur; and diverse opportunities for meaningful, sustaining engagement in the voluntary, productive, and sustainable private and social endeavours that best produce abundance and choice. Free markets best fulfill the need for autonomy, local activity, and wide distribution. Their superiority to all other known and likely possible systems, given that fulfillment, should be unapologetically recognized and promoted by those dedicated to the canonical values of the West. No other systems allow for the crucial and ever-changing decisions about what is currently valuable to be made by the uncompelled choice and voluntary endeavour of the widest possible number of people. No other systems allow for the sampling and aggregation of the myriad of widely varying and particularized thoughts and decisions constituted by that free choice and voluntary endeavour. No other system therefore does or apparently can operate in the manner that makes continued adaptation to the unpredictable horizon of the future both possible and desirable.

Truth: The future genuinely and unpredictably differs from the past. In consequence, a continual array of complex and unforeseen problems array themselves before us, demanding redress. A diverse, honest and freely-exchanged range of thoughts pertaining to those problems is the eternal precondition for the possibility of solution itself, as well as for its dissemination. There are many valid, productive and attractive ways of looking at and acting in the world, and a variety of perspectives is simultaneously necessary, strategically appropriate, and inevitable. It is also forever the case, however, that disciplined striving in a single direction fortifies and unifies, that an ethic capable of uniting diverse citizens in trust and peace is necessary and desirable, and that truth itself is never to be found in a particular set of facts or body of knowledge. The genuine striving forward, ethically, instead, is the very embodiment of truth and, therefore, the most valid manifestation of truth itself. The humble attempt to advance ourselves and others through discourse—as a consequence of listening and spontaneous response—is, instead, the very embodiment of truth. The willingness to reach in good faith across the divides of race, sex, economic class, and political temperament is, instead, the very embodiment of truth. The divisive insistence on the absolute relativity of truth can be combatted not least with the realization that truth is a process, not a state. The realization, finally, that the adventure of life is to be found precisely in pursuit of the truth constitutes the only real antidote to the corrosive nihilism that justifies deception, hopelessness, cynicism, and abdication of responsibility. The most fundamental freedoms upon which virtuous states and polities depend—freedom of speech and thought foremost above them—exist not for the impulsive gratification of momentary pleasures but so that the truth that redeems can find its living expression.

Agency: The insistence that we are all most appropriately conceptualized at the level of the group—whether by sexual preference, race, gender, political belief, or ethnicity—provides the counter-opportunity for conservatives to re-establish and reinforce the bedrock notion and principle of the sovereignty of the individual, which attributes to each person the capacity to advance and progress in the face of uncertainty, malevolence and adversity. Those with truly canonical Western views can, as well, oppose the demoralizing notions of the essential corruption of all human activity and its putative basis in nothing but oppression and compulsion

with the knowledge that the desire to strive forward is its essential form a manifestation of the spirit of voluntary cooperation, the desire for productive reciprocal social interaction, and the reality of genuine good will. The ambition that overcomes privation and penury, the urge to adventure toward greatness, the desire to marry, the wish to have a family, the willingness to shoulder responsibility: all this is truly and genuinely admirable and worthy of recognition and reward; all this constitutes the basis of any truly stable and desirable state, psychological and social alike, with attendant duties voluntarily undertaken and attendant rewards validly earned and distributed. All this is, furthermore, the most reliable basis for any true sustainability.

Identity: A sophisticated and adaptive identity is in no wise established through the mere insistence that a felt sense of subjective feeling must dominate and prevail. Identity is instead the result of continual and iterated communication, cooperation and competition between parents and children, husbands and wives, parents and children, friends, colleagues, subordinates, superiors and the present and future selves of sovereign individuals. Identity is, therefore, and must remain a carefully and justly negotiated agreement between the individual and society, at every level of that society. Conservatives can therefore offer a revitalized conception of *sovereign citizenship* as the most meaningful and significant form of identity: the sovereign citizenship that makes each person a credit to themselves, a reliable partner in marriage, a caring, judicious and discriminating parent, a trustworthy and competent partner in enterprise, an active participant in local and distal civic institutions, and an informed, enlightened and ethical political actor and voter. This is all predicated upon conceptualizing and articulating the need for a shift in the Western individual's moral outlook, away from the narrowly hedonistic blandishments of endless rights and externally bestowed privileges and toward the constructive rewards attendant upon a mature sacrifice, duty, responsibility, and reciprocity.

Merit: Individuals vary widely in their abilities across the entire range of human endeavour. A small number of highly productive people operating within all domains of human creative endeavour account for most of the production and progress. A direct relationship therefore obtains between the recognition and promotion of excellence and the ability for societies to ameliorate absolute privation; to generate and disseminate creative solutions to new and unexpected problems; to provide opportunity for individual and social flourishing and advancement; and to justly and effectively reward those endeavouring to be productive, successful and generous. The tight causal connection between merit and consequence means that pure merit can be defined objectively by the ability to undertake the work and build the social networks associated with goals valued by the free choice of actors in the free marketplaces of friendship, community association, consumer choice, employment opportunity and political decision. Such merit has been, validly—however partially and imperfectly—and must remain the fundamental principle governing selection, placement, and advancement in our social institutions.

Responsibility. Every individual requires a purpose to offset the tragedy of life. Every person needs something of true value to set against the anxiety, frustration, disappointment, grief and pain of mortal existence. That purpose is not to be found in the cynicism that too easily

replaces an initial naivete, or in a short-sighted, narrow and reactive hedonism, but in the establishment of stable, reliable, truthful and productive intimate relationships, friendships, apprenticeships, civic bonds, political duties, philosophical commitments, and religious habits and practices. In the absence of the structure and direction produced by such bonds and activities, the tragedy of life looms unacceptably large. Individuals subjected to suffering in the absence of an orientation toward meaning and responsibility become cynical, unstable, hopeless, and alienated—then resentful, vengeful and dangerous. Conservatives can offer personal responsibility, the committed social bonds of marriage, family and job, and true civic engagement as valid and reliable antidotes to the nihilism of unearned cynicism, the temptation of narrow short-term pleasure, and the demoralizing consequences of faithless hopelessness. Such advocates can remind us all that sacrifice—the willingness to forestall the gratifications of the immediate moment; the willingness to engage in difficult endeavours in the present to build something worthwhile for the future; the moral obligation to withstand the trials of immediate, timely disagreement and conflict, to ensure a lasting peace—is a laudable, necessary, and ultimately redeeming activity. Such advocates can, finally, define a pathway through the pitfalls of guilt, offering atonement through responsibility as the proper response to the inevitably unequal distribution of talents and privileges.

Community: The West has rightly emphasized the value of the individual, drawing on traditions derived from Rome, Athens and Jerusalem. The admirably liberal west has properly and useful articulated a doctrine of individual rights, grounded in natural law, in consequence, and that has led to an era of freedom unparalleled in its productivity, generosity and universality. But the highest ideal to which an individual might aspire cannot be grounded in an atomistic individualism, or predicated on the assumption that the highest manifestation of human striving be akin to an isolated self-actualization. Conservatives can rightly insist: the highest must serve the lowest, communally, in the truly religious sense; can rightly observe that we find our very sanity in relationship to community. Conservatives can note that sanity itself, both personal and social, is something continually and inescapably negotiated; that there can simply not be the happiness or even the pursuit thereof at the individual level in the absence of the optimally functioning social surround. A purely individual ethos is shallow, unsustainable, unworthy, and fragile (what do we do when our happiness vanishes?). A purely individual ethos fails to provide the orientation crucial for the upward striving that constitutes hope, the integrity necessary to resist temptation, the antidote to the dangerous and narcissistic expansion of ego and presumption, or the bounds of love that support us through tribulation, trial and tragedy.

Stewardship: Those who uphold the conservative ethos can offer responsible stewardship as the appropriate response to the necessity of maintaining harmony in our relationship with the natural world upon which our lives ultimately depend. This is an extension of the proper canonical response to the treasures of the historical past: that which is valuable should be recognized, valued, maintained, guarded and passed on down the generational chain. The scope of human activities has expanded in recent decades to a scale that makes of those activities a genuine planetary force. This presents us with real dangers, as well as unparalleled opportunities. Panicked apocalyptic thinking in relation to the former demoralizes, invites a

careless and self-serving demonization and derogation, and justifies the kind of impulsive, incautious, reactive global response that can easily produce unforeseen problems of the same magnitude or greater than the original problem. Thoughtful stewards of the natural world, governed by the doctrines intrinsic to the Western canon, can as an alternative recognize the particulars of the problems characterizing the relationship between our industrial culture and the natural world; can confidently note the fact that the human ingenuity most effectively manifested in free societies has and might endlessly and more ever-more efficiently continue to ameliorate poverty and rectify excessive inequality; can encourage conceptualization of the human population and its constituent individuals as a net good in the planetary context; can deliver to young people first and foremost the message that people of faith, courage and good will can manage the very real problems that confront us and make the future not the apocalypse that is always threatening but the eternally productive and abundant garden that we may all tend and inhabit.

Justice: Every individual who strives upward in the optimal and socially-beneficial manner deserves and must be granted the benefits attendant upon the consequences of that striving. This is the judicious and discerning recognition, rewarding and reinforcement of productive and generous ability. This is the justice that fosters and maintains that productive generosity at the individual and the social level. This is the justice that applies discriminating attention to the endeavours and utterances of past and present and enables constant separation of wheat from chaff. This is the justice that has in the past and must continue to be in the future the irreplaceable, necessary and corrective complement to what would otherwise be the incautious, too-forgiving and infantilizing universal compassion that too easily masquerades and demands recognition as moral virtue itself. Conservatives can rightly insist: it is this true and comprehensive justice, grounded in the irreplaceable traditions of our forebears, that has been and must continue to be both available to and applied equally to all citizens, regardless of birth or circumstances.

Tradition: Conservatives must state, with courageous faith and confidence: The fundamental institutions of the West are solid, philosophically and practically. The idea that each individual is equal before the law and of divine intrinsic worth is inextricably associated with the presumption of the sovereign citizen, as well as the associated insistence that the stability of the state rests upon the careful and truthful judgement of that citizen. The idea that honest and untrammelled discourse among men and women of good will constitutes the eternal pathway to the truth that refreshes and redeems is a realization whose profundity of conceptualization and reliability in application is unparalleled in human history. The parliaments, congresses, and senates where those of us in the West transform the inarticulate but reliable and trustworthy sentiments and desires of the people into the articulated body of laws we all abide by are fundamentally good and functional but require the wise trust and active engagement that conservatives would do well to embody and promote. Marriage, not sexual satisfaction, is the most appropriate goal for love. Children and adults flourish in stable two-parent families. The broader community is best served by stable marriage and family. The needs of those in absolute poverty are best served by an uncorrupted and genuinely cooperative and competitive free-market economy. The very real problem of inequality is best solved by a commendable

combination of productivity and generosity, within the framework that such structured systems provide. All of this nests within the overarching framework of the Abrahamic canon bequeathed to us by our forebears, and should be presented in a spirit of gratitude and humility as an inextricable part and parcel of that inheritance.

Unity: A house divided against itself cannot stand. Respect for individual sovereignty, appreciation for the intact family, responsible engagement in civic institutions, gratitude for the traditions that bind us and protect us from chaos, and courageous trust in the essential goodwill of others means unity in both appearance and reality. Conservatives are, at their best, characterized by profound appreciation for the necessity of such unity, apprehending it properly as the basis for the peaceful cooperation and competition that made, makes and keeps us strong in the face of both adversity and enmity. Such unity also provides for the psychological and social predictability and structure that keeps the destabilizing terror of uncertainty at bay, as well as for the shared communal purpose that provides the very framework for individual hope. The notion that no such unity is possible, or that it is always purchased through the use of self-interested power and compulsion, means only in the first case that disunity and the chaos that accompanies it is inevitable and in the second that a profound misunderstanding is in place regarding the causal relationship between true stability and productive peace and the principles of free choice, voluntary association, reciprocal exchange, mature capacity to forestall gratification, and responsible action. The acceptance of these twin presumptions dooms their holder to a counterproductive and destabilizing anxiety and aimless hopelessness and a consequent bitter cynicism and with no conceptual or practical alternative to the personal wielding of arbitrary force. This is a recipe for personal doom and social catastrophe.

Conclusion: The blind and instrumental insistence that truth is an illusion and that nothing but power truly rules has left virtually everything of true and enduring use as a guide to purpose and a bulwark against despair abandoned on the wayside. The demoralized people of the West and, indeed, in the rest of the world, are therefore crying out for the restoration of the abdicated values of individual sovereignty, responsible and genuine social service and purpose whose acceptance and embodiment make our free societies possible, productive, admirable, generative and stable. Conservatives who abide by the dictates of the eternal Western canon have the opportunity beckoning in front of them to once again make the case that the principles upon which we operate, the virtues in which we believe, and the freedom upon whose existence truly constitute the basis for the life more abundant which people of good faith desire and which we have every ability to establish and maintain.

Appendix 1: On poverty and inequality and their nature and amelioration:

It is of crucial importance that conservatives understand and discuss the true nature of material privation and the unequal distribution of both resources and rewards.

Absolute poverty, per se, is not primarily the consequence of individual sin or the corruption of social systems. It is instead a brute and irreducible fact of nature. All living things are fated to exert costly effort and garner expendable resources to survive. Thus, the poverty that must be overcome so that privation, pain and death can be kept at bay and reproduction ensured is not most fundamentally or properly attributed to the exploitation of one individual by another or the corruption and oppression of social institutions. The overcoming of dire want, in the first place, is to be regarded instead as unlikely and as the direct result of laudable personal endeavour and functional and sustainable social enterprise.

All the same is true of relative poverty. The equally brute fact of disproportionate gain and loss is neither attributable, in the most fundamental sense, to the inadequacies of individual aim or the insufficiency of communal institution. It is, instead, something deeply and mysteriously built into the structure of natural reality itself, both natural and social. It characterizes the distribution of matter within galaxies (a small number of stars have most of the mass), the movement of water within ecosystems (a small number of rivers carry most of the world's water), the habitation of people within geographical regions (a small number of cities have the majority of the people), the severity of natural disasters (a small number of earthquakes destroy the most buildings) and the distribution of natural resources (a small number of oil fields have most of the deposits). The same principle applies to performance and the receipt of attendant rewards within social domains (a small number of classical composers wrote all the music of the common classical repertoire), scientific endeavours (a small fraction of scientists publish the majority of scientific papers; a small number of scientific papers accrue the majority of citations), and book sales (a small number of authors dominate the bestseller charts). This inequality exists, equally, on the production side, in that a small number of people in every enterprise undertake the vast bulk of the valuable work, and on the compensation side, in that a small number of people garner most of the income and wealth. A diverse range of natural processes and every known productive and creative endeavour produces an inequality that must therefore be both recognized and managed.

Neither the fact of such facts, which are a small fraction of the full domain of such facts, nor the act of reference to such facts, constitutes any justification for the existence of relative poverty (any more than the fact that absolute privation is justified by the a priori reality of its existence). They are recognized and cited, instead, to ensure that the reality of inequality and the difficulty of its amelioration is both recognized and taken with sufficient seriousness (rather than, say, attributed unthinkingly and so dangerously to say, the mere fact of capitalism or the inadequacy of democracy or free markets).

It is also true and needs to be said that the willingness and ability to exploit, however motivated, and the degeneration and corruption of social systems from the family through the state and church can of course interfere with or even destroy the necessary trust and attitudes and practices that underly a sustainable, productive, generous citizenry and community.

But—and it bears repeating—that in no wise means that such desire, decay and interference is the root cause of the most fundamental economic problems that beset ourselves and our institutions. Individual ambition and action, rightly manifest, and social institution, properly established and maintained, instead produce and distribute abundantly and generously and are compromised in those functions by greed, resentment, nihilistic faithlessness and confusion, and the political, economic, sociological and theological consequences of those pathologies of motivation.

The fact of a priori deprivation and the operation of deep laws of unequal production, distribution and compensation means that individuals and societies alike must structure themselves so that productive people have the freedom to be productive and are optimally incentivized to continue producing. However, it is incumbent upon conservatives to appreciate in the deepest sense possible the catastrophe of absolute need and the danger and potential tragedy and social danger of radical inequality, to sympathize with the plight of those afflicted by such realities, and to note the danger posed to community order by unchecked disparity of ownership and opportunity. Those who abide by the Western canon must therefore support and work for the existence of a plethora of productive enterprises, so that many people can strive hopefully for success in many different directions and as well must also strive to foster, promote and maintain an ethic and culture of productive generosity. This best ensures a place for everyone, regardless of the vagaries of innate ability, as well as the proper taking of responsibility for and atonement in the face of absolute and relative poverty.

We are all fated to both arbitrary and unequal degrees of deprivation and privilege. Some are born poor, dim and unhealthy; others rich in both resource and opportunity, as well as ability and health. The proper response to such apparent injustice of placement is, in the first place, forbearance and gratitude, manifested courageously; and, in the second, cultivation of the desire and ability to employ those unequally distributed talents and gifts in the service of the poor, downtrodden, marginalized, and infirm. Such service satisfies the demands of both conscience and state, in the truest and most long-lasting senses. Such service also serves as the most valid and reliable source of the meaning that most truly sustains us all, protecting us from despair, individually and collectively, as we find ourselves exposed to the dramatic and challenging vicissitudes of fate. It is truly better to give, than to receive; and conservatives would do well to balance their demands for liberty, autonomy and tradition with the pledge to be caring, generous and charitable.

Appendix 2: On Personal Responsibility and the Practicalities of Meaning

In the absence of deep, sustaining meaning, the tragedy and betrayal that inevitably accompany life undermines motivation, engendering a suffering that can be unbearable, and tempting us all toward hedonism, cynicism, hopelessness, bitterness, envy and, ultimately, the delights of vengeful cruelty. That meaning has become questionable, not least in the aftermath of the philosophical and theological confusion manifesting itself in the aftermath of the so-called Death of God. Young and old alike have become ignorant of their heritage, skeptical of the benefits of adulthood, unsupported in their agency, accused of prejudice and unseemly ambition, and fed a continual diet of apocalyptic doom and historical guilt. They have become, in consequence, dangerously demoralized, despite the wealth and security of the present day and the vast horizons of opportunity now available to everyone. This most unsettling of conditions engenders an increasing distrust, as the worth of human endeavour becomes questionable and the motivations of others the target of increasing suspicion. This manifests itself as a dangerous and accelerating polarization, as shared aims disintegrate and claims of corruption, exploitation and victimization multiply.

Conservatives can offer not only a philosophical and theological alternative to the deterioration of faith producing such distrust and suspicion, but a practical guide to the ordering of life such that its suffering might remain tolerable and its stability and adventure sufficient. The values of maturity, responsibility, duty, tradition, commitment, industriousness, and civic engagement are now criticized and rejected; deemed anachronistic, even pilloried; regarded as problem, not solution; treated as unvirtuous and exploitative. They are, in fact, the opposite: the daily virtues of attitude and habit that stabilize, provide hope, and unify—that offer a true and time-tested and immediately implementable antidote to the anomie of moral relativism, cultural dissolution, philosophical ignorance and personal confusion.

Maturity, sacrifice and resistance to temptation: The ability to delay gratification is the hallmark of maturity, and a crucial part of the process of adapting to the reality of the future (as present actions have future consequences) and to the complexities that emerge from the necessity of adjusting short-term individual needs to the demands of sophisticated social reciprocity. This means that we must each undertake to bear difficult burdens in the present to ensure the survival of our future selves and, equally and similarly, our families and communities now and later. That maturity can well be recognized and promoted by conservatives as the appropriate and admirable goal of childhood and adolescent development—as a state of being preferable to those earlier stages of development; as a respectable, valid and worthwhile ambition for development; and as a precondition for the establishment of complex, productive social institutions.

Marriage: The idea that sexual intimacy is best contained within the confines of a stable relationship, that a man and a woman should come together as a permanent unit, and that children require a minimum of two opposite-sex parents for optimal development is a notion as close to universally human as any so far discovered, distributed and established. Marriage provides each individual with the opportunity for true intimacy, physical and spiritual; the

possibility of genuine, elevating communication and psychological development; a solid platform from which to engage in the challenge of raising children; and the profound satisfaction of engaging in a difficult, worthwhile, mature enterprise. A culture firmly based on the principal of stable monogamy is less prone to hyper-competitive youthful male aggression, often manifested as a consequence of jealousy, loneliness and existential frustration; provides women with the stability necessary to dare pregnancy and the vulnerability associated with the care of young children; and offers to boys and girls appropriate role models for the development of a stable identity and pattern for adulthood. Conservatives should be forthright in their admiration for and promotion of this most fundamental of social arrangements; all other options—however desirable in principle; however associated with some hypothetical utopia—as doomed, at minimum, to comparative and perhaps unforeseeable dire failure. This does not mean that alternative arrangements, whether formulated by necessity or desire, should be carelessly, opportunistically or cruelly devalued. It does mean, even given that caveat, that the gold standard of permanent traditional monogamous relationships should be broadly socially recognized and rewarded.

Family: A man or woman who has loyal, caring parents; reliable, true and honest brothers and sisters; and children bonded in love and mutual regard is an individual valued, celebrated, supported, remembered, and respected. We all therefore need to be encouraged to work with good will and honest courage to value, mend and maintain our relationships with our sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, to stabilize and strengthen our families and to make of them veritable pillars of the broader community. Conservatives can and should discuss and publicly and explicitly support the attitudes and actions necessary to foster such familial integration, and should strive to do so in the absence of a compromising doubt or guilt. The actions necessary to unify families and make them strong in the face of adversity are fundamentally akin to those that also make for reliable, productive social institutions at levels of social organization that surround and subsume the intimate and personal. Proper and caring practice at the local level thus properly prepares us all for proper and caring practice among our friends, neighbours, colleagues and fellow citizens. There is nothing in any of that to justify a corrosive doubt or undermining guilt.

Friendship: Every individual is well served, and well supported, by a network of friends, united in good faith, aiming at the mutual good, capable of providing reassurance in times of tragedy and betrayal, able and willing to honestly celebrate in times of success and triumph. Such friendships can neither be established or sustained in consequence of dominance, force and compulsion, but by the spirit of reciprocity and voluntary play, the hallmark of the most productive, stable and desirable forms of human social organization. People surrounded by friends who genuinely want the best for them, but who stand by them equally during times of uncertainty, confusion, cynicism and despair are in a much more stable position, existentially—psychologically and practically; are much less likely to drown in chaos and much more likely to maintain and flourish in an optimal order. Societies composed of individuals ensconced within such friendships are more likely to be stable, productive, charitable and generous.

Employment: Work—job or career—is socially-valued productive activity, most typically a sacrifice of present impulse to the broader community and the future. It is necessary (to say it again) not because one class, or sex, or race dominates another but because privation is the basic condition of life and effort must be expended to address it. Work is often viewed, cynically as a curse, or as an indication of exploitation and victimhood, and can indeed make itself manifest in the form of degrading, unsustainable and hopeless toil. Under optimal conditions, however, both psychological and social, work is a blessing, not simply because absolute poverty can be ameliorated through effort but because genuine and sustaining meaning can be found in a task well and faithfully undertaken, even at the most basic level of participation in an enterprise or endeavour. Work, properly undertaken, can offer the opportunity for genuine social contribution; the possibility of establishing lasting friendships and working relationships; the opportunity for learning and growth, personal and practical; the provision of rewards attendant upon participation in a worthwhile, valuable enterprise; and the experience necessary for informed and skillful movement forward into broader, more complex, sophisticated, productive and generous endeavour. Conservatives can make a case for work; can nest that case within their efforts to uphold, justify and promote free markets; can endeavour to make the rules governing work just and fair and arranged so that commitment, effort and merit are rewarded appropriately, sustainably and justly.

Civic Engagement: The stability of state and country is, in the final analysis, dependent on the integrity of the individual and the family. The local civic level functions as a necessary intermediary. Participation in small-scale local institutions—which is often where real, valuable and necessary fortification and change occurs—is therefore another necessary precondition for psychological health, social unity and productive peace. Sports teams, book and drama clubs, charitable foundations, business organizations, political parties, and churches, synagogues and mosques all offer social value and the sense of genuine contribution that interpersonal communion and mature and voluntary service to others inevitably provides. Conservatives can remind the alienated and lost that the many serious problems that need to be solved—and the many enjoyable games that could conceivably be played—provide a horizon of opportunity dependent only on pure willingness to engage. Conservatives could invite the disaffected, young and old alike, to make their services available so that the community could benefit and those offering welcomed, recognized and valued.

Accomplishment: Ambition, in the highest and truest sense, is the motivation to move forward in the face of difficulty—disappointment, frustration, privation, tragedy, betrayal and malevolence—and to engage in life courageously, honestly, productively, honestly and generously. This is the wish and the willingness to develop genuine competence, not the striving for narcissistic self-gratification; not the expression of the will to dominate, exploit and oppress; The desire for accomplishment is, in its deepest manifestation, the motivation to first see and then traverse the path that provides the best for all, at all levels of ability and opportunity. It is this instinct to engage in and value such accomplishment that is part of our most admirable moral sense. Ambition itself, seen in this light, is nothing less than the entirely admirable desire to reduce unnecessary pain and suffering, to promote a sustainable happiness, and to create the wealth and prosperity that makes for security, opportunity and

further adventure. It is better to give, than to receive—for these reasons, as well as those previously delineated—and the purest and most admirable form of accomplishment is more for all, in a manner simultaneously just, sustainable, and generous.

Every person does not have to participate in every social institution or social action, but it is a rare person indeed who can live without a degenerating misery and cynicism in the absence of all activities and social bonds. This does not mean that creative exception—even rejection, when required, of certain otherwise self-evidently necessary social norms—is either unnecessary or without value. It does mean, however, that the creative production that does not merely and heedlessly decimate and destroy must be undertaken within a broader framework of shared assumption, perception and action—of shared bedrock value. The conservatives desiring to uphold and promote the canon of Western values can therefore offer to all those who are hopeless and lost—even if they are truly exceptional—the purpose, adventure and support to be found in striving forward in all these varied domains of traditional endeavour. That practical orientation and accomplishment constitutes the most reliable bulwark against the oft-otherwise demoralizing tragedies, betrayals, disappointments and grievous losses that characterizing human, all-too-human, conception and existence. That practical orientation, provision of hope and stabilization serves as the genuine antidote to the despair and bitterness that can undermine all hope, engender a cruel and vindictive resentment, and dangerously destabilize and threaten society itself.