Appendix A:
The Philosophy of Power and the Power of Philosophy:
A Set of Reflections on the Nature of Power…*

At the center of a contragram we find a glimpse of reality…[1]

In the writing of my current book, *The Prosecution of Philosophy as a Discipline*, I have a number of times kept returning to this problematic topic of power. The title of this essay is the title given to my Seventh Essay in this book. The subtitle indicates, indirectly, that I am taking excerpts from this set of essays dealing with this particular topic. What is power? In a series of reflections, I will show that this topic is more complex than what is usually thought to be the case, and, will attempt to progressively reveal just what appears to be entailed in this politically oriented phenomenon? (0)

1. The Democratic Basis of Power

Essay 9:

> …as mere individuals, effectively, we are powerless (just like the king forced to chop his own firewood, etc., if all his subjects, each and every one, were to withdraw their services). We can only function, in society, to a manner as already accustomed to, through the services of others, and v.v. [9.170]

On a number of occasions, I have used this example of a king ordering his woodsman to chop firewood; be it to heat a certain room or hall where the king wishes to conduct business or a bedroom, etc. The woodsman could say "no". We, too, always have the opportunity to say "no". All enactions, however, have consequences both causal and social, etc. That king might ask someone else to do this act of wood-chopping. They might also decide to have the woodsman's head chopped off as well if that type of regal decision could be 'executed' in that kingdom. Then, the possibility arises that all the king's subjects could also say "no". If a large, critical number of people are no longer subservient to a certain ruler then that ruler is reduced to being a ruler in name only, albeit with a history of once having ruled. Such a 'ruler' would then be rendered powerless. Despotic regimes are ever fearful of such 'regime change'. Poorly organized rebellions usually get themselves stamped out. More to be feared, by such rulers, are people also in power, empowered by that regime and its leaders, who are organized enough to switch sides or who are found to be intent on replacing that current form of rulership. (1)

* For latest version of this paper: www.homestead.com/noelshomepage/noelshomepage5.html

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[1] A contragram gives with one hand and takes away with the other, in effect, gives us, through such cancellation, a type of suspension. E.g., how could a well-focused vision of a philosophy of power not also put into our hands an approach as to how power, itself, could be exerted, and, thereby, demonstrate how powerful that same philosophy could be through the exercised influence/s of those same insights?! By such means balancing, balancing out, promoting a passive understanding (insight) of this topic with an active exercise (oversight) of its apparent injunctions as described?

This text states: We can only function, in society, to a manner as already accustomed to, through the services of others, and v.v. This same sentence could also read: We can only function in society... because in the reality of lived-experience, correctly, we are rendered entirely powerless without the assistance of others, and v.v.[2] (2)

Hence my recent use of the formula: 'experience both lived-and-shared'. (3)

Essay 7:

> In a non-philosophical sense 'power' is usually understood to be something like 'the ability to enact[3] an intentional project or program[4] through the directed services of others'. Of course, if it is something we can do by ourselves, for ourselves, then we have the 'power' to enact that course of activity. However, in an interpersonal sense, power is directed from one person or a group of people through either the direct orders and/or indirect instructions to another person or group of people. E.g., person A orders B to do *x*. [7.3]
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> In a less superficial reading we could treat this simple formula to a deeper level of exposition, namely, 'A is able to communicate to B an order *x* to which B can enact should they wish to 'cooperate' with this instruction 'to enact *x*'.' Where 'A' is 'one set containing either one or more persons', and, 'B' is 'another set containing either another person or some other persons'. 'Cooperation' being directed across the entire gamut from 'full co-operation to successfully enforced co-option'. If B is neither amenable to relative co-operation nor relative co-option, or some coercive mix of both somewhere in between, then A has no power over B in that same regard… demonstrating, in principle, but rarely in practice, that the real basis of power is 'democratic'; i.e. dependent on all directed parties 'permitting' the enaction of either those orders and/or instructions issued by those parties directing such intentional objectives to be enacted. The master might tell their slave 'to do *x*', but, if that slave does not do *x*, and refuses to do *x*, then that master is now 'powerless' in that same regard. That master may well punish their slave, but, if that slave still refuses to do *x*, then, that same master remains powerless in this same regard. If that same master were to then threaten the life of that same slave and this slave still refuses to either co-operate or be co-opted in the face of such a threat, or is actually killed, their master, in either eventuality, remain powerless in that same respect. Of course, should the master have another slave they might order or instruct them to do as charged. But, still, the same point holds, should they refuse, in turn, to 'cooperate', either through some form or mix of cooperative co-

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[2] I continue this argument to note that we are powerless to even think by ourselves as well. Refer to 9.170.

[3] I use the words 'enact' or 'enaction' to mean 'intentional decisions to act, not to act, or, as left deferred through indecisive inaction'.

[4] A 'project' being 'the enaction of a short-term set of intentional instructions with the objective of realizing the obtainment of a certain simple intentional goal'. Say, e.g., completing an essay. A 'program' is 'a longer-term set of intentional instructions to realize a complex set of projects'. Say, e.g., setting out to complete a varied course of university studies in order to obtain a degree. All the above happens in a 'prospect' which contains all the life-worlds associated with formal 'disciplines' or less formal 'modes of life'.

> operation or coerced co-option, then that same master continues to remain powerless in this same regard. Needless to say, power relations are never absolutely equal in reality (even between friends) and this so-called 'democratic basis' is more often overlooked and rarely observed by any of the parties concerned in such unequal transactions. However, in either more equal relations or less relatively unequal relations forms of compensation must also be seen to enter the equation. Compensation taking the form of a mix that privileges either direct forms of recompense and/or indirect forms of obligation. E.g., walk into a restaurant and order a meal, and, you are expected to pay for that same meal. Or, e.g., work in that same restaurant and you might not be paid that day, but, you would expect to be paid in some period in the near future. To complicate this picture, however, there are some forms of labour, that are done without an expectation of either compensation or obligations, being seen, deontologically, in such a manner, that their commission is their own reward. But, putting such ideal considerations aside, for the moment, we need to recognize that an even deeper dimension exists in our more aligned appreciation of power relations. Namely, the existential fact that the basic presuppositions beneath or behind power relations are not directly focused, through orders or instructions, but rather pre-conditionally organized in a more fluid, non-directional, dispersed, pervasive sense (somewhat after Michel Foucault, but, more on this pre-conditional level?). Let me explore what the ramifications of this more diffuse reading of power relations entails. [7.4]

Obviously, power cannot be a one-way street even if it were to be misunderstood as merely the emitting of orders or instructions and merely finding those orders or instructions carried out as demanded. Power can be immediately short-circuited through any resistive act that distorts or disrupts, wittingly and/or unwittingly, the commission of those enactions required to be completed as framed through such demands. (4)

Then, as noted above, we must also take into any account of power relations obligations, forms of payment, the expectations of non-payment, forms of debt and indebtedness, forms of how such debts and indebtedness can be discharged, etc., etc. (5)

Power relations can also be viewed, provisionally, as involving simple and complex chains of command whose nodes of interconnection are human agents (be they mediated by machines, computers, etc., or left unmediated by such devices). (6)

2. Power as an Amorphous, Fluid Realm of Anticipation

Essay 7:

> In our inescapable participation in the political-economy in which we are culturally immersed, regardless of the complexion and intensity of its politics, there is this seemingly self-evident myth that we are the absolute masters of our own fate… and, that we rise and fall, accordingly, through the results, respectively, of either the sufficiency of our own efforts or through a lack of sufficient self-effort.

This is the short-sighted basis for a politically destructive ideology of neo-liberalism. But, equally, it is also the basis of a non-capitalistic, socialistic politics that insists that there is an ever-ongoing need for repeated acts of both self-criticism and self-correction. Indeed, cultural doubts that individuals will stray from such self-advancement in society may well explain the incremental rise of ever-expanding forms of individual surveillance?[5] I am also sure there are many other reasons that could be invoked to explain this type of phenomenon, but, be that as it may or may not be the case, there is this resonant social delusion that we all should be self-made persons, of course, to the fullest extent of our natural capabilities. Why? Because 'we deserve it'; when it is the case that we do deserve it, and, as advertising would have us believe it, we always deserve it because if we are able to act on such messaging then obviously we must be in a position where we must truly deserve such self-rewards! Still, such beliefs and self-beliefs, whether acted upon or not acted upon, whether consciously understood or not consciously understood, must have some basis in evidence for such self-truths to persist with such memetic-like force. It is true that each person is embodied in this world as lived and if they wish to breathe deeply then they can immediately do so, or, if they wish to raise their right arm then they can do just that. We seem to be the complete masters of our bodies and this semblance of self-directed power extends outwards into our communities and beyond. But, we are born into this world as helpless babies, and, more correctly, such self-helplessness extends throughout the course of our existence as we seem to make our individual passages through this world with others. Without parents or carers we would die. Without the guidance of families and teachers we could not become apparent individuals before others. As I have noted on a number of occasions, I can buy a cup of coffee for say $3.50. But, if I wanted to get that same cup of coffee purely through my own self-efforts I would have to trans-locate myself to a tropical country, plant coffee bushes, wait a number of years before I could even harvest my first coffee beans, then roast them, etc., manufacture implements to both make that coffee and serve the same before finding ways to get milk and sugar if they, too, were also desired. In truth, a $3.50 cup of coffee buys a lot more than just a simple cup of coffee… in some measure of this fact the final cup of coffee is almost an accidental occurrence in this long, complex, intertwined chains of actions done by others predicated on the eventuality that someone, indeed, many others, will desire and buy this form of beverage. Yes, I can breathe deeply and raise my right hand, but, I must live with others, directly or indirectly, through all stages of my existence in this world that ever supports our continuing existence with others! Yes, I can breathe deeply and raise my right hand… but for how long would I be able to do that without this necessary, inescapable support of others! In essence, as mere individuals, effectively, we are powerless… [7.5]

[5] I argue later, in this Appendix A, that surveillance is a natural feature of the extension of intentional experience throughout our relationships, communities, etc., given its basis in the inescapable coupling of both intentional insight and oversight. Refer to 9.172-174.

So, contrary to this myth of the so-called self-made person, just who are we and how do we really stand as a person within this world before others… equally dependent upon us as we, too, must depend upon them?! [7.6]

Now, let us see what more likely happens. Say I go to a coffee shop and before the barista order a particular type of coffee. Now, this barista does not then ask the person who oversees the delivery of coffee beans, then and there, to deliver the same, and, nor does such a person, then and there, order the person who roasts such beans to have them roasted… and so on. If such were the case it might well be quicker to go off and grow my own coffee. At the very least, I would have to be inordinately patient. So, so much then for this 'sergeant major-like model' in the enactment and transmission of power in society! Rather, it would seem, society anticipates such orders and pre-emptively attempts to enact them before such commissions of directed intent. In effect, society can only respond to such orders or instructions by being pre-conditionally attuned to such possibilities and enacting such preparations that would then allow their expedited commission should such commissions be eventually received. [7.7]

Into this 'sea of expectations' we are ever thrown to both play our part and find our place in these intersecting strings of anticipation. Through such an ocean of obligations and pre-conditional enactments, whether inherited or earned, whether given or gained, upon reflection we should be able to observe this all pervasive, amorphous-like formation of power relations into which we find ourselves continually or more intermittently involved, not-involved and/or not involved through forms of exemption. How do we participate in such interactions – through an observance of the conventions associated with the intersection of those genres of behaviour deemed relevant and the manner of their resolution of their competing imperatives as we both navigate and negotiate their arbitration with-others, before-others. As complicated as this sounds, and is, much of this harmonizing of competing interests, etc., is enacted habitually in a manner society has instructed us to perform, more often than not, with both little thought or a need to think and reflect upon the same. When you have learnt to ride a bike you then do so without too much thought in order to safely arrive at that destination you have chosen to be your destination. Only when the necessary pre-conditions are in place are you then able to enact the apparent passage of your journey. You need to be in possession of a bike, know how to ride a bike, be where a bike can be ridden, and, have extricated yourself from all your obligations, etc., 'rightly or wrongly', that would otherwise have impeded your being able to ride that bike at that point in time, etc. It is the nature of our intentions that they can only be successfully discharged when all pre-conditions and conditions find an alignment that allows their apparent 'self-directed delivery'… [7.8]

The enactment and transmission of power can no longer be validly seen as the mere fulfillment of a set of either orders and/or instructions. The pre-conditions of power are diffuse and all-pervasive and pre-emptively anticipated, rightly or wrongly, throughout the metaphorical body of a community, a society, a nation,

indeed, the entirety of the world as lived. They devolve about obligations that must be mutual to some extent or other, and, into which we find ourselves inserted through forms of overt cooperation be that an overt-covert mix of co-operation and co-option. Because power relations are never absolutely equal it could be argued that co-operation also must entail co-option to some degree or other. Conversely, and at the same time, because power relations are never absolutely engendered then co-option can never be absolutely coercive since some residual degree of permission must ever persist even if it were most unlikely that that individual would withdraw their permission in the discharge of their dictated directions. Because power relations in magnitude can never be absolutely engendered it follows some degree of mutuality must persist even if only in a residual format and form. Then, as already noted, a full alignment between relevant pre-conditions and conditions must also be observed before the successful activation of those power relations in such a manner determined through the sufficient, non-absolute resolution of those apparently directed intentions. As argued elsewhere, 'absolute resolution is the death of that relationship in question' and it would follow, therefore, in such a situation that no enaction in that relationship could then be engendered should that relationship no longer be extant. So, once more, it also follows that a minimum residual degree of mutuality must ever persist in any surviving relationship even in one centered in relatively extreme coercion. [7.9]

Into this chaotic ocean of persisting obligations, evolving resolutions and anticipated pre-conditions, every person becomes a node through which the apparent intentions of self and others can be discharged; be that through relatively simple projects or relatively more complex programs. Only through cooperation can any 'one pattern of enaction' be successfully directed in its realized eventuality. Such complexity is chaotic in orientation. Through directed incremental pattern of enaction non-incremental moments of intentionally purchased patterns of behaviour are re-directed in and through such bifurcations. 'Purchased' given their sequentially organized commission and eventual discharge in and through the sufficient meeting of a sea of obligations, etc. The observance of all obligations recognizing a minimum degree of mutual obligation in a compactual dimension since no contractual relations could be successfully entered into without such a basis. Even a slave needs to be fed and not find their life immediately facing imminent forfeiture. [7.10]

Only given this pervasion of power, already in place, can the individual then muster their talents, their education and opportunities, etc., in a necessary alignment with all relevant pre-conditions, etc., to oversee, hopefully, a more positive, relative alteration in their overall power relations with others. But the apparent discharge of all such ambitions is also accompanied with the apparent arising of unintended consequences in a spectrum, as discussed elsewhere, ranging from the relatively successful discharge of our objectives to a less successful process of mis-intended consequences to the closing of a window of opportunity in the meeting of unintended consequences and/or being impacted by the accidental intrusion of not-intended consequence over which we may have had little control or antici-

> pation. Obviously, the realization of our intentional objectives cannot be immediately enacted non-virtually, and, will meet a certain degree of overall resistance over which we must find forms of resolution through such patterns of alignment that eventually allow us to relatively realize such ambitions; be they in the aspirational form of personal ambitions and/or inter-personal imperatives directed either individually or collectively, although, more correctly, no person can ever direct and realize their aspirations through any series of acts centered in any absolute acts of so-called 'self-will'! Even to find myself able to breathe deeply and/or raise my right hand, etc., I must have been sufficiently fed and watered (like a well-cultivated plant), educated and exercised in a (cultivated) manner that allows me to think that I can then perform such deeply dependent activities. [7.11]

From further reflections we are being led to adopt a more Foucault-like view on power relations. I.e., as fluid, amorphous, linked through human nodes, as anticipatory, etc. That such a dimension is complex and entails many variables like the existential recognition/non-existential non-recognition of others,[6] obligations, debts, payments, contractual *versus* compactual elements as well as their deeper levels of interrelational interaction (like, e.g., how 'free' parks are paid for by the council or state, etc.), etc. (7)

Power is almost, if not equivalent, to a force field radiating through people and where these complex overlapping processes of dissemination can be enacted in a manner, upon reflection, that could entail forms of the mere reiteration of subservience, adaptation, re(-)direction, mis-direction, distortion and/or obstruction.[7] (8)

3. Power Demands the Inescapable Dimension of the Other

Without others, we are absolutely powerless! (9)

Essay 9:

> …This being the case, it then follows that we are also powerless to think as mere individuals, but, thankfully, we have others to mutually help us through the inestimable, hard-won gift of language, through education, conversation, reading, the mentoring of others, indeed, thinking as if we were an-other, etc. Indeed, because I can think and act, therefore, my existence must be with-others. So, consequently, this overall life-world (as an overlapping plurality of both major and minor life-worlds) must be both lived-and-shared. Furthermore, given this lived necessity of being with-others it follows that it must be our deontological duty, to both our-

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[6] To be explored later in this Appendix A. The sense of the 'existential' recognizes a need to privilege our relationships to that extent, for-us, they are greater than the sum of their parts. Refer to paragraphs 14-19, 9.170. I have argued, elsewhere, that existentially oriented experience, realized through an ongoing existentialization of the relatively non-existential, is experienced quite differently from relatively non-existential experience, etc.

[7] Basically, modes of reiteration, or non-reiteration. I.e., mere reiteration; sheer re-iterational re-direction through adaptation; bare re-iterational replication of rhetorical tropes, memes, etc; distortion and/or disruption. That these modes of iteration, etc., can also be viewed in sequential terms of reference.

> selves and to others, to engage the world of the other in as mutual a manner as best discharges this service that needs to be rendered both to ourselves and to others, i.e., in this pro-relational, existential attitude of mutual cooperation (being entered into through a mix of contractual co-option and compactual co-operation). To a considerable extent living this deep, fundamental categorical imperative in order to maintain the historical existences of our relationships with-others, when and where, they need to be supported through ongoing processes of relational resolution. To do otherwise is to act, more or less, as a social parasite… living off the good works of others without contributing as much in return. I am sure we all know people that fall within that type of category, whether on the world stage or sequestered in your workplace, out to manipulate the toil of others for their own ends, who would much rather not pay their taxes and be proud of that fact, perhaps possess a mercenary disposition, misuse inherited wealth to demean the good character of others, perhaps contribute little other than such endless negativity, obstruction, scorn, and so on…. [9.170]

Given this dependence upon others, it behooves us to existentially recognize them, in all their variety, as we might hope to be existentially recognized in turn, in all our diversity, etc! (10)

This recognition of the inescapable dimension of others, the Other, should also put paid to short-sighted philosophical notions like for example, that there is a problem with other minds, and so on. Without others, we could neither encounter, recognize nor engage with our own sense/s of self, etc! (11)

4. The Power of Surveillance and the Surveillance of Power

Essay 9:

> In our intentional lives we find a mutual co-association between passive insight and active oversight. Our intentions are never just pure perceptions, but, rather processes of potential-actual enaction. We make intentional decision to act, or, to not act, or, when we cannot currently make a decision, through deferral, decide to let our inactions speak for us instead. Obviously, in this regard, the inescapable couplings of both insight and oversight are the hallmarks of an intentional life; usually enacted in the form of micro-adjustments in intentional directedness, but, occasionally, being re-directed through some form of a relatively more radical sense of re-positioning. Given this intentional co-existence and our sheer helplessness as a mere individual in this world at large then we must expect to find this pairing being extended out into our experience of this world as both lived-and-shared. Indeed, both surveillance and power go hand in hand! How could it be otherwise? These two facets, these two sides of the same intentional coin, permeate the constitution of our overall life-world. In other words, surveillance and power are natural facts of our lives before-others. But, like all things, without suitable levels of critical scrutiny, these facets can, through proliferation and ensuing

paralysis, and all other forms of mis-direction, distort or obstruct our passage through this same world as lived-and-shared. Consequently, it is up to us, both individually and collectively, to ensure processes of re-normalization are ever in play. Hence the need for an accountable dialectic between transparency and privacy, between responsiveness and responsibility, between individual and social forms of care and concern, ensuing a reasonable balance between contractual and compactual forms of behaviour, insuring a productive mediation and resolution of imperatives that motivate and cross-fertilize both personal ambitions and social aspirations, and so on. The default mode in society is for surveillance… be it personal, be it community oriented, be it state sponsored, even if, through theological speculation, it be invoked by Divine means, etc. This we must face and accept, and, in the process, make it our own; not allow it to be a force that will divide nations and societies, alienate whole states and their constituents, empower a few individuals at the expense of entire populations! [9.172]

This existential philosophy is a type of (meta-)positioning through an ongoing, self-critical re-positioning… Better exercised through the suitably[8] enacted, parallel exercise of deconstruction, reconstruction, and, con-construction. A type of philosophical (meta-)positioning that renders as totally impermissible certain controversial philosophical problems like mind-body dilemmas, knowing other-minds, etc. [9.173]

Furthermore, as we must accept that surveillance and power are ever to be with us then how should we go about their critical supervision? I would strongly argue that we go about this form of resolution by adopting and adapting a more mutual, pro-relational, existential attitude that balances and neutralizes their excessive imposition or inadequate instantiation or inefficient exemplification… by re-balancing prioritizations of one facet over the other, by reversing their over-enforcement (when arrived at through proliferation)… by defusing paralysis (realized through over-proliferation) by re-empowering individuals through a re-empowering of their relationships and communities, by suitably empowering organizations and nations in order to re-authenticate our being with-others, before-others! In essence, either creating new, beneficial relationships; by preserving both the relational richness of our older relationships; and/or, the conservational enrichment of those same relationship! Realizing empowerment from observing approaches that ensure de-alienation through a re-existentialization of the relatively non-existential. Effectively, promoting our relationships through exercising suitable processes of ongoing, harmonic resolution..! [9.174]

Obviously, surveillance is an inescapable aspect of our social reality. But, accordingly, needs to be critically supervised in turn! (12)

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[8] As noted elsewhere, 'suitably' is a shorthand code for 'phenomenal-phenomenological propriety (through correlations), hermeneutic appropriateness (through accommodations), and, (non-systematic) existential appositeness (through transformations), etc. The 'suitable' being promoted through an existentially oriented insightful economy (consisting of insight, oversight and re-sight[ing]. Refer to the Tenth Essay).

5. The Amorphous, Powerful, Self-Created Dimensions of Social Space and Time

Our lived reality in this world is both other-created and self-created! (13)

We, collectively, create this lived world for-us, and, individually, within those parameters, redefine the same, usually, within those same terms of reference. Our genres of thought are already pre-thought for us, but, in our own way, in response to an ongoing re-perception, a 're-sighting' of our place in this world can we then readopt and readapt such things-to-hand. By such means our understandings evolve and hopefully find closer forms of alignment through such ongoing resolution with this world at large. (14)

In effect, through passive insight and active oversight we re-engineer a world for-us through ongoing processes of alignment 'corrected' through both ongoing re-alignment and re-de-mis-alignment (as explored elsewhere). Such alignments, as forms of 're-sighting', being subjectively, inter-subjectively and/or objectively oriented, are progressively refined through such processes of ongoing re(-)alignment. Consequently, and subsequently, we need to recognize that we live in a relational world whose dissemination of power is relatively amorphous, effectively de-centered, 'self-created' through both others and self in response to each-other, in such a manner that necessitates both existential insight and oversight in order to better facilitate, both collectively and individually, the 're-sighting' of our passage through this world with-others, through-others! (15)

6. Provisional Conclusions, Observations and Comments

That, any existentially promoted reform of this world, on any level, therefore, must be organized collectively, i.e., politically! That all appeals, e.g., to the ongoing self-correction and self-improvement of the individual should be seen as a diversion and sham; as but one more way society can subvert patterns of needed reform that can only be instituted through collective action of a mindset able to recognize the necessity for reform and in what directions it should best proceed[9] (as with our urgent need to deal constructively with a variety of climate and environmental concerns, disruptions of our democracies, reinstituting political processes that reverse adverse forms of inequality, etc.). But take heart, the very political trends and systems that may work against us can also work for us, for-us! That, through a mutual progression of such critical insights and oversights, we have the power, through such 're-sighting', to affect change, and, hopefully, ensure that such interventions are enacted from a positively beneficial,[10] pro-relational, existential perspective in such a manner that this delivery of care and concern is suitably extended to all agents in this vast nexus[11] of relationships involved in this overall dissemination of collective power..!! (18)

Noël Tointon, Wentworth Falls, 16.5.19.

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[9] Hence the necessity to sell a certain political message through suitable forms of informational dissemination. So, therefore, personal consciousness raising is a necessary but insufficient condition by itself!

[10] Suitably creating valuational formations, preserving the richness of those relationships in historical existence, and, conserving/meta-conserving their enrichment/exponential re-enrichment, etc.

[11] A nexus that must cross all political and national boundaries; and even the restrictions of time and space, life and death…