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People do the darnedest things. They discover preventions and cures for disease; commit mass murder and rape; create masterpieces of literature; perform levitating acts of kindness and devastating acts of blindness; and invent weapons that can bring their own species to an end.

Because of this astonishing range of human options and abilities, we constantly change the world. The world of 1800 was very different from the world of 1900. No one in 1900 could have imagined what the world would be like today, and no one today can predict what the world will be like in a hundred years. The changes take place incrementally or suddenly. Absolutely essential advances may go completely unheralded; catastrophic changes are usually unforeseen. The work of years can be destroyed in minutes; the work of an afternoon can exert a powerful influence for decades. We cannot predict what the world will be like even ten years from now, yet we influence what that world will be like each day of our lives.

It was not quite a century ago that World War I was called
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“the war to end all wars.” That cataclysm did hideous things to countless human beings, yet even former peace activists were recruited into it, perhaps thinking this would be the last time. It was followed by an attempt to outlaw war, yet by 1940 we were at it again, descending into World War II. During that particular chapter of our history, we invented nuclear weapons, which are widely recognized as a threat to our very existence as a species.

Sobered by the consequences of our behavior, we humans then conceived the United Nations. The UN Charter, signed on June 26, 1945, opens with these words:

We, the people of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to regain faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small … and for these ends … to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.

Where are we going?

Recurrent cycles of self-destructive behavior, followed by repeated resolutions to bring the behavior under control, characterize alcoholics as individuals and human beings as a species. There have been signs of progress toward breaking our addiction but also emerging challenges that can undermine the progress. There is the ever-present danger that such challenges might even lead to human extinction.
For the first time in history, it is possible to contemplate a non-biblical “end of the world” scenario — not an act of God but a deliberate unleashing of a manmade, global, cataclysmic chain reaction. (Brzezinski 2004, 12)

As every well-educated person knows, the dangers are not only from warfare and nuclear weapons but also from environmental conditions. Jared Diamond emphasizes a series of environmental challenges that include climate change:

Our world society is presently on a non-sustainable course, and any of our 12 problems of non-sustainability that we have just summarized would suffice to limit our lifestyle within the next several decades. They are like time bombs with fuses of less than 50 years. (2005, 498)

The major challenges we face do not occur in isolation. On the page preceding the statement quoted above, Jared Diamond provides two maps. One illustrates “political trouble spots of the modern world”; the other, “environmental trouble spots of the modern world.” The two maps are identical except for the titles.

A person weakened by hopelessness or malnutrition or an immune deficiency is more likely to succumb to an infectious disease than a person who has the same disease but is otherwise in good health. Environmental problems are made worse by militarism. Warfare undermines the basis for all human rights. Public health systems and infrastructure deteriorate when public resources are diverted into weapons acquisition and development.

Our patterns of behavior in North America indicate that we are grossly irresponsible with respect to conditions essential for human survival. This irresponsibility is apparent in our conspicuous waste and consumption, and in our disregard for the lives of people in Iraq and other parts of the world. Such irresponsibility makes all of us more vulnerable, and undermines human options for future
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generations. The challenges we face do not occur in isolation, nor do the consequences of our irresponsibility. Our own patterns of thinking and behavior are responsible for the self-destructive direction in which we are heading, yet we make daily choices largely unaware of this fact. It is not so much the danger of human extinction but the ongoing loss of human creative potential that chiefly concerns me in this book. We can improve human options and the conditions of human existence, but it will require a basic understanding of why we have been so self-destructive, and active use of that understanding to change ourselves and our culture. Many of our institutions are rooted in self-destructive patterns of thinking and behavior, and serve to perpetuate our self-destruction. We will have to change those institutions. The most essential part of the work, however, must be at the personal level. We cannot be part of the solution until we understand that we are part of the problem.

**Where do we want to go?**

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

— **LEWIS CARROLL**, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

The Cheshire Cat’s response to Alice is good advice for us as citizens. We had better think carefully about where we want to go. Leaving the choice to political leaders and the “experts” who advise them is a prescription for recurrent disaster. That’s not because political leaders and experts are evil but because their thinking and their options are largely confined to the box of the old ways of thinking and because they serve in political and cultural institutions based on those ways of thinking.
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We need effective public discussion about options for our future. The discussion should be ongoing, vigorous, visionary, well informed, well organized, and well documented. It should move freely outside the box of the old ways of thinking. Erich Fromm was a careful observer of human psychology and its effects on twentieth-century society. Noting the much greater attention that had been devoted to ideas of “the good man” and “the good society” in previous centuries, he writes:

The twentieth century is conspicuous for the absence of such visions… The absence of visions projecting a “better” man and a “better” society has had the effect of paralyzing man’s faith in himself and his future (and is at the same time the result of such a paralysis). (1947, 82–83)

If we cannot make a cooperative effort to focus human imagination on our options, then our choices will be unconscious and poorly informed, and our influence will be haphazard. Something better than that is certainly possible, and it might make the difference between survival and extinction. The question is whether we want to try.

In studying the history of societies that made catastrophic choices, Jared Diamond suggested that the failure could be thought of as having several stages:

First of all, a group may fail to anticipate a problem before the problem actually arrives. Second, when the problem does arrive, the group may fail to perceive it. Then, after they perceive it, they may fail even to try to solve it. Finally, they may try to solve it but may not succeed. (2005, 421)
The problems are all around us; they have economic, environmental, political, cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. Responsible global citizenship involves an evidence-based, goal-directed engagement in the work of solving these problems. If, as citizens of the global community, we were to take these things seriously and set to work on them, we would need some conceptual frame of reference as a pragmatic guide. I refer to such a frame of reference here as Option A, which I prefer, contrasting it with Option B, which is the self-destructive direction we have been traveling. Each of these options can be expressed in various ways; the sections and chapters that follow will develop this conceptual framework. A concise and effective way of expressing Option A and Option B was provided several decades ago by Martin Luther King Jr. It is worth repeating and memorizing:

We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish together as fools.

We can greatly improve our orientation in time and space by using this system of navigation. We can evaluate our own culture, history, and process of decision-making at each step in terms of whether they lead toward Option A or toward Option B.

I will refer to the patterns of thinking that tend to move us toward Option B as an “old paradigm” and ways of thinking that tend to move us toward Option A as a “new paradigm.” Old-paradigm thinking is characteristic of entrenched power structures, which historically have been challenged repeatedly by the new paradigm. Because they cultivate the old paradigm, empires drive themselves toward Option B (perishing as fools).

Many people are able to break free of old-paradigm thinking, but it would be a rare person who has not been influenced by it. In old-paradigm thinking, which is characterized by cynicism, Option A is “idealistic” or “unrealistic.” If you think in this way, you will probably read this book critically. Good.
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The practice of medicine and the practice of global citizenship

The bias in this book is similar to the bias in medicine, a profession in which the first principle is “Do no harm.” As in medicine, this book has a specific ethical basis (new-paradigm thinking directed toward Option A: human well-being) and a goal-oriented, evidence-based approach to understanding the conditions that influence human well-being. The same bias was articulated by Albert Camus in his novel The Plague:

All I maintain is that on this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it’s up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences. (1947, 253)

In the practice of medicine, the purpose of identifying and examining disease-producing factors and mechanisms is to find ways to cure and prevent the disease. Pathogenesis is the medical term for factors and mechanisms that produce a disease. The study of human self-destruction is essentially the study of a form of pathology. The question addressed in the next section — “Why are we so self-destructive?” — has an obvious similarity to the question “How does cancer get started and grow and metastasize?” This book presents a way of understanding the pathology that we human beings inflict on ourselves. The self-destructive patterns of human thinking and behavior, which have undermined the conditions of human existence (and are threatening human survival), are here recognized as pathological.

In writing this book, I am interested not just in the solution to a puzzle but also in actively solving the problem. If we define the problem in narrow terms as one of political leadership, we cannot solve it. Only when we begin to see that we are part of the pathogenesis, that our own patterns of thinking in fact support the self-destructive patterns of human behavior — only then can
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we begin to achieve optimal effectiveness in the practice of global citizenship.

Taking the practice of medicine as analogue for the practice of citizenship has a number of advantages. It helps to clarify the new paradigm, to define problems and obstacles in practice, and to identify potential solutions to the problems and ways to move past the obstacles.

Notice the emphasis on learning in the statement by Martin Luther King Jr.: learn or perish. An active process of learning is necessary, or we will perish as fools. But what is it that needs to be learned in order to move us toward Option A? After all, there is plenty to learn in moving in the other direction, toward Option B. There’s learning how to plant land mines, how to fire air-to-surface missiles, how to salute, how to display the flag, and how to sing the national anthem. There’s always a new book or article out by an Option B intellectual with plenty of new things to learn, lots of details from historical research, all placed in a conceptual framework that reinforces our tendency to move toward Option B. This book (the one you are reading) presents a way of thinking (a new paradigm) designed to facilitate progress toward Option A. Many books, websites, and other sources provide rich additional material that enhances our awareness of Option A. The culture in which we are immersed constantly floods us with information that reinforces either Option A (new paradigm) thinking or Option B (old paradigm) thinking.

The term pragmatic realism as used in this book refers to a mindset similar to that of a good physician in the midst of a crisis that threatens human health and well-being. Very much aware of the dangers, the physician is also aware that timely and intelligent action can reduce the dangers and lead to optimal outcomes.

Pragmatic realism recognizes our own part in human self-destruction, but also our capacity for better, more life-affirming human options. It seeks an evidence-based way to promote human
well-being and enable optimal development of human possibilities. Pragmatic realism has the patience and concern for the well-being of others, as well as the respect for their value, that characterize a good physician.

Pragmatic realism is essential to the practice of responsible, effective local and global citizenship. Pragmatic realism can drive a positive feed-forward loop whereby the practice of responsible citizenship revitalizes democratic process, and that revitalized democracy steadily reinforces international law. The resulting increase in human security worldwide enables the conditions that foster human creative potential (education, public health measures, community interaction). By amplifying this process locally and globally, and by creating structures and resources for that purpose, this part of the feed-forward loop can foster a sustained application of human intelligence in the service of human well-being, similar to that seen in the best health care systems. That would mean a constant reinforcement of the practice of responsible citizenship, with its feed-forward effects on democracy, international law, and human security.

**Pathogenesis: Why are we so self-destructive?**

In the 1980s, the Cold War was drawing to a close. Nuclear weapons might have been eliminated, along with a wide range of other costly and destructive Cold War-era policies and practices. Enormous resources could have been freed up and redirected toward more constructive alternatives. The benefits from that line of decision-making would have been beyond our ability to calculate.

Instead, governments chose to perpetuate the warfare system. In the 1990s, violence was escalated again and again when other options were available. We will be paying the costs of this choice — also incalculable — for decades to come. One example of the consequences will be examined in detail in chapter 5, “The Case of Iraq.”
Why are political leaders and their advisors so incompetent at breaking this self-destructive pattern of human behavior? It’s a puzzle, potentially much more interesting than a murder mystery or a crossword. And the solution will be incomparably more rewarding.

There have been many approaches to solving the puzzle, including Marxist perspectives, comparisons with the territorial behavior of other species, and historicist analyses that emphasize the decision-making processes of political leaders. A critical analysis of institutions that promote the self-destructive patterns of thinking and behavior is also essential. These are a few examples of analytic paradigms for understanding the origins of war.

Even more basic to solving not only the puzzle but also the problem are approaches that help us understand how we (you and I) are contributing to human self-destruction. In a book that has become a modern classic (*The Denial of Death*, 1973), Ernest Becker proposes that our self-destructive behavior and much of our culture can be explained by the very human fear of death. Each of us is going to die, and we know it. Culture can be understood as a strategy for coping with the anxiety produced by that awareness. We create “immortality systems,” ways of denying our mortality by identifying with something we believe to be eternal. Being a citizen of the Roman Empire, a Roman Catholic, a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, a patriot, a Communist, or simply being “saved” can serve as a sort of security blanket. I am an American (or a Christian or whatever), and America (or the Kingdom of God or whatever) is eternal and I am part of it and so I am immortal. This “immortality system” makes the very idea of death more bearable.

Referring to Sigmund Freud’s book *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and developments that followed it, Becker sketches an understanding of why a political leader can so easily induce complicity in acts of aggression and destruction. If “the leader” orders the killing of tens of thousands of people, it becomes “holy aggression.” Thus members of the armed forces can kill with
equanimity, and a society can remain silent while its government deprives human beings of basic human rights. It is allegiance to what has been declared right and noble and good.

Our awareness of death could remind us of our shared humanity and become part of the basis for creating a healthy global community. Instead, it has become one of the forces producing the dysfunctional global community we inhabit today.

Becker’s way of thinking is useful because it draws the connection between something that is deeply compelling at the personal level and something that is profoundly destructive at the level of world events. To understand why we are so self-destructive will take more than this, but *The Denial of Death* can serve as one very helpful reference point.

The countless versions, combinations, and permutations of immortality systems include the one promulgated by imperialist Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902):

> Only one race approached God’s ideal type, his own Anglo-Saxon race: God’s purpose then was to make the Anglo-Saxon race predominant, and the best way to help on God’s work and fulfill His purpose in the world was to contribute to the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon race and so bring nearer the reign of justice, liberty and peace. (Rhodes, quoted in Alexander 1996, 25)

Mr. Rhodes instructs us that white supremacist policies are “in accord with God’s will,” and violence in the service of such policies advances God’s purpose. Much more recently, we heard such arguments in support of the invasion of Iraq, including the idea that U.S. military action is bringing democracy to the Middle East. Killing tens or hundreds of thousands of people in the service of state power is not an easy sell to normal healthy individuals. If you want to recruit support for the violence you are planning, you have to find some way of disguising its primary purpose (supporting
political power). Your publicity for the project must obscure the fact that you will be killing fellow human beings and ruining lives of survivors, and must emphasize some benefit (making the world safe for democracy, advancing God’s purpose in the world, whatever) that will appeal to the public and the executioners — the soldiers and others who carry out the orders. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn put it,

To do evil a human being must first of all believe that what he’s doing is good. (1974, 173)

One of the reasons we are so self-destructive is because we think we are not responsible. The violence is originating somewhere else, not with me. It was Hitler, it was the Germans, it was the communists, it was the terrorists, it was the Muslims. In the case of Iraq, examined in some detail in chapter 5, it was Saddam Hussein who was responsible for our imposing sanctions on Iraq and the invasion of Iraq. Even if our own government did something wrong by imposing sanctions and invading Iraq, we are not personally responsible for that. It was our leaders and the experts who advised them who are at fault. If someone were to ask us, “Why did you allow this to happen?” we might respond: “I didn’t know these things,” or “I am not a foreign policy expert,” or “It was the President’s responsibility,” or “We had to stop the evil that was over there,” or “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

We think of Hitler as a prime example of evil, but support for Hitler came from “good citizens” and “good soldiers” doing their duty for their country. Just like us.

By far the greater part of violence that humans have inflicted on each other is not the work of criminals or the mentally deranged, but of normal, respectable citizens in the service of the collective ego. One can go so far as to say that on this planet “normal” equals insane. (Tolle 2005, 73)
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Democracy by definition is a form of governance in which the citizens are ultimately responsible for the behavior of their government. And “the citizens” means you and me.

Policies of our governments have been responsible for the extinction or devastation of millions of lives over the past quarter century. Most recently, under the banner of a “war against terrorism,” we have blatantly violated international human rights law, humanitarian law, and the law of non-aggression. Governments in many parts of the world have been responsible for murderous atrocities. So have ours, in Canada and the United States. The question is whether we are going to apply the same standards to our murderous atrocities as we apply to those of others.

Old-paradigm thinking makes us blind to our atrocities. New-paradigm thinking makes us aware of them:

First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

(Matthew 7:5)

That’s new-paradigm thinking, as expressed at the origin of one of the world’s major spiritual traditions.

Because of our ignorance, because of old-paradigm thinking, irreparable physical and psychological damage has been visited upon countless children, women, and men. Social and economic support systems have been ravaged. Plans for careers, for love, for marriage, for children and grandchildren, for a better future have been incinerated as a result of policies supported by taxpayers. We have almost no idea of the human creative potential we have helped to extinguish, of the chances for love we have helped to destroy, or the seeds of hatred we have helped to sow. To preserve our sanity, we shield ourselves from such knowledge. We return to our immortality systems. We pursue our careers to win the approval of our peers. We read books and articles that make us comfortable by reassuring us about our basic goodness or our
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inability to do anything about all this — or by distracting us from thinking about it. We can’t change the world. We are helpless. It’s the best we can do. We didn’t know. We didn’t know any better. We didn’t know anything better was possible.

The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance.
(Camus 1947, 131)

Pathogenesis: Nationalism and warfare

Standard definitions of nationalism include this one:

The policy or doctrine of asserting the interests of one’s own nation, viewed as separate from the interests of other nations or the common interests of all nations.
(Random House 1987)

Definitions are important for clarity of communication, but there is much more to be said about nationalism than can be expressed in dictionary definitions. The ideology of nationalism makes it acceptable to fabricate evidence, to torture, and to murder in defense of the nation, or in “the national interest.” Nationalism easily becomes an ideological framework for the psychology of the herd, as Sigmund Freud, Ernest Becker, and others have understood it.

Despite the negative attributes of nationalism (or related to them), nationalist resistance can be a legitimate and indeed essential response to oppression. Both Gandhi and Hitler appear in lists of prominent nationalists of the twentieth century. Readers who are somewhat acquainted with that history, however, will recognize important differences between the nationalism of Gandhi and that of Hitler.

Erich Fromm alludes to this distinction:
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Nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity. “Patriotism” is its cult. It should hardly be necessary to say, that by “patriotism” I mean that attitude which puts the own nation above humanity, above the principles of truth and justice; not the loving interest in one’s own nation, which is the concern with the nation’s spiritual as much as with its material welfare — never with its power over other nations. Just as love for one individual which excludes the love for others is not love, love for one’s country which is not part of one’s love for humanity is not love, but idolatrous worship. (1955, 58–59)

The boundary between the nationalism of Gandhi and the nationalism of Hitler is the very boundary to which Fromm refers. It is the divide that separates legitimate from illegitimate nationalism. Fromm and many other observers have recognized the destructiveness of nationalism. In this book I use the terms nationalism and militant (or malignant or illegitimate) nationalism almost interchangeably to refer to the dominant form of nationalism, which exerts such a catastrophic influence in the global community today. When I deviate from that usage (using nationalism without the connotation of malignancy), the context should make the meaning of the word reasonably clear. I will specifically use the term positive nationalism to refer to a healthy “love of country” that is part of a love of and respect for humanity. Positive nationalism can be thought of as an extended form of civic nationalism. Every human being is thereby recognized as a member of the global community, to whom the provisions of international human rights law and humanitarian law are applicable. International law provides a necessary formal framework for distinguishing between positive nationalism and militant nationalism.

Both Gandhi and Hitler were responding to militant nationalist
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conditions that preceded them. Gandhi was rejecting British nationalist domination of India (British imperialism). Hitler was rejecting the humiliation of Germany and Germans that followed World War I, of which Versailles 1919 was the cornerstone and emblem. From 1919 to 1933, the humiliation included a series of economic shocks in Germany and ethnic upheavals in Europe.

Gandhi’s nationalism carried the therapeutic ingredients that could solve the problem of militant nationalism. It was life-affirming and recognized the shared humanity of everyone involved in the conflict. It was deeply realistic and was calculated to recruit universal support.

Hitler’s nationalism carried the pathogens that exacerbated the problem. It was life-negating. It glorified ignorance of the shared humanity of Germans, Jews, and other members of the global community. World War II was the relapse that Hitler’s nationalism provoked. Imagining itself to be the salvation of Germany and Germans, Hitler’s nationalism was profoundly unrealistic. Within twelve years of its ascendancy, Germany was reduced to ashes.

Gandhi’s life and work can be used as a case study in the legitimate uses of nationalism. Gandhi emphasized non-violent resistance, communication, and respect for the other as essential actions and attitudes in the process of rejecting oppression.

International law and the origins of the world’s spiritual traditions are on the side of Gandhi’s nationalism, not Hitler’s. Article 2 of the UN Charter affirms the principle of non-aggression. International human rights law and humanitarian law affirm the priority of human well-being over state power and violent contests for power. Article 51 of the UN Charter affirms the right to self-defense, strictly defined in authoritative interpretations of the Charter.

Christianity and other major spiritual traditions at their origins affirmed and actualized a profound respect for human well-being and made allegiance to power dependent upon and subordinate to that priority. International law and the origins of the world’s spiritual traditions represent healthy responses to the pathology of
power. Because they are prescriptions for the treatment of human self-destruction, they challenge established power structures.

The pathology reasserts itself. States refuse to take the medicine that would cure the pathology. Again and again they have rejected the principles and purposes of international law. The most powerful states subvert the institutions intended to implement international law. Christianity and other major spiritual traditions have been subverted to serve state power. This is evident in the speed and comfort with which the church in Germany accommodated the policies of the Nazi regime and in the support for militant nationalism that comes from evangelical Christianity in the United States today.

At the apex of all this very human pathology is warfare, and the warfare system that sustains it. Warfare is a disease in the same sense that cancer or HIV/AIDS is a disease: it destroys human life and health. Militant nationalism rejects this self-evident interpretation, substituting very different interpretations designed to sustain the warfare system.

Nationalism becomes increasingly pathological as it is increasingly associated with domination, armed violence, and contempt for human rights and humanitarian law. Power unconstrained by law is the major pathogenetic factor in warfare, and it is a defining feature of illegitimate nationalism.

There was widespread satisfaction at the outcome of World War II. Germany and Japan had been defeated in their efforts at ascendency. Everyone on “our” side had been instructed in how evil Germany and Japan were: they had done hideous things to millions of people and were trying to dominate the world. Militarism had played a prominent role in their ideology. Germany and Japan were militant nationalist states. Had they not been stopped, they probably would have developed weapons of mass destruction and would eventually have threatened human existence itself. Fortunately, they lost the war and turned their attention to making Volkswagens and Toyotas. What a relief!
The problem is that the victors were also militant nationalist states and they have not been stopped. It is impossible to solve the problem of militant nationalism by defeating two of the lower-ranking militant nationalist states while militant nationalism itself continues, triumphant and unchecked, in the global community.

Again the question, why are we so self-destructive? Why would anyone choose a way of thinking that is so obviously suicidal for the global community? Nationalism had a powerful influence on twentieth-century history, and it is important to emphasize some of the reasons for its historical success. It is true, and important, that nationalism is potentially a constructive paradigm for the conduct of human affairs. A positive nationalism can foster healthy community and promote the public good. In a multicultural state, inclusive nationalism can ameliorate interethnic conflict (conflicting nationalisms) within the state.

Nationalism can be used as part of a rallying strategy when a society or an ethnic group is ravaged by economic crisis or other challenges, as in Germany during the Great Depression of the 1930s or in Argentina during an economic crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In response to a mortal threat, nationalism can be a powerful unifying and revitalizing force even though it is part of a larger pathological process. The Zionist response to German nationalist oppression and the British response to German nationalist aggression are examples from the era of 1930 to 1945. Conversely, loss of national cohesion often coincides with the violent disintegration of a state (civil war) into competing nationalist entities.

From my own experience growing up in the United States, I know the enthusiasm that militant nationalism can evoke. Singing the national anthem before football games, watching those inspiring war and action-adventure movies, pledging allegiance to the flag in grade school, or reading advertisements for military enlistment — those of us who came of age in the United States are deeply programmed in militant nationalism. There are veterans who look
back on their military experience as among the best times of their lives: they felt the esprit de corps, being part of a highly disciplined, effective, and closely knit unit serving their country.

Reasons for the emotional success of militant nationalism are easy to find. In part it is rooted in healthy human psychology, the devotion to something larger than the little self and the positive effects of self-discipline in service to others. In militant nationalism, these positive human tendencies are placed in the service of a profoundly destructive pattern of human behavior. Yet they retain their power. There is little wonder that young men can be persuade
to go out and “do their duty for God and country,” even if that means killing people or being killed or permanently disabled themselves. Perhaps some aspire to escape from the emotional vulnerability of being human by simply obeying orders — to disappear, as expressed by a writer whose work influenced many Germans in the era of National Socialism:

War is elevating, because the individual disappears before the great conception of the state.... What a perversion of morality to wish to abolish heroism among men!

(Treitschke 1916, 74)

These are ways of dealing with anxiety about death and separation. Becker’s concept of the immortality system helps to clarify the pathology that humans inflict on one another. It is better to die for something you believe in than just to die.

But immortality systems don’t bring home the groceries. Even when militant nationalism can be evoked, it tends to be transient. To sustain it, an ongoing rewards system must be put in place to ensure that the pathogenetic work will continue. There have to be paying jobs — and plenty of them — to sustain the pathology of nationalism.

Those jobs are available in established cultural, political, military, and economic institutions rooted in old-paradigm thinking and
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Option B behavior. Eisenhower referred to a military-industrial complex, but the system is much more pervasive than that. It is a military-industrial-cultural-economic-political complex that provides jobs and an identity. The institutions maintain the pathological value system and the basis for decisions that to a rational observer often appear psychotic.

A paying job, an immortality system, positive feedback from the universities and society — what more could a man ask? It’s a very masculine form of pathology, but women are not immune to recruitment. With all that good stuff, little wonder that individuals in a militant nationalist state can have trouble understanding that militant nationalism is pathological.

The road to hell is paved with immortality systems and lucrative job opportunities. Despite all those apparent benefits — and the comforting thought that it’s other people’s children, not yours, who are going to be hit with the air-to-surface missiles and the economic devastation and the water-borne diseases — militant nationalism exerts a pervasive destructive effect on the militant nationalist state itself. This is true no matter how powerful the state relative to other states in the global community. The United States is considered the world’s last superpower. Militant nationalism in the United States leads to post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, spousal and child abuse, and depression in military families, and to a profound, pervasive social malaise in society at large. Those who think it’s alright to ravage the lives of other human beings in “the national interest” are not healthy human beings, and societies made up of such people are not healthy societies.

Particularly since the mid-twentieth century in the United States, militant nationalism has come into tension with consumerist and careerist tendencies in our culture. Harvard graduates and rich folks don’t flock to service in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. It’s those headed toward poverty who are enticed into the conflagration. While World Wars I and II actually had the effect of increasing social cohesion, with individuals from all
walks of life sharing a common purpose, the ongoing preparation and promotion of war has no such effect in our society today. The polarization of wealth is accompanied by the polarization of mortal risk (largely assigned to the poor) and of primary responsibility for directing and rationalizing the carnage (largely a purview of the rich and their close associates). For many, “Support our troops” is a heartfelt expression of sympathy for those who, because of limited financial means, are putting their lives in the line of fire.

Militant nationalism is a chronic societal disease. Public resources are funneled into military purposes instead of into health care, education, and other priorities for a sane society. Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, in The Three Trillion Dollar War (2008), have estimated that the invasion of Iraq will cost the United States three trillion dollars.

The Bush administration said the war would cost $50 billion. The U.S. now spends that amount in Iraq every three months.

To put that number in context: For one-sixth of the cost of the war, the U.S. could put its social security system on a sound footing for more than a half-century, without cutting benefits or raising contributions. (Stiglitz 2008)

Political leaders unable to break free of the old paradigm become deaf to the voices of concerned citizens and continue shoveling public resources into the flames. Militant nationalism is an ongoing and perhaps terminal danger to our security. With time and the sustained level of risk inherent in the militant nationalist paradigm, disasters such as the destruction of Iraq and the incineration of the World Trade Center will recur in various forms.
In the months preceding the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, I made a series of phone calls to the offices of my two senators in Maryland. With each phone call, politely but firmly, I asked a basic question. Each phone call and letter emphasized a different question, but each in the series of questions was related to the first question I asked: In the senator’s opinion, should U.S. foreign policy comply with international law?

Each phone call was followed up with a letter that put the question in writing. The series of phone calls and letters had, of course, an achievable objective: to test the democratic emergency response system. If the senators responded intelligently and openly, it would be a good sign, potentially enabling an exchange on realistic options for U.S.-Iraq relations. If they gave a form response, a brush-off, it would be a bad sign. Either way, it would provide important information about how U.S. democracy works in the months leading up to a crisis in the global community.

The senators’ offices failed to answer a single question. Signally, their offices refused — despite repeated requests — to answer the question: Should U.S. foreign policy comply with international law?

That particular failure of the senators’ offices is related to a failure inherent in nationalism. As nationalism becomes militant (and it has long been militant in the United States), it becomes increasingly unresponsive to the wisdom of concerned citizens. It blocks effective democracy.

Arguments for the legitimacy of the nation-state are based on its capacity to foster human well-being. Such arguments derive from many writers, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The concept of “divine right” long ago gave way to the concept that even a monarchical rule is subject to this test of legitimacy.

Experience has shown that the best wisdom for governance
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comes from an open exchange of ideas rather than from decisions made behind closed doors. Militant nationalism undermines democracy and tends to increase the secrecy of decision-making among those in power.

Democracy draws on the strength of the “marketplace of ideas.” Democracy can be thought of not merely as majority rule, but as governance based on the best of the collective wisdom of the people. The majority will not reliably provide the best wisdom, and — as this book emphasizes — the old paradigm that dominates established political institutions leads to recurrent catastrophe. For these reasons, democracy must be guided by sound principles of law. Law must be just; it must protect the minority against the tyranny of the majority. As David Held puts it, “The *demos* must rule, but within the framework of a legal order which is both empowering and limiting” (1995, 222).

Law must also ensure that neither the majority nor the government becomes a tyrant in the international arena. In the twentieth century, international law evolved in response to catastrophic violence in the international system. Rivalries among states for military power, and the idea in international law (under the Westphalian system, dating from 1648) that states were at liberty to pursue their “national interest,” had produced apocalyptic violence, particularly in World Wars I and II. This violence threatened democracy itself. The threat that warfare poses to freedom had been recognized much earlier, of course.

Although the threats to freedom derive, in [Immanuel] Kant’s view, from many forms of violence, they stem above all from war and the preparations for war. “The greatest evils which affect civilized nations are,” he wrote, “brought about by war, and not so much by actual wars in the past or the present as by never ending and indeed continually increasing preparations for war.” (Held 1995, 226)
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Demagogues like Hitler and Stalin, almost by definition, win widespread public support. If democracy is nothing more than government by elected agents, democracy has the capacity to self-destruct. Majority rule will self-destruct unless it is guided by sound principles. For a detailed treatment of this, as well as the interdependence of law and democracy, David Held’s book *Democracy and the Global Order* (quoted above) is a useful resource.

Militant nationalism undermines democracy, and with it, our ability to meet a wide range of challenges that will face us in this century and the next. International law — particularly human rights law, humanitarian law, and the law of non-aggression — is an essential part of the curriculum for learning to live together as human beings. We will continue down the road toward Option B unless our governments bring their policies and practices into compliance with international law. Our governments, however, are extremely unlikely to do that unless citizens insist on that compliance. As citizens, we are expected, for good reason, to comply with the law. If we fail to insist on the same standard from our government, we fail an equally important test of citizenship.

Obviously international law will not solve all the world’s problems. It is necessary but not sufficient for the global community to move toward Option A. It recognizes as legitimate the measures necessary for human security. International law does not forbid self-defense. It recognizes state sovereignty, including the right of each state to defend itself against armed attack, and the right of other states to come to the assistance of the state that has been attacked. International law does not recognize any right to “pre-emptive self-defense,” for obvious reasons.

International law has evolved, and continues to evolve, in full awareness of racism, dictatorships, and the danger to basic human rights from many sources. It provides the necessary framework for any legitimate international threat or use of force. Clearly, further evolution of international law is essential, but that must take
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place openly and with the full participation of the international community, not as a *de facto* acceptance of murderous violations of law by powerful states. Down that road lies extinction.

A standard objection to international law is that, unlike domestic (“municipal”) law, there is no agent for enforcement. No doubt a formal framework for enforcement is needed (and states must take that step), but the basic source for enforcement is quite clear from the standard definition of democracy. Since governments are the agents that must comply with the law, and since democracy by definition places the responsibility for governance with the people, it is ultimately the citizens of a state who are responsible for their government’s compliance or non-compliance with law.

Ultimately responsible but feeling powerless, citizens are in a precarious situation. It is as if we are being driven everywhere by a chauffeur who pays no attention to our instructions and repeatedly does things that place us in great danger. The question is this: when will we get our chauffeur to drive more safely, follow our instructions, and comply with the rules of the road? That is essentially the challenge we face as citizens: getting our governments to comply with the law and act in our interest.

*The rabbi’s son from Krakow*

In his booklet *The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism*, Martin Buber tells the story of a rabbi’s son from Krakow who, through a series of dreams and a journey, discovers that there is a treasure buried beneath the stove in his own home. He unearths the incredible fortune and uses it to build a prayer house serving the community.

This story appears in other versions in various spiritual traditions. It has received diverse interpretations, and even a parody by Woody Allen. For my purposes, the following interpretation is useful.

Each of us holds creative potential, the capacity to bring to
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the world a unique gift that may remain undiscovered for years, perhaps forever. To discover that potentially epoch-making gift, we must be aware of the possibility. We have to take ourselves seriously. And of course there is work to be done in finding and developing and bringing to the world our unique contribution.

In our society, this insight is too often obscured. Depression and low self-esteem are rampant. The associated waste of human potential is an incalculable loss — both to the afflicted individuals and to their society.

Yet even in our society, many wise observers remind us of such things and heighten our awareness of ourselves. In doing so, they can also enhance our capacity as citizens. Nathaniel Branden’s work focuses on the enabling effect of self-esteem in every part of the life experience, including the contributions we make to those around us. Daniel Goleman, in his book Emotional Intelligence, provides a list of seven key ingredients in a “crucial capacity” — how to learn. Each ingredient could be taken as an essential skill in the practice of responsible and effective global citizenship: confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate, and cooperativeness. These abilities emerged as important competencies among children who did well in school, but their value extends far beyond the school years.

“Life is difficult,” writes Scott Peck in the opening line of his book The Road Less Travelled. Like other experienced observers, he thinks of love as a conscious decision, leading to the difficult and life-long work of developing your potential for the purpose of enhancing your own life and the lives of others.

In the landscape of literature essential for global citizenship, Erich Fromm’s work is monumental. He calls our attention to the anxiety that human freedom carries with it and to what he saw as just two alternatives for coping with that anxiety: to accept our freedom by developing our unique capacities through loving relationships with other human beings or to escape from our freedom, losing our true identity in some ideology and deference
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to some authority. These alternatives faced Germans of the Nazi era, but they also confront North Americans in our time. Fromm said that society itself is insane if it promotes among its members a life-negating escape from freedom rather than a life-affirming acceptance of it.

There is a resonance among the paradigms put forward by many writers concerned with healthy human psychology. Abraham Maslow emphasized the process of discovering and developing one’s potential, which he called self-actualization. Self-actualization involves creative effort on behalf of others:

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. (1971, 42)

Maslow also emphasized the necessity of such individuals to the health of a society, as well as the decisive effect they have on both the conditions of human existence worldwide and on their own happiness.

Responsible and effective global citizenship: what’s in it for you? It could be freedom, discovery and exploration, self-actualization. You would have to pursue it to find out.

Choosing the future: Summary

If we have no concept of where we are, the challenges ahead, or where we want to go, then our future will be much darker compared to what it will be if we heighten our awareness of these things. This chapter presents some observations intended to help with a process of heightening awareness. The first of these observations is that as a global community and as a species, we humans are divided against ourselves. Violent contests for power are undermining the conditions of our existence, the possibilities for growth of the human spirit, and the chances of human survival. Resources that
are urgently needed for life-enhancing work are being used instead to promote self-destructive behavior.

The second is that we do not have to continue this process of self-destruction. We have a choice. Our self-destruction (the pathology) is based in identifiable patterns of thinking. A shorthand way of describing these ways of thinking is “us versus them.” In this book I refer to these ways of thinking as the old paradigm. With practice, we can identify these patterns of thinking in ourselves. They are a necessary (though not sufficient) factor in the pathogenesis of our self-destruction. Old-paradigm thinking leads all of us toward Option B.

In a very important sense, then, the pathogenesis of this disease that threatens our future is different from that of diseases such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. It is volitional (we are making the choices essential to produce the disease) and visible (we can directly experience the choices being made as they happen).

This may make it easier to find a cure and prevention for our self-destruction than for cancer and HIV/AIDS, or it may make it more difficult. Either way, it does make it more directly our responsibility to work toward the cure for this disease than to work toward a cure for cancer or HIV/AIDS. It also becomes obvious that we can only be effective as citizens by being aware of our own part in the pathogenesis.

The old paradigm (the disease-producing pattern of thinking) takes the form of various ideologies. Nationalism in its currently dominant form, militant nationalism, is one such ideology, and it is especially pervasive. Many of our established political, cultural, and economic institutions are rooted in militant nationalism. Militant nationalism is driving the global community toward Option B.

The ideology could not produce the disease without the institutions needed to sustain it. Cultural institutions provide the basic indoctrination in the ideology and shape the “news” and “history” in a way that fits the old-paradigm way of thinking. Economic
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Institutions maintain the daily input of financial and human resources to reinforce and implement the progress toward Option B. Political institutions shuffle the cards in the deck of old-paradigm thinking and deal the hands that lead again and again toward Option B.

In a population of normal, healthy individuals, a minority are able on their own to see through the old paradigm, understand its consequences, and reject it. Others can accomplish this if someone else leads the way. Many individuals, however, will persist in old-paradigm thinking, no matter what the evidence for its self-destructive effects and no matter how clearly that evidence is presented — especially if their incomes and their identities depend on it.

Finding a cure for the plague that threatens our extinction depends on sound personal and social psychology, and on healthy interactions at every level, from the personal to the global. Militant nationalism is a deeply pessimistic ideology that assumes we have no choice but to continue violent contests for power among nation-states. On the contrary: healthy interactions internationally, regionally, locally, and interpersonally are an achievable norm. Militant nationalism tends to make these interactions pathological and to induce depression and psychological dysfunction in individuals, families, and local communities.

At every level from the personal to the global, the process of choosing between affirmation and negation of life is dynamic and interdependent. The society and culture into which an individual is born and comes of age affects the values of that individual, and the values that person develops as he or she matures will affect the culture and the society in which he or she lives.

Competent and responsible citizenship requires more than a healthy personality. A knowledge base and a set of skills, and experience in applying them, are as essential to the competent practice of citizenship as they are to the competent practice of medicine.
The \textit{ABCs} of Human Survival

The basic principles, purposes, and prescriptions of international law are an essential framework for the practice of responsible citizenship. Viable democracy depends on the active practice of responsible citizenship. International law defines the boundary between positive nationalism and malignant nationalism. International law and democracy are interdependent. We cannot achieve a rule of law for the global community until and unless citizens become aware of the requirements of international law, and of their responsibility to ensure compliance by their governments. Otherwise old-paradigm thinking will continue to drive all of us down the road toward Option B.

As citizens of the global community, we are in a similar situation to that of the main character in Camus’s novel \textit{The Plague}. The protagonist is a physician who must do what he can, day after day, as the plague destroys human life and health in the city to which everyone is quarantined. The outlook is too dark for pessimism. Optimism is essential; pessimism, a waste of time.

Each human life is an index of what the human spirit can achieve. What you decide to do with your life will be one part of that record.