

Conclusions

Volume II

by

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Back: Figure depicting conclusion reached

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*I dedicate this book to
my grandchildren*

*Again, my gratitude goes to my wife, Renate,
to my daughter Nancy, and to my friend
Diana McLeod, for their valued advice.
All mistakes remaining are entirely mine.*

Preface

Those of you who have read the preface of *Conclusions Volume I* will remember my rash conclusion that Albert Einstein was wrong about the speed of light being the fastest in the Universe. When I published *Conclusions Volume I*, many scientists still believed subatomic particles known as neutrinos could outpace light. Now, a new experiment to repeat a test of the speed of neutrinos has established that they travel at the same speed as light.¹ This is a good example to remind us that we should avoid reaching rash conclusions, and, in this volume and in further future volumes of *Conclusions*, I will certainly endeavor to be more careful.

The Opera group at the Gran Sasso underground laboratory in Italy announced its test results in September 2011, suggesting that neutrinos can exceed the speed of light. It shocked the world, because the results upended a century of physics as well as Einstein's relativity theory, which holds that the speed of light is the Universe's absolute speed limit. The Opera group clocked the speed of neutrinos more than once, and the results seemed to be a near certainty. This should teach us that we must take most scientific assertions with a grain of salt – more so, nonscientific assertions.

¹ However, Icarus in Switzerland, Minos in the US, and T2K in Japan are still continuing their experiments to settle the neutrino-speed issue.

In any case, I am not convinced that the speed of light is the Universe's absolute speed limit. As I have already mentioned in my book *Thoughts in a Maze*, we could easily conclude that thoughts travel faster than light. For example, our thoughts can travel to a star several light years away from us in less than a second, whereas the light emitted from the star takes years to reach us.

In addition to drawing your attention to some interesting women in the news, this volume also explores a few puzzles and mysteries. A case in point is the written history of human beings. If Earth is four-and-a-half billion years old, and human beings came into existence many hundred thousands of years ago, why are their written records less than eight thousand years old? When I pose this question, I am giving full credit to the intelligence of human beings. To me, it is not plausible that intelligent human beings advanced several hundred thousands of years not developing some written record of their lives and achievements until the very end of that time, since they must have already used effective verbal communications near the beginning of their existence.

Imitating the clay figure on the front cover of this volume, you can ponder such puzzles at your leisure.

The figure design on the back cover depicts our wavering pondering, from alpha to omega, which may eventually lead us to some credible conclusions.

Again, in this volume I have made extensive use of the Wikipedia to verify and obtain information.

Arthur O.R. Thormann
Edmonton, August 2012

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Part I:
Modern Dilemmas

Modern Dilemmas

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Introduction:

We know that all kinds of dilemmas inundate our modern world. Take, for example, the increase in terrorism during our century. You can declare war on terrorists, as George W. Bush did, but can you win such a war? We have no ready answer to this question. This is certainly one dilemma.

The later exposé, *Greeks Hating Germans*, is another example. In this exposé, all the Germans were demanding is some security for the bailout money they are providing the Greeks, no more than any moneylender would demand. Yet, some Greeks are comparing this demand to Nazi tactics – a ludicrous comparison, at best – and emotions in Athens ran high when demonstrators destroyed a German flag. Is the conclusion that there is more depth to such hatred?

Another dilemma is the foods and drinks we consume. Almost weekly, if not daily, we find out something wrong with one or more of our favorite foods or drinks. A few days back, a news story told us that eating bacon could cause stomach cancer. This is certainly also a dilemma, considering the amount of bacon people consume.

The list of dilemmas is endless, and, sadly, I can only devote a few pages to some of them.

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The Poetic Justice in Dilemmas

Here is my favorite example of poetic justice: A man decides to shoot another man. He aims, shoots, but misses, and the magic bullet travels once around the world, hits the shooter in the back, and kills him.

Another good example comes from a golden-oldie movie called *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, written and directed by John Houston, from the novel by B. Traven. The plot is simple: three US citizens, Fred, Bob, and Howard¹ meet in the Mexican oil-town of Tampico, and decide to go prospecting together for gold. Howard discovers it first, in the Sierra Madre Mountains, and they mine a fair amount of gold dust, which they divide among themselves. Then, some Mexican Indians call on Howard to help them save a little boy's life. He leaves his goods with Fred and Bob, arranging to meet up with them in town. While Fred and Bob ride with their loaded burros to town, Fred decides to keep all the gold and shoots Bob, leaving him for dead. Then, Fred meets up with some Mexican bandits, who kill him for his burros. The bandits slash open the sacks filled with gold dust, and mistake the escaping gold dust for sand. A fierce storm blows the gold dust back towards the Sierra Madre Mountains. Trying to sell the stolen burros, local villagers catch the bandits and promptly have them shot by a firing squad.

¹ Humphrey Bogart, Tim Holt, and Walter Houston, respectively, portrayed these characters.

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In the mean time, the Mexican Indians find Bob and take him to their village, where Howard nurses him back to life. When Bob and Howard go in search for Fred, they only find the stolen burros and the slashed sacks. They realize that all because of Fred's greed, none of them ended up with any of their hard-won gold dust, and Fred, rather than killing his friend Bob, lost his life to boot. I think this film is choice when it comes to poetic justice.²

In real life, we can find many good examples as well: In an election campaign, John supports Robert against George; Robert loses the election, and John loses George's friendship. We like certain foods, but the foods do not agree with us, and eventually cause our demise. We pollute our drinking water and can no longer drink it without being poisoned. A man puts a dose of poison in his wife's wineglass, intending to kill her; then, he grabs the wrong glass and poisons himself instead. A greedy boss refuses to pay a fair wage to his workers, who go on strike, and the greedy boss loses a lucrative order for his goods. Businesses overcharge for their products as much as they can get away with, and when business declines, customers force them to charge even less than the cost for these products. Oil companies increase the price of oil because of a potential oil shortage (which may never occur) but lose sales to newly developing energy sources. Greeks and Spaniards hate austerity

² In 1990, the Library of Congress selected this film, being culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant, for preservation in the United States National Film Registry.

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measures; however, these measures are simply akin to people eating their thirty-day wartime rations in twenty days, and then having to go hungry for ten days. Pension-plan members want governments to regulate their pensions, but complain when the regulations work to their detriment and decrease their pensions.

Governments, too, suffer all kinds of poetic justice: Terrorists need only to exist to cause damage for potential terrorism, causing governments to lose money trying to avoid terrorism. Governments like the tax on tobacco, but dislike the cost of treating lung cancer. Governments that severely regulate the limits of industry pollution, forcing some industries to go bankrupt, may experience a severe loss of government tax revenue. The same applies to governments that raise taxes unreasonably. Governments have also learned to stay out of businesses like airlines and utilities, privatizing them instead, mainly because it is difficult for governments to justify a profit or a loss. Governments who built infrastructure at the lowest cost found out the hard way that they lost more maintaining the facilities than they saved building them. Germany's anti-nuclear power-plant policy invites more coal-powered plants, at a worse pollution than the potential hazard of nuclear plants' leakage.

On a more global scale, many governments support the Syrian rebels against President al-Assad's regime, but could end up with a worse regime than that of President al-Assad.

These are just a few examples of poetic justice

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we face every day of our “modern” lives.

*Detrimental Conflicts of Interest*³

In my book *Connections*, I drew the attention of my readers to some biases of jurors in a movie called *12 Angry Men*, with Henry Fonda as the star (see page 59). Some jurors in this movie also have a conflict of interest, such as wanting to cut juror discussions short to attend a baseball game, or to get back to their pressing businesses. Had other jurors given in to the pressures of jurors with time concerns, the latter’s conflicts of interest would certainly have been detrimental to the accused.

Nevertheless, when it comes to group meetings and group decisions, this conflict of interest is rather typical. Conflicts of interest abound in our society, and judges, jurors, trustees, directors, and politicians must be especially aware of them. People will less likely question the fairness of the proceedings, if they believe that judges, jurors, trustees, and directors are free from disabling conflicts of interest. Trustees, directors, and executives of a corporation are subject to legal liability if a conflict of interest breaches their duty of loyalty. Opposing counsel will intensively question jurors, of course, to make sure no potential conflicts of interest exist to carry out their expected duty.

³ The Wikipedia supplied some information and data in this section.

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Attorneys, too, must beware of their own conflicts of interest. The duty of loyalty owed to a client prohibits an attorney, and sometimes a law firm, even if opposing parties use separate attorneys, from representing another party with adverse interest to a current client. Other conflicts of interest also exist in competing roles. An internal auditor, for example, who is in a position of trust, must avoid competing professional or personal interests. Similarly, a corporation should not be allowed to provide two types of services to a government that have conflicting interests or appear objectionable; for example, manufacturing parts, and participating on a government selection committee comparing parts manufacturers. Another concern is the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on medical research.

Very large election-campaign contributions will naturally influence politicians, and cause them conflicts of interest during their term in office, at which time big businesses' lobbying efforts often continue to cause politicians conflicts of interest. The potential benefits to contributors can include lucrative government contracts, and, all things being equal, favoring a contributing company; furthermore, the elected government will more likely overlook any mistakes a contributing company makes; the elected government is also receptive to pass favorable laws for a contributing company or industry. For example, contributions from the sugar-interests' lobby have assured the price of sugar in the US being roughly double the international price for over half a century.

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Whereas contributions from small contributors support democracy, large contributors' money tends to pervert democracy.

Another conflict of interest for government officials, whether elected or not, may exist when they accept work with companies that were affected by legislation they helped enact, a practice sometimes referred to as the revolving door. The conflict of interest arises when they may either compromise laws and regulations, or use inside information, for their potential, new employers.

Such conflicts of interest may have been partially responsible for the 2007-2008 financial crisis, because financial economists, also engaged as consultants by Wall Street firms, were opposed to regulating the financial sector. Consequently, these economists not only failed to predict the crisis but also actually helped to create it.

Another detrimental conflict of interest develops when commercial media organizations try to balance the interests of their advertisers with the interest of their readers or news watchers, and the more consolidated media organizations become, the worse the conflict grows. It is much easier for ever-larger media organizations to hide news and entertainment not acceptable to their advertisers. This is another reason why investigative journalism declined, especially during election years, when political parties are the major advertisers.

Another major conflict of interest could develop after the present conflict in Syria. If the Syrian rebels

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are able to oust President al-Assad's regime, their internal Shiite and Sunni denominations could easily cause another, even worse, conflict.

Here are some conflicts of interests closer to home: She wants them to take a Mediterranean cruise for their vacation; he wants them to go camping and fishing in the Canadian Rockies. She wants them to attend her parents' 25th wedding anniversary; he wants to watch the Grey Cup game with his friends. She wants a house with a garden; he wants a condominium in a high rise. Such conflicts of interest can easily lead to divorce.

White Supremacy

Some national resentment may have its roots in racism. Take the early American obsession with "whites" for example. The US Naturalization Act of 1790 offered naturalization only to "any alien, being a free white person." Most Americans' opinions regarding whites have changed over the years, of course, but in earlier times of American history some Americans did not consider the Irish, Finns, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Slavs, Greeks, Welsh, and other non-English peoples, white. Even Benjamin Franklin was among the doubters. Here is what the Wikipedia reports about Benjamin Franklin's opinion, expressed in his essay *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.*:

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Benjamin Franklin...complained about the increasing influx of German Americans, stating that they had a negative influence on the early United States. The only exception were Germans of Saxon descent “*who, with the English, make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. I could wish their Numbers were increased.*” Benjamin Franklin most likely thought favorably of the Saxons because Anglo-Saxons like him were thought to be descendants of Saxon invaders to Britain.

In the final paragraph of the essay, Benjamin Franklin stated “...in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians, and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy complexion; as are the Germans also...” Furthermore, he suggested that Dutch and German immigration should be restricted: “Why should the palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements?” Benjamin Franklin, recognizing the potential offense his comments might give, deleted the final paragraph from later editions of his essay. Nevertheless, his political enemies in Pennsylvania used his derogatory remarks against him, and this led to a declining support of him among the Pennsylvania Dutch. Thus, partly as the result of this declining support, he was defeated in the October 1764 election of the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly.

Before the beginning of the twentieth century, some Americans did not even see the Finns as white, but Asian. They believed the Finns were of Mongolian

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rather than of European origin, since the Finnish language is of the Uralic and not the European family. The Wikipedia states:

On January 4, 1908, a trial was held in Minnesota about whether John Svan and several other Finnish immigrants would become naturalized United States citizens or not, as the process wasn't for "colored" in general, and district prosecutor John Sweet was of the opinion that Finnish immigrants were Mongols, not white. The judge, William A. Cant, later reached the conclusion that the Finnish people may have been Mongolian from the beginning, but that the climate they had been living in for a long time, and the to Finland historical immigration and assimilation of Germanic tribes (Teutons), that he considered the modern "pure Finns" to be indistinguishable from, had made the Finnish population one of the whitest (fairest) people in Europe. If the Finns eventually had Mongolian ancestry, it was too distant and diluted to search for. John Svan and the others were made naturalized US citizens, and from that day on, it was forbidden to treat Finnish migrants and Americans of Finnish descent as not white.

The sad point is this: If Judge William A. Cant had agreed with district prosecutor John Sweet, and reached a conclusion that the Finns are colored people, it would have prevented the Finns, at that time, from

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becoming naturalized US citizens. With such a historical background, it should not surprise us to find some white racism among American people to this day.

Some Americans also victimized Italians. For example, they lynched eleven Italian immigrants in New Orleans, one of the largest mass lynchings in US history. In addition, the US Immigration Act of 1924 reduced the entry of Italians to the United States, classifying Southern Italians as a separate nationality, primarily at the request of their Northern Italian counterparts, who considered themselves Alpine or Nordic, more akin to the French and German peoples (see the Wikipedia for more details).

Furthermore, on the 2000 US Census form, race, and ethnicity are distinct questions. Of the over thirty-five million Hispanics or Latinos in the 2000 Census, a plurality of 48.6% identified as “white-Hispanic,” 48.2% identified as “Hispanic-Hispanic” (mostly presumed to be mestizos), and 3.2% identified as “black-Hispanic.” Evidently, some people still believe being white is important. Judging by the answers given by Hispanics in the 2000 Census, this belief seems to exist especially among those not considered white by “white” Americans.

Groups like the Ku Klux Klan especially advocated white supremacy in America. Such strong feelings are waning, but still exist to some extent, and a few inadvertent actions by our leaders and governments seem to support these feelings.

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