THE STATE IS OUT OF DATE

GREGORY SAMS

The text that follows is the first four chapters (there being thirty-three in all) of Gregory Sams' book (hence the references in the text to "this book", an absent "next chapter", and so forth) *Uncommon Sense: The State is Out of Date*, which was published in 1997. See below for details.

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1. A NATURAL STATE

As a child I remember taking comfort in the apparently straightforward truth that if it was possible for one person to bring about a great World War, as it seemed Hitler had recently done, then it must be possible for one man to bring about a great World Peace.

Jesus, Mohammed and other prophets and interpreters of divine truth sought to give us some pointers to peace but the religions that developed after they died never did bring peace and brotherhood to mankind. Most religions are still based on the premise that, if only we would all follow the exact same version of the divine interpretations of one particular prophet, then we would have world peace and global harmony.

Like many, I used to hope that one day some truly inspired leader might come along, political or spiritual, and that somehow this person would get the ball rolling in the right direction and unite us all behind them and their pure inspired actions. Perhaps some combination of Christ, Gandhi, the Buddha, and Bill Gates would do the trick. In our despair of this miracle ever arising on earth, many today believe in an imminent Alien Contact whereby a Ten Commandments type of scenario will be broadcast simultaneously in all languages to all televisions and radios around the globe. But would even this, an ultimatum from space, do the job?

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

After many years' consideration it now seems clear that whilst one person's actions can demonstrably plunge chunks of the world into war and disorder, a state of peace can never be constructed or created by one person's actions. This is because a state of peace is as much the natural condition of our world as is the stability that developed in the natural rainforest. A state of balance and harmony arises as the eventual result of billions of people's activities and interests interacting with each other, and the rest of the world, in a free condition. One person or group of people, however chosen and however enlightened or inspired, cannot determine the specific route to this state of peace. And somewhere in our soul we know that peace *is* a possible condition — something that our species *is* capable of achieving, notwithstanding our lengthy catalogue of failures. It is not a natural condition of being human that we must kill and maim each other for really ludicrous reasons.

The reason we experience so much disorder, suffering and what is often referred to as "chaos" is the result, ironically, of our incessant attempts to forcibly put order into the chaotic and constantly changing mix of what we call society and civilisation. For too long society has been "run" on the basis that we are actually able to govern and control something so complex by setting ever more complex rules and regulations — linear controls which serve only to obstruct the natural evolutionary changes that a successful development of our species demands.

This book is not all about some dramatic new way to run the world because there is no way it can be done. The world can look after itself and support us if we work within its basic operating framework, which is a fundamentally free system. The reason we threaten the future of the planet that sustains us is because we have become a significantly dominant species and yet still operate in ignorance of one of the most basic operating principles of the universe — one that has recently been discovered in the new science known as chaos theory.

There is a way not to run the planet and it might seem self-evident that the way it is being done today is a good example. Nevertheless, the usual approach to this situation is to assume that a change of figurehead or even a severe re-arrangement of the knobs and levers, will sort things out eventually. These pages will seek to convince you that no new combination or rearrangement of the levers and knobs of coercive power will work. When you consider the number of states there are in the world, each run by people who believe they know what they are doing and each tweaked to its local circumstances, and you then consider the minor and major tweaking that has gone on throughout the history of the state (pharaoh, church, senate, king, emperor, president, parliament, etc.) it is apparent that there have already been many many thousands of different combinations attempted. None of them have worked in the long term, though some lasted more years than others. Now do we really believe that, for instance, Version 273,582 is going to be the one that finally works?

At the time each new state was formed, it was generally believed by the instigators/originators of this new state that they had the right policies and programmes to get everything working just perfectly or at least a lot better. And when their programmes fail and flounder, as they have usually done throughout history, the blame is usually placed on "outside influences" which starkly shows the inability of these statesmen to recognise that we all inhabit the same small planet. There are far too many complex elements involved in the system we call society and civilization for any group of people to determine its course and evolution with coercively-backed regulations and rules, made either locally or globally, made with good intent or bad.

The state does perform functions that are necessary to society. It claims the monopoly on these vital functions and does an increasingly bad job of them. We can see crime proliferating as more and more money is spent combating it. We see our true health decline as more and more is spent on sickness care by the state. Education, the roads, agriculture, social security, nuclear power — wherever you look the determined hand of the state can be seen to fail or distort in its objectives.

My proposition is that the means to deal with vital functions can and eventually will arise in a freely operating society so that, for example, thieves and murderers do not run amok, nor polluters have a free license to destroy our environment. Whilst we need mechanisms to deal with these areas, it is apparent that the current mechanism upon which we rely is proving inadequate. The state, local and national, is far more diligent and effective in raising taxes than it is in pursuing polluters, crime, graft or corruption. Many of the state's laws are unnecessary in any event, filling our courts and prisons with perpetrators of crimes that have no real victims. A free society would have no difficulty with many things now thought to be unacceptable by the state.

The state's priorities will not change. Self-interest, self-survival and self-advancement will always be the primary concern of any ruler or government and of the individual power exercisers who are manipulating the controls. The short-term interests of society will take a poor second best, with our long-term interests hardly considered. When a state is said to be "in power" it holds that power for the simple reason that it has the ability to force us to do or not do that which it decides is best. Whether this power was acquired through military force or won in a political bunfight makes little difference in the long run.

You will find more questions than answers in this book and more problems than solutions. This is not a pessimistic view, but one based on the premise that our current system of attacking the problems of the world actually blocks the emergence of organic working solutions. Neither will every aspect of every subject be aired, nor copious examples delivered on every principle. Once familiar with some of the basic principles of cause and effect you will find your own good examples in next week's newspapers or any history book.

2. WHAT WOULD AN ALIEN THINK?

Just for a moment, imagine humanity from the viewpoint of some alien consciousness at least as developed as ours, but without the imposed order of state control as a focusing element of its evolution and culture. This intelligence may have music, dance, art, design, cuisine, architecture, communication, science, love, fashion, high technology, clubs, pubs, sports, humour, drama, means of travel, animal friends and all the other changing elements we treasure in our own culture. After all, none of them were conceived, planned or developed by the state, though from time to time the state may seek to influence, support or control different aspects of them for the supposed benefit of us all.

OK, you assume that this alien must have a central commander and head of state even though they are not needed for any of the above cultural achievements, nor even to build spaceships. You assume this because central command is all that we have in our own limited frame of reference. It certainly *is not* the natural state. You have only to look around you to realise that every other intelligent life form which shares this Earth with us has operated successfully for millennia without any form of central controlling structure for the species. The dinosaur dominated for thirty five times the period that we have been on the planet, as far as we know without the benefit of any parliament, king or other ruling body.

As far as I am aware, even ants have no central code of law defining specific punishments for ants that step out of line. In their specific "one-mind" type of community however, it is likely that any ant choosing not to contribute in the expected manner would soon lose the support of its colony and therefore die. I know of no voting council of trees which determines the specific proportions and varieties of trees in a given forest. It is interesting and significant that in many cases, such as the oak, the long-term successful species has figured out how to co-operate with as many other species as possible. This ability to co-operate with other forms of life is a far more intelligent long-term survival strategy than is that of domination and control by rulers and ruling bodies.

Why do we assume that some other intelligent species, even more "successful" than us, will have the same sort of flawed structures as ourselves, with different names for the leaders and law-making bodies? Why is it so inconceivable to us that any other civilization could be operating, as does every successful structure in the universe — in a state of freedom? These aren't deep questions — they just reveal the deep ruts in which our own imagination is trapped.

We also assume that any intelligent creature capable of space travel will come equipped with ray guns, ionic blasters, phaser bolts and a full arsenal of high-tech weaponry with which to kill and destroy. Why? We humans have experienced a dramatic and possibly unique evolution of ways to kill each other on this planet. A mainstay of our chosen cultural entertainment involves depictions of us killing each other in countless war and confrontational movies. Are we to assume that this is a normal or natural element of any highly developed civilisation?

Our alien may have learned how to travel along the fractal patterns of hyperspace and be able to outmanoeuvre a missile or fighter jet. But it is quite possible that its civilization never figured out how to split the atom. Maybe it never had the fear of a Hitler to inspire its scientists to tap such a destructive force. The consequences of this discovery appear to have been universally negative and now pose an added threat to our own survival. Yet we assume that a higher alien intelligence will have even greater means of destruction at its disposal. This is a basically illogical assumption.

We assume that our highly developed alien will have a very highly developed state and well regulated society. Yet what does the central controlling state actually give to us, not one specific state here or there, but the beast in general — the totality of states running their own big and little countries around the world? They primarily exist to protect us from other versions of themselves. It is difficult to find anything else they do which we treasure, or are satisfied by. They take vast sums of money from us and piss back a little here and there, sprinkling some on the poor and hungry if they are left wing, or subsidizing the unworthy and unnecessary if they are right wing. The vast majority of it though, whichever wing of the bird the centre tilts toward, is wasted and squandered in useless, unproductive and often downright damaging activities.

Probably eighty per cent of what the state does is unnecessary or unproductive, things we are quite capable of sorting out in society without resort to one ruling body, supported by police, the military, nuclear arsenals, parliaments, dictators, presidents and vast armies of bureaucrats; like which side of the road we drive on, what size packet our pasta is sold in, how we generate electricity, what constitutes an acceptable dwelling or house, how two people make a commitment to each other, what types of medicine we use, or how long can we work in a week. Don't imagine that we would live in some disordered mess without a central command issuing all these rules. Wherever they don't exist in our society we seem to have developed real order. We will read more about the reliable aspects of our culture that developed from its own chaotic interactions rather than by government directive.

The other twenty per cent of the state's frame of activities consists of valuable and necessary functions that society needs. Unfortunately, the state does a lousy job in these areas and it is getting worse rather than better. These functions include arenas that vary from state to state, but usually include some mix of essential areas such as education, roads, health care, power, protection from crime, safety regulation, charity, transportation or the press. The state does not govern these areas; it seeks to control them to the best of its abilities.

So what happened to our alien? Well, I hope that he or she will spend enough time to feel a sense of awe for the beauty of this planet and for many of the wonderful technological and cultural achievements arising from our own unique evolution through the chaos of society. But, if our alien is intelligent, it would not take it very long to recognise that Planet Earth is a dangerous place for its own massively armed human inhabitants, let alone a relatively peaceful creature visiting from another world.

We can understand why our visitor might have reticence about "coming out" in our civilization, and frequently may need to

"hyper-space" it back to a civilization whose inhabitants had long ago found peace and stability without the need to continually control and kill each other in its pursuit. They will also, perhaps, have found ways to do this without raping and damaging the ecosystem that supports them.

And I think it unlikely that our alien would willingly choose to share the secrets of space travel with us.

3. THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES

We all know the story of the little boy who realised not only that the emperor was wearing no clothes, but also acknowledged that he saw it, and said so, even though everybody else was acting exactly as if the emperor did have his clothes on. Today it is apparent that big government, the state, has lost any of the merit that we imagine it had in "the old days". Deep inside, more and more of us realise that our structure of government by the state is a decaying system and all over the world we read daily of its latest dire activities against our civilization and of past abuses now revealed.

The term "for political reasons" is commonly taken to mean that something is not being done for genuine reasons. Politicians rate below even lawyers in numerous surveys that gauge public respect for different professional groups'. Our own cultural "body language" tells us what we really think of politics. Most of us have far greater confidence in our corner grocer or our carpenter than we do in our government — those who profess to be supplying us with the essential need of running our society and protecting our borders. It is sobering to recognize that few of those who claim the ability to run our country would be able to successfully manage a corner grocery store in the marketplace they have distorted. Few of us can look in our souls and really believe that the state, our government system, is working.

Yet most of us go about our daily lives acting as though the emperor does indeed have on his new clothes — heatedly comparing one politician's outfit to another's, wishing they would "do something effective" about this or that problem, bemoaning the billions wasted on shelved missile projects and failed employment schemes and thinking that it is somehow going to stop happening.

We refuse to recognise openly that the emperor has no clothes because the alternatives seem so horrific. If the emperor is really naked then:

— Who will run the emergency wards?

— Who will pay the unemployed?

— Who will maintain employment in the arms industry?

— Who will keep our streets safe?

— Who will make sure our air is not poisonous?

— Who will safeguard the farming industry?

— Who will educate our children?

— Who will insure the nuclear power industry?

— Who will decide what foods and drugs are safe?

— Who will look after us when we can't look after ourselves?

These may be important and vital issues but the size of the issue and the need for action should not blind us to the obvious. The archaic/modern state does not deliver what it promises when it moves in to control these vital issues. This seems to be the case whether we are talking about Uncle Sam, the Taliban, the former Soviet Union or present day Russia. I would be interested to hear of any country in the world where, in private, a majority of the inhabitants are genuinely satisfied with their government's efforts.

Of course, so many of the terrible problems which we depend upon governments around the world to deal with, are problems that are caused by governments around the world. It is the state in general, our protecting Emperor, who carries out, sanctions or aggravates the activities that create orphans, refugees, terrorists, the homeless, famines, bankrupts, bulging jails, unsupported families, many of the unemployed and even mad cows, as we shall see.

4. THE STATE IS OUT OF DATE

Little has changed in the management of the state for four thousand years. Whether we are told what to do by pharaohs, emperors, priests, generals, senates, kings, presidents or democratically elected representatives, the resultant state operates on the same basic principles of legislating change with coercively supported laws (not to be confused with natural laws such as that of gravity), and funding itself with coercively raised taxes or plunder from other nations. As we will see in the next chapter, these principles of state management are now shown to be flawed and destined to ultimately fail whenever and for whatever purposes they are applied.

Maybe there was a time when the state was the lesser of two evils — when it was necessary to have strong men willing to kill on command in order to protect us from the bakers, tailors and bookkeepers living over the hill or across the river. Today however, in most of the world's frightening conflicts, the danger comes from the confrontation between those who have control of a territory, and those who seek to wrest it from them. Maybe civilization did get a boost from some of the stability that early governing states were able to achieve. We certainly know that rulers today and in the past have always taken credit for the achievements of civilization that occurred during their reign. Yet, too often we have seen a large part of that civilization's achievements destroyed with the state when it is eventually conquered, or decayed and dissipated by the time that it falls of its own weight. This happened dramatically in the former Soviet Union which ultimately fell apart from the weight of its own uselessness, without any actual penetration or provocation from outside forces or agencies. The world is full of the magnificent ruins of civilizations past — the temples, statues and fortresses that remain as the monuments to the pomp and paranoia of rulers past.

The main reason most of us believe it necessary to have a state "of some sort" centrally controlling society is because we think it to have always been done that way and therefore it has to be done that way. Who else would decide which side off the road we drive upon, or what to do with murderers, or what are safe chemicals to add to the food chain? The fact that our road programme has gone berserk, that murder and incidental violence continue to grow, and that our food chain is mindlessly polluted (with the state's encouragement) rarely comes to mind when we consider with horror the void that we imagine would be left without "central control" telling us all just what we need to do and making damn sure we do it — or else!

In practice we have seen that this system does not work and has no hope of ever doing so, but we are so used to its inefficiencies, iniquities and regular horrors that we accept it with resignation as the way of the world — a necessary evil. It does not seem to matter much whether the state is run by good men or bad, or even run by women. It does not seem to matter whether it gets power by divine right, inheritance, struggles for freedom or democratic elections. When every state comes to its inevitable demise, those elements of society that it has been controlling most are generally those in the greatest disarray.

And yet we still somehow believe that without this system in place there would be a terrible void, gross disorder and a degeneration of society into some kind of a violent morass ruled by the whim of the mob. In fact, as we will see, most aspects of society that we can currently depend upon, evolved outside of this state-run system — things such as our food supply, communications and entertainment which were neither planned nor centrally controlled but work just fine.

Yet the state's modus operandi is to determine just what is a *standard* standard-of-living and then try to legislate us all into it either by supporting people who have not reached the ideal standard, or by attacking those who choose some other way to live. Why should we let these proven incompetents be responsible for our living standards, especially when so many of the problems

they deal with are caused by them, or not a problem to anyone else but them?

In a sense the state, like slavery or war, has always been out of date. It doesn't work, has never worked and is not in the long-term interest of our society, our civilization or our own personal evolution. That said, it seemed like a reasonable way to run things — especially when everybody else was doing it. But we haven't found a way to make it work in four thousand years and we threaten our very existence with our persistence in putting new clothes on the Emperor. Four thousand years is not a long time in our own evolution on this planet, which may have spanned anything up to two million years or more.

We are now faced with the inescapable evidence that this system cannot work. The one constant feature binding the states that have been trying to run the world for four thousand years is the foundation stone of *determinism*. Determinism is, quite simply, the belief that by central planning, with the right information, you can determine the actual development of a complex system. It is the belief that by passing man-made laws and launching programmes and plans we can more positively affect and effectively control the evolution of society than it can do by itself. This, we now know, is like saying we could do a better job of managing the solar system by adjusting and carefully regulating the orbits and rotations of each of its planets, moons and asteroids. What science can do with some regularity is determine, in the sense of correctly predicting, what a complex system is going to do, or guess the probability of various possible outcomes. What it cannot do is alter or accurately influence the outcome of the system by mandate, combined with manipulation of some of its parts.

The new discoveries of science provided by the study of chaotic systems show us not only that efforts to mechanistically control them are futile, but also that they have an organizing force of their own. That is to say that chaotic systems, *systems with an uncountable number of parts operating independently in an unpredictable manner*, have a fundamental tendency to organize themselves into stable and flexible working systems, constantly adjusting themselves according to feedback from within and without the system.

A good example of such a system is the rain forest that achieves a stability which provides life for all its myriad components, while delivering oxygen to the rest of the globe as a by-product. Another manifestation of chaos organizing itself is the evolution of music in our society, evolving through constantly new harmonies, forms and technologies in order to provide continually new variations of pleasure for billions of differently tuned ears.

We could worry much less about the fate of the Amazonian rainforest, were not the Brazilian state actively subsidising clearance for cattle ranching, as well as building roads and facilities for Japanese timber interests. One of the jokes in the rain forest is: "Where's the beef?", as many contractors simply clear the land, take the subsidy money and run, rather than getting involved in the short-term marginally profitable business of trying to feed cattle on the thin topsoil that is exposed. The state, in its brazen desire to expand its effective tax base, spends great sums of so-called public money to entice business to rape an ecosystem that would economically otherwise remain untouched. Though the whole project bears all the hallmarks of a disaster that will be forever regretted, it will be doggedly pursued for years by a state which will always have successors to be responsible for its short-sightedness.

And just imagine if our society believed music to be so important to our lives that it had to be regulated, like health-care, with strict government controls and regulation. Would we ever have had jazz, rhythm and blues, rock 'n roll, the Beatles, punk rock, acid house, ambient music and psychedelic trance? The state of the music industry in France today is a testament to that government's absurd attempts to legislate the content of music and maintain its French "cultural integrity". They have at least excluded classical music from their complex regulations since many of the great composers were not French.

That states are unable to deterministically manage a system as complex as human society is evident in every area over which they exert control. A classic case in Europe is the Common Agricultural Policy which — through trying to safeguard our food supply — has posed the greatest threat imaginable to it and our health. Some of the effects of the Common Agricultural Policy are:

— It counters our evolutionary change to a healthier diet, by breaking the natural and effective feedback loop between the consumer and the primary food producer.

— It encourages the introduction of toxic chemicals to our ecosystem through supporting and subsidising food production beyond society's demands.

— It is responsible for the surplus of cattle that were fed back to themselves, as a means of reducing the "beef mountain". This created the conditions for the growth and spread of BSE (mad cow disease). The original cause of this modern tragedy is the intervention of the state in our food chain.

— It has been widely recognized as unworkable, corruption-prone and grossly inefficient since the early 1980's. Literally billions have been taken in subsidy money for non-existent food production with the companies dissolved before they are ever detected.

Yet somewhere in Brussels, nerve-centre of the growing European Empire, the wielders of deterministic power think that some more of our money and some clever manipulation of the grotesque formula will get it all working. The alternative of lost jobs (their own) and responsibilities is too awful to contemplate. We will have more on the above points later. I leave it to researchers and historians to determine, but suggest that almost any large empire, in the final ten percent of its existence, had more priests and bureaucrats and military, with more volumes of laws and regulation, than at any other point in the 90% of the rest of its existence. I suggest that this applies as much to the Aztec Empire as to the former Soviet Union or to the world's current superpower.

People may plan their lives ahead and often live out the plan successfully, companies can plan five-year strategies and projects that may come to fruition. But in neither instance is civilisation as a whole being forced to accept these plans and they stand or fall on their own merit. Should someone in Japan develop a car that runs on water, then all the plans of the oil companies will need rapid alteration. They are part of the chaotic mix of billions of entities making decisions that affect all of the other entities on the planet in unpredictable ways — the ways of a complex system. If they do fit in and positively enhance our lives they survive and prosper.

Our newly discovered scientific appreciation of the nature of complex systems (see next chapter) gives us a clear explanation for the eventual failure of all past and future govemment programmes involving the forced manipulation and management of "vital" aspects of the complex system that is our society. In every area that the state controls, the natural feedback loop inherent in a complex system is broken and we cannot expect "our say" at the ballot box to make more than a marginal difference in things. We know that whoever is in power will be ineffectual and a waste of our money — and yet we continue to avoid even wondering if there are possible alternatives to the palpable madness of the modern state, democratic or otherwise.

Here, we accept that the state, however the knobs and levers and buttons are arranged, is just never going to "get it right", never going to legislate us into peace, harmony and progress. It can have no positive part to play in the healthy or successful evolution of our species and its own activities are indeed counter-evolutionary. It does not work and you know it does not work. But there it is — what to do? First of all — *stop* believing that the state is necessary, or being frustrated by its inevitable failures, or expecting that it will get something right in the long run. It should come as a relief to recognise that we do not have to rely on the state to get things right, even if it is only because we cannot.