

Alliance for Responsible Citizenship (ARC)
Statement of Vision and Invitation

February 12, 2023



The good news

Life has improved dramatically, over the past few centuries, for almost everyone, everywhere, at an ever-accelerating rate. Far more people are thriving on our planet than we could have imagined even mere decades ago. We live longer, are increasingly and globally literate, educated, and connected, and enjoy unparalleled access to fresh water, food, energy and resources.

We exist, as well, in comparative peace: violence of every form, from murder to insurrection, is increasingly rare and universally condemned, and fewer people than ever before confront the ravages of war. To note that all this is a miracle is to still understate the enormity of the accomplishment.

Many problems, of course, remain: hundreds of millions still labour under conditions of extreme privation; we still organize ourselves less effectively than we might if we were truly wise; we are still determining how to maintain our economic security and prosperity in an efficient, cost-effective, and nature-conserving manner.

But the foundations are secure and good: we have learned how to act and to conduct ourselves both individually and socially so that true human flourishing is possible, on a scale heretofore undreamed of and practically impossible.

The challenge

Despite all this good news, this undeniable progress, a shadow has emerged, an adversarial challenge to this state and process of expanding abundance; an emergent crisis of meaning and purpose. God is dead, or so the story goes, and the future is uncertain. Five centuries of ascendant reductionist Enlightenment rationality have revealed that this starkly objective world lacks all intrinsic meaning. A century and a half or more of corrosive cultural criticism has undermined our understanding of and faith in the traditions necessary to unite and guide us.

In the midst of this existential chaos, the false idol of apocalyptic ideology inevitably beckons.

We find ourselves, in consequence, inundated by a continual onslaught of ominous, demoralizing messages, most particularly in the form of environmental catastrophism; the insistence that we confront a severe and immediately pending emergency of biological destruction, causally associated with our degenerate social structures and their excess and destructive industrial production.

The narrative generating these messages, quasi-religious in its structure and intensity, paints a dismal existential picture: the individual is a rapacious, predatory, parasitical consumer; society—even the little society of the family—an oppressive, tyrannical despoiler; and nature, herself, a hapless, fragile, virginal victim.

For our sins, so the story goes, the horsemen of the apocalypse are to be loosed upon us—and justly so. The ultimate Malthusian nightmare is about to be realized: the planet is unsustainably and unforgivably overpopulated; there is simply too much fundamentally pathological human activity; plague, political anarchy and starvation await us all. It is, in consequence, high time to repent, and change our errant ways; to admit in defeated shame that our current social and industrial enterprises are corrupt and unsustainable; to radically revolutionize all traditional forms of conduct and governance; to question even the propriety of bringing new devouring mouths into this world; to accept, without resistance, the limits to growth and opportunity made increasingly mandatory by a coterie of concerned and hypothetically expert elites.

A deep, worldwide, social, economic and environmental revolution is therefore allegedly at hand; those who dare suggest otherwise are blind, if not malevolent, and must be silenced.

The results of such theories? The consequences of such proclamations?

The increasing and increasingly compelled imposition of severe, involuntary limits to material abundance and growth; the resultant artificially-inflated prices, particularly for energy, that most truly punish the poor.

The fraying of our social fabric into a chaos of alienated polarization; simultaneously, and in predictable lockstep, the extension of reach and control over even the most private details of our lives by increasingly gigantic and centralized organizations, governmental and corporate alike.

The spread, particularly among the young, of a demoralizing and socially-divisive doubt and hopelessness.

Invitation to the ARC

The catastrophizing must stop. It is existentially perilous to insist upon the impending end of the world in this doomsaying manner—lest the ensuing panicked tyranny produce exactly the result that is, in principle, most feared. The use of increasingly powerful and invasive technology to monitor and control everything, in combination with the willingness and ability to use compulsion and force, can lead only to tyranny and despair, regardless of the hypothetical nobility of the end goal.

We have improved almost everything, and appear to be rapidly getting better at doing precisely that. As the great British historian Macaulay long ago inquired: “On what principle is it, that when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?”

We have therefore initiated the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship (ARC), a new movement of hopeful vision, local, national and international in its aim and scope, aimed at the collective, voluntary establishment of a maximally attractive route forward. The ARC will open itself up to widespread public membership, as rapidly and extensively as is practically manageable, as as

low a cost as is possible and desirable, so that everyone interested can aid in voluntarily formulating this story and strategy, and to discuss how its implementation might be encouraged.

We are also announcing our first conference, slated for Greenwich, London, England, October 30th and 31st and November 1st, concentrating on issues metaphysical, cultural and practical. Some of this conference will be necessarily limited in its scale to two thousand initial attendees; some of it will be made open to a wide a swathe of the public; the happenings on both fronts will be made available online insofar as that is pragmatically possible, either live or recorded for later reading, viewing or listening.

We plan to render the operations of the ARC public and transparent; to operate under the assumption that each citizen has the inalienable right and is well-equipped when engaged, informed and consulted to choose and adhere to the desirable, sustainable, productive and generous future path.

The sheer complexity of the world, and the genuine diversity of individual ability and preference means that distributed decision-making is a necessity, not a luxury: no elite technocracy is capable of knowing best and then determining how we should all move forward as individuals and communities.

It follows from this that policy requiring compulsion, let alone force, rather than the voluntary assent of the participants, is bad policy.

We offer for the contemplation of those potentially interested in our invitation six fundamental questions, the answers to which might form the basis for a vision that is voluntarily compelling, motivating, stabilizing and uniting.

- Vision and Story: What destiny might we envision and pursue, such that we are maximally fortified against anxiety and despair, motivated by faith and hope, and voluntarily united in our pursuit of a flourishing and abundant world?
- Responsible Citizenship: How might we encourage individuals to reflect and to act so that they adopt full voluntary responsibility for themselves, present and future, as well as their families and communities?
- Family and Social Fabric: How might we effectively conceptualize, value and reward the sacrificial, long-term, peaceful, child-centered intimate relationships upon which psychological integrity and social stability most fundamentally depend?
- Free Exchange and Good Governance: How can we continue to gain from the genius of unbridled human innovation and the productive reciprocity of voluntary production and free exchange, while protecting ourselves against the tendency of successful organizations to degenerate into a state of wilfully blind and narrowly self-serving authoritarianism?

- Energy and Resources: How do we ensure provision of the energy and other resources crucial to our shared security and opportunity in a manner that is inexpensive, reliable, safe, efficient and widely and universally accessible?
- Environmental Stewardship: How might we properly pursue the environmental stewardship that most truly serves the needs and wants of all individuals today, tomorrow and into the foreseeable future?

Concluding words

We at ARC do not believe that humanity is necessarily and inevitably teetering on the brink of apocalyptic disaster. We do not believe that we are beings primarily motivated by lust for power and desire to dominate. We do not regard ourselves or our fellow citizens as destructive forces, living in an alien relationship to the pristine and pure natural world.

We posit, instead, that men and women of faith and decisiveness, made in the image of God, can arrange their affairs with care and attention so that abundance and opportunity could be available for all.

Those who present a vision of inevitable catastrophe in the absence of severely enforced material privation are not wise seers of the inevitable future, but forlorn prisoners of their own limited, faithless imaginations. Those who scheme to lead using terror as a motivator and force as a cudgel reveal themselves by definition unfit for the job.

We hope to encourage the development of an alternative pathway uphill, out of both tyranny and the desert, stabilizing, unifying and compelling to men and women of sound judgement and free will.

Welcome aboard the ARC.