



Published on *Reality Sandwich* (<http://www.realitysandwich.com>)

CC-BY: A Step into the Belated Future

By *Nick Meador*

Created 08/12/2010 - 10:53

Feature

teaser:

Copyright law now protects creative works for almost a century. At the very least, copyright terms should be drastically reduced. Of course, the concept of revising creative compensation is based on the presumption that we will still use monetary currency with inborn inflation in the future. But a gradual transition would be better than picking up the pieces in a post-apocalyptic world.

As a long-time supporter of the peer-to-peer torrent network evolution, it became clear by the time I entered grad school in 2007 that there was something very wrong with the implications of copyright law in the United States. I don't think I fully realized it until I found Creative Commons ("CC" for short) -- the innovative service which provides partial copyright protections (sometimes called "copyleft") to creative authors according to their sharing preferences -- and, by extension, the 2004 book *Free Culture*, written by law professor and activist Lawrence Lessig.

I have been a "pirate" -- a file-sharer -- since computer programming class in the fall of 1997, when my fellow ninth-graders and I exchanged MP3s over the Internet (using Internet Relay Chat, as was customary in the pre-Napster era) without so much as a momentary consideration of the legal or ethical implications involved. So when Lessig wrote that U.S. copyright law has been drastically over-extended not only in duration but also in application, in such a way that it has a chilling effect on creativity itself, I believed him wholeheartedly.

A part of me was grateful for the multitudes of music to which I had been exposed because of the paradigm shift brought forth by the Internet. Another part of me was giddy over the thought of pop stars, record label hot shots, and their RIAA pit bulls sobbing (and, in the case of the RIAA, hopefully contemplating suicide) in empty mansions because we (by "we," I mean millions of geographically separated people acting on common sense and a love of music) were dismantling their power pyramid block by block.

But I was always slightly dismayed by Lessig's approach. Being a law professor (then at

Stanford), it was clear that he hoped, at least *in practice*, to take a moderate approach in his activism. What he proposed *in theory*, sometimes only between the lines, was that copyright law is irrefutably broken and we should do everything possible to deconstruct it. It seemed as though he didn't want to spark a violent backlash from either the masses of law-obeying (and sometimes righteous) consumer-automatons, nor from their multi-million-dollar-funded and drunk-on-power counterparts in the biz. Clearly he had considered the history of revolutionary process - if only in post-war America - and he was trying a more constructive approach with less media conflagration and the public hysteria that comes with it.

The core of Lessig's argument was that modern copyright law has been extended to the point where it comes into direct contradiction with common sense. The forces of the dark side could call us thieves for committing the moral equivalent of stealing a CD from a store, but we knew it wasn't completely true. Even without the beneficial context provided by Lessig's book, kids and adults alike could sense intuitively that, in some way, they were entitled to rip, share and download music, burn it to a CD for personal use, and -- for the more adventurous -- create a remix or mash-up. As long as they weren't taking a physical product or selling copies, the common people saw themselves as innocent.

Copyright law has always included a "fair use" element, which allows certain kinds of copyright rule-bending for activities like teaching, or writing an essay with a reasonable number of direct quotes from someone else's book (as I'm doing right now). But as Lessig explains, fair use now carries a lot of legal weight because the technology of the Internet is

"...a distributed, digital network where every use of a copyrighted work produces a copy. [...] Uses that before were presumptively unregulated are now presumptively regulated. No longer is there a set of presumptively unregulated uses that define a freedom associated with a copyrighted work. Instead, each use is now subject to the copyright, because each use also makes a copy." (1)

Hence, by 2004 the RIAA had engaged in a suing spree. As Lessig writes, "If a family's computer is used to download a single CD's worth of music, the family could be liable for \$2 million in damages." (2) In the past there was no possible way for a major record label to know if, for example, you created mixtapes from CDs you had purchased and then freely distributed the tapes to your friends. But that time was suddenly over.

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Fast-forward to 2010, a time when we can no longer afford to ignore the work of R. Buckminster Fuller. In his 1969 book *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, Fuller had the incredible foresight -- 20 years before the invention of the World Wide Web (3) -- to write, "A new, physically uncompromised, metaphysical initiative of unbiased integrity could unify the world. It could and probably will be provided by the utterly impersonal problem solutions of the computers." (4) By "metaphysical," Fuller essentially meant intangible creations, ideas and knowledge -- versus "physical" items, like a computer itself.

The U.S. government developed the Internet -- the global data infrastructure that enables

the content system known as the World Wide Web -- in the '60s, and I wouldn't be surprised if Fuller knew about it when he wrote this statement. (5) Most people living in the civilized world have already witnessed something spectacular on the Web, whether it was looking at Area 51 via the satellite view on Google Maps, finding a long-lost friend on Facebook, or -- to keep in line with this discussion -- gaining entry to a p2p (BitTorrent) music network so organized and comprehensive that it serves the purpose of music distribution better than any store in the world (including the iTunes Music Store or Amazon.com, for that matter).

The Net is arguably (or maybe undeniably) the greatest example of metaphysical innovation to arise from humanity thus far. In fact, one p2p network recently held a poll -- containing both physical and metaphysical choices -- that sought to identify mankind's best invention. The clear winner at 54 percent was the Internet (it beat cold beer [17 percent], the wheel [13], the condom [5] and macaroni with cheese [3], among other things. Of course, the survey pool of twentysomething computer nerds wasn't exactly projectable onto the general population). In other words, for the inhabitants of a universe that is, as Fuller described it, "nonsimultaneous, nonidentical and only partially overlapping," our whole species is pretty amazed, all at the same moment, by what we can do on and because of the Internet. (6)

Here's where my problem with copyright law arises. There seems to be a fundamental clash between Fuller's rightful suggestion that computer technology could save the world, and the observed fact that interconnected computers have made a whole generation of people into criminals. This fact is so troublesome that Lessig's *activist side* (which proposed measures to rebuild the public domain -- the realm of totally unprotected content -- and restore balance to the creative process) has often been overshadowed by his *law professor side* (which had moral qualms about fighting for something our country deemed illegal, while he was supposed to be preparing students for a career in legal practice).

It seemed that the decriminalization of file sharing would be more likely to happen than any massive restructuring of American copyright law. But six years after the publication of *Free Culture*, I don't see much indication that we've gained ground in the war. Lessig himself has transferred to Harvard Law School, and his efforts have shifted to his new group Change Congress, which aims to end corporate funding in political campaigns -- probably the largest source of conflicted interests in our semi-democratic system ("semi-democracy" is another of Fuller's terms). The RIAA announced in 2008 that it would stop suing individuals for sharing songs (they had attacked 35,000 people since 2003), and instead began working with Internet service providers to disconnect offenders who didn't obey cease and desist orders. (7) So in a way, both sides went for a broader, more systematic approach in this fight that, sadly enough, now goes largely unnoticed by the general public.

The law is extraneous to my main concerns, partly because I feel that fighting from a legal perspective alone omits some of the most important considerations. "Bucky" Fuller had some other wacky ideas aside from, but related to, his futuristic projection about computers. He said Einstein's equation $E=Mc^2$ changed our entire conception of the universe by showing that matter and energy are interchangeable.

"Thus the metaphysical took the measure of, and mastered, the physical. That relationship seems by experience to be irreversible. [...] If the present planting of humanity upon Spaceship Earth cannot...discipline itself to service exclusively that function of

metaphysical mastering of the physical it will be discontinued..." (8)

In case his unusual wording didn't smack you upside the head, he's saying we each have to "put mind over matter" and obey our natural inclination to develop a comprehensive set of abilities -- or else the primate known as *homo sapien* will inevitably go extinct.

If we apply this theory to the debate over copyright law, it tells us that Lessig's aims, even if executed successfully, will never be enough. The legal approach is insufficient because what we're talking about goes well beyond the common understanding of copyright law. We're essentially fighting over the control of our collective metaphysical universe, which amounts to half of "total universe" -- though the half that is literally hidden from view (especially these days, when most physical media formats have given way to MP3s and other digital media). And since the metaphysical universe is inherently invisible, it can never be weighed or measured, and it has no objective value. Its worth has been, and always will be, whatever we ascribe to it.

If you were to poll the general public on the meaning of wealth, the top responses would undoubtedly contain some reference to money. We assume that a \$1 bill is actually worth a dollar, when *in reality* it's a piece of paper -- practically worthless in physical terms -- with an agreed upon metaphysical value. The problem with our popular understanding of wealth is that it's now based on metaphysical factors alone. Money generally used to be valued on a gold standard system, wherein paper currency was exchangeable for gold coins or bullion.

But the start of the Federal Reserve System in 1913 allowed the government to print money as needed. (9) And then, after occasionally moving off the gold standard in times of war or economic hardship, President Nixon decided in 1971 that gold and U.S. dollars would no longer be convertible. (10) The combined effect of these two measures is that the value of our money steadily decreases in value (i.e., inflation), and the value itself is totally arbitrary (that is to say, metaphysical). The Fed creates more money without having to match it with gold reserves, so each dollar bill (or dollar number in a bank account) comes with debt built into it, ensuring that inflation will continue in a regular fashion.

As Fuller writes in *Spaceship Earth*, the gross national product of the U.S. was valued at \$3 billion of assets in 1810, but by 1970 it was considered to be \$1 trillion. (11) Since the total gold supply (i.e., the physical monetary reserve) on the planet is actually around \$40 billion, the perceived growth in wealth was all metaphysical. That isn't to say that our entire economy is *worthless*. The point is that our definition of wealth is totally skewed. Therefore, people who accept or affirm the consumerism and materialism of the status quo aren't just shallow; they're completely ignorant as to what wealth actually means. But "we, the people" are not totally at fault, since no one in a position of power has ever explained this to us.

Fuller realized that these topics are far removed from everyday discourse, so in order to illustrate the fundamental shift that was necessary in society, he proposed a total redefinition of wealth:

"Now we can account *wealth* more precisely as *the number of forward days for a specific number of people we are physically prepared to sustain at a physically stated time and space liberating level of metabolic and metaphysical regeneration.*" (12)

Stated another way, wealth can only be measured by how effectively we're using our intuition to ensure the survival and well being of the human race.

As Robert Anton Wilson argued in his 1983 book *Prometheus Rising*, economists and Marxists are both wrong in thinking that wealth arises from some combination of "land, labor, and capital." "The real source of wealth is correct ideas: workable ideas: that is, negative entropy -- Information. The origin of these coherent (workable) ideas is the human nervous system. All *wealth is created by human beings using their neurons intelligently.*" (13)

This redefinition reveals the utterly backwards state of our current economic system. Einstein's theory of relativity contains within it a law stating that, contrary to how we commonly perceive it, energy can't ever be created or destroyed. Energy is always conserved in a closed system, such as the universe. It's irresponsible to think of wealth as a physical thing, since, as we witnessed in the economic crash of 2008, many people lost a sizeable portion of their life savings in an instant. None of these victims would admit that their *worth* as human beings had suddenly decreased, but that is exactly what is implied by such a flawed vision of *wealth*. The current definition only takes metaphysical wealth (e.g., knowledge, ideas and wisdom) into account if the idea or content has a commercial value - that is, if it can be copyrighted and sold.

In reality, every new human endeavor can only result in a gain in knowledge, not a loss of it. So "wealth is irreversible in evolutionary processes" because it's a function of physical energy (which is constant) and metaphysical knowledge (which continually grows). (14) As Fuller wrote, "we find that the physical constituent of wealth-energy-cannot decrease and...the metaphysical constituent-know-how-can only increase." (15) Therefore, any economic arrangement in which it's possible for "wealth" to decrease is bogus, for the simple reason that it's not in line with the universal truth of evolution.

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Towards the end of *Free Culture*, Lessig proclaims that the goal of Creative Commons licensing "is to build a movement of consumers and producers of content...who help build the public domain and, by their work, demonstrate the importance of the public domain to other creativity." (16) If the thinking behind this goal was influenced by Fuller's radical redefinition of wealth, Lessig certainly doesn't admit it. In fact, Lessig's narrow focus on copyrighted content suggests that he was unaware of the two-faced physical/metaphysical nature of our universe. To clarify, he believes copyright is necessary because it provides incentive for people to create and then share their creations with the world, thereby reaping a monetary reward. It's our overblown application of copyright law, he says, that's the real problem.

But if we are to take Fuller's redefinition seriously, it implies that *copyright law contradicts the workings of the universe*. This isn't about developing a new ideology or dogma; it's about understanding the nature of the system of evolution that brought us to our current state of existence, and then trying to live consciously in that mode. Fuller went so far as to say that, because "the part of our wealth which is physical energy is conserved...the word

'spending' is now scientifically meaningless and is therefore obsolete." (17)

Spending is obsolete? Then what are we doing when we go to Walmart, Target and Best Buy? What *is* that action whereby we get stuff with the swipe of a plastic card or the surrender of paper bills and metal coins? Perhaps Fuller's words imply that the vast majority of these "transactions" are both worthless and imaginary. Even worse is the suggestion of what this means for the lives of all the enthusiastic shoppers, the proud upholders of our consumeristic system.

Before your socialist/communist/Utopian alarms start beeping, let me provide some more context. According to Fuller, the most powerful men throughout history were the ones who best fulfilled their will by organizing other people to work. This meant partly that they were smart men equipped with cunning (since they had to manipulate others) and good memories (because it would be dangerous to write down their tactical information). Yet each of these "Great Pirates," as Fuller refers to them, depended on advice from a "comprehensively anticipatory design scientist." Leonardo da Vinci is the first example given, and he serves as a sort of archetype. Specialization of workers then developed as a way for the Great Pirates to remain in power, since all knowledge traveled vertically up the hierarchy, not horizontally between lower masters. And this was enforced by punishment, in order to ensure that the peons remained oblivious, though still proud of their role in the scheme.

By World War I, technology had developed to the point that the G.P.s could no longer control the spread of information. Similarly, technology made it theoretically possible for humans to stop doing super-specialized work and get back to developing our comprehensive abilities. In other words, we could start enjoying "the orgiastic future" that America has failed to grasp so many times now.

Due to misinterpretations of Malthus's economics and Darwin's theory of natural selection - which, when combined, seemed to suggest that resources were limited and that only the fittest would survive -- sovereign nations set out to hoard reserves as much as possible. This is embodied in the 1950s Cold War game theory strategies of John Nash, best known through the game "Fuck Your Buddy." It meant specialized work had to continue, in order to preserve the long-standing power establishment. Hence, today the status quo demands that we "work for a living," even if the work is degrading, feels absolutely pointless, infects us with a constant state of nausea, or worse.

Even in 2010, when almost one in five working-age Americans is without a full-time job (national unemployment is at 9.5 percent, but "underemployment" is at 16.5), the general public feels only terror over the possibility that those specialized positions might not return. (18) Not many are excited that we now have a chance to cultivate a global society that previous generations didn't have the wisdom to allow. No one comprehends that our economic system is bankrupt because it's so disconnected from a universal definition of wealth. Few can see clearly that, up until this point in the history of human civilization, the masses have essentially served as slaves - either physically, mentally, or both - to the Great Pirates and their henchmen.

Fuller had a different vision of the future, a "future" that could have been consummated in the mid-1900s: "While all enjoy total Earth no human will be interfering with the other, and none will be profiting at the expense of the other. Humans will be free in the sense that 99.9 per cent of their waking hours will be freely investable at their own discretion." (19)

His suggestion -- which would generate as many laughs today as it likely did in 1969 -- was to give a research and development fellowship to anyone who couldn't find a job or who became unemployed. Even one person among thousands would devise something so valuable, he said, that it would pay for the whole program.

It's difficult to predict how that vision could come to be a reality, especially as America sinks further towards third world status. But it's absolutely imperative that we evaluate our options from a truly universal perspective. One thing that must change is how we treat metaphysical innovations such as creative works. Creative Commons licenses are amazing, and they are beginning to rebuild a very damaged public domain -- but they won't be adequate. By their very nature, amateur creations -- those without large commercial value -- aren't competing with mass-market products in movie theaters and entertainment mega-stores.

We've been duped by the Great Pirates into thinking that *we* are the "pirates" for doing what to us seems absolutely natural and ethically sound. In fact, *they* are the reprehensible ones for holding our metaphysical universe hostage. That's half of our entire universe (as experienced currently at the human level) stuck in prison! We don't even consciously understand that these media (by which I'm referring mostly to music, movies, books and scholarly journals), the metaphysical products of our civilization, are mostly locked up by a select few corporations.

But every time someone remixes a Top 40 song, or parodies a TV show, or rips a movie and puts it on YouTube...he or she is asserting something that makes common sense even if the individual can't explain it with words: *these creative works belong to the public just as much as they "belong" to the companies.*

As I stated before, copyright law now protects creative works for almost a century. Lessig makes it quite clear in *Free Culture* that copyright law is intended to protect the right of the author to duplicate and distribute the work *during a period of commercial viability*. After that time, the work should pass into the public domain so that our culture can proceed with its natural function: to build upon itself in an ongoing process of refinement and improvement.

This is why I can no longer pass off copyright law as a mere inconvenience. I agree with Lessig's stance that, at the very least, copyright terms should be drastically reduced. As he wrote, "Until 1976, the average term was just 32.2 years. We should be aiming for the same." (20) My theory is that, after that 32-year term of commercial viability, in which the author or creator would have the option to control market use of the work, all creative and proprietary work should take on a permanent CC-BY license -- that is, Creative Commons "Attribution" -- requiring only that anyone who shares or adapts the work must properly credit the original author by listing their name and, when applicable, a hyperlink.

The original author would still have the option to duplicate and sell the work...but so would everyone else in the universe. Some things literally have no sellable value after 32 years, like a video game console. Other things could be adapted into the landscape of modern technology -- like paper books turned into e-books -- in which case the incentive would be to develop the best method of distribution and consumption.

To demonstrate, we can consider that the original *Star Wars* film came out almost 33 years ago. If copyright law was functioning within reason, anyone in the universe would now be

allowed to do whatever he or she wanted with any aspect of that film. Teenagers could create and distribute their own video adaptation; a craftsman could produce hand-made Chewbacca action figures or dolls and sell them on eBay; video game designers could reimagine the entire Star Wars universe (at long as they stuck to the first film) in a new PC game; entrepreneurs could even copy and sell *Star Wars* DVDs.

None of this would require permission from or royalty payments to Lucasfilm. That's how copyright used to work, when it originally lasted for 14 years. Lessig explains how, in America's youth, books by British authors were printed and sold in unregulated fashion across the Atlantic. The U.S. was a developing nation at the time, and that sort of business helped build the economy. That's part of the reason authors like Charles Dickens became so popular among American readers. It was all part of the progression of culture.

Another key example is how the Walt Disney Company has used public domain stories as the foundation for many of its animated films, like *Cinderella* and *Alice in Wonderland* -- as well as their most recent, *The Princess and the Frog*. Now that Disney has produced these movies, they can in some cases restrict what is done with the original public domain stories. They could, for instance, prevent Dreamworks from making a film rendition of *Alice* without their permission - all the more so because Disney has now renewed their "right" to the story with a Tim Burton remake. (Now it's more clear why they "re-release a classic film from the Disney vaults" every few years, huh?).

The very reason that copyright law now applies for up to 95 years -- the impetus that led to the most recent term boost -- was that Sonny Bono's wife didn't want his music to pass into the public domain...that and complaints from the estates of Dr. Seuss and Gershwin. (21) Companies who own copyrights from the time in question (1923 to 1942) supported these causes even though, as Lessig explains, only two percent of that material is still commercially viable (think: Laurel and Hardy, and the Three Stooges). (22) The net effect, according to Lessig, is that *no creative works now protected by copyright will be released into the public domain until 2019*. A million patents will also become unprotected at that time. (23) Of course, corporations will be lobbying for another term extension around that time, and I fear the public uproar won't even surpass the one aroused by the recent health care debate.

It's important to understand that we're not just talking about simple copyrighted media, but also proprietary information: computer software, pharmaceutical drugs, medical devices, the recipes for foods and beverages, etc. In fact, the documentary *The Future of Food* demonstrates the absurdity of allowing a company like Monsanto to patent genes in food seeds (commonly known as GMOs, or genetically modified organisms). (24) That essentially means companies and governments can control what is done with food crops, down to the very genes. The majority of farmers still depend on their own seed reserves. But since patented genes can easily outcross into independent food stocks, Monsanto can claim ownership of the plants wherever they find their genes. A simple application of Monsanto's RoundUp pesticide determines which plants are "theirs," since the farmer's plants all die. The company sues offending (but unknowing) farmers to make an example, forcing them to purchase seeds from Monsanto. This process is exactly the same as when the RIAA sues music file-sharers, and it's the reason that American farmers work at a loss and depend on government subsidies to survive. But paradoxically, the U.S. government is co-owner of a Monsanto patent, and company officials regularly cycle through FDA appointments.

Anyone who has ever signed a non-disclosure agreement has upheld this system that puts profits over the progress of mankind. The counter-argument is that protection encourages innovation, but I don't buy this. Not only does the proprietary system encourage laziness and corruption, but it's also the most recent example of the gangsters formerly known as Great Pirates preventing the natural flow of human evolution.

Remember when Obama came into office and he was chirping about "transparency"? Rest assured, we won't have government transparency until we have it at *all* levels of society, including the individual. Just look at the case of scientific research. Verification is the essence of the scientific method. If experiments could be verified immediately, it would speed up the scientific process beyond measure. But if the government is funding the research to gain a tactical military advantage over other countries, and the lab is run by scientists and opportunists who hope to gain prestige, awards and (most of all) money for their work, and the research findings are published in an academic journal that requires expensive subscription fees to view, then transparency and progress are nearly impossible.

Personally I think there should always be a way for *anyone* to access *any* creative work that has been made commercially available *at any point in history*, whether it was protected through copyright or proprietary measures. How long do you think it would take us to cure cancer if all medical research was made public? A week? A day? Does it make you wonder if maybe the pharmaceutical companies who profit from chemotherapy have a vested interest in preventing the discovery of a real cure? Do you think we'd still be driving cars with gas tanks if those profiting from oil trade -- everyone from General Motors to George W. Bush - hadn't actively fought electric cars (or even hybrids) from going into mass production? Does anyone ask themselves why we power, heat and cool our homes with coal, nuclear fission and natural gas, when we could harness all the power we need from solar radiation, wind, rivers and tidal shifts?

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I admit that I want to see the realization of Fuller's future. And despite my suggestion for reducing copyright terms, I fear that our quality of life and our prospects for the future will steadily diminish worldwide until we discontinue any system that leaves one party worse off than another. Soon, as unemployment crosses the 20-percent line and creeps towards 50 (or above), we may not have a choice to uphold the current system. When that time comes, we'll have plenty of options. Since the "weapons-backed sovereign nations," as Fuller would call them, will stop at nothing to retain their power, we may see a military dictatorship before we see... well, anything better than our current system of smoke-and-mirrors capitalism.

In the interim, it's up to the "common folk" to devise better systems for paying content creators without enabling the middle men (such as Warner Music Group or Barnes and Noble), the pimps of modern creativity who manipulate both the ones creating and consuming the material. This was the focus of Lessig's 2008 book *Remix*, and some places have already begun these experiments. Certain European countries now tax citizens based on the assumption that they are downloading copyrighted works. The taxes

are used to compensate copyright holders for their supposed losses (though Lessig thoroughly demonstrates that file sharers don't drastically affect profits for media companies since, more often than not, those people wouldn't have purchased the content).

Of course, the very concept of revising creative compensation is based on the presumption that we will still use monetary currency with inborn inflation in the future -- that we will still base our entire concept of wealth on a metaphysical abstraction, one that doesn't even brush the surface of our actual wealth. But a gradual transition (which would still be rapid, in the context of history) would be better than picking up the pieces in a post-apocalyptic world.

What I wonder now is if the computer, the Internet, and technology in general can get us back on course with evolution. Judging by the leaps in communication and content exchange we've taken over the past 15 years with the help of high-speed Internet access, it seems that Fuller may have been right. The Internet will be hard to beat in terms of human innovation...but are we really content to let the wheel, cold beer, and the condom follow closely behind it? After all, I'm not saying that we need to speed up evolution; I'm saying that we spent most of the last century actively thwarting it. Much of what lies ahead will involve the relinquishing of sovereign control and adopting a stance of humility and cooperation.

In his 1957 book *The Undiscovered Self*, famed psychologist C.G. Jung wrote of communism: "So far as one can see, only one possibility remains, and that is a breakdown of power from within, which must, however, be left to follow its own inner development." (25) It seems to me that we're watching the slow but inevitable death of market-based capitalism, a very tired and flawed economic system built on fear and greed. That goes for the major record labels and the Monsanto Company just the same as it goes for predatory lenders in the home mortgage market. Each is part of a powerful institution with very limited liability and no qualms about manipulating millions of people. Someone gains at the expense of someone else.

Jung also wrote,

"History will undoubtedly pass over those who feel it is their vocation to resist this inevitable development, however desirable or psychologically necessary it may be to cling to what is essential and good in our own tradition. Despite all the differences, the unity of mankind will assert itself irresistibly." (26)

And he wrote time and time again that change can only happen at the individual level. Any concept of humans beyond that -- a city, a company, a nation, a religion -- is inherently an abstraction, a compromise made in the attempt to describe multiple individuals. An individual empowered by Fuller's definition has no choice but to ask himself, "What is my actual wealth?" Furthermore, if everyone on the planet was suddenly denied an income, how many people would be able to survive without the aid of a gun?

It seems clear to me that, aside from ensuring access to high-speed Internet, we will need to boost our efforts at education. Most of that will happen through personal volition, since public schools and universities are too embedded in the institutional establishment to approach the problem from outside the "status quo" reality tunnel. Education will aid us in reconsidering every assumption we hold about the way the world can and should operate.

It'll also help us flex our intuitive muscle as we seek to fulfill our rightful place in the evolution of the universe, which will happen eventually no matter who tries to prevent it. Or we'll drive ourselves into extinction, at which point we will no longer be able to care.

Fuller pointed out that we weren't given an instruction manual for our Spaceship Earth, and in fact it was imperative that it be so. We literally have to devise our way into the future that lies before us, the future we've imagined for quite some time. Every single human being will be born with the same rights (not just told that is the case), the same access to food and medicine, and the same potential for self-realization. Now we just have to work our way through the labyrinth and strike down the minotaur that is our heart of darkness, both personally and collectively.

In the meantime, I'll be waiting for an offer to arrive in my mailbox granting me a lifetime fellowship in research and development.

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26. Jung, C.G. Ibid. p. 92.

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