

# Who I Am, What I'm About, 2024 Edition



By Steven Yates

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*"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* Psalm 90:12

*"We are not given a short life but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it."* –Seneca

*"Only the educated are truly free."* –Epictetus

*"Money is an extremely efficient control system. People order themselves upon money incentives, and thus difficult, dangerous and energy intensive overt physical control need not be employed broadly."* –David Rogers Webb

Welcome to 2024, readers! The year we've all been waiting for! The year that will make us or break us! Literally!

## **Five Principles Going Forward.**

Every January I now try to do this: write a reflection piece about who I am and what I'm trying to do. It helps me think more clearly, and I hope it helps readers.

Who am I? A guy with too much *formal* education who left academia over ten years ago, went overseas, but has returned periodically to his homeland and stays in close touch. I thank God daily for the Internet, which makes this arrangement possible.

I'm married to a foreign national. No children. Two cats. We

live in a place that would be very difficult to find if you didn't know exactly where you are going.

There's not much else to tell about my personal life. It's not that interesting. Sometimes my wife gets annoyed at my computer time.

Checking [last year's column](#), I see that I wrote mostly about the past. There's a place for that, but this go round, I'd prefer to emphasize the present and future, especially as for many, the future doubtless looks dark and menacing.

Election 2024 is already fraught with tensions. This will be the year's front-burner concern unless something even more divisive erupts. It's not the only valid concern. Our financialized money political economy is powered by a debt bubble that balloons larger every year: the national debt just crossed the \$34 trillion threshold. This system favors mega-billionaires and works automatically against the best interests of everyone else, be they Republicans or Democrats; be they Establishment Republicans or Trumpists; be they white, black, Hispanic, or Asian; male or female; straight or gay or whatever.

Some worry, finally, over whether generative AI and other disruptive technologies are going to take away jobs and cause more technological unemployment.

There's plenty to be anxious about.

So I'd like to emphasize principles we can formulate *now*, today, and take with us as guides, going forward. Such principles might gain us perspective on what *we can do*, focused on what *we can control*. While many such lists are circulating, especially since Jordan Peterson published his *12 Rules for Life* (2018), mine is shorter. I think I can get my "rules for life" into a single article. At least, I shall try. These are intended to work together and form a single, unitary tapestry.

1. **Truth Matters.** Seek it as best you can. Do not avoid it, as doing so can bring you long term and sometimes short term harm. Acknowledge it when it looks you in the face. Do not sugar-coat it.

Be *humble* about proclaiming it, though, since not all truths are straightforward, and what may be obvious to us is not necessarily obvious to the next guy and looks downright crazy to the third. Recognize that we all get things wrong sometimes. Changing your mind is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of intellectual honesty and growth.

Be empathetic. Some truths *hurt*. Those who need to hear a painful truth may not be ready. Be sure of a greater good to be achieved in telling it.

The best means, historically, of teasing out truth: *free inquiry, freedom of speech* about its results, *civil dialogue* and *structured debate* when we disagree. Truth *isn't* political *per se*. It just *is*. Seeking it, learning it, communicating it, and preserving it should try to transcend politics / political economy. At one time, this was the primary mission of higher education in America.

How do we resolve disputes where we remain at loggerheads, e.g., between those who believe in God's dominance versus secular materialists?

Maybe we don't. Not absolutely. But we come away from fair-minded exchanges of ideas with *better* opinions, and perhaps with *more* truth than we had before!

What I'd contend is that if a dominant theory, narrative, worldview, etc., articulated or merely embodied in a range of institutions and cultural practices, is corrupting them, leading persons and groups to self-destruct, or taking civilization itself on a destructive course, we should *question* this theory, narrative, or worldview.

2. **Freedom Matters.** Claim it, *responsibly*. You may have to fight for it. As the saying goes, freedom isn't free. We're having to fight for freedom of speech right now. The fight is worth it. If you don't have free speech, you can't defend anything else.

Note, though, that responsible freedom is *not* the freedom to do anything we please. It is not *all or nothing*. It is freedom within the bounds of *practicality* and *morality*. It's easy to overthink this. I've made that mistake.

Don't treat freedom as a technical, academic abstraction. You're *technically* free to quit your job if you dislike it. But doing so might not be *practical*. So exercising that technical freedom might not be *responsible*. Determine what would make the choice more practical. Do that instead.

Responsible freedom is not freedom exercised at the expense of others, by coercing them or petitioning a more powerful entity (government or a corporation) to do so. When we coerce others, or attempt to get someone else to do so, we destroy *their* freedom. We *devalue* them. We treat them as beneath us, as *less* than we are. This is immoral.

A key to increasing one's freedom is *learning to do more*. Be open to opportunities to acquire new knowledge or skills. Be a lifelong learner. Learn something new every day if possible, whether you use it today or not. You may discover a use for it tomorrow.

It's true that some people don't want to be free. As H.L. Mencken put it, they simply want to be safe. There will always be those who sacrifice freedom for security. This is probably the majority. There's nothing we can do about that except avoid that road ourselves and try to convince others to avoid it.

3. **Human Connections Matter.** Seek them out, build them, nurture them, maintain them: family, friends, neighbors

(if they will permit it), fellow churchgoers (if you attend church), professional associates, others who share your interests and values.

Here's our predicament: *we're too isolated from one another.*

Atomized.

The breakup of stable families has contributed to this, as has the decline of stable marriages and the fact that millions of men and women are electing not to marry. I attribute some of this to feminism, although economic factors and social media have atomized us just as effectively.

While marriage may not be for everybody, the point is, we are social beings. We aren't wired psychologically to exist in isolation. This is why many observers now consider solitary confinement to be a form of torture.

How do we establish, or improve, our connections to others?

Start by seeing them, and yourself, as having *intrinsic value*: created in God's image. Act accordingly. Again, it's important not to overthink this. If you don't believe in God, the onus is on *you* to find some other basis for committing to the intrinsic value of persons. The point is, to create that commitment and embody it in our lives and day-to-day interactions with others. We need to stop looking down on "those people," whoever *those people* might be. I'm not necessarily talking about other races or ethnic groups here, or men, or women, or whatever other categories someone might think are real.

I'm talking about those who serve you food in restaurants, hand you hotel keys, or clean your rooms. Those who empty the trash in our workplaces at the end of the day, or clean the floors. Those who drive Ubers for a living.

All are human, and what I've learned is that basic one-on-one

kindness goes a long way.

Since [none of us truly knows what is occurring inside another person's head](#), when sizing someone up I go off observation as much as possible. How does the person routinely treat others. Does he tip the waitress or the Uber driver? Does he hold the door for the person behind him. Is she respectful of those whose jobs require them to deal daily and hourly with strangers (e.g., store clerks)? Does he drive courteously? Is she attentive, or always checking her phone?

How does she respond if a baby starts crying nearby? Does she accept that babies cry, it's what they do? Or does she visibly grit her teeth and struggle to avoid losing it in public?

Also: how does the person treat animals? One of Jordan Peterson's more interesting rules goes something like: "Pet a cat when you encounter one in the street." If the cat will permit it, of course. If you don't like cats, try dogs. I tend to not trust people who are unkind to animals, or don't at least smile at the sight of someone walking a small dog outdoors. Oh, if it's *you* walking *your* dog, it goes without saying: clean up after it.

Kindness to little animals won't change *the* world, but you'll feel better, and this might brighten *your* world.

All these, and others, are measures of a person's mindfulness, of their adult awareness of the world around them and how their actions might affect others.

They indicate the intrinsic value we place on others: *lived*, rather than intellectualized about.

4. **The Shortness of Life Matters.** However disquieting the thought, our time on this journey called life is finite. Yet we often act as if our days weren't numbered. Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher, pondered the "shortness of life" in a [must-read essay](#) on the subject.

He noted how the problem isn't so much life's shortness as the amount of time we waste.

Time is the ultimate scarce resource. Each day, once it passes, is gone. You'll never get yesterday back. Much less last year.

The lesson for us is to assess how we're using the time we have. There are some excellent guides out there on how to structure your time. They begin with *self*-assessment. What do you wish to prioritize? Well, what are you best at? And what really drives you? What is it that you get out of bed in the morning thinking about, and don't have to be motivated from the outside to do, as by the prospect of a paycheck?

How can you spend more time doing things that really get you "in the groove" and less time doing things you are indifferent to, or hate? How can you better delegate, to avoid the latter? Can you arrange your days in ways that enhance all this?

Are you aware of the disadvantages of "doomscrolling" on your phone or checking email first thing in the morning? *Are you in control of your social media accounts, or are they in control of you?* Did you know that if you have a free account, you're not the customer. Social media corporations' customers are their advertisers. *You are the product.* Act accordingly.

We are what we do habitually, to paraphrase Aristotle. There are some good books out there on great habits and how to cultivate them. My favorite these days is James Clear's *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* (2018).

Little to do with politics, but everything to do with having a better life!

5. **Focus Matters.** These days I often find myself meditating on the first principle the ancient Stoics insisted on. Paraphrasing Epictetus now, "Some things are up to us,

and some things are not up to us.” Not up to us are traffic, the weather, what the economy is doing, what the neighbors might be doing, the opinions of others generally.

Up to us are our responses to these.

Epictetus thus counsels: *focus your life energies on what you can control*. What you can't control, note it to the extent it affects you, but don't react emotionally. The point is not to be emotionless. That's a misunderstanding. The point is to control your responses and channel your efforts in directions where you can do some good.

This is harder than it sounds. Try it.

We writers are a special case. We place our written thoughts before strangers (or near-strangers). Some won't agree with us, especially if our opinions are outside-the-box and controversial. Review my [article](#) on how Tucker Carlson deals with this. Whether you like him or not, I don't think you can fault his idea that losing sleep over the opinions of people who couldn't care less about you is a bad idea.

None other than Donald Trump could take lessons here. He sometimes reacts in ways he shouldn't. Most leftists may not be prizes as human beings, but I'd have avoided calling them “vermin.” That's just one recent example.

When all is said and done, though, I'd prefer to give Trump a break. Consider the quantity, level, and volume of sheer, venomous *hatred* that's been slung his way since 2015! I don't think I've ever seen anything like this directed at one person who's gone into politics in America.

The problem: when he reacts as he does, he gives ammunition to the haters.

All that said, there's little in politics you can control. To



some (libertarians and anarchists), this is why voting is pointless. I'll admit to having pondered, *What if "they" held an election and no one showed?* Won't happen, of course. Most who live in so-called democracies believe voting matters. It's part of the mass psychology of modernity. The participant has a sense of control, or at least, of having done the right thing. I'll confess to having straddled the fence here. There might be an argument to be made that by not voting, we peasants relinquish what little *voice* we have in our so-called democracy (which was founded as a constitutional *republic*).

There are areas of our lives where our control is larger, and perhaps we should focus on them. Our chances of being heard at the local level, for instance, may be greater. Control increases still more when we forget politics and act under the radar.

**What about the immediate and near future?** It's now cliché to state that we're moving into a turbulent year. It might be the most turbulent since the late 1960s or 1970s. Those old enough probably remember race riots, massive antiwar demonstrations that occasionally led to homicide-by-government as at Kent State, suspicious political assassinations.

One big difference is that back then the overall mood of the country was optimistic. I don't sense much optimism now. What I see and hear and read, daily: climate hysteria, hysteria over Russia, China, Hamas; hysteria-to-the-nth-power over the prospects of Trump 2.0 taking the reins in January 2025.

The Supreme Court has what may be its biggest decision in history looming, more momentous than *Roe v Wade*. My understanding is that oral arguments are scheduled to begin on February 8.

The Court *must strike down* what happened in Colorado and Maine!

If it does not, these unilateral moves, trading on *an official*

*narrative* about January 6 and insurrections, will precipitate chaos! I may have to [eat my words about the low likelihood of civil war on the streets of America!](#)

The globalist-leftist power elite and its foot soldiers are doing everything they can to thwart a Trump 2.0. They still have gambits to play. Some we've probably not seen yet.

Think of the [Great Taking](#), which would begin with a purported banking emergency and end with the institution of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), digital IDs, and other elements of *total population dominance*. All to destroy freedom of speech, prevent Trump 2.0, and prevent the eventual rise of another Donald Trump.

What can you do about any of this? David Rogers Webb was honest and straightforward by saying: *nothing!* Not directly, anyway. It's doubtful *any* of us have identified the most powerful actors (even Soros could be a bit player next to those with *real* power who *choose* to remain unknown).

There *are* things you can do. If you're able to communicate information to others, e.g., forwarding this article to others will do for a start. Or subscribing to my Substack, [Navigating the New Normal](#).

You can also work on projects that will help extricate you from the grid. These include growing vegetables, raising chickens, developing other skills that were commonplace a couple centuries ago but have atrophied during the industrial era. Those with such skills are positioned to survive, if, say, a cyberattack were to take down portions of the grid for an extended period of time.

I confess I've grown a tad skeptical of cyberattack-based scenarios, though. Such an event would result in too much that foot soldiers of the power elite would have their hands full trying to control. Riots would envelope cities. People able to live off the grid couldn't be easily monitored.

Organizations like the WHO playing off climate hysteria and declaring a global “health emergency” seems more plausible, as a means of locking down the planet and instituting total control, especially over speech and information. They’ve just invented an Orwellian new category, “*malinformation*”: information that *may be true* but *encourages distrust of authority!*

You can’t make this stuff up!

In an orchestrated deflationary event, banks would close (possibly be surrounded by armed private security) and currency would literally vanish.

You would awaken the next morning, boot up your computer, and find yourself staring at a screen ordering you to set up your global digital ID.

Don’t want a global digital ID? You don’t get past that screen.

No digital ID, no access to your bank account! If you still have a bank account!

No more cash. So unless you’ve jumped through these digital hoops, you can’t legally buy food or pay your mortgage or even keep the lights on.

**Are we seeing the value in being able to live independently of the grid**, by not depending on the increasingly digitized money political economy for life’s basic necessities.

Getting such points across to those who believe they will benefit from them is part of what I’m doing here.

*Bottom line:* it should have become clear long ago, even before the plan-demic, that we’re in an *information civil war* of historic proportions: *a war about what the truth actually is!*

To one side, I’m spreading *misinformation* (or is it

*malinformation), conspiracy theories, or "alternative facts."*

To the other, I'm a truth teller urging a humane worldview based on the intrinsic value of the person, and calling for an end to centralization or consolidation of power and resources in the hands of a tiny globalist superelite, whom the majority of leftists serve without even knowing it (they aren't the brightest lights in the harbor!).

This superelite controls the bulk of resources; it controls financial networks, corporate media, all the major universities, professional organizations national and international, and at least the start of the social media era, Big Tech as well as Big Pharma.

But all is not lost! The good news is that *the plan-demic woke a lot of people up!* Others were awakened before, when *political correctness morphed into "antiracism," i.e., antiwhite racism.* There is now a lot of intellectual and journalistic firepower on our side, and it crosses the political spectrum from intelligent and well-informed writers who would self-identify as left-of-center (Glenn Greenwald, for example, or Bret Weinstein) as well as those on the right (Tucker Carlson, Steve Bannon) and those somewhere in the middle (Paul Craig Roberts, Bari Weiss, others too numerous to name). Not all of these voices will agree with one another or with me. But they are all contributing useful information and ideas.

Behind the information civil war is then *the cold war between the global consolidators (superelite) and those of us who want to be left alone,* and who might embrace principles such as those I've outlined above.

What characterizes super-elitism is this strange psychological need to control others. Money is how global power elites keep score. They are materialists, consciously or not. Their *de facto* worldview is of a godless cosmos in which power gets the

last word, in which they are *Übermenschen* wielding both financial and technocratic power to remake humanity in their image (an ideology now called *transhumanism*).

In achieving this, *anything goes*. It might be good to remember that *anything*, which includes assassinations and genocides.

Thus *finally*, behind the cold war over global consolidation is *a cold war over worldviews*. **Unless we challenge materialism as a worldview**, the latter's effects will continue as the death culture and death economy darken prospects for average participants. The superrich will continue getting richer and more controlling, even as the death culture / death economy continues fomenting wars and then profiting from them, slaughtering unborn children, kicking those it doesn't slaughter out of their homes, or entrapping them in mountains of inescapable debt.

In a future in which human life has no intrinsic value but is expendable if inconvenient, as the saying now goes, *you will own nothing, have no privacy, but will be happy*. (Whatever this last is supposed to mean. Oh, right. Big Pharma will keep us peasants supplied with plenty of drugs!)

Regrettably, most people won't try to grasp or act on any of this until it's too late. They never have. Some of us warned of the most likely consequences of runaway political correctness over 30 years ago. The silence was deafening. Now, the need for new institutions to replace the increasingly discredited old ones is palpable.

*You* can take charge of what you can control, if you make the necessary choices now. That's the message I want to communicate as this new and likely turbulent year gets underway.

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