

Introduction

A Path on the Precipice



IS THIS THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME in human history? That’s the opinion of Noam Chomsky in a September 2020 interview. It’s such an extraordinary claim that I tried to think of a counterexample. World War II? Chomsky is old enough to remember the 1930s, when there was a real possibility that Nazism could take over much of Eurasia, “but even that, horrible enough, was not like the end of organized human life on earth, which is what we’re facing.”¹

When he gave the interview, the COVID-19 pandemic was near its peak, but Chomsky didn’t mention it. Instead, he focused on three issues: the climate crisis, the growing threat of nuclear war, and the decline of democracy—that is, rising authoritarianism—around the world. Unfortunately, each of these problems has become markedly worse since his interview.

Urgent though it is, accelerating global heating is only part of a much larger ecological catastrophe, which includes many other threats, most obviously loss of biodiversity. Back in 1900 (when world population was only 1.6 billion), humans plus our domesticated livestock, such as cattle and pigs, constituted about 83 percent of the total biomass of all mammals that live on land. By 2000, it had increased to 96 percent: 36 percent human, 60 percent other mammals. The biomass of our poultry is about three times that of all the wild birds on earth.

We have also reduced the world's biomass of plant matter by half.² For every five wild mammals living in 1970, there were two in 2017, and less than that now. Species are disappearing at rates variously estimated to be one thousand or even ten thousand times as quickly as they would without human impact.

In addition to this ongoing extinction event—the sixth in the earth's 4.5-billion-year history—deforestation (250 trees cut down every *second*) and desertification (8 acres per *minute*) are increasing. Every year, 24 *billion* tons of topsoil are lost due to erosion.³ There are now more than 500 dead zones in the ocean, their total area being larger than Europe, and they are growing. Toxic industrial chemicals are present in the breast milk of every mother, on top of Mount Everest, in the deepest ocean trenches, and at the North Pole. Micro- and nanoplastics can also be found everywhere, even in our brains.⁴

We could go on, but the point is made. Reducing greenhouse gases is certainly necessary but cannot be a sufficient response, because the deeper ecological challenge is humanity's dysfunctional relationship with the rest of the natural world.

Long before the war in Ukraine, Chomsky emphasized the persistent risk of nuclear war. There are also ongoing problems with nuclear reactors, including accidents such as those at Chernobyl and Fukushima, as well as thousands of tons of radioactive waste that will remain dangerous for hundreds of thousands of years because no one knows how to store it safely for such a long period.

Chomsky also warned about rising authoritarianism. More than a few of the world's democracies look increasingly fragile because autocratic regimes, having attained power, are subverting their own democratic institutions. The January 6 attack on the Capitol building in Washington, DC, along with an increasingly polarized and acrimonious political climate culminating in Donald Trump's reelection in 2024, shows that the United States is not invulnerable to such a development. His actions since then have reinforced such apprehensions.

One perhaps should add to this some other serious concerns that Chomsky did not mention, including social justice issues. Economic

problems often contribute to political strife, especially the enormous and still-growing disparity almost everywhere between a small group of obscenely wealthy individuals and the precarious situation of most people—a gap the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated. “Nearly 40% of all Americans say they have skipped meals in order to meet their housing payments, and more than 70% admit to living with economic anxiety.”⁵

Finally—one must stop somewhere!—is the growing impact of all the above on mental health worldwide, especially that of young people, who face a dismal future burdened with the challenge of cleaning up the messes their elders have created. Although aging is no fun, I would not want to be a teenager today.

We can describe all this as a *polycrisis*, but even that term may be inadequate. It’s not simply that many problems are occurring at the same time. Nor is it enough to emphasize that they are interacting with and often reinforcing each other. Is it more accurate to say we have a *metacrisis*? No, this is not a reference to the corporation formerly known as Facebook. The Greek root *meta-* (literally “beyond”) is an adjective that can be translated as “more comprehensive” or “transcending”—the point being that the various crises facing us may in fact be different facets of a deeper problem. What might that problem be?

The tragic irony is that, just when humanity has achieved a truly global civilization, our civilization has lost its way and seems to be self-destructing: “The day of reckoning has come,” according to the ecotheologian Thomas Berry. “In this disintegrating phase of our industrial society, we now see ourselves not as the splendor of creation, but as the most pernicious mode of earthly being.”⁶ Why so pernicious? For John Gray, “The destruction of the natural world is not the result of global capitalism, industrialization, ‘Western civilization’ or any flaw in human institutions. It is a consequence of the evolutionary success of an exceptionally rapacious primate.”⁷ Although I wouldn’t give a free pass to what Joanna Macy calls industrial growth society, the important point is that Gray roots the ecological crisis in an all-too-human character trait that all-too-often interacts with

other problematic tendencies, such as tribalism (including nationalism, racism, and religious fundamentalism) and aggression (including militarism and terrorism).

E. O. Wilson sums up our quandary: “The real problem of humanity is that we have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and god-like technology.”⁸ Despite the unexpected adverse effects of some escalating technologies—for example, the internet—the problems facing us today may be grounded in something much older and more fundamental: the way our minds have been sculpted by evolution. Are human rapacity, tribalism, and violence just bad habits we can blame on regrettable (but correctable) social conditioning? Or have they been built into the DNA of our species over many millennia by the competition to survive and reproduce?

That the dysfunction might be at least partially innate is a possibility that may be dangerous to ignore. Can an understanding of evolutionary psychology—how human emotions and behavior have evolved—grant us some insight into its genesis, and might that insight help us respond more appropriately? If our predicament today is a consequence of prehistoric as well as more recent developments, we need to consider how and why we evolved the ways that we have. Might that help us understand why the efforts we have been making are not working well enough?

There is another dysfunction that needs to be addressed. Humans are not only products of biological evolution. Both individually and collectively, we are also artifacts of cultural evolution. When we consider basic existential questions about the meaning of life (beyond mere survival and reproduction) and how to live (the moral codes to follow), nothing has been more important historically than our religious traditions. I am not sure that is still true: one could argue that consumerism has now become, in effect, the most popular religion. In either case, the mainstream religious traditions are failing us today. In fact, their failure is one of the main motivations for this book.

The theologian Paul Tillich developed what he called a theology of correlation: the answers that religions have to offer should correspond

to the questions that a culture is asking. If they fail at doing this, then those religions become irrelevant. By that standard, our spiritual traditions are no longer fit for our purposes. Their premodern mythologies and doctrines are increasingly incompatible with contemporary worldviews, scientific and otherwise, and so it is not surprising that their traditional ethical codes do not help enough when we try to address the problems mentioned above. Their dualistic theologies not only draw our attention away from what is happening here and now, but their emphasis on an otherworldly salvation has also contributed significantly to the ecological crisis, because this world is devalued in comparison to whatever postmortem bliss that we can enjoy somewhere else. Why be so concerned about what is happening here when we will soon go to a much better place?

In short, the spiritual paths that our religions offer are outdated and need to be revised. My hope is that this book will contribute in some small way to their reformation.

This book is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 offers an overview of evolutionary psychology, which reveals the deep source of the crises that confront us today. Chapter 2 shifts the focus to cultural evolution, especially the historical role of religion as our main collective effort to deal with the tensions created by our biological evolution. Chapter 3 critiques those attempts, which have largely failed, and offers a more “this-worldly” version of the spiritual path. What we need to transcend is not this reality but our usual ways of experiencing and understanding it. If this world is different from what we have thought, might salvation also be quite different from what we have been taught?

*What We Can Learn from Our Evolution:
The Bipolar Ape*

Darwinian evolution is essential for understanding how our species has developed, but its implications for how our minds work has received little attention until the last few decades. Chapter 1 summarizes many

of the important (and controversial) claims of evolutionary psychology. One widespread cultural fiction is the belief that we are mostly “blank slates” until conditioned by our social environment. In fact, psychological research has discovered that heredity plays a major role—often *the* major role—in many behavioral traits, predisposing us to problems such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, autism, attention deficit disorder, compulsive gambling, smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, suicidal behavior, psychopathy, and even a predilection for marital infidelity.

Nonetheless, the implication is not nature over nurture, but nature *via* nurture—how they interact. Genetic predispositions do not predetermine what we will do: we are born as unfinished animals and become human as we are socialized. Culture is another form of trait-transmission, social and learned rather than hereditary. Most of our brain development occurs after birth, during the many years that we are dependent on adult caregivers and influenced by them.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of our behavioral tendencies is that they can work against each other and pull us in different directions. Like Rousseau, we want to believe we are born free and benevolent, and only later become corrupted by society. Hobbes’s view, that we are basically self-centered and need to be tamed by culture, is less flattering. The never-resolved argument between the two is suggestive: Can both be true? Do both propensities co-exist within us, inclining us to be both selfish and selfless? And is it possible that, due to our complicated genetic legacy, human nature is both inclined to egalitarianism and susceptible to authoritarianism?

The most controversial topic in evolutionary psychology is whether there is *multilevel* selection. In the struggle to get one’s genes into the next generation, is each individual competing only with other individuals, or does competition for genetic survival also occur between groups? This issue may seem abstract, but it provides an important insight into the origins of morality—especially if the conflict within us between “good” and “evil” is hardwired into our psychology. Most

vice—murder, theft, rape, fraud, and so on—originates from selfishness, while virtue—cooperation, altruism, generosity, sympathy, kindness—benefits the group because it expresses concern for others' welfare.⁹ Individual selfishness can provide a competitive advantage within a group but works against group cohesiveness; being cooperative and altruistic reduces one's individual advantage but contributes to the survival and competitive success of the group. But it can also replace murder with genocide. As Matt Ridley puts it, "It is a rule of evolution to which we are far from immune that the more cooperative societies are, the more violent the battles between them."¹⁰

Agriculture and pastoralism led to the greatest transformation in human history. Our relationship with the earth changed radically, and our relationships with each other changed just as radically, as animistic hunter-gatherer cultures developed into (or were displaced by) theocratic agrarian states. Civilization shifted the focus from nature to nation. Farming could support much larger populations, settled in dense communities with more anonymous interaction. Nature deities were superseded by "big gods," aware of everything you do, and who were now needed to prescribe ethical principles and punish transgressions. By no coincidence, hierarchical pantheons of gods also stabilized the new class system by legitimating its earthly political hierarchy.

Whether individual or collective, acquisitiveness, aggression, and selfishness seem to correspond to what Buddhism identifies as *the three poisons* (or three fires): greed, ill will, and delusion. Buddhist teachings have usually viewed these three as personal problems, but today they have been institutionalized as our economic system (corporate consumer capitalism focused on indefinite growth), militarism (now over a trillion dollars per year for "defense"), and sophisticated fake news (including advertising and propaganda).

Do the three poisons, both individualized and institutionalized, point to the source of the crises that confront us today? Although the scale of our metacrisis is unique, the problems bequeathed to us by our evolutionary psychology are not new.

*What We Could Have Learned from Our Religions:
How to Transform*

In early agrarian civilizations there was no significant distinction between religious authority and secular political power. Theocratic kings served as the crucial link between human society and the cosmic order. For everyone else too, social roles were not distinguished from religious obligations, both of which maintained the sacralized social order.

Archaic empires reinforced tribalistic identity on an ever-larger scale, increasingly aggressive and imperialistic. But they proved to be unstable. The Bronze Age collapse (c. 1200 BCE) in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, India, and China was violent and disastrous. In its aftermath, however, an extraordinary cultural development occurred in all these places.

Historically, the most important attempt to control and channel our conflicting predispositions was provided by Axial Age religions. The Axial Age can be viewed as cultural evolution's way of compensating for the problematic propensities, both individual and tribal, that originally enabled our species to survive and reproduce in competitive and often-threatening environments. Today, however, those tendencies threaten our very existence. When the push of a button can launch thousands of nuclear weapons, nationalistic and ethnic tribalism are more dangerous than ever. An economic system that must keep growing in order to avoid collapse is irreconcilable with a biosphere that does not, and neoliberalism's penchant for producing billionaires while billions of other people struggle to get by is incompatible with a just or harmonious global civilization.

The *Axial Age* is a term coined by Karl Jaspers to describe a pivotal period that began in the middle of the first millennium BCE, when "the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece."¹¹ Religious revolutionaries such as Lao-tzu, Gautama Buddha, the Hebrew

prophets, Jesus, and Muhammad were not official priests but marginal figures, responding to a widespread sense of social and moral failure by offering innovative conceptions of cosmic order that juxtaposed this mundane (and unsatisfactory) world with an idealized transcendent realm (heaven, nirvana). This was accompanied by a new emphasis on one's own relationship with that higher reality, shifting the focus from temple rituals to personal morality. Salvation became radically individualized: no longer a destiny restricted to elites but a possibility for each of us, according to how we live. The basic religious teachings we usually take for granted today—*individual* morality and salvation, with compassion for *everyone*—were Axial Age developments.

These ideals are so important to our spiritual traditions today—which does not mean we actually follow them, of course—that it is difficult to appreciate how radical they were when first proclaimed. Nonetheless, most Axial Age teachings have two serious flaws that limit their relevance to our difficult situation today: *cosmological dualism* and *individual salvation*.¹²

Belief in another and better postmortem reality was important for liberating the individual from what had become tight embeddedness in a hierarchical social structure, but *cosmological dualism* tends to devalue *this* world. In Christian terms, the earth is merely a backdrop to the human drama of sin and salvation. Why worry about what's happening here and now if our eternal bliss is elsewhere? This implied another dualism that has become especially problematic for us today, between humanity and the rest of the biosphere. Lynn White Jr. has (controversially) traced the ecological crisis back to “the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man. . . . Despite Darwin, we are *not*, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim.”¹³

Individual salvation means that my well-being is ultimately separate from yours. Sure, I hope you will make it to heaven too, or attain nirvana, but in either case my own spiritual destiny will be unaffected. Replacing self-centered evolutionary selection—preoccupied with

reproducing one's own genes—with self-centered afterlife selection—preoccupied with personally qualifying for heaven and so on—was not necessarily a big improvement.

Historically, the Axial Age failed. The revolutionary personal and social transformations implied by its teachings—attempting to address the tensions inherent in our evolutionary psychology—were aborted as the new religions became reappropriated by despotic rulers and institutionalized into their empires. With the Roman Emperor Constantine's conversion, Christianity became Christendom. Later European kings ruled by divine right, and their Asian equivalents (who must have extraordinarily good karma from past lifetimes!) sometimes declared themselves to be bodhisattvas or buddhas. A good example is the way that Christian teachings have been used to rationalize the forceful conversion of pagans, the persecution of Jews and heretics, the subordination of women, crusades against Muslims, and the establishment of brutal empires. What is now known as Christian nationalism, in particular, is an oxymoron—it has almost nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus—but it is not new. More generally, nationalism has been described by Arnold Toynbee as “ninety percent of the religion of ninety percent of the people of the Western world and of the rest of the world as well.”¹⁴ A sacralized social order continues to sanctify our overgrown tribalism.

The good news is that the Axial Age *teachings* have survived, and they have served an important role in the development of democracy and human rights. Nonetheless, it is increasingly difficult to take their hallowed mythologies and theologies literally, especially belief in a transcendent salvation that supersedes whatever happens here. In order to revive their revolutionary potential, we need to interrogate and recuperate the insights of their founders. The spiritual path needs to be updated, which is the focus of the last chapter.

*What We Need Today:
A Spirituality That Loves This World*

Although most people still identify with one of the Axial religions, their emphasis on postmortem salvation in another reality has made those traditions incapable of responding adequately to the problems we face in *this* reality. Today we need a spirituality that focuses on realizing the true nature of this world, which by no coincidence also happens to be our own true nature. We too are manifestations of this earth, not exiled spirits that should be preoccupied with qualifying for eternal bliss somewhere else. Nor do we need such an otherworldly reward. The challenge is not to transcend the world but to transcend our usual ways of experiencing it. It turns out that this world is quite different from what we thought. And so are we.

In contrast to Axial dualism, what we have understood as the sacred is not something “higher” that occasionally interjects itself into this world, but is its ever-present ground. The impermanent phenomena we experience every day are the manifold ways that the sacred assumes form and expresses itself here and now.

We usually perceive the world as a collection of separate, self-existing things that interact in objective space and time—one of those things being *me*. We learn to see it this way as we grow up, socialized into relating to it in the same way that everyone else does. Living this way has served the evolutionary process by contributing to our survival and success: once we identify things and their functions, we can utilize them for doing and getting what we want. So this way of perceiving serves an important role in our lives and our collective development. But it is not the only way to experience and understand the world, or ourselves.

Preoccupied with *using* things to achieve certain goals (such as satisfying desires), we overlook something important: the world as normally experienced is a psychological and social construct. That is why *deconstructive* practices such as meditation can lead to a different and more

nondual experience, in which supposedly separate beings are actually *hierophanies* revealing the sacred. To use theistic terms, “God” is not an invisible, super-powerful transcendent being who created everything, but is better characterized as a formless nothing (or *no-thing*) that manifests as all the phenomena we encounter—including ourselves.

Although *mysticism* is a broad term that refers to a variety of spiritual experiences, the most insightful ones involve unmediated awareness of an ultimate reality right here. In such encounters, the usual duality between a self *inside* and an objective world *outside* dissolves when I *let go* of myself. That is possible because the sense of being separable from the rest of the world is part of that psychological and social conditioning. Letting go of the habitual thought patterns that sustain the illusion of an autonomous self can lead to the most important realization of all: that we are not separate from each other, or from the earth on which and with which we have evolved, but are part of a biosphere that continues to nurture us.

It is no coincidence that the principal mystical traditions—Abrahamic theistic as well as Asian nondualist—agree that the fundamental obstacle to God-realization or enlightenment is the ego-self, the subjective pole of the self-object duality. Many of the great mystics have emphasized this when they talk about *how to experience* God or Brahman or the Dao. It is surely no coincidence that in every shamanic culture, too, candidates must endure a difficult trial that involves regression to an undifferentiated condition: dissolution of self, ego-death, and rebirth. “There is always a point where the potential shaman remains for a time on the threshold, experiencing the primal void—a state of unbeing—and its greatest mysteries. Only when he has surrendered himself utterly can he be reborn.”¹⁵

According to the Jewish Kabbalah, when we empty ourselves of selfhood, we reach true reality, which is divine nothingness. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul exhorts us to follow the example of Jesus, who humbled himself and “made himself nothing.” Meister Eckhart encouraged the same self-emptying (*kenosis*): “If you could naught yourself for an instant, indeed I say less than an instant, you would

possess all.” And Sufism? According to Rumi, “If you could get rid of yourself just once, the secret of secrets would open to you. The face of the unknown, hidden beyond the universe, would appear on the mirror of your perception.”

Asian nondualist traditions such as Vedanta, Buddhism, and Daoism describe the absolute in more impersonal terms, but their spiritual paths involve the same transformation: ego-death and rebirth into a transfigured world. According to Vedanta, we perceive the everyday world as real due to our ignorance (*avidya*), but when true knowledge dawns we are freed from the delusion of individuality and wake up to our true nature: we have always been one with Brahman. For Buddhism, according to Dogen, “to study the way of enlightenment is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things.”¹⁶

For Daoism, the Dao (“the Way”) is the inexhaustible womb of all life here and now, “an empty vessel that yet may be drawn from without ever needing to be filled.” Becoming no-thing is how we return to the source from which all things including us originate. By “mind fasting” (*wang xin*) we can forget our usual dualistic sense of self, and the *Daodejing* tells us that the world may be entrusted to those who know and love the world as their true self.

To let go and “forget oneself” is not to rise above this world but to become one with it—or rather, to realize that we have always been nondual with it. Is this the spiritual awakening that we seek? The salvation that the world too needs us to realize?

Joseph Campbell liked to say that all religions are true, one way or another, when understood metaphorically; the problems arise when their metaphors are taken literally. Perhaps it was inevitable that a different and unexpected way of experiencing this world would sometimes be (mis)understood as the temporary irruption of a “higher” reality into this one. And how much the better if such transcendence seems to offer an escape from our persistent dissatisfaction with this “lower reality”! But then what are we overlooking about our undervalued world?

When we are not so fixated on transcending it, we will be able to appreciate that the earth is not only our home, it's our mother—and we never cut the umbilical cord. Our interdependence with other species and ecosystems means that their well-being is not separable from our own. Despite the fantasies of some wealthy survivalists, who hope to ride out the apocalypse in well-stocked bunkers, worldwide ecological degradation makes it clearer than ever that human and nonhuman destinies are inextricably tied to each other in a biosphere that encompasses us all.

In sum, our problematic spiritual traditions will not be able to help us address the various crises we face today without questioning and reforming themselves to recover their essential spiritual message about *here and now*. Until that happens, our religions, with their many billions of adherents, remain more a part of the metacrisis than contributors to its solution.

A century ago, H. G. Wells said that “history is a race between education and catastrophe”—and today both are accelerating. It remains to be seen: what role will our spiritual traditions play in that race?

Just as we can gain a better understanding of ourselves from knowledge of our parents and their lives, so we can draw solace and a sense of orientation from knowledge of the genetic and cultural evolutionary processes that created our human natures and shaped humanity's long history and much longer prehistory.

—Paul Ehrlich

We human beings are what we have been for millions of years—colossally greedy, envious, aggressive, jealous, anxious and despairing, with occasional flashes of joy and affection. We are a strange mixture of hate, fear and gentleness; we are both violence and peace. There has been outward progress from the bullock cart to the jet plane but psychologically the individual has not changed at all, and the structure of society throughout the world has been created by individuals. The outward social structure is the result of the inward psychological structure of our human relationships, for the individual is the result of the total experience, knowledge and conduct of man. Each one of us is the storehouse of all the past. The individual is the human who is all mankind.

—Jiddu Krishnamurti

Homo sapiens is an innately dysfunctional species. We are hampered by the Paleolithic Curse: genetic adaptations that worked very well for millions of years of hunter-gatherer existence but are increasingly a hindrance in a globally urban and technoscientific society. We seem unable to stabilize either economic policies or the means of governance higher than the level of a village. Further, the great majority of people worldwide remain in the thrall of tribal organized religions, led by men who claim supernatural power in order to compete for the obedience and resources of the faithful. We are addicted to tribal conflict, which is harmless and entertaining when sublimated into team sports, but deadly when expressed as real-world ethnic,

religious, and ideological struggles. There are other hereditary biases. Too paralyzed with self-absorption to protect the rest of life, we continue to tear down the natural environment, our species' irreplaceable and most precious heritage.

—Edward O. Wilson

The destruction of the natural world is not the result of global capitalism, industrialization, “Western civilization” or any flaw in human institutions. It is a consequence of the evolutionary success of an exceptionally rapacious primate.

—John Gray

The human race's prospects of survival were considerably better when we were defenseless against tigers than they are today, when we have become defenseless against ourselves.

—Arnold Toynbee

The greatest achievement of humanity is not its works of art, science, or technology, but the recognition of its own dysfunction, its own madness.

—Eckhart Tolle

When I was a young scientist, I genuinely believed that if we understood the science behind environmental problems, conservation would naturally follow. Forty years later, my life experience intrudes and says that it might not be so. It may indeed be the case that effective responses to obvious problems are being delayed by human behaviors that are deeply rooted in the past. Some of these behaviors were diagnosed by Gautama Buddha two and a half millennia ago.

—Paul A. Keddy

We are among the first generations to understand not only that we have evolved, but also the mechanisms by which we have evolved and how this evolutionary heritage influences our behavior.

In the story of evolution we are automatically forgiven for all our supposed sins and mistakes because we see that we are just a baby species. There were about 10 million generations of dinosaurs, and 10 to 20 million generations of mammals before humans came along. We've only had about ten or twenty *thousand* generations of modern *homo sapiens*. We just got these big brains and don't know how to use them very well yet. They didn't come with a good instruction manual. In the story of evolution we see that humans are just a baby species, and therefore should not be tried as adults. Indeed, the most profound spiritual message of evolution is this: *You are not your fault!* . . .

Friends, if you believe you have sinned, or that you are seriously flawed as a human being, I am happy to tell you that salvation has arrived. It is the story of evolution, revealing that we were all created out of the shape-shifting stream of life as it danced with ever-changing Earth conditions and natural phenomena. You did not choose to have your brain and nervous system or your instincts for bonding and self-preservation any more than you choose to have thumbs. We can take no credit or blame for who we are. In the eyes of Mother Nature we are all forgiven. Accept it! *You are not your fault.*

—Wes Nisker