

WHY AMERICA IS POLARIZED

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Political analysts have been impressed lately by the polarization of the American public between “reds” and “blues”. Eighty percent of our population has declared itself impervious to persuasion. Why has this happened? Why have political positions hardened while the pragmatic center has shrunk?

While the media speak of the new importance of ‘moral values’, as if this were some recent fashion trend that had just burst upon the scene, this ‘red/blue’ division is rooted in major historical changes—changes that are welcomed by half of our nation, appalling to the other half. Furthermore, this division is not simply an American phenomenon, but a global one, rooted in the most revolutionary cultural shift in the history of our species.

Consider these seemingly unrelated events:

- In 1996 business writer E. E. Lawler found that 80% of all the companies he studied had some form of participatory management.
- In 1996, for the first time, there were more visits by Americans to alternative practitioners than to traditional Western physicians.
- In 2001 scientists began to consider the possibility that the “laws” of nature might not be immutable.
- In 2002 lawyers argued that chimpanzees should be accorded legal status as persons.
- In 2004, for the first time, more women than men applied to medical school, while women made up a majority of first-year law students and outnumbered male college students 56% to 44%.
- In 2004, gay marriages became legal in Massachusetts.

All of these events would have been inconceivable fifty years ago. During this time we’ve seen social change taking place at a rate unprecedented in the history of the planet. And while many of the changes have had widespread popular support, they have also—especially when combined with the unrelenting pace of technological innovation—stressed our adaptive capacities. We’ve not only had to adjust to computers and email and cell phones, but also to the changing roles of women and minorities, the “sexual revolution”, the decline of the nuclear family, the growth of the global economy, the ecological movement, and so on.

■ **CONTINUED FROM WEBSITE:** We may welcome many or all of these changes. But it’s part of our human makeup to long for something immutable and permanent, which may account for the increasing strength—in our largely secular, ecumenical society—of fundamentalist values. It’s as if many people were saying, “I can accept that everything I own is rapidly becoming obsolete, and that I don’t understand the music and films that people like nowadays, as long as I have these ancient, fixed beliefs that I can hold onto amid the chaos”. It may seem absurd for people to place such heavy reliance on sacred texts written by men who believed the earth was flat and thought slavery normal, but it isn’t hard to understand the deep need for some kind of firm stability amid the fluid, ever-shifting chaos of modern life. We are not built to adapt to change as quickly as our technological age demands and social innovators would like.

“THE CENTER WILL NOT HOLD”

This is not just an American phenomenon. The entire globe is convulsed with change, and the fundamentalists of America are mirrored in the fundamentalists of Islam. All over the world there's confusion over values, a loss of ethical certainty, a bewildering lack of consensus about almost everything. Churches battle over gay rights, the French battle over head scarves in schools, Southerners battle over the Ten Commandments in public buildings.

Incivility and chaos pervade our world because we're undergoing a turbulent transition between two global cultural systems with opposing values and assumptions. Things seem to be falling apart because this transition is incomplete—the old system is breaking down but the new one hasn't yet fully taken hold.

This is not a conflict between nations, or between religious traditions, or between left and right. The struggle is taking place WITHIN every nation, every political party, every religious tradition, every institution, every individual.

The old system I call *Control Culture*, because its underlying focus on order led to the creation of rigid mental and physical compartments. The new system I call *Connecting Culture*, because its guiding impulse is to bring down walls and permeate boundaries—to bring everything—ideas, people, images, cultures, species—into relation with everything else.

We've moved from segregation to integration, from Newtonian physics to quantum physics, from authoritarianism to democracy, from a mind/body split to psychosomatic theory, from World Wars to the European Union, from mechanical models to biological models, from national economies to the global economy. Boundaries are becoming less rigid everywhere.

But this is not a smooth, even process. A wall comes down in Berlin, but walls go up in Israel, and on the U.S.-Mexico border. Old cultural systems are not abandoned without fierce resistance.

THE TWO SYSTEMS

If your life revolves around getting control—over Nature, other people, and your own body and feelings—you can't look at the world around you as one great indissoluble, ever-changing Unity. How could you ever control such a thing? So Control Culture tended to split it up (“divide and conquer”), to see the world as a static collection of paired opposites: friend/enemy, master/slave, mind/body, good/evil. It was a world that fit the Bible and Newton's Clockwork Universe equally well.

Another problem for the Controller is that living things aren't all that crazy about *being* controlled, so you're going to have to fight a lot. Control Culture was a warrior culture—competitive, belligerent, macho. And a culture based on war tends to be authoritarian. Slaves and serfs have to be kept in line, and fighting men—trained to be competitive and quarrelsome—have to be controlled. So rigid hierarchies with rigid rules of behavior became the norm. And because war was viewed as the most noble masculine profession, parents raised their boys to be ‘from Mars’—that is, stoic, rigid, and aggressive, while women were expected to specialize in cooperation, intimacy, and nurturance. And since women weren't doing soldierly things they wound up at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Even the lowest serf was expected to dominate his wife.

We've been steeped for so long in this cultural system that many people assume its customs and norms are locked in our DNA. They think Control Culture is just "human nature". But what was "human nature" two thousand years ago is very different from what "human nature" was twenty thousand years ago, or what it will be a thousand years from now. Human societies have managed to persuade people to act in the most varied and outlandish ways, and to believe their odd habits "natural".

Yet there's a grain of truth in the "human nature" belief: a cultural pattern this deeply ingrained doesn't change overnight. It will take generations for these habits fall into disuse.

Connecting Culture reverses all the themes of Control Culture, seeking to tear down the artificial walls it has built. Whereas Control Culture viewed the universe as a gigantic, clockwork machine controlled from above, Connecting Culture sees it as a self-generating organism. The Connector world-view is consistent with the revolutions in science brought about by Darwinian theory and quantum physics. Its growing power is one reason the evolution-creationism debate is so heated.

The spread of democracy, the Women's Movement, the global economy, the ecology movement, the Internet, New Age philosophies, Chaos Theory, organic farming, the growth of international institutions and international law, the sudden interest in understanding other cultures and in communicating with other species, the interest in telling old stories from new viewpoints—these things are all part of Connecting Culture. Connecting Culture is about integrating diversity. Control Culture was about eliminating it.

CONTROL CULTURE

Universe split into opposites

World is static matter

Authoritarian, hierarchical

Competitive, macho, warlike

Women devalued, constrained

Change ordered from above

CONNECTING CULTURE

Universe undivided, whole

World is energy, process

Democratic, egalitarian

Cooperative, communicative

Women valued, empowered

Spontaneous evolution

The clash between these cultural systems can be found not only in large public issues like gay marriage, abortion rights, and the global economy. It creeps into everything.

During the 1980s a group of midwives in California pooled their resources to found a local birthing center. As they were holding a workshop with new mothers and their babies, a SWAT team with drawn guns and bullet-proof vests burst in and arrested the midwives for practicing medicine without a license. For at that time, giving birth was defined by the medical establishment as a disease—an example of the older culture's fear of losing control.

Modern Western medicine was founded on the study of cadavers, which led doctors to view the body as a passive object to be manipulated by the physician. Disease was an enemy that invaded this helpless body and had to be fought and killed by the knight-like doctor. Health was a matter of dominating and vanquishing

enemy germs and cancer cells with biological and chemical weapons, “magic bullets”, and knives. But if no enemy germs or cells can be found, this military model tends to leave the physician helpless, especially faced with auto-immune diseases.

These limitations of Control Culture medicine led to wholesale defections by patients during the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Today there is more acceptance by Western doctors of alternative approaches like acupuncture that are based on the Connector concept of helping a self-equilibrating organism balance itself.

The conflict can be found even in such esoteric realms as horse training and university tenure policy:

For thousands of years humanity’s relationship with horses was one of domination. Horses had to be “broken”, before they could be ridden. You had to “show them who’s boss.” Beatings were a common part of the process, which could take days or weeks. Monty Roberts, celebrated in the film *The Horse Whisperer*, revolutionized this process. Roberts learned how horses use their bodies to convey information, and with this knowledge was able to communicate with them. He could get a wild horse to accept saddle, bridle, and rider in 30 minutes. But even when he became well-known, and his techniques widely copied, his father—a traditional “broncobuster” who used ropes, beatings, and hobblings to “break” horses, was unconvinced. “Keep doing it that way and they’ll get you,” he said.

An article by Cathy A. Trower and Richard P. Chait on tenure in academia found sharp contrasts in the attitudes held by older and younger academics about the tenure review process. The older academics wanted the process to be secret, believed competition improved performance, thought research should be organized within disciplines, believed work and family should be kept separate, and thought faculty members should be autonomous. Younger academics thought the review process should be transparent, thought cooperation improved performance, thought research should be organized around problems rather than disciplines, that a balance between work and personal life was important, and that faculty had a collective responsibility. The older academics, in other words, wanted to maintain rigid boundaries between individuals, between disciplines, between work and life, while the younger academics were saying these boundaries were artificial, illusory, and harmful.

IT’S NOT ABOUT POLITICAL PARTIES

This conflict cannot be equated with the familiar Left-Right split. For while the Neo-Cons in the Republican party may epitomize the fundamentalist backlash against Connecting Culture, traditional conservatives, in their preference for spontaneous processes and deep distrust of centralized authority, embrace many Connector values.

Progressives are equally split. Controller radicals approach social change as a conquest. There is only one “correct” path, which must triumph over all other paths. This path usually puts a priority on gaining centralized political power, at which point change can be imposed by force on a benighted populace. They reserve their deepest scorn for those who are “too moderate”.

Connector progressives see change not as imposed from the top but as evolving from spontaneous, grass-roots movements like MoveOn.org. They tend to accept multiple approaches to change—those who work with

corporations to achieve sustainability are not thought to have “sold out”, for example. There is no “blueprint” for change, no “party discipline” and leadership is seen as a quality that ordinary people everywhere can exercise in their own communities.

WHY NOW?

But why is all this happening now? Why, after thousands of years of being second-class citizens, did women suddenly reject the role? Why, after thousands of years of accepting tyranny as the natural order of the universe, did people suddenly opt for democracy? Why, after thousands of years of assuming war was just part of life—and the major way that men could prove themselves—did people start seeking peace and creating institutions to preserve it?

Modern science—notably evolution theory, chaos theory, and quantum physics—has created severe challenges to Control Culture thinking, but cultural values are notoriously impervious to rational considerations. Science may have reinforced Connecting Culture but the real causes lie elsewhere.

There are four main reasons why Connecting Culture is growing so quickly today—all arising from the achievements and excesses of Control Culture itself:

First, the sharp increase in the pace of technological change;

Second, sudden increases in the speed and breadth of global communication;

Third, increasing awareness of our common dependence on the health of the planet we inhabit together;

Fourth, the decreasing utility of war.

I. THE PACE OF CHANGE

Warren Bennis and I predicted in 1964 that “democracy was inevitable” and that the Soviet Union and other authoritarian regimes would either collapse or be forced to democratize within fifty years. Since 1980, eighty-two nations have converted to democracy, while thirty-three military dictatorships have been replaced.

Bahrain used to be typical of the autocratic and repressive regimes of the Middle East. It was a breeding ground of Al-Qaeda extremists and deemed unsafe for Western firms. Then the old Emir died and his son, Emir Sheikh Hamad al Khalifa, decided to embrace democracy. He freed over a thousand political prisoners, abolished the laws that allowed police to hold prisoners without charge, and held free elections in 2002, giving every single Bahraini—male or female—the right to vote. While protests occurred when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, they were peaceful. In the past, as one Bahraini observed:

*U.S. soldiers would have been afraid to step outside the bases...
Today, if we disagree, we can protest, write editorials, campaign.
But in Saudi, what can they do? Only use bombs.*

Authoritarianism can survive in places where nothing much changes for decades at a time but are too rigid and slow to adapt in an age of rapid change. In the corporate world, hierarchies have flattened, and ad hoc teams

are replacing pyramidal bureaucracies. As business analyst William Knoke observes:

The behemoths that performed well in a static world are proving unadaptable to a changing marketplace, dizzying technologies, and dynamic consumer tastes... Hierarchy and centralized control are collapsing.

In his book *Six Degrees*, Duncan Watts points out that during 9/11 centralized emergency systems, like the mayor's emergency command bunker and the police command center, were immediately put out of commission, while informal networks all over the city responded quickly to the crisis.

Repair of a system in such a crisis depends on utilizing all the resources of that system, which in turn requires rapid communication among all of its parts. But hierarchies prevent this by requiring that all communication between departments be routed through managers at the "top".

Toyotas are manufactured by over 200 separate companies, all of which exchange personnel, assistance, and intellectual property—in other words, a network. In 1997 a plant that was the exclusive manufacturer of a crucial brake valve burned to the ground, leaving Toyota with only a two days supply of the valves and no way to make any more until the plant was rebuilt. Car production ground to a halt. Yet within three days 62 of the other companies—none of whom had any previous experience with the valves—became emergency valve producers, with 150 other companies indirectly involved as suppliers. Two weeks after the disaster struck car production was back to normal levels.

This amazing recovery would not have been possible without decentralization—without a rich tradition of full lateral communication at the ground level and cooperative daily problem-solving. It's this flexibility that makes networks so successful in an age of chronic change. And it's this decentralized flexibility that makes groups like Al-Qaeda impossible to destroy by conventional military force.

II. COMMUNICATION

As an executive training exercise, management expert Charles Handy would select two men from opposite sides of a room, place them in chairs facing away from each other, and auction off, one at a time, three five-pound notes, giving each man a turn at bidding first. Invariably the notes were sold at or above their actual value:

The rest of the group watched, amazed by the apparent idiocy of the bidding. There would be a rush of volunteers for the next round, eager to try out their theory of preemptive bidding. The result would be the same as long as I was careful to pick them from different sides of the room.

Finally he'd choose a pair he'd seen whispering together. One would bid pennies, the other would pass, then they'd split the proceeds. Communication had transformed the situation. Without it:

Logical, sensible, mature individuals were competing to the point of lunacy.

Communication changed the game. And communication is what creates Connecting Culture. The doom of Control Culture was foreshadowed when international trade was born. In Control Culture value came from

scarcity. In *Connecting Culture* it comes from profusion. A single telephone, modem, or fax machine is worth nothing. The more there are the more value they have.

III. ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The hunter-gatherers who covered the globe before Control Culture emerged saw the world as a unity, and saw all living things as interdependent. Hunters felt one with their prey—identified with it, worshipped it, felt their success in killing it was a gift. They would have been astonished to hear us talk about Nature as if we stood outside it. “Man against Nature” would have sounded as silly to them as “Toe against Foot”.

Control Culture split the world into a battleground of warring opposites. Everything had to be cut in two: friend vs. enemy, men vs. women, aristocrat vs. peasant, man vs. nature, good vs. evil. Mind was separated from body, spirit from matter, religion from sexuality. Even the unity of the human body was denied: The right hand became the “righteous” hand and the left hand was “sinister,” as if the two halves of the body were enemies.

Today it’s harder to make these splits. The world is shrinking. It’s harder to avoid each other, harder to ignore each other, harder to deceive each other. Harder to deny our interdependence. You can’t take action anywhere in the world without it having repercussions for everyone. Factory emissions in Illinois cause acid rain in Massachusetts. Stock market prices in Europe and Japan affect those on Wall Street and vice versa. Insecticides from American farms leave deposits in the Arctic Circle. The greed of corporate executives in Texas destroys the pensions of widows in Vermont. Chemical weapons used against Vietnamese and Iraqis contaminate our own soldiers. Modern industry, modern chemicals, and modern weapons are all indifferent to national boundaries. We live in a woven world.

It’s also a finite world. Our economic system demands perpetual growth, but we’re already drowning in trash, and people have become frightened at the extremes to which the open-ended biblical precept to “increase and multiply” has been carried. Unlimited growth is, after all, cancer.

The only thing that can be expanded indefinitely is communication—relationships, linkages. And that’s what *Connecting Culture* is all about.

IV. THE OBSOLESCENCE OF WAR

War as we know it, with standing armies, pitched battles, and large scale slaughter, has only been around for a few thousand years, and for most of that time it had a practical value based on an agrarian economic system. Through war you could acquire land and the slaves to work it. Today war doesn’t buy you anything, even security. There’s nothing you can get with war today that you can’t get more cheaply without it. Going to war today therefore requires some sort of moral pretext—the enemy must somehow be demonized, dehumanized.

Furthermore, modern warfare lacks the glamor of ancient hand-to-hand combat, being largely a matter of destroying infrastructures and slaughtering civilians. The romance of war received a mortal wound when the gun replaced the sword, and was put out of its misery by Hiroshima.

Finally, the global economy has created a world where it’s hard to find a place to shoot where you won’t hit yourself—your own companies, citizens, and assets. Unless you’re selling weaponry, war is no longer good for

business. The world's most prosperous nations, in terms of average personal income, don't engage in it.

It may seem odd to say war is obsolete when American soldiers are dying in Iraq and Afghanistan. But to say something is obsolete doesn't mean it ceases to exist. Monarchy is obsolete, but there are still kings and queens. People still ride horses, too, and take buggy-rides. What does it mean, then, to say war is obsolete?

The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were defined as efforts to combat terrorism. But Al Qaida is a network, not a nation; its terrorists found all over the globe. Many feel that traditional nation-vs.-nation wars actually increase our insecurity by inciting anti-American hatred in the conquered nations, aiding the recruitment of terrorists, and retarding—through the devastation of infrastructures—the westernization of the nations involved. Terrorism can't be eliminated by military means. All the planes, tanks, and missiles in the world won't stop a single terrorist from poisoning a water supply or hijacking a plane. A network is not a nation, and as John Arquilla, professor of analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, points out, it takes a network to fight a network—a network of contacts, allies, nations. Clinging to an archaic boundary concept just gets in the way when you're trying to cope with a network that has no boundaries.

Body counts illustrate the difference between the two ways of thinking. The Controller worldview sees terrorists as isolated 'bad guys', so that each one you kill is one less, and if a few civilians are killed along with them it's a small price to pay. The Connector sees each person slain as part of an extended family and community, so that each death may produce a dozen new terrorists seeking revenge. The Connector sees terrorism, not as a war problem, soluble by mortar attacks and blowing up buildings, but as a police problem of apprehending would-be perpetrators.

Over the last 200 years Control Culture, and the assumptions that feed it, have been in decline. Governments have become more democratic, hierarchies have flattened, women have gained power and status, and war has become unpopular in most of the civilized world. And since hand-to-hand combat has little relation to modern life—even to modern war—the traits men are trained in from birth have become irrelevant to the world we live in. The cooperative skills women have been forced to specialize in, on the other hand, have become increasingly important in our shrinking world. The status of women has increased proportionately.

THE LEGACY OF THE SIXTIES

The fundamentalist, neo-conservative movement that has swept the United States during the past two decades was a frightened reaction to the radical movements of the 1960s. Before the 1960s people had sought changes in one or two aspects of the Controller system, but the movements of the sixties constituted the first *generalized* challenge to it. By the late sixties and early seventies all Controller principles were under assault.

Few people recognized the common denominator to these movements, and the various groups involved—hippies, anti-war protesters, civil rights activists, feminists—engaged in loud and bitter arguments about priorities. But the significance of the period should not be underestimated. For the first time every assumption of Control Culture was being called into question by a substantial segment of society.

The 60s dealt Control Culture a mortal wound, but Controllers—like the de-limbed knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* were in denial: "It's only a scratch." The media, of course, saw the sixties as tie-dye and bell bottoms—a

fashion that came and went. Yet everything of substance that the pioneers of that period began has endured:

1 Civil rights activists ended apartheid in our own South and opened doors for African-Americans in all areas of life. In the midst of today's many forms of racism we tend to forget that blacks were virtually invisible in mainstream America of the fifties. There were no blacks on TV or films except as servants, and very few in the professions or law enforcement.

2 Anti-war activists successfully challenged an on-going war for the first time in our history, brought it to an end, and exposed the government hypocrisy and deception associated with it. Military adventures would never again receive the kind of automatic and virtually unanimous support from the American people that they did prior to 1960.

3 Feminists confronted practices that had gone unchallenged for thousands of years, and brought about major changes in all parts of society and all aspects of male-female relationships.

4 The isolated nuclear family began to erode. Young women began to marry later or not at all, and to postpone having children. While the commune movement withered after a decade or so, the pattern of unrelated people sharing households continued to grow. In 1960 there were only 500,000 unwed American couples living together, in 1997 over 4,000,000, a third of whom had children.

5 Although the AIDS epidemic moderated the promiscuity of the 60s and 70s, the "sexual revolution" was permanent. Women emerged from the 60s and 70s with an image fully sexed, fully human. And the censorship that had plagued Hollywood for 30 years—censorship so prudish that even married couples couldn't be shown in bed together—was overthrown. Sex came into the open.

6 LSD and other psychedelic drugs became illegal, but interest in altered states and spiritual experiences only increased in the decades following the sixties. For many people who took psychedelics it was the beginning of a prolonged spiritual quest—interest in Yoga, Zen Buddhism and other spiritual disciplines has grown steadily since the sixties.

7 The hippie interest in nature was a major factor in the burgeoning of the ecological movement—the strongest grassroots political force in America today.

Although the often naive and idealistic enthusiasm of the sixties soon petered out, to be replaced in the eighties by an intense affirmation of greed and cynicism, the trends that began in the sixties have widened and strengthened, and while the Controller backlash has been more dramatic, the growth of Connector values has been sturdy and consistent.

AN AWKWARD AGE

Today, every aspect of Control Culture is being challenged—and every aspect is being bitterly defended. The debate over which path to take is what makes our nation, and our world, feel so polarized. Controllers and Connectors hold such diametrically opposite world-views that they find it hard to understand each other. Controllers see Connectors as "unrealistic". Connectors see Controllers as "living in the past". In a sense, both

are right: Connectors tend to overestimate the speed with which humans are capable of changing their habits, while Controllers tend to deny that the change is in fact taking place.

If change happened slowly and smoothly we might be able to handle it more gracefully. But that's not what happens. As they sense an old cultural system dying around them, those who espouse it will assert its values more harshly, more stridently, more desperately. The most extreme forms of authoritarianism, for example, occurred in the 1930s, when democracy was a growing trend.

We can see the fear of Connecting Culture in the rise of fundamentalism around the world, from Al-Qaeda to the Christian Coalition. We can see it in the screams of outraged machismo and the increase in hate crimes. This makes us feel the world's going in opposite directions at the same time. We've never been more concerned about the environment yet never more destructive of it; never more distrustful of technology yet never more dependent on it; never more opposed to violence yet never more fascinated with it; never more ego-driven and never more hungry to lose ourselves in something beyond ego; never more health conscious yet never more unhealthy. And while we've never had more ways of connecting with each other, we've never felt more disconnected.

These are the predictable symptoms of a society in transition. Old familiar habits have begun to seem irrelevant or destructive, while the emerging system still feels awkward and uncomfortable, like shoes that haven't yet shaped themselves to our feet.

It's as if we were in the middle of one of those shaky rope footbridges that appear in old Hollywood jungle movies. It's a long bridge, spanning the deep ravine between these two cultures, and we're arguing with each other about which way to go. Some feel the journey was a mistake and want to go back, others want to hurry everyone to the other side, and this milling about makes the bridge even shakier. But we're going to be here, in the middle of the bridge, for a long time.

PURITY AS A SYMPTOM OF DECAY

It would be nice if some sort of compromise were possible. After all, isn't every healthy culture full of contradictions? Lewis Mumford once observed that cultures survive only when they're logically impure—when they accumulate inconsistencies like lichen on a rock.

Medieval Europe had a Feast of Fools, for example, during which nobles and peasants exchanged roles, priests were the butt of practical jokes, and all the usual taboos and rules of deference to one's "superiors" were abolished for a day. Similarly, the Japanese have a tradition that anything said while drunk will have no repercussions in their daily lives. Ceremonious Brits adore making fun of pomposity, and materialistic Americans are addicted to sentimental movies proclaiming that the best things in life are free. These contradictions, Mumford said, protect a cultural system from "self-asphyxiation".

But when an old cultural system begins to decay it's these very stabilizing inconsistencies that come under attack. Fundamentalists and other ideologues believe they're trying to "revive" or "revitalize" a system when they call for a return to "basic values" or "fundamental principles", but since it's the contradictions that protect a system from self-asphyxiation, these purists are in effect smothering it. When Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution to strip away "impurities"—traditional values and entrepreneurism—from Chinese communism he smothered the system and opened the door to capitalistic and democratic reforms.

The purest forms of a social system appear when it's decaying. The rigidly dualistic Nazis tried to control every aspect of life, believed war was the fullest expression of German manhood, reduced women to near-slave status, and maintained an oppressive authoritarian hierarchy. It was Control Culture's purest example, and heralded the collapse of authoritarianism's global hegemony.

CONSENSUS

"Impurity" implies a degree of consensus about what ought to be—a generally-accepted framework within which these "impurities" can be permitted. The Feast of Fools was allowable only when people generally accepted the status quo it mocked. It came into disfavor during the 17th and 18th centuries as the social distance between classes was being questioned. It was all right to play games with the rigid class system as long as that system was unchallenged, but when it was under attack its values had to be asserted more stridently. It was no longer a joking matter. Yet in its prime the Feast of Fools, far from being a challenge to hierarchy, was a measure of how utterly secure people felt about it.

What we have today is not a consensus with permitted "impurities", but a lack of consensus. Control Culture and Connecting Culture are too equally balanced for either to tolerate the values of the other. There is no center yet from which these "impurities" can diverge. It will be decades before Connecting Culture achieves the kind of general acceptance that Control Culture enjoyed for thousands of years.

Control Culture is doomed by its irrelevance to the interdependent, interwoven world we live in today. The "purity" of fundamentalist ideologies is symptomatic of a terminal cultural illness. But Connector enthusiasts need to recognize and honor in themselves the same need for stability and familiarity that activates their foes. Radical leftists in the past have often crippled themselves through an egoistic devotion to ideological purity, preferring to go down with the ship singing "nearer to the left than thee" rather than share a lifeboat with conservatives and compromising liberals.

Connector values like cooperation, empathy, and flexibility were never absent during the Controller era, they were simply assigned inferior status—something women concerned themselves with. Similarly, when Connecting Culture achieves a comfortable preponderance in our shrinking world, the old Controller values of competitiveness, stoicism, and inflexibility will have a niche. The kind of consensus that will permit this is a long way off, but we can take some comfort from the likelihood that our descendants will enjoy it. Prophets of doom always attract an audience because people love drama, but the probable reality is more mundane: we can expect a long period of adaptation, during which violent flareups, like those of this decade, will gradually diminish in frequency as more and more of the world embraces the emerging culture. Life on our planet will then settle into an equilibrium—one that may not create any more happiness, but will at least be more stable, and our nation less polarized. ∞

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