

Cultural Creativity and The Wave of Change

Image: Wave of Change

Imagine that we're standing near a beach watching the ocean. A great tidal wave has been moving in on an angle to the beach. Off to our left and in front of us, much of the beach has already experienced the wave with its curl and its roar, and it's already receding; but off to our right, the wave is coming in just now. This is how it has been with Modernism, as it has grown and spread over the past 400 years. The British Isles, France, Belgium and Holland caught the wave first in the 1500s, in an industrial revolution that brought big cities, big governments, big bureaucracies, big armies and big media, and about 1750 it spread to us in America, and then to Germany, Italy and Spain, and then to Russia and Japan, and recently to parts of Latin America, Taiwan, Korea. In the West, that great wave of change is already receding, and as a strong sign of that, we're recognizing all the problems and contradictions it has been carrying, and the new social movements and consciousness movements have been pointing that out for forty years now. As it turns out, the new group we're talking about tonight, the Cultural Creatives, have come out of all those movements for a new kind of change. For a big part of our story tonight is that in the Western world, as the old wave has receded, a whole new wave of change is coming in, whose carrier population is the Cultural Creatives. And we'll talk about that in just a moment.

However, in the Middle East and parts of Asia and Africa, that urban-industrial wave of change has been moving around the planet, and there it has just been arriving over the last generation, and bring in its wake immense changes... and violence. For we must tell you an essential piece of the story: Everywhere that money and banking and the market came, the old agrarian communities have been destroyed and an established way of life started to disintegrate, and some powerful elite groups have been harmed, along with their followers: the landed aristocracies, the churches that legitimized them, and the generals who fought for them. And those groups never took it lying down: wars and violence erupted practically every time: A major civil war England between the Cromwellites and the Royalists, the French Revolution, The American Civil War, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Communists against the Kuomintang, and repeated wars and coups d'etat all over the developing world.

So when this wave of change really hit the Arab countries, and they got violence out of it, it was the same old, same old. But with one big difference: now we have one world for the very first time, linked together by easy air travel, the Internet, global financial markets, global communications of all kinds. When the far right wing terrorists, who lived in failing societies where modernism is not succeeding, want to strike back at the source of their pain and suffering, now they are able to strike back at us here in the U.S., not just at some local dictators. We've been the sponsors of some pretty repressive Arab regimes, and our CIA and military have done some pretty terrible things to large civilian populations over the last generation, and New York is the absolute center of all the globalization, big financial markets, big media. Part of what has most dismayed those fundamentalists is our TV networks and big movie studios with their outpourings of the pornography of extreme wealth, their titillating sex and ever more gory violence, all exported to all the rest of the world.

For about 10 years they've been trying to hit back at us, and on 9/11/01 they finally did it. Remember that it's the powerless who become terrorists, and the best they could do was not to destroy our industries, or our armies, navies and air force, but make a symbolic strike: at the symbolic center of global finance and the symbolic center of the military superpower. Not a single financial market has been destroyed, or a single corporation, or a single army—just the symbols of power. Nevertheless, the loss of 3,000 people was devastating and personal to Americans. Our media personalized those deaths, because they were OUR people. Remember the '91 Gulf War? What set off a lot of those Arab terrorists was the 100,000 Iraqis we killed ten years ago, and the tens of thousands of Iraqi children who suffer from hunger and no medical care today, from our government's actions. Our air strikes against Iraq were treated by our media like a video game, when it was only THEIR people. So even though the terrorists weren't able to hit at the substance of our power, we suddenly learned how vulnerable we are. And we were shocked.

9/11 also sounded a bell of change, just for the West. It's a bell that says, "The old era is ending, and a new one is beginning." We've all been wondering for the last 10-20 years if it was time: time to speak out about what really matters to us, to start living lives of voluntary simplicity, to

really go all out for ecological sustainability, to really get on that spiritual path, to really get in good shape on our health or our psyche, to really start a vocation that was both for the good of our souls and for the good of the planet.” Well, the bell has rung, and we’ve all heard it. What we’ve been hearing all over, is that people are finally looking at the quality of their inner lives, and looking at the question of what they want to do for a vocation, a real calling, and are asking “what is this time in history, and can I play a meaningful role in it?”

The Great Wave of Change and Demand for New Leadership

You are at the leading edge of a great wave of change going through Western Culture, especially the U.S. and Europe. Who you are, what you value most, what you create has great significance now. You are the people who, awakening from the shocks of this time, are creating a new culture.

How shall we understand our lives right now? We must drop the small context of our personal situations. It’s too psychological and individualistic, comfortable and familiar:

Looking out for number one, just taking care of ourselves, resulting in Dismay, Disheartenment, Disempowerment— allowing corrupt politics and business, and planetary destruction. Many shrink back, silencing our voices/values, believing that we’re pretty much alone in our concerns, and that regardless of what good causes we’re in, we’re probably going to lose out to the Bigs (gov, biz, media, military, finance). Did we lose our democracy to a corrupt corporate elite, dominated by big energy interests, in a stolen election? In fact, we need new forms of leadership

Instead let’s expand our mental horizons to look at the Big Context: Linking our life experience to the life of our world, we see a larger life, with a longer time horizons, on the order of centuries, a planetary perspective. Then something remarkable happens: Hope Empowerment, Possibility:

- 1) We discover we are not alone in our values and concerns: we’ve got lots of company.
Cultural Creatives who share our values are 50 M adults in U.S. and 90 M adults in Western Europe. They came from: 20+ kinds of new social movements and consciousness movements from the 60s right up to today.
- 3) We live in a unique time in history: more promising, more dangerous: a tipping point.

- 4) Cultural Creatives are the essential carrier population for the next culture: an old civilization is failing and a new one is trying to emerge, and that's what they are creating.
- 5) The Hope gets expressed in a Positive Image of the Future that keeps drawing us forward, creating an enlargement of our common Purpose.
 - We open up to Creativity, putting the message out there that we're not alone: millions of us are already creating new ways of life, though the media refuse to report it.
 - We look for allies, with gatherings in living rooms, coffee shops, conferences like this one, citizens meetings, etc.
 - We need thousands more events and occasions where Cultural Creatives can meet and get support for what we must do next: tell each other our stories, brainstorm on what we can create in new businesses and projects, lay out our dreams and visions for the future.
 - Creating a new culture is so complex that it will take tens of thousands of us working in parallel to even touch on all the new areas that need to be reworked.

What is the nature of this time? It's a time in the changeover between eras.

As the wave of industrial change is receding growing numbers of Americans and Western Europeans have been asking themselves if materialist progress, measured in consumer goods can possibly be worth the cost of destroying our planet, weakening democracy and weakening the quality of our inner lives. But they're not coming up with the answers that the social conservatives have been pushing. The answers to their questions go to a more interesting place than just to fundamentalism and trying to roll back the results of all the movements of the past 40 years.

A gigantic part of the nature of our time is the emergence of the 50M Cultural Creatives in the U.S. and 90M in Western Europe, people whose values of ecology, social justice, women's issues, relationship, spirituality and personal growth, and authenticity all grew out of all those new social movements and consciousness movements from the Sixties right up to the WTO demonstrations last year. A typical Cultural Creative has cared about and been involved in half a dozen of those movements (list) and tends to volunteer more and give more money to good causes than most Americans. The new social movements and consciousness movements co-evolved with Cultural Creatives: the people and the movements shaped each other. And because

of that, all the movements have been converging slowly over the past 40 years, so that today they all share the same values and lifestyles, and pretty much the same broad worldview. Just in the nick of time, there's an opportunity for all the new social movements to come together in one giant mega-movement, to create a big tent for positive change. The supporters of all those movements are one huge constituency, namely, the Cultural Creatives. There's an opportunity to reshape politics in the next era, and to build new kinds of institutions, and new kinds of businesses.

One Planet, not Globalization

We're becoming One World for the first time, and what goes around, comes around. Better and better, worse and worse, faster and faster. This is the good and bad news of Modernism's legacy: global markets and communications, the Internet, information about what's going on around the world, both in human and ecological terms. But it's also ever-faster destruction of ecosystems and species around the planet, and easier spread of epidemic diseases, and easier spread of crises and wars. And it's also identification with Gaia, and growth of a real willingness to act both locally and globally, and not just for us — for Her.

A new civilization is in the process of emerging

 a new wave is coming in as the wave of Modernism recedes.

 The Feminine is coming into public life for the first time in millenia.

 Planetary awareness, communication, technology

 Ecological awareness

We have bigger problems and bigger capabilities than ever before in history.

 We are balanced right at the cusp of history. It's the time between eras, between stories, the transition time. Cascade of crises happens here, with the WTC being one of many we can expect. Lots of stored up wealth, technology and knowledge that can be put to use to support the transition to the next new culture, and climb up the steep slope as we rebound from the crises.

Your place in history is right now

You can make more of a difference than ever before. If you are culturally creative, you are carrying the kinds of values and living in a way that can create the new civilization that is in the process of being born.

If you tried to bring this to birth centuries or even several decades ago, you had very little leverage. The old institutions kept you from bringing your ideas forth or following through on them. In the Sixties, this started to change.

And if you try to bring your values to birth decades from now, it may be too late.

Our time is now. For social change activists, for women, for everyone who cares deeply about what is happening to our Earth, it's time to tell the truth about what you value. Time to bring your new ideas and social inventions and expression into the public sphere.

Where does this leave us now?

How shall we understand our lives right now? We must drop the small context of our personal situations. It's too psychological and individualistic, comfortable and familiar:

Looking out for number one, just taking care of ourselves, resulting in Dismay, Disheartenment, Disempowerment— allowing corrupt politics and business, planetary destruction. Many shrink back, silencing our voices/values, believing we're pretty much alone in our concerns, and regardless of what good causes we're in, we're probably going to lose out to the Bigs (gov, biz, media, military, finance). Did we lose our democracy to a corrupt corporate elite, dominated by big energy interests, in a stolen election? In fact, we need new forms of leadership

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2. We discover we are not alone in our values and concerns: we've got lots of company. Cultural Creatives who share our values are 50 M adults in U.S. and 90 M adults in Western Europe. They came from: 20+ kinds of new social movements and consciousness movements from the 60s right up to today.
3. We live in a unique time in history: more promising, more dangerous: a tipping point.

4. Cultural Creatives are the essential carrier population for the next culture: an old civilization is failing and a new one is trying to emerge, and that's what they are creating.
5. The Hope gets expressed in a Positive Image of the Future that keeps drawing us forward, creating an enlargement of our common Purpose.
6. We open up to Creativity, putting the message out there that we're not alone: millions of us are already creating new ways of life, though the media refuse to report it.
7. We look for allies, with gatherings in living rooms, coffee shops, conferences like this one, citizens meetings, etc.
8. We need thousands more events and occasions where Cultural Creatives can meet and get support for what we must do next: tell each other our stories, brainstorm on what we can create in new businesses and projects, lay out our dreams and visions for the future.
9. Creating a new culture is so complex that it will take tens of thousands of us working in parallel to even touch on all the new areas that need to be reworked.

Don't split off birth from death; don't fall into despair as you see the disintegration of Modernism all around you, because a new civilization is also trying to be born.

And recognize: this creativity is not something to do alone. It's a birth process we are doing together. Creating a culture is too complex, too subtle, too rich for any one person or group or movement to have the resources we need.

1. Convergence of new social movements and consciousness movements makes an opportunity for common action; alignment not agreement on all the details
2. True Mirrors: need to have media that is not infected by the culture of advertising and giant corporations
3. Basis for trust through personal contact: gatherings and gathering places
4. Pull off the old frames, to bring new solutions; surprises; freshness
e.g. restorative justice; new kinds of performance art
5. New politics
6. New kinds of biz, and cross overs; and someone told us: "I wish the churches weren't so damned dead! At one time, they were a force for change."

What is this cultural creativity?

It comes at every level of our shared life together:

Examples of what is changing in the culture:

- We've gone from 300 international NGOs to 30,000 in 50 years. We've gone from about a thousand NGOs in the U.S. to over 200,000 today.
- Yoga has grown from <1% of U.S. to 19% in 15 years.
- Socially responsible investing is now \$1.2 trillion
- LOHAS industries are \$230 Bil/year sales in U.S. and \$540 Bil/year worldwide: ecological sustainability, natural and organic food and products, Alternative health care, new spirituality.
- A Green Economic Movement Strategy (GEMS) is developing
- Hybrid gas-electric cars are already on the market after General Motors claimed 2 years ago that it would be in 2010 at the soonest. Fuel cell cars are less than 5 years away.
- A large hospice movement changing the way we handle dying to make it more spiritual and meaningful
- People starting to do initiations of teenagers and elders again
- Small groups of citizens meeting to educate themselves about voluntary simplicity and ecological sustainability: NW Earth Inst has gone to 30,000 people in 8 years.
- Sacred Grove and land trusts
- We're seeing how to invent new kinds of money: local currencies, global reference currency
- The Triple Bottom Line is growing in acceptance in both European and American business.

Take it to the Next Level:

New leadership is needed to empower us to go to the next level, to see ourselves as historical actors on the big stage of the planet: making history, making the next civilization as modernism declines around us. We call it Creating a Wisdom Culture.

- 1) What's discouraging us is simply the decline of a decadent culture no longer doing its job. Support the new culture instead! Don't try to prop up decay, create what's new, longing to come into existence! Nearly every institution needs reinvention to some degree.

- 2) Accept how paradoxical this feels, decay and corruption going on around us, decline of the planetary ecology, at the same moment when we have more tools than ever, more people on our side than ever, and a promising new culture already beginning to be born.
- 3) The Cultural Creatives are the population who are the carriers of the next new culture. They are literally working on creating a new culture, no matter who's in power!

All the new social movements and all the consciousness movements are converging on the same world view, the same values and the same basic approach. And they are learning to cooperate, like the last half dozen giant demonstrations against the WTO, IMF, World Bank..

- We're looking at the emergence of the Feminine as a big principle behind a lot of the changes: more about the inner life, less hierarchy, more relationship-based, good process, nonviolence,
- This is about emergence of a whole planetary consciousness, and a better conscience, and a relationship to the Earth: One Planet, One People!
- This is about maturity for many of us as individuals, becoming the New Elders, to help our planetary transition. But also it's about maturation of our whole species.

Wisdom Civilization

- The task of our time is to create a new planetary-level Wisdom Civilization, that can serve as a holding environment for the development of truly enlightened individuals by the millions, and for the upleveling of the consciousness of ordinary citizens to a place of active responsibility and participation.

Several elements are needed to visualize a wisdom civilization:

- ❑ Elders, or wisdom carriers who can help define the boundaries and the underlying context for a wisdom society.
- ❑ Overarching visions which help to define the possibilities.
- ❑ Processes and practices which allow people to interact with each other, the visions and the wisdom carriers.