

Forums for a Future ¹

Podcast # 27:

A Conceptual Framework for the Civic Discussions We Need to Have, to Have a Future

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In my podcast/course, “Forums for a Future,” I have suggested that recorded history can be divided into three eras, each spanning approximately only 1/10 of the time of the previous era, thus reflecting the accelerating speed of change:

- 1) The Pre-Modern Era, about 5,000 years (3,500BC-1500 AD),
- 2) The Modern Era, about 500 years (1500-2000), and
- 3) The Post-Modern Era, about 50 years (2000-2050)

The transition between each Era is marked by an inflection “point” (a period of time) in which there was a change in the “world view” generally accepted by humanity at the time. The alternative World Views are:

1. In the Pre-Modern Era, the human condition was largely seen as a matter of fate reflecting the unpredictable and arbitrary mood of the gods, and the mediating structure created by humans was church/divine leader.
2. In the Modern Era, science and technology emerged as means for humans to take the future into their own hands, and the facilitating structure became the nation state.
3. In the Post-Modern Era, wealth vs. sustainability are competing over which engine should drive the human condition under the facilitating structure of globalization.

Now, however, we only have about 50 years to figure it out. For the first time in human history a single lifetime will span an Era, and it is the lifetime of the youth of today. It is the Age of the Millennials. The adults of today, the Boomers, will live long enough to have a guess about how it all will turn out. What an exciting time to be alive!

If one believes, as I do, that we are at such an historical inflection point at a time of rapid change, then it is essential to think in terms of the future, and to allow our thinking in the United States to be guided by a new world view, one that is based on fundamentally different assumption and structures than the expired core beliefs and values from the Modern Era of:

1. **Nationalism and Patriotism**
2. **Ideology** (Capitalism, Individualism and Democracy), and
3. **Wealth** (through ownership, control and manipulation of information)

Although the conceptualizations required are as yet imperfectly formulated, one can make reasonable arguments about the nature of the challenges and choices. I have proposed three principles that provide a foundation for this alternative new World View. They are:

- 1. Building and strengthening world citizenship, not citizenships of the world.**
As the direction of change away from the core belief that nationalism and patriotism are the responses of choice to the globalizations which threaten the sustainability of the geopolitical world.
- 2. Achieving and respecting the power of balance, not the balance of power.**
As the direction of change away from the core belief that the ideologies of capitalism, individualism, and a decentralized democracy (e.g., small government) are absolute truths for all people, at all times, in all places, and for all circumstances.
- 3. Establishing and enhancing knowledge as public domain, not a commodity for financial gain or political power.**
As the direction of change away from the ownership, control and manipulation of information, as the means to create wealth through media and government fostered ignorance.

These three principles provide the conceptual constraints for reconciling the four timeless pillars that define the human condition:

- 1) The Economic (the creation and use of wealth)
- 2) The Political (the collection and application of power)
- 3) The Social (the core beliefs and values that provide purpose and direction), and
- 4) The Psychological (the personal capacity for change and adaptation)

During the Modern Era, these pillars evolved into four scholarly disciplines, each with their own independent but simultaneous narratives based on discipline specific concepts.

However, when the pillars are viewed as four simultaneous forces, each constrained by the others, a new World View appropriate for the Post-Modern Era can be formulated. The three principles provide the basis for prescribing the economic, political, social and psychological concepts necessary for a sustainable passage into the 21st Century under the emerging structure of globalization.

¹ This essay is based on an audio and video podcast by Professor Renner entitled “**Forums for a Future**.” Text, audio and video copies of the material may be accessed from his website at www.kerenner.com. The direct link for subscribing to the video series from iTunes is:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=289289719>

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https://my.usf.edu/webapps/lobj-podcast-bb_bb60/feed/IDH3400.004S09/podcast.xml