

This paper is one of a series of individual essays written within the conceptual constraints provided by "Forms for a Future." The collection of essays will become the individual episodes of the podcast.

'... Forums for A Future...'

Part 6: Review and Transition
Podcast (#18) Principles for Having a Future

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Prelude

I am Ed Renner. Welcome to my Podcast, "Forums for a Future."

Forums for a Future is based on a university honors course I taught at the University of South Florida in 2007-2008. Three textbooks provide background reading for the individual episodes. They are:

- Thomas Friedman's The World is Flat
- Jarred Diamond's Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed
- Gwynne Dyer's Future: Tense. The Coming World Order

The syllabus for the podcast series, text copies of all of the individual podcasts, and directions for subscribing to the series, either directly or through iTunes, are available on my web site at: kerenner.com, that is: www.k-e-r-e-n-n-e-r.com.

The first 16 episodes are in audio format. They provide an academic conceptual foundation for the series. After having taken nearly a one-year break to teach "Forums for the Future," I am now ready to continue the series, but this time in both audio and video formats. As a way to get started on the continuation, I have created a three-part transition. Episodes 17, 18 and 19 provide a brief introduction of the conceptual foundation for those new to the series, and a quick review for the original subscribers. Starting with Podcast #20, the continuation of the podcast is an open-ended series of positive approaches for addressing the many specific contemporary economic, social and political issues that challenge our capacity for making the necessary changes for having a future in the 21st Century.

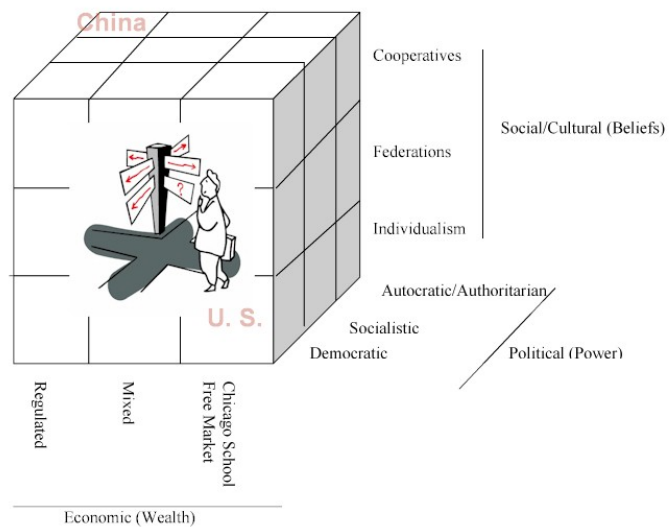
The Key Concept

Welcome to Podcast #18: Principles for Having a Future. The key concept in today's podcast is that:

Re-conceptualizing wealth, power and beliefs as alternative sides of a single concept allows us to escape the impossible task of creating a coherent economic-political-social system from three independent dimensions each with their own set of constructs.

Having a Future: Core Constructs for the 21st Century

The dilemma of attempting to reconcile three independent sets of constructs has no rational solution in our current global context. The three dimensions of economic, political, and social are ideologies often associated with national identities. As an example, China and the United States are at opposite poles on all three dimensions. China has a regulated economy, authoritarian power, and social and cultural beliefs that place the interest of the society ahead of those of the individual. In contrast, the United States has a free-market economy, a democratic government, and social and cultural beliefs that emphasize individualism. These are the ingredients for a new Cold War if we are to try to resolve which one is morally “right,” or even practically speaking, which one is simply “best.” This is especially true when the national use of unilateral military force is an option.



China with its one-child policy and geographic relocation programs has been able to avert a population explosion, a national food crisis, and become a dominant force in the world economy in one generation. This enhanced the human condition for the Chinese within the constraints of their culture. Viewing this progress in China as a human rights violation, as the US has done, simply reflects a uniquely Western perspective with its emphasis on capitalism, democracy and individualism. This is the same emphasis that has paralyzed the capacity of the United States to make some of the dramatic, but essential, adjustments required for the transition into the Postmodern Era. Which better serves human progress? Is the United States model any more appropriate for the economic, political and social reality facing China at the start of the 21st Century, than the Chinese model is for the United States?

Escaping the Matrix

The solution for escaping the matrix is to stop seeing the political, economic and social as three independent constructs. In a global context, there is one issue, not three. The issue is how to create a coherent economic-political-social system capable of peacefully and fairly reconciling wealth, power and beliefs in the 21st Century. Such a system requires a single set of principles about our social institutions, economic structures and political processes that are simultaneously applicable to all three dimensions. Such a solution transcends the contradictions between the elements of the separate disciplines of economics, political science and the social and behavioral sciences. This proposition was covered in detail and audio podcast numbers 11 through 14.

In summary, the economic, political, and social constructs are better considered as a set of simultaneous equations, each defined in terms of the other two. The principles for each one provide the necessary solutions to the other two. In its symbolic form:

- Economics (wealth) is a function of Core Beliefs and Values (social and cultural) and Political (power).
- Core Beliefs and Values (social and cultural) are a function of Political (power) and Economics (wealth).
- Political (power) is a function of Economics (wealth) and Core Beliefs and Values (social and culture).

In other words, three common principles apply equally to all three domains, one grounded in economics, one in the political and the other in the social/cultural. This can be illustrated graphically as a two-dimensional table rather than a matrix composed of 27 independent cells. In a table the three principles (World Citizenship, The Power of Balance, and Knowledge as Public Domain) are applicable to each of the three areas (Political Power, Economic Wealth, and Social Beliefs and Values); and, each of the three areas (A, B, C) are defined by the three principles (a, b, c). All are interdependent similar to a set of simultaneous equations.

Three Basic Conceptual Units for Power, Wealth and Belief	A. Political Power	B. Economic Wealth	C. Social/Cultural Beliefs & Values
a. World Citizenship	Aa Audio Podcast #12	Ba	Ca
b. The Power of Balance	Ab	Bb Audio Podcast #13	Cb
c. Knowledge as Public Domain	Ac	Bc	Cc Audio Podcast #14

The Three Principles

Each of the three principles was independently developed in a previous audio podcast. World citizenship in podcast number 12, the balance of power in podcast number 13, and knowledge as public domain in pod cast number 14. I will briefly review each of the three principles. Each principal may be considered a higher order construct that has a hierarchical set of elements, all of which are applicable to the political, economic, and social /cultural realms. The new series of audio/video podcast will apply the political, economic, and social aspects of the three principles to a variety of contemporary social issues, beginning with the health care crisis in the US in Podcast #20. The purpose will be to show that this alternative conceptual framework provides a coherent frame of reference for transcending the separate and often conflicting ramifications of power, wealth, and beliefs.

1. Building and Strengthening World Citizenship Not Citizenships of the World

We are most familiar with the Modern Era, of course, because for everyone, except for the Millennials, the constructs and values of the Modern Era, in their final form, have dominated our life. The final evolution of our own democratic government in the Modern Era was to balance the power and interest of wealth with those of individual citizens. However, with the advent of the Post-Modern Era that balance has been lost as economic globalization has escaped the boundaries of national regulation and has superseded national political power. Just as the muckrakers and anti-monopoly legislation was essential to the 1920s to properly harness the final chapter of the Modern Era, similar *global* political capacity is required again a century later.

The basic unit for civic responsibility is now global, not local. Centuries ago, at the end of the Pre-Modern Era, a city could manage its safety and its commerce; by the end of the modern Era this was no longer possible and responsibility had shifted to the nation state. In the Post-Modern Era, so too is the case for a nation, even one as large as the United States. This new reality requires building and strengthening our sense of world citizenship, through a sense of loyalty and association that is more essential than our national identity.

2. Achieving and Respecting The Power of Balance Not the Balance of Power

In any situation in which one person, institution, or nation holds the overwhelming balance of power, wealth or ideology, the result is enforced submission, servitude and obedience. All of these are the antithesis of what is generally regarded as human progress. When the balance of power becomes too great, the result is a decline in the over-all well being of the larger whole. At the other extreme, complete equality of power, wealth and ideology does not acknowledge the reality of individual differences. Not everyone is capable of leading, or of similar accomplishments, nor are all ideas equally good. The power of balance is finding a location between these two extremes where ambition, industry and creativity are rewarded, but not to the point where the autonomy, needs and spirit of others can be subjugated. The power for human progress is in the balance that both inspires individual accomplishment and advances the whole. Winning the overwhelming balance of power serves neither the best interests of the individual nor the group over the long-term. Jared Diamond has documented over the course of history how this imbalance eventually results in the collapse of the society. On many issues, such as inequalities of income and wealth, we are on the verge of crossing a critical line, the result of which will be the collapse of the planet, as we know it.

3. Establishing and Enhancing Knowledge As Public Domain Not a Commodity for Financial Gain

Historically, knowledge has served the end of advancing human progress. Only recently has it started to become the principal tool, similar to land and then natural resources in the past, for the creation of wealth, and through wealth, gaining the balanced of power. As an example, although it may still be intuitively obvious that health should not be treated as a commodity, like wheat or oil, it is becoming so. If health becomes a commodity for making a profit, then sickness and death are the inevitable outcome for some in a free-market economy when their individual health

is simply not profitable. If there is no profit to be made by selling health in Africa then sickness will prevail as an economic corollary of valuing financial gain over knowledge as public domain. Such harsh language reverses the human value that health should be the means to wealth, not the reverse. Increasingly, in many other domains, we are reversing the conditions under which knowledge is seen as belonging in the public domain, in the direction of treating it as a commodity for financial gain. Perhaps our most important core belief and value for having a future is the need to challenge the process of allowing the accumulation of knowledge to be less and less devoted to serving the end of human progress, and more and more the means for financial gain. The arguments of Thomas Friedman in his book The World Is Flat, the influence of Bill Gates, the advocates of Milton Friedman's friction free capitalism, and the policies of the New American Century, however seductive at this inflection point in history, are prescription for disaster in the Post-Modern 21st Century.

If we can no longer have faith in the core beliefs and values from the final chapter of the Modern Era, then what are the articles of faith for achieving human destiny in the new era?

Articles of Faith and Achieving Human Destiny

In the Pre-Modern Era articles of faith played a central role. Natural events were seen as acts of God, mediated by the institution of the church, which determine the fate of the human condition. But, the science and technology of Modern Era increasingly provided mechanical explanations for natural events that could be manipulated and controlled by human intervention. Now the state, rather than the church, became the official institution for mediating the human condition. As it has turned out, this knowledge and capacity was the actual pot of gold at the end of the rainbow of science and technology. Now, humankind has entered the Post-Modern Era with the knowledge and the capacity to control the destiny of the human condition.

Now, in the Post-Modern Era, there are fewer and fewer constructs that have to be accepted as articles of faith. Human destiny is in our own hands. Yet, vestiges of previous articles of faith still stand in our way, blocking the transition into the future. There are still intrusions of residual spiritual articles of faith from the Pre-Modern Era: Although there is no credible evidence that dinosaurs and humans live side by side in the Garden of Eden 6000 years ago, creationism is a growing social force reflecting a reluctance to fully embrace the reality of the Post-Modern Era. It is the reality of a self-determined capacity to control human destiny through making the choices required for creating a sustainable lifestyle on this planet. The alternative is to collapse because of the inability to relinquish dysfunctional economic, political, and social/cultural constructs defining the accepted contemporary "truths" of the Modern Era, ones that cannot be reconciled with each other.

We now know most of what we need to know. Unlike the collapse of previous societies ignorance will not be the cause. Jared Diamond in his book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed wrote:

"One basis for hope is that, realistically, we are not beset by insoluble problems.... Instead, they are ones that we are generating ourselves. Because we are the cause of our environmental problems, we are the ones in control of them, and we can choose or not

choose to stop causing them and start solving them... We don't need new technologies to solve our problems; while new technologies can make some contribution, for the most part we 'just' need the political will to apply solutions already available. Of course, that's a big 'just.' But many societies did find the necessary political will in the past." (p. 521-522)

Diamond's conclusion about our current social/cultural ecological challenges, also applies to the political and economic challenge arising from globalization: Can intelligent life use its knowledge to create the promised spiritual paradise here on earth through morally responsible choices? Or, we will choose a descent into the hell of global collapse through morally irresponsible choices? This is, perhaps, what the purpose of the great human experiment is all about.

It is no small task to relinquish both important articles of faith and nationalism, as we have known them historically, as a prerequisite for having a future. But, that is what inflection points are all about.

What an exciting time to be alive.