

WAITING FOR THE SPARK

As I write this, an American space shuttle has landed for the last time. Mission Control is being shuttered. The greatest nation on earth is running on empty, belatedly acknowledging its deeply embarrassing addiction to borrowed money — about 40% of all federal spending — while stumbling towards the inevitable end-game crisis. POTUS 44 has overruled the consensus advice of our Pentagon leaders, and is prematurely backing US forces out of Afghanistan - the same country that housed the Taliban and al Qaeda murderers who were complicit in the worst attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor. I believe this is a political ploy — under the cover of the assassination of bin Laden - so that the embarrassing rout of the fragile Afghanistan government can be delayed until after the 2012 elections. Meanwhile, instability courses through the Middle East like a plague, while the nuclear arsenal of the fragile and unstable Pakistani regime is up for grabs; a nasty theocracy in Iran is hell-bent on acquiring its own jihad nukes; and the American national security apparatus is struggling through the fog of incoherence from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

At home, the economy is mired in a trap created by the political class, a sinkhole into which they, their fellow travelers and millions of innocent bystanders have fallen. Everyone knows that irresponsible borrowing must stop, that the crippling public debt must be reduced, but somehow the tax load on the private economy must not be allowed to throttle any recovery. Some guilt-driven soft leftists feel relief at the prospect of the collapse of the “American empire” while the hard leftists are showing signs of shadenfreude. The conservatives are fragmented, too fixated on political positioning to unite.

One remaining viable exit strategy has eluded the major players: an American creative surge. No such recovery will take hold this decade unless the government substantially reduces the political load on economic progress and creative innovation. Yes, we hear voices from the old-line liberal and conservative commentariat, calling for “creative solutions.” They are invoking a magic mantra, clueless about the creative process, heedless of the heavy lifting, the trial and error and the relentless determination that real creativity demands of us. Given enough time, minds can change. But quicker progress demands fresh minds, new voices and new hands at the helm. Where are you?

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THE AMERICAN CREATIVE SURGE

And the Case for Renaissance Conservatism

By

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A special Introduction for Conservatives

By

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The Great Opportunity of the Century

The world is now witnessing the collapse of the progressive experiment in cost-free, Marxism Lite. Progressive political liberals, with the complicity of comatose conservatives and rootless moderates, have brought the modern Western economic system to the edge of total credit and monetary collapse. This represents a failure cascade so huge that it is forcing policy changes that would have been unthinkable ten years ago. While some major correction was inevitable, these events are unusual in scale, duration and depth.

What does all this mean for the future of Western Civilization? What are the implications for the future of conservatism? For that matter, what do they portend for the survival of liberalism?

In the following discussion, *The American Creative Surge*, the author makes the case that a fundamental shift in American political/ideological alignments is both inevitable and urgently needed. While both liberalism and conservatism must adapt, conservatism is now poised to assume the dominant policy role and must do so first because liberalism (in its present form) remains too entangled with the ideologies and ideologues that have led to this crisis.

In the largest, most universal sense, liberalism represents the relentless human instinct to challenge boundaries, moral, social and economic, while conservatism in the same universal sense represents the natural human instinct to defend boundaries. Constructive change over time benefits from the retention of the essential moral and prudential boundaries on which stable human societies are founded. The malign social experiments of authoritarian socialism, whether explicitly or implicitly founded in Marxism, still exert a deep attraction to the left. The current world-wide fiscal crisis was driven by the naïve political consensus that socialist/welfare state burdens on the mostly free commercial, wealth creating sector could be avoided by a magic trick: reverse time travel. This is the notion of concealed wealth redistribution, the allocation of tax revenues as yet uncollected to fund programs in the present day. In other words, politicians actually believed (or pretended to believe) that phantom money could be indefinitely taken from the future without a reckoning. This was a violation of the boundary between borrowing and theft. Many conservatives went along with the game in order to fund national security priorities, telling themselves that “growth” could indefinitely provide a painless path for debt repayment. The debt gap gradually outpaced growth and the moment of reckoning has arrived.

The author expects to see little creative change within the left for three election cycles.

This **Introduction**, designed to provide the contextual setting for “The American Creative Surge”, is in three sections, The Conservative Crisis, the Liberal Crisis, and the Agents and Contours of Change.

ONE
The Conservative Crisis

Modern American conservatism is experiencing a crisis of incoherence. I’ll briefly outline the fracture lines, but first a review of the core ideas, principles and precepts that bind most conservatives most of the time.

Core Precepts and Principles of 21st Century American Conservatism

- Preservation of the time tested social & political institutions, principally family, community, and constitutional government, and of the underlying moral precepts that support them, such as promise-fidelity and loyalty.
- A commitment to evolution over revolution (except *in extremis*) based on a belief that sustainable, realistic progress is far more fruitful and less dangerous than the urgent pursuit of utopia.
- A commitment to the moral and practical necessities of robust self defense, individually, on behalf of family and community and - writ large - in support of the nation against all threats.
- A strong commitment to the right to one’s honestly acquired property, especially one’s earnings from productive activities, to be respected by private and public authorities alike.
- The constitutional and moral right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the context of a civil society that fiercely protects these rights from government violations and private intrusions alike.
- A dedication to public policies that sustain the value of one’s property rather than undermine it, based on the assessment that prudent fiscal and monetary policies are superior to rampant public borrowing and erosion of the value of the currency, on both moral and practical grounds.
- An equally strong commitment to the right to free exchange between and among citizens, whether of ideas, positions and creative works, or services and goods, without censorship, burdensome taxes, undue regulation or monetary manipulation.
- A robust commitment of law and order, domestic and national security, based on tough, clear-headed realism, based on the assessment that the explicit and

unapologetic commitment to the tough rule-consequences model in domestic law and sovereign relations is demonstrably superior to the naïve reliance on the therapeutic model.

- A commitment to protect human equality before the law, regardless of race, gender or circumstance, in opposition to the unattainable and destructive goal of equality in one's circumstances regardless of ability and accomplishment.
- The robust protection of freedom of religious belief and practice and the concomitant freedom of non-religious belief and practice as long as the rights of all citizens to peaceful free expression are not infringed.
- A commitment to charity and altruism – and their opposites - as free individual choices in the context of a society of free, peaceful and law abiding persons.

Practical and Ideological Divisions within Conservatism

Inevitably, practical issues intrude on ideals to the end that shared principles and precepts lead to different policy judgments. Outcomes, both bad and good, tend to refract back on conservative principles and precepts, and these pressures have resulted in modifications, eventually even to schisms. Consider the following examples:

Five Loci of Disputes

1. Arguments over the extent, costs and styles of implementation of “safety-net” welfare system (now largely accepted among the conservative mainstream);
2. Fractures over aspects of security - proactive international interventions, law and order issues (such as the death penalty and mandatory prison laws) and gun control (especially in urban settings);
3. Disagreements over the separation of church and state (as it affects the display of crosses, the ten commandments, and the location of mosques);
4. Policy debates over taxation, especially the tolerance of progressive income rates (from zero tolerance to mildly progressive), and deficit spending, especially when vital national defense programs are on the block; and –
5. Schisms over the so called social issues, such as gay marriage, drug legalization and abortion.

Seven Divisions

Fractures like these were to be expected, given the inevitable gulf between ideals and reality, promises and real-world outcomes. As a result of the many individual policy disputes, the compromises with the left, and the necessary accommodations to local constituencies, distinct divisions of conservative thought can be identified. I am persuaded that each of these divisions allows for substantial mutual agreement on issues, precepts and principles. A common conservative word view is still possible. The primary divisions are Social Conservatism, Libertarianism, Community Conservatism, Neo-

Conservatism, Business-Centered Conservatism, Fiscal-Conservatism, and National-Greatness Conservatism.

Social conservatives are located in both parties where they represent a durable constituency for law and order, family values, patriotism, and – for the most part – a spirited defense of traditional marriage against its redefinition by “social progressives”, and opposition to abortion-on-demand (with significant variations on side issues, like birth control and adherence to *Roe vs. Wade*).

Libertarians enjoy the virtue and the vulnerability of thematic consistency – an authentically free-market, laissez faire capitalism, linked with drug legalization and an isolationist foreign policy bordering on pacifism.

Community conservatism is founded in the early American vision of nested communities, family, neighborhood, town and state, with a policy of the upward delegation of limited powers, leaving the federal level with only those things that absolutely must be handled by government at the national level.

Neo-conservatives are the former leftists who rebelled against the authoritarian excesses of communism and the naïve apologetics of the domestic left, especially for the murderous excesses of Stalin and Mao, among others. This branch of conservatism represents a fierce rejection of leftist politics and of the new authoritarian challenges that have sprung up after the collapse of Marxism. Their focus on national security leaves room for a great deal of variation on social issues.

Business-centered conservatism represents the substitution of one question – “What is good for existing businesses?” for an overall governing philosophy, and has opened up the GOP for the paybacks of ‘crony capitalism.’ Again, social issues are less critical to this subset.

Fiscal-conservatism is making a comeback among centrists, conservatives and even realistic liberals. It upholds “quaint” and “old fashioned” notions about repaying loans, not borrowing more than one can pay back, and opposing financial gimmicks that promote such unwise policies to creep into ongoing political arrangements. Social issues and even taxation issues (within the context of “fiscal responsibility) are secondary concerns.

National-greatness conservatism is perhaps the least philosophically consistent on the list, but the most easily explained and understood. A great nation is prosperous, is faithful to great values, and accomplishes great things. The Hoover Dam, the railroads, the Moon Program and victory in WWII are hallmarks of national-greatness conservatism.

This is just a thematic sketch of the main threads and themes that make up conservative diversity – volumes have been written on the forms of conservatism.

TWO

The Liberal Crisis

The liberal crisis became a witch hunt for apostasy in the wake of the crack up of the Soviet Union. John F Kennedy, Henry “Scoop” Jackson and Daniel Moynihan, all liberal icons of the last century, became Democratic Party dinosaurs (or so it seemed), in light of the profound liberal intolerance (think of Joe Lieberman - a JFK democrat), among others. But Marxism did not die with the collapse of communism. Instead it sought refuge in a recrudescence of the British Fabian Socialism model, clothed in Keynesian deficit spending (without the fiscal discipline that Keynes advocated) and the use of regulatory mechanisms to achieve the same goals without direct expenditures.

The Neo-Marxist Liberal Precepts

- Economic inequality is unfair, as it is almost always the legacy of former oppression and of the illegitimate accumulation of wealth as a result of the inequitable distribution of personal circumstances over generations. Therefore it is the obligation of the government to reduce economic inequality through its taxing, spending and regulatory powers.
- Social inequality is unfair and immoral, the legacy of racism, sexism, classism and other retrograde cultural forces. Because diverse cultures have diverse moral ideas, the imposition of any single morality on all members of society is a form of oppression that produces social inequalities. Social equality requires a spirit of cultural relativism in the larger culture. It is the duty of the government to ensure social equality, by promoting cultural diversity, enforcing intercultural tolerance.
- Capitalism is to be kept subordinate to the overarching goal to remit all social and economic equalities. Within the liberal world, the free market is valuable on utilitarian grounds (as the Chinese have discovered) but deeply flawed on moral grounds.
- Altruism is a public good, and is best accomplished by comprehensive federal undertakings (primarily taxation, spending and regulation) aimed at bringing about “social justice” by which is meant accomplishing the reversal of patterns of economic and social oppression and the promotion of actual equality in human circumstance.
- Certain freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, are to be most strongly protected when they operate outside the sphere of profit-seeking activity, especially as they represent the opposition to social injustice. But these freedoms are less worthy of protection when there are merely economic in nature, as in commercial advertising and political the spending financed by rich corporations. Creative, artistic freedom is most deserving of protection and support when it is

not part of the capitalist system.

- Social progress represents the erasure of all the barriers between peoples, whether they derive from cultural, moral or economic circumstances. But the distinct moral and cultural identity of oppressed peoples must be preserved and honored. There is no contradiction in these two propositions because social barriers cannot be erased as long as there are oppressed peoples.

The hard Marxist left was the bastard child of the radical egalitarians of the French Revolution and the disciples of the authoritarian hierarchical thinking of the German philosopher, Hegel. Post JFK liberalism differs from the hard left, particularly from paleo-Marxism, primarily in its gradualism (borrowed from the British Fabian socialists), its commitment to democratic processes, and its dishonesty (its Marxist origins and occasional secret allegiances are loudly denied). But the ultimate goal of “social justice” liberals remains the achievement of functional social and economic equality, *by any means necessary*. This assessment of ruthlessness flows from a simple fact: a working majority of people are flat out opposed to this vision. Therefore the ruthlessness is covert, and the hard edges are softened by a commitment to opportunistic gradualism and the inclusion of useful centrists who aren’t on board for (nor necessarily even aware of) the scope of the larger program or the ruthlessness needed to bring it to fruition.

The American “new” left (the ethos that grew out of the street protests of the 1962-1968 mindset) has temporarily smothered the traditionalist liberals in the Democratic Party. It was the love child of the pre-Marxist anarchists and the post-communist Marxists who are pursuing socialist-egalitarianism via the accumulation of *administrative power* (regulatory agencies and ideological courts) as an end run around a fickle, bothersome electorate.

In the American setting, a majority of the “common” people remain consistently unwilling to fund the ambitions of a full-on welfare utopia. Culminating with the tax revolts in 1980’s California, funding for the American version of the British Fabian program dried up at the state and local level. In response, liberals supported substantial public borrowing, augmented at the federal level by Keynesian fiat money, filling the gap without imposing “taxes.” In a second policy strategy, liberals discovered how to export the cost of its social justice programs to the private sector. This was accomplished by empowering social justice administrative agencies to make rules that have the force of law, supported by new, government sanctioned causes for law suits. Neither these administrative agencies nor the new law suits, once authorized in the vaguest terms, have required any further approval from the congress, state legislatures, or voters. In sum, these measures were designed as an end run: “taxation without representation” has become, in effect, “litigation and regulation without representation.”

It seems that, early in the 21st century, the utopian liberal game has run its course.

THREE

The Agents and Contours of Change

The power of post-modern liberalism in all its forms, within the academy and the larger intelligentsia, has flowed from its credibility as an agent of ameliorative change. Its dominance among “respectable intellectuals” was cemented by the historical association of “conservatives” with the repressive “right wing” defenders of kings, tyrants, royalty and other malefactors of unearned privilege. Within this parodic construct, the national socialists of Germany and the Marxist socialists of Russia mark the extremes of “right” (occupied by German socialists) and “left” occupied by the Russian variant.

There will be a conservative surge – “fire truck” conservatives are brought to power when the excesses of liberalism become too painful. The pending sovereign debt crisis will inflict pain sufficient to discredit liberalism in all its forms for some decades. The questions of the coming decade become bright line clear- What happens as after the fire is extinguished? What sort of enduring political and intellectual leadership will emerge from the ashes?

The answers to these and the related questions critically depend on two things: (1) whether the coming crisis will be widely recognized as the result of fundamental contradictions within liberalism; and (2) whether a new conservatism can address the future with a simple, powerful philosophy that unites the core precepts and principles of traditional conservatism with a theory of human progress. If the answer to the second question is Yes, then so will be the answer to the first. The following article is about (2).

It turns out that human economic and social progress critically depends on conserving core conservative values in the context of the emergence of a robust creative civilization. It turns out that only a creative adaptive civilization can survive the challenges of the next hundred years. And it turns out that the special conditions for a robust, creative-adaptive civilization were uniquely present at the founding of the American Experiment.

In fact, the extension of the American Experiment as a world model is the single plausible scenario that supports a realistic and optimistic path to a better future. It has the same capacity to inspire as did original Marxism and enjoys infinitely better prospects as a practical program. It therefore opens the prospect of the conversion of a critical mass of the academy and the intelligentsia, while gaining the enduring allegiance of the productive “classes” at all social and economic levels. Whether and how this development takes place depends in turn on the emergence of new conservative leaders in the first instance and new liberal leaders that emerge to engage in an principled and fruitful policy dialogic, the participants in which are anchored in the core moral assessments and commitments to freedom that once animated classic liberalism and constructive conservatism.

This development will be sparked, in the author’s opinion, by a new stage in conservative thought and practice that, by whatever name, will constitute ***renaissance conservatism***.

The term “renaissance man” is still used to describe a polymath (obviously including women), that subgroup of increasingly rare thinkers and doers who live rich, cross-disciplinary lives, filled with creative, productive endeavors in which arts, sciences, humanities and the pursuits of civilization are combined. The original renaissance took place in Roman Catholic Italy, and its creative participants pursued their passions in a moral context that anchored creativity to the moral order of the day.

The modern age suffers from overspecialization without an undergirding moral foundation, especially among the political class. Harnessing human creative endeavors in the cause of civilization requires a deep respect for the very notion of “creative” as a broadband category of human constructive activity, embracing both art and technology; its protection requires a deep commitment to the freedoms (including economic freedoms) that creativity requires to flourish, and the a deep, underlying moral order that both civilization and its creative elements and nodes must have to avoid a Dark Age. I have identified several renaissance conservative precursor figures for discussion, Cicero for his suspicion of Cesarean power, the polymaths Da Vinci, Franklin and Jefferson for reasons that should be obvious, Burke for his support of the American revolution over and against the French version, and for his conservative moral compass, Goethe as a polymath who understood the lure of evil, Eric Hoffer for his classic analysis of collectivist regimes and his deep respect for the creative capacities of the common people, C S Lewis for his acute moral insights and understanding of the human condition, Ayn Rand (Alisa Rosenbaum) for her passionate defense of the human creative spirit and insistence that it includes a broad band of productive human activity, Heinlein and JFK for linking freedom with eploration. My list is idiosyncratic and incomplete. Consider this an invitation to add, subtract and comment.

Some Renaissance Conservative Precursors¹

- Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE)
- Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519)
- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)
- Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)
- Edmund Burke (1729-1797)
- Johan von Goethe (1749-1832)
- Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis (1898-1963)
- Eric Hoffer (1902-1983)
- Ayn Rand (1905-1982)
- Robert Heinlein (1907-1988)
- John F Kennedy (1917-1963)

---- Your suggestions -----

¹ See the Appendix at pp66-67 for more of the author’s selection rationale. After reading the following pages, you are invited to add and subtract names. Who would you include or exclude and – more importantly - why? Contact the author via e-mail > law@jaygaskill.com

THE AMERICAN CREATIVE SURGE
*Building a Creative Civilization,
The Roles of
Renaissance Conservatism, Entrepreneurial Liberalism
Affirming
American Exceptionalism*

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Long term human survival will depend on our ability to nurture and protect major centers of constructive creative activity everywhere feasible. This will require the conservation of the life-affirming moral order, because creative innovation, when it is un-tethered from all morality, can and will be misappropriated by the next generation of tyrants. This project will also require the conservation of the institutions that protect and foster general conditions of freedom. All creative enterprises require this, whether they are artistic or technological.

Creativity is an equal-opportunity disrupter of things as they are. It produces inequalities. The partisans of left and right each have a blind spot where creative activities are concerned: The paleo-left, in its infatuation with artistic creativity, tends to marginalize or ignore the technological innovation side, while the paleo-right is almost a mirror image. But life-affirming creativity resists compartmentalization, and the liberties that sustain it are indivisible. As it happens, the American experiment was and is the single most important model of a creative civilization that has emerged to date. The temporary bankruptcy of American liberalism is an opening for the emergence of a renewed, forward-aimed conservatism, one animated and informed by the vision of a creative civilization, and of the USA as the world's single most viable exemplar:

This will be known as **Renaissance Conservatism**. The genius of such a new conservative movement imbued with Renaissance values is the affirmation that creation, unmoored from the life-affirming moral order, will turn against itself, and that authoritarian civilizations that throttle creative endeavors will self destruct. Renaissance Conservatism is to reactive conservatism as a 3d color movie is to a 19th century daguerreotype. This is not the conservatism of your grandparents. It is the conservatism of the generations who will colonize other worlds.

Blueprint for Renewal

THE PATH TO THE AMERICAN RECOVERY

I invite you to step back and look at the really big picture for a moment. Human history from the Roman Empire to the present day presents a Darwinian drama, the life-death struggle of competing forms of civilization for survival on the world stage. The American experiment was something entirely new on the planet, a new model of what a civilization can become. For this reason alone we were and are seen as a threat to the competing models. But we are not alone. Civilization in all its freedom-friendly forms is under attack, particularly those nodes of civilization that are most “American” in their organization and character. And 20th and 21st century weapons have ramped up the stakes. We have arrived at the “We dare not lose” level of the struggle.

One general type of civilization is uniquely equipped to survive the challenges of resurgent atavism, post-modern tribalism and the collapse of self confidence of the secular intelligentsia. That general type is the *creative /adaptive civilization model*. The American experiment was the first, but far from the last such creative civilization. Creative civilizations must prevail in the present century or the entire game could be lost to a new Dark Age.

We are witnessing an epic world economic crisis, the kind that can ignite war on a world scale. The roots of the economic crisis are sufficiently obvious that even a populist movement like the American Tea Party has a more fundamentally accurate take on the situation than, say, a Nobel laureate economist like the New York times’ maven, Paul Krugman.

The Western economies, to a greater or lesser extent, have yoked themselves to an escalating entitlement system, financed by an imprudent mix of fiat money and sovereign debt. An ingrained political feedback loop between the underfunded, underproductive beneficiaries of this arrangement and the timid governments that are increasingly unable to fund anything but the exponentially growing entitlement sector has emerged. The predictable results have included riots, populist anger, political polarization and policy paralysis. This distressing and dangerous situation has finally reached the USA.

We are witnessing on a world wide scale the collapse of soft-Marxism, the failure of Fabian socialism in all its guises. As a Soviet factory worker once quipped, “I pretend to work and they pretend to pay me.” In the post-Marxist, Marxist-Lite West, the elites might ruefully quip, “We pretended to pay them with faux money and they pretended to accept it.”

THE DEATH OF CONSERVATISM AS WE KNEW IT?

On January 26 2009 *New York Times* ran the last column written by William Kristol, the paper's token Neo-Con. Bill Kristol is editor of *The Weekly Standard*. His last New York Times piece ("Will Obama Save Liberalism?") began with a premature epitaph:

"All good things must come to an end. Jan. 20, 2009, marked the end of a conservative era." Then Mr. Kristol made several telling points:

- "Conservatives have been right ... about Communism and jihadism, crime and welfare, education and the family.
- "Lest conservatives be too proud, it's worth recalling that conservatism's rise was decisively enabled by liberalism's weakness.
- [Quoting Harvard's Harvey Mansfield] "From having been the aggressive doctrine of vigorous, spirited men, liberalism has become hardly more than a trembling in the presence of illiberalism. ... Who today is called a liberal for strength and confidence in defense of liberty?"
- "[M]odern conservatism, led at the crucial moment by Ronald Reagan ... assumed the task of defending liberty with strength and confidence. Can a revived liberalism, faced with a new set of challenges, now pick up that mantle?"
- "Sixty-seven years ago...another liberal president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt... quoted Paine: "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."
- "Can Obama reshape liberalism to be, as it was under F.D.R., a fighting faith, unapologetically patriotic and strong in the defense of liberty?"

When, on November 2, 2010, conservatives acquired a working majority in the US Congress and a working stalemate in the US Senate, President Obama, an avowed, left-leaning liberal, was forced to accede to those new forces, at least as to the continuation of the lower income tax rates opposed by the left, but only reluctantly and temporarily. Modern American conservatism is in the position of the talented understudy who suddenly gets center stage when the star falters. Not every understudy gets a second chance.

The future needs robust *policy* conservatism because otherwise it cannot avoid the recurring excesses of contemporary American liberalism (aided and abetted by its political partners in fiscal irresponsibility, the "kick-the-can-down-the-road-and-hope-for-growth" GOP leaders.

From time to time conservative governments have been brought to power as a corrective, then were swiftly retired, punished for the role. These are the "fire truck" conservatives. The current crisis has deep roots, so deep that a single election cycle will not be sufficient to reverse the damage and restore a pattern of robust economic progress.

In the context of the decline of principled, freedom-friendly liberalism (the recovery of which is a vital element in any American creative surge), a renewed form of conservatism will be the key ingredient in the defense of any healthy, distinctly *creative* civilization. As it happens, the essential steps in the American recovery are also essential to the recovery of western civilization.

Any robust creative civilization is necessarily held up by two pillars: a progress-directed conservatism (something that in this essay, I am calling Renaissance Conservatism - a term and concept that is developed infra) and a deeper, more principled liberalism than the postmodern, Marxist Lite version that is in vogue at the moment.

One party government is inherently dangerous. In the USA, two party government has proven the most stable and productive of the various competing models ...providing there is a bi-partisan overlap about the essential steps and policies needed to preserve civilization. Such a core foreign policy consensus was achieved in the US from FDR through John Kennedy, a period of about 35 years. This was America's Dialogic Period, the era in which Democratic Party once contained its own subset of the dialogic - hawks like Washington State's Senator Scoop Jackson, doves like Gene McCarthy, and intellectuals like Daniel Moynihan and George Kennan. William F. Buckley was the quintessential dialogic conservative of that period.

The American recovery will be aided by the renewal of such a consensus and a new Dialogic Period of US politics. In any great dialogic period, conservative voices seek to retain boundaries while liberal voices try to overcome them. Change is inevitable, but the *essential* moral/social boundaries - the practical and moral boundaries any healthy, working civilization requires - must be preserved. These constitute the essential life support of civilization as much as the necessary ongoing creative adaptations. Therefore, progress requires an intelligent liberal-conservative dialogue. The process is heuristic, an essential component of any creative renewal.

I am personally persuaded that the stakes are much higher than the current generation of political leaders is willing to recognize. Beyond the American situation, writ small, an even larger challenge looms. I submit that, without a resurgent conservative movement, ascendant and respected in the culture, the media and in government, most of the freedom-respecting zones of Western civilization will go under...possibly for a very long time.

I would prefer to avoid a Dark Age rather than attempt to climb out of one.

Please understand: I really don't like the rhetoric of apocalypse. I am confident that a renewed conservatism linked to the rescue of creative civilization will in fact emerge, and that sanity will eventually prevail. But there is uncertainty. Yes, there are existential risks. This is why a new vision has both historical relevance and urgency.

What passes for liberalism in the present moment is far too infected with pathological post-modernism to be a constructive player in the coming struggle for the duration of the current crisis. The next “winds of change” will necessarily be led by the new conservatives, at least until the reasonable liberals come out of the closet to join them. Among the current crop of postmodern liberals, reasonable minds are as rare as classical guitar players among a flock of turkeys.

The Congressional Correction of November 2, 2010 represented the first stirrings of a resurgent conservatism as a necessary restraining force. The question of the decade is whether and how soon conservatism can become much more than that, to wit - a new, forward-leading, governing paradigm.

Modern American liberalism is a runaway train because its natural balancing principle, conservatism, was knocked off the rails. That derailment was occasioned by republican negligence and a bi-partisan economic mega-crisis that should have been anticipated. If left unaddressed, that crisis will fatally destabilize the American polity.

Neither classic conservatives nor the enduring-principles liberals as such, were operating the locomotive. In truth, the principled, dedicated conservatives were in a soft cultural exile within and outside the USA’s ruling elites for years. Out-of-the-closet vocal conservatives were excluded from the centers of power in the Beltway, exiled from the Academy, banished from the K-12 Principate and reviled by the one-note media mavens. Exceptions are seen as “outliers” (when intelligent) or “raving nuts” (when populist).

This state of affairs proved toxic for the old fashioned enduring principles liberals. Remember Hubert Humphrey, Daniel Moynihan and Henry (Scoop) Jackson? They did their best work when trading ideas with their conservative colleagues. Contemporary American liberalism can only recover its balance when it throws off the illiberal influence of the arch-egalitarian left.

The correction of November 2, 2010 was a missed opportunity for the Democratic Party to shed itself of the proto-Marxist, politically correct, elitist left. That task, if it still can be accomplished, will take several election cycles. Meantime, the country at large does not have the luxury of time. For now, the opportunity and the obligation to set the new course fall to the conservatives, beginning with the watershed elections of 2012.

Over the last two hundred years, conservatives were tasked by history to fight to retain boundaries while liberals were self-appointed to overcome them. In a healthy era, these two tendencies work in a constructive dialectic such that arbitrary boundaries are ameliorated while essential boundaries are strengthened.

This is not a healthy era.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, conservatism was too often captured or caricatured by the image of a cadre of privileged ones dedicated to the amoral defense of entrenched

advantage. The liberal failures in the 20th & 21st centuries demonstrate that the amoral defense of entrenched advantage is not inherently wedded to the left or right side of the aisle.

The sins that attend power are ecumenical.

Conservatives urgently need to make the transition from a mere bulwark against excessive liberalism (“fire truck conservatism”) to the vanguard of progress. During this transition, conservatives need to attain, reveal and demonstrate deep authenticity - both moral and philosophical; and to link their world view to a sound theory of creative innovation.

Conservative leaders will need much more than “the vision” thing. Conservatives now must have actual Vision.

Conservatives of the 21st century have a window of opportunity to redefine themselves, replacing a false image with the *fact* of integrity and a resolute commitment to a better (but not perfect) world.

Nothing less will do.

This article will outline the shape and design of a new conservatism, and *inter alia*, set the stage for the emergence of a more balanced and healthy liberalism. This will not be the conservatism of your parents. When it succeeds, I believe that will be so deeply associated with human progress in the next thirty years that it will rise in the academy and dominant media to the standing that conventional liberalism achieved in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Over the last century, conservatism and liberalism were locked in an eternal dance, each rising up periodically to check the excesses of the other. From time to time, “weaponized” ideologies (such as class warfare, socialist engineering or paranoid, doctrinaire libertarianism) ripped through the dance floor, chilling dialogue and crippling the dancers. Optimally, liberalism challenges traditional social and economic boundaries while conservatism mounts a principled defense. In the Euro-American politics of the last century, the privileges of royalty were never supported by American conservatives (and are gradually being abandoned by their British counterparts), while the privileges of gender (once supported by male liberals and conservatives alike) are now supported by neither. The “social issues” of the moment tend to involve changes in family structures and sexual preference accommodations. Disputes of these sorts benefit from a prudent certain restraint, an emphasis on gradual local, bottom-up social evolution, all as guided by the larger paradigm: the protection of a stable, free, creative civilization. Whenever *essential* boundaries, founded in the enduring moral strata of the human condition, are upheld, but *non-essential* boundaries are reasonably and incrementally modified, the human condition is advanced.

Progressivism is a misleading label currently in vogue among the political left. {As in - “I’m not a liberal. I’m a progressive. Who can be against social progress?”} The term and concept were taken from the playbook of the Fabian socialists of late 19th and early 20th century Britain. The Fabians were crypt-Marxists who planned to incrementally and peacefully “advance” England into a socialist state. This was to be a humanitarian utopia in which all of the essential elements of economic life had been gradually brought under government’s benign, democratic/bureaucratic control. The practical result was a Labour Party-controlled state of poverty and decline.

But there was no violent revolution. In contrast with their brothers and sisters in Soviet Russia, the British Marxists preserved the essence of democracy while the Marxist goal – obtaining state “ownership” of the “means of production” (effectively all hiring, prices and wages) was accomplished via a vast web of regulation and control, implemented by bureaucrats and state empowered labor leaders. The economically stagnant UK is just now attempting to extricate itself from the suffocating spider trap of a half century of Fabian socialism.

Contemporary American “progressives” are still trying to take America down the same failed path. They simply do not accept the view that the rough and tumble of private interactions among relatively free people can serve humanitarian aims as well as the bureaucratic state can, especially when it operated under benign party control. American liberals have yet to break free from their progressive managers.

Over time, real human progress is achieved through the fruitful interaction of two forces: (1) creative innovation, especially when commerce is able to make its fruits widely available; (2) the elimination of arbitrary boundaries to human achievement, such as race, gender, royal privilege and political connections. The direct pursuit of an actual equality in human circumstances, especially using coercive means, has repeatedly failed. Enforced egalitarian policies have been counterproductive at best and have opened the gateway to the tyrannical suppression of human creative progress at worst. It is no coincidence that whenever a tyranny achieves power somewhere in the world, the most creative people under its control will take to boats, trains and planes to escape. When allowed, their destination is a freer country like the USA.

A partisan Op Ed in the 12/7/10 *New York Times* by Timothy Egan, identified the Obama problem as the absence of the “Big Idea”: “*A Big Idea, understood by all, would provide a narrative framework for the upcoming skirmishes with Republicans, whose only idea is to keep rich people from paying their fair share of taxes. That...and denying Obama a second term. What may have lulled Obama into his thoughtful stupor was the historic magnitude of his election. **Yet being the first black president is not an idea. Hope is not a theme. Change We Can Believe In is not a governing principle.***”

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/06/a-big-idea/?ref=opinion>

Mr. Kristol’s challenged is still posed to us: Under whose leadership will that fighting faith, strong in the defense of liberty arise? Might this still happen under Mr. Obama’s leadership? Based on this president’s ideology, rhetoric and performance, such a

prospect, however attractive to his former supporters among moderates and independents, is neither probable nor even plausible.

THE NEW BIG IDEA

Any trace of a Big Idea seems altogether absent from within Mr. Obama's circle. But some of us can detect the outlines of a new force that is capable of auguring in the next "fighting faith, unapologetically patriotic and strong in the defense of liberty". Its energy is manifest at the grassroots level. This was a distinctly populist energy, to be sure, but the Tea Party movement is still searching of the Big Idea. For the most part, it is a middle class populist rebellion whose ideology remains inchoate and unexpressed

The new conservatism at hand, the one that will replace progressivism, provide the overdue balancing force to unchecked liberalism and restart the dance that leads to real human progress, combines three essential elements: {1} a comprehensive, broadband respect for all human creative activities, commercial and artistic, for their interconnections and dependence on the institutions that protect risk, accomplishment and creative freedom; {2} the absolute necessity of a life-affirming ethos, rooted in deep moral tradition, that unites and supports a system of laws and institutions designed and tasked to maintain the special conditions of freedom and security from predators (private and government) needed for a healthy, creative social and economic order; {3} the commitment to the American constitutional model as the first, best such model, American exceptionalism as the Great Experiment than cannot be allowed to fail, the vanguard of realistic hope for the rest of the world.

I have proposed that this new force in the world will be called Renaissance Conservatism. Any name will do, but this is the missing big idea. I am convinced that it will form the outline of a coherent, forward-looking, political movement. This movement has deep taproots in the American founding and in the Renaissance writ large; it will have traction on Main Street and in the enlightened parts of the academy.

Its main tenets can be distilled into these six propositions:

- **Civilizations come and go but the ones that tower over the rest – and have the best chance of surviving – are the ones that foster and promote human creative potential. Whenever authoritarian regimes seize power, the most creative members of the captive civilization attempt to leave.**
- **Creative activities flourish in zone of protected freedom and liberty. The model of a free, independent creative civilization was a new development in human history. It started with the United States of America.**
- **The survival of the human race is riding on the success of that experiment.**

- **Creative activities flourish under conditions of protected freedom, and the creative activities that sustain civilization are not limited to the creative arts but include commerce, exploration and technology. Capitalism and creative freedom are allies.**
- **The protection of all creative activities requires a life-affirming, liberty respecting ethos, comprehensive and robustly protected by a deep respect for the underlying moral order, and real world institutions dedicated to the protection of ordered liberty: As we Americans have learned, these institutions include a real constitution, a real bill of rights, and a robust system of checks and balances against the concentration of power.**

Modern liberalism has been temporarily self-disabled by the unbalanced left...and traditional conservatism is struggling to make the transition from a provisional unity-in-opposition (the excesses of the left have united many strange bedfellows) to the path of intelligent, forward-aimed governance.

New Conservatives are just now appearing from offstage, linked by a common understanding of the American founding principles and a shared commitment to put the USA back on the path to greatness.

KEY ELEMENTS OF RENAISSANCE CONSERVATISM

Renaissance Conservatives are about ruthless *practical* hope, an ethos rooted in life affirmation, principled respect for the constitution and an enthusiasm for creative innovation coupled with a commitment to promote innovative supply-side strategies for everything that is good. The group contains apostates who are sexual libertarians and others who are arch social conservatives, but all are life affirming, morally centered patriots who understand the core value of the Great American Experiment are willing to unite in defense of freedom.

Renaissance Conservatives (we'll occasionally be using the shorthand "Re-Cons") resolutely endorse pursuit of abundance and strongly reject the passive acceptance of scarcity.

The Re-Con ethos is best captured by the salutation of the archetypal science officer Spock of the Star Trek myth – **"Live long and prosper!"** This is a bright line grim injunction of the left: **"Don't live too long or prosper too much...."**

All life-affirming human creative endeavors are part of the same protected activity. The artists and musicians cannot dismiss the technologists, scientists, engineers, and enterprise geniuses as peripheral to the human condition and the latter group cannot ignore nor denigrate the creative contributions of artists. Humanity has benefited from both the wheel and the song. All forms of life affirming creative innovation are needed in the mix to sustain a living civilization against its ongoing challenges. And all forms of

human creative activities and enterprises need protected zones of freedom as much as life on earth needs water to survive. The Great American Experiment established a protected zone of freedom, a nation state with a unique constitution, one designed to perpetuate the blessings of ordered liberty to future generations.

Liberty is indivisible. We cannot, as modern humans, pretend that one can enjoy “artistic freedom” without the economic freedom to buy, sell, build and own. The power and inclination to throttle one category of freedom dooms the other.

We Americans made the first truly transformative revolution in world history, one that Thomas Jefferson and others recognized for what it really was: a threat to the old world order. We were and are a threat to the constellation of retrograde forces in the world that would hold back the freedom-driven creative forces needed for humankind to thrive and prosper everywhere.

Any political orientation without a foundational philosophy² contains no checks or balances outside the calculus of success or failure. The conservative transformation into vanguard of progress will necessarily have a special authenticity, suggesting more than meets the eye. On further examination, it is revealed to rest on a specific foundational philosophy. For Renaissance conservatives, this is a world-view wherein America is valued, not arbitrarily, nor as a “perfect kingdom”, but as the primary modern exemplar of a free and creative civilization. At its best, America is the model for the world to follow, the noble experiment that has matured into a vanguard. For these conservatives, the moral understanding that animated the founding of the United States in turn becomes the foundation of a free, life affirming civilization in which the special conditions for creative accomplishment were constitutionally embedded from the very outset.

Renaissance Conservatism (and eventually its liberal corollary - principled, entrepreneurial liberalism) will stand out among all the other nascent political forces as containing the elements of a vanguard of sustainable human progress, the indispensable facilitator and mediator of constructive change.

Contrast two signal transformative events in human history, one recent and one not. There was a burst of creative energy in the Weimar Republic of Germany³, the failure of which led directly to the Hitlerian nightmare. There was a far earlier burst of creative

² By foundational **philosophy**, is simply meant a common moral understanding that transcends mere fad and custom.

³ The Weimar Republic was viable from 1919 ‘till 1933, ending with Hitler's ascent to power. Born during the crippling reparations following Germany's crushing defeat in WW I, under pressure from left and right, the Weimar Republic experienced a burst of cultural energy characterized by a mood of bleakness and failure (often described as “modernism”) in the literature of geniuses like Brecht and Mann and the atonal music of Berg and Schoenberg, and in the political theories of the so called Critical Theorists. The predictable result was a catastrophic loss of confidence in the value of liberal civilization, providing an opening for Nazism.

energy in Florentine Italy that sparked a Renaissance that led directly to modern Western civilization.

There were many differences between these two events, of course. But I submit that the core difference was that the first Renaissance was grounded in a life-affirming, morally grounded ethos and the Weimar experiment was not. One development flourished in conservative soil, and the other died in liberal backwash and opened the door to the holocaust.

A Message to Paleo-Conservatives:

Whatever you think about those creative communities near your local golf course, whether they are occupied by scruffy, tattooed, pierced rebels, earthy or ethereal musicians, or socially maladroit e-geeks, they are of your tribe. All human creative endeavors writ large, in all their manifold forms - artistic, commercial and technological - are absolutely essential for human survival and prosperity. The success of the human project depends not only on the continuity of civilization; it depends on the emergence and triumph of life affirming creative civilizations. Life affirming freedom is the legacy of conservatism.

Liberty is indivisible. Human creativity is indivisible.

There is no sharp dividing line between innovations in the arts, the sciences, human exploration and technological advance, except as these activities and endeavors further or impede human life in all its fullness and glory.

As it happens, the United States of America - from its very founding documents and personalities, in its a historically unique convergence of political philosophy, moral underpinnings and practical wisdom, became the very crucible of a new, creative civilization.

All friends of liberty (under whatever umbrella or none at all) need to remain alert and active. As Andrew Jackson said – “But you must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing. It behooves you, therefore, to be watchful in your States as well as in the Federal Government.” From President Jackson’s Farewell Address, March 4, 1837.

The operatives on the left still live by the motto, “Never let a crisis go to waste.” So what is the next crisis? It is the rapid collapse of the federal debt financing system. This will be a conservative Katrina moment ... or it will be the conservative rescue moment, the arrival of adult supervision. If conservatives produce the masterful exercise of prepared leadership, a grateful nation will remember as our grandparents remembered FDR.

No one will question that a crisis of government finance is owned by the liberal elites. We will need an American Margaret Thatcher (of either gender) with common

sense and an iron spine, someone who can shame the weak souls among the putative patriots, “not to go all wobbly.”

And the country urgently needs smart, articulate, tough conservatives in elected office who are willing to show some fire in the belly and stiffness in the spine...because they are driven by core principles and love the USA. Talented and dedicated men and women are urgently needed at all levels in and out of government who are unwilling to be distracted by trivia in order to band together:

- ...to contain all entitlement growth,
- ...to stop all further federal borrowing,
- ...to forcefully un-tether the business sector from the petty bureaucratic stranglehold of third world minded politicians and government functionaries, and
- ...to unleash the US military to punish our real enemies with unforgettable consequences and unflinching resolve.

All this needs to be explained and sold on several levels, starting with the kind of discussions that a certain subset of liberty-friendly liberals can also hear. The conversation begins with Renaissance Conservatives, the forward aimed creative-adaptive conservatives who are committed to engineering an American Renaissance.

A Renaissance Conservative Creed

The Declaration of Independence is our normative founding document.

The Declaration of Independence
IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. **And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.**

We celebrate the equality of one’s legal status and the dynamic inequality of a creative society...equally. We share three core liberal commitments: the respect for human

dignity, the fierce protection of free expression and the integrity of democratic/republican governance.

We clearly grasp the taproot connections between liberty and liberty's vital support systems: Between society's commercial & technological innovations and our other creative endeavors, especially in the arts and exploration; between the vitality of our creative endeavors generally and the health and ultimate survival of civilization; between the baseline conditions of security and freedom and the vitality of the human creative enterprise.

We “get” American Exceptionalism: We recognize the emergence of the American experiment as the world's first, truly vital creative civilization. We are hard nosed, liberty-loving realists who clearly recognize that the emergent historical and institutional challenges to America (atavistic, faux-modern and postmodern) are the challenges to creative civilization itself. We understand that the enemies of creative civilization are targeting America as their main obstacle. This challenge frames the urgent necessity of a renaissance within conservatism the USA, leading to a renaissance of a creative conservative-liberal dialogic, leading to an American renaissance, leading to a world renaissance.

We share in the best of the liberal tradition - the commitment to work to improve the human condition, and to achieve a world in which basic human dignity is respected regardless of one's status or station.

We share in the best of the libertarian tradition the commitment to expand the scope of individual freedom of choice as an essential expression of respect for human dignity.

We share in the best of the secular conservative tradition the commitment to attain and preserve robust security to all citizens from predators, whether the predators operate within or without the nation's boundaries, as an essential obligation of any government committed to respect human dignity.

We share in the best of the constitutional and religious traditions that all our fundamental liberties and freedoms are the gift, not of sovereigns, rulers, potentates or even of democratically elected governments, but of nature or nature's God; that the assertion in the American Declaration of Independence, that we possess inalienable rights endowed by our Creator is the central tenet of our policy and philosophy.

We hold that a robust, constitutional civil polity with the strength and legitimacy to contain and protect individuals against the arbitrary and oppressive use of power within the scope of its authority, whether the oppression is public or private, is essential to preserve liberty and human dignity within a given territory; that this public goal, when authentically and lawfully exercised, forms the core imperative that is the sole source of sovereign legitimacy.

We hold that the preservation, promotion and protection of all human life-affirming creative endeavors is a vital, ongoing obligation of all governments, and that such endeavors absolutely require conditions of protected freedom.

We recognize and honor America's exceptional role in preserving and promoting her legacy of freedom, and to that end we affirm that our precious freedoms are a sacred Gift, a legacy from the Authority that rules all rulers, of those inalienable rights that are bestowed to every individual, Including the right to life, to liberty, to the pursue happiness, and to the consent of the governed. We believe that America was called as a sacred trust: to secure these rights; to preserve a government by, for and of the people; and to stand as the beacon of liberty for all the world's oppressed peoples.

The hallmark themes of Renaissance Conservatism are life affirmation, freedom affirmation and the celebration and support of creative activities in all spheres (artistic, commercial, scientific and exploration), all of which are seen as an indivisible moral and practical imperative. We love creative freedom and its fruits so much that they respect the dangers of government meddling, and understand that the selective bureaucratic promotion of some creative activities over others is subtle censorship. We support free, untrammelled patronage of creative pursuits, encouraged but not controlled by the state.



There is heavy lifting ahead. But one bright day, a robust, self confident conservatism will arise from the ashes. When it does, it will be that really new, old thing: a vital self-confident, forward-looking conservatism.

Here is how you will tell: Renaissance Conservatism will be as attractive in its own way as was the liberalism that inspired the under the first Civil Rights movement. It will supply the sort of energy, both intellectual and idealistic, that captures minds and creates key leaders in both parties. It will infiltrate the media, the academy and even the Nanny Principia with a single, bright line goal: to reinvigorate Western Civilization by reigniting the American Revolution.

THE PRACTICAL BASIS FOR AN OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

Renaissance Conservatism will add radical new energy and purpose to the time-honored, but badly shaken world view of historically-rooted, backwards-facing conservatism. This is to be a broadband cultural and political renaissance, rooted in and supported by core conservative principles, and characterized by four themes and elements:

Realistic Idealism,
The Civilization Imperative,
Respect for the Moral infrastructure,
Defense of Creativity and Ordered Freedom.

REALISTIC IDEALISM

Ambitious goals require *realistic* idealism: Therefore, renaissance conservatism seeks to *optimize* the human condition *without attempting to perfect it*. Utopia is supplanted by attainable progress anchored in the special conditions that promote and protect the human creative enterprise in all its manifold forms.

THE CIVILIZATION IMPERATIVE

Our survival depends on the emergence of a truly new thing: A vital, adaptive, morally centered civilization. Such Great Events are rarely glaringly apparent to those swept up in day-to-day affairs. The prospect of a trip to the executioner wonderfully clarifies everything, even one's entire world view. Yes, any civilization is a flawed enterprise. But it remains true that civilization, as such, is our most powerful *and essential* social technology. Modern civilization, all warts accounted for, is the first iteration of that technology that has demonstrated the capacity to curb tyranny and rally the decent in the cause of protection of the innocent. Without the blessings of modern civilization, the good, the true and the innocent become, once again, mere prey for society's worst predators, in and out of government. Here is the gallows image that looms over the present world turmoil: Modern civilization may yet fail.

Modernity comes with a price: We are increasingly dependent on the blessings and protections of modern civilization and decreasingly able to survive without its enduring existence. Therefore, our recovery from another Dark Age is not at all assured. The breakdown of the moral boundaries that conservatism has been tasked to protect is no trivial matter. As the 21st century dawns, we may well awake to a shattering discovery: that we have arrived at the "no failure allowed" point.

Renaissance conservatism stands with bright line clarity and urgent seriousness for the proposition that the continued success of modern civilization cannot be taken for granted. Civilization is our life support system and the bulwark against the prospect of a new, barbaric Dark Age. Any failure of our civilization would take place against the backdrop of uncontrolled nuclear and biological weapons and the ongoing "arms race" between humans and natural pathogens for which our bodies have no defenses.

These are challenges that we will meet because we must. Realism, idealism and optimism converge whenever realists awaken to the next challenge.

RESPECT FOR THE MORAL INFRASTRUCTURE

If an autopsy on a failed modern civilization is ever performed, we can be assured that the same pathogens were at work: the accumulation of moral confusion in the culture leading to the catastrophic failure of the moral immune system. This will have been presaged by a loss of moral confidence. These are the signs and symptoms of a profound *moral* failure more systemically dangerous than a biological plague.

Modern civilization is our bulwark against the next Dark Age. Its underlying moral infrastructure constitutes our collective immune system. One robust, morally centered creative civilization has emerged in the modern world, and has been partly copied: The United States of America. Just as the USA is beginning to lose its sense of mission, Renaissance Conservatism has emerged to make the compelling case that its moral and philosophical moorings are sound and its self confidence fully justified. This may be the ultimate takeaway lesson of the “American experiment”, whose founding document located the moral authority for life affirming freedom outside mere human provenance.

DEFENSE OF CREATIVITY AND ORDERED FREEDOM

Renaissance Conservatism holds with equal clarity and seriousness to the historical and practical proposition that the continued survival of any vital and adaptive civilization requires the freedom-supporting infrastructure on which all creative and innovative enterprises are built. The American constitution is such an infrastructure, providing as it does, not only robust protections for free expression but also for the protections of intellectual property rights to the creative innovators in the arts, technologies and sciences.

At the very foundation of that freedom-supporting infrastructure lies a profound set of moral insights (as in the “endowed by our creator” language in the Declaration of Independence) that the religious and secular among us (when they are wise) will recognize as the elements of the Common Moral Law.

NOT ALL CONSERVATIVES ARE THE SAME SIX DIFFERENTIALS

The contrast with current liberalism is self evident, but there are also significant differences with some contemporary conservatives as well.

DIFFERENTIAL ONE: Re-Cons fiercely hold all seven of the following conservative positions (at least one of which has been compromised or abandoned by a major subset of conservative thinkers and partisans):

(a) **That there are only three true entitlements:** (1) The right to have the laws enforced evenhandedly, resulting in equal public safety for high and low; (2) The right to retain the fruits of one’s own efforts, earnings and risks taken in the course of economic and creative endeavors, as property; (3) The right to have one’s core liberties protected against all predators, public and private, especially the right to peaceful expression, self defense and the pursuit of achievement and happiness. NOTE: These entitlements are not self-executing but require a liberty-friendly civilization dedicated to their protection. All the rest are mere benefits.

(b) **That a comprehensive anti-bureaucratic ethos is essential** to policy wisdom, an attitude and commitment to continuously seek ways to lift the dead

hand of the stultifying, inflexible and anti-creative effects bureaucracies exert in **both the public and private spheres.**

(c) That sound policy entails resolute support for all entrepreneurial enterprises, personal or corporate, in science, commerce and the arts, opposing the barriers, penalties, **and controlling subsidies** that abort and smother innovation.

(d) That the belief in the morality of freedom and its fruits must lead to policies supporting and promoting supply side resource development, especially in energy, manufacturing, food production, and opposing an ethos of denial and deprivation.

(e) That any political philosophy worthy of support necessarily fiercely protects the common moral foundations of a free and creative society, readily bridging the secular and religious foundations as necessary in service of this common purpose.

(f) That a fierce but intelligent nationalism is the natural product of a true understanding of the current plight of civilization, in turn leading to a foreign policy respecting and defending the other freedom-friendly nation states that support ours, one that actively promotes the vision of America as a revolutionary force in the world.

DIFFERENTIAL TWO: Re-Cons are pan-partisan.

Re-Cons exist to forge working policy alliances among republicans, democrats and independents. Therefore, Re-Cons support a principle-grounded dialogue among all reasonable players who support the vision of a vital adaptive civilization founded in enduring freedom. Re-Cons understand that dialogue is not a debate. The latter is staged for the benefit of a third party audience, a show whose actors are too busy arguing to listen and think. A debate is polemic. Real dialogue is mutually heuristic.

DIFFERENTIAL THREE: Re-Cons are driven by the creative civilization imperative.

In the old mold, liberals claimed a natural affiliation with the creative artists, while fully willing to use the same artists as propagandists; yet the same liberals failed to see the creative innovations in technology and commerce as just one more facet of the human creative project. In the old mold, conservatives were often alienated from the artistic communities, while supporting technological and commercial innovation.

Latter-day political liberals have forfeited their claim as “best friends” of the creative forces of civilization because they have abandoned the core freedom-protecting principles that constitute the very moral foundation of all creative activity. Liberalism has become an ideology that would differentially burden creative innovation in commerce by special

taxation and regulation; that would hamper creative freedom in the arts by subsidizing the preferred artists; and would impose a bureaucratic load throughout the creative process. In this malign form, liberalism has become an enemy of a vital creative civilization.

Re-Cons differ from both modern liberals **and** paleo-conservatives because they uniquely understand the vital nexus between protected freedom and creative progress in all its forms. For Re-Cons, freedom isn't a mere indulgence. Freedom is rooted in the life-affirming moral order and its robust protection constitutes the essential condition for human survival.

DIFFERENTIAL FOUR: Re-Cons are driven by a steady confidence in the future and a reasonable faith in the ultimate wisdom of the “common” people.

These attitudes are rooted in real world experience. They lead Re-Cons to seek incremental reform and to reject those who create false crises or seek to exploit real ones.

The vision of a creative civilization is one the very scope of which confers a sense of steadiness and direction. Much as the socialist Fabians of the UK were able to dramatically repeal economic freedoms over decades, Re-Cons will restore them in the same, steady, determined fashion. As a bonus, policy prudence allows for real world policy error correction.

Re-Cons hold venerable popular institutions in deep respect because they represent the accumulated human wisdom of centuries of “field research.” This leads to a pro-family ethos, coupled with procedural populism on the major social issues. A just and prudent government does not engage in the elitist “progressive” social engineering all too often exploited by the undemocratic left whose ideologues are dedicated to overcome all established traditions that violate politically correct norms.

Social morality should not be directed or engineered from top down as long as the sanctity and dignity of human life and our essential freedoms are protected. For example, the voters of state A should be free chose to permit homosexual marriage, and those of state B free to forbid graphic sex education or homosexual advocacy in grade schools; but no judge or bureaucrat in either state should ever be allowed to overrule the popular will. Whenever an administrative fiat or an elitist judicial ruling is used to usurp democratic institutions in the service of political correctness, the ghosts of Lenin and Stalin cheer.

DIFFERENTIAL FIVE: Re-Cons characteristically look at issues in their largest contexts; and therefore remain doggedly committed to finding bridges between secular and religious boundaries.

A. Re-Cons stand out from opportunistic conservatives because of the quality of their understanding of the nature of civilization, of the existential and cultural challenges it faces and the absolute necessity of maintaining its secure moral foundations. Free civilizations cannot long survive without a supporting moral infrastructure that sustains the institutions of law and justice such that they apply

with equal force to rulers and ruled, to the winners and losers. Free civilizations will wither and die unless they respect and protect creative freedom and the institutions that protect it. This requires the broadest possible consensus. Re-Cons embrace a policy and practice of building secular and religious bridges, binding all those whose belief systems include the core Moral Law as it supports civilizations and human freedoms.

B. Re-Cons recognize America as the first modern creative civilization, the first major nation state founded on free institutions under modern conditions. This is America as a light to the world, the experiment that cannot be allowed to fail. This is America as the beloved homeland and the Model for the World. This is the America that will survive...*even America*. From the Re-Con perspective, the American model is the path to human survival. The scope of this vision leads to a recognition of the *necessity* of a heuristic dialogue among the non-ideologues and a pan-partisan alliance among all conservatives.

C. Re-Cons understand that the struggle between liberalism and conservatism is a universal dialogic in which conservatives are tasked to defend our essential boundaries, particularly the moral ones, while liberals (at their best) are to attack the arbitrary boundaries, particularly the social ones. Re-Cons uniquely see the rigid ideologies of the left (and many of the right) as pathologies to be overcome. Re-cons understand the need to resume something like the Cold War dialogic between the anti-communist liberals and conservatives in the service of the larger goal – the protection of free civilization. But contemporary liberalism and conservatism have some heavy lifting to do before that can happen.

D. Unlike contemporary liberals, Re-Cons believe in the *presumptive* defense of traditional boundaries, even when a particular boundary might seem unnecessary or excessive. This is because Re-Cons have absorbed the lessons of history that the rash and thoughtless elimination of traditional boundaries, however “flawed” or “old fashioned” they seem in the moment, can damage civilization. History teaches that discarding essential, but misunderstood boundaries is more dangerous than retaining the occasional arbitrary and useless ones. The excesses of the French Revolution are a chilling caution about the potential excesses of the liberal mind when un-tethered by the core Moral Law, ordinary prudence and common sense. The weakness of the Weimar Republic is another caution.

DIFFERENTIAL SIX: Re-Cons are innately predisposed to realistic, long term optimism, colored by humor, intellectual humility and a commitment to creative adaptation.

The Renaissance Conservative commitment to an authentic political and policy dialogic is not an incidental side issue. Both conservatives and liberals supported the Civil Rights movement, only to witness with growing dismay the excesses of excessive victim politics and reverse discrimination. Liberals and conservatives supported free market

experiments in the form of “contracting out” government services, superficially harnessing market efficiencies, then serving as a cover for crony politics and corruption.

Liberal and conservative fads all too often fail. Whenever error and failure are possible, humility and good humor are the order of the day. In the real world, error and failure are not just possible, they are inevitable. The legendary Murphy – of Murphy’s Law- is the patron saint of the Re-Cons. Only ideologies cling to a failed model in the face of mounting evidence.

Humor is the creative human impulse at play. As Eric Hoffer - that self-taught longshoreman genius for the common people - once pointed out, some of the most powerful practical innovations first appeared as toys (e.g., the first steam engine was just a toy for ancient Roman children). As supporters of creative civilization and the creative process generally, both in technology and the arts, Re-Cons are distinguished from many classic conservatives by honoring the spirit of play and the value of humor.

INTEGRATING THE PENDING POPULIST REFORMATION

Renaissance Conservative thinkers and leaders are poised to unify the conservative movement by a principled incorporation of centrists and reasonable liberals. A plurality of the country will follow, but to achieve a wide consensus, all of the key players, left, right and center, will need accommodate and integrate the latest and most uniquely American populist movement.

The Tea Party movement is essentially different from its American predecessors because of its middle class roots and its emphasis on quasi-conservative core values, including the emphasis on protection of earnings from the manipulation of disconnected elites (in and out of government).

In this usage, the term *populist* is meant in its largest application to describe the politically relevant precepts, attitudes and core positions that distinguish an enduring majority of adults from the political elites that depend on their approval. For example, the support for the death penalty for murder is a populist opinion, opposed by a plurality of the academic and religious elite

In practice, American politics has evolved two cooperating political elites, each of which runs one of the two parties and shares three common traits: (1) high education levels, (2) important wealth (3) a distrust of the populist vote bordering on fear. Winning elections for each requires a periodic courting ritual during which the populist vote (on which success depends) is earnestly sought, followed by a measure of post-election betrayal.

The corporate country club conservatives and the limousine liberals have so far succeeded in achieving a rough division of the populist center: social populists on one side, economic populists on the other. Renaissance Conservatives will change that.

Both elite and popular opinions are subject to fads. The populist positions that interest me are the ones that endure from election to election and will be relevant to the specifically American political scene over the next decade or so.

When manipulative elites ignore or marginalize the popular moral ethos, sneering at the under-educated and unsophisticated “ordinary people” and when they promote policies that violate common sense, there will be trouble. When judges and bureaucrats abuse the public trust by overriding the popular will on essential “family values” issues, a populist rebellion is inevitable and appropriate. When an economic crash is due to elite neglect and misconduct, there will be hell to pay.

As the conservative elites grapple with the implications of coming populist unrest and possible eruption, everyone should remember that the main populist strands of opinion, concerns and perspectives are not the only such threads in American politics, just the ones most often neglected by the elites of the left and right.

This is why populism tends to erupt from time to time, instead of congealing around a particular party or set of interest groups.

The center of gravity of American populism is located among those who are too busy working, earning and living real lives (elites would say “mundane” lives, here) to become political junkies. They periodically awake...like the mythical sleeping giant...only when provoked by prolonged policy neglect or irritated into sufficient anger by repeated disregard of their core values and concerns.

Whenever the elites forget who really serves whom for long enough, there is a populist eruption. History reminds us that the consequences of these eruptions can be very destructive. The world is full of demagogues ready at the first opportunity to ride popular discontent into power and thereafter to drive the civil order into the ground. This is why it becomes an imperative for American conservatives to take stock of the truly valuable populist contributions, and to lead the way to a populist reformation.

By *populist reformation* I mean a procedural and substantive reconciliation between the political elites and the most valuable elements of the popular ethos.

Consider free trade as a sacrosanct political doctrine: Working people rarely are impressed by any doctrine or theory that has the practical result of taking away good jobs, reducing the stability and amount of their incomes and that appears to lower their country’s standing in the world. A conservative populist will find, advocate and proactively implement policies that restore American manufacturing capability and the attendant job base. A conservative elitist will passively accept the perpetual irrelevance

of the “manufacturing problem” because doctrine says that we are always “better off” relying on cheap foreign suppliers.

In effect, the elites of both parties think that we can prosper with lower incomes for the formerly well off, compensated by even higher incomes for the new “information workers”, especially when the life styles of the newly marginalized workers can be subsidized with cheap goods from China.

Heads up to the elites: **The credit crash has changed all that.** China will not forever play the game to our benefit.

Populism has a sharply different look and feel in the USA as opposed to, say, Venezuela or Iran because the American middle class is so well entrenched and numerous that its numbers overwhelm those who cling to hereditary privilege.

While ours is not a fully “classless” society, its various divisions tend to be blurry and membership levels very fluid as people and families migrate from hardship to wealth and back again. **This is the country where the less wealthy can reasonably aspire to wealth and the wealthy can reasonably worry about losing everything.**

The Manipulative Elites vs. the Productive & Creative Majority

This juxtaposition identified the core conflict from which the tea Party has emerged. In this new milieu, there are only two great “class” divisions in the populist mind that really matter: those who work, create value and struggle to make productive things happen for themselves, their families and the community at large, and those who manipulate the former group.

In the populist mind, the manipulative class includes the idle rich, the idle poor, and the political and cultural leaders who exploit the productive “class”.

The coming populist reformation will be driven by the events and exigencies of the next few years because these challenges will bring the failures of elites of right and left to address the core populist values and concerns into sharp relief.

The elites could have seen this coming. Think of the California tax revolt, the popular resistance in many states to judicial or administrative attempts to impose political correctness (as in the aborted attempt to conflate gay rights with the earlier post-slavery struggles of the civil rights era) and the abrupt right turn by the democrats on the border security issue.

What are the challenging events and exigencies of the next few years? The broad outlines are already clear. The pattern was first evident with the oil and hostage crisis under the non-populist President Jimmy Carter and became blatant with the 9-11-01 attacks on American soil. We are energy vulnerable, economically vulnerable and culturally vulnerable.

There are a number of vital sub-issues, among them the primacy of the English language, the obligation of the elites to control the influx of unassimilated “outsiders” and to vigorously promote the assimilation of the “newly arrived” and the fervent wish of those who work for a living to be able to retain their earnings. These populist issues (in altered form) are alive and well in Europe where the elites may have irretrievably mucked things up. Here, the American elites on the right and left are on notice that there is still time to avert disaster.

Incidentally, when one is discussing disaster in the context of growing populism, “disaster” can take one or both of two forms: (1) The trigger event that inaugurates a true populist eruption – through neglect or deception – actually happens; (2) We get a powerful, irresponsible populist figure on the stage bent on “sticking it to” the elites.

The notion of a *populist reformation* is that the elites will be able to reconcile rational policy to the main populist concerns before a triggering disaster takes place. The game so far has been one of obfuscation, placation and deception. In the hyper information age, this game is now over. Information flow has been democratized. But the dominant media is still in charge....

American Populism Is Unique

There is an apparent contradiction for anyone who tries to write sympathetically about populism, because doing that is an “elite” activity.

Or is it? My favorite populist thinker of the 20th century was Eric Hoffer, the immigrant longshoreman. He was self educated, trenchant and brilliant. His signature work, “The True Believer” was a classic takedown of the elites of communism, Nazism and the religious authorities whose organizational structure these two bloody secular religions of the last century copied. I had the privilege of seeing this passionate, insightful longshoreman twice when I was a law student in the Bay Area. He was a man who maintained from life experience that the common people were “lumpy with talent” and that the idle intellectuals were a dangerous combination of skill and lack of judgment.

As a student, I worked in road construction and enjoyed the company of these older guys for whom a 10 hour day with a shovel or jackhammer was a career, as opposed to a source of tuition money. As a lawyer, I’m now unable to deny my “elite station” in life.

My predicted populist reformation is not a populist revolution. We’ve seen far too many of those events; they end badly for the working people these revolutions purport to help.

Instead I’m predicting (and supporting) a mutual adjustment of the relationship between the manipulative elites and the productive men and women who actually make things happen.

I should acknowledge here that a legitimate populist movement can accommodate local custom as when popular sentiment clearly differs from the mainstream. I'm thinking of opinion favoring celebrations of gay marriages in one jurisdiction and the passionately opposing abortions in another. It will always be an open question for conservative populists just how much local variation on sensitive issues is appropriate. But for conservatives, there can be no accommodation for the anti-democratic reversal of the popular will in important aspects of family life, particularly by judicial or administrative fiat.

This reformation is only possible in contemporary America because here the distance between elites and non-elites is smaller than anywhere else in the world, and the fund of experience, common sense and talent in the "populist sector" often exceeds that of the elites.

Ours is a unique situation, the product of three converging social forces:

- (1) The democratization of information flow (note that the cyber-revolution is already changing the information dominance of the academy);
- (2) the democratization of economic processes (success of the pricing systems and entrepreneurial models of modern capitalism that are copied within socialist economies produce a sort of quick-entry elite group and destabilize the older ideological and hereditary elites);
- (3) The decline of the authority of the manipulative elites because of the corrosive effects of an overly-fluid relativistic value perspective that has caused the withering away of the traditional moral underpinnings of all ruling cliques everywhere that the post-modern ethos has penetrated.

Just how dramatically different is the American situation? Compare just two examples:

In rural India, the ancient practice of suttee (sati) is still being carried out. Widows are expected to be burned alive on their husband's funeral pyre. The urban elites of India condemn (and prosecute) this barbaric "populist" practice as murder.

In this country, a late term unborn male, heart beating, just short of unassisted viability outside the womb, is dismembered at the prospective mother's request. Some of our elites defend this as a "therapeutic medical procedure" and as a "proper exercise of female autonomy". Some of our populists condemn the practice as "barbaric, approaching infanticide" or even as "murder".

Leaving aside all of the constitutional law arguments and nuanced public policy debate on the abortion issue, we elites might reasonably concede that it is not at all clear whether the elite position always represents the more enlightened moral perspective.

This raises the major reason that our current circumstances auger a populist reformation that will soon effect a transformation in one or both of this country's political parties.

The older established elites operated openly, sustained by a mantle of moral authority grounded in deep tradition and/or universal moral principles commonly accepted as normative by an overwhelming majority.

The post modern elites are so disconnected from the popular ethos that they must attempt to operate in the background, their actual attitudes and positions cloaked with three well-honed opinion-shaping “technologies”-- *deception, obfuscation and distraction*. This is a hard act to maintain in the information age, much like that of the emperor who thought none of his subjects would notice that he was naked.

A necessary caveat: At this point I will seem to have romanticized the populist ethos. This is really the contrast effect. The modern populist perspective looks very good next to the post modern moral ambivalence and narcissistic indulgence (including a tendency to faux moral posturing) that prevail among the manipulative elites.

Naturally, there are aspects of the populist mindset (especially on the fringes) that I don't share. For example, I am much more inclined to support changes in public policy and private practice that include our gay and lesbian friends in the mainstream than is typically acceptable within the populist mindset. But I differ with the typical elite perspective that dismisses American populist thinking as retrograde or barbaric. And I strongly agree with the populists who would not conflate the full social integration of our tiny gay subpopulation with the epic struggles against slavery. In the main, the distinctively American version of populism has captured a great deal of folk wisdom and common sense morality that the elites dismiss only at their peril.

A special qualification: By contrasting the manipulative, non-productive elites with the much larger group of us who are engaged in productive work, I have radically changed the contours of the normal populist-elite divide, and effectively reduced the number of issues held in common that define the populist perspective.

I would specifically include among the populist cohort those of us who toil at creative tasks. The creative-productive among us have their own set of “issues” with the manipulative, non-productive elites.

Modern American populism, in this expanded and general sense, is much more functionally egalitarian than non-American populists and much more so than our own manipulative elites who profess an ideal utopian equality that is functionally empty.

At the deepest, often unexamined level, our elites have a very strange egalitarian notion indeed, one driven by the psychological contradiction between an ingrained narcissism and the need to be “well thought of”. I see several elements operating in the manipulative elite mindset: Those who think alike are morally equal. Material inequalities of all kinds should be redressed by some kind of compensation. The manipulative elites manage to feel insulated against the (truthful) allegation that they're part of the “inequality problem” by selectively demonizing the people who don't think

like them. After all (these elites typically think) that retrograde, unenlightened mindset is the root cause of all the world's ills.

Our home-grown populists are united by a common experience of productive struggle. That experience validates the common morality of earning which leads quickly to the idea that all men and women are entitled to keep the fruits of their productive efforts. Inequalities tend to be readily accepted by the populist mind when they are not accomplished by fraud and are not defended by hypocrisy.

There are conscientious and reasonable members of the manipulative elites who will be able to accommodate the coming populist reformation. But this will require some self-reassessment. I see several takeaway points that will be central to this process:

All of the most salient and durable populist positions represent “field tested” values, enduring social norms whose utility is well established. These include tough “rule-consequences” policies for crime control, the obvious morality of retribution against our enemies on the foreign policy stage, the need for robust protection of the earned fruits of the productive efforts of “the people”, and for strong, effective policies to protect the health and stability of the families who make and rear children.

The elites would be wise to respect all strongly held populist positions (whether they agree with them or not) such that major reversals or changes should never be accomplished via deception or manipulation. I believe that there is a coming populist reformation, presaged but not yet defined by the Tea Party Movement. It will be driven by major events, only some of which can be predicted. At the moment, the political elites are predominantly liberal. This is an opening, the major conservative opportunity of the century, if there is a renaissance in conservative thought.

There are the prominent threads in the reemerging American populism. They will shape the parties and the political discussion over the next decade:

[1] PROCEDURAL POPULISM – A PRINCIPLED STRATEGY

The signal anti-populist development of the last 65 years was the emergence of governance via non-elected institutions under the control of the non-populist elites of the two parties. Principally the courts and the administrative agencies, these new power centers have quietly and not so quietly set public policies in motion that never could have gathered sufficient popular support. Examples of this, abound, many obvious. The signal pro-populist development in the same period was the emergence – principally in California producing what some political scientists are now calling “hybrid government” of the popular initiative as a tool for setting social and tax policy in ways that the legislative bodies, controlled by party elites, did not. Resistance to social engendering by unelected elites, whether acting in the guise of enlightened jurists or empowered bureaucrats, is a legitimate exercise in populist power. As a rule, social change, especially when it touches on family arrangements, sex and reproduction, should be gradual, moderate and

bottom-up, not radical, rapid and top down. Renaissance conservatives, even those who are not on the same page with many social conservatives, can and should make alliances with local traditionalists that are resisting bureaucratic social engineering. This aligns procedural populism and a broad spectrum of conservative and libertarian thought.

[2] ME-FIRST NATIONALISM

Starting with Ross Perot several election cycles ago, this is the many headed hydra that the elites in both parties fear the most, and it is the most universal form of populism. The failure of the Soviet Empire as an international model is a classic case of a putative universal ideology hitting the nationalist wall. Note that party elites of all stripes tend to be more internationalist than the so called “common people”.

[3] TOUGH MINDED POPULISM VS. THE WIMP ELITES

This covers a whole range of issues from the death penalty for Hannibal Lector to the prosecution of high placed banking and Wall Street crooks, from a hard line on terrorism to another mass murder on American soil. These issues will be pivotal in the next decade and they may be unnecessarily interesting for those of us who prefer to live in safety.

[4] COMMON SENSE ECONOMICS

The revolting specter of a broken financial system fueled by pampered executives (as many of them democrat-pandering as republican-pandering) who pursue ultra short term paper profits over long term real world gains is so profoundly unsettling that a populist rebellion is inevitable in some form. The fears and anxieties in the current electoral-economic situation introduce a mob psychology wild-card effect that will mask the larger trend...but not for long.

Most conservatives are not yet wrapped in elitist cocoons and not yet ready to surrender the future to elite leftist fools. All conservatives (led by their Re-Con colleagues) should be willing to step up to the task at hand. Armed with an intelligent and conservative populism, moved by the vision of a better civilization, conservatives should be prepared to challenge their principled entrepreneurial liberal colleagues to engage in next Dialogic Period.

The first of the two major political parties that manages to integrate the populist reformation with its own ethos can become a durable majority. If both parties are able to achieve this, the USA will enter a long and healthy Dialogic Period.

Each party needs a leader whose visceral commitment to a muscular and farsighted defense of the homeland is immediately recognized as authentic, a leader who speaks with a distinctly American voice, with a voice that makes sense to a modern populist. This is the voice of any renaissance conservative who has integrated the populist reformation. Many remaining populist issues, as important as they are, will remain secondary until the jihad against civilization has been decisively defeated.

This must be *content* not stylistic populism because Americans can tell the difference.

Here's what the post 9-11 version of a renewed American populism might look like:

- Populism speaks with the confident assertion of American Exceptionalism, the ideal of America as representing the powerful social exemplar for the world. This is the populism that animated the chants of rescue workers in the rubble of the World Trade Center, "USA! USA!"
- Populism is rooted in our common American social values, especially the historically pro-family social traditions that govern in the heartland. These values trump all the non-democratic institutions of governance.
- Populism values the contribution of all newly arrived Americans but recognizes that the current very low rate of assimilation poses a threat to American cultural integrity. There is an emerging populist consensus about immigration: the rigorous exclusion of illegals coupled with robust restrictive border control and a very high priority for assimilation into American culture and values.
- Populism is authentically tough on crime and terrorism. National and domestic security considerations (especially during the current wartime conditions -- think of FDR's "Freedom from Fear") trump all bureaucratic processes, political correctness, isolationist obstructionism, and fractious interest group politics. A self confident populist administration would overcome the narrow civil libertarian objections to "racial" profiling to exclude terrorist suspects and to the use of biometric identification technologies and terrorist lists for all those entering the U.S.
- A populist environmental policy is explicitly pro-human, with equal emphasis on resource preservation and people access. Environmentalism by the people and for the people prevails over those who worship the environment as some quasi-deity or who elevate the protection of obscure species at the expense of the concerns of ordinary people.
- Populists favor and honor productive work (which includes the critically important work of child rearing) over all forms of subsidized idleness. Few living democrats seem to honor the pro-work ethos of FDR's New Deal except in hollow rhetoric.

- Populists agree that the burdens of taxes must be meaningfully reduced on those who are actually working for a living. This issue transcends all the other left-right, partisan issues on tax policy.
- Populist economic and social policy is governed by the goal of promoting upward mobility without undermining the value of the goal: to be successful, financially secure, and to be allowed pass on those benefits to one's family.

Postmodern liberals find it incomprehensible that “ordinary” working people, who (from the perspective of the Eurocentric left) have no prospect of gaining great wealth, would nevertheless oppose confiscatory taxation of estates. This is because these liberals don't take the American dream as seriously as do the so called “common” people. There is a core populist agenda which sounds discordant to liberal ears. Eventually the political landscape will be reformed. Even the shadow of jihad against the West will fade. Then America will be forced to face **and solve** the energy production independence issue. This is the issue that Renaissance Conservatives, committed to practical creative solutions that lead to and sustain abundance, can and should seize as their own.

One other, sleeper issue, that won't go away, will be center stage: **Who will be working in this country at what jobs, for whom and at what pay?** Any party or movement that fails to take this question with the utmost seriousness and urgency will become one of history's discards. A working understanding of creativity as the wellspring of wealth, security and abundance is the threshold criterion for leadership on this issue. Again; advantage Renaissance Conservatives.

THE DIALOGIC IMPERATIVE

The Dialogic Period

One party government is inherently dangerous. A two party government is the most stable and productive of the various competing models ...providing there is a bi-partisan overlap about the essential steps and policies needed to preserve civilization. Such a core foreign policy consensus was achieved in the US from FDR through John Kennedy, a period of about 35 years.

This was the Dialogic Period of US politics. The conservative renaissance will be aided by the renewal of such a consensus.

At the most generic level, the terms “liberal” and “conservative” describe the polarity between one's approach to boundaries (in human thought, relationships, interpersonal definitions, categories and moral precepts). Liberalism in this sense is the tendency to dissolve, negate or weaken boundaries, and conservatism is the counter-tendency to harden, affirm or strengthen them.

During the Dialogic Period, the Democratic Party once contained its own subset of the dialogic - hawks like Washington State's Senator Scoop Jackson, doves like Gene McCarthy, and intellectuals like Daniel Moynihan and George Kennan. William F. Buckley was the quintessential dialogic conservative.

But the ascent of the 60's liberals remade the Democratic Party into a narrow corridor, a claustrophobic compartment defined by an ideology that was never really shared by the populist center.

ESCAPING THE TOXIC POLITICAL LEFT

This is not an analysis of historical liberalism as a discipline or conscientious approach to political and social problems. I am using the term "political liberal" in a special sense to describe a partisan pathology. I am describing the subset of self styled "liberals" or "progressives" for whom belonging to "tribe liberal": (a) is kind of a calling, in which some one's declaration that "I'm a liberal" sounds very much like "I'm a Seventh Day Adventist" (my apologies to all SDA's...this is just an illustration); (b) the liberal self-identification is meant to immediately imply a specific litany (dare I say catechism) of specific doctrines. In general these are the positions that are shared by the left wing of the Democratic Party and the Green party. Because of the fierce hold of this pathological form of liberalism on the mind, a cure must precede the possibility of authentic dialogue. The good news is that most of these people are closet moderates who have adopted political liberal camouflage.

A short list of the defining positions of political liberals would include many laudable liberal sentiments shared by most conservatives (such as opposition to racism and the devaluation of women; the concern for the protection of the quality of the natural environment). All of these are mainstream issues and sentiments widely shared by almost everyone, including all renaissance conservatives.

But in the "fevered minds" of political liberals, these sentiments become conflated into an epic struggle against the grotesque foes of all that is good and true. This is a mythic "liberal" construct in which all middle class whites are inherently racist; all heterosexual males are irredeemably sexist; and all businesses (save a select few who donate heavily to liberal causes) are bent on raping the environment.

It is no coincidence that political liberals thickly populate some of the wealthiest and best educated coastal and urban communities in America. They are bound together, not only by a political religion, but by shared experiences. For the most part, they constitute social cohorts that enjoy six linked sets of shared assumptions and attitudes:

1. A comfortable hedonism enjoyed by predominantly well educated post-religious middle class and upper class sub-populations;
2. A "hip" social outlook that tends to mask or anesthetize moral qualms about the enjoyment of their position; effect this is a shared social milieu in which "style"

- and social “sophistication” operate to confer on their life styles a sort of genteel veneer of social virtue, one characterized by “tolerance”;
3. Compartmentalized morality, especially in the arts, an attitude that holds that the arts are generally to be free of all traditional moral stances and constraints, except for a small sub-component (honored more by gesture than actually patronized) in which the condemnation of oppression and the celebration of the oppressed are featured elements;
 4. Non judgmental attitudes about “sins” of the educated and tolerant, overlooking drug abuse, “life-style” motivated abortions, serial divorces and a whole range of sexual behavior typically condemned in less “sophisticated” cultures;
 5. The tendency to see morality as the avoidance of social criticism, leading to a tendency to take the ‘on-stage’ or cinematic moral stand;
 6. The notion that morality is properly and even sufficiently manifested by moral gestures. As a result, “correct” positions and stances trump all gritty engagement with the world, even at the expense of practical results.

How do we explain the fierce grip maintained by the religion of political liberalism over its adherents? Liberalism’s ability to transmute its “correct” stances and gestures into a tower of humanitarian virtue has an extraordinary effect: within the liberal-left bubble such stances and gestures serve to shield the comfortable hedonist life styles of its main adherents from moral criticism.

Thus the religion of liberalism represents a form of social détente and clever camouflage.

The faux-religion of political liberalism has three principal canons:

(1) Nationalization of charity:

Humanitarian endeavors cannot be effectively performed, nor equitably supported unless they are done by government agencies. This has the virtue of insulating its adherents from real moral claims on their personal resources. In effect, the political-moral stance that begins with the phrase, “I support (you can fill in the blanks with a liberal cause here)”, becomes the equivalent of, “I gave at the office.”

(2) Social Marxism:

This stance (going by various other names of course) dictates that a doctrine of (pretended) social equality substitutes for the now discredited ruthless redistribution of all wealth. This stance (which was really the ur-source of political correctness) allows its adherents to accomplish (or at least favor) the humiliation and social repression of those whom its shifting fashions might choose to label oppressors. This is a low cost approach to egalitarianism and protects those whose sophisticated hedonism would otherwise be criticized. The appropriately expressed politically correct bromides are the camouflage of “undeserved” well off.

(3) Collective Expiation of guilt:

Social survivor guilt, the inevitable result of a sense of “unearned” well being, is expiated by this religion’s ritual practices. These rituals, for the most part, consist of bumper stickers, public gestures, cocktail party banter, and occasional political activity in support of liberal causes.

The psychological strength of the liberal religion derives from four related developments in the human condition, mostly confined to the highly developed and prosperous communities in Europe and the Americas:

1. The collapse of traditional religious and other transcendent moral claims on the individual among the dominant intelligentsia of the developed world;
2. The persistent, nagging voice of residual conscience, still suffered by those anti-traditional secularists who have not yet succumbed to outright nihilism;
3. The emperor-has-no-clothes fragility of the whole act, such that any invalidation or repudiation of a part of the doctrine threatens the whole;
4. The deep psychological dread of any prospective return to individual accountability measured by an authoritative moral system.

THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY: A FIGHTING CREED

The ideologies of the left are dying, but the thirst for liberty and the institutions and values that support it, have never been stronger. Here are the elements of a new creed, one that should, but does not yet, cross the major red vs. blue political divide.

- A. Individuals – but not collectives - are endowed with basic rights.
- B. Individual rights come with the concomitant individual obligation to respect the rights of others.
- C. Collectives are social and political constructs that possess no inherent rights at all but exist with such organizational purposes, functions and revocable powers as were entrusted to them by free individuals.
- D. Government does not create rights, but exists to preserve their individual exercise by maintaining the moral, legal and security infrastructure of civilization.
- E. The right to an adequately funded, robust law and justice system, together with the necessary police, security and military forces to protect all citizens from predators (whether home-grown or invaders) is the only true entitlement; everything else is an optional expenditure.
- F. The rule/consequences model, grounded in the natural moral law, is the foundation of social morality and of civilization.
- G. The earning/keeping principle and the right to live one’s own life and to take one’s own risks are the bedrock of human dignity and a free society.

- H. The right of individuals to freely engage in mutual, honest, peaceful exchange relationships under conditions of creative, commercial and communication freedom is the foundation of a civilization worth defending with blood.
- I. Coercive threats to the rights, values and conditions of freedom set out above -- whether the threat emanates from other individuals, groups, countries or the government itself - must be opposed with courage and all necessary force.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A RENAISSANCE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Populist conservatism:

Renaissance conservatism will be seen as constructively redefining and incorporating a sophisticated populism. In this development, conservatism helps give birth and shape to a *populist reformation*;

Conservatism as a universal idea:

Conservatism's insights into the human condition will be seen as a necessary feature of a healthy, developing and growing civilization and, *inter alia*, as providing a constructive redefinition of liberalism. In this development, liberalism is not repudiated, just called to its highest form and partly integrated. This strengthens the conservative critique of modern and postmodern liberalism's excesses;

Creative conservatism:

Renaissance conservative values and policies will be recognized as a vital support system for a specifically **creative** civilization. This thread is separate from the populist reformation discussion. I am personally persuaded that the pursuit of a truly creative civilization, as a movement, and as an organizing political / moral principle, will be the principal engine of constructive change in the world for the foreseeable future. In this context, the creative forms of civilization will be seen as profoundly normative, and as presaged by the ongoing American experiment. Conservatives must be in the vanguard of that movement.

Renewal of the Dialogic Period:

Renaissance conservative ideas will be instrumental in restarting the Dialogic Period. A fresh, positive vision of civilization enriched by conservatism's contributions is the most effective way to restore balance to a media crippled by the ideologies of the extreme left. To transform the currently sclerotic media will require the power of fresh ideas driven by the dawning realization that the pursuit of creative civilization is the wave of the future (I expand on this below).

Getting Blue Dog & Reagan Democrats back in the game:

Renaissance Conservatism is more than a shotgun marriage of convenience and political exigency. It represents the careful integration of faith in liberty, the populist reformation, the restored Dialogic Period, the advent of bipartisan conservative alliances, and the political adoption of the *Creative Civilization Model*. Neither conservatives nor liberals can exclusively “own” the creative civilization. So the question of the next several years becomes: **Can old-line conservatives ride this horse?**

THE “HINGE OF HISTORY” MOMENT

I can’t over-stress the point that the notion of a freedom-friendly civilization explicitly devoted to protecting and promoting human creative activities, broadly conceived, is a radical new paradigm. The next wave of the future will be the advent of specifically **creative** civilizations of which the United States of America is the first, most successful, most powerful and most significant exemplar.

Civilization is soft technology. It represents the single innovation of Homo Sapiens that is most responsible for the dramatic increase of human freedom and welfare. Civilization is a rational exchange system among people which adjusts power relationships (and therefore resource allocations). It requires and therefore preserves and defends group norms, and acts as a carrier for group memory. The group norms appropriate to civilization exhibit a remarkable cross-cultural correspondence. All such norms concern the relationships between human purposes and human power.

ENTER --- THE CREATIVE CIVILIZATION PARADIGM

Civilization in its most developed form follows the “Western civilization” model, a product of Greco-Roman organization, Judeo-Christian values and Anglo-American jurisprudence, with accrued innovations from all the other successful models.

Western civilization is fragmented and unstable at the moment, held in temporary suspension by its decaying traditions against a storm of destructive challenges. The current challenges are deadly. They represent a unique admixture of atavistic, nihilistic and paleo-ideological forces. We who are committed to the preservation of civilization need to achieve general agreement about that which we will fight to preserve. We are called by history to locate the foundational norms, values and principles on which, together, we intend to stand.

We remain at risk, in large part, precisely because Western civilization seems unable to reach that sort of general agreement. This is a “software” problem, to borrow a

contemporary metaphor. Western civilization’s operating system has become unstable because of virus that attacks all values, including those on which the operating system itself crucially depends.

The failure of modern free civilizations to survive intact in the face of the current set of challenges would usher in a Dark Age from which we may not be able to recover, given the size of our footprint on the world, the virulence of the pathogens that follow us wherever we live and the scale and seriousness of the instabilities in the biosphere on which we rely. The current set of challenges has taken us to a crossroads.

The sign at the intersection identifies only two branches: “**Repair or fail**”.

The last eight millennia of the human story can be described as the *post-primal* struggle between competing civilizations. In all of human history only a few nodes within the civilized zones of the world sheltered robust, well supported efflorescences of human creativity.

We are now poised at the threshold of an emerging model of civilization, one that is self-consciously organized to generate the cultural, esthetic, spiritual and technical innovations necessary for humanity to thrive in relative peace and freedom, while retaining that essence that makes us truly human.

Its successful adoption will propel the advancement of the human species for the next eight millennia. In the **Appendix**, POINTS OF LIGHT & DARKNESS, I trace the acceleration of artistic and technological innovation from its early stirrings in Athens through the great American creative surge of the 20th century.

Late in the 20th century, the understood scope of human creative activity was broadened to include technology. This was a key insight of the American, former soviet émigré, novelist / philosopher, Ayn Rand⁴. It follows that a creative civilization must necessarily have a free economic system as well as robust protections for creative expression and free communication.

From the point of view of the art-friendly left, there is a poignant irony here. The creative activities of the engineers, technologists and scientists have done more to

⁴ Alisa Rosenbaum, A footnote. A core element of the conservative ethos is the celebration of individual heroic achievement, whether that of an entrepreneur, explorer or creative genius (thinking here of the archetypal architect, Howard Roark, in Ayn Rand’s *Fountainhead*). Taken in their totality, Ms. Rand’s novels (particularly *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*) and her non-fiction works (esp. *The Romantic Manifesto*) make a philosophical case for a comprehensive vision of creative freedom. This is a notion of considerable scope that folds in the creative arts and the innovative arts of industry. While many conservatives are uncomfortable with Ms. Rand’s philosophy of atheistic egoism, especially as it derides altruism, her contributions to the philosophy of freedom are too great to be ignored. Ayn Rand (1905-1982) was born Alisa Rosenbaum in Russia and learned fluent English while working in Hollywood. As a young graduate student in New York, Alan Greenspan belonged to a group that was in the thrall of Ms. Rand. As a secular Jewish Soviet émigré -- the Soviets had essentially destroyed her parent’s business, she was a fierce anticommunist who defended the ethic of rational self interest against cultural and political forces that would compel a sacrificial ethos, deride profit and sap achievement.

advance the real living conditions of the poor people, the so-called commoners to whom the left has pretended allegiance, than any experiment in social organization explicitly designed to ameliorate their lot. One can make the historical case that the specifically “mundane” American style of technological innovation has done more for the day-to-day lives of the common people than all of the Marxist and utopian social planners combined.

There are certain moral and practical principles that make up the foundation of an **explicitly creative civilization. Providentially, these moral and practical principles were set out in the American founding documents.** Creative activity flourishes in an intensely free society and withers in a bureaucratic tyrannical one. No wonder America is the paradigm exemplar of the creative society.

Almost every innovation listed in the previous section represents the happy confluence of at three forces: (1) Creative freedom; (2) Protection of the creative process either via a powerful patron or a robust patent / copyright intellectual property system; (3) and in the 20th century, the operation of the risk-incentive-profit sequence.

It is not coincidental that the technical or so called “industrial” creative innovations since 1700 have collectively done more to improve the lot of the so called common people than all the previous creative innovations in art and science combined. We should not forget that the epicenter of these innovations, of their inspiration, application and development, was and still is the United States of America.

The insight that a civilization should provide the foundations of law and peaceful transitions of power is incomplete. The atavistic forces that would cripple or destroy Western civilization carry a sharp lesson for us. When the Taliban took over on Afghanistan, creative people were forced to flee.

While the spread of an authoritarian and fanatical theocracy that animates the jihad against the West minimally meets the definition of ‘a civilization’, it is manifestly hostile to free human creative endeavors. This prompts us to take up the simple, but profound agenda that will transform the conduct and defense of all modern civilizations for centuries to come. The task of furthering the expansion of creative civilizations and defending them – and their free institutions - has *from now on* become the overriding goal of the human enterprise.

The universal goal of purposively fostering creative civilizations means that the idea of American Exceptionalism is not jingoism, but the epicenter of an uncompleted world revolution.

To survive and flourish over time, a civilization must provide robust, proactive protection for all peaceful creative activities – and the special conditions of freedom in which the human creative enterprise flourishes. In this new paradigm, creative activities (and the concomitant freedom of expression and communication) are to be defined very broadly, including but not limited to the free exchange of political ideas, art forms, cultural, spiritual and esthetic creative products, technological innovations, and human exploration

of the cosmos. As to all of these creative expressions of our humanity, the protection of intellectual property and robust firewalls against censorship are paramount among the creation-friendly conditions that civilizations are now charged to provide.

Therefore it would be a profound mistake for conservatives to neglect the creative arts as if they were some inessential frill in a creative civilization, in contrast with technological innovation. And it would be even a greater a mistake for the liberals to embrace the creative arts against technological innovation in some deluded Luddite frenzy.

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS

Cultural conservatives who are hostile to modernity in all its manifestations can contribute less to the discussion than the Renaissance Conservatives. The creative arts deserve conservative support, especially as they celebrate beauty, life and human freedom in the context of the love of beauty and the celebration of life. There will never be a time when humanity can survive for long (let alone thrive) without robust creative communities working (and playing⁵) in an atmosphere of productive, life affirming freedom. This lesson and its implications should be, but are not yet obvious – this, in spite of the huge benefits human creative accomplishments have brought us in the last 1,000 years.

In contrast with our ancient and medieval ancestors, those of us who live in the developed areas of the world enjoy clean hot and cold running water, the benefits of heating, air conditioning and refrigeration, the pleasure of rapid communication with friends and strangers across the world, and the ability to listen to – even witness - concerts and performances that were once exclusive fare of royalty and the very, very wealthy.

Many of us moderns complain about “quality of life” issues, but in very significant ways, the day-to-day lives of former peasants and serfs are more luxurious on a practical level than their former lords, kings and queens.

A telling feature of the modern creative efflorescence is that former “commoners” have entered the game as creative geniuses. As the autodidact longshoremen philosopher Eric Hoffer put it, “The common people are lumpy with talent.”

The Beatles of Liverpool would have been minor minstrels at best in 11th century England. Albert Einstein might not have survived at all, let alone have enjoyed the benefits of a proper education in the Germany of the 13th century. Part of the modern creative efflorescence is the emergence of zones of protected freedom. Had Albert Einstein remained in the Germany of 1937, he would have been incinerated.

⁵ There is a fascinating body of information that links playful activity to creative achievement. It seems that recreation and creation are joined at the hip. Eric Hoffer has pointed out that the first working model of a steam engine was a toy for Roman children ignored by their bureaucratic elders.

It is no accident that, whenever authoritarian regimes seize power, the most creative members of the captive civilization attempt to leave. Nor is it just by chance that the truly free societies of the world are the ones that have fostered the efflorescence of creative energy and accomplishment of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

A study of human creativity is needed and ongoing, but some lessons are clear enough right now. A great deal has been written about the history of technological innovation as a separate topic, but little if anything has been done connecting this creative efflorescence to the Renaissance periods of European history.

Leonardo Da Vinci was the emblematic crossover figure between the artistic and “practical” achievement, the classic Renaissance man, yet too many models of civilization feel free to repress some creative activities while attempting to control and exploit others. It is now clear that human creativity cannot be compartmentalized, that the conditions for it to flourish are common to all of its forms.

Our creative activities cannot be compartmentalized, in part because the conditions of creative freedom and the protection of intellectual property are the common seed conditions for all creativity, whether “artistic” or “practical”. But any attempt at compartmentalization fails also because the manifold areas and modalities of innovation, inspiration, and discovery that engage the human creative mind are elements of the same general process: they can take place in the same life, the same community and the same civilization. They cross fertilize each other. The impact, richness and value of creative activities in all their forms far, far exceeds the sum of the constituent elements.

The contemporary lesson that has yet to spread across the globe is this: Creative activities flourish in zones of protected freedom and liberty, particularly where the fruits of innovation – artistic and technological – are legally protected as earned property. The model of a free, independent creative civilization was a new development in human history. Foremost among these models in world history is the United States of America, the constitution of which enshrines free speech, free commerce, patent and copyright protections among the many other blessings of freedom.

I believe the survival of the human race is riding on the success of that experiment.

Creative Artists and Capitalists

It is not coincidental that the technical or so called “industrial” creative innovations since 1700 have collectively done more to improve the lot of the so-called common people than all the previous creative innovations in art and science combined. We should not forget that the epicenter of these innovations, of their inspiration, application and development, was and still is the United States of America.

Late in the 20th century, the understood scope of human creative activity was broadened to include technology. This was a key insight of the American, former soviet émigré,

novelist / philosopher, Ayn Rand⁶. It follows that any civilization that aspires to be a creative one must create and sustain a free economic system and robust protections for creative expression and free communication. In other words, there are certain moral and practical principles that make up the foundation of an explicitly *creative* civilization. Providentially, these moral and practical principles were set out in the American founding documents.

While creative activity flourishes in an intensely free society, **it withers in a bureaucratic tyrannical one**. No wonder America is the paradigm exemplar of the creative society.

Creativity's Moral Center

I am proposing here that the protection of all creative activities requires a life-affirming, liberty respecting ethos, comprehensively and robustly protected by legal system anchored in a deep respect for the underlying moral order. And to make these protections real and enduring, robust legal institutions must be dedicated to the protection of ordered liberty as enshrined in a governing constitution. As we Americans have learned, the institutions on which liberty depends include an authentic constitution that includes a concrete bill of rights, a method for their enforcement, and a robust system of checks and balances against the concentration of power.

Almost every benign creative innovation in the last two hundred years represents the happy confluence of at least four elements:

- A. Creative freedom;
- B. Protection of the creative process either via a powerful patron or a robust patent / copyright intellectual property system;
- C. Especially, from the 19th century, the operation of the risk-incentive-profit sequence;
- D. A life affirming moral order and an anchor and a guide. {I expand in this theme briefly in "*Weimar's Despair & Pixar's Rules*" below.}

The insight that a civilization should provide the foundations of law and peaceful transitions of power is incomplete. The atavistic forces that would cripple or destroy Western civilization carry a sharp lesson for us. When the Taliban took over on Afghanistan, creative people were forced to flee.

⁶ See footnote 4. The daughter of a commercial family whose property was confiscated by the Soviets, Alisa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum escaped to the USA, eventually changing her name to Ayn Rand. In her breakout novel, *The Fountainhead*, the nexus between creative freedom and intellectual property is explicit, and in *Atlas Shrugged*, the underlying links between artistic innovation, invention and commercial freedom are central to the storyline. Her philosophical writings, loosely grouped under the rubric, *Objectivism*, have been scathingly dismissed by the left as amoral. But Ms. Rand's passion for creative freedom as a *moral* imperative was a specific commitment that transcended "mere" greed and belied the parodic attempts to marginalize an original, serious ethic, sharply relevant to the modern human condition.

While the spread of an authoritarian and fanatical theocracy that animates the jihad against the West minimally meets the definition of “a civilization”, it is manifestly hostile to the full range of free human creative endeavors. This prompts us to take up the simple, but profound agenda that will transform the conduct and defense of all modern civilizations for centuries to come.

The task of furthering the expansion of creative civilizations and defending them – and their free institutions - has *from now on* become the overriding goal of the human enterprise.

Protecting the Creation-engendering Infrastructure

Creative activities flourish under conditions of protected freedom, and the creative activities that sustain civilization are not limited to the creative arts but include commerce, exploration and technology. Capitalism, in the form of free commerce, restrained only by reasonable, impartial laws designed to protect honest transactions and public health and safety, is the necessary ally of creative freedom in all its other manifestations, and vice-versa. Recent developments in information technology have blurred the interface between copyright and patent, content and delivery system, and in the same way information technology has fully bridged the gap between “mere” technological invention and art.

Electronically recorded and transmitted music and images, increasingly available and at decreasing unit cost, have made music from Beethoven to Beyonce, drama from Shakespeare to the Matrix, available on a hand held device almost anywhere on the planet earth 24/7/365.

Censorship has become more difficult at the same time that intellectual piracy and the glut of raw talent clamoring for attention have made individual creative endeavors less profitable for the individual aspiring artist.

But the information technology explosion has generated a parallel explosion in the creative arts. Tracking the constantly expanding numbers of movie and television productions during the 20th century is like tracking the first nanosecond of the Big Bang or the first second of a nuclear explosion. Notice the blurring between creative content and the technologies and modalities of expression and communication; and note that patent, copyright and trademark protections are necessarily interwoven.

Notice, as well, the exponential increase in the synergies of creative forms, music, words, shapes, narratives, such that a given work cannot be reduced to any one discipline or art.

Never before in human history has so much of the entire creative output of the human race been so readily and instantly available to so many people at such low cost. And note also, the modern sense of threat felt by certain authoritarian regimes as measured by their attempts to control and restrain creativity except as it directly serves the needs of their own power brokers.

They cannot be allowed to prevail.

To survive and flourish over time, a civilization must provide robust, proactive protection for all peaceful creative activities – and the special conditions of freedom in which the human creative enterprise flourishes. In this new paradigm, creative activities (and the concomitant freedom of expression and communication) are to be defined very broadly, including but not limited to the free exchange of political ideas, art forms, cultural, spiritual and esthetic creative products, technological innovations, and human exploration of the cosmos.

As to all of these creative expressions of our humanity, the protection of intellectual property and robust firewalls against censorship are paramount among the creation-friendly conditions that civilizations are now charged to provide.

The universal goal of purposively fostering creative civilizations means that the idea of American Exceptionalism is not jingoism, but the epicenter of an uncompleted world revolution.

CONSERVATIVE VALUES & THE HUMAN CREATIVE ENTERPRISE

Modern conservatives are the political world's most reliable friends of personal safety and liberty. They are the architects the conditions and institutions that hold up human freedom and liberty, the very soil of all human creative activities. Conservatives were the first to extol and advance the virtues of human technological creativity as a vital strand of the human creative enterprise. In this new era they are the friends and allies of human creative activity everywhere it is repressed.

Beyond that, conservatives almost uniquely understand the critical role of *boundaries* as part of the creative support system. Boundaries are as essential the creative enterprise as cell walls are to biological function. From the moral and legal boundaries that make creative civilization stable and capable of self-defense, to the deep understanding of moral limits that will enable us to survive our own terrifying inventions, the conservative instinct to protect essential boundaries is part of the creation support system.

Conservative communities need to be in fruitful liaison with the creative arts communities. The creative arts, in their highest forms, operate to challenge trivial boundaries, but illuminate our essential ones. This essay is not the place to go much farther with this, so I conclude with three takeaway points:

- (1) Because conservatives are natural defenders of freedom, they (we) understand at the gut level that art should not ever be harnessed to any political agenda or religious institution.
- (2) All art is worthy of strong conservative support (and the individual patronage of conservatives) when it celebrates life and freedom;

(3) Artists were the original entrepreneurs.

The current century has begun to expose more clearly than ever before that there are striking differences among competing civilizations based on the degree to which each protects, supports and/or promotes its inner creative functions. We should never forget that when authoritarian regimes assume power, the creative types flee, many to America. Recall the fleeing artists from the former Soviet Union. Notice the contemporary anti-creative tendencies in authoritarian mainland China and the theocracy in Iran. Examine the politically correct soft censorship in left-dominated universities on our own soil. The battle for creative civilization has just begun

While some civilizations promote freedom as a general good, and others promote certain arts as a national goal, little conscious, intentional value has been assigned to the task of protecting and fostering creativity within a civilization as one of its primary *raison d'être*.

That must change.

Instances of creative efflorescence in the past have been driven by unusual circumstances, as in very local zones of protection and patronage –think of ancient Athens where slaves allowed the leisure for the creative class, and Renaissance Florence where creative artists flourished under the protection and patronage of the Medici family.

For most of our history, the elites tended to think of the whole notion of human creative activity as something confined to the fine arts. But the creative cyber-explosion of the 20th Century is changing our understanding. Creativity includes more than paintings, sculpture, literature and music. The creative stepchildren are innovations in technology, commerce, and social organization. I am persuaded that the new creative civilization paradigm will broadly integrate all aspects of human creativity, including exploration and all of the attendant support activities.

And I also must note that there has been a profound disconnection between human creative activities and the field of morality and ethics, such that – especially in religious traditions –notion of “good” and “holy” were confined to worship and interpersonal altruism, while the labor and sacrifice of someone in the throes of creative inspiration tended to be marginalized as self indulgent egoism. I believe that this balkanization of human value systems will break down in the current century, as the inherent value of explicitly creative civilizations takes hold.

I should add that the creative civilization paradigm fully answers the moralist critique of libertarianism as mere libertine indulgence. In a creative civilization there is a vital, overriding interest in liberty: it is the very soil of all human creative activities.

THE AMERICAN RECOVERY PROJECT

Any conservative recovery that fails to be robust and coherent, fails period. A successful conservative recovery in the current left-leaning environment will necessarily be organized around the real life concerns that transcend popular ideological stereotypes.

Ultimate political success depends on the ability of conservatives at every level to find, sell and implement good solutions, the very efficacy of which will serve to expose the dysfunctional approaches of the current crop of illiberal-liberals.

Renaissance conservatism, as I have described it here, immediately overcomes the conservative reputation for status quo thinking. This will swiftly become the one conservative brand that trusted to effectively and creatively solve the problems that liberalism typically neglects to actually address – as opposed to merely posturing about them. As it happens, these are the primary problems facing America in its current malaise after years of ineffectual liberal tinkering, irresolution, failed experimentation, and dismal results.

Any short list of our biggest problems will include these six areas:

- ▶ ...The almost Sisyphean task of transforming the US economy into a robust investment-production model, replacing the failed debt-consumption model...
- ▶ ...The looming energy insufficiency...
- ▶ ...The prospect of food supply shortages (already foreshadowed by rising prices)...
- ▶ ...The stifling of creative thinking through the political and cultural censorship called political correctness, media group-think, and the smothering of the arts via bureaucratic subsidies and political expectations...
- ▶ ...The growing toxicity of post modern relativism: -which has given rise to deteriorating family relationships, cultural baseness, educational failure and growing moral illiteracy. All of these malign developments are the consequences of moral boundary decay.

A confident and forward conservative program will: replace the acceptance of scarcity with the pursuit of abundance; trump ineffectual gestures with creative accomplishments, unmask the politics of posture; strengthen our firewalls against predators, corruption, and disease; and secure family life from the forces, economic and cultural, that threaten to dissolve it.

Here are the watch words of the recovery:

- **Radical fiscal reform**, a three pronged attack on the bureaucratic/political load on commerce, the unlimited entitlement load on government resources and the

unsupportable sovereign debt load on the US public and private economic systems;

- **Energy Abundance**, trumping an energy-starved economy and hostage oil;
- **Food Abundance**, driving internal prosperity and better exports;
- **A Creative Surge**, restoring America’s cultural and innovative primacy;
- **Healthy Boundaries**, promoting public safety, family ties, and honesty/integrity in public and private life.

The political liberals who dominate the democratic and green parties, the media and the academy will eventually be seen (even by traditional liberals) as a small, deranged minority that achieved undue influence because no one challenged their narrative with enough coherence, consistency and force. The time has come to expose the naked emperors. Creative civilization is the *almost self-evident* wave of the future.

The Renaissance Conservative movement is poised attract the participation of competent, forward-looking conservative leaders with strong communication skills, attracting leaders because it is the wave of the future. Exceptional leaders are needed at every level, respected and charismatic men and women who are comfortable explaining creative conservative principles and programs in a way that educates the larger public as it drives policy. Conservatives with a renaissance mindset are needed in both parties, in the academy and the media. Empowered by a motivated belief in the future, they can do what no conservative movement before have ever accomplished: move opinion.

The overall goal is to effect a return to the Dialogic Period in each of the three power centers currently dominated by the left- the academy, the media (new & old) and the power brokers of government.

An America imbued with fresh self-confidence and purpose is an America deeply renewed. America’s renaissance conservatives of both parties are called to lead the way. The former liberals and conservatives are welcome to follow.

Overcoming the Suffocation Effect ***Mindless Bureaucracy as the Enemy of Creativity***

The term, “mindless bureaucracy”, is redundant. Bureaucracy **is** the hierarchical mechanization of human relations. Bureaucrats are a necessary annoyance when their role is confined to its proper scope, the routine, efficient administration of mundane, repetitive approval processes. But bureaucrats become an unnecessary evil when they are empowered to become the primary means of social control.

Here are some of the early lessons:

- The bureaucratic, egalitarian state is incompatible with healthy, ongoing creativity. The creative mind, by its very nature, abhors bureaucracy, disturbs

sameness by introducing novelty -- and creative achievements are inherently unequal.

- Corporate bureaucracies can interfere with creativity in much the same way as governments can, but the condition is correctible when competitive forces from non-bureaucratic enterprises emerge, provided that the marketplace is kept sufficiently free.
- An overarching, life-affirming moral ethos supporting core moral boundaries is essential to the long term survival of the “creative engine”. Weimar’s despair is a caution (see below).
- Individual creative communities thrive in a setting that provides order, rules and constraints that give syntax and continuity to creative evolution. Pixar’s rules (see below) are instructive.
- All creative activity - as distinguished from chaos – is conservative in the sense that novelty is the unexpected realignment of existing elements, following established organic patterns. The enduring fruits of creativity always represent new order that is intelligible by the old, but nevertheless was unexpected, novel and surprising until after the fact.

By its very nature, the creative engine cannot be directed down the expected and predictable path without killing it. This is a good thing because the really dangerous challenges that we will face in this century and those that follow will be the least expected ones, the kind that will require an extraordinary capacity for creative adaptation.⁷

Weimar’s Despair & Pixar’s Rules

Creative accomplishment requires boundaries without oppression. Mozart was an exuberant innovator but worked within the musical syntax and language that was developed by Bach and Hayden. Beethoven was a revolutionary who took that language and syntax a step farther into new, romantic-heroic territory.

⁷ I find David Brooks on the same page. In the New York Times, he wrote, “The new sort of competition is all about charisma. It’s about gathering talent ... because people are most creative when they collaborate face to face). This concentration of talent then attracts more talent, which creates more collaboration, which multiplies everybody’s skills, which attracts more talent and so on. The nation with the most diverse creative hot spots will dominate the century.” And he points out the function of the patron, business or government is to facilitate, not dominate. “So it is with government in an innovation economy. Entrepreneurs, corporate executives, line workers and store managers handle the substance of the economy. Government tries to nurture settings where brilliance can happen.” David Brooks, “The Talent Magnet”, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/25/opinion/25brooks.html?_r=1&ref=opinion .

The PIXAR animation studios have created vivid, engaging fantasy works with enduring value, among them the *Toy Story* features, *Ratatouille*, *Nemo*, *UP*, *Monster's Inc.*, *Carz* and *Wall*E*. Wide creative latitude is accompanied by plausibility rules that govern the created world. The toys of *Toy Story*, for example could not teleport, change size, or exert superpowers. In the presence of children and adults they fell and remained inert.

“The core separation into world, character and story is a good example of our most fundamental decomposition. Experts in environments can concentrate on discovering the rules of the world. Character specialists can make believable actors from bugs or lamps or toys. Storytellers can concentrate on what happens and why. Each process informs the other, inspiring a new environment with a story point or a different way to see a character against a fresh background.”

From UC Berkeley explanatory essay released by PIXAR

“[W]e try to stay as true as you can because there’s a certain veracity, you know, you get stable when you create a set of rules for the character and for the environment, it stabilizes the viewer and helps them experience the world in a much better way. You can lose yourself in the story much better if the rules are consistent, you don’t have to think about them anymore. We all know that when we watch films, rules are all over the map or it’s inconsistent, the continuity doesn’t make sense, you start thinking about it.”

Interview with PIXAR producer Darla Anderson

Structure and a common language of collaboration are evidently essential. But what are the special conditions that foster *constructive* creative activity? There is a need for an underlying moral context.

There was a burst of creative energy in the Weimar Republic of Germany, 1919-1933, ending with Hitler's ascent to power. The Weimar Republic was born during the crippling reparations following Germany’s crushing defeat in WW I, and under pressure from left and right, it experienced a burst of cultural energy characterized by a mood of bleakness and failure (often described as “modernism”), manifested in the literature of geniuses like Brecht and Mann and the atonal music of Berg and Schoenberg.

This bleak ethos found political expression the theories of the so called Critical Theorists of the Marxist Frankfurt School. One prominent thread in the Weimar cultural mix was a Marxist-inspired attack on traditional beauty; the beauty “worship” of romanticism was portrayed as part of the ideology of capitalism (much as religion was denounced as the “opiate of the people”. One sympathetic writer described the role of “modern” music as a “message of despair”. The Weimar cultural period, whatever its incidental value to world culture, contained a dominant anti-life ethos that ultimately crippled the very creative process itself, marking the beginning of popular alienation from the “elite arts.”

The failure to honor moral boundaries and the concomitant undermining of life affirmation within the creative community of Weimar, undermined the commitment to creative freedom, and led directly to the loss of all freedom in the Hitlerian nightmare.

China and the State Capitalism Fad

No full-on free-market capitalism has ever really been allowed to operate for long by the governments within which such markets operate, even though full-on laissez-faire conditions are not necessary, just a robust legal system that protects contracts, polices fraud and ensures reasonable safety and accountability.

“State capitalism” is the buzzword of the day, although it is nothing new on the planet. The mercantilism of the British Empire operated in the service of the Crown, exclusive franchises, i.e., monopolies, were the order of the day.⁸

China’s blowtorch economy is an artificial construct - a hell-bent effort to create a production-based economy capable of employing a half-billion displaced rural workers by flooding the world with underpriced goods. Starting from a base near zero, China’s GDP numbers are artificially large. But, within the booming Shanghai region, a bubble of comparative commercial freedom has been tolerated by nervous post-Marxist communist apparatchiks, while every other outbreak of creative activity is stamped out with ruthless, bureaucratic zeal.

As one Chinese business leader put it, “You have to understand that business is the only creative outlet permitted in my country.”

I am cautiously optimistic about the Chinese prospects for a peaceful, internal reformation particularly after 2012. Every knowledgeable adult in China remembers not only Tiananmen Square 1989, but they vividly recall the image of that towering white statue, holding a torch, “The Goddess of Democracy”.

Like Voldemort in Harry Potter, one does not publicly talk of these things inside mainland China, let alone name them. But that same Lady still stands on Liberty Island against the backdrop of Manhattan. She and the American example are universals.

STARTING THE RE-CON SURGE

Renaissance Conservatives (and their principled entrepreneurial liberal colleagues) are linked by personal predisposition and a common ethos to **all** of the creative ventures of humanity, particular those that celebrate human life, beauty and creation itself and the

⁸ For a discussion of mercantilism as a general theory, see < <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Mercantilism.html> >. As mercantilism affected the colonies, see < <http://www.landandfreedom.org/ushistory/us3.htm> >. The policies of mercantilism were opposed by Adam Smith and John Locke, among others, but they reappeared under Germany’s National Socialism.

technologies that make it all possible. The common task is to link this ethos to the larger agenda of forming, fostering and protecting a creative civilization, to all of its creative features, technological, spiritual and artistic, and to demonstrate in all its forms, and to join our rhetoric, actual behavior and policies, such that they are deeply linked to this end.

Here is the message: All benign human creative activity transcends party, politics and ideology. And bless the rebellious, anti-conventional members of our creative subcultures. Pierced body parts and purple hair included, **they are our allies** ... even if they don't yet "get it." The hallmark themes of Renaissance Conservatism are life affirmation⁹, freedom affirmation and the celebration and support of creative activities in all spheres (artistic, commercial, scientific and exploration), all of which are seen as part of an indivisible moral and practical imperative.

Re-Cons love creative freedom and its fruits so much that they respect the dangers of government meddling, even the well intentioned meddling of government subsidies and grants. They understand that the selective bureaucratic promotion of some creative activities over others is subtle censorship. Re-Cons support free, untrammelled patronage of creative pursuits, encouraged but not controlled by the state. Creative activities thrive where bureaucratic power and an ethos of sameness are on the defense. The affirmation of heroic achievement and the celebration of our **non**-equalities are essential components of any truly creative society.

A litmus test here is the support of the charitable tax deduction for educational and creative endeavors.

Today, the USA hesitates at a crossroads, facing a fiscal crisis that masks an even deeper moral one. The choices are between competing versions of America, and our own personal futures.

The steps we take now will represent a choice of goals and outcomes: "Live long and prosper!" ...Or... "Don't live too long or prosper too much."

Where do you want to be? What are you willing to do? When are you willing to do it?

As Hillel the Elder said, **"If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"**

⁹ Setting aside the legal and theological discussions of early pregnancy issues, Renaissance Conservatives support a culture of strong life-affirmation, rejecting the notion that any creative civilization can long endure when involuntary euthanasia – in whatever form or guise – is promoted or encouraged.

WHO AMONG US?

Which men and women, among living conservative public figures, best fit the emerging Renaissance Conservative profile? Add your picks, please...

Clint Eastwood (1930-)¹⁰

Norman Podhoretz (1930-)¹¹

Camille Anna Paglia (1947-)¹²

Victor Davis Hanson (1953-)¹³

Condoleezza Rice (1954 -)¹⁴

Gary Sinise (1955-)¹⁵

Mark Steyn (1959 -)¹⁶

David Brooks (1961-)¹⁷

John Podhoretz (1961 -)¹⁸

Claire Berlinski (1968 -)¹⁹

¹⁰ An actor whose true genius became increasingly evident in his later films as a director, musician-composer; Eastwood was a mayor, a patriotic social liberal whose deeper conservatism leads to a mixed, thoughtful world view.

¹¹ A converted leftist intellectual, the patron of the dreaded “neo-cons”, in other works a free- thinking, conservative with deep credentials, much, much brighter than the typical leftist “smarter-than-you” type.

¹² While not easily categorized, Paglia is that rare combination of social liberalism, leavened by a touch of moral conservatism; she is a libertarian member of the literati, someone with great personal authenticity.

¹³ Farmer, classicist, military historian, Hoover Scholar, a thoughtful conservative columnist and author, an intellectual with roots in the common experience, a writer and thinker with a larger world view and deeper historical perspective than the surrounding commentariat.

¹⁴ As a Hoover Scholar, Secretary of State, concert-class pianist, Dr. Rice fits the Re-Con profile perfectly.

¹⁵ A highly creative conservative - an accomplished actor, director and musician, a patriot who devotes every spare moment to visit and entertain US troops in combat zones and hospitals, a quiet Re-Con.

¹⁶ Steyn is brilliant, funny critic of the excesses of liberalism, a Canadian who fully appreciates American exceptionalism, an intelligent advocate of core conservative principles, and who sees them on the larger stage of a civilization in trouble. A great Re-Con model..

¹⁷ Brooks occupies the thoughtful liberal wing of the renaissance conservative spectrum but, at core, he respects and honors creativity and the conservative values that sustain it. He belongs in the Re-Con camp.

¹⁸ Like his father, Norman P., John is an intellectual conservative with a wide and lively interest in the culture, the arts and the condition of civilization, in other words, a Re-Con-leader-in-the-making.

¹⁹ Dr. Berlinski (international relations, Oxford) is a courageous American writer living in Turkey. See the Manhattan Institute profile < <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/berlinski.htm>>. A closet Re-Con embedded in a hostile, atavistic milieu.

THE
APPENDIX

POINTS OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

Over the span of pre-modern human history, the creative nodes within the human experience stand out like brightly lit cities on the dark side of the earth as seen from space. We think of Florentine Italy, the efflorescence of science in Ninth Century Islam, the many sparks in Western Europe and England. But as we approach the modern era, among the sparks and bursts we see a creative blaze forming on North America.

Beginning in the mid 1800's, the face of America would appear on our imaginary dark-side-of-earth map as a series of brilliant flares, completely unprecedented in their scope and intensity. The flames of innovation and creative energy in the USA soon became a firestorm.

The following summary illustrates the scope and magnitude of human creative progress from Greeks to geeks, 500 BCE to the present day. Many of my references and some avenues for further research are listed in the footnote below.²⁰ The overall takeaway point here is that, when seen from a sufficient remove, the arc of human material and moral progress is clearly evident – all reversals and stalls accounted for, and that this progressive trend has been driven by free human creativity, not the authoritarian grip of history's potentates and dictators.

The FIRST SPARK: Athens 500-300 BCE

Starting with geniuses named Aristotle, Plato, Archimedes and Pythagoras, and others – all were figures dismissed by the postmodern cultural left as “dead white men”, an astounding efflorescence of logic, history and the arts flourished in ancient Greece.

Even 21st century readers are occasionally startled by the modernity of some of these creative achievements, compared with the many dreary subsequent eras. The seminal efflorescence of creative and exploratory thought in ancient Greece was made possible by

²⁰ There are a number of sources for the various parts of this section, including a Wikipedia article on the chronology of technological inventions. There are many avenues for further research, among the most valuable: *The Lever of Riches*, by Joel Mokyr, Oxford 1990; *Structures of Change in the Mechanical Age: Technological Innovation in the United States, 1790—1865*, by Ross Thompson, John Hopkins 2009; *Technological innovation as an Evolutionary Process*, John Ziman, Ed., Cambridge University Press 2000; *The Timetables of Technology: A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in the History of Technology*, by Brian H Bunch & Alexander Hellemans, Simon and Schuster 1993; *An Encyclopedia of the History of Technology*, Ian McNeil, Ed. 1990, 1996 Routledge; and *Fortune is a River, Leonardo Da Vinci and Niccolo Machiavelli's Magnificent Dream to Change the Course of Florentine History* by Roger Masters, Penguin 1998, 1999.

conditions of peace, leisure and a culture of free and lively discourse, taking mostly within a protected “creative zone”, sometimes during wars. The classical period left the world a seed legacy of unequaled and incalculable value.

The Long Darkness

Flash forward to post-Roman Imperial Europe. All human memory of that Greco-Roman cultural and creative outpouring was reduced to a precious few ancient Greek texts that resided mostly in a handful of monasteries after the economic, cultural, political and military disintegration of the Western Roman Empire. Europe slipped into that prolonged cultural amnesia we call the Dark Ages.

The Islamic World’s Efflorescence 750–1250 CE

During Europe’s later Dark Ages, Cordoba, capital of Islamic Spain, was the leading knowledge center for Europe. In the 800’s, the library of the monastery of St. Gall, the largest in Continental Europe, held only about **36** volumes. But Cordoba’s library contained a half million. During this remarkable time of Arab creative efflorescence, intellectual developments like the number zero, the decimal system and basic algebra emerged; they later would form the foundation for the scientific revolution.

I note particular admiration the work of Al-Khwarizmi (Algorismus) after whom the algorithm was named. Muslims not only passed on Greek classical works but also introduced new scientific theories, including the theory of the pendulum, the basis for measuring time.

The European Renaissance 1100-1650 CE

Europe’s first Renaissance began with the recovery of the writings from the Greek creative period partly facilitated by the contemporary Irish monks (See Cahill’s “How the Irish Saved Civilization”) and partly as a result of the contributions by the Muslim scholars and their Spanish connection. In the 12th century in Europe, all scholars agree that a dramatic surge in inventions and innovations took place. More useful innovations directly affecting day-to-day life emerged than in the preceding thousand years. I note especially advances in printing, spectacles, time keeping, and navigation. Great ships were built and the Age of Exploration began.

Europe’s second renaissance started in Italy, particularly in Florence (think of the Medici family’s protection and patronage, and of geniuses like Leonardo and Michelangelo). The creative surge began in the 1300’s and ran at least until the 1600’s.

The Anglo-Euro-Japanese-American Techno-Renaissance 1700-2000

But the greatest economic and technological progress in all human history was concentrated in a 110 year period starting about 1890. During this period the US moved from agrarian irrelevance to the most powerful industrial nation in world history

generated a third of the industrial output for the whole planet. The intellectual seeds of this explosion were planted in the 18th century.

Among the innovations of the **1700's** were:

The Steam Piston Engine, The Mercury Thermometer, Iron Smelting, The Franklin Stove, The Lightning Rod, The Steam Car, The Steamboat, The Circular Saw, The Hot Air Balloon, Bifocals, The Automatic Flour Mill, The Threshing Machine, Artificial Teeth, Vaccination ...

Note the acceleration in the: **1800s**:

The Locomotive, The Submarine, The Screw Propeller Steamboat, The Steam Locomotive, The Gas Stove, The Band Saw, The Arc Lamp, The Miner's Safety Lamp, The Stirling Engine, The Stethoscope, The Bicycle, The Electric Motor, Portland Cement, Photography, The Internal Combustion Engine, The Friction Match, The Thermostat, The Magnetic Acoustic Telegraph, The Reaper, The Electrical Generator, The Braille System, The Refrigerator, The Combine Harvester, The Incandescent Light Bulb, The Sewing Machine, The Electric Printing Press, The Steel Plow, The Magnetic Telegraph, The Electric Telegraph, The Closed Diving Suit, rubber Vulcanization, Artificial Fertilizer, Anesthesia, The Typewriter, The Fax Machine, The Ice Cream Maker, The Pile Driver, The Safety Match, The Pneumatic Tire, The Sewing Machine, the Rotary Printing Press, The Safety Pin, The Telephone, The Passenger Elevator, Gyroscope, Bunsen Burner, Celluloid, Undersea Telegraph Cable, Oil Drill, Lead Acid Battery, Light Bulb, Linoleum, Pasteurization, Player Piano, Roller Coaster, Barbed Wire, Dynamite, Vacuum Cleaner, Cable Car, D C Electric Motor, Electric Street Car, Gasoline Carburetor, Loudspeaker, Stapler, Induction Motor, Phonograph, Microphone, Cathode Ray Tube, Cash Register, Roll Film, Safety Razor, Seismograph, Metal Detector, Electric Fan, Blowtorch, A C Electric Motor, Automobile, Motorcycle, A C Transformer, Gasoline Engine, Contact Lens, Gramophone, Ceiling Fan, AC Electric Power System, Kodak Camera, Ballpoint Pen, Harvester-Thresher, Escalator, Zipper, Adjustable Wrench, Photography, Telephone-Exchange, Carburetor, Tuned Wireless Communication, Radio Transmission, Milking Machine, Diesel Engine, Radiotelegraph, Remote Control, Car Self-Starter, Magnetic Tape Recorder, Gas Turbine...

Now take in a partial overview of the really **big explosion** in the 20th Century:

The Neon Lamp, Rayon, Electrocardiograph, Powered, Controlled Airplane, Tractor, Radio Tube Diode, **Sonar, Helicopter**, Washing Machine, Cellophane, Geiger Counter, Gyrocompass, Neon Lighting, Hydroplane, Parachute, **Radio Receiver**, Stainless Steel, **X-Ray, Liquid Fuel Rocket**, Tungsten Filament, Pyrex, **Sonar** Echolocation, Cruise Missile, Radio Crystal Oscillator, Polygraph, **Radar, Sound Film, Television**, Wind Tunnel, Xenon Flash Lamp, Aerosol Spray, Cotton Picker, Sliced Bread, Electric Dry Shaver, **Antibiotics, Electroencephalograph, Band Aid, Synthetic Insulin**, Mechanical Potato Peeler, Rigid Dirigible Airship, Microwave Optics, Disposable Razor Blade, Vacuum Cleaner, **Air Conditioner**, Radio Telescope, Nylon, Turboprop Engine, **Jet**

Engine, Ballpoint Pen, Xerography, Fiberglass, View-Master, **Computer**, Velcro, Nuclear Reactor, Undersea Oil Pipeline, Aqua-Lung, Electron Spectrometer, Slinky, **Microwave Oven**, **Atomic Weapons**, **Mobile Telephone Service**, Bikini, **Transistor**, Polaroid Camera, Long Playing Record, **Holography**, Atomic Clocks, **Credit Card**, **Oral Contraceptive**, Nuclear Power Reactor, **Floppy Disk**, **Optical Fiber**, **H Bomb**, Hovercraft, Medical **Ultrasound**, Radar Gun, Geodesic Dome, **Hard Drive**, **Video Phone**, Videocassette Recorder, Jet Boat, **Integrated Circuit Chip**, **Communications Satellite**, Pacemaker, **Laser**, **Optical Disc**, Cochlear Implant, **Human Spaceflight**, Light-Emitting Diode, Space Observatory, Computer Mouse, Space Dock, AT M, Hypertext, **Video Game Console**, Packet Switching, ARPANET, Relational Database, **Space Station**, **E-Mail**, **Liquid Crystal Display**, **Microprocessor**, Pocket Calculator, MRI machine, **Ethernet**, **Personal Computer**, Microcredit, **Microfinance**, Gas-Electric Hybrid Vehicle, **DNA Sequencing**, **Digital Camera**, Gore-Tex, Personal Stereo, **Mobile Phone**, Spreadsheet, **Compact Disc**, Scanning Tunneling Microscope, Artificial Heart, **Internet**, Lithotripsy, Polymerase Chain Reaction, **DNA Fingerprinting**, Statin Cholesterol Drug, Digital Light Processing, **World Wide Web**, Global **Positioning System**, **LED**, **Non-Mechanical Digital Audio Player**.

And so it continues...

THE CREATIVE INFORMATION EXPLOSION: 1900-Present Day

Marshal McLuhan (1911-1980) is forever known for a single aphorism, “The medium is the message”. Less well known is the fact that he was a converted Roman Catholic and the “patron saint” of WIRED magazine.

A renaissance conservative needs to be aware of McLuhan’s insights on more than a superficial level.

Consider that in McLuhan’s conception all of the new communication technologies (think print technology, then the new media) profoundly affect the way we think, act and understand the world.

McLuhan has persuasively argued that print communication technologies created the modern Western world. The print culture was inherently individualistic, leading to democracy and capitalism. In the 1960’s, he predicted that profound social changes would result as we entered the era of “electronic interdependence”. The new communication and information transfer technologies would de-emphasize reading in favor of graphics and sound, causing the culture to migrate from fragmented individualism to a “tribal base”, the so-called “global village.”

We might now detect a return to individuation as a result of the phenomenon of the individual, handheld multi-media device.

Electronically recorded and transmitted music and images, increasingly available and at decreasing unit cost, have made music from Beethoven to Beyonce, drama from

Shakespeare to the Matrix, available on a hand held device almost anywhere on the planet earth 24/7/365. Censorship has become more difficult at the same time that intellectual piracy and the glut of raw talent clamoring for attention have made individual creative endeavors less profitable for the individual aspiring artist.

But the information technology explosion has generated a parallel explosion in the creative arts. Tracking the constantly expanding numbers of movie and television productions during the 20th century is like tracking the first nanosecond of the Big Bang or the first second of a nuclear explosion.

Among the new art forms, still in their infancy (at by the development standards of pre-modern eras) are these:

- Movies, live action;
- Movies, animated;
- Movies, live action or animated with computer generated effects;
- High fidelity, surround sound;
- Light Sculpture;
- Augmented natural music (think of the amplified rock guitar and the electronic keyboard)
- Electronic music;
- Interactive “smart” sculpture;
- Stage plays or events enhanced by the forgoing;
- Video games;
- Virtual reality constructs, including fully recreated live concerts & interactive fiction....

The Expanding Creative Nodes

In the ancient and medieval worlds the centers or nodes of creative activities were so rare that they could be numbered in the handful for an entire millennium. Today, if they were illuminated all at once, a nighttime satellite picture of the world light up with their glow.

Just where are these modern creative nodes?

Consider one list of the top 25 world cities in technology – a study giving special emphasis on cyber-technology: **Boston, Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, New York, Frankfurt, San Francisco, Copenhagen, Lyon, Hamburg, Berlin, Toronto, Stuttgart, London, Munich, Milan, Stockholm, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Tokyo, Rome, Kyoto, Washington DC, Shanghai, & Düsseldorf.**

[Source: 2thinknow Innovation Cities™ Program: www.innovation-cities.com]

Robust creative arts communities are thriving in **every high-tech city in the top 25, with the exception of *Shanghai***, where the creative arts do not thrive, except as an underground avocation.²¹

Lists like this one provide a small glimpse into the pervasive and strong correlations between the creative arts and creative technological innovation. In the modern setting, they tend to thrive together. This pattern emerges even more vividly when we expand our understanding of creativity, and look closely at some of the smaller, but highly significant nodes.

For example, the Seattle metro area includes both Microsoft and its spin-offs, and a robust arts community. The San Francisco metro area includes Silicon Valley and another brilliant arts community. Little Israel, given its small population, represents a striking confluence of high-tech innovation and cultural vitality. “The World Economic Forum has designated Israel is one of the leading countries in the world in technological innovation”

LINK <http://www.ittn.org.il/news.php?cat=22&in=0>.

That connection is always multilayered. Techno-innovators prefer to live and work in culturally interesting areas. Many of the arts have strong crossover appeal. For example music, mathematics, the graphic arts and aspects of computer technology turn out to be cross-disciplinary, and their creators tend to share crossover interests.

Note that the only two *Chinese* centers that make the innovation lists are *Hong Kong*, where freedom of expression is alive, and the *Shanghai* region, where creativity is sharply channeled into business enterprises, but suppressed in other activities. Professors Sean Chen (Department of Asian Studies, Furman University) and Kirk Karwan (Department of Business & Accounting, Furman University) have collaborated in a study of “*Innovative cities in China: Lessons from Pudong New District, Zhangjiang High-tech Park and SMIC Village.*” An abstract of their study is telling:

“Although the pace of development in Chinese cities over the past decade has been unprecedented, future economic progress in China may be increasingly constrained by limitations in the social structures that serve to attract skilled labor. ...Although much of what has been seen in Shanghai and Pudong is consistent with recent theories of city innovation, central control of the CDLC leaves open the question of whether the Shanghai model is a sustainable one. In particular, the influence of multinational enterprises (MNEs) in recognizing and supporting social innovations is likely to be essential to future success in Shanghai.

²¹ “Chinese Authorities Raze an Artist’s Studio” New York Times, January 12, 2011.

“Mr. Ai’s studio was to be used as an education center and a site for artists in residence.” ... “Everything is gone,” he said. “It’s all black now. They finished the job at 9 o’clock last night.”
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/asia/13china.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=china%20artist&st=cse

“The question is whether these innovations will be allowed to continue or if they will be controlled by central authorities in a way that will derail attempts to attract the necessary high-tech human capital.”

Web link: <http://www.innovation-enterprise.com/archives/vol/10/issue/2-3/article/2627/innovative-cities-in-china-lessons-from-pudong>

RENAISSANCE CONSERVATIVE PRECURSORS

No new movement rises up unbidden and without antecedents. As Isaac Newton acknowledged in the 17th century, quoting a 12th century sage, ‘We are standing on the shoulders of giants. Here are some giants from which Renaissance Conservatism will trace its origins

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), was among the earliest thinkers to oppose the concentration of political power in a single “great leader”. Much of his rhetoric, as a Roman constitutionalist, foreshadowed the ethos of the renaissance and the American founding.

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519), history’s most prolific polymath, exemplified the broadband nature of the creative enterprise, including painting, technology and scientific exploration, all in the context of a moral framework. He was, for many, the renaissance personified.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), a scientist, artist and statesman, a renaissance man with conservative values, leavened by a relaxed social outlook.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), author of much of the American foundational literature, was an acknowledged polymath.

Edmund Burke (1729-1797), Irish lawyer, statesman, political philosopher, who supported the American Revolution, but not the French, and advocated the necessity of moral and social continuity and foundations for enduring liberty.

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis (1898-1963), British classicist, novelist, essayist, lay theologian, advocate of universal morality and natural law that support and give form to humankind’s universal desire for freedom. “Of all tyrannies a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive.”

Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), the self educated longshoreman, son of a German-Jewish immigrant family, a fierce anti-communist whose insights about the nature of mass movements are still discussed, and who frequently extolled the creative capabilities of ordinary people, “the common people are lumpy with talent.”

Ayn Rand (1905-1982), the Russian Jewish immigrant (Alisa Rosnbaum), novelist/philosopher who fiercely defended individual rights, especially as they related to creative achievement. She was among the very first 20th century intellectuals to defend capitalism and to celebrate creativity in industry and invention as well as in the arts

Robert Heinlein (1907-1988), the writer and space travel visionary whose work inspired astronauts and dreamers across the world, a conservative whose vision touched the stars.

John F Kennedy (1917-1963), the American president who lowered tax rates, started the space program and recast the Cold War against Soviet Russia as a long term struggle for liberty.

POLITICAL NOTES

ONE

THE TRIAGE IMPERATIVE

Renaissance Conservatism is about preserving, nurturing and protecting creative nodes of civilization, starting with the Mother Node, the USA. We are the mother of all modern creative civilizations, the one experiment that cannot be allowed to fail, because the American experience has captured the unique set of elements that actually works to sustain creativity in all its manifold forms. The elements include these four:

[1] A country-wide zone of broadband creative freedom, including freedom of expression, freedom in the exchange of ideas, intellectual products, goods and services in the context of a constitutional system that protects these and all the related freedoms generally;

[2] Robust protections for intellectual property and the related property rights that entitle creative individuals and enterprises to the fruits of their work;

[3] A consensus moral foundation for the foregoing - a common moral system that not only justifies freedom and creative accomplishments, but puts these values in a still larger, life affirming context sufficient to distinguish the use of creative gifts for good purposes from their employment and exploitation by evil ideologies, evil purposes and the malign systems of thought that are in a death struggle against creative civilizations everywhere;

[4] A stable legal, constitutional governing structure founded and anchored in the constitution, the founding documents, the enduring traditions, such that this structure is coherent with the reinforcing moral foundation.

As general as these points may sound, they go a huge distance towards producing specific policies within an overall unifying paradigm among all thinking conservatives. Here are some of the immediate implications:

Robust, tough-minded, guilt-free national security policies: The preservation of America as a secure, strong and admirable beacon of liberty and freedom to the world is a practical and a moral priority. The USA is to be defended with vigor, using force and intelligence against all threats. The USA is to seek and support allies that are also aligned as

freedom-friendly, creative societies and Americans are to recognize the common threats posed by the various totalitarian/authoritarian ideologies and movements, whether scientific (in the Nazi/Marxist sense) or post modern or atavistic (in the jihad sense).

Free market, fiscally sound, pro-growth economic policies: Top down, bureaucratic states not only strangle economic growth, they tend to suffocate creative innovation in all its forms. It is no coincidence that, when repressive regimes assume power, the most creative try to escape, often to America, always to a less repressive, more ‘creative-friendly’ polity. Increased prosperity, “surplus” wealth and time have always fostered human creative activities whether during the Medici Renaissance or the creative hotbed of Silicon Valley. Therefore Renaissance Conservatives endorse the mythical salutation from that iconic, optimistic series, Star Trek, “Live long and prosper!” The tepid admonitions of the minders of the left would say, “Don’t live too long or prosper too much.”

Federalism and local control is appropriate for most other issues, subject to the prudent, “procedural populism” rule. With few exceptions, social issues should be left to the people on a local level, as close to the popular sentiment as feasible; they are to be resolved locally without the interference or control of non-elected bureaucrats and jurists. Suppose, for example, that a stable majority of voters in a given jurisdiction are opposed or in favor of granting or withholding the title marriage for a domestic partnership between same gender couples. It is inappropriate for a court or administrative agency to decree otherwise. Some matters are best left to gradual and authentic social evolution, not social engineering, whether by administrative agencies or jurists.

In the current crisis, we face the dire prospect of a fiscal collapse, leading to punitive taxes, rampant inflation, or both, all while the POTUS is unable or unwilling to entertain alternatives designed to reign in excessive government spending, to preserve the private economy and unleash creative progress.

We are suffering from a self-inflicted energy shortage, threatening a world-wide food shortage and worse, while the ideologues-in-charge are unable or unwilling to entertain the readily available realistic alternatives to scarcity.

We are embroiled in a long conflict with atavistic forces seeking the destruction of Western civilization- these forces covertly allied with our “former” enemies and false friends. Yet our Commander in Chief seems bent on snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Under current leadership we substitute ambivalence and incoherence for a clear-eyed assertion of American interests, while following half-hearted military engagements with dangerously severe funding cuts and dangerously premature withdrawals.

Triage allows no room for time, energy and political capital to be squandered on minor local disputes, as passionately as the combatants tend to regard many of the social issues.

There is a principled accommodation. It is this: Renaissance Conservatives support *authentic* local control on these issues, whether they and we, as individuals, might agree

or disagree on the merits. But Re-Cons remain strong and reliable allies of those who are suffering from the manipulation of the democratic process to accomplish social engineering in opposition to the popular will. We are well past slavery and the civil war. The social issues of the moment need not and should not be national causes that seek to use federal or other jurisprudential tools to quell the popular will, wither the issue is the death penalty, marriage or pre-abortion counseling.

TWO

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Once upon a time, I was a libertarian. Libertarianism is the halfway house between right and left. Its social laissez faire policies, tendencies towards isolationism and neo-pacifism appeal to disenchanted liberals moving to away from leftist neo-Marxism.

These same features appeal to conservatives moving away from rightist neo-fundamentalism.

Like its mirror image twin, socialism, libertarianism is constructed on a single ethical principle, the primacy of individual choice, in effect exalting personal autonomy over all conflicting principles. Socialism is based on the primacy of welfare over all conflicting principles, in effect elevating the collective pursuit of equality over all conflicting principles.

Yet libertarian thought fails to answer the core question - “Why personal freedom?” Socialist thought fails to answer the core question - “Why impersonal equality?”

By giving prominent moral status to life-affirming human creativity in all its manifestations we resolve these apparent conflicts, and supply the larger moral context: Human creative activities are a primary good when they support human life and the conditions for further human creative activities. The implications of a creative moral imperative are clear: Freedom is necessary for our creative accomplishments, which in turn flourish under circumstances in which the “unequal” results of successful creativity are widely honored and respected. The entire human enterprise, writ large, is built on exchange processes that include but are hardly limited to those of traditional commercial capitalism. It is bright line clear to me that life-affirming creativity is an indivisible good, embracing exploration, artistic, commercial and technological creative innovation, without which we humans would still be living the bleak lives described by Thomas Hobbes as “nasty, brutish and short.” And it is equally bright line clear to me that the special conditions for creative activities to flourish, to wit -- a sound, freedom-affirming moral framework, and the broadband protection-in-fact of all creative freedoms (artistic, technological, commercial, the exchange of goods and services and the protection of property, creative and otherwise), cannot be limited. This meant that freedoms are not to be compartmentalized or limited to some political notion of appropriate or favored activity while other less “worthy” endeavors are discouraged or prohibited.

As a result of this line of thinking – and my take on the state of the country and the world – I’ve evolved into a pan-partisan conservative, a life affirming social-libertarian, a fiscal and foreign policy hawk - in the traditions of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan, dedicated to the restoration of American greatness. I support robust energy independence (including the aggressive development to the newer nuclear power technologies). I support an awakened America that serves its historical calling as the world’s leader against the neo-Marxist and atavistic jihadists, both of which are the declared blood enemies of free creative civilizations everywhere.

The support of enclaves of freedom and decency in the world, especially those who are our traditional friends and allies, represents a vital, enduring national obligation, constrained only by immediate practical concerns for our own protection, and the normal prudential considerations that govern any great nation’s military engagements.

Therefore, strong, unwavering, practical support for **Israel** (economic, diplomatic, political and in terms of national security) is a no-brainer.

The promotion of third and fourth generation nuclear energy technologies and the exploitation of our vast coal reserves in the meantime are also no-brainers.

Immediate federal fiscal restraint, achieved, as necessary, by the pro-rata reduction of salaries and benefits for all employees and beneficiaries of the federal government from POTUS on down is another no-brainer.

The tendency of liberals to hold defense and national security hostage when budget cutting becomes an issue – or when a balanced budget amendment become effective -must be decisively taken off the table as long as creative civilizations must survive in a hostile and deadly international environment. I recommend a bypass: a national, flat income surtax of a small percentage of adjusted gross income (applied down to \$15,000k/person). The funding flow would be designed to provide a realistic floor for all ongoing military and security funding, such that the appropriations could not be traded away or held hostage to other programs. All other budget expenditures, including entitlements and additional defense and security spending would be in the discretionary category, requiring annual specific appropriations.

I am pro-life. As a moral proposition, I find a deep and disturbing linkage between societal callousness about the termination of a viable pregnancy and the euthanasia of elders and disabled, whether overt or under bureaucratic cover. But I am a realist. The mere repeal of *Roe vs. Wade*, for example could have the effect of opening the abortion floodgates in certain pro-choice states. Pro-life advocates tend to forget or discount that the Supreme Court, under *Roe*, has granted authority to virtually ban all abortions done in the last 66% of any pregnancy. The most dedicated pro-choice advocates tend to emphasize “the protection of the life of the mother” (which is a medical/ethical given) but actually mean the “health” of the mother, hoping that it will be construed to mean emotional distress over the pregnancy, allowing courts to create a back-door exception. I

stand with the pro-life advocates on this. Where an abortion would otherwise be unlawful, the health exception needs to be bright-line medically clear. No pro-life ethic can support the subordination of the life of a mother to that of her unborn child, unless she heroically grants informed consent.

It is a fact of life that *Roe* represents a fragile societal consensus but does not bar significant further movement in the pro-life direction. Its main limitation, in my legal opinion, is its arbitrary and increasingly obsolete definition of “viability”, simplistically decreed to obtain in the second and third trimesters, but not the first. This is viability outside the womb, of course, something that medical technology is gradually pushing back in time.

There are a number of pro-life measures within the overall ambit of *Roe vs. Wade*, such as required pre-abortion counseling, including a requirement that the latest baby-imaging technology be used. Ditto: parental notification and consent.

Therefore (again on a personal level) I advocate the concept of using a different viability test --intra-utero viability, rather than extra-utero. This would leave a gray area soon after conception during which viability cannot be presumed.

But I also advocate policy restraint, and a bias in favor of gradual social change. Like the other “social issues”, it is prudent and sound policy to stake out an emphasis on local decisions based on a healthy respect for custom and practice. In my opinion, a forward-aimed conservative movement can and should accommodate any candidate who is aligned with the pro-life sentiment, while unwilling to push for the repeal of *Roe vs. Wade* at least while all of the other pro-life measures are implemented.

The other divisive social issue of the day is typically described as the “Gay Marriage” dispute. I favor substantial legal accommodations for gay couples who are trying to form family units that are traditional in all respects save the same-gender union element. This includes access to the same insurance benefits, medical and otherwise, and to care givers (thinking of “next of kin” status in a hospital, for example) as would be afforded heterosexual couples. Such practical benefits should not, in my opinion be denied gay or lesbian couples.

But the term, “marriage” cannot and should not be redefined or reassigned except via a wide and durable social consensus honestly ascertained on a local basis by the regular democratic political processes. Marriage redefinition is not an appropriate issue for social engineering, whether the engineers are wearing black robes or not. As I explain this to pro-gay marriage advocates, I ask them to think of it as a brand or trademark issue. The trademark for traditional official heterosexual family unions is taken – it is marriage.

And – as I have told some of our gay friends – the marriage issue, especially in the context of the grave issues facing the USA and the world, remains a boutique one. As a conservative, I favor measures to uphold, honor and strengthen the traditional family without going out of our way to harm or disparage non-traditional families. I strongly

believe that no substantial fundamental changes in such a basic feature of daily life as marriage should ever be imposed without wide and deep public consent. I also believe that our gay and lesbian relatives, friends and neighbors who choose to live as same-gender couples have the right to live their lives in peace and dignity. They should not be arbitrarily barred from key economic and practical benefits just because they are not a “straight couple.” But the term marriage has a settled meaning and the federal government has no business changing it.

I am strongly opposed to drug legalization, by which I mean the virtual elimination of meaningful controls on the sale and distribution of strongly addictive, psychotropic substances. My reasons are grounded in long experience with the criminal subpopulation and the insight that the serious addictions amount character poison and in cases of hard addiction they are chemical slavery. A free society cannot endure when a substantial subpopulation is addicted to mind-altering drugs.

I am not a free-market absolutist when it comes to government investments in education, research and development. But I am deeply hostile to the stultifying effects of empowered bureaucrats. DARPA, in its present form, is effective because it designed to operate outside the bureaucratic mentality and culture, seeding promising defense-related developments with an intelligent, light touch.²²

My point in this personal exegesis is to make clear that I do not require agreement on the details in order to engage in a fruitful, mutually respectful dialogue on good policy. Not for those of us who remain united on the larger topic of building a free, creative civilization using America as the model. I am deeply convinced that a forward-aimed conservative movement is an essential first step, but I would never exclude non-conforming conservatives or thoughtful liberals from the conversation. Good dialogue is heuristic for all the participants.

Nor would I require that same level of agreement from a presidential or other candidate who is authentically closer to the renaissance conservative positions and philosophy than an incumbent leftist. What I do require of any liberal or conservative that which I require of myself. Intellectual and transactional honesty, borne of several deep visceral and practical commitments, to wit: to promote the conditions of ordered liberty necessary to sustain a creative civilization; to maintain a blood commitment to defend our constitution; and to keep a fierce, abiding loyalty to the vision of the USA as the greatest nation on the earth, the last best hope for a free world.

²² See ***The Department of Mad Scientists: How DARPA Is Remaking Our World, from the Internet to Artificial Limbs***, by Michael Belfiore, Harper Collins 2009.

Re-Con Self Definition

An Exercise

Because renaissance conservatism is a new development, subtly but significantly differing from paleo-conservatism, the task of differentiation is one and the same as the task of evangelism. This means that no opportunity for positive self-definition is to be neglected. Surface differences invite deeper exploration. And Re-Cons differ in one common feature – the philosophical depth and consistence of the belief system that underlies everything they do and advocate, even when they disagree with each other.

Re-Cons sound different, tend to hang with different people, and react differently, than other conservatives.

“Sounding different” means that we hear Re-Cons using certain themes and language that are not common to modern conservatives, particularly the retrospective ones. For example:

- All critiques and the identification of problems or proposed approaches or solutions are coupled with a self-confident optimism about the prospects for a better, freer, more humane and more creative future.
- Re-Con discussions memorably include the larger context of a civilization under challenge and the firm belief that the American example provides the normative model for renewal.
- All justice issues are addressed with passion, but with a clear emphasis on individuated justice, and a concomitant disdain for collective solutions - because collective, bureaucratic solutions inevitably do injustice on the individual level.
- Creativity is lauded and supported, always in the context of the deeper, underlying, life-affirming moral order, always in the broadband sense in which the entrepreneurial technological side and the artistic side are seen a part of a unified, immensely valuable whole.

In sum: About one third of the contents of Re-Con discourse – even in casual discussions - are cheerfully positive and future-aimed.

Hanging with different people means that Re-Cons go out of their way to cultivate friendships within the various creative communities on a pan-partisan, non-ideological basis. Re-Cons are ambassadors from and to conservative values, from and to the creative communities that thrive in the settings that such values make possible yet remain alienated by their conservative stereotypes.

Reacting differently means a fierce defense of issues and concerns, many of which are neglected by liberals and conservatives, especially of creative freedoms, the defense of which is stated in specific Re-Con terms, whenever and from whatever source the threat

presents: the Re-Con defense of creativity is coupled with a moral ethos of life affirmation. The Re-Con message can be summarized: The conservative gift to progress is that all our creative endeavors need to be fruitfully integrated with the larger, freedom supporting, life affirming moral order.

Re-Cons are uniquely capable of doing this sort of thing without seeming puritanical or falling into the trap of fashionably hip amorality. Here are some test issues and typical Re-Con *visceral*²³ responses:

7. Restraints on free communication in the service of “good causes”: Immediate, fierce opposition, coupled with an explanation of the central tenet of renaissance conservatism, to wit: that our liberties are indivisible, that our life-saving creative capabilities critically depend on an indivisible wall of protection for all our unalienable freedoms.
8. Proposals to curtail, to eviscerate or eliminate the charitable deduction, especially for the support of creative activities: Immediate, fierce opposition.
9. Proposals to weaken the protection for intellectual property rights, especially for individual creative achievements: Fierce opposition, whether the threat comes from government, larger private entities or a combination of both.
10. Proposals for collective reparations or punishment: Fierce opposition, coupled with equally fierce support for the legitimately aggrieved individuals.
11. Broadside attacks on a liberal figure who is an ally on some core Re-Con concern. Immediate support, calling attention to the area of agreement – “liberty needs all the friends she can get”.

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Jay B Gaskill
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jay B Gaskill is a well known California attorney, author, commentator and consultant, who served for ten years as the 7th Alameda County, CA, Public Defender. He has appeared on CBS 48 Hours. His website, THE POLICY THINK SITE, is dedicated to “thoughtful conservatives and realistic liberals”.

Among his widely read articles are:

²³ The key here is visceral, a litmus test of the authenticity of someone who might or might not have internalized the core understanding of the renaissance conservative world view.

Political Liberalism as a Secular Religion

“Liberalism in this form is a secular religion. This religion originated, innocently enough, as an attempt to off-load the entire charitable and humanitarian enterprise to the regulatory and social action agencies of government. ...political liberals consist of two groups: the angry and outspoken activists who define “pure” doctrine, and the much larger group who simply go along. It is the unwillingness of this second, larger group to openly deviate from doctrine that interests me. I believe that, for this larger group (most of whom are well off financially and educated far above the “trailer park” level they tend to despise), the primary function of this secular religion is to protect the comfortable lifestyles of its adherents.”

<http://www.jaygaskill.com/liberalismasreligion.htm>

Thugology 101

“A working understanding of thuggish behavior is basic to any study of the human condition, essential to the study of history, important for the conduct of American foreign policy and a key to local police staffing issues. What I’ve learned about thugs comes from 28 years of interactions with the crooks of Alameda County.”

<http://www.jaygaskill.com/THUGOLOGY101.pdf>

Recovery 101

“We Americans are writing this story, and the narrative is under our control. Public opinion polls tell us that a majority of Americans actually understand the gravity and scope of the fiscal crisis. The most of us still believe in American exceptionalism. A majority of voters are out of synch with Obama 1.0, the arch liberal who pushed through a hugely costly health care reform scheme that rank and file Americans strongly opposed.”

<http://www.jaygaskill.com/Recovery101.pdf>

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