

## Resolving the crisis: from turmoil to new practice

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# **RESOLVING THE CRISIS: FROM TURMOIL TO NEW PRACTICE**

Gennady Shkliarevsky

To my best friend and my wife Lena

## ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is the current crisis that rocks our civilization and poses a threat to its survival. It is a very broad phenomenon that has many aspects; and one study is not enough to cover it. For this reason, this study has chosen to focus on one segment of this broad phenomenon—the turmoil on student campuses in America. The student unrest is an integral component of the broader crisis. It is a microcosm of the general crisis and shares many features with it. An examination of the student unrest will help understand the broader turmoil that has engulfed America and the world.

The study explores the main aspects of the student unrest and its development. It pays particular attention to the illiberal turn that this unrest has taken and offers its explanation of the reason for the rise of illiberalism in American educational institutions. The study also explores principal theoretical perspectives on this development and the solutions proposed to address the unrest.

The study sees the principal source of the unrest in the problem of difference. The current liberal social practice cannot solve this problem that originates in exclusion and inequality that remain persistent features of our civilization. The study proposes a new approach in resolving the current crisis. In contrast to the liberal practice, this approach uses the universal process of creation as its main organizing principle. Unlike the liberal approach that uses selective inclusion, the approach proposed by this study practices universal inclusion and equality. The use of universal inclusion and equality will eliminate exclusion and inequality and thus contribute to the resolution of the current crisis. The study also discusses the main aspects and features of the new social practice that it proposes.

**Key words:** Student unrest, freedom of speech and expression, censorship, the problem of difference, liberal theory and practice, inclusion, equality, reconciliation, the process of creation, the new social practice

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## Introduction

The current crisis in America is in full swing and shows no signs of abatement. On the contrary, it continues to gather strength, and no one knows how far it will go. A sample of headlines resembles a cry of desperation. Just a few examples convey a general idea of the dominant mood in the country today: “America Is Facing 5 Epic Crises All at Once” (*The New York Times*), “How Today’s American Crisis Is Different” (*TIME* magazine), “‘A Crisis Coming’: The Twin Threats to American Democracy” (*The New York Times*), “America Is Headed Toward Collapse” (*The Atlantic*), “America’s Crisis of Despair (Brookings Institution), “Anxiety Grows Among Americans as Crisis After Crisis Spirals Out of Control” (*U.S. News and World Report*). The list can go on and on.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Brooks, “America Is Facing 5 Epic Crises All at Once,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/opinion/us-coronavirus-protests.html>; David Keiser, “How Today’s American Crisis Is Different,” *TIME*, July 22, 2016, <https://time.com/4417672/american-crisis-history/>; David Leonhardt, “‘A Crisis Coming’: The Twin Threats to American Democracy,” *The New York Times*, September 17, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/17/us/american-democracy-threats.html>; Paul Rosenberg, “Welcome to the ‘End Times’: Peter Turchin Saw This Coming—and Says We Can Still Prevent Collapse,” *Salon*, June 13, 2023, <https://www.salon.com/2023/06/13/welcome-to-the-end-times-peter-turchin-saw-this-coming--and-says-we-can-still-prevent-collapse/>; Peter Turchin, “America Is Headed Toward Collapse,” *The Atlantic* (blog), June 2, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/06/us-societal-trends-institutional-trust-economy/674260/>; Peter Turchin, “Heading for a Fall?” *New Scientist*, vol. 260, no. 3468 (December 9, 2023), pp. 36–39, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0262-4079\(23\)02291-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0262-4079(23)02291-1); Carol Graham, “America’s Crisis of Despair: A Federal Task Force for Economic Recovery and Societal Well-Being,” *Brookings*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/americas-crisis-of-despair-a-federal-task-force-for-economic-recovery-and-societal-well-being/>; Susan Milligan and Tim Smart, “Anxiety Grows Among Americans as Crisis After Crisis Spirals Out of Control,” *US News & World Report*, July 15, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2022-07-15/anxiety-grows-among-americans-as-crisis-after-crisis-spirals-out-of-control>.

Numerous contributions explore the causes of the current crisis and forces that drive it. As in many other cases related to developments on such scale, perspectives on this crisis differ. Current contributions see the cause of the crisis in a combination of different factors: declining economy, inflation, racial tensions, social divisions, mass shootings, endless wars, the pandemic,<sup>2</sup> the disconnect between government policies and public opinion,<sup>3</sup> disintegration of elites and elite rule,<sup>4</sup> the overall climate of despair that prevails in America,<sup>5</sup> and much, much else. Certainly, the diversity of these perspectives makes a definitive interpretation very difficult. Even the determination of how long this crisis has been going on is a problematic issue on which many disagree. David Brooks, for example, dates the beginning of this crisis as far back as 50 years ago.<sup>6</sup> Others place it much closer, within 15 to 20 years.<sup>7</sup> Most assessments, however, agree that this crisis has been long in the making. It is very broad and has many aspects.<sup>8</sup> A detailed examination of this crisis will require a large book, perhaps even several. Such undertaking is certainly beyond this study.

The purpose of this study is more modest. Like many other contributions on the subject, it also seeks to understand the forces that drive the general crisis. However, given the enormity of this crisis, the study chooses to take a detailed look at a snapshot of the general upheaval—the turmoil that is raging today on American college campuses. The scale of the campus unrest is much smaller than that of the general crisis, which make its detailed examination easier to manage. Yet, the student unrest is an integral part of the general upheaval; it has much in common and shares many features with the calamities that rock America and the world. A detailed examination of the campus unrest will certainly give a pretty good idea about the forces that drive the general crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> David Brooks, “America Is Facing 5 Epic Crises All at Once”; *The New York Times*, David Keiser, “How Today’s American Crisis Is Different”; Susan Milligan and Tim Smart, “Anxiety Grows Among Americans as Crisis After Crisis Spirals Out of Control.”

<sup>3</sup> Leonhardt, “‘A Crisis Coming’: The Twin Threats to American Democracy.”

<sup>4</sup> Peter Turchin, *End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration* a Book by Peter Turchin (New York: Penguin Press, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Graham, “America’s Crisis of Despair.”

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, “America Is Facing 5 Epic Crises All at Once.”

<sup>7</sup> Turchin, “Heading for a Fall?”; Keiser, “How Today’s American Crisis Is Different.”

<sup>8</sup> Cullen Murphy, ed., *The American Crisis: What Went Wrong. How We Recover.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

Student activism has always been integral to periods of social and political transformations. Young men and women have contributed much to the dynamism of such periods. Their boundless energy, enthusiasm, dedication, their sense of justice, and their visions have played an enormous role in promoting changes. Student movements are extremely dynamic. By participating in these movements, students mature and evolve; they emerge from them as new adults who hold keys to the future.

The current period of change is no exception. The turmoil that is taking place on American campuses is an important factor in the developments that are taking place in America today. Unsurprisingly, students' role in this crisis attracts much attention by scholars, politicians, journalists, and public figures. They all try to understand what shapes the unrest in American colleges and universities. They seek insights and explanations that may help us understand better the upheaval on American campuses.

The current campus turmoil is a very complex phenomenon. There are many factors that shape its character and course. These factors are integrally connected to and reflect numerous problems faced by American society. Understanding this complex phenomenon is very important. Such understanding will certainly be helpful in making student activism play a constructive, not destructive, role in the period of transformation that our country experiences and in the future. It may also help in solving the challenging problems faced by America and the civilization.

Like many other contributions that address the campus turmoil, this study also represents an attempt to make sense of this complex phenomenon. It will examine several problems related to this unrest, including its origin and the most important issues that it involves and that attract much attention. The role of the principal groups that shape this unrest—students, faculty, and administrators—will be an important focus of this study.

The current turmoil revolves around the distinct features that define our civilization. The study will discuss these features as they relate to the unrest on campuses. Freedom of speech and expression, for example, is one issue that attracts much attention in the current developments on student campuses as different sides involved in the unrest seek to silence their opponents and limit their access to public forums.

The freedom of speech and expression is one of the central tenets of liberalism. The concept of freedom of speech owes its existence to liberalism that places the individual in the center of its vision. The foundation of liberalism rests on the ontological primacy of the individual and on individualism. In many ways the rights and freedoms of the individual define the social, political, and legal practice of liberalism. In the liberal universe the freedom of speech and expression is absolute and universal; as such, it cannot be subject to any limitations and restrictions. The foundation of liberalism has also given rise to such ideas as pluralism, tolerance, and civility that liberals consider to be essential requirements for modern social and political practice.

The current turmoil, however, questions the absoluteness of freedom of speech and expression. Many contributors to the current debates on freedom of speech feel that freedom of speech must be restricted. They feel that unconditional freedom of speech may exclude those who find some statements to be distasteful and repugnant. Many participants in current debates also feel that unrestricted freedom of speech poses a threat to social order and public peace.



There is one important problem that lurks in the debates over freedom of speech. It is the problem of difference. This problem emerges directly from the liberal commitment to the individual and individual rights. Liberalism views all individuals as unique with his or her distinct experience that has value intrinsic to each individual. According to liberalism, each individual holds views and convictions that constitute their self. All individuals have a profound commitment to their beliefs and ideas. Such deeply felt individual commitments inevitably intensify centrifugal forces in society and thus disrupt social and political cohesion that is necessary for orderly social life.

Liberals have been aware of this problem and its disruptive potential ever since the early history of liberalism. They have not left it unattended. To counter this problem, liberalism has proposed a social practice that would act as a counterbalance to the centrifugal forces of individualism and would help maintain social cohesion and peace. This practice rests on three pillars that liberals deem essential in public life: pluralism, tolerance, and civility. Many debates that are taking place during the current unrest are about free speech, pluralism, tolerance, and civility. Many contributors to these debates are concerned with the intensity of conflicts that are taking place today, both on and off campuses. Many of them are looking for ways that to guide student enthusiasm and energies to ends that are constructive and beneficial both to the student community and to society.

The study will offer a critical examination of the key premises and principles that have shaped liberal theory and practice. Such examination is important for addressing the problems that confront our society today. A critical perspective on current contributions dealing with freedom of speech, pluralism, tolerance, and civility will help to decide whether the liberal approach to the problem of difference is up to the tasks that liberals want to accomplish.

Criticism of the liberal practice acquires particular importance at this juncture since liberal values and principles have spread throughout the world. Today, they circulate far beyond America and the Western world. Many non-Western countries and societies recognize the importance and share the commitment to liberal values, principles, and freedoms. They also often accept them as absolute and universal. For this reason, the examination of the issues relevant to the freedom of speech and expression has a much wider application than one that is useful in the American or even Western context.

In its concluding section the study will outline an alternative approach to the problem of difference. It seeks to offer a much-needed corrective to the liberal theory and practice and to help in resolving the controversial issues that cause much tension and conflict in the current period of change.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Campus Unrest: An Overview

#### *When Did the Current Turmoil Begin?*

As has already been indicated, much of the current student unrest revolves around free speech. The practice of free speech has become one of the most important indicators in assessing the degree and intensity of unrest on American campuses. Willingness to limit free speech and restrict dissonant voices has come to be identified with what many call today the free speech crisis or America's illiberal turn.

Although no one disputes the fact that egregious examples of intimidating opponents, denying access to campus forums, cases of disinviting speakers, and other instances of violation of the freedom of speech are very unfortunate developments, there is, in fact, a dramatic division of opinions as to whether all these violations amount to a full-fledged crisis. Representatives of one group claim that the number of violations of freedom of speech, examples of uncivil behavior, and cases of demonization are so significant that their frequency and severity give enough reason to describe the developments on American campuses as a situation that reaches the level of a full-fledged crisis. Representatives of the opposing group—the so-called skeptics—offer a relatively benign assessment of the unrest in American colleges and universities.

In his article “There Is No Campus Free Speech Crisis: A Close Look at the Evidence,” published in 2018, Jeffrey Sacks, one of the skeptics, recognizes the fact that violations of freedom of speech and expression are taking place on American campuses. However, in his view, the overall situation is not dramatically different from what we have seen in the past. He argues that the perception of an ongoing crisis has been created by the frenzy of sensation hungry media eager to sell its products.<sup>9</sup> Matthew Yglesias also expresses skepticism in an article he published in 2018. He forcefully disputes assertions that the debates about political correctness have reached unacceptable levels that pose a threat to democracy and freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Critics do not dispute the numbers cited by skeptics. However, they point to problems with the methodological approach used in polls and questionnaires on which skeptics, such as Sacks and Yglesias, rely. According to critics, this methodology is overly general and misses important details and nuances. As a result, the data obtained

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Sacks, “There Is No Campus Free Speech Crisis: A Close Look at the Evidence,” Niskanen Center, April 27, 2018, <https://www.niskanencenter.org/there-is-no-campus-free-speech-crisis-a-close-look-at-the-evidence/>.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Yglesias, “Everything we think about the political correctness debate is wrong,” *Vox*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/3/12/17100496/political-correctness-data>.

through this methodology shows little change in attitudes toward free speech in the American society and particularly among the student population. More attenuated and nuanced approaches reveal significant and even dramatic differences starting in 2009.<sup>11</sup>

In his three-part essay “Skeptics Are Wrong,” written in 2018, Sean Stevens points out that the longitudinal data sets used by Sacks and Yglesias are essentially a methodological artifact that greatly overestimates political tolerance among students.<sup>12</sup> According to Stevens, the questions of the data collectors have focused on groups that are no longer controversial, such as “communists” or “homosexuals.”<sup>13</sup> The essay also notes that the overall tolerance climate may change rapidly and dramatically even if the average attitudes reveal little or no change.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Stevens points out that even a relatively small group of students can impose severe social costs on those who express views different from their own, particularly if their actions encounter no resistance from college administration.<sup>15</sup>

There is also another important point that Stevens makes. The data he uses show that there is no appreciable difference in the attitude toward free speech between students on the left and on the right. The willingness to censor and suppress discordant voices is about even on both sides. The tendency initially was even slightly higher among conservative students than among liberal. Things, however, began to change dramatically after 2009, particularly following protests in 2013 and 2014 when students on the left diverged from the previous pattern. Incidents of their attempts to censor speech on campus have grown sharply. They often disinvite speakers based on their political views to take part in campus events; they also try to disrupt events if they fail in disinviting speakers. Finally, they have also started to issue frequent demands that

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<sup>11</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics are Wrong Part 1: Attitudes About Free Speech On Campus are Changing,” *Heterodox Academy*, May 4, 2018, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/skeptics-are-wrong-about-campus-speech/>.

<sup>12</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics are Wrong Part 1: Attitudes About Free Speech On Campus are Changing,” *Heterodox Academy*, March 4, 2018, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/skeptics-are-wrong-about-campus-speech/>; “The Skeptics Are Wrong, Part 2: Speech Culture on Campus is Changing,” *Heterodox Academy*, March 11, 2018, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/the-skeptics-are-wrong-part-2/>; “The Skeptics are Wrong Part 3: Political Intolerance Levels on Campus are High, and Here is Why,” *Heterodox Academy*, May 11, 2018, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/the-skeptics-are-wrong-part-3-intolerance-levels-are-high>.

<sup>13</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics are Wrong,” Part 1.

<sup>14</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics are Wrong,” Part 1.

<sup>15</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong,” Part 2.

college administration should enforce norms of political correctness or to cease funding campus publications that express opposing view and opinions.<sup>16</sup>

The intensity of efforts to suppress free speech on campus grew significantly during the race riots of 2014 and 2015 when student activism increased dramatically due to their participation in BLM campaigns and particularly in protests that followed the death of George Floyd. Multiple sources, including university and college administrators, confirm this dating.<sup>17</sup> Freedom of speech became a major victim of the growing unrest as the incidence of intolerance, uncivil behavior, and intimidation of opponents rose dramatically.

In the wake of that wave of unrest new ideas and terminology about speech began to spread nationally. A number of new concepts and terms became widely applied in campus settings. Their vagueness made possible their wide application in cases of individuals targeted for silencing. For example, “micro aggression”—a new concept that was introduced at that time—gained wide acceptance on college campuses and even in high schools. This concept makes possible to hold an individual or a group responsible and “called out” if someone takes offense to what they say or do, however insignificant. Whether “offense” is intended or not is irrelevant; it is the impact on the audience that matters, not the act. At students’ requests hundreds of schools have created “bias response teams.” Anyone can anonymously report acts of micro-aggressions to these teams. A Cato survey of 2017 has found that 65% of college students support the creation of “bias response teams.”<sup>18</sup> Another Cato/YouGov Survey reports high degree of support for restricting speech among iGen and Millennials than in previous student generations.<sup>19</sup> To sum up, the available data indicate that from 2013 to 2017 norms of free speech, tolerance, and civility among the student population dramatically changed. American students today are, on the average, more willing than students in the past to suppress speech and speakers on campus for the sake of moral or political goals.<sup>20</sup>

This development is not sudden or unexpected. In fact, over the past decade several commentators—Robert Putnam, Stephen Carter, and Benjamin Barber among many others--have cautioned against the progressive decline in civil behavior and civic

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<sup>16</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong Pt 2.”

<sup>17</sup> Christopher L. Eisgruber, President Princeton, “What Is Happening on Our Campuses?” *Office of the President*, January 13, 2016, <https://president.princeton.edu/blogs/what-happening-our-campuses>

<sup>18</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong Pt 3: Political Intolerance on Campus,” *Heterodox Academy*, May 18, 2018. <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/the-skeptics-are-wrong-part-3-intolerance-levels-are-high>

<sup>19</sup> Sean Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong, Pt 3.”

<sup>20</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong, Part 3.”

responsibility in the United States.<sup>21</sup> The trend continues unabated to this day and is even gaining in intensity. With the beginning of the war between Israel and Hamas, violations of the norms of free speech, tolerance, and civility have reached new heights. Anti-Semitic verbal assaults against Jewish students and faculty have become daily occurrences in many liberal colleges and universities. Even prominent American schools, perhaps particularly prominent American schools like Columbia, Harvard and MIT, have not escaped ugly manifestations of anti-Semitism, demonization, and hate of Jews. For example, in one of the recent episodes reported in the media, a prominent Jewish computer scientist at MIT had to resign his position due to anti-Semitic threats.<sup>22</sup>

Even the White House, that is generally lenient toward left-wing student radicalism, has issued a statement condemning campus anti-Semitism. The statement has expressed horror about the “extremely disturbing pattern of anti-Semitic messages being conveyed on college campuses.” According to a White House spokesperson, “delegitimizing the State of Israel while praising the Hamas terrorist murderers who burned innocent people alive, or targeting Jewish students, is the definition of unacceptable—and the definition of anti-Semitism.”<sup>23</sup>

### *The Evolution of the Current Unrest: The Illiberal Turn*

The current turmoil is not a static phenomenon. It is a dynamic process that has been constantly changing student environment. The forms in which students express their discontent have transformed since the beginning of the unrest. In the early period, students relied on mass demonstrations and protests to voice their views and opinions. Such was the case when students protested American war in Syria back in 2009. As students’ unrest has evolved, its character has changed. Originally, it largely followed the same patterns as the movements that preceded it. However, as time has passed, new features have appeared that were not observed in the past.

When student activism entered the last decade, it largely imitated the strategies and tactics of the previous periods of campus protests. Students organized demonstrations, protest rallies, and marches; they staged sit-down strikes, teach-ins, and walkouts. They blocked traffic through university grounds and even hijacked several university buildings, locking themselves inside. Students were also active in voter

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<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Meyer, “Civility and Its Discontents: Essays on Civic Virtue, Toleration, and Culture,” *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 32, issue 3 (July 2006), pp. 516-521.

<sup>22</sup> Mike LaChance, “Prominent MIT Jewish Computer Scientist Resigns, Citing Anti-Semitism,” *Legal Insurrection*, January 8, 2024, <https://legalinsurrection.com/2024/01/prominent-mit-jewish-computer-scientist-resigns-citing-anti-semitism/>.

<sup>23</sup> K. C. Johnson, “The University Horrors: Chapter and Verse,” *Commentary Magazine*, November 10, 2023. <https://www.commentary.org/articles/kc-johnson/anti-semitic-university-horrors/>.

registration and in support of progressive candidates. Such patterns were very prominent, for example, during the protests against tuition hikes in 2009 and during the Occupy movement of 2011 against wealth disparity in America. They were also visible in the renewed environmental activism in support of the Green New Deal of 2012, in climate marches and strikes of 2014, and during Dreamers' marches of 2011-2012.

Some of the same forms of activism continued into 2013 and 2014, but they became distinctly more militant and aggressive in their tone. The change became very visible in the race riots of 2013-2014. The militancy reached new levels of intensity when student activists aligned themselves with the BLM movement during the riots in Ferguson and Staten Island protesting systemic racism in America and the deaths of black Americans who lost their lives in confrontations with police.

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016 was a major catalyst that stimulated the distinct drift toward greater combativeness and even aggression. In addition to traditional forms of protests, students created organizations and launched online campaigns that vowed to resist Trump's agenda in its entirety. Trump became for students the symbol of resurgence of reactionary forces in American society and they were determined to meet this challenge with unprecedented force and determination.

The election of Donald Trump was in many ways a pivotal moment for the resurgence of strident and bellicose tone that colored student activism. This moment in time witnessed the revival of American Socialism as many students backed Senator Sanders's Democratic Socialist agenda in his bid for presidency. The increased militancy also marked pro-women marches of 2017-2018, the 2018 March for Our Lives and the Never Again March, and particularly the racial riots of 2020-2022 that followed the death of George Floyd who lost his life in the confrontation with the Minnesota police. Even Women's March, #MeToo movement, and climate strikes of 2019 did not escape the impact of vociferous stridency.

## 1. The Rise of Intolerance

The campus turmoil revolves around many issues. These issues include traditional ones that students had embraced even before the beginning of the current unrest. Such issues include social and racial justice, climate change, economic disparity, sexual and gender equality, women's rights and the right to abortion, and others. There are also some newer ones that have emerged in recent months--for example, support for Palestinians and anti-Israel protests.

Yet there is one issue that overshadows all others; it lurks in the background of all actions that students undertake. It is not about specific goals, but about the way students pursue their goals. The distinct general feature of the current campus unrest is the extent to which students are willing to forego and disregard values and principles that have been central to American liberalism, such as, freedom of speech, pluralism, tolerance, and civility. They engage in suppressing dissenters and stifling dissonant voices; they harass and punish individuals who disagree with opinions held by majority on campus. They do

not want to hear anything on campus that contradicts their views and opinions; they disrupt campus events and presentations that involve speakers they find disagreeable.<sup>24</sup>

Such behavior is not new in the history of American student movements. They have occurred in the past. However, at no point students demonstrated this behavior to the degree they do in today's events. Generally, the student population has always shared the commitment to freedom of speech and expression, norms of civil behavior, and respect for differences, even in the most passionate pursuit of their causes. The predominant attitude today represents a dramatic departure from this tradition. Moreover, while campus liberals are engaging today in full-scale assault on democratic freedoms and principles, they continue to insist that they remain committed to difference, diversity, and freedom of speech.<sup>25</sup>

American campuses have never been a sacred ground immune to intolerance and discrimination. There have been many cases of campus discrimination in the past. In a multi-institutional study of religious intolerance in American colleges and universities Cynthia Broderick and Kevin Fosnacht, for example, discuss instances of discrimination against students from various faith traditions, particularly Jewish and Muslim students.<sup>26</sup> Another study that appeared in 2016 showed that school principals were "unable to reconcile the requirement of the constitution with their own traditions and school rules."<sup>27</sup>

Many who have followed the evolving culture of American colleges and universities point out that during recent culture wars students and faculty have forged a Left-wing monoculture that has become increasingly intolerant. Some have sounded the alarm for decades with little success.<sup>28</sup> As student activism has been growing on campuses over the last decade or so, rates of intolerance have also been rising.

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<sup>24</sup> Catherine Rampell, "Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America's College Campuses," *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/liberal-but-not-tolerant-on-the-nations-college-campuses/2016/02/11/0f79e8e8-d101-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/liberal-but-not-tolerant-on-the-nations-college-campuses/2016/02/11/0f79e8e8-d101-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad_story.html).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Boyers, "Liberal Intolerance," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 63, no. 29 (March 24, 2017), pp. B10–12.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin Fosnacht and Cynthia Broderick, "Religious Intolerance on Campus: A Multi-Institution Study," *Journal of College and Character*, no. 4 (2020), pp. 244–62.

<sup>27</sup> Maitumeleng Albertina Ntho-Ntho, and Jan Frederik Nieuwenhuis, "Religious Intolerance: The Case of Principals in Multi-Faith Schools," *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2016), pp. 167–86, p. 167.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Kaufmann, "Even Democrats Are Waking up to America's Campus Crisis," *UnHerd.com*, *The Post*, December 11, 2023, <https://unherd.com/the-post/even-democrats-are-waking-up-to-americas-campus-crisis/>; Rampell, "Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America's College Campuses."

Intolerance has not been limited to one or several issues. No issue that has come up in campus politics has failed to provoke eruptions of intolerance.<sup>29</sup>

Many first-hand reports illustrate the kind of prejudicial behavior among students. For example, as a strong pro-lifer, Austin Clark, a medical student at the University of Louisville, thought that students should be exposed to pro-life views. In 2018, Clark organized a speaking event with Alex McFarland, an author and an evangelist who writes extensively about conservative Christian views on issues of gender identity and abortion. Although school authorities expressed security concerns, they permitted the event to go forward, and the presentation went as planned. However, after the event, the attitude toward Clark on campus drastically shifted. Both faculty and peers subjected him to ostracism. When asked to comment on the state of tolerance on campus, the school administration refused an interview, citing as a reason for the refusal a lawsuit filed by Clark after he was expelled from the school in 2020.<sup>30</sup>

Another episode that took place in 2018 at University of Colorado School of Medicine's Anschutz campus reflects a similar intolerant attitude on the part of students. When a Christian-based club invited an outspoken pro-life advocate to give a presentation, a group of vocal pro-choice students demanded to disinvite the speaker. The protesters confronted Shanta Zimmer, senior associate dean of medical education, and demanded answers. As she recalls, one of them berated her: "As a woman leader in medicine, how can you allow this to happen?" When the dean attempted to calm down the protesters by saying that they could engage the speaker and then organize an event of their own, their response was curt: "We don't even want to talk to them."<sup>31</sup>

Diversity and inclusion have been another contentious subject that caused frequent conflicts. In May of 2023, a chapter of the conservative-leaning National Association of Scholars (NSA) was to hold a symposium at Medical College of Wisconsin on the uses and abuses of government-sponsored Diversity and Inclusion programs instituted in many schools. The announcement about the symposium provoked angry responses from students and faculty who demanded that the event should be cancelled. The letter to MCW President John Raymond stated that the symposium was "politically motivated" and the presence of NSA on campus would negatively affect students, particularly those who had experienced racial injustice.

According to Raymond, the letter and objections listed in it were intemperate in tone. As a result, the administration decided that the issue was just "too disruptive" and was creating "a lot of friction on campus." The authorities were particularly concerned that there might be a face-off between the opposing sides at the site of the event. The

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<sup>29</sup> Patrick Boyle, "Here's What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen," *AAMC*, October 5, 2023. <https://www.aamc.org/news/here-s-what-happens-when-freedom-speak-meets-intolerance-listen>.

<sup>30</sup> Boyle, "Here's What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen."

<sup>31</sup> Boyle, "Here's What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen."



college decided to postpone the symposium that eventually took place off-campus and online with MCW's assistance.<sup>32</sup>

In 2018 students in the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago, staged a protest over the scheduled appearance of Steve Bannon, Trump's controversial former advisor, and demanded that his engagement be cancelled because Bannon promulgated "intolerant extremist views." Be that as it may, but using intolerance in protesting intolerance does seem to be an odd approach in advocating tolerance.<sup>33</sup>

There are hundreds of other examples of intolerant behavior on the part of students. At Claremont McKenna College in California, protesters blocked the doors to a lecture hall preventing conservative author Heather Mac Donald from speaking. At Middlebury College in Vermont, a professor accompanying libertarian author Charles Murray was injured by an angry mob when he accompanied the speaker for the introduction. Protests against controversial speakers invited to University of California-Berkeley frequently turn ugly.<sup>34</sup> Student government at Wichita State University denied recognition to a student group because the group dared to argue that hate speech was protected by the First Amendment. They later rescind their decision.<sup>35</sup>

The most convincing evidence of intolerance practiced on American campuses comes from students themselves. Many describe episodes of mistreatment, hostility, and even violence, either symbolic or physical, by their fellow students and faculty. Abigail Anthony, a junior at Princeton, reports feeling shocked by the atmosphere of intolerance that she witnessed on campus. According to Anthony, students often harassed and punished students who expressed views that went against campus majority opinions. Abigail describes feeling intimidated to such a degree that she felt strongly disinclined to express her views; she had to be very careful about what she said and how she said it. When she expressed her pro-life views in class, she received messages from other students saying that they agreed with her comments but felt very uncomfortable

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<sup>32</sup> Boyle, "Here's What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen."

<sup>33</sup> Boyle, "Here's What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen."

<sup>34</sup> The Editorial Board, "Campus Mobs Muzzle Free Speech: Our View." *USA TODAY*, May 2, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/01/campus-protesters-free-speech-editorials-debates/100885962/>.

<sup>35</sup> The Editorial Board, "Campus Mobs Muzzle Free Speech: Our View." *USA TODAY*, May 2, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/01/campus-protesters-free-speech-editorials-debates/100885962/>.

vocalizing their support in class for fear of social, academic, and professional consequences.<sup>36</sup>

As an independent, Chris Wells, a student at University of British Columbia, found himself in a lot of hot water on his campus with both students and faculty. He quickly learned that writing papers that argued against the established narrative could result in a mark down. Many question, he writes, “can’t even be asked without walking on eggshells.” On one occasion the instructor in his class interrupted his presentation and criticized him for “platforming bigotry and transphobia.” The instructor failed Chris on the assignment. A prominent campus activist took to social media the comments that Chris made that went against the mainstream opinion. He and others accused Chris of being a racist and threatened to destroy the reputation of those who “associated themselves” with him.<sup>37</sup>

As a Hispanic, Christopher Rayes, a student at Allegheny College, faced blowbacks for being the president the college’s Republican chapter. When Jahmarri Green, a student of color at Friends University, started a chapter of Young Americans for Freedom at his school, students called him a traitor and “Uncle Tom.” A paper in which he disputed the existence of the gender wage gap earned him a markdown (Jahmarri is a consistent A student) and a reprimand from the instructor who in his comments on the paper wrote in red pen “Do not agree, wrong.”<sup>38</sup>

Many students say that they do not feel safe expressing opinions that cut against mainstream views for fear of provoking cancel culture hostility from peers and teachers.<sup>39</sup> Faculty are also not immune to acts of intolerance. Numerous polls show that conservative faculty members experience significantly more hostility toward them than their more liberal colleagues.<sup>40</sup> The case of Amy Wax, a law professor with the University of Pennsylvania is typical in this respect. Students and fellow faculty

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<sup>36</sup> Rikki Schlott, “Five College Students Speak out against Campus ‘Wokeness,’” *New York Post*, January 18, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/01/15/five-college-students-speak-out-against-campus-wokeness/>.

<sup>37</sup> Schlott, “Five College Students Speak out against Campus ‘Wokeness.’”

<sup>38</sup> Schlott, “Five College Students Speak out against Campus ‘Wokeness.’”

<sup>39</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>40</sup> Nathan Honeycutt, “Political Intolerance Among University Faculty Highlights Need For Viewpoint Diversity,” *Forbes*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/11/21/political-intolerance-among-university-faculty-highlights-need-for-viewpoint-diversity/>.

members demanded from the administration to remove Amy—a brilliant law professor—from the university.<sup>41</sup>

These are just a few examples out of hundreds, if not thousands, that are available from various sources. They eloquently describe the atmosphere of wide-scale intolerance that has become pervasive on American campuses. However, as bad as this atmosphere was during the past decade or so, nothing can compare to the bacchanal of intolerance that erupted after the breakout of the war between Israel and Hamas.

The war has touched the nerve and stirred great passions among students. However, to the surprise of many, the sympathy expressed by many students was not on the side of those kidnapped, raped, and killed by Hamas. Rather, the most vocal and virulent protests condemned Israeli policies and even advocated a destruction of the state of Israel.<sup>42</sup>

As the events in this war evolved, the atmosphere of intolerance and repressive vengeance in colleges and universities thickened. The dueling among opposing factions made American campuses an unwelcome and even dangerous place. The wave of anti-Semitism engulfed many American schools, including such prominent institutions as Columbia, Harvard, and MIT. Numerous incidents of expressions of hate, intimidation, demonization, and anti-Semitic verbal and physical assaults on Jewish students and faculty captured media headlines. Due to anti-Semitic threats a prominent Jewish computer scientist at MIT had to resign from his position.<sup>43</sup> The Harvard administration was so concerned about anti-Semitic violence that it ordered a Jewish student group to lock up Menorah for the night to prevent acts of vandalism.<sup>44</sup> Antisemitic graffiti appeared in spaces designated for Jewish students at Loyola University in Chicago.<sup>45</sup>

Yola Ashkenazie, one of the demonstrators who protested against anti-Semitism at Columbia, commented in an interview that Jewish students on campus “feel unsafe”

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<sup>41</sup> George Leef, “The Growing Intolerance in Higher Education,” *National Review*, September 28, 2022. <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/the-growing-intolerance-in-higher-education/>.

<sup>42</sup> K. C. Johnson, “The University Horrors: Chapter and Verse.”

<sup>43</sup> Mike LaChance, “Prominent MIT Jewish Computer Scientist Resigns, Citing Anti-Semitism.”

<sup>44</sup> Mike LaChance, “Rabbi at Harvard Claims School Is Forcing Jewish Student Group to Lock Up Menorah at Night for Fear of Vandalism,” *Legal Insurrection* | (blog), December 17, 2023, <https://legalinsurrection.com/2023/12/rabbi-at-harvard-claims-school-is-forcing-jewish-student-group-to-lock-up-menorah-at-night-for-fear-of-vandalism/>.

<sup>45</sup> Mike LaChance, “Antisemitic Graffiti Found in Space Designated for Jewish Students at Loyola University in Chicago,” *Legal Insurrection*, February 5, 2024, <https://legalinsurrection.com/2024/02/antisemitic-graffiti-found-in-space-designated-for-jewish-students-at-loyola-university-in-chicago/>.

because “the rise in anti-Semitism on our campus has been abhorrent.”<sup>46</sup> Another Columbia student, a 19-year-old female, was charged with assaulting a fellow student over posters bearing the names and images of hostages being held by Hamas.<sup>47</sup> Students at Harvard’s Graduate Students for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Committee circulated a letter signed by more than two dozen other student groups in which they declared that they “hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence.” Student demonstrators were filmed tearing down posters of Israelis taken hostage by Hamas. At George Washington University students projected anti-Israeli messages onto a wall of the library, including ones that read “Glory to our Martyrs” and “Divestment From Zionist Genocide Now.”<sup>48</sup>

Students’ involvement in acts of intolerance, violence, and anti-Semitism produced a wave of outrage, as America watched aghast and in disbelief the display of moral misjudgement and confusion unfolding on American campuses. Critics were quick to point out that the attitudes expressed by students were no accident, but rather these attitudes were inculcated “by the universities and their DEI departments’ promotion of an ‘oppressed v. oppressor’ narrative, which identifies terrorists as the oppressed and the women they raped as their oppressors.”<sup>49</sup>

The social outrage caused by this display of moral confusion and insensitivity was so powerful that a significant trickle of college professors, but not students, walked back on their expressions of various degrees of support for Hamas they had made after the attack. They wanted to divert the accusation alleging that far-left professors are radicalizing students and heighten polarization.<sup>50</sup> At Columbia, for example, hundreds of faculty members criticized the statement from students and activists who wrote that the “weight of responsibility for the war and casualties undeniably lies with the Israeli extremist government and other Western governments, including the U.S. government.”<sup>51</sup>

As concerns about expressions of anti-Semitism among the college population grew, politicians also got into the act. New York governor Kathy Hochul issued a

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<sup>46</sup> Jocelyn Gecker, Chrissie Thimpson, and Michaewl Melia, “The Israel-Hamas War Has Roiled U.S. College Campuses,” *Associated Press*, October 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-college-free-speech-543aff623d5f54ad6529fe598ae48271>.

<sup>47</sup> Gecker, et al., “The Israel-Hamas War Has Roiled U.S. College Campuses.”

<sup>48</sup> Lauren Camera, “The War on College Campuses,” *U.S. News and World Report*, October 12, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2023-11-02/the-war-on-college-campuses>.

<sup>49</sup> Mike Gonzalez, “College Presidents Expose the Moral Rot within Their Institutions,” *Washington Examiner*, December 7, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Camera, “The War on College Campuses.”

<sup>51</sup> Camera, “The War on College Campuses.”

statement addressed to administrations of New York colleges and universities telling them to oppose the spread of anti-Semitism on campuses.<sup>52</sup> The U.S. House of Representatives summoned the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania to an inquiry that addressed the alarming rise of overt antisemitism on their campuses following the Hamas attacks on Israel. Their responses made it all too clear why one of the oldest and most disgraceful forms of bigotry flourishes today in academic circles.<sup>53</sup>

In response to acts of intolerance, even the White House, that is generally lenient toward student radicalism, issued a statement condemning campus anti-Semitism. The statement expressed horror about the “extremely disturbing pattern of anti-Semitic messages being conveyed on college campuses.” According to a White House spokesperson, “delegitimizing the State of Israel while praising the Hamas terrorist murderers who burned innocent people alive, or targeting Jewish students, is the definition of unacceptable—and the definition of anti-Semitism.”<sup>54</sup>

## 2. The War on Free Speech

Liberalism views tolerance and freedom of speech and expression as mutually co-dependent; they are supposed to work together. Tolerance sustains free speech. Without free speech tolerance has no meaning. The current turmoil is a severe test for both. Today’s politics of campus unrest has weakened them and pulled them apart. In the current environment they even come into conflict with each other. There is a widespread opinion today that freedom of speech contributes to the growth of intolerance and, therefore, it should be limited as a way of combatting intolerance.<sup>55</sup>

This opinion is quite popular and represents a new development in liberalism. Liberals have traditionally valued and celebrated differences. Their principal position has always been that differences play an important role in our social and political practice. The justification for limiting freedom of speech is in fact an argument for suppressing differences. The contention that free speech must be limited to constrain intolerance

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<sup>52</sup> Mike LaChance, “Kathy Hochul Warns New York Colleges and Universities to Address Anti-Semitism on Campus,” *Legal Insurrection*, December 10, 2023, <https://legalinsurrection.com/2023/12/kathy-hochul-warns-new-york-colleges-and-universities-to-address-anti-semitism-on-campus/>.

<sup>53</sup> Jay Greene, “College Presidents Just Showed America Their Moral Cowardice.” Fox News, December 7, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/college-presidents-showed-america-their-moral-cowardice>.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, “The University Horrors: Chapter and Verse.”

<sup>55</sup> The Editorial Board, “Campus Mobs Muzzle Free Speech: Our View.” *USA TODAY*, May 2, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/01/campus-protesters-free-speech-editorials-debates/100885962/>.

represents a significant departure from the traditional liberal position on differences. This view is against differences. It insists that differences lead to conflicts and pose a threat to social stability. In effect, the proponents of restricting free speech no longer see differences as an asset, but rather as a liability. No matter what justifications are used for imposing restrictions of free speech, the only conclusion that follows from them is that differences should be suppressed. This line of thinking goes against the traditional celebration of differences and diversity in liberalism. It represents an approach to the problem of difference that departs from the one that liberals have traditionally advocated. In effect, this approach proposes a new solution to the problem of difference. This solution solves the problem of differences by suppressing them: no differences, no problem.

Traditionally, the freedom of speech and expression has had a strong support in American academic community. Students, faculty, and administrators have always been very vocal in expressing their support for free speech. In the current unrest this attitude is rapidly changing. Students, for example, are increasingly turning against free speech. All too often, they resort to censoring and restricting speech, intimidating and silencing opponents, disinviting speakers, and even displaying violence toward individuals who express opposing views. Nevertheless, many of them continue to describe themselves as liberals. They continue to believe “that they remain committed to ‘difference’ and debate, even as they countenance a full-scale assault on diversity of outlook and opinion.”<sup>56</sup>

a) *Confirmation bias and the “safe space” mindset*

Restrictions of free speech are not a new development in American higher education. In fact, it has been decades in the making; the current unrest has merely intensified this trend. Several factors have contributed to this process. One of these factors is a mindset that has been adopted in American educational institutions.

In the traditional mindset of American educators, the mission of higher educational institutions was to provide a safe, secure, and comfortable space—a kind of home away from home—where students could focus on their intellectual development and professional goals. At the same time, an integral part of this mission was to create an environment where students would be intellectually challenged, where they would be confronted with new and unfamiliar ideas, some of which they may find objectionable, disturbing, and even offensive. The general belief was that by denying students the safety of their habitual worldview, by destabilizing their mental comfort zone, and disrupting their intellectual universe, schools would stir students’ curiosity and help them advance intellectually. This approach would promote students’ self-confidence, enhance their mental powers, and help them to control better the creative capacity of their mind. In other words, students were to feel safe and secure physically, but unsafe intellectually.

However, in the past two decades this traditional mindset has given way to a new vision that has extended the traditional requirement of physical safety and security to the intellectual sphere. Educational institutions have taken to the view that they should also

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<sup>56</sup> Boyers, “Liberal Intolerance.”

provide a space where students would feel intellectually and emotionally secure, not just physically.

The maturation of this new mindset has been gradual and incremental. Intellectual and cultural developments were important contributors. Advances in child psychology introduced new ideas that have resulted in the emergence of new practices in rearing and bringing up children. The innovations emphasized the need for positive reinforcement, affirmation and validation of child's self, the fostering of self-esteem, and emotional gratification, comfort, and support. All these innovations became part of the widely accepted attitudes and practices adopted in many American families. As new attitudes encouraged by new practices have become part of the culture of American homes, they have also percolated into the expectations that prospective students and their parents have brought to colleges and universities. As a result, many American schools have adopted this "home away from home" mindset. Today, many students turn to colleges they decide to attend for much more than intellectual stimulation and professional training. They look for emotional affirmation and validation. They seek an acknowledgment of their wounds and traumas, the validation of their ego, affirmation of their self, and much more.

Schools are more than willing to meet these demands. Under the conditions of the declining population growth, the competition of American colleges and universities for students (and their dollars) have become fierce. Applicants' choices depend on how far a school is willing to go to meet their exacting demands. Schools have become merchants of amenities that challenge imagination. They peddle tantalizing dining options, designer's living arrangements, and all sorts of amusements and entertainment. They have turned students into sophisticated and highly discriminating and demanding customers; and, as the saying goes, customer is always right.

Students demands and expectations have not been limited to physical amenities and comforts of life. They expect the college to accommodate and confirm their bias (the special term for this expectation is "confirmation bias"), not to undermine it. They believe that the ideas circulating on campus should confirm the set of fundamental beliefs they hold and their worldview. They seek to control the intellectual content of what they learn and the cultural climate of their colleges, which includes also who teaches, what is being taught, and how it is being taught.

Both administration and faculty have positively responded and even encouraged students' demands and expectations. In accordance with the new mindset, colleges and universities increasingly cast themselves as much more than just educational institutions. Most, if not all of them, see themselves as "stewards of students' welfare, guarantors of their safety, their places of refuge and precincts of healing."<sup>57</sup>

Administrators and faculty have significantly restructured the educational practice at their institutions. They double down on implementing the surrogate-parent function shaped by the "home-away-from-home paradigm." Faculty receive reminders from administrators daily to "take temperature" of students for slightest signs of distress, particularly in an event of global, national, or local calamities.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bruni, "With War Raging, Colleges Confront a Crisis of Their Own Making."

<sup>58</sup> Bruni, "With War Raging, Colleges Confront a Crisis of Their Own Making."

The restructuring has had a profound effect on power relations on campus. Students have acquired considerable clout and leverage that makes possible for them to influence the choice of faculty, initiate curricular changes, and demand new courses.<sup>59</sup> Today, faculty depend heavily on students, particularly for their employment. Course enrollments and student evaluations are perhaps some of the most important factors that make possible for faculty, particularly non-tenured faculty, to keep their jobs. In today's climate, faculty often choose to accommodate students and yield to their pressure. Students are aware of their powers, and they use them. They question content, teaching, and grading in courses they take. The pressure faculty experience from students is a major reason for the galloping grade inflation in American schools. At Yale, for example, A has become the median grade.<sup>60</sup> Present conditions compel faculty members to be far more lenient and accommodating toward students than they have been in the past. They are more likely to grant generous extensions; they write gingerly comments on students' work and progress. The relationship between students and faculty today is more about coddling, comforting, patting on the back, validating even trivial efforts, and pampering students' egos. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2020-21 fiscal year, private four-year colleges spent 40 percent of their budgets on student support services. Over the span of the past 20 years, the dollar amount spent on servicing students has more than tripled.<sup>61</sup>

The proliferation of the culture of diversity and inclusion has led to the emergence of the concept of safe spaces—the idea that educational institutions should serve as haven where students are protected.<sup>62</sup> Many colleges and universities take supine attitude and even encourage students' hostility to ideas they find disagreeable. They take for granted the odd notion that hearing unwelcome views is somehow harmful to students.<sup>63</sup> The new attitude has paved the way for many new concepts and phenomena on campuses that were until relatively recently unknown. The “safe space” mindset has led to the introduction of speech codes. Schools have adopted rules against language that may

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<sup>59</sup> Bruni, “With War Raging, Colleges Confront a Crisis of Their Own Making.”

<sup>60</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire,” *CNN*, December 10, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/08/opinions/israel-palestine-antisemitism-american-universities-zakaria/index.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Ginia Bellafante, “On Elite Campuses, a New Protest Demand: Unwavering Support,” *The New York Times*, October 20, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/20/nyregion/college-protest-israel-palestine.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>63</sup> Glenn Harlan Reynolds, “Intolerant Society,” *New Criterion*, vol. 41, no. 10 (June 2023), pp. 41–44, p. 41.



offend some group or individuals.<sup>64</sup> Universities advise against speaking, acting, and even dressing in ways that some students may find offensive,<sup>65</sup> as Erika Christakis, an instructor and the wife of a professor and administrator at Yale, has sadly learned. A student mob verbally assaulted her and her husband, also a Yale professor and administrator, after she had provocatively questioned university edicts against “potentially offensive Halloween costumes.”<sup>66</sup>

Coded terms--such as “microaggression,” “white supremacist,” “hate speech,” “transphobia,” “sexist,” “racist,” and many others—help identify and suppress real or even potential offenders. The vagueness of these terms makes possible their gratuitous and even indiscriminate application. Many campuses today require using gender-neutral language and only those personal pronouns that are allowed by speech codes. Self-appointed campus vigilantes can use “bias response teams” and Title IX Star Chamber courts to hold responsible and “call out” individuals or groups if someone takes offense to what they say or do, however insignificant, and regardless of whether offense is intended or not; the impact on the audience, not the act itself, is what matters. At students’ requests hundreds of schools have created “bias response teams” that take anonymous reports on acts of micro-aggressions. A Cato survey of 2017 has found that 65% of college students support the creation of “bias response teams.”<sup>67</sup> Another Cato/YouGov Survey reports a high degree of support for restricting speech among iGen and Millennials, more so than in previous student generations.<sup>68</sup>

Examples abound. A student at Stanford University was reported for reading Adolf Hitler’s “Mein Kampf” through Stanford’s “Protected Identity Harm” system where students can report alleged “hate crimes” and “crimes based on hate,” as well as illegal/unlawful and/or unconstitutional behaviors.<sup>69</sup> The episode with Yoel Inbar, an associate professor of psychology from the University of Toronto, is indicative of the climate on college campuses. Professor Inbar was close to joining the UCLA’s Department of Psychology that supported his hiring. Students effectively vetoed the

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<sup>64</sup> Greg Lukianoff, “The Latest Victims of the Free-Speech Crisis,” *The Atlantic* (blog), November 28, 2023. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/11/pro-palestine-speech-college-campuses/676155/>.

<sup>65</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>66</sup> Bruni, “With War Raging, Colleges Confront a Crisis of Their Own Making.”

<sup>67</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong Pt 3: Political Intolerance on Campus.”

<sup>68</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong Pt 3: Political Intolerance on Campus.”

<sup>69</sup> Samuel J. Abrams and Harvey A. Silverglate, “A College Campus Is the Last Place That Should Promote a Culture of Intolerance,” *The Boston Globe*, August 21, 2023. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/08/21/opinion/wokeism-college-campus-diversity-equity-inclusion/>.

hiring by petitioning the administration to withdraw the offer due to Inbar's views on diversity. Students have effectively become censors of what they see and hear.<sup>70</sup> What speech counts as "racist" or "sexist" is of course in the eye of the beholder, as evidenced by attempts to silence public discourse on racially and sexually charged topics at Wesleyan, Yale and Northwestern universities.<sup>71</sup> Recent incidents suggest students (and sometimes their professors) may have rather expansive views of who belongs to the category of "extreme speaker."<sup>72</sup> Many of those who have been classified as "extreme speakers" are hardly the names that come to mind when you think about extremism. They have included, for example, Suzanne Venker, a critic of feminism, Condoleezza Rice, former secretary of state, Christine Lagarde, International Monetary Fund Managing Director, and Narendra Modi, the Indian prime minister.<sup>73</sup>

The best illustrations of the atmosphere that today prevails on American campuses come from students. Abigail Anthony, for example, describes mandatory freshman orientations that looked to her as "essentially indoctrination sessions to bring incoming students into conformity with the campus" and the discomfort she felt during these orientations. She also recalls that following the death of George Floyd in May 2020, virtually all student organizations adopted an "anti-racist" mission with an emphasis on "inclusivity." Aryaan Misra recalls a fifteen-page list of words that cannot be used during a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion orientation. "I couldn't say," he remembers, "'born male,' I had to say, 'sex assigned at birth male.' 'Ladies and gentlemen' should be replaced with 'folks,' and 'opposite sexes' should be changed to 'all genders.'"<sup>74</sup> Jahmarri Green, at Friends University, quickly learned his lesson when he disputed a claim made by gender activists. Enforcers of uniformity have made Christopher Reyes, a Hispanic, feel uncomfortable when he announced his Republican sympathies. All this was going with full knowledge, connivance, and even complicity of school administrators.<sup>75</sup>

Commentators and media pundits have often suggested that students today are simply too quick to take offense, and in some cases are taking offense when it is not intended. Students frequently demand that they be insulated from any viewpoints or

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<sup>70</sup> Abrams and Silverglate, "A College Campus Is the Last Place That Should Promote a Culture of Intolerance."

<sup>71</sup> Rampell, "Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America's College Campuses."

<sup>72</sup> Rampell, "Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America's College Campuses."

<sup>73</sup> Rampell, "Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America's College Campuses."

<sup>74</sup> Rikki Schlott, "Five College Students Speak out against Campus 'Wokeness,'" *New York Post*, January 18, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/01/15/five-college-students-speak-out-against-campus-wokeness/>.

<sup>75</sup> Schlott, "Five College Students Speak out against Campus 'Wokeness.'"

behaviors that make them feel disrespected or unwelcome.<sup>76</sup> Peter Coleman, a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University and the director of the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, explains the heightened intolerance among students by the projection of their inner fears and anxieties; he also sees that students use intolerance as a way to bring meaning to their lives. “There are many factors,” he has commented in an interview, “contributing to these young people being really easily triggered and outraged and part of it is that it’s a place to locate your anxiety and find purpose in what seems like a purposeless world.”<sup>77</sup>

b) *The politicization of American campuses*

Another important factor that has contributed to the proliferation of censorship on American campuses is the politicization of American education. The politicization of the educational system has not been sudden or accidental. It has been a process shaped by developments both inside and outside the academia that has taken almost three decades. Perhaps the single most important development was the formulation of a new strategy by progressive liberals who were looking for innovative ways to advance their agenda.

The last quarter of the 20th century was disappointing for progressive liberals. In the wake of the lackluster presidency of Jimmy Carter, progressives suffered several major setbacks. The triumph of conservative Republicanism under Ronald Reagan and George Bush reversed America’s course on domestic policies that were central to the progressives for decades. The cautious centrist drift under Bill Clinton also did not offer many hopes that could invigorate the progressive movement. In response to these seismic challenges, progressive liberals were searching for a strategy and resources that would bring new life to their movement.<sup>78</sup> They put their hopes on American elites and the professional class. In pursuit of this goal, they engaged in concerted efforts to gain more supporters in these groups.

Progressives have always had a strong presence among elites and professionals. However, the new strategic shift sought unchallenged domination, not just strong presence. Progressive liberals aimed at making a dramatic expansion of their support among government employees, bureaucrats in regulatory agencies, functionaries in federal and state legislatures, as well as in courts, non-government organizations, and in the media.<sup>79</sup> The task was monumental, and progressives had to find the way to accomplishing it. They found their key to success in education.

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<sup>76</sup> Eisgruber, “What Is Happening on Our Campuses?”

<sup>77</sup> Camera, “The War on College Campuses.”

<sup>78</sup> Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (New York, Harper, 2017); Jonathan Rauch, “Speaking as a . . .” *The New York Review of Books*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/11/09/mark-lilla-liberal-speaking/>.

<sup>79</sup> Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal*; Rauch, “Speaking as a . . .”

Progressives realized that the educational system was an enormous resource with huge potential for enhancing their role in shaping America's future. Most, if not all, members of elites and professional classes attended colleges and universities at some point of their career. Getting an advanced degree was and still is a kind of rite of passage that offers a ticket to membership in the exclusive and privileged group that has a capacity for disproportionately high influence in the country. By establishing their dominant position in and control of the educational system, by promulgating the progressive mindset and culture among the vast population of American students, progressives hoped to clinch their eventual hold on power in the country. This politically motivated logic precipitated the progressive drive on American campuses. The competition for young minds was to be won in classrooms.

The success of the drive for control of the educational system depended heavily on faculty and administration. It required placing a vast number of progressive-minded administrators and teachers in institutions of higher learning, transforming curriculums, and introducing new courses and programs that would become venues for advancing progressive goals. The drive has been one of the most successful ventures initiated by progressive reformers. It has been the most singularly important factor that has influenced the politicization of American colleges and universities. The results are impressive. The system of American higher education has witnessed a dramatic expansion of courses and programs that reflect many issues central to the progressive agenda. They deal with a variety of topics, including gender and sexuality, transgender issues, race and racial equality, the rights of women, feminism, abortion, the climate change and the protection of the environment, social justice, and much else. New subjects crop up almost daily. They are primarily about political agendas, not academic fields. Today, for example, students can actually major in "diversity, equity and inclusion."<sup>80</sup> Schools have been pursuing aggressively the hiring of members of the faculty who offer the right set of courses. As Fareed Zakaria has sarcastically remarked, a white male studying US presidency "does not have a prayer of getting tenure at a major history department in America."<sup>81</sup> Institutions of higher learning have also promoted various extracurricular programs and initiatives centered on progressive issues.

These policies have profoundly transformed American educational institutions. They have become more homogenous, more politicized, and more inclined toward progressivism. Political pluralism is all but gone from American academia. Liberal arts faculties in elite colleges and universities are predominantly left-oriented. Conservatives who have survived in the new environment are largely pariahs. The number of registered Democrats among members of the faculty outnumber Republicans by 20 to one; in social sciences and humanities, the ratio is even higher—40 to one.

Popular perceptions also speak to the domination of education by progressives. Eric Kaufmann has conducted a poll in a sample of almost 600 Americans across the political spectrum, asking them what percentage of American academics in social sciences and humanities they think are Republicans. According to the poll, a typical

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<sup>80</sup> Zakaria, "Why University Presidents Are under Fire."

<sup>81</sup> Zakaria, "Why University Presidents Are under Fire."

Trump voter believes the numbers are 65% Democrats and 35% Republicans. The real numbers are closer to 75.5% in favor of Democrats. A survey of Harvard faculty has shown that a mere 1.5% were in the Republican camp. The figures for political donations across Ivy League schools are also dramatic and show the split of 96 to 4 in favor of the Democrats. Even schools in red states show a strong leaning toward Democrats.<sup>82</sup>

The politicization of education is not just an American phenomenon. The situation in other countries is very similar. While in Great Britain over 50% of voters support conservatives, in academic institutions less than 12% do. Across Europe and in Canada the numbers are similar, as David Goodhart shows in his book *The Road to Somewhere*.<sup>83</sup>

The politicization of the academia has exposed campuses to the vicissitudes and perils of politics. Campus interactions have gradually conformed to the logic of political competition. They are no longer about acquisition of knowledge or search for truth; they are about winning and domination. The imperative of defeating opponents prevails over all other concerns and interests. It dictates the means to this end. Censorship is one of the most important. Political competition on campuses relies on silencing opponents, denying them voice, and depriving them of access to public forums. The mission of higher education and freedom of speech are two biggest losers to this transformation.

Christopher Reyes's account of his college experience gives a good idea of the situation on the ground that is typical for many colleges—a kind of view from below. As the president of Allegheny's College Republican chapter, Chris experiences constant blowbacks from students who criticize him for his association with the Republican Party. The question that they most often ask of him is as crude as it is racist: "Aren't you a Hispanic?" Attempts to bend his will and make him conform to the majority opinion are a vivid illustration of the breakdown of what many think should be the normal intercourse among students. They are a sad result of the politicization.<sup>84</sup>

The hearing at the U.S. House of Representatives that addressed the alarming rise of anti-Semitism on the campuses of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania made painfully clear the harmful effects of the politicization and restrictions on free speech. They led to the flourishing of one of the oldest and most disgraceful forms of bigotry in these eminent educational institutions.<sup>85</sup> As Fareed Zakaria has cogently

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<sup>82</sup> Eric Kaufmann, "Even Democrats Are Waking up to America's Campus Crisis," *UnHerd.com The Post*, December 11, 2023. <https://unherd.com/the-post/even-democrats-are-waking-up-to-americas-campus-crisis/>.

<sup>83</sup> Joel Kotkin, "Is Gen Z Turning against Western Civilisation?" *Spiked*, December 5, 2023, <https://www.spiked-online.com/2023/12/05/is-gen-z-turning-against-western-civilisation/?fbclid=IwAR1QGaR8AjjfTe59ayvq7J9N2R2W5bPH0oFPkSqVKqcZO67plzm7K7Sa0>.

<sup>84</sup> Schlott, "Five College Students Speak out against Campus 'Wokeness.'"

<sup>85</sup> Jay Greene, "College presidents just showed America their moral cowardice,"

observed, the testimonies of the presidents of the three schools show that top schools in America ““are no longer seen as bastions of excellence, but as partisan outfits.”<sup>86</sup> The results of their research convince Milos Brocic and Andrew Miles from the University of Toronto that today’s higher education promotes in students a kind of “moral absolutism.”<sup>87</sup> Bročić and Miles are not alone in their perception that many American educational institutions have become de facto ideological monasteries.<sup>88</sup>

### c) *Intolerance and censorship*

There is another and potentially very dangerous development related to restrictions of freedom of speech and expression. It reveals a fundamental problem that liberalism is unlikely to remedy. Liberalism has traditionally associated tolerance and free speech. In fact, it has deemed that the two are inseparable and mutually co-dependent. In their view, the two are supposed to work together: tolerance is supposed to sustain free speech, and free speech should promote tolerance. Liberalism has regarded the two to be closely interrelated, if not, indeed, inseparable.

The current turmoil puts the liberal view of the inseparability of tolerance and free speech to a severe test. As a result of their experience, liberals are beginning to recognize that their view of tolerance and freedom of speech as co-dependents has serious flaws. Their practice increasingly embraces the idea that the two are not simply separable but that their separation is a vital necessity under the conditions of the current unrest. There is a widespread opinion today among liberals that the freedom of speech is a major factor that contributes to the growth of intolerance. Therefore, in their mind, restrictions of freedom of speech are perfectly justifiable as a way of stemming the rise of intolerance and conflicts.<sup>89</sup>

This widespread opinion represents a new development in liberalism. Liberals have traditionally valued and celebrated differences. Their principal position has been that differences play an important in our social and political practice. Restrictions of free

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*Fox News*, December 7, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/college-presidents-showed-america-their-moral-cowardice>

<sup>86</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>87</sup> Miloš Bročić and Andrew Miles, “College and the ‘Culture War’: Assessing Higher Education’s Influence on Moral Attitudes,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 86, no. 5 (October 1, 2021), pp. 856–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224211041094>.

<sup>88</sup> J. D. Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance,” *Reason.Com*, October 1, 2021. <https://reason.com/2021/10/01/universities-are-teaching-the-wrong-skills-and-morals/>.

<sup>89</sup> The Editorial Board, “Campus Mobs Muzzle Free Speech: Our View.” *USA TODAY*, May 2, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/01/campus-protesters-free-speech-editorials-debates/100885962/>.

speech are in fact a form of suppression of differences. The new view implies that differences lead to conflict and pose a threat to social stability, and, therefore, are undesirable. Liberals no longer see differences as an asset, but rather as a liability.

This new development represents a significant departure from the traditional liberal stance on differences. No matter what justifications liberals use for imposing restrictions on free speech, such restrictions suppress differences. This line of thinking goes against the traditional celebration of differences and diversity. It represents an approach to the problem of difference that contradicts the liberal tradition. In effect, the approach proposes a new solution to the problem of difference. The new solution is in suppressing differences, rather than tolerating them and promoting civility; the new solution is, no differences, no problem.

Quite a few episodes that have taken place during the current unrest illustrate this point. During the upheaval associated with the war between Israel and Hamas, Santa Ono, president of the University of Michigan, barred students from voting on two resolutions related to the war in Gaza. He characterized them as “controversial and divisive.” In his online post President Ono thus justified his decision: “The proposed resolutions have done more to stoke fear, anger, and animosity on our campus than they would ever accomplish as recommendations to the university.”<sup>90</sup> During protests in support of Palestinians, the administration of Barnard College removed without warning the section of the webpage that expressed support for the Palestinian people. This decision caused a crisis. In response to the inquiry about the removal, the college administration said that the statement and links it had provided were “impermissible political speech.”<sup>91</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The days when American higher education proudly professed its embrace of pluralism and controversy are over. Today anyone who may say something that offends “zealots” is more than likely to face an academic lynch mob that has real power and is more than willing to use it to punish offenders.<sup>92</sup> Today, dominant majorities determine

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<sup>90</sup> Mike LeChance, “Anti-Israel Student Protesters March at University of Michigan and Wayne State U.,” *Legal Insurrection*, December 10, 2023. <https://legalinsurrection.com/2023/12/anti-israel-student-protesters-march-at-university-of-michigan-and-wayne-state-u/>.

<sup>91</sup> Sharon Otterman, “Barnard College’s Restrictions on Political Speech Prompt Outcry,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/24/nyregion/barnard-college-free-speech-restrictions-israel-hamas-war.html>.

<sup>92</sup> George Leef, “The Growing Intolerance in Higher Education,” *National Review*, September 28, 2022, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/the-growing-intolerance-in-higher-education/>.

what one can and cannot say publicly on campuses. There is what one might call a “party line” on many topics that enforces conformity. Those who offer resistance face unpleasant confrontations or even removal from campus. Summarizing the troubling trend in American colleges and universities, Professor Richard Vedder writes: “It is interesting but depressing to me that the more eminent a college or university is perceived to be, the more outrageous are efforts by administrators to stifle individual expression and enforce a numbing conformity of ideas reminiscent of universities in the old Soviet Union or Nazi Germany.”<sup>93</sup> Zachary Greenberg who has served for a long time as a senior program officer for campus rights advocacy at FIRE (Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression), echoes this assessment. Summarizing the dangerous trends in American institutions of higher learning, Greenberg offers the following observation on years of his experience: “We are seeing increasing rates of self-censorship, increasing rates of intolerance toward opposing ideas.”<sup>94</sup>

Sean Stevens makes the following claim: “A generation of young people has turned, en masse, against free speech. There has been a big shift in the population, and we should all be very alarmed that millions of students are turning into “SJWs” [social justice warriors].<sup>95</sup> Alex Morey, director of campus rights advocacy at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, also observes: “This is an incredibly difficult free speech moment on campuses, where both sides have deeply passionate, entrenched, intractable views.”<sup>96</sup> Student groups from at least 76 schools have signed a common list of demands (not proposals, not suggestions!) for administrations of their school. These demands include the introduction of speech codes, public apologies, and resignations in cases of dissonant voices.<sup>97</sup>

The spread of campus censorship is not a momentary event in response to some extraordinary development, such as the war in Gaza. Greg Lukianoff confirms that it is an integral part of the trend that started long before the Israel-Hamas war.<sup>98</sup> In 2023, FIRE has received 1,312 complaints about possible free-speech violations, which is lower

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<sup>93</sup> Leef, “The Growing Intolerance in Higher Education.”

<sup>94</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>95</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong. Part 1.”

<sup>96</sup> Gecker, et al., “The Israel-Hamas War Has Roiled U.S. College Campuses.”

<sup>97</sup> Rampell, “Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America’s College Campuses”; Leah Libresco, “Here Are The Demands From Students Protesting Racism At 51 Colleges,” *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), December 3, 2015. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/here-are-the-demands-from-students-protesting-racism-at-51-colleges/>.

<sup>98</sup> Lukianoff, “The Latest Victims of the Free-Speech Crisis.”



than 1,394 submissions in 2022, 1,445 in 2021, and 1,526 in 2020.<sup>99</sup> The Challey survey has found that 74 percent of students surveyed believe that professors should be reported for saying something found offensive, while 26 percent disagree; 81 percent of liberal students and 53 percent of conservative students agree that a professor who is offensive should be reported.<sup>100</sup> Reporting individuals deemed offensive relates also to students: 66 percent of liberal students and 37 percent of conservative students have stated that they would also report peers who made offensive comments.<sup>101</sup> About 71 percent of freshmen surveyed last fall said they agreed with the statement that “colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus.” This question has been asked on and off for a couple of decades, and 2015 logged the highest percentage of positive responses on record. For comparison, the share in the early 1990s hovered around 60 percent; also high, but not as high as it is today.<sup>102</sup>

These numbers are just a few indications of the illiberal turn on American campuses. The turn is an ominous development, particularly in the general climate of the growing polarization of American society and politics today. The students who engage in acts of intolerance, who demand suppression of dissonant voices, and who are willing to stifle opposition will graduate from their schools and enter the mainstream of American life. If they bring the same views and attitudes with them, freedom in America will be, indeed, under a serious threat.

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<sup>99</sup> Lukianoff, “The Latest Victims of the Free-Speech Crisis.”

<sup>100</sup> Abrams and Silverglate, “A College Campus Is the Last Place That Should Promote a Culture of Intolerance.”

<sup>101</sup> Abrams and Silverglate, “A College Campus Is the Last Place That Should Promote a Culture of Intolerance.”

<sup>102</sup> Rampell, “Liberal Intolerance Is on the Rise on America’s College Campuses.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### Current Perspectives on the Campus Unrest

The turmoil on American campuses is a source of much concern among the American public. Many researchers, journalists, and commentators have been covering the alarming developments in the American institutions of higher learning. They are trying to make sense of the unrest, offer explanations of its possible causes, and make recommendations on ways of addressing the problems it creates. This section will discuss the insights and proposals offered by this vast body of contributions.

#### *Explanations of the Illiberal Turn*

There are numerous books and articles that provide insights into the rise of unrest and its illiberal turn. They differ, often significantly, in their approach. Some of them focus on individual factors that, in the opinion of observers, have had impact on the rise of intolerance. Others are taking a more in-depth look into the causes of the unrest in general. Neither individually nor collectively they offer what may count as a comprehensive explanation. However, each covers a particular aspect of the complex reality, and each deserves attention.

#### 1. Lame Institutional Policies in Response to the Rising Unrest

A fair number of commentators attribute the illiberal turn to supine attitudes toward instances of intolerance and free speech violations on the part of administrators. They argue that leaders of educational institutions have not responded adequately and in time to the rising threats. Lulled by their complacent routines and mired in their dull and unoriginal thinking and inane approaches, those in charge of educational institutions have not taken resolute actions against intolerance and violations of free speech. Rather than being proactive, they have taken refuge in escaping the responsibility by echoing opinions of the majority on campus; worse still, they have often simply resorted to nebulous remarks or even remain completely silent.<sup>103</sup>

The case of Harvard is very indicative in this regard. For several days after the Hamas attacked civilians and civilian targets in Israel, took hostages, and killed children, Harvard administration refused to take a resolute stand on the issue. When Harvard students erupted with anti-Semitic accusations and demands, when a group of Harvard faculty accused the institutional leaders of failing to protect free speech, Harvard's president Claudine Gay finally joined 17 other senior Harvard administrators in signing a letter that merely said that they were heartbroken and distressed about "the death and

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<sup>103</sup> K. C. Johnson, "The University Horrors: Chapter and Verse," *Commentary Magazine*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/kc-johnson/anti-semitic-university-horrors/>.

destruction” of “the war in Israel and Gaza now under way.”<sup>104</sup> The only effect that this meek response produced was a wave of criticism in the media and in Congress.

In an opinion piece about the growing intolerance on college campuses that appeared in *The New York Times*, two Stanford University professors blamed “the failure of higher education to provide students with the kind of shared intellectual framework that we call ‘civic education.’” The article squarely put the blame on the leadership of educational institutions for failing to fulfill their responsibility and “to equip students to live in a democratic society whose members will inevitably disagree on many things.”<sup>105</sup>

## 2. Blaming excessively restrictive administrative policies

There are other critics who, by contrast, blame the growing radicalism and intolerance among students on excessively restrictive policies by administrations. An article published in *The USA Today* has argued that many college administrators have played a significant role in provoking the eruption of intolerant attitudes by limiting students’ freedom of expression. For decades, the article points out, leaders in many colleges and universities, have been fighting in courts to keep their restrictive policies on expression in place. The article cites the extensive list of “ridiculous restrictions” compiled by FIRE.

The example of Fairmont State University in West Virginia illustrates this argument. Only in the fall of 2023 the administration of the University finally accepted the right of students to gather signatures on petitions without the school’s permission. Regis University in Colorado shut down a student sale of baked goods that charged prices based on the buyers’ race, gender, religion, or sexuality, which was the way students used to promote affirmative action. One may agree or disagree with the decision of students who organized this sale, but one feels compelled to respect their right to make such decision. The administration of the University of South Alabama tried to force a student to take down a Trump sign from his dorm room.<sup>106</sup> Critics claim that such restrictive policies were bound to provoke intolerant responses.

## 3. The Monoculture on American campuses

There is a widely accepted view that the rise of intolerance among students is an effect of the decline of diversity on campuses. This decline has not been sudden and certainly not unexpected. It is a result of a long evolution shaped by many factors. Those who followed

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<sup>104</sup> Johnson, “The University Horrors: Chapter and Verse.”

<sup>105</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>106</sup> The Editorial Board, “Campus Mobs Muzzle Free Speech.”

developments in academic communities over the past few decades have repeatedly reported that a left-wing monoculture has been increasingly gaining ground in American institutions of higher learning. Some have sounded alarm long before the beginning of the current turmoil.<sup>107</sup> In their book *The Diversity Myth*, Peter Thiel and his co-author argue that the monoculture emerged out of concerted campaigns that involved students, faculty, and administrators. The intention of these campaigns was to make student communities more diverse and inclusive. Ironically, however, they have resulted in declining diversity and thorough politicization of academic communities. The progressive ideology that is central to campus monoculture offers theoretical perspectives, as well as views and opinions on many current events and developments. The woke ideology has shaped stable dominant majorities on many American campuses.<sup>108</sup> The decline in diversity has been running parallel with the rise of such stable majorities.

As has already been mentioned, the process of homogenization of American campuses has been a gradual process that involved many aspects. Hiring policies was one important tool of the homogenization, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Hiring for new academic positions has increasingly and primarily been centered on race and gender of applicants. The preference for minorities is often part of the advertisement for a position. Fareed Zakaria, who can hardly be accused of having right-wing sympathies, noted that courses on U.S. presidency have not been in high demand on the academic market.<sup>109</sup> Also, in many instances the preferred courses advertised in hiring are largely about marginalized and disempowered groups.<sup>110</sup> New subjects shaped to fit predominantly left-wing political agendas, rather than academic fields, crop up every day. In many prominent colleges and universities students can actually now major in diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>111</sup>

Homogeneity on campus comes from two directions. On one hand, the increased homogeneity among faculty and administrators leaves little room for challenging shared progressive beliefs. It sends a strong message to students that there is a moral consensus. When there are no challenges to this consensus, it appears to be naturally true and is, therefore, unquestionable.<sup>112</sup>

The tendency toward homogenization also comes from the process of socialization that affects students as members of the campus community. Colleges and universities are not simply educational institutions. They also take students through the rites of passage to professional classes. Their latent function is to socialize students in dominant culture by exposing them to “proper” ideas, etiquettes, aesthetic tastes, and

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<sup>107</sup> Eric Kaufmann, “Even Democrats Are Waking up to America’s Campus Crisis.”

<sup>108</sup> Peter Thiel, “The Diversity Myth,” *New Criterion*, vol. 41, no. 10 (June 2023), pp. 4–8.

<sup>109</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>110</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>112</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

moral convictions that will facilitate the transition to the higher social status. In their interactions students voice the beliefs and views that are mainstream on campus and scorn the ones that are considered unacceptable. These appropriated beliefs and ideas serve as codes for students' admission to the advanced social stage, which, in turn, means access to good jobs and high social status.

According to the scholarship on this subject, universities are the primary institution for mobility into the professional classes. Consequently, their latent function is to socialize students into "dominant status culture by teaching proper etiquette, aesthetic tastes, and moral evaluations that serve to legitimize their advantaged class position." Students often repeat "acceptable" opinions and scorn "unacceptable" ideas because they think that this strategy will help them gain access to good jobs and high social status. That access doesn't come cheap, either.<sup>113</sup>

Political diversity is one casualty in the homogenization of American campuses. Although students' views and opinions may still vary, they largely represent a broad field of progressive left-wing ideology. Conservative or Republican affiliations among students are extremely rare. The widely cited survey of social and political views of American faculty, conducted fifteen years ago, found that 44% of faculty were liberal, 46% described themselves as moderates, and only 9% of all faculty identified themselves as conservatives.<sup>114</sup>

A more recent survey conducted by FIRE in 2023 reveals comparable results: out of roughly 1,500 four-year college professors 50% are identified as liberals, 17% as moderates, and 26% as conservatives.<sup>115</sup> In a 2016 article for *The New York Times*, Samuel Adams, a professor of political science at Sarah Lawrence College who studied extensively ideology on campuses, thus characterized the overall situation in American higher education: "It appears that a fairly liberal student body is being taught by a very liberal professoriate—and socialized by an incredibly liberal group of administrators."<sup>116</sup> Describing the homogeneity in American higher education, Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, has observed: "There is an extremely intense, fundamental social justice religion that's taking over, not all students, but a very strong [space] of it, at all our colleges and universities."<sup>117</sup>

Bročić and Miles also agree that "increasing political homogeneity among faculty and/or administrators could create a sense of moral consensus that leaves shared liberal beliefs unchallenged or might even make them seem naturally true." The "growth in moral certainty," they add, "might also be explained by socialization into the official

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<sup>113</sup> Tuccille, "Universities Are Teaching Intolerance."

<sup>114</sup> Camera, "The War on College Campuses."

<sup>115</sup> Camera, *The War on College Campuses*."

<sup>116</sup> Camera, *The War on College Campuses*.

<sup>117</sup> Tuccille, "Universities Are Teaching Intolerance."

culture of dominant institutions.”<sup>118</sup> Bročić and Miles are not alone in their perception that many American universities have become de facto ideological monasteries. According to J. D. Tuccille, students emerge from universities with very weak commitments to traditional social order and its norms. Many, particularly those in humanities, arts, and social sciences, come to believe that morals in American society must change “to remedy historical (and current) injustices”—a kind of moral progressivism. Students also believe that the moral principles they have learned represent “moral truth”—the attitude that shapes their moral absolutism, which makes them less predisposed to feel sympathy for those with different views and opinions.<sup>119</sup> As James Holbrook, a clinical professor of law, opines: “Our confirmation biases result in ‘us’ versus ‘them’ tribalism which hardens our worldviews and diminishes our capacity and willingness to feel empathy for ‘Others.’”<sup>120</sup>

#### 4. Anxiety, Confusion, and Mental Disorders

Many contributions that discuss the unrest on American campuses point to moods and attitudes among students as a major contributing factor. The massive data they provide show that students today have a very bleak outlook on life. A large percentage of the student body today is pessimistic about their prospects for the future; they have low ambitions and expectations, and few career or life goals. The main argument is that students’ dispositional negativity has a significant effect on the rise of intolerance and aggressive behavior on American campuses.

Many researchers argue that one important reason for this dispositional negativity is the declining state of the educational system. The simple fact is that the educational system is failing millions of young Americans. It does not teach them what they need most in life. According to this view, American institutions of higher learning have been pursuing a variety of political and cultural agendas to the detriment of basic knowledge and skills. The intention to provide access to higher education to young people of very different backgrounds is admirable, but somewhere along the way it has morphed into a dogmatic ideology that has transformed colleges and universities into experimental sites for social engineering that train future social justice warriors, imbue them with the spirit of progressive ideology, and prepare them for waging culture wars on behalf of progressive agendas. The system does not advance academic merits and skills.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Bročić and Miles, “College and the ‘Culture War’”; Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

<sup>119</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

<sup>120</sup> James Holbrook, “Two Sources of Turmoil in a Divided America,” *S.J. Quinney College of Law* (blog), February 27, 2017. <https://www.law.utah.edu/news-articles/two-sources-of-turmoil-in-a-divided-america/>.

<sup>121</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

Many students fail to achieve adequate proficiency averaged across reading, writing, science and math, geography, history and civics.<sup>122</sup> Their hyperactivity on and excessive use of social media reduces their human interactions and increases personal anxiety disorders, as Cathy O’Neill suggests in her chilling book *Weapons of Math Destruction*.<sup>123</sup> The educational system does not equip students for the world of work and does not prepare them for life in an open and diverse society.<sup>124</sup>

One result of the failing performance of the educational system is that college degree that in the past offered a ticket to the future has lost much of its luster and attraction. There is a growing awareness among Americans of the many problems with higher education. The huge expense on education seems increasingly unjustified. As Paul Tough’s research shows, the share of young adults who believe that a college degree is important has fallen from 74% in 2013 to 41% in 2019. In 2018, 61% of Americans said that higher education was on the wrong track. Only 38% of Americans still believed at that time in higher education. According to the data collected in 2016, 70% of America’s high school graduates sought college education. Today, this number is 62%.<sup>125</sup> As Fareed Zakaria summarizes, this “souring on higher education makes America an outlier among all advanced nations.”<sup>126</sup>

Many employers think that left-wing ideology and the ability to argue endlessly and aggressively to convince unbelievers does not benefit their businesses. The increasing number of employers drop the requirement for college degree for new hires. According to Neil Morrison, director of human resources at Penguin Random House, the available evidence indicates that there is “no simple correlation between having a degree and future professional success.” In 2016, the publishing giant dropped the requirement of a college degree in a number of employment categories.<sup>127</sup> The state of Massachusetts has recently dropped degree requirement for 90% of government jobs.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Keri D. Ingraham, “The Crisis in American Education,” *Independent Women’s Forum*, vol. 103, October 17, 2023, <https://www.iwf.org/2023/10/17/the-crisis-in-american-education/>

<sup>123</sup> Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Crown, 2016).

<sup>124</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance

<sup>125</sup> Paul Tough, “Americans Are Losing Faith in the Value of College. Whose Fault Is That?” *The New York Times*, September 5, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/05/magazine/college-worth-price.html>

<sup>126</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>127</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

<sup>128</sup> Mike LaChance, “Massachusetts Drops College Degree Requirement for 90% of Govt. Jobs,” *Legal Insurrection*, February 5, 2024,

All these developments are taking place against the backdrop of declining economy and increased tensions and conflicts in the country. The low prospects of a rewarding employment and the falling demand for a college degree have severely affected the morale among young people. They fear the uncertainty of the current conditions. In contrast to the past, they dread most of what they envision ahead of them.<sup>129</sup> Driven by climate ideology, they envision only gloom and doom in the future of the planet and human civilization.<sup>130</sup> As a result, they often see no point in finding and holding an employment, pursuing a career, starting a family, buying a house, and much, much else to what young people of their age aspired in the past. Recent Conference Board studies show that “work-life balance” is more important to Gen Z than career advancement. They celebrate worklessness and “funemployment.”<sup>131</sup> The overwhelming majority of American part-time workers have chosen to work part-time and are not seeking to increase their work time or full employment.<sup>132</sup> The situation among young people in other countries is similar. Almost 10% of young people in Great Britain, currently in school or unemployed, deny having any intention of ever starting work; roughly 30% doubt they will ever reach their career goals. Their response to what they regard as unfavorable conditions is to delay transitioning to adulthood and having fewer children.<sup>133</sup> They seek a way of living without committing to a job, developing skills, or achieving what were once considered the rite of passage into adulthood. The

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<https://legalinsurrection.com/2024/02/massachusetts-drops-college-degree-requirement-for-90-of-govt-jobs/>.

<sup>129</sup> Claire Cain Miller, “Today’s Teenagers: Anxious About Their Futures and Disillusioned by Politicians,” *The New York Times*, January 29, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/29/upshot/teens-politics-mental-health.html>.

<sup>130</sup> Caroline Hickman, Elizabeth Marks, Panu Pihkala, Susan Clayton, R. Eric Lewandowski, Elouise E. Mayall, Britt Wray, Catriona Mellor, and Lise van Susteren, “Climate Anxiety in Children and Young People and Their Beliefs about Government Responses to Climate Change: A Global Survey,” *The Lancet Planetary Health*, vol. 5, no. 12 (December 1, 2021), pp. e863–73, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00278-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00278-3).

<sup>131</sup> Suzy Welch, “For Gen Z, Unemployment Can Be a Blast,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 17, 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-gen-z-unemployment-can-be-a-blast-employment-career-labor-generation-corporate-college-university-e24810ce?mod=opinion\\_lead\\_pos5&autoplay=false](https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-gen-z-unemployment-can-be-a-blast-employment-career-labor-generation-corporate-college-university-e24810ce?mod=opinion_lead_pos5&autoplay=false).

<sup>132</sup> Kotkin, “Is Gen Z Turning against Western Civilisation?”

<sup>133</sup> City & Guilds. “Almost a Quarter of a Million UK Youth Turned off Working for Life,” *FE News*, December 7, 2022. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-voices/over-a-quarter-of-a-million-uk-youth-turned-off-working-for-life/>.



fact that birth rates in America, Europe, and East Asia are record low comes as no surprise.<sup>134</sup>

The emerging picture is dismal. A recent AEI survey has found that GenZers are far lonelier and are less likely to have strong romantic relationships or even just strong friendships than previous generations. An EU study shows that at least one in four young Europeans reports feeling anxious due to social media. Researchers observe similar patterns in America and other parts of the world.<sup>135</sup> Peter Coleman, a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University and the director of the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, points to high levels of stress and anxiety among students. “We’re all addicted,” he comments, “to our phones, to the news cycles, to the constant flow of outrage and information—they all create a perfect storm where we’re easily manipulated.”<sup>136</sup>

Youngsters know increasingly little about the world. American school children are remarkably ignorant of US history; only 13 per cent of eighth graders achieve proficiency in this subject. Whole centuries, notably the 19th century, seem to be vanishing from European classrooms in the drive to “decolonize” the curriculum.<sup>137</sup>

The negative take on the future among young people shows that in various ways the educational system does not serve them well. They are ill prepared to function in modern society. They often feel disoriented and have a hard time interpreting and understanding reality. As a result, reality appears to them to be hostile and threatening. They seem to be increasingly crazed and have a short fuse for aggressive intolerant behavior. These are more than just dysfunctional aberrations; they are symptoms of a deeper malady: a breakdown in social conventions, traditions, capacity for personal interactions, as well as in general knowledge. Contrary to logic and common sense, young people may show sympathy for terrorists who attack women and children, demand immediate elimination of fossil fuels or demand wiping out all gender distinctions.<sup>138</sup> Peter Coleman has perceptively noted that these extreme reactions and displays of outrage and anger are “a place to locate your anxiety and find purpose in what seems like a purposeless world.”<sup>139</sup>

The abundant evidence related to the state of mental health on campuses confirms the destructive impact of fear and anxiety on students. The numbers are alarming. They

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<sup>134</sup> Anthony DeBarros, “A Visual Breakdown of America’s Stagnating Number of Births,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 1, 2023, sec. US. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-visual-breakdown-of-americas-stagnating-number-of-births-9a2e6e2d>.

<sup>135</sup> Kotkin, “Is Gen Z Turning against Western Civilisation?”

<sup>136</sup> Camera, “The War on College Campuses.”

<sup>137</sup> Kotkin, “Is Gen Z Turning against Western Civilisation?”

<sup>138</sup> Kotkin, “Is Gen Z Turning against Western Civilisation?”

<sup>139</sup> Camera, “The War on College Campuses.”

describe an unprecedented mental health crisis on American campuses. According to an exclusive survey of 1,000 college students, published by *Fortune* magazine, three in five college students—that is, full 60%—report that they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition by a professional doctor. The most common disorders among students are anxiety and depression. The number is significantly larger than the 48% for the general population. A disproportionate number of those in Generation Z (ages 15 to 25), roughly 40%, battle severe depression. A corresponding number for those over age 25 is 23%. The condition of close to 18% of Generation Z is so severe that they contemplate self-harm or suicide. The number of suicides for those between 18 and 25 is stable at 16%.<sup>140</sup> In her interview for *Fortune* Paula Johnson, president of Wellesley college, thus characterized the mental health situation among young people: “This is a national problem that is, quite frankly, potentially endangering the future workforce of our country.”<sup>141</sup>

Yet despite the seriousness of the problem, colleges and universities are woefully ill-equipped to deal with this emergency. America as a society is totally unprepared to handle such crisis. The issues related to students’ perceptions of reality and psychological conditions have not received much attention. Many aspects of this complex phenomenon are still unknown or in the initial stages of exploration.<sup>142</sup> We still do not have a full picture of how much tolerance young people have for uncertainty. Pioneering studies are only beginning to identify promising directions for future research and treatment strategies.<sup>143</sup>

In the meantime, the fact remains that 60% of young people are in “great distress.” They believe that they have no control over their environment. Current efforts to help them are pitifully few and ineffective, which leaves young people to their own devices in the world that they do not understand. The failure to understand the world

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<sup>140</sup> Megan Leonhardt, “Crisis on Campus: 60% of College Kids Have Mental Health Disorders, and Schools Are Unprepared,” *Fortune*, July 12, 2022. <https://fortune.com/well/2022/07/12/mental-health-crisis-college-schools-unprepared/>.

<sup>141</sup> Leonhardt, “Crisis on Campus.”

<sup>142</sup> Adrian Wroblewski, Maïke Hollandt, Yunbo Yang, Isabelle C. Ridderbusch, Anne Pietzner, Christoph Szeska, Martin Lotze, et al. “Sometimes I Feel the Fear of Uncertainty: How Intolerance of Uncertainty and Trait Anxiety Impact Fear Acquisition, Extinction and the Return of Fear,” *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, vol. 181 (November 1, 2022), pp. 125–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2022.09.001>.

<sup>143</sup> Mary E. Oglesby, Joseph W. Boffa, Nicole A. Short, Amanda M. Raines, and Norman B. Schmidt, “Intolerance of Uncertainty as a Predictor of Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms Following a Traumatic Event,” *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, Fearing the Unknown*, vol. 41 (June 1, 2016), pp. 82–87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2016.01.005>.

produces fear and anxiety; and the most common response to fear and anxiety is aggression. The current research shows that the failure of understanding reality combined with the woeful state of mental health on campuses create a fertile ground for aggressive behavior, intolerance, and incivility. The willingness to silence opposing voices, eliminate disagreement, suppress freedom of speech and discussion, ban dissonant voices—all these are aggressive responses to deep-seated fear and anxiety.

#### 5. Effects of general conditions in society

The turmoil on American campuses is not an isolated phenomenon. It evolves in the macrocosm of American society and the world. No matter how secluded colleges and universities may be, links between students and the outside world run deep. Students do not live in isolation from conditions and events that are taking place in society and that affect and in many ways shape campus life.

Many explanations of the campus unrest view the conditions, events, and processes that are taking place in society and politics as being an important causal factor that generates and shapes the turmoil on campuses. They point to significant similarities between the processes observed on campuses and the processes that are taking place in society at large. Researchers and commentators draw attention to cultural and political polarization, the coarsening of public discourse and decline in civility, intolerance toward opposing views and opinions, and other negative phenomena of our public life as having a trickle-down effect on the student population. Even before young men and women start on their college career, they grow up in the environment where political leaders, media, and public figures demonize their opponents, deny legitimacy to opposing views, and readily spread misinformation to serve their purposes. Prospective students certainly learn from observing these negative developments. They learn to hold on to their views as absolute and to be intolerant toward those in their social environment who oppose them; they bring this negative baggage to college.<sup>144</sup>

Colleges and universities reinforce these attitudes by supplying the imprimatur of unquestionable scientific truth and the endorsement from progressive ideology. Again, the moral and scientific absolutism and intolerance are not unique to higher education. They are not unique to a political faction or movement. Liberals and conservatives leaven their political actions on unwavering belief that their views, their positions, their visions are right, and those of their opponents are wrong. This conviction prevails both on the left and on the right; it permeates the entire political spectrum and our culture.<sup>145</sup> Higher education promotes the certitude of moral absolutism and the unquestioning loyalty to the authority of science. According to Bročić and Miles, students “come to believe that the morals of society must change to remedy historical (and current)

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<sup>144</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>145</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

injustices (i.e., moral progressivism), but that the moral principles they have learned through their studies represent the real moral truth (moral absolutism)."<sup>146</sup>

Students are exposed to these attitudes in our social environment.<sup>147</sup> In the past young people have often received their tutoring in tolerance and civility from elected leaders, journalists, and teachers. But, as Patrick Boyle notes, today “such civic tutoring seems to be both less common and less embraced.”<sup>148</sup> Ironically, the fervent tone of those on the left is very similar to moral absolutism of religious fundamentalist that they criticize. In his article for *The Atlantic* Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution offers a very perceptive comment:

American faith, it turns out, is as fervent as ever; it's just that what was once religious belief has now been channeled into political belief . . .

Political debates over what America is supposed to mean have taken on the character of theological disputations. This is what religion without religion looks like.<sup>149</sup>

As Zachary Greenberg observes, “Students see this intolerance of opposing beliefs in society, they see leaders trying to destroy their adversaries,”<sup>150</sup> The fact that students also display these attitudes and behavior hardly comes as a surprise.

### *Countering the Illiberal Turn*

The preceding section shows that the illiberal turn in the campus unrest is a complex phenomenon with many aspects and different contributing factors. Each explanation of this turn has specific focus and covers only one or several factors, which limits its explanatory power. Yet each explanation reflects an important part of the complex overall reality. For this reason, each explanation deserves a very close and careful consideration. They complement each other and together constitute an intricate mosaic, a composite picture, that enriches our understanding of this multisided phenomenon.

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<sup>146</sup> Bročić and Miles, “College and the ‘Culture War.’”

<sup>147</sup> Shadi Hamid, “America Without God,” *The Atlantic*, April 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/04/america-politics-religion/618072/>.

<sup>148</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>149</sup> Hamid, “America Without God.”

<sup>150</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

Explaining the reasons for the illiberal turn is not merely an academic exercise. These explanations serve as the basis for proposals and recommendations on ways of responding to the illiberal turn and eliminating or reversing its harmful effects. One can divide these proposals and recommendations into two basic groups. Although both groups are internally diverse, each group represents a particular approach in addressing the illiberal turn.

### 1. The “Interventionist” Approach

One common feature for one group of proposals is that they see the rise of illiberalism as a result of failures to take appropriate actions that would stop or reverse this development. They focus on what government officials, institutional leaders and school administrators can do to counter the illiberal turn. Their solutions emphasize the need for introducing appropriate laws or regulations to intervene and counter acts of intolerance. For a lack of a better term, one can describe these proposals as “interventionist.”

Paula Johnson, president of Wellesley College, is a typical representative of the interventionist approach. Johnson sees the current situation as dire. In her view, it is “potentially endangering the future workforce of our country.”<sup>151</sup> She claims that despite the seriousness of the threat, there is, regrettably, no clear solution to this problem and no “national strategy for this crisis.” Johnson strongly believes that “that we have not really put the time, effort, thought, and muscle behind really figuring out what that [strategy] should look like.” She urges a strong bipartisan effort by lawmakers who should get into action and provide necessary laws and guidelines to counter the threat.<sup>152</sup> Tia Dole, executive director of The Steve Fund, also sees the need for concerted actions that should involve parents, teachers, administrators, and institutional leaders.<sup>153</sup>

Many interventionist proposals assign the blame for the unfortunate course of events to leaders and administrators of the educational institutions. Summarizing his vast experience in dealing with schools and their administrators, Sean Stevens, FIRE’s senior fellow for polling and analytics, concludes: “The research is clear, and our experience working with these schools confirms it: Much of the campus climate for expression is determined by the administration.” In his view, administrators have failed to offer a constructive response to illiberal trends in student communities.<sup>154</sup> Kamden Strunk, one of the critics of the way many colleges approach the issue of civility, points out that college administrators have failed to develop a standard of civility to be used on their campuses. In his view, administrators and faculty often “put oppressive, incorrect and dehumanizing views on an even ground with all other perspectives.” The concept of civility, he argues, “is defined within systems of whiteness and cisheterosexism.” This

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<sup>151</sup> Leonhardt, “Crisis on Campus.”

<sup>152</sup> Leonhardt, “Crisis on Campus.”

<sup>153</sup> Leonhardt, “Crisis on Campus.”

<sup>154</sup> Tuccille, “Universities Are Teaching Intolerance.”

approach encourages and promotes the weaponization of “claims of incivility against marginalized groups to vilify their [marginal groups’) attempts to claim full human dignity and full equity.”<sup>155</sup>

Fareed Zakaria, a popular commentator on current events, also puts the blame on senior administrators. He attributes the illiberal turn to decades of efforts of politicizing educational institutions. The politicization has turned top American school into bastions of political partisanship and has made them dangerously exposed to political storms. He recommends that schools should abandon their “long misadventure into politics, retrain their gaze on their core strengths and rebuild their reputation as centers of research and learning.”<sup>156</sup>

Some critics even demand harsh punishments of presidents and senior administrators for malfeasance and derelictions of duties. Jay Green, a senior research fellow in the Center for Educational Policy at The Heritage Foundation, sees that too many senior administrators are motivated more by their ruthless ambitions than by “deep principles or scholarly accomplishment.” He thinks that their failures deserve removal from office as the most powerful form of accountability. “If they see others,” he opines, “losing their jobs for failing to stand up to antisemitism, they’ll all get in line.”<sup>157</sup>

Nicholas C. Burbules and his co-authors feel that leaders in many colleges and universities have failed to find a proper balance between civility and free speech; they have allowed the public debate on intolerance to “become bogged down in slogans and false either-or dichotomies.” The authors see the need for a greater effort in clarifying the criteria by which the language of policies about free speech, hate speech and civility is to be defined. Different institutions, they argue, define these criteria differently. In their view, an engaged debate can shed light on how different groups view and experience these criteria, which should help to contain hostility without limiting free speech.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Kamden K. Strunk, “Free Speech for Some, Civility for Others,” *Inside Higher Ed*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/09/21/colleges-and-politicians-promote-free-speech-some-insist-civility-others-opinion>; BrandE Faupell, Nicholas C. Burbules, C. K. Gunsalus, Brian C. Martinson, “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/04/14/how-academic-leaders-can-balance-civility-free-speech-opinion>.

<sup>156</sup> Zakaria, “Why University Presidents Are under Fire.”

<sup>157</sup> Greene, “College presidents just showed America their moral cowardice.”

<sup>158</sup> Nicholas C. Burbules, C. K. Gunsalus, Brian C. Martinson, BrandE Faupell, “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About.” *Inside Higher Ed*. April 14, 2022, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/04/14/how-academic-leaders-can-balance-civility-free-speech-opinion>.

In his article “A five-point plan to save Harvard from itself” Steven Pinker, a well-known Harvard psychologist, has outlined his plan for addressing illiberalism on campus. Pinker emphasizes the need for clear and coherent policies. He also proposes that all colleges and universities should adopt “institutional neutrality” on controversial public issues. “Universities,” Pinker contends, “are forums, not protagonists”; they should end “heckler’s vetoes, building takeovers, classroom invasions, intimidations, blockades, [and] assaults.”

Pinker does not limit his plan strictly to policies. Reforms, in his opinion, should also extend into culture. Educational institutions should abandon ideologically motivated monocultures that breed groupthink, intolerance, and oppression. Pinker strongly opposes, for example, the diversity, equity, and inclusion programs adopted by many colleges and universities. In his view, these programs do not empower students, but merely promote censorship and extreme political bias.<sup>159</sup> Most importantly, educational institutions should embrace greater viewpoint diversity and “absorb the fundamental truth that the best answer to bad speech is better speech, not censorship.”<sup>160</sup> In his op-ed column for *The New York Times*, David French has strongly endorsed Pinker’s plan that he finds to be the clearest and the most coherent in comparison to all other proposals.<sup>161</sup>

Some proposals in this group recognize the impact of psychological insecurity among students. Hearing about real threats from off-campus sources makes students lose faith in democratic institutions and increasingly embrace illiberal attitudes and approaches. They see that the way to address the problem of illiberalism and intolerance is to offer students a positive view on reality, strengthen their sense of security, and improve their mental health. For Sean Stevens, for example, the best way to enhance tolerance is by increasing “feelings of psychological security, physical security, and trust in local and democratic institutions.”<sup>162</sup> Others propose to educate students about each other as a way of bringing them onto a common ground. As Shanta Zimmer, senior associate dean from Colorado University, says in desperation, “If only our students and our colleagues would learn some of those things about one another, I think we’d find a

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<sup>159</sup> Steven Pinker, “A five-point plan to save Harvard from itself,” *The Boston Globe*, December 11, 2023. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/12/11/opinion/steven-pinker-how-to-save-universities-harvard-claudine-gay/>; David French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech,” *The New York Times*, December 10, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/10/opinion/antisemitism-university-presidents.html>.

<sup>160</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

<sup>161</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

<sup>162</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong.”

little more of that common ground and be able to have these discussions but not hate each other.”<sup>163</sup>

## 2. The “Traditionalist” Approach

In contrast to the “interventionists,” the approach that is characteristic for the other group of proposals is more liberal in the conventional sense. This approach centers on the traditional liberal practice (hence the designations “traditionalist”) based on time-honored liberal ideas and values: pluralism, tolerance, and civility. Freedom of speech and expression has the key role in this approach. “Traditionalists” offer some of the most passionate arguments in defense of free speech; they are adamantly opposed to any attempts to restrict this vital freedom for any purposes.

This reverential devotion to free speech comes from a realization that its role is not merely about preserving the freedom to act in accordance with our wishes, attaining truth or advancing democracy (the justifications that are commonly used in relation to the freedom of speech). It is about something far more fundamental to our existence. As Lee Bollinger argues in his well-known book *The Tolerant Society: Freedom of Speech and Extremist Speech in America*, free speech is critical for the development of the human mind and our way of thinking.<sup>164</sup> Explaining the reason why we should permit and tolerate speech that we find objectionable, Bollinger insists that having to tolerate such speech exercises the muscles of tolerance and helps us to build a “tolerant mind.”<sup>165</sup>

The proponents of the “traditionalist” approach also argue that free speech has a profound liberating function. It frees humans from their irrational fears. Bollinger quotes Justice Louis Brandeis's dissent in *Whitney v. California* (1927): “Men feared witches and burned women, and it is the function of [free] speech to free men from the bondage of irrational fears.”<sup>166</sup> Echoing Bollinger, Glen Harlan Reynolds explains in his article “Intolerant Society”:

Allowing space for ideas we hate and ideas propounded by people we are inclined to hate not only trains our mind to refrain from lashing out reflexively at unwelcome arguments, it more importantly frees us from the compulsion to do so. And freedom from that compulsion is not only good for free speech, it is also good for the soul.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Boyle, “Here’s What Happens When Freedom to Speak Meets Intolerance to Listen.”

<sup>164</sup> Lee C. Bollinger, *The Tolerant Society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>165</sup> Bollinger, *The Tolerant Society*.

<sup>166</sup> Bollinger, *The Tolerant Society*, p. 141.

<sup>167</sup> Reynolds, “Intolerant Society.”



Given the importance that “traditionalists” attribute to freedom of speech and expression, most of their proposals for addressing the crisis of liberalism adamantly oppose any restrictions on free speech. In a piece characteristically entitled “Why We Must Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on College Campuses,” David Cole, the National Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, writes:

Restricting speech may seem like an attractive option for college administrators to quell campus tensions. But efforts to censor speech often prove counterproductive and undermine the very mission of the university. We strongly caution universities against conflating the suppression of speech with the façade of safety.<sup>168</sup>

Addressing the issue of hate speech on the Internet, Raymond Smith, Chairman of the Bell Atlantic Corporation, argues that the only solution of this problem is “to fight the destructive rhetoric with constructive dialogue.” In an obvious retort to “interventionist” proposals, Smith insists that we need to think “less about ways to keep cyberhate off the screen, and more about ways to meet it head on . . . hate speech with truth . . . restrictions with greater Internet access.”<sup>169</sup> “Freedom, not censorship,” Smith concludes, “is the only way to combat this threat to civility.” His final word is “more speech--not less.”<sup>170</sup>

In a similar vein, David French writes in his op-ed that “confronting hatred with courageous speech is far better than confronting hatred with censorship.”<sup>171</sup> Addressing specifically academic administrators, French’s advises:

But do not protect students from speech. Let them grow up and engage with even the most vile of ideas. The answer to campus hypocrisy isn’t more censorship. It’s true liberty. Without that liberty, the hypocrisy will reign for decades more.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> David Cole, “Why We Must Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on College Campuses,” *American Civil Liberties Union* (blog), November 2, 2023, <https://www.aclu.org/news/free-speech/why-we-must-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-college-campuses>.

<sup>169</sup> Raymond W. Smith, “Civility Without Censorship,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 01/15/99, vol. 65 Issue 7 (January 15, 1999K), pp. 196-99.

<sup>170</sup> Smith, “Civility Without Censorship.”

<sup>171</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

<sup>172</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

In his inaugural lecture on Law, Religion, and the First Amendment, Princeton President Christopher L. Eisgruber spoke strongly in support of free speech on campus. Addressing student at the University of Pennsylvania law school Eisgruber stated:

We expect all interactions on our campus to be guided by principles of civility and mutual respect, but we do students no favor—on the contrary, we do them great harm—if we shield them from all expression that discomfits, angers, or offends them.<sup>173</sup>

At first glance, the “traditionalist” approach may appear non-contradictory and straightforward; and in many ways it is. In their writings and speeches, one can sense that liberal theory has played a much greater role in shaping their approach than it has the more practically oriented “interventionist” perspective. Indeed, arguments that embracing diversity and different points of view advances the development of our mind or our spiritual development may look very convincing at academic conferences but using these arguments in a confrontational situation where two sides hurl curses and abuses at each other will show very quickly that these arguments have little relevance in real conditions of social unrest.

“Traditionalists” are certainly aware of the reality of social confrontations; they are not blind to real practical needs. For this reason, their specific proposals may also include some “interventionist” methods. David French may passionately advocate “confronting hatred with courageous speech,” but he also acknowledges that “it is obviously important to protect students from harassment,”<sup>174</sup> as many academic administrators know only too well.

Raymond Smith may speak very eloquently about fighting the destructive hate speech with constructive dialogue, but he also proposes to use considerable resources to create sites and home pages on the Internet that would meet head-on “the racist caricatures and pseudo history” and speaks about the vital need to enrich the Web’s content “by minority culture and beliefs” as a way of promoting liberal values.<sup>175</sup>

After an embarrassing event at Stanford University during which students and faculty heckled a conservative federal judge, the dean of the Stanford law school Jenny S. Martinez published a strong letter in support of free speech. However, the same letter also obligated all students to attend seminars on free expression, which implied negative judgment on a perfectly legitimate reason for students to express their opinion. Perhaps heckling is not what many recognize as civil behavior, but using civility to censor students’ opinion is not exactly an encouragement of free speech.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Eisgruber, “What Is Happening on Our Campuses?”

<sup>174</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

<sup>175</sup> Smith, “Civility Without Censorship.”

<sup>176</sup> Scott Jaschik, Scott. “Stanford Apologizes After Students Heckle Judge,” *Inside Higher Ed*, March 13, 2023.

In another episode, Cornell President Martha Pollock and Provost Michael Kotlikoff rebuffed the student assembly that wanted to introduce “trigger warnings” in classes to ward off professors who questioned ideas that were popular among students. While their letter reasserted the principle of academic freedom, it nevertheless warned recalcitrant faculty to refrain from introducing in their classes “controversial matters” deemed unrelated to the subject of their course.<sup>177</sup>

Richard Vedder, another “traditionalist,” proposes to use financial incentives against assaults on free speech. For him, the preferred ultimate solution is to reduce financial support for the “aggressively woke suppression of ideas.” He also thinks that part of the solution may be institutional reforms that heighten awareness of various forms of incivility and abuses of free speech.<sup>178</sup>

While “traditionalist” approach as a rule considers inappropriate to use censorship or sanctions in cases of violations of free speech, they nevertheless recommend using “softer” methods such as education (that may often look like indoctrination), including compulsory education, financial incentives and methods, all sorts of workshops and conferences, and various other forms of control. The administration has a large arsenal of ways to pressure students into compliance. Certainly, direct and indirect pressure is different from outright punishments and sanctions. However, although the means are different, the goal is the same: to squeeze differences.

### *Critique of the Current Proposals*

Perhaps the most important criticism of the current proposals for dealing with the campus unrest and the illiberal turn is that they have not produced an effective solution. As has already been emphasized earlier, all these proposals are interesting and valuable. They all offer important insights. Together they represent a complex mosaic of different snippets, but they do not amount to a comprehensive and definitive solution. Such solution may involve integration and synthesis of the current proposals, which will most definitely require creating a perspective that can make such comprehensive understanding of the unrest and its resolution possible.

The descriptions of the two approaches— “interventionist” and “traditionalist”—reveal contradictions and inconsistencies. The “interventionist” approach is at odds with the need to recognize and embrace differences that has been consistently stressed in liberalism. In the way they address the rise of intolerance, the “interventionists” resort to the suppression of differences.

At first glance, the “traditionalists” may appear to be more consistent with liberalism in their approach to differences. They are adamant in their support for

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/13/stanford-apologizes-after-students-heckle-judge>.

<sup>177</sup> Reynolds, “Intolerant Society,” p. 41.

<sup>178</sup> Leef, “The Growing Intolerance in Higher Education.”

free speech and accept no excuses for exceptions. In their view, the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment covers even calls to violence. As David French observes,

In case after case, the Supreme Court has held that in the absence of an actual, immediate threat — such as an incitement to violence — the government cannot punish a person who advocates violence. And no, there is not even a genocide exception to this rule.<sup>179</sup>

One certainly cannot point to any instances when “traditionalists” would recommend using bans or advocate punitive sanctions against violations of free speech. However, they are not averse to “softer” methods of suppressing differences. The educational approach that they propose comes perilously close to indoctrination. The intention of other forms of direct and indirect pressure is also to discourage differences. Granted that these methods differ from bans and interdictions recommended by “interventionist,” but their intention, just like the intention of “interventionists,” is also to weaken, diffuse, and erode differences, not preserve them. Ironically, intolerance also represents a difference. Trying to suppress intolerant views comes perilously close to attempting to suppress differences. No matter how you sugarcoat the pill, it is still a pill, not a coating, that matters.

Both approaches reveal a major departure from liberalism. According to liberal theory and practice, freedom of speech and tolerance are supposed to work together: tolerance sustains free speech, and free speech promotes tolerance. Liberalism has regarded the two to be closely interrelated, if not, indeed, inseparable. As numerous examples from the current turmoil indicate, liberals have departed from this sacred principle. In their policies, tolerance and free speech are divorced and often oppose each other. For the sake of tolerance, liberals have often imposed restrictions on free speech.

Of course, liberals are not happy about this development and would like to restore the unity between tolerance and free speech, but their efforts are wrecked by the unyielding reality of unrest. Liberals, both “interventionists” and “traditionalists,” place much hope on civility as a factor that can mediate the conflict between free speech and tolerance. They see civility as playing a key role in reconciling the two. Their arguments to this effect are very eloquent and inspiring.<sup>180</sup> But many liberals remain unconvinced. They see civility as a constraint on free speech.

Kamden Strunk, one of the critics of civility, maintains that in a society based on inequality civility is a standard heavily weighted in favor of dominant groups and against those who are disempowered. “Because of the ways in which ‘civility’ is defined within systems of whiteness and cisheterosexism,” Kamden argues, “claims of incivility are

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<sup>179</sup> French, “What the University Presidents Got Right and Wrong About Antisemitic Speech.”

<sup>180</sup> Cary Nelson, “A Civility Manifesto,” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 10, 2014, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/10/10/essay-defending-value-civility-higher-education>.

weaponized against marginalized groups to vilify their attempts to claim full human dignity and full equity.”<sup>181</sup> As Kamden maintains, putting the views of “those who are oppressed and dehumanized” on an even ground with the views of the oppressor is preposterous. The oppressed simply cannot respond to the oppressor in a detached and unemotional manner precisely because they are not detached, and they certainly have strong feelings about their state of disempowerment. They are the targets of the system of oppression. From their point of view, they would be wrong to hide their views and feelings. In Kamden’s opinion, they will, and, in fact, they must challenge this system, and the challenge is not going to be civil and graceful.

The authors of the article “How Academic Leaders Can Balance Civility with Free Speech” tend to agree with Strunk and other critics of civility. “Here the critics,” they stress, “have more of a point: members of groups with privilege and power have the luxury of expressing certain views dispassionately because for them these are conventional, mainstream positions.” The rhetorical questions they pose are very cogent: “How do you challenge these without sharp language? How do you ask people to keep calm when they are feeling personally attacked?”<sup>182</sup>

There are many contributors who maintain that acting with civility is crucial for good campus relationships and the proper functioning of educational institutions.<sup>183</sup> However, the question of whether civility is good for educational institutions remains unanswered. An episode that took place in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign a few years ago is a poignant illustration for this visceral split on this issue in the liberal camp. During a protest students put stickers on their mouths that said “Civility = Silence, Silence = Death.”<sup>184</sup>

Disagreements among liberals over the capacity of civility to mediate differences suggest that the hopes that civility inspires in them are problematic. In a way, many liberals recognize this problem. Over the last decade or so they have begun to shift their arguments away from pluralism, tolerance, and civility and more toward reconciliation.

Contradictions and inconsistencies in the way that liberals respond to the illiberal turn are not a result of the lack of commitment to principles and values. They point to a deeper problem: the fundamental discrepancy between liberal theory and practice, on one hand, and real-life situations, on the other. Indeed, arguments that differences and viewpoint diversity improve our thinking, advance our mind, contribute to our spiritual development may look very convincing at academic conferences, but using these

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<sup>181</sup> Burbules, et al., “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About,” *Inside Higher Ed*. April 14, 2022.

<sup>182</sup> Burbules, et al., “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About,” *Inside Higher Ed*. April 14, 2022.

<sup>183</sup> Burbules, et al., “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About,” *Inside Higher Ed*. April 14, 2022.

<sup>184</sup> Burbules, et al., “What the Debate Over Civility Is Really About,” *Inside Higher Ed*. April 14, 2022.

arguments in a confrontation where two sides hurl curses and abuses at each other show that they have little relevance under conditions of real social unrest.

As has been explained earlier, differences play a key role in liberal theory and practice. Liberals venerate differences. They have written many inspired and inspiring passages in which they extoll the benefits that differences bestow on human civilization. The importance of differences for liberals extends far beyond politics, society, or culture. It is far more fundamental, they believe, to our existence and our future. Differences and diversity are crucial, they contend, for the development of our capacity to think, the advancement of our mind, and the continued evolution of our civilization.<sup>185</sup> As Reynolds argues, allowing space for differences, “for ideas we hate . . . trains our mind to refrain from lashing out reflexively at unwelcome arguments.” But even more importantly, it “frees us from the compulsion to do so.” Freedom from compulsion, as Reynolds puts it, “is good “for the soul.”<sup>186</sup> What liberals say about differences and viewpoint diversity is very poetic and inspiring. What they say may be necessary and useful, but it is woefully insufficient.

Liberals claim that free speech and diversity improve our thinking and advance our mind. However, they say little to nothing about the way differences create their marvels, the way they work to our advantage. They merely refer (as Sean Stevens does, for example) to “the magic of viewpoint diversity” that “cancels out” our confirmation biases and allows us, over time, to “converge on the truth” or at least “get nearer to it.”<sup>187</sup> And that’s about as far as it goes. There is very little that is specific that one can derive from these generalities in terms of practical guidance—in other words, what we can do to replicate these “magic” results. Without this knowledge, the inspiring words provide little guidance; they have little practical significance and, therefore, they are unlikely be effective and produce results.

The most important evidence for the discrepancy between theory and practice of liberalism, on one hand, and reality, on the other, is the very fact that the liberal formula for addressing the problem of difference has spectacularly failed. Liberalism has been around for centuries. It has been aware of the problem of difference—the fact that differences tend to clash in ways that can be destructive. To address this problem liberalism has introduced a practice organized around its most important principles and values: pluralism, tolerance, civility, and free speech. The current crisis is a dramatic proof of the failure of the liberal practice. It has failed to prevent the current turmoil. The failure shows that liberalism cannot solve the problem of difference that is central to the promise of liberation that liberals never fail to repeat. Without solving this problem,

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<sup>185</sup> Bollinger, Lee C. *The Tolerant Society*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

<sup>186</sup> Reynolds, Glenn Harlan. “Intolerant Society.” *New Criterion* 41, no. 10 (June 2023): 41–44.

<sup>187</sup> Stevens, “The Skeptics Are Wrong Pt 3: Political Intolerance on Campus.” Heterodox Academy, May 18, 2018. <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/the-skeptics-are-wrong-part-3-intolerance-levels-are-high>.

liberals cannot deliver on their promise to liberate humanity from fear and oppression. The fact that liberals have worked for a very long time to fulfill their promise suggests that there is no reason to believe that they ever will. The entire liberal formula for addressing the problem of difference does not work; it does not do what it is supposed to do—to solve the problem of difference. At best, it can only ameliorate the most egregious effects that arise from the clash of difference, but liberalism cannot prevent such clashes now or in the future. Our civilization continues to be vulnerable to social cataclysms that are ultimately due to the unsolved problem of difference.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Differences, Exclusion, Inequality, and Disempowerment

#### *The Liberal Approach Toward the Problem of Difference*

The student unrest reveals violent clashes of differences. These clashes are the fuel that drives this turmoil. One can see effects of these clashes in acts of intolerance, uncivil behavior, and violence. They motivate assaults on free speech and efforts to suppress and silence opposing voices.

Liberals have been aware of the dangers that clashes of differences may pose since the emergence of liberalism. After all, liberalism was born in the fire of the French revolution and many other social and political upheavals. Academic discussions and writings were not the only source of liberal ideas, principles, and values. Political and social confrontations have also been the crucible in which the tools of liberalism have been forged.

Liberalism extols and embraces differences. The uniqueness of the individual is, arguably, the most important value for liberals. Liberals do not idealize differences. They recognized the dangers that individual differences can pose. From the very emergence of liberalism, its creators have been aware of violent clashes that differences can produce and looked for ways to address the problem that differences could create—or the problem of difference. The result of their quest is the social and political practice based on important liberal principles and values—pluralism, tolerance, civility, freedom of speech and expression, and others. Liberals use these principles and values in organizing their social practice.

Liberals have no illusions about the practice they proposed. They understand that it does not solve the problem that they see as inherent in individualism. They know that their practice is merely a palliative that moderates and ameliorates dangers that may result from the problem of difference. They have hoped—and the hope is still alive—that with the help of their practice they will be able to contain the most violent clashes and prevent their most egregious and destructive effects. Even today, in the midst of the current turmoil when everything appears to be falling apart, they hope that things will go back to the way they had been before the crisis erupted. They believe that their approach in addressing the problem of difference will eventually be able to restore order, peace, and civility in America, vindicate their theory and practice, and preserve their heritage without fundamental changes.

Yet the reality that stares right in the eye is very different. A detailed analysis of liberal politics is beyond the scope of this study, but a few comments are in order. Today, there are deep divisions that separate mainstream liberal elites; and they are not likely to be healed any time soon, if ever. There are few, if any, prospects of bringing Democrats and Republicans together. Each party also has deep internal divisions. Radical wings in both parties are threatening the integrity of both the Democrats and the Republicans. The reconciliation of these internal schisms also seems unlikely. The characteristic feature of the current state of



society is a widening gap between political elites and society. Finally, there are also deep social divisions that no palliatives will make go away. These problems require solutions, not mediations.

As the turmoil that rocks America and the rest of the world continues, liberal hopes begin to wane. The developments on American campuses and in society at large increasingly appear as a monumental failure of liberals to deliver on promises they have made. The growing intensity of the current crisis creates a persistent impression that it will not subside on its own, that the practice that has failed to prevent it will not be sufficient to resolve this crisis, and that only the solution of the problem of difference can lead America and our civilization out of this conundrum.

Liberals have used their palliative approach to address the problem of difference for decades, if not centuries. Yet the fact remains that this approach has dismally failed to prevent or rein in the current upheaval. The palliative has clearly not worked. The conclusion that follows is that problems created by clashes of differences require a positive solution, not some palliative measures. The fact that liberals have not solved the problem of difference suggests that their approach has limitations. These limitations indicate that the liberal perspective on differences that shapes the liberal approach is also limited. Objectivity requires a perspective that includes all possible views of an object or a phenomenon under study. The fact that the liberal approach is limited indicates that it does not meet this criterion. An objective perspective on differences requires a comprehensive, or universal view—that is, a view from the perspective of the universe and processes that occur in it.

### *Differences and Creation*

A view of differences from a universal perspective must start with the universe. Our universe is unique. It is all there is. All attempts to prove otherwise have so far failed to produce a convincing proof. Since there is nothing outside our universe, nothing can come into it from outside because there is nothing outside our universe. Also, nothing can disappear from the universe because there is nowhere to disappear. Therefore, everything must be conserved. Conservation is ubiquitous throughout the universe; it operates on all levels of organization that exist in the universe: from particles and atoms, to molecules, nebulae, galaxies, planets, and stars, to life forms, the mind, societies and civilizations. There is absolutely nothing in our universe, including the universe itself, where conservation would not be relevant.<sup>188</sup>

Conservation requires resources. In the universe of finite objects resources are also finite. Access to new resources is an essential condition for conservation. Since new resources cannot come from outside the universe, they must be found inside the universe. If possibilities that offer access to new resources cannot come from outside the universe, the only way to acquire such possibilities is to create them.

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<sup>188</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Conservation, Creation, and Evolution: Revising the Darwinian Project," *Journal of Evolutionary Science*, vol. 1, issue 2 (2019), pp. 1-30.

All systems (entities or phenomena) in the universe have functional operations—that is, they do something. The functional operations of a system constitute its most important properties—that is, those properties that define the system. Functional operations are forms of action. The only way to conserve action is by enacting it. Therefore, the more functional operations are used, the better they, and the system they make up, are conserved. The evolution favors systems that exercise their functions as much as possible and as efficiently as possible; they are the ones that are selected for fitness.

To gain access to new resources, a system must expand its range of possibilities, or the range of its functions. Such expansion leads to the acquisition of new properties that the system did not have prior to the expansion. In other words, the system must transcend itself, which means that it must have a function that makes possible to transcend the system's boundaries and, thus, provide access to new resources necessary for conserving the system. Obviously, the evolution selects this function for fitness.

All systems require regulation. The function of regulation coordinates all other functional operations of the system. Coordination and regulation of functional operations conserve the system. Since the regulatory function controls all other functional operations, it must be more powerful and offer more possibilities than any other operation within the system or their sum total. It uses this power to connect and coordinate functional operations. It can integrate functional operations, thus creating their combinations.

Creating combinations is a form of multiplication; regulation multiplies functional operations, rather than adds them up. Regulation combines all possibilities offered by the system's functional operations. By doing so, it creates something new that has not existed prior to its emergence; something that transcends the functional operations of the system. Due to its greater power, regulation can reach out beyond the boundaries of the system that it regulates. Its range of possibilities exceeds all possibilities of all functional operations of the system. In other words, regulation includes something that the system is not; it has a capacity for embracing the negation of the system. This capacity is one of the most important properties of regulation. Regulation can recognize properties, or operations, that are not part of the system. Thus, regulation plays a crucial role in conserving systems. It coordinates and equilibrates interactions of internal functional operations. It also has the capacity to establish interactions between the system and other systems in its environment; it can integrate the differences they represent with the system it regulates. Thus, the operations of the system can be triggered into action by internal sources and sources outside the system. All these triggers, both internal and external, constitute resources that are new to the system, and they become available for the system's conservation.

The creation of combinations that have not existed prior to their emergence gives rise to new levels of organization. Since new levels of organization integrate differences that have not been combined prior to their integration, they offer new possibilities. Consequently, they are more powerful than the levels of organization from which they have emerged. Such emergent levels of organization provide access to new resources. Conservation is at the heart of this process. Integration of differences enriches the system, expands its range of possibilities, and provides access to new resources. Thus, conservation requires creation of new and more powerful levels of

organization. The rise of new and more powerful levels of organization is what the evolution is all about, for what is the evolution if not a succession of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Conservation propels the evolution. To conserve itself, a system must evolve. A system that does not evolve cannot conserve itself and begins to disintegrate.<sup>189</sup>

Regulation is a global function. Its primary role is to conserve the entire system, including the regulatory function itself. In other words, regulation also needs to be conserved. If regulation is not conserved, the entire system will not be properly regulated, and it will start disintegrating. Conservation of regulation is no different than conservation of any other operation: to be conserved regulation must stay active. The more often it is activated, the longer it stays active, the better it is conserved. The most proximate source of activating the regulatory function is the local functional operations of the system. Hence, conservation requires integration of regulation with functional operations.

Since the level of organization that sustains regulation is the most powerful level of organization in the entire system, regulation can assimilate local functional operations by including them into its own operational schemata. The connection of local functional operations with the regulatory operation provides them access to more powerful global regulatory operations. Their adaptation to the global level is possible only if regulatory operations are accessible to local functional operations. In other words, less powerful operations must have the capacity to “understand” more powerful levels of organization.

Since they do not possess this capacity, it must be created. This creative act requires the translation of operations of greater power into the terms of functional operations sustained by a less powerful level of organization, which is possible only by creating a broad frame in which both local and global operations will be two particular cases—that is, cases that are true and valid under specific conditions. The creation of the broader frame marks the beginning of a new cycle in the system’s evolution.<sup>190</sup> This description fully applies to the method used by Gödel in his famous theorems of consistency and completeness when he translated operations that regulate interactions between numbers in terms of these numbers. He used this method to construct what is known as Gödelian numbers that were crucial for his famous proof.<sup>191</sup>

Using local functional operations is not the only way in which regulation conserves itself and propels the evolution of the system. Another way is by using other systems in the environment. Since regulation has the capacity to transcend the boundaries of the system, it can sense excitations in the environment that come from

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<sup>189</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “Squaring the Circle: In Quest for Sustainability,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 32, issue 6 (Nov. 3, 2015), pp. 629-49.

<sup>190</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “Understanding the Process of Creation,” *Management: Journal of Sustainable Business and Management Solutions in Emerging Economies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (October 2017), pp. 1-13.

<sup>191</sup> Ernest Nagel and James Newman, *Gödel’s Proof* (New York: New York University Press, 1958).

other systems. These external excitations trigger the regulatory mechanism into action. Activation conserves the regulatory mechanism. It also connects the system to external stimuli, or differences. Thus, regulation establishes connections between the system and its environment, including other systems. The result is what Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela<sup>192</sup> called structural coupling. They used this term to describe the process by which regulatory operations that belong to different systems can connect with each other. Such connections lead to the emergence of new structural wholes in which each constituent part becomes a subsystem of a new and more powerful totality. The new totality offers more possibilities and, consequently, provides access to a greater array of resources. The common regulatory mechanism activates subsystems more often, which means that they are conserved better than before the coupling.

No matter which path to conservation a system takes—internal, external, or a combination of the two—the outcome is the same: the emergence of new and more powerful levels of organization with a more extensive array of possibilities. The larger number of possibilities provides access to new resources and greater stability. As a result, the system is better conserved; and whatever is conserved better is “selected for fitness.”

An example from early child development described by famous psychologist and cognitive scientist Jean Piaget in his book *The Origin of Intelligence in Children* is a good illustration of how systems evolve.<sup>193</sup> For Piaget, the starting point in this development is reflexes that are triggered by nerve signals. Neural operations regulate physiological functions (for example, muscle contraction). Signals from neurons activate physiological functions and thus conserve them. The more frequently this triggering occurs, the more active and, consequently, more stable these physiological functions will be. Thus, neural networks regulate physiological functions and conserve them. Combinations of neural and physiological functions give rise to sensory-motor operations.

Sensory-motor operations, or schemata in Piaget’s terminology, also require conservation. They conserve themselves in two ways. First, they become increasingly oriented toward external reality in search of stimulation. This process evolves from casual encounters with stimuli to random groping in search of stimulation, and then to a more directed search. The directed search for stimulation leads to the establishment of permanent connections (structural coupling) between sensory-motor operations. The combination of sensory-motor operations leads to the gradual construction of the object on the level of sensory–motor operations (but not yet on the level of mental representations). The child begins to simulate the presence of an object that the child has

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<sup>192</sup> Humberto Maturana 2002. “Autopoiesis, structural coupling and cognition: a history of these and other notions in the biology of cognition,” *Cybernetics & Human Knowing*, vol. 9, no. 3–4 (2002), pp. 5–34; Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1998).

<sup>193</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (Madison: International University Press, 1998).

assimilated in previous encounters (for example, simulating hand movements necessary for grasping a particular object). As more objects are incorporated into sensory–motor schemata, the infant becomes increasingly more orientated toward the external environment because it provides stimulation necessary for conserving the child’s functions.

Sensory–motor operations (for example, tactile, audio, visual, gustatory, and other functions) also conserve themselves through mutual assimilation; that is, by including each other into their operational schemata. One example of such mutual assimilation is the activation of the audio function by the visual one, and vice versa. Piaget discusses several such instances. For example, his observations demonstrate that at a certain age when a child hears mother’s voice, he or she begins to turn the head, searching for the familiar image.

Mutual assimilation of sensory-motor operations results in the emergence of stable connections between them and common regulatory functions. The child begins to “hear” the sound associated with the familiar object, when he or she sees this object; and the child begins to “see” the object when he or she hears the sound associated with it. The two functions develop a bond—a common regulatory mechanism. As a result of the emergence of the common mechanism of regulation, each sensory-motor operation receives more stimulation and consequently is better conserved. The stable bond between the two functions, create a mental object that the child can “see” and “hear” even when the physical object is not present. The object that the child “sees” and “hears” is a mental representation of the physical object.

The common regulatory mechanism offers more possibilities and, therefore, more resources for conservation. It operates on the level of organization that is more powerful than the level of organization that sustains sensory-motor operations. Thus, sensory-motor operations become particular cases in this new and more powerful totality sustained by the organization of neurons in the child’s mind. The adaptation of sensory-motor operations to this new totality completes the process. It enriches each sensory-motor operation and makes it more powerful. The new and more powerful level of organization gives rise to permanent mental images that are mental equivalents of sensory-motor functions. By the end of the first year of life, the child generally completes the process that results in the emergence of the level of organization that sustains mental objects. At the beginning of the second year of life infants begin to look for objects that they cannot access either through audio or visual function.

The emergence of neural networks that give rise to mental images marks the beginning of a new cycle in child development. While these networks regulate and conserve sensory-motor operations, they also require conservation. Such conservation involves mutual assimilation of networks, creation of common regulatory levels of organization that assimilates neural networks that, in turn, adapt to these common regulatory levels. Regulation stabilizes and optimizes these connections, which opens the path for the development of symbolic operations, or what we commonly call thinking; and the development of symbolic operations eventually create conditions for the emergence of language, society, and civilization.<sup>194</sup>

## *Theoretical Perspectives on Exclusion*

This brief discussion<sup>195</sup> shows the vital role of differences in conservation. Combinations of differences create new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization that provide access to new resources that make conservation possible. This process propels the evolution that sustains the universe and all that is in it. This process is universally inclusive. It is truly universal. Viewing differences from the perspective of this process represents a truly universal perspective on differences.

The universal perspective on differences shows the importance of differences. They are essential for sustaining the universe and all that is in it. They play a very important role in ensuring the survival of human civilization. As the discussion in the preceding section demonstrates, conservation—the essential property of the universe—requires the creation of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. These new levels offer new possibilities and provide access to new resources that make conservation possible. This process is at the heart of the evolution. The preceding section makes clear that differences are a vital part of this process. Their integration makes possible the rise of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Integration is not a mere aggregation of differences. When integrated, differences retain their properties. They are all equal contributors to the creation of the new totality. A new level of organization will emerge only if complete equality of all differences is observed. This process works on universal inclusion and equality.

The above discussion also shows that contrary to the liberal view, clashes between differences are not endemic and inevitable. In the process of creation differences do not clash; they are integrated. Integration conserves them and makes their evolution possible. The conclusion that follows is that the problem of difference (the clashes of differences) is not fundamental. Clashes of differences are epiphenomenal. They do not occur under all conditions; certainly not when they are part of the process of creation. Therefore, the problem that results in clashes of differences is the failure to integrate differences, or exclusion that is integrally connected to inequality. Another conclusion that follows from this line of argumentation is that there can be no solution of the problem of difference without solving first the problem of exclusion and inequality, which is possible only by understanding the source of exclusion.

Many researchers, commentators, politicians, and pundits point to the problem of exclusion as one of the main sources, if not the main source, of many ailments that plague our civilization. They bring up exclusion as the principal culprit in the current crisis. They see the effects of exclusion in the persistence of racial tensions, discrimination, social conflicts, economic disparities, decline of the economy, and many other negative developments in our society. There is a widespread view that exclusion in our society must be eliminated; and that the elimination of exclusion will be an important step in achieving human liberation. There are hardly any advocates of liberation who are more consistent and more passionate about achieving this goal than liberals.

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<sup>195</sup> A more detailed discussion is in Gennady Shkliarevsky, *The Civilization at a Crossroads: Constructing the Paradigm Shift*.

Over the last several centuries, liberalism has in many ways defined the direction of the evolution of our civilization. It still retains much of its influence. However, its domination is waning. In many ways, the current turmoil is a convincing proof of liberalism's decline. Many inconsistencies, contradictions, and paradoxes beset liberal theory and practice. In minds of many people, the woes of contemporary liberalism give rise to important questions: Can liberalism deliver on its historical promise to liberate humanity from fear, oppression, and violence? Can it lead us into a better future? For many people, answers to these questions are negative. The search for alternatives to liberalism is already under way. The doubts are not about the goals professed by liberalism but about the theory, practice, and methods that liberals use in pursuing these goals.

Liberation has been the object of aspirations of many generations of humans going back many centuries. The pursuit of liberation had begun long before liberalism came into existence. Perspectives on liberation have changed. But the goal has not. The search for a path to liberation continues. Liberals have not been the only ones who have promised liberation. Liberals were not the first to start talking about liberation. There are many indications that they will not have the last word in this pursuit.

Although perspectives on liberation often differ from each other, there is a shared view what liberation involves. Most of the current perspectives see liberation in ending oppression, exploitation, wars, violence, and other ills that plague our civilization. However, that's where similarities end. The ways of achieving the goal of liberation differ. Some perspectives emphasize that to end all violence we must resort to violent methods. Many doubt that such approach will bring anything different from what humanity has experienced so far. Some even think, and with much reason, that solutions that involve violence will be much worse than what has happened already in the history of our civilization. We can possibly witness a nuclear holocaust and a destruction of humanity. Our civilization may ruin nature as the habitat for humanity and cause a total human extinction. There is a wide array of critical problems that our civilization currently faces. The resolution of the conundrum in which our civilization finds itself requires an understanding of its source; and there is no consensus about this source. All we have is theories and guesses that confuse us and provide no sense of direction.

Many of the ailments experienced by our civilization are not new. They have existed for a long time. In some cases, the roots reach to the origin of human culture and society. Therefore, the source of these ailments must be old too, hidden in the fog of the past. Many of the problems we face today are similar to the ones that humans have faced in the past. Therefore, the source must also be close to us since we see its destructive effects in the contemporary world.

Most contributions that attempt to explain what is fundamentally wrong with our civilization generally put the blame on exclusion. Exclusion, in their view, breeds inequality, and inequality leads to conflicts. The common view is that inequality and exclusion are closely related; so closely, in fact, that many contributions on the subject often use them interchangeably. This view also recognizes that exclusion and inequality have a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship. The evidence that supports this claim is abundant. Many examples show that inequality

creates conditions for exclusion and exclusion gives rise to inequality. However, despite the recognition of this close interrelationship, researchers still approach exclusion and inequality as two distinct phenomena.

Social scientists—archeologists, anthropologists, economic historians, and others—focus primarily on inequality. The reason is perhaps at least in part methodological. Inequality is much more accessible to quantification than is the major analytical tool in social sciences. Exclusion, by contrast, is much harder to quantify. Most social scientists see inequality as a relatively later development that resulted from the social and economic evolution of the earlier largely egalitarian societies of nomadic hunters and gatherers. There are some social scientists, however, who see the appearance of exclusion and the emergence of hierarchies in earlier egalitarian societies before the rise of inequality in wealth.<sup>196</sup>

The focus on exclusion is prevalent among psychologists and researchers from cognate disciplines (for example, social psychology or behavioral economics). They see exclusion as primarily a result of psychological and mental processes that take place either in the individual mind or in a group, rather than a product of changes in social and economic conditions. They are certainly not blind to the influence of these conditions, but they play a secondary and complementary role in their discourse. Also, researchers whose focus is on exclusion tend to be less interested in historical roots of exclusion but rather in its underpinnings in human psyche and group behavior. Their studies do not dispute the narrative constructed by social scientists. However, unlike the latter, they rarely, if at all, attempt to draw broad generalizations about the historical origin of exclusion or engage in making extrapolations from contemporary conditions into the distant past.

There is a broad agreement among social scientists, supported by a great deal of empirical evidence, that early human societies were largely egalitarian. For example, Ernest Gellner in his typology of human societies notes the uniquely egalitarian structure of nomadic societies of hunters and foragers.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, there does not seem to be much economic or social differentiation in nomadic bands that roamed the earth in distant past. These groups also regularly practiced redistribution of resources. According to students of early societies, such redistributions were largely the rule rather than an exception. Bowles, Smith, and Mulder emphasize, for example, that there is little or no evidence of economic differentiation before 24,000 years ago.<sup>198</sup> Others caution against drawing

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<sup>196</sup> Robert Kurzban, "Evolutionary Origins of Stigmatization: The Functions of Social Exclusion," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 127, no. 2 (2001), pp. 187–208; Patrik Soderberg, "Anthropological Aspect of Ostracism," in Kipling D. Williams and Steve A. Nida, eds., *Ostracism, Exclusion, and Rejection* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 258–272; R. Kurzban and M. Leary, "Evolutionary origins of stigma: The functions of social exclusion," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 127 (2001), pp. 187–208.

<sup>197</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (London: Collins, 1988).

<sup>198</sup> Samuel Bowles, Eric Alden Smith, Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, "The emergence and persistence of inequality in pre-modern societies: introduction to the special section," *Current Anthropology*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2010), pp. 7–17.



such conclusions that may simply be a result of a lack of evidence on periods before 24,000 year ago, particularly evidence related to the embodied and relational wealth transfers.<sup>199</sup>

The rise of inequality under egalitarian conditions is still a puzzle and a subject of numerous debates. The most widely accepted view is that the source of inequality was in the creation of wealth and the complexification of society associated with wealth creation.<sup>200</sup> The growth of wealth required an extensive division of labor, as well as new administrative and managerial practices related to procurement, distribution, storing and preservation of resources. These innovations led to social changes that put an end to egalitarianism among early humans.

Although many share this general thesis, specific explanations vary. The dominant explanation emphasizes sedentary agriculture and farming that came relatively late in history as the principal source of inequality.<sup>201</sup> Charles Boix explains,

The agrarian revolution triggered a momentous transition. Formerly, all men were engaged in foraging activities, and the marginal productivity of hunting was the same across the board. The new technologies of storage and plant domestication led to a high degree of territorial variation in terms of land fertility and productivity.<sup>202</sup>

Other explanations point to the domestication of animals as a great divider that produced inequality.<sup>203</sup> Many new explanations of the origin of inequality have sprouted from a broader, more sophisticated, and more nuanced understanding of what constituted wealth in the early society. Researchers have recognized that wealth included a lot more than

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<sup>199</sup> Kenneth M. Ames, "Comments on the Emergence and Persistence of Inequality in Premodern Societies," *Current Anthropology*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2010), pp. 95–96, p. 96, <https://doi.org/10.1086/649536>

<sup>200</sup> Oded Galor, "The Journey of Humanity: Roots of Inequality in the Wealth of Nations." *Economics and Business Review*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2020), pp. 7–18.

<sup>201</sup> Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 36; Oded Galor, "The Journey of Humanity: Roots of Inequality in the Wealth of Nations," *Economics and Business Review*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2020), pp. 7–18.

<sup>202</sup> Charles Boix, "Origins and Persistence of Economic Inequality," *Annual Reviews of Political Science*, vol. 13 (2010), pp. 489–516, p. 496.

<sup>203</sup> Lizzie Wade, "How Taming Cows and Horses Sparked Inequality across the Ancient World," *Science | AAAS*, November 15, 2017, <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/11/how-taming-cows-and-horses-sparked-inequality-across-ancient-world>.

just land and production implements. They related to the category of wealth such factors as control of hunting and trapping grounds, fishing sites, but also skills, social connections and prestige, expertise and knowledge, and even reproductive success and opportunities. Material wealth transfers, health-based differences in wellbeing, prestige competition and mutualism, and even individual traits—all these factors are deemed to have enhanced dominance and, consequently, inequality.<sup>204</sup>

The richness of the accumulated evidence tends to undermine the dominant view on the source of inequality and, ironically, makes it less, rather than more understandable. The source of inequality has become more elusive. The variety of factors that constitute wealth, for example, has significantly affected the general argument about inequality as a product of wealth creation. This variety leads to a conclusion that inequality often arises in societies where material wealth, in our common understanding, is basically absent—that is, even in societies that have been viewed as egalitarian.<sup>205</sup> Archeologists have challenged the thesis of complexification of society to be a result of economic progress. Many of them separate societies of hunter-gatherers into two basic groups "simple" and "complex." Recently there have been heated discussions of the "nature" of complexity in societies of hunters and gatherers.<sup>206</sup> Indeed, many researchers recognize that permanent economic inequality is unknown among mobile foragers and hunters, but they note the existence of hereditary class distinctions between elites and non-elites in their societies.<sup>207</sup>

In addition, there are also relatively new perspectives that emphasize the role of factors other than wealth creation in the origin of inequality. Reuben and Mark, for example, bring up the size of the population and population pressures as critical for the rise of inequality.<sup>208</sup> For Milena Tsvetkova, network structure and institutions cause

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<sup>204</sup> Siobhan M. Mattison, "The Evolution of Inequality." *Evolutionary Anthropology*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2016), pp.184-99, <https://doi.org/10.1002/evan.21491>; M. Borgerhoff Mulder, S. Bowles, T. Hertz T, "Intergenerational wealth transmission and the dynamics of inequality in small scale societies," *Science*, vol. 326 (2009), pp. 682-688.

<sup>205</sup> Mattison, "The Evolution of Inequality," p. 190.

<sup>206</sup> Michaelyn Harle, "Background of Hunter-Gatherer Complexity," *Lambda Alpha Journal*, vol. 29 (1999), pp. 1-10, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> Gregory K. Dow and Clyde G. Reed, "The Origins of Inequality: Insiders, Outsiders, Elites, and Commoners," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 121, no. 3 (June 1, 2013), pp. 609-41, <https://doi.org/10.1086/670741>.

<sup>208</sup> Reuben J. Thomas and Noah P. Mark, "Population Size, Network Density, and the Emergence of Inherited Inequality," *Social Forces*, vol. 92, no. 2 (December 2013), pp. 521-44, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sot080>.

inequality of distribution in social groups.<sup>209</sup> At times it seems that there are as many perspectives on inequality as there are researchers.

The new developments dispute the thesis that economic growth is the driving force of inequality. They claim that there is little connection between complexification and inequality since complexity is just as characteristic for egalitarian societies as it is for non-egalitarian ones. They also argue that the emergence of social complexity and inequality does not require high growth and that inequality was not necessarily the result of the shift to sedentary agriculture.<sup>210</sup> The diversity and differences among perspectives on the origin of inequality create confusion. They also bring forth an urgent need to formulate a comprehensive perspective that can integrate all these diverse theories. Such integration becomes particularly important if they are to be used—and they often are—in developing policy recommendations.

The career of exclusion, or social exclusion as it is often called, has been even more checkered than that of inequality. Just as with inequality, confusion and controversy beset discussions of exclusion, too. To start with, the focus on exclusion is a relatively recent development. Social exclusion as a concept came into use only in 1974 with the publication of the book *Les exclus* by René Lenoir.<sup>211</sup> After the publication of Lenoir's book, the issue of exclusion lay dormant for several decades. It gained prominence only after the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.<sup>212</sup> Also, as many researchers have noted, prior to the rise of exclusion as a concept of wide circulation, social policies “were discussed in terms poverty, inequality, distribution: concepts which were well-defined, well-understood, axiomatic, and rigorously researched.”<sup>213</sup> Unlike inequality, exclusion is more fluid and its operational

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<sup>209</sup> Milena Tsvetkova, “The Emergence of Inequality in Social Groups: Network Structure and Institutions Affect the Distribution of Earnings in Cooperation Games,” *PLOS ONE*, (July 20, 2018), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/160156652.pdf>.

<sup>210</sup> Thomas P. Leppard, “Social Complexity and Social Inequality in the Prehistoric Mediterranean,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 60, no. 3 (May 1, 2019), pp. 283–308, <https://doi.org/10.1086/703174>.

<sup>211</sup> Jordi Estivill, *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>212</sup> Esuna Dugarova, “Social Inclusion, Poverty Eradication and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” October 2015, p. iii, [https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/\\$file/Dugarova.pdf](https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/$file/Dugarova.pdf); Nabin Rawal, “Social Inclusion and Exclusion: A Review,” *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 2 (2008), pp. 161–80, <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v2i0.1362>.

<sup>213</sup> Ashwini Deshpande, “Exclusion and Inclusive Growth,” UNDP, 2013, (shift from inequality to exclusion), p. 1, <file:///Users/Gennady/Downloads/exclusion-and-inclusive-growth-1.pdf>.

meaning is hard to grasp. Many theorists emphasize that exclusion is, first and foremost, a process, not simply the outcome that results from this process.<sup>214</sup> Others wonder whether the concept of exclusion adds anything to the existing understanding of poverty and inequality, particularly since this understanding encompasses a wide range of disabilities.<sup>215</sup>

The focus on social exclusion seems largely due to the crisis of the welfare state. The main preoccupation of the welfare state was the reduction of inequality through redistribution of wealth. In the wake of the demise of the welfare state, bureaucratic elites were looking for new ways to retain their relevance. Social exclusion became their solution.<sup>216</sup> As one author has noted, the fact that many national and international bureaucracies (ILO, the United Nations, UNESCO, the World Bank, and others) promote the focus on exclusion is no accident.<sup>217</sup>

The widely accepted formulation defines exclusion as “a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live.”<sup>218</sup> Social exclusion covers a variety of very different situations: social marginalization, new poverty, democratic legal/political exclusion, non-material disadvantage, exclusion from the “minimal acceptable way of life,” cultural exclusion (including race and gender), exclusion from family and the community, exclusion from the welfare state, long-term poverty, exclusion from mainstream political and economic life, poverty, state of deprivation, detachment from work relations, economic exclusion, and exclusion from the labor market.<sup>219</sup> It

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<sup>214</sup> Hilary Silver, “The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept.” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, October 1, 2007, p. 1, [1https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1087789](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1087789)

<sup>215</sup> Ashwini Deshpande, “Exclusion and Inclusive Growth,” *UNDP*, 2013, p. 1, <file:///Users/Gennady/Downloads/exclusion-and-inclusive-growth-1.pdf>.

<sup>216</sup> Nabin Rawal, “Social Inclusion and Exclusion: A Review,” *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 2 (2008), pp. 161–80, pp. 177-78, <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v2i0.1362>, <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v2i0.1362>.

<sup>217</sup> Jordi Estivill, *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2003).

<sup>218</sup> Robin Peace, “Social Exclusion: A Concept in Need of Definition?” *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 16 (January 1, 2001), p. 22.

<sup>219</sup> Peace, “Social Exclusion,” p. 22.

occurs “in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household.”<sup>220</sup>

This kind of diversity has blurred the boundaries of the concept of exclusion and mired it in controversy. The proponents of analytical relevancy of social exclusion find that it illuminates the plight of various disadvantaged groups and holds a promise of understanding this problem better. Critics, however, argue that the concept is “so evocative, ambiguous, multidimensional and elastic that it can be defined in many different ways and owing to its ambiguity in definition it may mean all things to all people.”<sup>221</sup> Parent and Lewis, for example, point out that the concept has received much criticism “due to its lack of clarity and inconsistent application in the academic literature and by policy makers.”<sup>222</sup> There are many others who offer similar criticisms of the way that the concept has been defined and employed.

If social exclusion is hard to define, it is even harder to measure. As has been pointed out, many researchers insist that social exclusion is a process, not simply a condition that results from this process.<sup>223</sup> Others view exclusion primarily in terms of tangible outcomes and conditions. The latter approach brings the concept of social exclusion perilously close to the concept of inequality that it is supposed to replace. For Ishwar Modi, for example, the term “inequality” is clearer and more relevant to the conditions in developing countries than social exclusion.<sup>224</sup>

Using the old trick of nominalization whereby strong active verbs are turned into nouns does not help to dispel the confusion.<sup>225</sup> There is a persistent tendency, for example, to equate exclusion with “economic” exclusion.<sup>226</sup> For Ajit Bhalia, poverty

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<sup>220</sup> GSDRC, “Social Exclusion: Topic Guide,” 2015, <https://gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SocialExclusion.pdf>.

<sup>221</sup> Rawal, “Social Inclusion and Exclusion,” p. 163.

<sup>222</sup> F. Dale Parent and Bonnie L. Lewis, “Social Exclusion: A Useful Concept for Applied Sociology in the United States?” *Journal of Applied Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2002), pp. 100–123, p. 102; Rob Atkinson and Simon Davoudi, “The Concept of Social Exclusion in the European Union: Context, Development and Possibilities,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 38 (2000), pp. 427–48.

<sup>223</sup> Hilary Silver, “The Process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, October 1, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1087789>, p. 1.

<sup>224</sup> Ishwar Modi, “Social Exclusion and Inequality: Challenges before a Developing Society,” *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 64, no. 1 (2015), pp. 3–14.

<sup>225</sup> Robin Peace, “Social Exclusion: A Concept in Need of Definition?” *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 16 (January 1, 2001), p. 21.

<sup>226</sup> Esuna Dugarova, “Social Inclusion, Poverty Eradication and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” October 2015,

and marginalization are the sources of exclusion.<sup>227</sup> As he writes: “The concept of exclusion thus has economic, social and political dimensions which are often not explicitly stated, particularly in the vast literature on poverty in developing countries.”<sup>228</sup> Many researchers wonder whether social exclusion is not the same as poverty, or the familiar inequality.<sup>229</sup> Andrew Fischer notes:

Despite the fact that most of the literature agrees that the value added of social exclusion is found in its treatment of processes and that social exclusion can occur without poverty, most attempts to operationalise the concept end up reducing it to a description of certain aspects of poverty.<sup>230</sup>

There is a common tendency to see the reduction of poverty as the way to tackle the issue of social exclusion.<sup>231</sup>

As has already been mentioned, many researchers regard exclusion as primarily a psychological phenomenon and behavioral pattern. This view is the main reason why the study of exclusion and its origin attracts psychologists, neurobiologists, social psychologists, and students of behavioral economics. The proponents of this approach see the origin of exclusion in mental, psychological, neural, and more broadly in biological processes.<sup>232</sup> Michael Thomas, for example, argues that the basis of social

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[https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/\\$file/Dugarova.pdf](https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/0E9547327B7941D6C1257EDF003E74EB/$file/Dugarova.pdf), p. iii.

<sup>227</sup> Ajit Bhalla, “Social Exclusion: Towards an Analytical and Operational Framework,” *Development and Change*, 1997, 413–33, p. 413.

<sup>228</sup> Ajit Bhalla, “Social Exclusion: Towards an Analytical and Operational Framework,” *Development and Change*, 1997, 413–33, p. 430.

<sup>229</sup> Andrew Fischer, “Reconceiving Social Exclusion,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, April 8, 2011, p. 12, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1805685>.

<sup>230</sup> Fischer, “Reconceiving Social Exclusion,” p. 23.

<sup>231</sup> “Reducing poverty by tackling social exclusion: A DFID policy paper,” <https://gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SocialExclusion.pdf>; Estivill, Concepts and Strategies.”

<sup>232</sup> Kelly Lynn Mulvey, Corey Boswell, and Jiali Zheng, “Causes and Consequences of Social Exclusion and Peer Rejection Among Children and Adolescents,” *Report on Emotional & Behavioral Disorders in Youth*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2017), pp. 71–75; Kelly Lynn Mulvey, Aline Hitti, and Melanie Killen, “The Development of Stereotyping and Exclusion,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews. Cognitive Science*, vol. 1, no. 4 (July 2010), pp. 597–606, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.66>; Karla Hoff and James Walsh, “The Whys of Social Exclusion: Insights from Behavioral Economics,” in Paolo Riva and Jennifer Eck, eds., *Social Exclusion: Psychological Approaches to Understanding*

exclusion and group structure is best expressed in terms “neurobiological compatibility and risk assessment modulated by an internal associative model.”<sup>233</sup> Bruce Charlton sees exclusion to be a result of interactions between what he calls “human nature” and environmental circumstances. Following Barkow, he approaches human nature from the standpoint of biology and evolutionary psychology.<sup>234</sup>

The approach that emphasizes psychological dimensions and behavioral patterns as the sources of exclusion is largely unhistorical. That is why in discussing the origin of exclusion in historical terms, researchers, with some notable exceptions,<sup>235</sup> revert to inequality as the cause of marginalization and exclusion.<sup>236</sup> The emphasis shifts the discussion of exclusion from psychology to structural facets of poverty and social marginality.<sup>237</sup> The shift, however, complicates the problem since one has to explain the origin of inequality that has traditionally been explained primarily in social and economic terms, not psychological ones. Some researchers go so far as to claim that inequality originated in psychological processes—a claim that has no solid historical basis.<sup>238</sup>

The grounding of exclusion in psychology and behavioral studies and attributing it to social instincts and psychological processes brings a degree of ambivalence and ambiguity to its study. Exclusion, like inclusion, emerges as an essential dimension of

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*and Reducing Its Impact* (Springer, 2016).

<sup>233</sup> Michael Thomas, “The Basis For A Neurobiological-Associative Model of Personality and Group Cohesion: The Evolutionary And System Biological Origins Of Social Exclusion, Hierarchy, and Structure,” July 2, 2020, p. 1, <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202007.0003/v1>.

<sup>234</sup> Bruce Charlton, “Injustice, Inequality and Evolutionary Psychology,” <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucbtdag/bioethics/writings/ineqpoli.html> (accessed May 3, 2021).

<sup>235</sup> Dan Allman, “The Sociology of Social Inclusion,” *Sage Open*, 2013, 1–16, p. 2. Kurzban, “Evolutionary Origins of Stigmatization”; Soderberg, “Anthropological Aspect of Ostracism”; Kurzban and Leary, “Evolutionary origins of stigma.”

<sup>236</sup> Laura Pohlan, “Unemployment and Social Exclusion,” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, vol. 164 (August 1, 2019), pp. 273–99, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2019.06.006>.

<sup>237</sup> Ian McDowell, “Social Exclusion,” [http://www.med.uottawa.ca/courses/epi6181/course\\_outline/Sociology\\_Social\\_Exclusion.htm](http://www.med.uottawa.ca/courses/epi6181/course_outline/Sociology_Social_Exclusion.htm) (accessed May 1, 2021).

<sup>238</sup> Paul K. Piff, “Unpacking the Inequality Paradox: The Psychological Roots Of Inequality and Social Class,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2017. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5432c0d8e4b0fc3eccdb0500/t/5a620a308165f505d9a19562/1516374577854/AESP.FINAL.pdf>.

human interactions that may even play a positive role. Bruce Charlton, for example, points to fluid and unsettled conditions in early egalitarian societies. Such societies are not, in his view, without social conflicts. Their harmony, he writes, “is of the nature of a dynamic equilibrium between dominance and counter-dominance, *both of which sets of instincts continue to operate*, the equilibrium between which can be altered by a change of circumstance.”<sup>239</sup> In his view, both exclusion and inequality originate in social instincts and both are equally essential. Exclusion, for example, evolved to promote cooperation in small-scale, egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies. Modern *Homo sapiens*, he writes,

. . . has been "designed" by natural selection to live in such societies, and has "counter-dominance" instincts that are gratified by equal sharing of resources and an equal distribution of resources. However, there are also phylogenetically older "dominance" social instincts (status seeking, nepotism, mutual reciprocity) deriving from pre-hominid ancestors, and these tend to create inequality under "modern" conditions of economic surplus.<sup>240</sup>

### *Critique of the Current Perspectives on Exclusion and Inequality*

The review of the current theoretical perspectives on the origin of exclusion and inequality leads to a paradoxical conclusion. On one hand, it shows the great amount of work, both theoretical and empirical, that has been done. This work has enormously expanded our knowledge about early human societies. We now know more about general conditions and minute details in the life of early humans. On the other hand, all this work has not moved us any closer to the solution of the main problem that inspired and propelled this research—to provide a definitive understanding of what constitutes the source of exclusion and inequality. On the contrary, the solution of this problem appears even more distant today than it was when we began to study it. Things were much clearer in the beginning.

In the original hypothesis the source and chronology were very clear. Inequality emerged during the time of the transition to sedentary agriculture between 11,000 and 8,000 years ago. It was a result of wealth creation caused by the economic and social progress that transformed the early egalitarian community of nomadic hunters and gatherers.

However, as our understanding of what constituted wealth and how it could be passed from generation to generation has expanded, as our knowledge of early human society became more nuanced, we have realized that inequality could actually originate

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<sup>239</sup> Charlton, “Injustice, Inequality and Evolutionary Psychology.”

<sup>240</sup> Charlton, “Injustice, Inequality and Evolutionary Psychology,” (emphasis added).



much earlier, well before the rise of sedentary agriculture.<sup>241</sup> Rick Schulting, for example, has shown that hierarchies appeared well before farming.<sup>242</sup> As a result of these new contributions, the origin of inequality has receded into an increasingly more distant past and its source has become more obscure.

Some researchers have even concluded that humans could have inherited inequality from the animal world in the course of the evolution. They argue that inequality, domination, and exclusion are part of the animal world and were inherited by humans. After all, evolution “has conditioned humans, like other animals, to use the least energy and secure the best resources that they could convert to their own genetic material.”<sup>243</sup> In other words, the roots of inequality reach back into nature and are evident in our complex hormonal and psychological responses.<sup>244</sup> As Mark Flinn succinctly put it, “evolution is not egalitarian.”<sup>245</sup>

Claims of direct connection between the animal and the human world are certainly open to criticisms and objections. However, they do question the conviction that exclusion and inequality originated in processes that take place in human society. If, indeed, the source of inequality and exclusion is in nature and in biology, the quest to eliminate them becomes extremely problematic.

The most important criticism one can make regarding the current theoretical perspectives is that they have not solved the problem of the source or sources of inequality and exclusion. Referring exclusion and inequality back to nature is no explanation of the origin; it merely moves the problem further into the evolution of nature. The lack of a solution of the problem of origin puts the current policies that

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<sup>241</sup> Richard Waller, “The Emergence and Persistence of Inequality in Premodern Societies: A Historical Perspective,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2010), pp. 117–18. <https://doi.org/10.1086/649567>.

<sup>242</sup> Rick J. Schulting, “Unequal in Death and in Life? Linking Burial Rites with Individual Life Histories,” in Luc Moreau, ed., *Social Inequality before Farming? Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Social Organization in Prehistoric and Ethnographic Hunter-Gatherer-Fisher Societies*, (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020), [https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/313527/Social Inequality Before Farming q Chapter16.pdf?sequence=2](https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/313527/Social%20Inequality%20Before%20Farming%20Chapter16.pdf?sequence=2).

<sup>243</sup> R. D. Alexander, *Darwinism and human affairs* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), p. 17.

<sup>244</sup> P. Farmer, “An Anthropology of Structural Violence,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2004), pp. 305-317; M. V. Flinn, “Evolution and Ontogeny of Stress Response to Social Challenged in the Human Child,” *Developmental Review*, vol. 26 (2006), pp. 138-74.

<sup>245</sup> Mark V. Flinn, “Evolution Is Not Egalitarian,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2010), pp. 103–4. <https://doi.org/10.1086/649565>.

promise to bring inclusion and equality on a very shaky ground. Many economists, for example, have serious reservations about these policies. Michele Alacevic laments the fact that even scholars of good repute “have exhibited a rather nonchalant attitude, suggesting that a certain degree of inequality must be accepted to maintain a society in good political and economic health.”<sup>246</sup> Rather than viewing inequality as an unhealthy consequence of a flawed social and economic order, they consider it as a factor that promotes growth. Trying to reduce inequality may actually lead to the decline of growth. Albert Hirschman derided the argument for equality as the “jeopardy thesis.”<sup>247</sup>

Investigations into exclusion and inclusion have focused primarily on understanding their evolutionary roots, as well as their social and biological purposes.<sup>248</sup> The emphasis on psychology and behavior makes exclusion appear less tangible and harder to measure. This fact is probably one reason why the discussion of exclusion often shifts to its structural and institutional factors, or what is often called systemic exclusion (e.g. systemic racism).<sup>249</sup>

Like theories of inequality, theoretical perspectives on exclusion are not devoid of their own ambiguities and contradictions. For many researchers exclusion is not a result of flawed society; it is a human capacity—“something we all do.”<sup>250</sup> Exclusion is not necessarily negative; it is also a desirable outcome of evolutionary processes that shaped human community--a necessary condition and consequence of inclusion.<sup>251</sup> Sasaki and Uchida, for example, view exclusion as an important factor that promotes social

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<sup>246</sup> Michele Alacevich, *Inequality: A Short History* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), pp. 14-15.

<sup>247</sup> Alacevich, *Inequality: A Short History*, p. 16.

<sup>248</sup> Allman, “The Sociology of Social Inclusion,” p. 2. Kurzban, “Evolutionary Origins of Stigmatization”; Soderberg, “Anthropological Aspect of Ostracism.”

<sup>249</sup> Peace, “Social Exclusion: A Concept in Need of Definition?” p. 24; Paula McClain, “Race, Power, and Knowledge: Tracing the Roots Of exclusion in the Development of Political Science In the United States,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2016), pp. 467–82; Editorial Board, “Tackling Systemic Racism Requires the System of Science to Change,” *Nature*, vol. 593, no. 7859 (May 19, 2021), pp. 313–313, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-01312-4>.

<sup>250</sup> Susan Opotow, Janet Gerson, and Sarah Woodside, “From Moral Exclusion to Moral Inclusion: Theory for Teaching Peace,” *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2005), pp. 303–18, p. 311; Susan Opotow, “Drawing the line: Social categorization, moral exclusion, and the scope of justice,” in B. B. Bunker and J. Z. Rubin, eds., *Conflict, cooperation, and justice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), pp. 347-369.

<sup>251</sup> Cari Romm, “How We Learn to Exclude People,” *The Cut*, April 13, 2017. <https://www.thecut.com/article/how-we-make-friends-exclude-others.html>.

cooperation.<sup>252</sup> Abrams and Hogg also point to the connection between deviancy and the need for conformism, or inclusion and exclusion as practiced in groups.<sup>253</sup> In their article on social psychology of exclusion they opine:

Thus, it is not always useful to pathologize either the excluders or the excluded, but rather to focus on the social psychological processes at work . . . This is not to say that exclusion can be dealt with only at a social psychological level, but on the other hand, the social science and social policy literature has barely considered the actual mechanisms at work or how interventions at the levels of individuals and groups might be implemented.<sup>254</sup>

The prevailing approach to the study of ethnocentrism, in-group bias, and prejudice presumes that in-group love and out-group hate are reciprocally related.<sup>255</sup>

Although researchers recognize the intimate relationship between exclusion and inequality, studies of their origin largely pursue very different paths. One path focuses on social and economic processes and the other on psychological and behavioral patterns. As a result, although the equal and autonomous status of both exclusion and inequality is recognized, in reconstructing their relationship the autonomous status of one or the other is often lost. Reducing exclusion to inequality or attributing inequality to exclusion is very common.

The point of this brief critical examination is to show that the study of the origin of inequality and exclusion is a widely open field. It is still very much a work-in-progress. It abounds in contradictions and ambiguities. A definitive understanding of the problem of origin remains elusive; and there is no way we can resolve the issue of inequality and exclusion without a clear understanding of what constitutes their source or sources. Despite much progress that has been made and perhaps even in a significant degree due to this progress, we still do not understand either their source or sources, and we do not understand their interrelationship. The field in its current state cannot provide recommendations for practical policies that promise to eradicate exclusion and inequality. Yet despite these obvious problems, politicians, government officials, public figures, and social activists insist on a broad political use of equality and social inclusion as an intrinsic part of broader and coherent developmental strategies, rather than simply as a

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<sup>252</sup> Tatsuya Sasaki and Satoshi Uchida, "The Evolution of Cooperation by Social Exclusion," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, vol. 280, no. 1752 (February 7, 2013), p. 20122498, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2012.2498>.

<sup>253</sup> Dominic Abrams, M. Hogg, and Jose Marques, *The Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion* (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), p. 39.

<sup>254</sup> Abrams, *The Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion*, p. 46.

<sup>255</sup> Marilynn B. Brewer, "The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?" *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 55, no. 3 (Fall 1999), pp. 429–429, p. 429.

means for remedial actions.<sup>256</sup> Such course of action can only result in more confusion, more tensions, and more conflicts.

### *Inclusion and Equality: A Universal Perspective*

As has been pointed out earlier, the theories on the origin of inequality and exclusion have certainly advanced our knowledge about early human societies. Ironically, however, this knowledge has not moved us any closer toward understanding their source. Also, current theories do not help us understand the source of inclusion and equality. Their focus in exclusion and inequality suggests that inclusion does not have an independent source and may simply be a result of the absence or elimination of exclusion.

The persistence of the struggle for a just society indicates that aspirations for inclusion and equality are not fortuitous. They do not seem to owe their existence to subjective and transient factors. Rather their source appears to be fundamental to our life.

The discussion of differences and their role in the universal process of creation shows that inclusion is an integral aspect of this process. Integration of all differences as equals gives rise to new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization that sustain the universe and all that exists in it. The relationship between the process of creation, on one hand, and inclusion and equality on the other, is reciprocal. They sustain each other. The process of creation works on inclusion and equality; and inclusion and equality make this process possible. As an integral aspect of the process of creation, inclusion is fundamental to reality.

Since the process of creation is universal, both inclusion and equality are also universal; and they can only be universal. As has been mentioned, exclusion, no matter how small, reduces the number of possibilities and, consequently, limits access to new resources. Any violation of the principle of universal inclusion impedes the process of creation and goes against conservation and the evolution.

If inclusion works on the recognition of equal value of all differences, exclusion is about denial of their equal value. The denial of value is the essence of inequality. Exclusion and inequality are closely related: exclusion can only work on the basis of inequality and inequality can only exist as a result of exclusion.

As the discussion of the process of creation shows, exclusion and inequality have no role in the process of creation and, consequently, in the evolution of our universe. They are superfluous and non-essential. They have no positive cause for their existence, which may explain why the source of exclusion and inequality has proved to be so elusive. They appear only when the process of creation and its essential aspects universal inclusion and equality are violated.

The persistence of exclusion and inequality in our civilization is a puzzle with roots reaching into distant past to the very beginning of human civilization. There is no question that humans and their society have emerged in the course of the evolution,

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<sup>256</sup> Dugarova, "Social Inclusion, Poverty Eradication and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," p. iv.

which means that they are products of the process of creation. In fact, human mind is the most powerful tool of creation; it can create an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. This capacity distinguishes humans from the rest of nature.

Our mind and consciousness play an essential mediating role in the way we humans relate to reality. Mental constructs are the principal tools that allow humans to perceive, interpret, and understand reality. This fact was as true for early humans, just as it is true for us today. While early humans relied on these tools, they certainly had no idea that these tools were created and that they were the ones who created them. They most certainly knew little to nothing about the process of creation and its critical role in their relationship with reality. Incidentally, we are not that much different from them in this regard since we do not recognize the central role of the process of creation.<sup>257</sup> Margaret Boden, one of the pre-eminent researchers in the field of creativity, draws the following conclusion in her influential book on the subject:

Our ignorance of our own creativity is very great. We are not aware of all the structural constraints involved in particular domains, still less of the ways in which they can be creatively transformed. We use creative heuristics, but know very little about what they are or how they work. If we do have any sense of these matters, it is very likely tacit rather than explicit: many people can be surprised by a novel harmony, but relatively few can explicitly predict even a plagal cadence.<sup>258</sup>

Early humans certainly had no idea about their creative mental processes that played a vital role in their relationship with reality. The creative capacity of their mind was not the focal point of the frame through which they viewed reality. The initial stage of symbolic appropriation of reality is assimilation—objects are included into mental operations and, as a result, humans see reality in terms of their own projections.

The tendency to project mental constructs has its origin in the symbolic assimilation of reality. Such assimilation is the first stage in the mental appropriation of reality by humans. It involves spontaneous projection of mental constructs on nature and its objects; it animates objects. Reality appears as a reflection of human properties.

As a result of such spontaneous (and one could add uncritical) projection, early humans could not and did not differentiate between their mental constructs and what reality was; they did not know the difference between reality and their representations of reality. They tended to attribute to objects their own human properties, including their own creative powers. They endowed objects with agency, thus denying their own agency that was ultimately involved in interpreting the world.

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<sup>257</sup> Margaret Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>258</sup> Margaret Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 246.

One can observe such spontaneous animism in the early stages of child development, or what is often defined as child egocentrism. At this stage children endow objects with human characteristics (emotions, intentions, and thinking). Symbolic operations that create such initial representations must be conserved. Conservation requires the equilibration of these operations with each other. Since symbolic operations define human actions, physical interactions between humans and their environment manifests this equilibration. The balancing of mental operations with each other involves putting them and, consequently, the objects they construct into causal relations with each other, which leads to manipulation of objects. Humans begin to manipulate objects. As a result of such manipulation and the establishment of causal relations among objects, humans begin to make differentiation between themselves and objects they manipulate. The objects begin to lose their human characteristics and magic powers previously attributed to them. They become things—objects to be used and manipulated, not autonomous agents. And as objects of nature lose their divine character in human imagination, so eventually does nature. It becomes an object that we seek to control and manipulate.

The early stages of human civilization provide much evidence that support this interpretation. One can observe this evolution in folklore, artifacts, and belief systems. The belief system progresses from animism that attributes creative agency to various objects (rocks, stones, shells, plants, trees, rivers, etc.) to totemism that attributes agency to animals, to mythologies and ancient religions that attribute agency to objects of nature increasingly distant from humans and their world—objects that are not immediately accessible to manipulation: celestial bodies (planets and stars), earth, sky, as well as various natural phenomena (thunder, lightning, wind, etc.). The vector of this evolution points in one direction: from objects that are more easily accessible to human manipulation (like stones and rocks) to objects that are less accessible (mountains, earth, sky, planets); from objects that are incapable of autonomous and self-determined movement (such as rocks, trees, shells, etc.) to objects that move (animals or planets).

This detailed description of the evolution of the mental appropriation of reality by early humans illustrates one important point. Early humans excluded the process of creation from their frame of vision. This early exclusion established a pattern whereby the process we use in creating our mental constructs remained largely outside of our frame of vision. As a result, our knowledge of the process of creation has been and remains very limited.<sup>259</sup> Without understanding how the process of creation works, we cannot have a comprehensive and objective understanding of reality. Also, without such understanding, we are not able to appreciate the full import and significance that universal inclusion of differences and their equality have for us and our civilization. This failure is the main reason why we mistake selective “inclusion” that is a form of exclusion for the real thing—the bona fide inclusion. This failure to embrace the process of creation is the source of exclusion and its consequences. It is the mother of all exclusions.

We view exclusion and inequality on equal terms with inclusion and equality, as a kind of antipodes. In fact, they are not. Exclusion and inequality cannot match the

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<sup>259</sup> Shkliarevsky, “Understanding the Process of Creation”; Boden, *The Creative Mind*.

power and importance of inclusion and equality. They have no role in the process of creation that sustains our universe and all in it. Contrary to the current theories, exclusion and inequality have no positive cause. This fact may explain why the search for their source has been so difficult and inconclusive.

Exclusion and inequality are no equals to inclusion and equality. Inclusion and equality are not mere moral imperatives (although they are this too); they empower us and sustain our life. They play a vital role in the evolution, in conserving our universe and all that is in it. Exclusion and inequality do not even come close to the power of inclusion and equality. Their only reason for existence is the fact that we have not embraced in our practice universal inclusion and equality. As a result of our failure to grasp the real importance of inclusion and equality, they have become a mere exchange currency in the subjective human realm, replaceable by its opposites. If we understood their importance, we would never shortchange them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Process of Creation and the New Social Practice**

This study is not unique in viewing exclusion and inequality as the greatest danger that creates numerous problems that beset our civilization. It is not unique in seeing exclusion and inequality as the most serious threat to the survival of our civilization. It is not alone in calling for their complete elimination as the vital prerequisite for solving numerous other problems we face, including the present crisis. The important contribution of this study is the connection that it establishes between exclusion and inequality, on one hand, and our relationship with reality, on the other. This study argues that there is a fundamental flaw in this relationship: it does not recognize and embrace the most vital part of reality—the process of creation. We essentially disregard the process of creation and do not recognize its central role. For all practical purposes, we exclude this process from the frame of vision through which we view reality. As a result, our view of reality is limited, subjective, and arbitrary. It is woefully inadequate. This fundamental inadequacy is the source of the numerous problems humanity has faced in the past and continues to face in the present. This problem has many practical consequences. The exclusion of the process of creation breeds other forms of exclusion. Our social practice based on the exclusion of the process of creation makes exclusion and inequality a persistent presence in our civilization.

During its long and turbulent history, our civilization has experienced many transformational changes. Each period in this evolution—pagan, Christian, Modern—has had its own distinct foundation based on its specific organizing principle. Although all these organizing principles differ from each other and are, in many ways, incommensurable, they do share one common characteristic. All these organizing principles are human creations. Their origin is in anthropocentrism—our propensity to view reality from a humanly created perspective. For this reason, all these stages of our history are anthropocentric. Our civilization from its emergence to the present day has been and remains anthropocentric in its orientation. In a fundamental sense, it is human-centered. Such human-centered orientation is inevitably exclusive, limiting, subjective, and arbitrary.

The preceding section shows that the process of creation works on universal inclusion and equality. Differences play an essential role in this process. They do not clash. On the contrary, they become integrated into new totalities that conserve differences and make their evolution possible. An important conclusion follows from the fact that differences involved in the process of creation do not clash. A social practice that uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle will be able to prevent clashes among differences. It will be able to integrate differences into new structural wholes that will conserve differences and make their evolution possible. Consequently, such practice will not only be able to prevent conflicts that result from clashes of differences, but it will also be able to ensure conservation (i.e. survival) and the continued evolution of our civilization. Therefore, there is every



reason to give a serious thought to a possibility of developing such practice and making it central in our relationship with reality.

### *Properties of the New Social Practice*

#### 1. General Observations

The foundation of the new social practice is totally different from other practices on which humans have hitherto relied. It uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle. The process of creation is not our invention. This process had been there long before the rise of humanity. Humans have not created it; on the contrary, this process has created humanity and its civilization. The new social practice is decidedly non-anthropocentric. It will make possible to observe reality from a universal perspective based on a principle that has not been devised and put forward by humans. It will result in a view of reality that will be objective and critical.

The process of creation is universal. It embraces all creations—past, present, and future. The view of reality from the perspective of the process of creation satisfies two important conditions of objectivity: a) it includes all possibilities; and b) it is universal and makes possible to observe objects or phenomena from all possible sides.

There is also another important criterion of objectivity that the practice based on the process of creation satisfies. According to this criterion, an objective representation of reality should include the critical capacity to observe the process of observing itself. All current theories of knowledge have not solved this problem of self-referentiality. Observing always requires a point from which one can observe the object. To offer a full view of the object, this point should necessarily be located outside the object. If the object is observation itself, one need to have a point from which one can observe the observing. The problem is that this secondary observing must also be observed to satisfy the criterion of criticality and objectivity. But choosing such external point of observing will inevitably lead to what Niklas Luhmann has called “infinite regress.” In other words, every point of observation can and will be succeeded by another one, no less susceptible to self-referentiality than its predecessor.<sup>260</sup>

The process of creation makes possible to solve the problem of “infinite regress.” This process is a system. Since it is universal, it is no different from other systems in one important respect: it also requires stabilization and, therefore, regulation. Regulation is a reflective function and, as such, offers a possibility of reflection. If the process of

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<sup>260</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The Paradox of Observing, Autopoiesis, and the Future of Social Sciences,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* 24(3), pp. 323 – 32; Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 479.

creation requires regulation, there must be a point from which one should be able to reflect on the entire process while at the same time remaining deeply embedded in this process.

## 2. The Balance Between Equilibration and the Production of Disequilibrium

As has been repeatedly pointed out, conservation and regulation are at the heart of the process of creation. Conservation of functional operations requires their equilibration with each other. Their equilibration creates a new and more powerful level of organization that can regulate interactions of functional operations. The emergence of a more powerful level of organization produces disequilibrium that requires re-equilibration and so on. Thus, the process of creation involves constant oscillation between equilibration and the production of disequilibrium, or between equilibrium and disequilibrium.

Equilibrium and disequilibrium are dynamically related: as operations are equilibrated and equilibrium increase, so does disequilibrium that arises as a result of the emergence of a new and more powerful level of organization. The two are in balance. This constant balance between equilibration and the production of disequilibrium, or between equilibrium and disequilibrium, sustains the dynamism of the process of creation, just like the balance between equilibrium and disequilibrium sustains our ability to walk.

This dynamic balance has a function of regulation and, as a regulatory function, it makes possible to reflect on the entire process of creation from within this process. Any mental construct (theory, idea, concept, etc.) can and should be viewed with full awareness that it is ultimately a stage in the transition to new and more powerful levels of organization that will give rise to new ideas, theories, and concepts. Using a point of balance between equilibrium and disequilibrium makes possible to satisfy the requirement of critical reflection that is a very important criterion of objectivity.

## 3. The Balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions

There is another important balance that plays a vital role in the process of creation. It is the balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions. The contemporary social practices deem hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions, or hierarchies and networks, to be diametrically opposed to each other. Consequently, they believe that the relationship between these two types of interactions requires subordination and domination of one by the other.<sup>261</sup> This belief has been and still remains the source of violent conflicts, the likes of which we have seen in the events of Tiananmen Square, the Arab Spring, the Maidan movement in Ukraine, the protest movement in Hong Kong, the Occupy movement, and the current turmoil.

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<sup>261</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Rethinking Democracy: A Systems Perspective on the Global Unrest," *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 33, issue 3 (2016), pp. 452-470.

As the analysis of the process of creation shows, non-hierarchical interactions create new and more powerful levels of organization. The emergence of more powerful levels of organization certainly indicates the presence of hierarchies. Thus, the functioning of systems reveals a symbiotic relationship between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions. Non-hierarchical interactions create new levels of organization that are more powerful than the ones from which they have emerged. Hierarchical interactions conserve and optimize what non-hierarchical interactions have created. Hierarchical interactions cannot create; and non-hierarchical interactions cannot conserve and optimize what they have created. The two complement each other.

Within the process of creation, the two types of interactions have a complementary relationship. They are in balance and in harmony. The brain represents the most powerful level of organization in an organism. Yet, the brain does not tell cells what to do. The two levels are mutually supportive and sustain each other. The domination of one type or the other will disrupt the process of creation and will make the conservation of a system and its evolution impossible.

One can observe this symbiotic relationship between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions only when the process of creation is in the focus and organizes our view of reality. If this process is not in our frame of vision, the two types of interactions will necessarily appear as irreconcilable and opposed to each other.

#### 4. The Cognitive Property of the New Practice

The recognition of the central role of the process of creation in our relationship; with reality significantly changes the understanding of how we acquire knowledge. The process of creation propels and shapes the evolution that has led to the rise of mental operations and the human mind. Consequently, this process has a lot to do with the way our mind functions.

As has been explained, mental constructs that we use to make sense of reality are products of the process of creation. Our knowledge is essentially one-to-one correspondences that we establish between our mental constructs and reality. As our mental constructs evolve, they change our representations of reality, or our knowledge. The process of creation is the source of our knowledge; and cognitive aspect is an important part of this process.

The conception of knowledge that recognizes the central role of the process of creation in knowledge production raises several questions. The theory of knowledge that has dominated our civilization and still retains its grip views knowledge in terms of reflection. According to this view, our senses transmit their perceptions of reality and impress these perceptions in the brain. According to the conception of knowledge based on the recognition of the process of creation, mental constructs make perceptions of reality possible. These perceptions are simply one-to-one correspondences that we establish between our mental constructs and reality.

Mental constructs are products of interactions among neuronal operations. These interactions are more about conserving neuronal circuits than about the conscious pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge is essentially a by-product of the process that in pursuit of conservation creates new and increasingly more powerful

levels of organization that give rise to new and more powerful constructs. The evolution of our knowledge is essentially a by-product of this process.

Since the human mind represents the most powerful level of organization in the universe, it can incorporate and contain all other levels of organization that exist in the universe. Its power is much greater than the power of any other level of organization. Therefore, we can always establish one-to-one correspondences between our mental constructs and objects or phenomena that we observe.

As has been maintained throughout this study, the process of creation can produce an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. In accordance with this claim, our knowledge is constantly changing, which means that knowledge is not finite. Some may feel a certain degree of discomfort about accepting this notion. After all, we need reliable knowledge to operate in the world of finite things. In this world we must have some finality to achieve predictable and finite outcomes and offer valid explanations that can be used for practical purposes. Knowledge and understanding of objects and phenomena give us control over them. Without definite knowledge we may not have such control, which is a concern that many of us share.

The theory of knowledge based on the process of creation has a response to this concern. We live in the world of finite things and phenomena; and finite things and phenomena have finite number of properties. Indeed, we can construct an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization, and these levels of organization will enable us to formulate new ideas and approaches. However, while our power to acquire knowledge is infinite, finite objects have finite number of properties. Consequently, at some point, we may identify all properties of a specific finite object or phenomenon. At some point, new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization may describe all properties that finite objects have and adding new levels of organization will add nothing to the description of such objects. Consequently, the fact that we can create an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization does not exclude a possibility that we may have finite knowledge about finite objects; in fact, our mental capacity practically guarantees this outcome.

## 5. The New Social Practice and Meaning Creation

Meaning creation is an important part of our life. The operation that makes meaning creation possible is assimilation. Assimilation plays an important role in our interactions with reality. It involves the incorporation of differences into functional operations. Assimilation represents an action that is akin to devouring prey by predator. It conforms differences to functional operations and metabolizes them.

Assimilation is an essential part of the process of creation that is the organizing principle of the new social practice. For this reason, assimilation is also an essential part of the new practice that is based on the process of creation. Consequently, assimilation, or meaning creation, is integral to the new social practice. It is an important contributor to knowledge production.

## 6. Adaptation and Evolution

This study has explained the connection between the process of creation and constant changes that constitute the evolution (p. 61). By contrast with assimilation, adaptation is about adjustment of functional operations to differences; it is about conforming functional operations to differences. As has been explained, interactions among functional operations create a new and more powerful level of organization. Conservation requires integration of the new level of organization to the one from which it has emerged.

The two levels are very different: the emergent level is much more powerful (in fact, exponentially more powerful) than the level from which it has emerged. There is also another asymmetry between them. While more powerful level has access to the less powerful one, the reverse is not true; yet integration requires for it to have access to the more powerful level. Less powerful operations must have a capacity to “understand” operations sustained by the more powerful level of organization. The former acquire this capacity as a result of a long process of gradual adaptation that enriches them by new possibilities, or properties, and makes them more powerful. Adaptation enriches functional operations of the system; they acquire new possibilities, or properties, and become more powerful. Their re-equilibration advances the entire system. It evolves and becomes more powerful and more stable.

Thus, adaptation plays an essential role in the process of creation and the evolution. Adaptation will also be an important aspect of the new social practice. Consequently, the new social practice has no possibility for stagnation. The evolution is its inevitable outcome. Each new stage in this evolution will be more powerful (exponentially more powerful) than the stage that has preceded it.

## 7. The New Practice, Freedom, and Determination

The concept of freedom occupies a very special place in our civilization. Attaining freedom has been and continues to be an avowed goal that has inspired generations. Many people are willing to endure great sacrifices to attain this goal. Although freedom is a human concept, it has its equivalent in the process of creation. This process has a property that has evolved eventually in our consciousness into the concept of freedom.

The process of creation is a determined process. It has a constraint. In order to exist, the process must be active; it must create. This is, to be sure, a constraint, but this constraint is internal to the process, not external to it. The determination in this case is internal, not external. It is a form of self-determination, which is an essential condition of freedom.

Thus, self-determination is an essential property of the process of creation. The new social practice inherits this property that is its integral part. Self-determination and freedom are important properties of the new social practice that it inherits from the process of creation. As a result, the new social practice promotes self-determination. It inevitably leads to the attainment of freedom.

## 8. Non-Dualism of the New Social Practice

Dualism is one of the concepts related to reality that dominates our current knowledge. This concept has a powerful influence on our current social practice, including science and philosophy. Dualism has many forms and affects many spheres of our knowledge. Perhaps the best-known form of dualism is the opposition between the subject and the object. One can point to other forms of dualism: mind and matter, determinism and indeterminism, wave and particle, and many others. Dualism creates confusion and contradictions in our knowledge, thus hindering our understanding of reality.

There is no room for dualism in the process of creation. The subject and the object are both products of this process. The analysis of the process of creation shows that as we create new mental constructs (i.e., as we change the subject), our understanding of reality, or the object, also changes. Piaget's study of the early development of children shows that any advance in understanding reality (the object) by the child necessarily involves changes in the child's mind and vice versa. Viewed from this perspective, the subject and the object no longer appear as opposed to each other; rather, they are integral to a productive and mutually enriching relationship mediated by the process of creation. Only when we disregard the process of creation, the two appear as diametrically opposed to each other.<sup>262</sup> The understanding of the emergence of the human mind and consciousness shows that both owe their existence to material processes that create new combinations that constitute the evolution leading to the rise of human mind and the emergence of consciousness.<sup>263</sup>

The failure to embrace the process of creation results in a one-sided, subjective, and ultimately arbitrary view of reality. Such view of reality creates general confusion that negatively affects our capacity to understand reality, which leads to flawed decisions and the accumulation of problems we cannot solve. The new social practice eschews dualism and will be decidedly non-dualistic. The view of reality that will result from a non-dualistic approach will be inclusive, comprehensive, and objective. Such view will be very helpful in making sense of reality and making adequate decisions.

## 9. The Moral Property of the New Practice

Morality rests on two important pillars. One is about the necessity, indeed the obligation, to act morally. The other is about the good, goodness, and justice. It is about our obligation to act in the interests of goodness and justice. Morality resides in the

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<sup>262</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "In Quest for Justice: Solving the Problem of Inclusion and Equality," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, June 8, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3862630> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3862630>; Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence*.

<sup>263</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Mind's Eye: De-Mystifying Consciousness," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, May 10, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4105608> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4105608>.

domain of consciousness. Consciousness is a product of the evolution that is propelled by the process of creation.<sup>264</sup> Morality, as a part of the domain of consciousness, partakes in the properties of the process of creation that have entered the domain of consciousness in the course of the evolution.

The process of creation is necessary for sustaining our universe. Without it, the universe simply would not exist. This necessary character of the process of creation is its very important property. Consciousness has inherited this property and expresses it as the necessity, obligation, or duty.

The good and goodness are two other important concepts that are integral to morality. The meaning of these two concepts is very broad. They are notoriously difficult to define in specific terms. However, they do convey the general sense of what we regard as something that is universally beneficial. The process of creation sustains our universe. It benefits the universe and is, therefore, universally beneficial. Morality expresses this universal benefit in the concepts of goodness and the good.

Many moral codes include individual responsibility. The process of creation requires universal inclusion and equality. In other words, the value of each difference is implicit in this process. This implication evolves in our consciousness into the concepts of individual and individualism.

Morality also has an important social orientation and emphasizes the interest of society as an objective of moral action. The process of creation is not only about individual differences. It also involves the integration of differences into totalities of interrelated and interdependent differences. Such integration conserves differences and makes their collective evolution possible. The need to integrate differences into totalities has evolved in our consciousness into the communitarian idea of society.

The above discussion shows that all important aspects of morality are traceable to the properties of the process of creation. In other words, all properties of morality have equivalents in the properties possessed by the process of creation. Since the new social practice uses the process of creation as its central organizing principle, the moral dimension is an essential part of this practice.

## 10. The Aesthetic Dimension of the New Practice

The capacity to appreciate beauty is an important human property. Aesthetic sensibilities enable humans to create and appreciate works of art. Aesthetic experiences delight us; they bring us joy and happiness. The history of human civilization shows that the aesthetic sphere is integral to human social practices. It is a product of the evolution and, consequently, has its roots in the process of creation.

Aesthetic experiences delight us. They involve gratification of our senses. Therefore, gratification is the source of our aesthetic experience and values. Gratification is central to the process of creation. This process of creation sustains and conserves functional operations, including operations of our senses. The stimulation of our sense organ keeps them active. Staying active conserves these operations and propels their evolution that leads to the emergence of new sensibilities and new ways of

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<sup>264</sup> Shkliarevsky, "The Mind's Eye."

stimulating our senses. Aesthetic experiences play an important role in this process. They stimulate sensual organs and keep them active. They are a form of gratification that sustains functions of our sense organs and the evolution of our sensibilities. Since the new social practice uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle, the capacity to generate aesthetic experiences is an important property of the new practice.

The properties discussed in this section certainly do not exhaust the enormous array of properties that relate to the new practice. Human life is rich in experiences. The array of properties and experiences that are relevant to human life is enormous. Moreover, the evolution of human civilization results in the emergence of new properties, new experiences, new sensibilities that reflect the increasing richness of our lives. The new social practice will conserve the existing properties relevant to human life and give rise to new ones.

### *The New Social Practice and the Liberal Tradition*

The criticisms of liberalism in this study may create an impression that the new perspective represents a rejection of liberalism, and that the shift to the new social practice would lead to a complete disappearance of liberalism and its heritage. Such impression would be completely incorrect. For one thing, nothing can really disappear from the world in which conservation reigns supreme. The liberal tradition is no exception. Moreover, this impression would omit one important fact that the new perspective has its roots in liberalism and that liberalism has paved the way leading to the new social practice.

Indeed, liberalism has failed to solve the problem of difference and the current turmoil in America and the world is a convincing proof of this failure. Despite its many successes, liberalism has also failed to deliver on its promises of liberating humanity from fear, violence, and oppression. However, the failure of liberalism is not a result of some mistake, aberration, or a lack of commitment. Liberalism remains loyal to its principles and values.

The history of liberalism is a proof of its remarkable evolution. It has enormously expanded both in scale and scope. From Europe and America liberalism has spread to other parts of the world. It has also integrated many radically new ideas, concepts, views, and perspectives, some of which are dramatically different from and may even appear incompatible with liberalism's original formulation. This evolution has transformed liberalism and made it remarkably adaptive, malleable, and enduring. As a result of the integration of radical differences, the contemporary liberal theory and practice may appear to be full of contradictions and inconsistencies. However, this impression does not tell the full story. The integration of radical differences has become possible only because of the creation of new and more powerful level of organization that includes all these inconsistencies and contradictions as particular cases—i.e., cases that are true under specific conditions or assumptions. In its current form, liberalism is powerful enough to include all these contradictions and inconsistencies as specific cases. The evolution of liberalism has given rise to a new organizing principle that maintains the integrity and stability of the new level. Contradictions, inconsistencies, and paradoxes appear only if one does not see this new organizing principle.



Despite their differences, often very dramatic and radical, many new ideas, approaches, concepts, views, and perspectives that liberalism has embraced have one common feature. They have all been created. This fact indicates that there is a process that has led to their emergence, or what the new perspective identifies as the process of creation. The evolution of liberalism makes this realization possible. The new perspective that uses the process of creation as its central organizing principle has its roots in liberalism. It represents a transcendence of liberalism for which liberalism has paved the way. Reconciliation—a new approach in solving the problem of difference—illustrates the affinity between the new perspective and liberalism.

Although the concept of reconciliation has been known for a long time, only in the last two decades or so the study of reconciliation has emerged as a well-defined area of interest in political science and political psychology.<sup>265</sup> Reconciliation attracts much attention. The literature on reconciliation is vast and continues to grow. Reconciliation has become a theme for numerous conferences and presentations. Even high-level international organizations have picked up the idea of going “beyond tolerance” and now promote reconciliation as a solution to world problems. The theme of reconciliation, for example, has been the subject of the special address delivered by Kyung-wha Kang, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, to UN Human Rights Council.<sup>266</sup>

Few people have done more to popularize the idea of reconciliation than Ameen Fares Rihani (1876-1940), a Lebanese-American writer and thinker, who has launched the career of the reconciliation approach. Rihani had deep concerns about the separation between the East and the West. He prophetically believed that this separation was one of the most important problems faced by the modern civilization. Rihani was an ardent advocate of reconciliation as an alternative to the direction pursued by Western liberalism. Deeply steeped in both Western and Eastern cultural traditions, he advocated an integration of the two as equals. He argued that such integration would be every bit as

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<sup>265</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma H. Bennink, “The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” in Bar-Siman-Tov, Yaacov. *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 11-36; Michael L. Krepon and Amit Sevak, eds., *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building, and Reconciliation in South Asia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995); Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid’s Criminal Governance* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); Robert L. Rothstein, *After the Peace: Resistance and Reconciliation* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

<sup>266</sup> Kyung-wha Kang, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Statement made at the High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: fostering peaceful, inclusive societies and countering violent extremism,” UN Human Rights Council, New York, April 21, 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2015/04/statement-made-high-level-thematic-debate-un-general-assembly-promoting>.

beneficial to humanity as economic integration and cooperation.<sup>267</sup> Much of what Rihani wrote was not published and was largely neglected during his lifetime. A significant part of his heritage is still unpublished if not entirely neglected. However, the shift that has occurred in the discourse on conflict resolution toward reconciliation over the last few decades has led to a revival of attention to Rihani's ideas and heritage.<sup>268</sup>

There were quite a few intellectuals in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who discussed reconciliation in their works. But there were few systematic discussions of the subject. It was not before the end of the Cold War that reconciliation studies emerged as a well-defined field within the social sciences.<sup>269</sup> It has evolved out of the recognition that "there is a need to go beyond the traditional focus on conflict resolution, to expand the study of peacemaking to a macrosocietal perspective, which concerns reconciliation between society members."<sup>270</sup> Today, reconciliation studies are a thriving field that offers a variety of perspectives and attracts a growing number of academic, government, non-government, and international organizations, as well as researchers, politicians, and public figures.

Operationally, reconciliation is not an easy concept to use. This multifaceted term remains the subject of heated debates and disputes. It may appear deceptively easy to define in everyday life. However, as Luis Peña points out, reconciliation "turns out to be something of extreme complexity when described and implemented." Generally, in common usage, reconciliation involves the improvement of relationships between people and groups involved in a conflict. The complexity, however, Peña explains,

. . . lies in the fact that there is no definition of what should be improved in relations damaged by violence, what the mechanisms of reconciliation should be, or how the relationships of reconciled individuals and groups are perceived in everyday life. This complexity, more than a blockage or a

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<sup>267</sup> Nathan C. Funk and Betty J. Sitka, eds., *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West: A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2004), p. 10.

<sup>268</sup> Suheil Bushrui and May Rihani, eds., *The Essential Rihani* (College Park: University of Maryland, 2011); Funk and Sitka, *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West*.

<sup>269</sup> Diego Checa Hidalgo, ed., *Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Studies* (Granada 2022), <https://pcrsc.aaup.edu/sites/default/files/Manual-on-conflict-Resolution-and-Reconciliation-Studies2022.pdf>; Luis Peña, "Theories of reconciliation. Basic coordinates for navigating debates on building better relationships in societies in transition," in I. M. AlDajani and M. Leiner, eds., *Reconciliation, Heritage and Social Inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Springer, 2022), p. 23.

<sup>270</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink "The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process," p. 11.

weakness, expresses the vitality of reconciliation as a project of social transformation and as a field of study.<sup>271</sup>

There is a common tendency to use reconciliation and tolerance synonymously. Although the two have different meanings, they often apply to similar contexts. For this reason, their situational meanings come very close, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. However, the advocates of reconciliation as a distinct approach in addressing the problem of differences draw a clear line of separation between tolerance and reconciliation. In their view, tolerance has many important limitations that reconciliation does not have.

The distinction goes all the way back to Ameen Rehani. As Nathan Funk points out, for Rehani, the reconciliation of differences involves “more than just the reasonable toleration of differences in values, political ideas, metaphysical belief systems, folk customs, symbols, and forms of ritual worship.” Rehani, Funk continues, “went beyond the Western enlightenment paradigm of toleration as espoused by such exemplars as Voltaire, and developed his own approach to reconciliation as an existential search for a way of being that transcends but includes opposites.”<sup>272</sup>

Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma H. Bennink draw a distinction of their own between reconciliation and the liberal concepts of conflict resolution:

The formal resolution of conflict usually only involves leaders, undermining the fact that they only account for a small portion of a society and that the members of the society may still be at war with each other. Reconciliation involves modifying motivations, beliefs, and attitudes of the majority, and such activities promote establishing or renewing relations within a group.<sup>273</sup>

Some proponents of reconciliation even raise questions whether they should continue to promote tolerance. In an article provocatively entitled “Beyond Tolerance” Rahima Wad asks a poignant question: “But do we really want to promote tolerance as our final goal?”<sup>274</sup> Her answer to this largely rhetorical question is a resounding no. She explains by drawing a sharp line between reconciliation and tolerance. In reconciliation, she writes,

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<sup>271</sup> Peña, “Theories of Reconciliation,” p. 22.

<sup>272</sup> Funk, “More Than Tolerance.”

<sup>273</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink, “The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” p. 26.

<sup>274</sup> Rahima Wad, “Beyond Tolerance,” *Rethinking Schools*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Fall 1993), <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/beyond-tolerance/>.

Differences are no longer just tolerated, or even respected, they are embraced. The bond at this level goes beyond principled attitudes and perceptions and reaches into caring. It is the recognition of our common humanity . . . With this ideal in mind, the mission of “tolerance” seems an inadequate goal in our educational policies. Instead, I believe we must go beyond tolerance and use words such as understanding, valuing, respect, or better yet, solidarity and affirmation.<sup>275</sup>

Educator Sonia Nieto also proposes to identify the level of experience she associates with reconciliation as “affirmation” and “solidarity,” rather than tolerance.<sup>276</sup> Writing on tolerance, Martha Minow, Dean at Harvard’s School of Education, draws attention to the limitations of tolerance. She offers a sarcastic criticism of the way liberals use tolerance and inclusion in their discourse.

Tolerance means “inclusion,” but actually that is not enough. To many people who have been made marginal in the past, inclusion sounds like, “come on in, but don’t change anything.” Inclusion sounds like, “you’re welcome to join what we do, but we’re not going to change what we do.”<sup>277</sup>

The theme of embracing differences is very common among the proponents of reconciliation. Ruhani even uses the expression “extensive embracing” as a characteristic feature of reconciliation. Embracing is a metaphor, not an analytical term. Although no clear definition of embracing is offered (after all, as a metaphor embracing should be open to interpretation), but the meaning implies integration of differences.

Proponents of reconciliation point out that, in contrast to tolerance, reconciliation is first and foremost about a process that is syncretic and involves many aspects of our intellectual and social life. According to Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma H. Bennink, reconciliation, as a process, involves “changing the motivation, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of the society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves.”<sup>278</sup> In their

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<sup>275</sup> Wad, “Beyond Tolerance.”

<sup>276</sup> Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992).

<sup>277</sup> Martha Minow, “On Neutrality, Equality, and Tolerance: New Norms for a Decade of Distinction,” *Change*, vol. 22, no. 1, (January/ February 1990), pp. 17-25, p. 24.

<sup>278</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink, “The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” p. 12.

view, it is a long process that may take years to achieve results.<sup>279</sup> The process starts with psychological changes:

That is, reconciliation begins when the parties in conflict start to change their beliefs, attitudes, goals, motivations, and motions about the conflict, each other, and future relations—all in the direction of reconciliation.<sup>280</sup>

Many who advocate the reconciliation approach point out its multifaceted nature—the fact that it involves multiple aspects: moral, intellectual, aesthetic, social and others. For Funk, Rihani’s life experience, his thought and practice offer an important inspiration to those who seek “a positive approach to reconciliation amongst cultures.” Rihani’s entire life is an example of the synthesis that he achieved. It offers “a compelling model for a new way of being human—a way that is simultaneously cultural and multi-cultural, integrated and dynamic, particular and universalistic.”<sup>281</sup> Rihani dedicated his life and work to transcending “narrow and dogmatic parochialisms.” Rihani’s relentless pursuit of integrating “different but complementary ways of being in his own personal synthesis” is a good example of his life-long orientation toward reconciliation.<sup>282</sup> Summarizing his own and Rihani’s views, Funk writes:

What we experience today, then, is a simultaneous existence of “one world” and “many worlds”—of an emergent, global frame of reference for human life and a world of differences and conflicts. We find ourselves in need of a new, overarching narrative, yet know that any attempt to artificially construct such a narrative is doomed to failure. We find ourselves searching for a common binding culture, but recognize that, insofar as such a culture can truly exist, it must grow organically from the shared experiences and interactions of diverse peoples. A global outlook, narrative, or culture cannot be imposed or created by a committee. It must be an authentic expression of a new way of experiencing the world, of finding unity amidst diversity.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink, “The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” pp. 22-23

<sup>280</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink, “The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process,” p. 26.

<sup>281</sup> Nathan Funk, “More Than Tolerance: Rihani on Intercultural Reconciliation,” in Nathan C. Funk and Betty J. Sitka, eds., *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West: A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding* (University Press of America, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>282</sup> Funk, “More Than Tolerance,” p. 4.

<sup>283</sup> Funk, “More Than Tolerance.”

This brief overview of the reconciliation approach shows important similarities between this approach and the new perspective that centers on the process of creation. Both emphasize universal equality. Reconciliation stresses inclusion but its inclusion goes much deeper than it does in traditional liberal theory. It is not about toleration and co-existence. It is about creating a community in which differences do not lose their autonomy; they are conserved and retain their autonomous distinctions.

For Rihani, for example, differences represent an opportunity, not a problem. They offer learning another way of being human. For reconciliationists, the intercultural encounter is a path of integration. Rihani thrived on such integration, “drawing observations from his intercultural experiences in the United States, the Middle East, Europe, and India into his writings.”<sup>284</sup>

Just like the new perspective, the approach centered on reconciliation emphasizes universalism. Both advocate universal inclusion and equality. In contrast to liberalism, they are totally incompatible with “selective inclusion” and elitism that are acceptable in the liberal practice.

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<sup>284</sup> Funk, “More Than Tolerance.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **The New Social Practice and the Future of the Civilization**

The current turmoil in America has much in common with the developments that are taking place in other parts of the world. The similarities reveal that the upheaval in this country is part of the systemic crisis that affects the entire civilization. This cataclysm is not a result of some impersonal forces. It is of our own making—a result of our actions and the practices we use. To end this crisis, we need to change our practice. We need a different approach that would lead our civilization out of the conundrum it currently faces, create new possibilities, and open new horizons for our civilization.

The social practice proposed in this study is dramatically different from the social practices used today. It will produce significant changes in our civilization. The specific properties of this new practice make possible to predict the consequences that the introduction of this practice will have in different areas. This section will discuss these consequences. Some effects of the new practice will be general and relate to several areas; others will be specific and affect individual spheres.

#### *General Effects*

The most important general effect will follow from the fact that the new practice will use the process of creation as its main organizing principle. Understanding the way that the process of creation works will be central to the new approach. Such understanding is essential for establishing control over the process of creation and its efficient use. A good understanding of the process of creation will help to enhance the creative potential and its efficient use by each individual and by society. The realization of the creative potential will give rise to new possibilities and open access to new resources that are necessary for solving the problems we face and those that will arise in the future. Our civilization will become more creative, more productive, and more powerful.

As has been repeatedly stressed in this text, the process of creation works on universal inclusion and equality. The social practice based on this process also relies on these principles and seeks their widest application in various spheres: from politics to economics, to knowledge production, social relations, and much, much else.

Universal inclusion and equality are two fundamental principles that drive the process of creation. By seeking control over the process of creation and by using it more efficiently, the new practice will pursue the wide application of these principles to various spheres of our civilization. The efficient use of the process of creation--the absolute imperative for the success of the new practice--must inevitably lead to universal inclusion and equality that are the essential conditions for universal empowerment. The success of the new practice will fulfill the dream of universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment that inspired generations of reformers and revolutionaries who sought human liberation.

All social practices in use today do not recognize the centrality of the process of creation. As a result of the failure to embrace the process of creation, all current practices, including the liberal social practice, are compatible with exclusion and inequality. The “selective inclusion” that liberals use in their practice is nothing but a form of exclusion. As a result, liberals do not have a solution for the problem of inclusion and equality and cannot in principle achieve this goal. They merely move its implementation into a more and more distant future. Their current practice perpetuates exclusion and inequality.

### 1. Ending the Domination of Hierarchies

One important consequence of the failure to embrace the process of creation is the domination of hierarchies that is characteristic for our civilization. The domination of hierarchies has been a major source of social and political conflicts in the history of human civilization. Over the last three decades there have been several major upheavals that has shaken the world order: the Tiananmen Square protest movement, the Arab Spring, the colored revolutions in former Soviet republics, the Maidan movement in Ukraine, the protest movement in Hong Kong, the Occupy movement, and the current turmoil. These dramatic events have revealed a profound hostility and distrust toward hierarchies expressed by the participants in these events. Many ordinary people today see hierarchical rule as a threat to their aspirations for democracy and freedom. Ruling hierarchies respond in kind. They display intense fear of and deep suspicion toward opponents of hierarchical domination.

Researchers generally share the view about the irreconcilable hostility between networks and hierarchies. As Niall Ferguson observes: “Clashes between hierarchies and networks are not new in history; on the contrary, there is a sense in which they are history.”<sup>285</sup> This deep-seated enmity toward hierarchies led at least some researchers to conclude that it reflects something very fundamental in the nature of hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions. For Max Weber, authority and status were two very distinct features of bureaucratic hierarchies.<sup>286</sup> These features appear to be totally absent in the more flexible, pliant, and largely egalitarian structure of networks. Lawrence Tshuma observes in his study of the relationship between government hierarchies and networks: “. . . bureaucracies and networks stand in stark contrast as polar opposites.”<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> N. Ferguson, “Networks and Hierarchies,” *The American Interest* (2014, June 9) <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2014/06/09/networks-and-hierarchies/>.

<sup>286</sup> M. Weber M. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of an Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 2. Berkley: University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>287</sup> L. Tshuma, “Hierarchies and Government Versus Networks and Governance: Competing Regulatory Paradigms in Global Economic Regulation,” *Social & Legal Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2000), pp. 115–42, p. 131.



Although the belief that hierarchies and networks are opposed to each other and cannot be reconciled is widely accepted, it is largely based on intuition. It has not theoretical justification; and its empirical evidence is not clear cut.

The hostility between hierarchies and society rests on the assumption that hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions are incompatible and mutually exclusive. The assumption has no theoretical justification; it is largely intuitive. Also, the empirical evidence that supports it is rather weak. Yet, despite such weak foundation, many people accept this belief unquestionably and conclude that the relationship between these two types of interactions can only be based on subordination and domination of one by the other.<sup>288</sup>

The belief that hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions are opposed to each other contradicts what we know about the relationship between these two types of interactions in systems that exist in nature. There is a great deal of evidence that hierarchies and networks are ubiquitous and that, by and large, they are engaged in a cooperative and balanced relationship.<sup>289</sup> Biological organisms, for example, have many hierarchical levels—cellular, somatic, neural, or the level of organization that sustains mental functions. These levels differ in their power—that is, possibilities they offer and degrees of freedom they possess. However, their relationship is not based on domination. On the contrary, hierarchical interactions supervene on non-hierarchical interactions; the two types of interactions complement each other. Our neural system, including our brain, represents a much more powerful level of organization than the levels of organization that sustain organs or cells in our body. However, we cannot describe the relationship between our neural and other functions in our body domination. The relationship is balanced and complementary. Neural functions supervene on other functions of the organism and, in turn, regulate and conserve them. Neurons and neuronal circuits do not dictate the cells or organs what they should do. Occasionally, we can even observe such relationship in human systems. In his insightful article “Does Democracy Inevitably Imply Hierarchy?” William Collins shows that the functioning of democracy necessarily leads to the emergence of hierarchies.<sup>290</sup>

According to the theoretical perspective outlined in this study, hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions are both equally involved in the process of creation and complement each other. Non-hierarchical interactions combine differences. These combinations give rise to new and more powerful levels of organization. The rise of new levels of organization that are more powerful than the ones from which they have emerged indicates the presence of hierarchies. Thus, hierarchies are products of non-hierarchical interactions. Their function in systems is different from the function of non-hierarchical interactions. Non-hierarchical interactions have the

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<sup>288</sup> Shkliarevsky, “Rethinking Democracy.”

<sup>289</sup> A. Danchin, “The tree and the ring. Hierarchical and acentered structures in biology,” *The Cancer Journal*, vol. 2, no. 9 (1989), pp. 285-87.

<sup>290</sup> W. Collins, “Does Democracy Inevitably Imply Hierarchy?” *Quality & Quantity*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1986), pp. 405-17, p. 415.

capacity to create. Hierarchical interaction conserve and optimize their creations. The two types of interactions complement each other; and their complementary relationship conserves the system and makes its evolution possible.

Only if we disregard the process of creation, the two types of interactions appear to be opposed to each other. Current social practices do not recognize the central role of the process of creation in our relationship with reality and do not understand the way it works. As a result, hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions appear to our consciousness as irreconcilable opposites. We do not know how to reconcile them. Since our consciousness fails to embrace and understand how the process of creation functions, it cannot effectively conserve itself and guide our evolution.

The new social practice uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle. The foundation of the new practice is the understanding the main aspects of the process of creation constitutes the foundation of the new social practice. As this study has explained, one of these principles is the necessity of maintaining a balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions. Only a balance of the two types of interactions can ensure the creation of new levels of organization and the survival of our civilization. This balance will be one important factor that will ensure the success of the new practice. It will implement this principle in a variety of social contexts, as well as organizations and institutions that sustain our society.

## 2. The New Approach to Leadership

One consequence of the requirement of the balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions is a new approach toward leadership and the role of leaders. There is a variety of different perspectives on the function of leadership. Since the process of creation is not central to any of these perspectives, their understanding of the relationship between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions is limited. They certainly do not see these two types of interactions as interdependent and complementary; and they do not recognize the need for a balance between the two. For this reason, current discussions of leadership focus primarily on modes of coexistence and ways of reducing tensions and conflicts between leaders and those they lead.

The approach toward leadership in the new social practice is very different. It recognizes the need for a cooperative and complementary balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions is central to this approach. The new practice recognizes one important fact: although the roles of leaders/managers and those they lead differ, both roles involve hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions, which makes them equal participants in the process of creation.

As has been explained, both types of interactions are essential for the process of creation and the evolution of the system. Local interactions among the subsystems are non-hierarchical. The result of these interactions is the creation of a new and more powerful level of organization. In other words, these local interactions create a global level and hence hierarchy. The conservation of the system that consists of two different levels of organization—one more powerful than the other—requires integration of these two levels. Such integration requires establishing connections between their respective operations on one-to-one basis. These multiple connections will serve to activate operations on both levels more often and thus

conserve them better. Only the global level of organization can make this integration possible since only the global level has access to both local and global levels of organization.

Establishing such connections presents a problem. There is an asymmetry in the relations between the global and local levels of organization. While the global level of organization has access to the local level, the local level does not have access to the global level. In order to provide such access, the asymmetry, or inequality, in their relations should give way to symmetry and equality.

In order to remove asymmetry and provide equal access, operations at the global level must be expressed in terms of operations at the local level of interactions. This translation can only be performed at the global level since only the global level has access to local levels. The very act of translation of global operations into the terms of local interactions creates a common frame in which both the local and the global level of organization are but two particular cases. As such particulars of a more general frame, they become equals. In other words, it creates the level of organization that exceeds the power of both the local and the global level and it incorporates both as its particular cases. This act of creation requires reflective coding similar in methodology that Gödel has demonstrated in his famous proof that solves the problem of consistency and completeness in axiomatic systems.<sup>291</sup>

The integration of the two levels and establishing one-to-one connections results in complex changes. On one hand, the integration leads to differentiation of the global level and, on the other, it enriches the local level operations. The subsequent re-equilibration required by these changes creates a new and enriched global level of organization and the entire system enters a new cycle in its evolution. The process of creation that makes this evolution possible conserves the system by changing it and making it more powerful. If the integration does not happen, the system cannot evolve, and what does not evolve begins to disintegrate.<sup>292</sup>

Leaders function on the global level of organization. They have access to all functions involved in local interactions. In order to perform successfully their function of leadership, leaders should be capable of perceiving new levels of organization that are emerging in the course of non-hierarchical interactions. They should also be able to express their global perception in terms of local interactions. Expressing a more powerful level of organization in terms of a less powerful one requires an act of creation. Leader should create a frame that will be powerful enough to include both the local and the global level of organization as its particular cases. As a result of this creative act, local interactions gain access to the more powerful global level. Access to the more powerful global level enriches local interactions and makes them more powerful. Their subsequent equilibration leads to the consolidation of a new and more powerful level of organization that makes possible the system's conservation and evolution.

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<sup>291</sup> Nagel and Newman, *Gödel's Proof*.

<sup>292</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Conservation, Creation, and Evolution: Revising the Darwinian Project," *Journal of Evolutionary Science*, vol. 1, issue 2 (2019): 1-30. <https://openaccesspub.org/journal/jes/current-issue>

The above description of the role of leaders shows that their relationship with those they lead is incompatible with exclusion and domination. It requires cooperation and close creative interaction between the two in the common creative work that sustains the evolution of the entire system. Leaders and those they lead are equal partners in this process. They are all involved in hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions that are closely entangled with each other.<sup>293</sup>

The new social practice will also affect the role of leaders. There is a variety of different perspectives on the function of leadership. Since the process of creation is not central to any of these perspectives, their understanding of the interplay between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions is limited. They see the relationship between the two types of interactions in terms of co-existence and focus their discussions on various forms of coexistence. The new practice approaches the relationship between leaders and those they lead in terms of integration of their roles as equal partners in creating new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization.

The new practice recognizes one important fact: although the roles of leaders/managers and those they lead differ, both roles involve hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions, which makes them equal participants in the process of creation. The new practice directs leaders to rely on the creative power of non-hierarchical interactions. 3. These interactions integrate differences and create new levels of organization.

Leadership is primarily a function. It is a global function that has access to all functions involved in local interactions. To perform their function leaders should have a capacity to perceive the new level of organization that is emerging in non-hierarchical interactions. They should also be able to express their global perception in terms of local interactions. Expressing a more powerful level of organization in terms of a less powerful one requires an act of creation. Leader should create a frame that will be powerful enough to include both the local and the global level of organization as its particular cases. As a result of this creative act, local interactions gain access to the more powerful global level. Access to the more powerful global level enriches local interactions and makes them more powerful. Their subsequent equilibration leads to the consolidation of a new and more powerful level of organization that makes possible the system's conservation and evolution.

The above description of the role of leaders shows that their relationship with those they lead is incompatible with exclusion and domination. It requires cooperation and close creative interaction between the two in the common creative work that sustains the evolution of the entire system. Leaders and those they lead are equal partners in this process. They are all involved in hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions that are closely entangled with each other.<sup>294</sup>

### 3. Competition Vs. Cooperation

Current social practices recognize two types of human behavior: competition and

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<sup>293</sup> Shkliarevsky, *The Civilization at a Crossroads*, chap. 8.

<sup>294</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, *The Civilization at a Crossroads: Constructing the Paradigm Shift* (Raleigh, N.C.: Glasstree Publishing, 2017), chap. 8.

cooperation. Some practices emphasize competition as the dominant type. Others view cooperation as the dominant type. Still others have a more pragmatic approach: they consider that some situations require competition, while others cooperation.

The choice of what constitutes the dominant type of human behavior depends on the conception of human nature. The approach that emphasizes competition relies on the recognition of the ontological primacy of the individual. The approach that focuses on cooperation recognizes the ontological primacy of the community. The conceptions of human nature are essentially foundational principles used for organizing social and political practice. In European culture both conceptions originated in the tradition of the Enlightenment. They parted their ways later in the course of the evolution of this tradition and became the main organizing principles of the two very distinct social practices. The ontological primacy of the individual has become the main organizing principle for liberalism. Communism—for example, Marxist communism—adopted the ontological primacy of the community as its main organizing principle.

Both organizing principles play a very important role. Each constitutes the foundation of specific social practices that have dominated much of the modern period. Despite their importance, however, both principles are largely intuitive; they are what Kant called synthetic a priori judgements that we are supposed to accept as self-evident truth. Neither of these principles has passed the test of rational justification. The empirical evidence for both principles is largely mixed and inconclusive, to say the least. Both principles prove to be a very shaky foundation for social and political practices that have defined the course of modern history.

By contrast, the theoretical perspective that uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle fares much better. There is a strong rational justification in support of this principle. We simply cannot think about reality in which the process of creation does not exist. Without the process of creation, there would be nothing, rather than something. Also, there is plenty of empirical evidence that proves the existence of the process of creation: from particles to atoms, molecules, stars, galaxies, constellations, planets, and life. Our own existence is a convincing proof that the process of creation is real.

The process of creation is not a product of our own mind. It had existed long before humanity appeared. On the contrary, we are results of the evolution that is propelled by the process of creation; the individual and community also owe their existence to the process of creation.

The process of creation is not about the individual or the community. In order to create new and more powerful levels of organization, we have to include all differences that represent the community in which we live, not just our own views or those with which we agree. When we produce new and more powerful levels of organization that give rise to new ideas, theories, approaches, we enrich ourselves as individuals, but we also enrich our community. As one can see, the process of creation makes no distinction between the individual and the community. The process of creation is universal.

The new social practice is not about the individual, and it is not about the community. It is about creation that enriches, benefits, and empowers all. The new social practice is not about interests of the individual, nor is it about the interests of the community. Therefore, the new social practice does not have preference for either competition or cooperation. It is about creation. Creating new and increasingly more

powerful levels of organization is the main goal of the new practice. The main goal of all who are involved in this new practice is creation, not their individual interests, nor putative communal interests. In achieving their goal, they must practice universal inclusion and equality. This approach is not about competition or cooperation. Their goal is not to win either in one's own interests or in the interests of the community. Their goal is to create new and more powerful levels of organization—that is, levels of organization that are based on universal inclusion and equality.

There is no need to get fixated on either cooperation or competition. Human nature is not about individualism or communitarianism. Human nature is about creating an infinite number of new levels of mental organization. The creation of new levels of organization requires universal inclusion and equality, not competition or cooperation.

### *Democracy as Universal Inclusion and Empowerment*

Few political concepts have a history that has been more traumatic than the history of democracy. The concept has been a victim of more than its share of misinterpretation, malignment, vilification, and just plain abuse. The literature about democracy is vast. Definitions and interpretations of democracy have consumed much time and effort. Yet, we still are not in agreement about what democracy really means and involves. One can safely conclude that the fate of democracy so far has not been particularly successful. Yet despite all the disappointments and a lack of success, democracy has been and remains a powerful magnet that attracts multitudes of people. It continues to inspire new generations that view democracy as the only hope that promises the much-coveted liberation of humanity.

The word “democracy” has been part of the political vocabulary of human civilization since the time of Ancient Greece. The history of democracy as a form of government has been checkered. It has had its successes and failures. In its ideal sense, democracy means empowerment of all citizens, but the realization of democracy in this sense has been elusive and even deemed to be impossible. However, despite all ups and downs, the promise of democracy has retained its irresistible attraction and continues to inspire people throughout the world. The future of democracy is certainly one of the major concerns of the new social practice.

#### 1. The Deficit of Democracy

The current turmoil has given rise to major concerns about the fate of democracy in America and around the world. Many ordinary Americans are increasingly disillusioned in the existing democratic institutions. They feel excluded, ignored, and having little impact on the political process. There is now even a special term—“the deficit of democracy”—that captures the frustration and disillusionment with the current state of democracy in the world. The term has a wide circulation both in popular discourse and scholarly literature.

We often use democracy in conjunction with inclusion and equality, so much so that the three are often viewed and used as synonyms. There is a widespread belief that

democracy is impossible under conditions of exclusion and inequality. The struggle for democracy often goes hand-in-hand with the struggle for inclusion, equality, participation, and empowerment.

The political and social chaos and instability in recent years have certainly contributed to concerns about the fate of democracy. However, long-term conditions have also had a role. There is an indisputable fact that democracy as it exists today is totally compatible with exclusion, inequality, and elite rule. Criticism of the current state of democracy is very common these days and comes from all parts of society. Calls for changes reflect a massive dissatisfaction with the existing political process that leaves out large segments of the population. Complaints about the “deficit of democracy” have revived discussions and debates about the meaning of democracy and democratic practice.<sup>295</sup>

Liberals associate advances toward democracy with the eradication of exclusion and inequality. They have written a great deal on the subject. They also use democracy, inclusion, and equality as operational tools in their politics. However, despite individual successes in rectifying some egregious inequities in our society, liberals have not succeeded in eradicating exclusion, inequality, and disempowerment. They are still with us and continue to affect lives of many ordinary people. Thus, liberals, by their own criteria, have certainly failed to advance America along the path toward liberation, inclusion, equality, and democracy. Liberals have failed to eliminate exclusion and inequality.

The liberal politics of inclusion lacks theoretical depth. Liberals do not see an objective and universal source of inclusion, which opens the possibility for a subjective bias in their politics of inclusion. Their vision is limited. They do not see the forest for the trees. The politics of inclusion that they practice is selective and opportunistic. It is what one might call “selective inclusion” that is merely another form of exclusion. Current liberal policies provide a good illustration of their reliance on selective practice and subjective choices. The fact that their agenda excludes white Americans is the most obvious example. Mark Lilla, a liberal and a critic of liberal policies of inclusion, astutely points out:

If you are going to mention groups in America, you had better mention all of them. If you don't, those left out will notice and feel excluded. Which, as the data show, was exactly what happened with the white working class and those with strong religious convictions. Fully two-thirds of white voters without college degrees voted for Donald Trump, as did over 80 percent of white evangelicals.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Shkliarevsky, “Rethinking Democracy.”

<sup>296</sup> Mark Lilla, “The End of Identity Politics,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 2016; Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*, (New York: Harper, 2017).

White Americans are not the only group that is affected by the exclusionary liberal practices. Even those groups that liberal view as marginalized by “white supremacy” and that they seek to include and empower, are still subject to exclusionary preferences. While liberals advocate very vocally the inclusion of black Americans and Muslims, they exclude some of the most vital and important features of their community culture: religion, values, and norms that these communities have created and that constitute the foundation of their communal life. While most black Americans and Muslims support the notion that religion should have a role in public discourse, liberals are adamantly opposed to this notion. Liberal also stand firm on the pro-choice agenda, while black Americans and Muslims embrace the principle of the sanctity of life. Liberals continue to reject the inclusion of issues that are important to the African American and the Muslim communities into their political agenda.

Despite some individual successes, these policies have failed to deliver on liberal promises of eliminating exclusion and inequality. In response to criticisms, liberals simply move the fulfillment of their promises into a more and more distant future. As a result, exclusion and inequality persist, albeit in new guises. The failure of the liberal policies of inclusion is the source of the current “deficit of democracy.”

## 2. The New Democratic Practice: Ending Elite Rule

There is a widely shared view that connects democracy with inclusion and equality. The use of these three concepts in conjunction with each other is very common, so much so that they appear to be synonymous. Many theoretical perspectives, including liberalism, maintain that democracy is impossible under conditions of exclusion and inequality. The pursuit of democracy often goes hand-in-hand with the struggle for inclusion and equality. The fact that exclusion and inequality still retain their powerful grip on our society shows that democracy is still a distant ideal, rather than a reality.

As this study has shown, exclusion and inequality are very much compatible with the liberal social practice. Liberals use “selective inclusion” that, as this study demonstrates, is a form of exclusion. Thus, the liberal practice perpetuates exclusion and inequality and cannot possibly eliminate them and advance our civilization on the path toward democracy. The current turmoil and the “deficit of democracy” are convincing proofs that liberals are failing in fulfilling their promises of liberation and democracy. Also, the liberal practice relies on elites and elite rule that are not compatible with democracy.

Elites have been a permanent fixture in our civilization from its emergence to the present day. Elites are the class that rules our civilization; they are widely regarded (with elites’ blessing) as ineluctable.<sup>297</sup> According to all definitions, elite is a small group that is self-selected, self-appointed, and self-described as superior to all who do not belong to

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<sup>297</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The ‘Futility Thesis’ and the Uncomfortable Truth of Elite Rule,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, December 12, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3983569> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3983569>.



this group.<sup>298</sup> Thus, elitism and elite rule originate in exclusion. Elite practice is about exclusion. Elites use exclusion to ward off differences that pose a threat to their exceptional status. They use exclusion to protect, first and foremost, their capacity to exclude.<sup>299</sup> Exclusion is the *raison d'être* of elite rule and its main organizing principle. Without exclusion, elites simply would not be able to maintain their boundaries and sustain their existence.<sup>300</sup> Elites and elite rule perpetuate exclusion. They represent a serious threat to democracy and freedom. To move forward on the path toward democracy, inclusion, and equality, we must end elite rule. The mutual interdependence of elites and elite rule, on one hand, and exclusion and inequality, on the other, shows that in order to get rid of exclusion and inequality, we must end elite rule; and conversely, in order to get rid of elite rule, we must eliminate exclusion and inequality.

As this study has argued, the only way to end exclusion and inequality is to apply the principles of universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment. Any partial solutions, such as “selective inclusions,” are merely a form of exclusion. With its commitment to universal inclusion and equality, the new social practice simply has no room for elite rule and should inevitably lead to the demise of elitism and elites.

The belief in elite rule and the ineluctability of elites is widespread.<sup>301</sup> Those who subscribe to this belief disparage attempts to end elite rule as radical egalitarianism that seeks to eliminate hierarchies. This view results from a misunderstanding that conflates elites and hierarchies. Indeed, elites use hierarchies to perpetuate their rule. However, the instrumental use of hierarchies should not obfuscate the fact that elites and hierarchies are two phenomena that are very different in their nature, function, and origin.

As has been explained above, the source of elites and elitism is exclusion and inequality. The source of hierarchies is very different. Hierarchies emerge as a result of the process of creation. This study has shown that the process of creation involves interactions among equals, or non-hierarchical interactions. Such interactions create new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Due to the power differential

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<sup>298</sup> Eduardo Torres-Alonso, “Elite: Approaches to a Concept,” *Espacio I+D. Innovación Más Desarrollo* (English Version), Vol. VIII, Núm. 21, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, México, Octubre, 2019, Pp. 32-44.” *Espacio I+D. Innovación Más Desarrollo*, pp. 32-44, Jon Abbink and Tijo Salverda, eds., *The Anthropology of Elites Power, Culture, and the Complexities of Distinction*, n.d. p. 1.; Charles Kadushin, “Who Are the Elite Intellectuals?” p. 110.

<sup>299</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The ‘Futility Thesis’ and the Uncomfortable Truth of Elite Rule.”

<sup>300</sup> Thinker, Simplicius The. “America’s Super-Elite Disconnect.” Substack newsletter. *DARK FUTURA* (blog), March 3, 2024. <https://darkfutura.substack.com/p/americas-super-elite-disconnect?triedRedirect=true>.

<sup>301</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The ‘Futility Thesis’ and the Uncomfortable Truth of Elite Rule.”

between the emerging new level of organization and the level of organization from which it has emerged, the two levels constitute a hierarchy. Both levels of this hierarchy are important contributors to the system's evolution and conservation. The non-hierarchical interactions create new levels of organization and the hierarchical interactions conserve and optimize these creations. The two types of interactions (hierarchical and non-hierarchical) complement each other; they cannot exist with each other.

Non-hierarchical interaction can create but they cannot conserve and optimize their creations, which is the function of hierarchical interactions. Biological organisms, for example, have many hierarchical levels— cellular, somatic, neural, or the level of organization that sustains mental functions. These levels differ in their power—that is, possibilities they offer and degrees of freedom they possess. However, their relationship is not based on exclusion and domination. On the contrary, hierarchies supervene on non-hierarchical interactions; the two types of interactions complement each other. Mental operations that represent the most powerful level of organization do not tell cells what they should do. Their relationship is based on inclusion and does not violate the principle of autonomy. In an important way, all systems that operate at different levels of biological organisms are equal in retaining their autonomy, which is certainly not what we see in the way that members of elite groups relate to non-members. Contrary to what the conflation of elites and hierarchies implies, the two are very different. In contrast to elites that originate in exclusion, hierarchies are products of the process of creation, and they originate in universal inclusions and equality.

For this reason, the elimination of elite rule will not affect the existence of hierarchies. When they are not used for purposes of exclusion and domination, hierarchies will have an essential and constructive role to play in the evolution. Hierarchies are not at odds with the new social practice. On the contrary, they will make it more efficient by conserving and optimizing what non-hierarchical interactions create. Hierarchical interactions and the institutions that maintain them will continue to exist. They will work in harmony with non-hierarchical interactions. They rely on creative cooperation with non-hierarchical interactions. Domination destroys their creative cooperation. Such cooperation requires a balance in the relationship between the two types of interactions. The domination of either type will disrupt the process of creation. The domination of hierarchical interactions causes a decline in creativity; and the domination of non-hierarchical interactions will make impossible conserving and optimizing creations. The new social practice will secure this balance.

The new social practice outlined in this study relies on the process of creation that can only work on universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment. The outcome of the application of the new social practice cannot be anything other than full implementation of these principles. The implementation of these principles will transform our social and political order into a full-fledged democracy based on universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment. The inevitable consequence of this practice will be the demise of elites and elite rule.

The concept of democracy has as much relevance to relations among nations, as in relations within nations. Currently, global relations among states also suffer from the “deficit of democracy.” In fact, some nations or groups of nations try, and often successfully, to dictate to others; they try to determine their international and national policies. They effectively use domination to enforce international order that serves their

interests. This domination leads to instability, conflicts, and wars that are certainly part of the current crisis. The new practice has as much relevance to global relations among nations, as it does among groups and parties within nations.

### *The New Practice and Economic Efficiency*

The economic progress that our civilization has accomplished is nothing short of remarkable. The accumulated wealth is beyond the wildest imagination. The standard of living that this wealth maintains is unprecedented. However, despite obvious successes, the world economy still faces numerous and serious problems. The distribution of wealth remains uneven. The concentration of wealth and the living standard in developed countries is much higher than in the developing world. The developed economies also face serious internal problems. The uncontrollable rise of the national debt, particularly in the United States, presents a serious threat to economic stability. The rate of inflation remains high, which makes the economic future uncertain.

As has been argued elsewhere, most, if not all, of our economic problems have one source: it is the unsolved problem of growth.<sup>302</sup> Our economic growth is uneven; it often slows down to a crawl. Currently, the rate of growth is low. One consequence of this slow growth is declining resources that we need to sustain our civilization and solve the problems it faces. Despite the importance of the problem of growth, it remains unsolved and there are no indications that it will be solved any time soon. We are not even sure what causes this problem.<sup>303</sup>

The new social practice will have a profound effect on the economy. It is based on the process of creation that is a form of production. Therefore, one can look at this process as an economic system, which will help to appreciate fully the effect of the new practice on the economy.

As any other form of production, the process of creation must use resources. The main resource used in the process of creation is a level of organization and the possibilities that this level offers. Levels of organization represent what one may call a

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<sup>302</sup> Shkliarevsky, Gennady, "Infinite Growth: A Curse or a Blessing?" *SSRN Electronic Journal*, March 2, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4048232> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4048232>

<sup>303</sup> Eric D. Beinhocker, *The Origin of Wealth: The Radical Remaking of Economics and What It Means for Business and Society* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press, 2007); Robert P. Gilles, "The Principles of Economic Wealth Creation," *Economic Wealth Creation and the Social Division of Labour* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Richard Makadok and Russell Coff, "The Theory of Value and the Value of Theory: Breaking New Ground versus Reinventing the Wheel," *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2002), Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Continuum, 1973); Daniel Cohen, *The Infinite Desire for Growth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Shkliarevsky, "Infinite Growth: A Curse or a Blessing?"

value. The process of creation involves multiplication of possibilities, or their combinations with each other. The multiplication creates a new level of organization. The new level offers more possibilities than the number of possibilities that have existed prior to the multiplication—in fact,  $n^2$  more possibilities to be exact. The fact that there are  $n^2$  number of more possibilities means that the original value has experienced growth to the tune of  $n^2$ .

Two other observations are in order. The process of creation utilized fully all available resources. These resources have not depreciated; in fact, they appreciated exponentially, and so does the original value. Also, there is no separation of production and consumption in the process of creation: production occurs in the form of consumption, and consumption takes the form of production. The two complement each other and are closely interrelated. There is no such thing as pure consumption. In order to consume, one must produce/create, which is not always the case in current economies where production and consumption are often separated and where consumption is not necessarily used for production. The separation of production and consumption is a sign of inefficiency.

The new social practice uses the process of creation as its model. This practice will lead to economic production that will be fully efficient. It will fully use all available resources, maintain the unity between production and consumption, and because of its full efficiency, it will be able to attain infinite and exponential growth.<sup>304</sup>

Economy is a system. Conservation is just as relevant to economies as it is relevant to any other system. As has already been pointed out, conservation requires access to new resources. Only the creation of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization can provide access to new resources.

All economic theories agree that economies are about values. Conservation of value is at the heart of economic activities. Since conservation requires the creation of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization, conserving value inevitably leads to the creation of new value and, thus, value growth. Failure to achieve growth indicates that the value of the economy is not conserved and, consequently, such economy is inefficient.<sup>305</sup>

The growth of systems obeys the exponential  $n^2$  power law. As has been explained, conservation is at the heart of systems' growth. Systems grow by integrating differences, or functional operations; the more functional operations are integrated, the better they and the entire system of which they are a part are conserved. The goal of conservation is to integrate all functional operations with each other. Such integration works on multiplication, not addition. If a system has  $n$  number of functional operations, their complete integration, or the total number of combinations they can create, will be equal to  $n^2$ , which represents exponential growth. Each newly created level of organization offers exponentially larger number of possibilities than the level from which it has emerged. Since value is represented by the number of possibilities, an efficient

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<sup>304</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Infinite Growth: A Curse or a Blessing?" *SSRN Electronic Journal*

<sup>305</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Inflation and Value Creation: An Economic and Philosophic Investigation."

economy that conserves its value should generate exponential value growth. There are quite a few researchers who argue that exponential growth is the normal growth for an efficient economy.<sup>306</sup>

Money is the monetary equivalent of the value of economy. Since efficient economy conserves value, the monetary equivalent of this value should not change, and money should not lose its value. Moreover, conservation of value leads to the creation of new value that also has a monetary equivalent. Therefore, the volume of money will increase while the value of money remains stable. Since the value of money remains stable, the debt should not grow. The economy simply uses its value to create new value.

If, however, economy is not efficient and does not conserve value, the value of such economy declines; and if the value of the economy declines, so does the value of its monetary equivalent. In other words, money becomes cheaper, and we need more of it to sustain our economy. Consequently, we must borrow more, which leads to debt growth.<sup>307</sup> Our economy today experiences an uncontrollable debt growth.

As has been mentioned above, the separation of production and consumption is another sign of economic inefficiency. There are many voices in today that recognize that there is an urgent need to improve life conditions for many underprivileged groups and for populations in underdeveloped parts of the world. They stress that this situation is bad for the economy and bad for the world. As a way of addressing the problem of the growing economic disparity, they propose a more equitable wealth distribution. They want to use redistribution of wealth to increase consumption among the underprivileged. This popular policy essentially separates consumption from production. Its authors believe in increasing consumption without increasing production.

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<sup>306</sup> Jason Crawford, "Exponential Growth Is the Baseline," *The Roots of Progress*, February 21, 2021, <https://rootsofprogress.org/exponential-growth-is-the-baseline>. See also, Jeffrey Dorfman, "Why Growth Matters," *Forbes*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2017/12/22/why-growth-matters/>; Tim Harford, "Can Economic Growth Continue Forever? Of Course!" *Freakonomics* (blog), January 24, 2014, <https://freakonomics.com/2014/01/24/can-economic-growth-continue-forever-of-course/>; Melissa Mayer, "What Are Environmental Problems Due to Population Growth?" *Sciencing*, 2018, <https://sciencing.com/environmental-problems-due-population-growth-8337820.html>; Oliver Waters, "The Strange Necessity of Infinite Economic Growth," *Medium* (blog), November 14, 2018, [https://medium.com/@oliverwaters\\_76079/the-strange-necessity-of-infinite-economic-growth-ebc2e505cdf1](https://medium.com/@oliverwaters_76079/the-strange-necessity-of-infinite-economic-growth-ebc2e505cdf1); Max Roser, "What Is Economic Growth? And Why Is It So Important?" *Our World in Data*, May 13, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/what-is-economic-growth>.

<sup>307</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Made in America: The Debt Crisis USA." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January 7, 2023, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4320076> or <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4320076>.

Consumption is a form of assimilation, i.e., the inclusion of one entity into functional operations of another. When operations combine, they assimilate each other, or include each other into their functional activities. In a way, they consume each other, or use each other to conserve and sustain their own functions. But, at the same time, this consumption produces new combinations and new and more powerful levels of organization. In economic terms, this consumption produces the growth of value.

Production and consumption are intimately interrelated. They are both aspects of the process that creates new properties, or what economists call value creation. They are analytical, rather than ontological categories. As the analysis of the process of creation shows, the conservation of a given level of organization creates a new and more powerful level of organization. The emerging level of organization supervenes on the level from which it emerges; in other words, the level of organization that gives rise to the new level of organization is a resource that is consumed in the process of creation. One can also represent this relationship between consumption and production as a balance between equilibration and the production of disequilibrium. In this conception, disequilibrium is a resource for equilibration that produces new disequilibrium.

There is another example that illustrates the close relationship between production and consumption. Our sensory-motor functions produce and consume reality at the same time. Our relationship with reality sustained by sensory-motor functions involves both consumption and production. When we observe reality, we organize/produce it according to the structure of our sensory-motor functions; at the same time, when our sensory-motor functions include this organized reality into their operations they consume this organized reality, which conserves sensory-motor functions and ensures their continued operation. Viewing production and consumption through the prism of the process of creation shows their fundamental complementarity. Only when the process of creation is not central to one's frame of vision, production and consumption appear as ontologically separate and independent from each other.

The policy of redistribution of wealth is a result of ignorance of the importance of the process of creation for our relationship with reality and for economic production. It reflects a more general condition—the fact that our economic production is not organized around the process of creation. A dissociation of consumption and production is not uncommon in our economy. In fact, there is a strong tendency in our economy to underutilize and waste our most important resource—human capacity to create. There are also numerous examples when consumption is wasteful and does not contribute to growth in productivity.

By producing new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization we generate new values and create economic growth. The approach organized around the process of creation does not waste resources; and resources do not depreciate when used. Knowledge, for example, is one important product that does not depreciate. It only appreciates when consumed, as its consumption leads to new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization that give rise to new knowledge and ideas. As

Thomas Davenport and Lawrence Prusak have noted, “ideas breed new ideas, and shared knowledge stays with the giver while it enriches the receiver.”<sup>308</sup>

Organizing our economic activities around the process of creation ends the tendency to dissociate production from consumption; it makes the interrelationship between production and consumption effective and efficient. By complementing each other, they both will be able to grow exponentially and will make possible an exponential growth of our entire economy. One can see the contours of this new economic organization in the comment of Alan Webber who concludes: “In the end, the location of the new economy is not in the technology, be it the microchip or the global telecommunications network. It is in the human mind.”<sup>309</sup>

Economic production has always relied on new ideas. As our economies evolve, they become increasingly dependent on knowledge. Today, production of knowledge is arguably the most important source of economic growth. Investments in knowledge production are constantly on the rise. As knowledge production is growing increasingly more important, its efficiency has become a central issue that is widely discussed by economic planners, scientists, managers, and many others who look for new resources to grow our economy.<sup>310</sup>

The practice of knowledge production has experienced many changes. Yet many critics deem its current state to be unsatisfactory. They feel that today’s production of knowledge has a strong tendency toward stagnation.<sup>311</sup> Many critics charge that the current approach toward knowledge production often marginalizes new theories and ideas; it ignores differences. Significantly, such criticisms come from prominent practitioners involved in the production of knowledge. Steven Weinberg, a famous physicist and a Nobel laureate, is one of these critics. One of his articles, written for *The New York Review of Books* and symptomatically entitled “The Crisis of Big Science,” reflects a critical view of the state of modern science that is quite common.<sup>312</sup>

One major reason for the tendency toward stagnation is the dominant theory of knowledge. This theory rests on the assumption that our mental constructs are mere reflections of material objects and phenomena. This assumption completely ignores the

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<sup>308</sup> Thomas H. Davenport and Lawrence Prusak, “Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know,” *Ubiquity: An ACM IT Magazine and Forum* (August 1-August 31, 2000), p. 13, <http://ubiquity.acm.org/article.cfm?id=348775>.

<sup>309</sup> Alan M. Webber, “What’s So New About the New Economy?” *Harvard Business Review*, January 1, 1993. <https://hbr.org/1993/01/whats-so-new-about-the-new-economy>.

<sup>310</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “Science and Its Discontents: Is There an End to Knowing?” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2013), pp. 43-55.

<sup>311</sup> Shkliarevsky, Gennady, “Is Our Research Productivity in Decline?”

<sup>312</sup> Steven Weinberg, “The Crisis of Big Science,” *The New York Review of Books*, May 10, 2012.

process of creation and its role in our relationship with reality. The theoretical perspective based on this assumption is exclusive and cannot offer an objective representation of reality. According to a universally accepted conception of objectivity, an objective representation must include all possible views and perspectives. The exclusion of the process of creation from the frame of observation can only offer an incomplete, exclusive, subjective, and ultimately, arbitrary view of reality.

Although the reflective theory of knowledge has been challenged, it still retains its hold on our approach toward the production of knowledge. For example, it is central to the way we validate knowledge. One of the most important and widely popular methods of validation currently used is empirical verification. In today's practice, empirical verification is the most important criterion of what we consider objectivity, or objective knowledge. This practice largely ignores the crucial fact that our mental constructs represent the most powerful level of organizing reality that exists in the universe. The power of the human mind is infinite. It can construct an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Empirical facts cannot reliably validate mental constructs that are produced and sustained by the most powerful level of organization of reality. They simply lack sufficient power. The method of empirical verification frequently leads to what we call underdetermination. According to definitions, underdetermination recognizes that evidence is "more or less impotent to guide choice between competing mental constructs."<sup>313</sup> The philosophical concepts of underdetermination and overdetermination put into question empirical verification as the most important criterion for validating knowledge. As has been argued elsewhere, empirical verification is exclusive. It is prone to subjectivism and cannot be accepted as the preferred criterion for validating knowledge.<sup>314</sup>

As production of knowledge begins to dominate the sphere of economic activities, its efficiency is the key to the survival and success of our civilization. The shift toward the production of knowledge and the growing efficiency of knowledge production will guarantee the infinite and exponential economic growth, both in terms of production and consumption.<sup>315</sup> In contrast to other products that generally depreciate when used, knowledge does not lose value. On the contrary, knowledge appreciates when used. Therefore, with knowledge production on the rise, there will be no limit to the growth of economic production and consumption.

In the current organization of economy, consumption leads to depreciation. Our environmental problems manifest the depreciation of the environment that is one of our most important economic resources. The efficiency in knowledge production will significantly reduce depreciation of resources, including environmental sinks. Efficient

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<sup>313</sup> "Underdetermination," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/underdetermination/v-1>.

<sup>314</sup> Shkliarevsky *Civilization at a Crossroads*, Chapter 7.

<sup>315</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Infinite Growth: A Curse or a Blessing?" *SSRN Electronic Journal*, March 2, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4048232> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4048232>.



knowledge production will help to reduce or even eliminate the peril of depreciation. Such production of knowledge will also result in many new ideas and approaches that can help us combat current threats to our environment.

The new practice offers a very different approach toward knowledge production and validation. Since it replicates the process of creation, it requires universal inclusion. Inclusiveness is what makes one level of organization more powerful and more valid than another. Therefore, the new practice regards inclusiveness as the most important criterion in validating knowledge. According to this criterion, the best and most reliable way of validating knowledge is to use the level of organization that integrates all possible views and perspectives and is, for this reason, the most powerful. Knowledge validated on the basis of this criterion offers more possibilities (or more power in the Gödelian sense) and, for this very reason, is more valid and more reliable. This is not to argue that rational justification and empirical verification—the two popular methods currently in use—should have no role in validating knowledge; they most certainly should. But we must be aware of their limitations. We should apply these criteria in ways that do not undermine such important principles as universal inclusion and equality. Combined with methods that reflect other aspects of the process of creation, the new and universally inclusive practice will democratize our knowledge production and will make it more efficient.<sup>316</sup>

To conclude, economies must function efficiently. Only efficient economy can offer resources that will be sufficient for sustaining our civilization. Therefore, we have no choice but to operate our economy with maximum efficiency, which means that its growth should be exponential.

Economic organization is very complex. It has many aspects. A reorganization of our economy on the model of the process of creation will bring much innovation in the way we produce and consume economic goods. It will also require changes in our managerial practices that should become more inclusive and more democratic. It should also constantly enhance the creative potential of all those involved in economic production.

Obviously, the study cannot provide a detailed description of all changes that the remodeling of our economic production will require. Many of the required changes will become obvious only in the course of the application of the new social practice. We are still at the very beginning of this process; this study is its very initial stage. The reorganization of our economy on the new basis will require many new and creative contributions.

The process of creation is the core of the new social practice. This process can create an infinite number of new levels of organization that are exponentially more powerful than levels of organization from which they have emerged. Organizing our economic production on the model of the process of creation will make possible to solve the problem of growth and, consequently, all other problems that it causes.

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<sup>316</sup> Shkliarevsky, *Civilization at a Crossroads*, chapter 7; Shkliarevsky, “Is Our Research Productivity in Decline?”

## *The New Practice and Sustainability*

The degradation of the environment is arguably the most important problem that contributes to the current general crisis of our civilization. Concerns over the destructive impact of humans on nature have a long history that goes back several centuries, at least to the age of the Enlightenment, if not before.<sup>317</sup> The issue of the declining state of the environment and climate change has emerged in its present formulation as the problem of sustainability at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s when this subject has become an important focus in the public discourse. In 1972, the well-known report entitled *Limits to Growth* prepared for the Club of Rome raised questions regarding the capacity of the Earth to meet the rapidly growing needs of the global community.<sup>318</sup> That very same year the UN held its first major conference on sustainability in Stockholm.

Since that time the problem of sustainability has been in the center of public debates and political competition. It commands much attention and is a subject of numerous books and articles; it is a focus of talk shows and discussions in the media, and a major preoccupation of politicians, pundits, and scholars. It is a topic that is frequently discussed in ordinary households around the dinner table. The number of government and non-governmental organizations that deal with issues of sustainability and environmental protection has grown exponentially in recent decades. Many international organizations at the highest level concentrate their efforts and resources on problems related to sustainability. Hardly a day goes by without new warnings about climate change, levels of CO<sup>2</sup> in the atmosphere, or some other concern about the degradation of the environment. Sustainability has arguably become the most important social and political issue of our time, right next to the economy and international conflicts.

A large and constantly growing number of people subscribe to the belief that our civilization in its current form is unsustainable. This belief is not a passing fad. It has considerable staying power. Scientists from many different fields marshal massive data to prove that our environment is in a state of precipitous decline and, if no major changes are made, will reach a level of degradation that will make our life on this planet extremely difficult, if not indeed impossible.

There are many controversies related to the problem of sustainability. One of them is whether this problem even exists. Many so-called climate deniers dispute the claim that climate changes we experience today are really something unique in the history of the Earth, rather than a cyclical event that has occurred multiple times in the past, and that it does not pose a threat to the survival of humanity. Their opponents offer massive data that dispute such optimistic prediction. They claim that the human habitat is on the verge of a total collapse.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Robert U. Ayres, "Sustainability economics: Where do we stand?" *Ecological Economics*, vol. 67 (2008), pp. 281-310, p. 281.

<sup>318</sup> Donella H. Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth* (New York: New American Library, 1972).

<sup>319</sup> Donella H. Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth* (New York: New American Library, 1972).

Other controversies related to the degradation of the environment are about the ways in which our civilization should address the dangerous trend. There are many different and diverse approaches that propose solutions for the problem of sustainability: ecocentrism, environmental ethics, sustainable development, communitarianism, limited growth, de-growth, and others. They have been discussed in detail elsewhere, and there is no need to revisit this discussion in this study.<sup>320</sup> One observation, however, is in order. Sustainable development has been and to some extent still is the dominant trend in the discourse on sustainability. The core of the sustainable development perspective is the argument that entropy production and, consequently, the degradation of the environment can ultimately be constrained. While the argument is cogent, the sustainable development perspective has failed to outline the conditions that can constrain entropy, as has been demonstrated, for example, by George McMahon and Janusz Mrozek in their insightful article “Economics, Entropy and Sustainability.”<sup>321</sup> The failure of the sustainable development perspective to prove, both theoretically and practically, the possibility of attaining sustainability through continued development has shifted attention to alternative approaches.

Currently, the dominant trend among the proposed solutions of the problem of sustainability emphasizes the need to change the prevailing values and attitudes toward nature. The main perspectives representing this trend include ecocentrism, deep ecology, environmental ethics, and some others. In one way or another, they all claim that the source of the environmental crisis has deep roots. This source, in their view, is anthropocentrism, that is central to our civilization. According to the popular argument, anthropocentrism defines our practices, values, and norms that are focused exclusively on human needs and interests to the detriment of the rest of nature. Those who represent this trend advocate abandoning anthropocentrism and changing our relationship with nature as the only possible solution to the environmental crisis. They propose to view nature from a broader perspective that would recognize the intrinsic value of nature, animals, plants, and the Earth.

The problem of anthropocentrism is not only an ethical problem as current critics of anthropocentrism insist; it is not only about recognizing the primacy of humans and human interests in the cosmic order. The source of this problem lies much deeper. It is in our failure to view reality from any other perspective but those that humans have created. Thus, the perspectives we use are inadvertently centered in our preferences and choices and, for this reason, are limited, one-sided, subjective, and, ultimately, arbitrary.

Ending the domination of anthropocentrism requires the adoption of a perspective that does not rely on constructs created by humans. Even when the focus of a perspective shifts from humans to animals, plants, nature, or the Earth, as conservationists often

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<sup>320</sup> Shkliarevsky, Gennady, “Living a Non-Anthropocentric Future,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, September 29, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3933108> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3933108>

<sup>321</sup> G. F. McMahon and J. R. Mrozek, “Economics, Entropy and Sustainability,” *Hydrological Sciences*, vol. 42, no. 4 (August 1997), pp. 501–12, pp. 509–510.

propose, this shift will make no difference with regard to anthropocentrism, if those who formulate such alternative perspectives rely on constructs created by humans. Even if we succeed in answering the question posed by Thomas Nagel in his famous article “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”(in other words, what it is like to view reality from the perspective of a bat or some other animal, or anything non-human), there is no denial of the fact that the answer will still rely on our construct. No matter what perspective we will construct, it will still be, by definition, anthropocentric since it will rely on our mental constructs.<sup>322</sup> Despite their claims, all proposed solutions aimed at ending the domination of anthropocentrism are ultimately based on mental constructs and choices made by humans and, for this reason, are totally anthropocentric. A mere shifting of perspectives from humans to non-humans does not solve the problem. We cannot end the domination of anthropocentrism by using perspectives that, despite modifications, remain anthropocentric. We can only end the domination of the anthropocentric worldview if we adopt a perspective that does not originate in our mind.

The focus on the process of creation offers such perspective. This process is not a product of our mind. On the contrary, the human mind and humanity are its products. The process of creation had existed long before the rise of humanity. Consequently, the social practice that uses the process of creation as its central organizing principle offers a perspective that does not have its source in human constructs; it is decidedly non-anthropocentric. The source of anthropocentrism is in our failure to recognize the important role that the process of creation plays in the relationship between humans and reality.

The numerous current proposals to abandon anthropocentrism and adopt a broader worldview resonates with the main thrust of this study; it also advocates the adoption of the new social practice based on the process of creation as its main organizing principle. The process of creation works on universal inclusion and equality, not selective inclusion, as in the current practices. The proposed social practice based on the process of creation is universalist in its orientation, not human-centered.

Combinations that emerge as a result of universal inclusion represent new levels of organization. These new levels of organization are more powerful than the levels from which they have emerged. These new and more powerful levels of organization give rise to new visions, ideas, and approaches; they offer new possibilities and access to new resources that are essential for conservation. Each level of organization regulates and conserves the level from which it has emerged; each level is regulated by the level that has emerged from it. The more inclusive a perspective is, the more possibilities it will offer, the more powerful it will be. More possibilities will provide access to new resources. The approach that relies on universal inclusion will be objective and non-anthropocentric. Such objective approach will help make decisions about climate change and the environmental degradation that will be objective and not human-centered. It is also important to point out that the process of creation and universal inclusion are not about human knowledge. Knowledge is incidental to the process of creation. The process of creation is primarily about conservation and sustaining us, as individuals and a civilization.

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<sup>322</sup> Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4 (1974), pp. 435–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914>.

As this study makes clear, the source of anthropocentrism is the failure to recognize the essential role of the process of creation in our relationship with reality. This process is integral to our universe. It makes conservation and the evolution possible. As a result of the failure to embrace the process of creation, this very important part of reality is basically denied its central role. As has been explained, for all practical purposes, we exclude this process from our view of reality. This act of exclusion is subjective, and it leaves humans with no other alternative but to rely on human constructs and choices that are inevitably human-centered; they are subjective due to exclusion.

There is another problem with the current proposals that seek to end the domination of anthropocentrism. Most of them focus on the degradation of the environment and the destruction of nature. Anthropocentrism, as a worldview that is exclusive and subjective, has broad implications and affects many areas of our life. Anthropocentrism is fundamentally about exclusion. The degradation of the environment is not the only result of this exclusion. As this study shows, exclusion is the source of inequality and domination. It creates tensions and conflicts.<sup>323</sup> As many critics—including Charles Reich, the author of the famous book *The Greening of America*<sup>324</sup>—have pointed out, exclusion has multiple and different consequences that affect our civilization as a whole: our knowledge production, social relations, political systems, institutions, and much else.

Practically all perspectives associate the end of the domination of anthropocentrism with the inevitable decline of the role of humans in nature and the universe. Nothing could be further from the truth. The embracing of the process of creation and making it the main organizing principle of our social practice will empower humans, not diminish their power. By understanding the process of creation, humans will enhance their capacity to create an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Such new levels of organization will give rise to new ideas, approaches, and decisions. They will make possible to conserve human creations and sustain our civilization. The embracing of the process of creation will fulfill the promise that goes back to the time when humans began to walk the face of this Earth. Humans will not become less central to the cosmos. On the contrary, their role will become infinitely more important.

The increased importance of the human place and role in the universe will not lead to the destruction of nature and the animal world. The social practice based on the process of creation will be inclusive, not exclusive. Conservation requires the creation of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization, which is possible only

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<sup>323</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "In Quest for Justice: Solving the Problem of Inclusion and Equality, SSRN Electronic Journal," June 8, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3862630> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3862630>; Shkliarevsky, Gennady. "Overcoming Modernity and Violence." *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 11, no. 1 (August 18, 2015), pp. 299–314.

<sup>324</sup> Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), <https://silo.pub/the-greening-of-america.html>.

through inclusion of all differences—nature, animals, plants, the Earth, and all. Each difference is a source of creation. Such new practice will shape a new approach in our environmental policies. This new approach will include all available environmental perspectives as its particular cases—that is, cases that are based on specific assumptions. The new approach should not be merely an aggregation of the available perspectives, but their combination. Since this combination includes all differences, it will represent the most powerful level of organization, which is the principal condition for conservation. Such combinations will offer new possibilities, new choices, and access to new resources.

Finally, the creation of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization is the most important form of production. Contrary to many current approaches that see the solution of environmental problems in limiting growth or even achieving de-growth,<sup>325</sup> the perspective outlined in this study sees the solution in enhancing our production and increasing growth exponentially. The patterns of our production will change, but we must create new levels of organization and, therefore, production must grow because this growth will help us solve problems with the environment.

More than five decades ago, Charles Reich wrote this prophetic passage:

There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence.<sup>326</sup>

Many have heeded his call. A quarter of a century after Reich published his *The Greening of America* Mary Midgley in an article entitled “The End of Anthropocentrism?” offered the following reflection questioning the anthropocentric orthodoxy:

What is it to be Central? Are human beings in some sense central to the cosmos? It used to seem obvious that they were. It seems less obvious

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<sup>325</sup> G. Kallis, C. Kerschner, J. Martinez-Alier, “The economics of degrowth. Ecological Economics,” vol. 84 (2012), pp. 172–180; F. D. Vivien “Sustainable development: an overview of economic proposals,” *S.A.P.I.E.N.S. Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, no. 1.2, edited by Gaell Mainguy (2008), retrieved from <http://sapiens.revues.org/227>; C. Levallois C. 2010. Can de-growth be considered a policy option? A historical note on Nicholas GeorgescuRoegen and the Club of Rome,” *Ecological Economics*, vol. 69, no. 11 (2010), pp. 2271–2278; H. E. Daly, “Steady-state economics: a new paradigm,” *New Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1993), pp. 811–816; H. E. Daly, “Economics in a full world,” *Scientific American* vol. 293, no. 3 (2005), pp. 100–107; Gennady Shkliarevsky, “Squaring the Circle: In Quest for Sustainability,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 32, no. 6 (December 2015), pp. 629–45. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2271>.

<sup>326</sup> Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), <https://silo.pub/the-greening-of-america.html>.

now. But the idea is still powerful in our thinking, and it may be worthwhile asking just what it has meant.<sup>327</sup>

Much time has passed since publications by Reich and Midgley. Many new contributions have called to end the domination of anthropocentric worldview. The early challenges to the domination of anthropocentrism were relatively modest. As years have passed, criticisms of anthropocentrism have been on the rise and their tone has become increasingly alarming. The new voices call for mobilization and action against the ongoing climate change. In his introduction to the edited volume *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* Rob Boddice makes a bold statement: “This book is about the termination of anthropocentrism in ethics, politics, and throughout a range of academic disciplines.”<sup>328</sup> The number of contributions that call to end the domination of anthropocentrism has grown enormously in the last decade as environmental problems continue to amass. They all convey the need for urgent action.<sup>329</sup> The new social practice is a way to heed to this call.

### “The Pursuit of Happiness”

In discussing the current turmoil, this study has emphasized widespread sentiments of frustration, anomie, ennui, dejection, and the general feeling of unhappiness that many people are experiencing today. These negative feelings color perceptions of reality. As a result, reality appears to be hostile and threatening. Such perceptions create negative attitudes, a sense of hopelessness; they contribute to the general atmosphere of annoyance, vexation, exasperation, and overall dissatisfaction—all of which contribute to the deterioration of the current crisis. Reducing or eliminating the impact of negative attitudes and views are certainly an important part of the resolution of this crisis. The new practice can

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<sup>327</sup> Mary Midgley, “The End of Anthropocentrism?” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, no. 37 (June 1994), p. 103, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1358246100006482>

<sup>328</sup> Rob Boddice, ed., *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* (Brill: 2011), p. 1, <https://brill.com/view/title/18825>.

<sup>329</sup> Ralph R. Acampora, “Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy (Review),” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2006), pp. 480–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2006.0033>; John Michael Greer, “The Twilight of Anthropocentrism,” *The Ecological Citizen*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2017), pp. 75–81; Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Rajesh. K. Rajasekaran, “Environmental Ethics: Anthropocentric Chauvinism as Seen in Western Ethical Theories,” *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering*, vol. 8, no. 6 (2019), pp. 1385–89.

dramatically improve the overall situation. It can give people hope, make them more content and happier in general.

Happiness is one of the most wanted and most elusive goals that has motivated and continues to motivate humans in their endeavors. There is much evidence from the long history of humanity that supports this observation. Few other human pursuits can compare in importance with the pursuit of happiness. The inclusion of the pursuit of happiness into the United States Declaration of Independence has not been an accident. Yet despite the importance of happiness, there is little agreement or understanding of what constitutes happiness; and there is no certainty what path or paths lead to it. Generally, we do not venture far beyond various popular DIY proposals and methods to improve one's wellbeing.<sup>330</sup>

In the last two decades there has been a real boom in happiness studies. Happiness is now a subject of many academic and non-academic publications, polls, and multiple reports by many prestigious national and international organizations.<sup>331</sup> It often figures prominently in speeches and public addresses, media contributions, sermons, and other venues. Happiness has become an important subject for discussions among managers and businesspeople. There are research institutes devoted to studying happiness.<sup>332</sup> One can even get a graduate degree in happiness studies.<sup>333</sup>

Until relatively recently happiness was not an important factor in our corporate culture. The main concerns of business owners, managers and economists were generally about profits, supply, demand, efficiency, productivity, and other production factors. Happiness rarely, if at all, entered their considerations as a category that is important in business environment.

A few decades ago, however, the situation began to change. Publications in economics and management have opened their pages to contributions that discuss happiness. Colleges and universities have introduced courses with alluring titles "What Makes Employees Happy," "The Foundations of Happiness at Work," or "How to Create an Enjoyable Work Environment." Many educational institutions have

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<sup>330</sup> Ann Pietrangelo and Lori Lawrenz, How to Be Happy: 27 Habits to Add to Your Routine," Healthline, March 10, 2023, <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-be-happy>.

<sup>331</sup> The World Happiness Report, a yearly report published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network that gets much of its data from the Gallup World Poll, found in 2016 that countries with high levels of income, wealth and well-being inequality also had lower levels of overall happiness overall.

<sup>332</sup> See, for example, the site of the Happiness Research Institute, <https://www.happinessresearchinstitute.com>

<sup>333</sup> See, for example, the ad for an MA degree program in Happiness Studies at Centenary University, <https://www.centenaryuniversity.edu/academics/graduate/master-of-arts-in-happiness-studies/>.



included a new field of studies—Happiness Studies—in their curriculum. Special research institutes devoted to studying happiness—such as, for example, Happiness Research Institute in Denmark—indicate that the interest in the subject of happiness is growing. Today one can even get a certificate in happiness studies from accredited programs and institutions, such as the Happiness Studies Academy. There are numerous books with titles like *How to Be Happy at Work* (Annie McKee), *Powered by Happy: How to Get and Stay Happy at Work* (Beth Thomas), *Work Happy: What Great Bosses Know* (Jill Geisler), and many others. There are also academic journals—for example, *Journal of Happiness Studies*—that are devoted exclusively to studying happiness.

Study after study emphasize the important connection between happiness and production. Statistical data show that happy employees are more productive—actually 12% more productive on the average. Research also demonstrates that work cheer makes stock prices grow on the average 19%, as opposed to a mere 10% for companies with low morale. And there is more. A Gallup State of the American Workplace study published in 2012 revealed that employees with high overall wellbeing have 41% lower health related costs in comparison with employees who are struggling, and 62% lower costs compared with employees who were “suffering.” The numbers are significant enough for business owners and managers to start paying attention. They increasingly see happiness as a way to boost productivity and lower costs in the new technological environment where employee contributions are often measured in innovations and improvements rather than in the number of hours spent on the job.

This is not to create an impression that extensive ways of enhancing the wellbeing of employees are a norm in America. Only very few and very successful companies can afford to introduce ways to make their employees happy. However, the climate in American business is definitely changing. For business managers, happiness is no longer an exotic notion to consider. Many companies take the business of keeping their employees happy extremely seriously and are looking to researchers to unlock the secrets of a happy life.

Researchers have certainly responded to the challenge. Today scholars from multiple fields—from psychology to sociology, to neuroscience, anthropology, management science, and even some esoteric meditative disciplines—are probing the secrets of happiness. They have collected huge banks of empirical data, analyzed trillions of questionnaires, and published numerous studies. No stone seems left unturned. Yet despite all these efforts, we are no closer today to answering the fundamental question of what makes people happy than we were when happiness studies were in their incipient stages.

The recommendations provided by scholars vary greatly both in content and numbers.

Some see happiness resulting from a combination of three or four basic factors. Annie McKee, the author of a popular book *How to Be Happy at Work*, sees three components essential for happiness: a meaningful vision of the future, a sense of purpose, and great relationships at work. Others go as high as ten or fifteen ingredients of happiness; and a few produce an extensive list of dozens of happiness factors.

There is no shortage of expertise on the subject of happiness. There is also plenty of good will and sincere efforts. The scope of happiness studies is extensive, which leads

some scholars to conclude that “happiness research stands on the brink of an exciting new era.”<sup>334</sup> Much is being done and yet the results are disappointing. Most media contributions devoted to discussing predominant moods among Americans are alarming: “Americans Are Angry about . . . Everything,” “Americans Are Overwhelmingly Dissatisfied With the State of Things,” “An Epidemic of Unhappiness Is Consuming Young Americans. It Could Hobble the Economy,” “Unhappiness and Pain in Modern America.” Contributions with similar titles are abundant.<sup>335</sup>

The Gallup poll reports that currently only 24% of U.S. adults are satisfied with the way things are going in America, which is much below the high point of 71% satisfaction rate in 1999 during the dot-com boom. The level of satisfaction was as low as 7% in 2008 during the financial crisis. Although it has stayed above this level since then, it has never crossed the barrier of three-quarters of Americans who feel dissatisfied, unhappy, and angry.<sup>336</sup> According to Will Leitch, in 2022 America was going on 20 years of dissatisfaction.<sup>337</sup> One can only add that America is not an exception in this respect. The level of anger and dissatisfaction is very high around the world.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Dunigan Folk and Elizabeth Dunn, “How Can People Become Happier? A Systematic Review of Preregistered Experiments,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 75, (January 18, 2024), pp. 467–93, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-022423-030818>; Amber Dance, “Scientists Scrutinize Happiness Research,” *Knowable Magazine*, January 8, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1146/knowable-010824-2>.

<sup>335</sup> Noah Robertson and Patrik Jonsson, “Americans Are Angry about ... Everything. Is That Bad?” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 22, 2021. [https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2021/1022/Americans-are-angry-about-everything.-Is-that-bad?cmpid=mkt:ggl:dsa-np&gad\\_source=1](https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2021/1022/Americans-are-angry-about-everything.-Is-that-bad?cmpid=mkt:ggl:dsa-np&gad_source=1); FTI Consulting, “Americans Are Overwhelmingly Dissatisfied With the State of Things,” August 22, 2022, <https://www.fticonsulting.com/insights/articles/americans-dissatisfied-state-things-nothing-new>; Megan Leonhardt, “An Epidemic of Unhappiness Is Consuming Young Americans. It Could Hobble the Economy,” *Barron’s*, October 26, 2023. <https://www.barrons.com/articles/mental-health-depression-unhappiness-young-americans-economy-e20fa042>; David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, “Unhappiness and Pain in Modern America: A Review Essay, and Further Evidence, on Carol Graham’s *Happiness for All?*” *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2019), pp. 385–402.

<sup>336</sup> Gallup Inc., “Americans Remain Largely Dissatisfied with Direction of U.S.” *Gallup.com*, March 31, 2022. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/391358/americans-remain-largely-dissatisfied-direction.aspx>.

<sup>337</sup> Will Leitch, “America Is Going on 20 Years of Dissatisfaction,” *Medium* (blog), August 24, 2022. <https://williamfleitch.medium.com/america-is-going-on-20-years-of-dissatisfaction-7d3596382691>.

<sup>338</sup> Thomas Carothers and Brendan Hartnett, “Protests in 2023: Widespread Citizen Anger Continues, With Sources Multiplying,” Carnegie Endowment for International

There is an obvious discrepancy between the investment in money, effort, time, and expertise, on one hand, and the results on the other. We do not understand the source of unhappiness any more than we did two decades ago. This poor showing may be a result of a flawed approach. The field of happiness studies is very strong on empirical research and data collection; but it is weak on theory. The empirical data banks are enormous and keep on growing. By contrast, the theoretical foundation for happiness studies remains very thin. There is plenty of confusion in the way researchers understand happiness and its source.

Much of what constitutes our current understanding of happiness merely sums up various factors that have been identified in empirical studies based on different assumptions that are limited in scope and often contradict each other. The theoretical understanding of happiness and unhappiness remains limited. What we have is largely a result of unsystematic guesswork and a variety of trial-and-error approaches.

Even our definitions of happiness are vague. In trying to define happiness, some researchers, for example, go all the way to Aristotle who considered happiness to be simply an outcome of good life—not a particularly helpful or precise definition. Others associate happiness with subjective choices that people make; and go even so far as to assert that in order to be happy people simply have to decide to be happy. Still others look to culture as the determining factor of what we regard as happiness.

No doubt such diverse and even conflicting definitions point to the lack of a solid theoretical foundation. The result of this confusion is that empirical research on happiness evolves in very different and largely uncoordinated directions that do not really talk to each other. The field is essentially an eclectic aggregation of various methodological approaches based on empirical observations with little theoretical informing.

There is one common view, however, that all researchers share that may serve as a good starting point in discussing happiness. All researchers associate happiness with gratification, satisfaction, and fulfillment. They differ in their views as to what specifically must be gratified in order for an individual to feel happy, but there is little doubt that an act of gratification per se plays an essential role in creating a sense of happiness.

The view that gratification is the source of happiness is very general. It offers no clues as to what specifically needs to be gratified for one to feel happy. Therefore, disputing this view is difficult and may not even be necessary.

Indeed, gratification pleases us. We all seek pleasurable experiences and having such experience may very well be what makes us happy. However, such experience is so subjective that one will have a hard time turning it into some objective conclusion that goes beyond a mere recognition of fact.

Studies of child psychology offer a way for theoretical understanding of happiness. When a child is breastfeeding or sees a familiar object (say, mother's face), the child smiles. Evidently, feeding or seeing a familiar object activates certain functions (physiological in the case of feeding or visual in the case of seeing). Activation

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Peace, December 18, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/18/protests-in-2023-widespread-citizen-anger-continues-with-sources-multiplying-pub-91256>.

conserves functions: one could say it nourishes them. The sense of gratification in such cases comes from the reinforcement of functions—metabolic in one case and visual in another. When seeing something familiar the child exercises and, consequently, gratifies and conserves the very function of seeing, which gives a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

Thus, one can conclude that at the heart of gratification is conservation. The connection between conservation and gratification is hardly a surprise. Conservation is ubiquitous in our universe. It is integral to the evolution. By way of the evolution conservation has entered the human domain. Conservation requires nourishment and nourishment is a form of gratification. However, does gratification of any function we have constitute the source of human happiness? Do we really identify the satisfaction we feel after having a sumptuous meal with happiness? This is hardly the case.

Humans have different functions. Some of these functions are not that different from functions that many other biological organisms have. But some are uniquely human. We are the only species that can consistently engage in and perform symbolic operations. Indeed, some animals also have a limited capacity to operate with symbols, but the mental operations performed by the most advanced animals are no match for mental operations that humans have in their repertoire. The human mind can create an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of mental organization. No animal can perform operations of such complexity.

Thus, the mental operations that humans perform makes them different from other animal species. All humans acquire the capacity for performing symbolic operations and creating mental constructs. The evolution of this capacity gives rise to consciousness—a uniquely human property.<sup>339</sup> All children acquire consciousness by the end of their first year of life. Since we have not embraced the process of creation, we still do not understand how we acquire consciousness, even though Piaget has described the process in its main features in his seminal book *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*.<sup>340</sup>

Novelties are not the source of our happiness. They are only symptoms. The real source of our happiness lies much deeper. This source is the gratification of our main function—the function that defines us as species; the function of creating new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization that give rise to novelties. Performing this function exercises, gratifies, and conserves it. Gratification of this function gives us pleasure and makes us feel happy and fulfilled in a uniquely human way.

To understand happiness, we must understand the process of creation and the way it works. People often view creative work as something that is practiced by a select few—artists, poets, musicians, or intellectuals more generally. Sometimes they see creation involved in what scientists or entrepreneurs do. In fact, creation is much more common than many people think. It is involved in many types of activities that seem ordinary and mundane. For example, relationships with other people require a great deal of creativity since one must create a frame capable of integrating differences involved in

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<sup>339</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The Mind’s Eye: De-Mystifying Consciousness,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, May 10, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4105608> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4105608>

<sup>340</sup> Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*.

human interactions. A happy marriage certainly requires a lot of creativity.

Creative acts involve inclusion and combination of differences. In order to include differences, one should recognize them, which requires embracing autonomy, both one's own and that of others. The recognition of autonomy rests on the notion of equality; it is incompatible with exclusion and domination. When we disagree with each other, our first impulse is to prove that we are right, and our opponent is wrong. In other words, we try to assert our dominant position. This attitude is deeply ingrained in our culture and our psyche. Creation requires a very different attitude and approach. Instead of trying to prove that one side is right, while the other is wrong, one should try to create a common frame that integrates all differences as its particular cases—that is, cases that are true under specific conditions or assumptions. The advantage of this approach is it affirms differences, which will enrich and empower all participants. It is a win-win situation for all.

If shared by all employees in a business organization, regardless of their position in the company hierarchy, this attitude is an essential condition for fostering non-hierarchical interactions among them—one of the most important conditions for creating combinations of differences, which leads to the emergence of new and increasingly more powerful levels of mental organization that give rise to new ideas, products, approaches—in a word, to new values. As has already been mentioned, the emergence of new and more powerful levels of organization is the source of hierarchies. Fostering non-hierarchical interactions does not in any way overshadow a legitimate and important contributions of hierarchies to the process of creation.

Thus, the approach based on the universal inclusion and equality of all differences does not in any way deny the importance and legitimacy of hierarchical interactions and the existence of hierarchies. Hierarchies conserve and optimize new levels of organization. Without hierarchies no further evolution will be possible. The two types of interactions are equally important. Their entangled relationship should be in balance, which is an essential condition for sustaining the process of creation.

Humans are wired for meaning. By creating meaning, they render their lives meaningful, which makes them feel happy and fulfilled. The process of creation is integral to the creation of meaning and, thus, attaining happiness and fulfillment. Researchers show that meaning, happiness, and a sense of fulfillment make us smarter, more innovative, and more adaptable. The pursuit of happiness, in many ways, realizes our destiny.

Studying and understanding the process of creation is a very important part of the new social practice. By realizing the main parameters of the process of creation and fostering creativity, the new social practice plays an essential role in gratifying the most important human function—the capacity to create. The creation of new levels of organization will conserve the main human function, which will make our evolution as individuals and the civilization possible. The gratification of the most important human function is the most important condition for making us feel happy and fulfilled. The new practice with its focus on the process of creation is instrumental in our quest for happiness and fulfillment.

*The New Social Practice and the Sphere of Arts and Aesthetics*

The connection between art and creation has never been in doubt. Since the process of creation has not been a subject of rational examination, an understanding of the process of creation has not guided art making and criticism that uses intuition and emotional responses as their principal tools. These tools are certainly valuable, but they are not subject to rational control. As a result, their guidance is not always reliable. By contrast, an understanding of the way the process of creation works adds rational control over the process of creation to the sphere of aesthetic experience and values. The new social practice certainly does not deny the role of emotions and intuition in art practice and analysis, but the additional tools it provides make art practice more productive and will expand the range of analysis in art criticism and valuation. The addition will certainly enrich the sphere of aesthetic experience and art criticism.

The application of the new social practice to the art sphere is at this point very limited, which constrains the scope of the discussion of effects of the new practice on the aesthetic sphere. Only a systematic application of the new practice and an accumulation of experience will make a comprehensive discussion of such effects possible. This observation does not mean, however, that some effects cannot be considered even at this early stage. The current knowledge and understanding of the process of creation makes possible to talk about some consequences of the application of the new practice in the aesthetic sphere.

The new practice with its analytical approach toward the process of creation makes this process more accessible to rational understanding and human control. It helps us be creative when we want, not only when we can. The understanding of how the process of creation works and the capacity to control this process will make our art practice more productive. It will increase the sheer volume of the production of art works and will enrich the sphere of the arts with new aesthetic experiences and forms. Also, as has already been mentioned, the new social practice will also bring rational analysis into the process of evaluation of art and art criticism.

Like many other spheres of our civilization, the sphere of the arts has experienced dramatic transformations in modern times. Modern art has enriched our aesthetic experience with many new forms; it expanded the range of our aesthetic sensibilities and values. The proliferation art forms in the modern world has raised important questions related to understanding and evaluating new and unfamiliar works of art. The problem is that art evaluation and criticism is still largely guided by emotions and intuition. These tools have certainly served us well, but they do have limitations. For one thing, they are very subjective. Also, their analytical capabilities are limited. Finally, they are not particularly reliable; our capacity to exercise rational control over these tools is very restricted. For all these reasons, our judgements of art works and their value rarely, if at all, rely on rational justification and analysis. They remain largely subjective. The new practice can bring clarity, precision, and objectivity in the way we judge and evaluate works of art.

There are many examples from contemporary art that can be used to expand on this point. An extensive review and analysis of all these examples are certainly beyond the scope of this study. For reasons of economy, it will focus on a specific trend in contemporary art that is making a big splash on today's art scene. The works of Marina

Abramović are very representative of this new trend and are perhaps best known in the art world.<sup>341</sup>

Abramović is arguably the most celebrated contemporary artist in the world. She works in performance art that is currently regarded as the most avant-garde form of art. Abramović, who is now 74, has once dubbed herself in jest as “the grandmother of performance art.” The title has stuck and is currently widely used to introduce Abramović’s numerous shows and talks. In the course of her long and productive career, Abramovic directed and staged numerous performances that she presented in some of the most prestigious cultural venues. Her shows at the MOMA, the Guggenheim Museum, the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Oxford University, and other prominent institutions have attracted a lot of attention. The performance “The Artist is Present” went for three grueling months at the MOMA and had over 850,000 visitors who waited patiently in line to take part in the performance.<sup>342</sup> Abramovic is a recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the Golden Lion for Best Artist at the 1997 Venice Biennale for “Balkan Baroque” in which Abramovic scrubbed raw animal bones for hours despite the terrible stench that came from the pile.<sup>343</sup>

For Abramovic, true art must evoke a direct emotional response; it must produce a jolt of energy. This response constitutes, according to Abramovic, the essence of an authentic aesthetic experience.<sup>344</sup> Performance art, Abramovic contends, occupies a

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<sup>341</sup> Shkliarevsky, “The Phenomenon of Marina Abramovic as Re-Enactment of the Passions of the Contemporary Elite.”

<sup>342</sup> Chris Chang, “Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present,” *Film Comment*, vol. 48, no. 3 (June 5, 2012), p. 73. Ben Luke. “It Is Dangerous for Artists When the Events of the Day Change Their Work’: Marina Abramovic on Art and the Coronavirus Pandemic,” *The Art Newspaper*, May 8, 2020, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/interview/it-is-dangerous-for-artists-when-the-events-of-the-day-change-their-work-marina-abramovic-on-art-and-the-coronavirus-pandemic>.

<sup>343</sup> Freire Barnes, “The Time Out Interview -- Marina Abramovic -- How Do You Solve a Problem like Marina?; She’s Trained Gaga, Danced with Jay Z and Had a Loaded Gun Pointed at Her in the Name of Art. Now Marina Abramovic Is Attempting Her Most Daring Performance Art Piece yet: Doing Nothing. Freire Barnes Chats to the Serbian Superwoman.” *England and Wales*, 2014. [https://advance-lexis-com.ezprox.bard.edu/document/?pdmfid=1516831&crd=8fbce15d-7351-4073-b9d2-8573640fa1ba&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fnews%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A5CD6-7R11-JCF0-600H-00000-00&pdcontentcomponentid=246252&pdteaserkey=sr1&pditab=allpods&ecomp=gb63k&earg=sr1&prid=b200c4a7-02aa-47c2-a722-21932ef66828](https://advance.lexis-com.ezprox.bard.edu/document/?pdmfid=1516831&crd=8fbce15d-7351-4073-b9d2-8573640fa1ba&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fnews%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A5CD6-7R11-JCF0-600H-00000-00&pdcontentcomponentid=246252&pdteaserkey=sr1&pditab=allpods&ecomp=gb63k&earg=sr1&prid=b200c4a7-02aa-47c2-a722-21932ef66828) p. 269.

<sup>344</sup> Belinda Luscombe, “Marina Abramovic,” *Time Magazine*, vol. 188, no. 21 (November 21, 2016), p. 74.

special place in the world of art. More than any other form of art, she argues, performance pieces make direct impact on all involved in the production—both artist and spectators; it generates aesthetic experience simultaneously in viewers and in the artist. The two equally participate and collaborate in producing the work of art.

As Abramovic makes clear, emotional response is critical for the work of art. The more intense the emotional response is, the more powerful is the aesthetic experience; and the more powerful this experience is, the better the work of art performs its function and the more authentic and transformative it is. According to Abramović, the works of art that involve transgression against accepted norms and values are the most powerful and transformative in their impact. She views such transgressions as a path to transcendence that is considered a proper function of art.

Abramovic is not alone in practicing this approach in art. Many other contemporary artists believe with Abramovic that transgression generates the most powerful emotional response. It violates accepted norms and values, thus ushering in disorder and instability. It is a profoundly disturbing experience that denies spectators a sense of control and security provided by what is familiar and habitual. Transgression jettisons the safe ground of what is regarded as normal and acceptable. The forces unleashed by transgression threaten to destroy everything that we rely on in sustain normal social relations. They show the imminent danger of death and destruction. We have no control over these forces that, for this very reason, frighten us; they make us feel extremely uncomfortable, and insecure. Suffering is perhaps the most common among such experiences.

It is precisely for this reason that Abramovic and other contemporary artists value transgression. They use the term “transgression” synonymously with the term “transcendence” that has always been regarded in the art world as the main goal of true art. Their arsenal of devices to make the viewer feel uncomfortable is huge. It ranges from exposure of the intimate side that we usually try to keep private (nudity, sexuality, etc.) to exposing vulnerabilities to the intrusive gaze of outsiders, to spectacles that involve extreme endurance, physical pain, or a threat of pain, and even a possibility of death. Most of Abramovic’s performances played with expressive limits of pain. Her goal is to make audiences aware of her pain and bear witness to it.<sup>345</sup>

Many other contemporary performance artists seek to exploit sights of pain and suffering. They use them to produce the desired effect in their audiences; and the audiences are not unwilling. Sights of pain and suffering are what attracts audiences who derive from such performances what they regard as aesthetic pleasure.

Thus, for many contemporary artists transgression and suffering play an extremely important role in a creative act. In their view, transgression offers a path to transcendence. However, neither the artists nor critics offer a clear explanation of the connection that they claim exists between transgression that involves pain and suffering and transcendence.

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<sup>345</sup> Katherine Guinness, “Marina Abramovic Does not Feel Like You,” *Ferral Feminism*, issue 3 (2014); <https://feralfeminisms.com/abramovic/>.



They base their claim on what appears to be a superficial similarity between the two vaguely associated with crossing the boundary of what is socially acceptable. In other words, they tend to conflate transgression and transcendence. Sixto Castro, for example, emphasizes the role of transgression in art in his essay “The Transcendence of Transgression.” In his view, the process of creation starts with transgression—the denial of the norm. He writes:

This is one of the reasons why transgression in art is such an important topic for theorists: it is a constant effort to redefine the limits between what is considered sacred (and art has a decisive power on that) and what is profane (not sacred anymore or not yet).<sup>346</sup>

Elsewhere Castro further elaborates on the connection between transgression, on one hand, and transcendence, on the other:

For this reason, among others, artists usually claim a special status in the moral space, as seen in controversies on the ethical nature of certain works of art, demanding for themselves a special space beyond good and evil. Usually, artists affirm that art is not governed by ordinary moral criteria since transgression and scandal are supposed to be part of the structure of this new way of searching for transcendence, just as it happens with mystical religions.<sup>347</sup>

Indeed, on some very superficial level there is some similarity between transgression and transcendence in that both cross the boundary. However, this similarity does not go very deep; it overlooks a very important difference between the two. Transcendence is not possible without creation. The process of creation is universally inclusive; it does not reject the existing forms. It subsumes and conserves them by integrating them into a new and broader frame where the old forms constitute a particular case of a new and more powerful level of organization. Transcendence involves the creation of this new level of organization. In other words, there is a deep connection between transcendence and the act of creation.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Sixto J. Castro, “The Transcendence of Transgression,” *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research*, vol. 16, no. 3 (December 2018), pp. 237–45. [https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.16.3.237\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/tear.16.3.237_1); p. 237.

<sup>347</sup> Castro, “The Transcendence of Transgression,” p. 238.

<sup>348</sup> For a discussion of transcendence and the process of creation see Gennady Shkliarevsky, “Understanding the Process of Creation: A New Approach.” *Management: Journal of Sustainable Business and Management Solutions in Emerging Economies* 22, no. 3 (October 31, 2017), pp. 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.7595/management.fon.2017.0021>; Gennady Shkliarevsky, “The Evolution of Civilization as a Process of Creation,” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester,

By contrast, transgression does not involve creation. Transgression denies and rejects what exists. Such rejection does not require the creation of a new and more powerful level of organization and usually takes the form of inversion. It uses inversion to negate existing forms (values, norms, etc.) and thus does not transcend them. In contrast to transcendence, transgression does not have autonomy; it relies on existing forms because without them transgression has nothing to reject and invert. A criminal act, for example, involves transgression of existing norms and values but it does not create anything new. The transgression of the existing values and norms by criminals does not turn them into creative artists.

Contemporary artists (including Abramovic) and critics tend to overlook this important distinction between transgression and transcendence. They fail to recognize and, consequently, critically examine this distinction. They merely conflate the two and use this unwarranted conflation as the basis for their understanding of the process of art making. Symptomatically, Abramovic who is not shy to engage in extensive theorizing about her works and method does not offer much discussion of the creative process. She accepts the connection between transgression and transcendence as self-evident and leaves it at that.

Like many other contemporary performance artists Abramovic uses transgression—often gratuitously. In her work she inverts familiar notions, values, norms, modes of behavior, etc. She uses fear of exposure and vulnerability, and subjects her viewers to spectacles of self-mutilation, pain, suffering and even a threat of possible death. Abramovic symptomatically entitled one of her shows that turns the scene of funeral into a spectacle “The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic.” The thought of making a funeral exciting came to Abramovic when she attended the funeral for Susan Sontag.<sup>349</sup>

Abramovic’s methodology relies on the existing values, norms, and modes of behavior to produce the desired effect. She does not create anything new. The existing forms constantly lurk in the background as the essential referent for her experiments in transgression. Without these referents, her performances simply would be void of any meaning; they would not work. They lack the essential autonomy possessed by genuine works of art. Therefore, in this sense, her work cannot be regarded as a true artistic creation. It is merely an inversion that in its own perverse way mimics the original. Such inversion is not dissimilar to what takes place during the development of youngsters when they make the transition from the earlier stage of heteronomy with its dependence on rules imposed from outside by adults to the stage of autonomy with its realization of one’s own moral self. Jean Piaget, among others, has discussed this transition in his *The Moral Judgment of the Child*.<sup>350</sup> The initial move toward autonomy takes the form of

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NY: Social Science Research Network, January 28, 2020,  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3526961>.

<sup>349</sup> Joshua Abrams, “The Life and Death of Marina Abramović (Review),” *Theater Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2 (May 2012).

<sup>350</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1965). For a more popular discussion of this behavior, see Lisa Damour, “Why Teenagers

inversions of externally imposed rules, as many parents who have teenage children will attest.

Spectacles of pain and suffering that Abramovic stages involve the inversion of our values and norms. As has been pointed out, such inversions are characteristic for young adolescents who have not developed awareness and control of their agency and creative powers and who affirm themselves through contradiction and inversion.<sup>351</sup> Inversions do not create anything but rely on what already exists. Like parasites, inversions subsist on what is available. No matter how ingenious an inversion may be, it ultimately does not gratify our creative capacity and does not make us feel happy and delighted.<sup>352</sup>

For those who find spectacles of pain and suffering appealing, Abramovic's pieces perform a therapeutic role. They externalize the inner pain and suffering that members of her audiences feel. Such externalizations open possibilities for distancing and manipulation of their inner experience and create an illusion of control.

The above discussion of Abramovic's works shows what the new social practice brings into the world of art. The understanding of the process of creation makes possible to differentiate between a true creation and a simulacrum. Since the new practice relies on the rational understanding of the process of creation, it will bring clarity to contemporary art making and criticism and will break the monopoly of approaches based on emotions and intuition. The new practice makes possible to distinguish true creation from what simply appears as creation. Production of simulacra does not involve the creation of new and more powerful levels of organization and forms. It is merely a form of poaching the existing levels of organization without creating anything new.

### *Obsolescing the Moral Predicament*

As has been pointed out earlier, the process of creation has an important moral dimension. It works on universal inclusion and equality that are also essential properties of morality. Morality rests on the recognition of autonomy, agency, and equality. There is certainly a connection between the process of creation and morality. As a product of

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Reject Parents' Solutions to Their Problems," *The New York Times*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/18/well/family/why-teenagers-reject-parents-solutions-to-their-problems.html>; Jeanie Lerche Davis, "Teenagers: Why Do They Rebel?" *WebMD*, August 11, 2003. <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/teenagers-why-do-they-rebel>.

<sup>351</sup> Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*; Damour, "Why Teenagers Reject Parents' Solutions to Their Problems"; Davis, "Teenagers: Why Do They Rebel?"

<sup>352</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Phenomenon of Marina Abramovic as Re-Enactment of the Passions of the Contemporary Elite," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 27, 2020, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3682256> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3682256>.

the process of creation, morality inherits properties of this process. Since the new social practice relies on the process of creation, it is certainly relevant to the sphere of morality.

True morality is incompatible with selective inclusion. Such inclusion is a form of exclusion. Morality based on selective inclusion separates people into groups: those to whom this morality applies and those to whom it does not. True morality must apply to all; it must be universal.

There is no reason to explain the importance of morality for human civilization. Moral issues have been very influential in all major events and developments that have taken place in human history: social upheavals, revolutions, revolts, and wars. Aspirations for a just society were instrumental in the rise and evolution of Christianity. Moral indignation fueled the great revolutions that ushered in the Modern Age: the American Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutions in Europe, and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Moral appeals galvanized and mobilized the Civil Rights and protest movements during the 1960s in America. The current turmoil also has a strong moral component.

The moral outrage that has fueled many social upheavals and protest movements has its source in the all-too-obvious discrepancy—one might call it a predicament—between, on one hand, aspirations for equality and justice that are widely shared by people around the world and, on the other hand, the social reality in which we live that tolerates and perpetuates injustice and inequality. Many people view this discrepancy as an offense against human dignity that deprives humans of self-respect. Most importantly, in the eyes of many people this discrepancy has no reasonable justification. There does not seem to be any rational reason or explanation for its existence. The continued persistence of the moral predicament goes against common sense. It appears unfair and unjust. Its continued existence raises many serious concerns about the sincerity of our commitment to creating a just and moral society.

The problem of the moral predicament is very complex. The search for its solution requires understanding of the origin of morality and its evolution. We need to understand the roots of the imperative that rests on our promise and expectation to create a civilization in which equality and justice reign supreme. Our commitment to this goal cannot be fortuitous or accidental. It has endured across millennia. The reasons for its longevity must be very important.

There are many perspectives on morality and its origin. The sheer number and diversity of these perspectives indicate that there is no definitive explanation of the origin of morality, and that the field is very much in flux. There are two major approaches that currently dominate morality studies. One influential approach views the entire subject of morality as largely inaccessible to human understanding and relegates it to the domain of faith and religion. This approach runs against the dominant trend in the contemporary civilization that emphasizes rational understanding, rather than faith or tradition. In the modern secular climate, the approach that relies on faith and religion is losing its appeal. Its competitor seeks to offer explanations of morality and moral sentiments that would be based on rational arguments and material facts. This general approach is becoming increasingly attractive for new generations of thinkers and scientists. The number of new perspectives within this general trend is rapidly growing. However, decades of research have failed to synthesize these perspectives and produce a definitive explanation.

The evolutionary approach is the most influential secular trend in studying morality. Although it is increasingly popular, it has two major problems. One is the problem of grounding. Many researchers have reached a conclusion that the study of morality should be based on facts and these facts should be located “outside the proper domain of morality”—that is, outside the domain of OUGHT. In this view, morality should be grounded in the domain of IS.<sup>353</sup> The second problem is how to connect the non-moral domain with the moral one; in other words, how we can bridge the domain of facts, or IS, with the domain of what should be, or OUGHT.<sup>354</sup>

The two problems are obviously interrelated and so are their solutions: the solution of one requires the solution of the other, which additionally complicates the task. Philip Pettit points the obvious difficulty. Many contemporary moral philosophers, he explains, argue that moral concepts, or more broadly normative terms, cannot be translated into non-normative terms. Moral concepts simply cannot be reduced to the naturalistic terms of science. “Most of these thinkers,” Pettit writes, “treat one particular normative concept as more basic than others, especially in the realm of morality, but then insist that the concept itself defies further analysis, in particular analysis in non-normative terms.”<sup>355</sup> Richard Joyce, among others, also argues that OUGHT simply does not obtain from IS.<sup>356</sup>

The problem of moral predicament pivots on several important issues. One issue is about the necessity of moral obligation, or where the source of the OUGHT is. This study has explained that the process of creation is absolutely essential for sustaining the universe. Without this process, the universe simply cannot exist. In other words, the process of creation is absolutely necessary. This essential and necessary character of the process of creation is its very important property. Consciousness, that is a product of the evolution, has inherited this property and expressed it in the form of obligation or duty. That is how the OUGHT of our morality has come into existence.

The necessary nature of the process of creation, or its necessity, is not the only property of this process that is reflected in consciousness. The process of creation sustains the universe and is, therefore, beneficial, or good, for the existence of the

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<sup>353</sup> Albert A. Johnstone, “Why Morality?” *Humanistic Psychologist*, vol. 46, no. 2 (June 2018), pp. 188–203, <https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000090>.

<sup>354</sup> Chris Heathwood, “Could Morality Have a Source?” *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 2 (April 2012), pp. 1–19; Ian Morris, “The Unexpected Origin of Human Values,” *New Scientist*, vol. 226, no. 3017 (April 18, 2015), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079\(15\)30170-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079(15)30170-6).

<sup>355</sup> Philip Pettit, “Naturalizing Tomasello’s History of Morality,” *Philosophical Psychology*, vol. 31, no. 5 (July 2018), pp. 722–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2018.1486609>.

<sup>356</sup> Richard Joyce, “The Origins of Moral Judgment,” *Behaviour. Evolved Morality: The Biology and Philosophy of Human Conscience*, vol. 151, no. 2/3 (February 2014); see also Johnstone, “Why Morality?” p. 191.

universe. Consciousness reflects this property in the concepts of the good and goodness. Finally, the process of creation sustains the universe and all that is in it. Consequently, it is universal. Human consciousness has captured all these properties and expressed them in the form of universal morality, or as universal and necessary obligation to pursue what is just and good.

Moral codes also include the concept of individual responsibility. This concept reflects the awareness of autonomy and the sense of obligation associated with autonomy. As has been explained elsewhere,<sup>357</sup> the process of creation works on inclusion that conserves the properties of all included entities. The capacity to conserve autonomy is also an important feature of the process of creation. Consciousness captures this feature in the conception of individual, or personal moral responsibility.

Sociality is another important feature that is relevant to the domain of morality. The capacity to interact with other individuals has played an essential role in the emergence and evolution of morality.<sup>358</sup> There is an obvious similarity between the inclusive nature of the process of creation and the social orientation of morality, or its sociality.

Many researchers point out the important role that emotions—empathy, sympathy, and compassion—play in the moral domain. However, neither consciousness nor morality is the source of emotional responses. As the most powerful level of mental organization, consciousness can only regulate emotions. Emotions originate in the realm of the unconscious.

Emotions and emotional responses are associated with gratification; and gratification has its roots in conservation. The process of creation and conservation are intimately related. Via the evolution, gratification as a form of conservation has entered the domain of neuronal interactions, or mental operations. Consciousness regulates mental operations and reflects the effects of gratification in mental activities. Through consciousness emotions have entered the domain of morality.

The above discussion shows that many essential features of morality have their equivalents in the process of creation. The affinity between the two is not accidental. The process of creation is the ultimate source of all that exists, including morality. Since the process of creation also defines the new social practice, this practice will have a real and significant impact on the moral sphere of our civilization. Since the new practice is universally inclusive, it does not afford priority to any of the current approaches, either the one based on faith and religion or the other based on rational understanding and facts. For this reason, the new practice can communicate with both approaches.

Unlike the current secular tradition, the new social practice is universally inclusive and does not reject the important insights that come from religion and takes them into consideration. However, in contrast to approaches that rely exclusively on faith and religion, it also relies on reason, rational analysis, and empirical facts. The new social practice engages both approaches toward morality—the one that relies on faith and the other that relies on rational understanding. It offers a common frame that includes

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<sup>357</sup> Gennady Shkliarevsky, "In Quest for Justice: Solving the Problem of Inclusion and Equality," Rochester, *SSRN Scholarly Papers*, June 6, 2021.

<sup>358</sup> Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of Children*.

both approaches as particular cases and, thus, bridges the gap that separates the two. The new practice provides a common ground on which the two approaches can meet.

In contrast to the current approaches, the new social practice eschews dualism and does not recognize as inevitable the division between the domain of the mind and the domain of material objects and processes. The new practice integrates the domain of OUGHT and the domain of IS. It sees the essential unity of reality that is sustained by the one and only source of everything—the process of creation. The new social practice incorporates the properties of the process of creation that are represented by their moral equivalents.

As this study has shown, the main source of the moral predicament in exclusion. The current practices exclude the process of creation. Exclusion is the source of inequality and injustice. The current practices use exclusion and thus perpetuate inequality and injustice. One cannot expect moral outcomes from practices that are based on exclusion and, therefore, have a fundamental flaw that inevitably leads to immoral outcomes. The current practices cannot eliminate the discrepancy between our intuitive moral principles that originate in the process of creation and the social practices shaped by our subjective and limited understanding of reality and the exclusion of the process of creation from our frame of vision. Our current practices cannot render obsolete the moral predicament that has led to many conflicts in the past and continues to produce tensions and destructive clashes, including in the current crisis. All one needs to do to realize this fact is to look at the abominable wars that are currently raging in many parts of the world. They reveal the farcical travesty of the moral predicament in our civilization.

The new social practice rests on the principle of universal inclusion, equality, empowerment, and justice. It is simply incompatible with exclusion and has no room for inequality. For this reason, the new practice is fundamentally moral and, consequently, can only lead to moral outcomes. It can eliminate the moral predicament that continues to ruin our civilization and generate tensions and irreconcilable controversies, which impedes the evolution of our civilization and makes its survival uncertain.

There are only two paths out of this moral conundrum. We can either abandon our moral imperative or we can change our social practice in ways that will fully realize our moral imperative. The first path is not a real possibility because it goes against the process of creation. By staying on this path, we cannot create a civilization based on equality and justice. Our commitment to the imperative of inclusion and equality will continue to be merely theoretical with few practical consequences. The result is the continued discrepancy between our commitment to a moral society and our social practice that has plagued and continues to plague our civilization. This path can only lead to more totally futile wars that never end, more deaths and wasted lives, and more suffering.

The imperative of equality originates in the process of creation that sustains more than just our personal lives or even the life of humanity; this process sustains our entire universe and all that is in it. We can use this process to our benefit or we can continue to shun it at our peril, but we cannot change it. The only realistic path toward solving the problem of the moral predicament is to change our social practice and bring it into conformity with our deeply felt commitment to the imperative of inclusion, equality, and justice.

The study offers no specific prescriptions that would describe the details of new ways in which we should practice morality. It only lays out the main principles, leaving the details to the future. The very nature of this new practice demands universal inclusion and equality. There is only one way to fulfill this condition: the process of creation should serve as the ultimate guide in all these efforts. The commitment to this process should not be merely theoretical—mere protestations as to its validity. Those who will devote their minds, time, and energy to this transformation should use this process in their own practical interactions with each other. They should not view this process as merely a theoretical possibility. This process should be firmly imbedded in their own actions and guide them.

The very process of transforming our social practice should be the arena in which the process of creation will be applied in interactions among those who will be involved in this effort. Only under such conditions the process of creation will not be merely a vision for the future to which we will periodically bow in rituals of obeisance. Rather, the understanding of this process should be the manual for practical interactions of all creators involved in transforming our social practice. Only under such condition our efforts will be successful.



## CONCLUSION

Among many wondrous paradoxes that we can see in our impossible world there is one that is very special. The remarkable feature of this paradox is that it does not appear to us at all paradoxical. It is like a paradox within a paradox. It does not particularly pique our interest or cause much controversy. We tend to accept it as self-evident truth. And yet this paradox points to one of the greatest mysteries of our world.

We live in the world of finitudes. All entities in this world are finite. We can say with full confidence that everything that exists in our universe has a beginning and one day it will have an end. Yet, we cannot say with confidence that the universe itself will end. In fact, there is a distinct possibility that our universe is infinite and eternal. The end of everything in our universe is the beginning of something new, and so into eternity.

Just like everything else in our world, this study also comes to conclusion. To end, this study must complete a full circle. It must transcend itself and become a beginning of something new. It must take the reader into a transcendent space from which he or she can have a full view of what this study has accomplished.

This study has started with an examination of one constituent part of the current crisis: the turmoil of student campuses. The examination has explored of a string of problems related to the turmoil nested in each other matryoshka style. It has argued that the main cause of the turmoil (and by implication of the entire crisis) is the problem of difference. Ruling liberal elites have identified this problem, yet they have failed to solve it.

This study has also shown that the source of this problem is exclusion. Again, liberal elites have brought up the issue of exclusion as one of the main and fatal flaws, if not the main flaw, that may ruin our civilization. Again, as this study shows, liberals have not resolved this issue and, despite all their efforts, exclusion and inequality remain the fact of life that still threatens the survival of our civilization.

The discussion of exclusion that this study has undertaken shows that the source of exclusion is the failure to understand the nature of our relationship with reality. We have failed to grasp the important role that the process of creation plays in our life and our relationship with reality. We do not accord this process the central place in the frame of vision through which we view reality.

As this study has argued, this process is the only true and unchanging reality in our universe. It conserves our universe and all that is in it by creating new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization, thus propelling the evolution and ensuring the survival of our world and civilization. Like the universe, this process is eternal and infinite. Each new level of organization it creates is the beginning of a new act of creation. This process has no beginning, and it does not end. It has no external cause or causes that start this process and that can bring its end. It is totally *sui generis*. Within its eternal flow this process contains all beginnings and all ends.

This study shows that the failure to embrace the centrality of the process of creation to our existence was the primary act of exclusion—the mother of all exclusions—that has been followed by many other forms of exclusion. Exclusion has brought us conflicts, wars, violence, and other calamities that have beset our civilization. Exclusion has given rise to the problem of difference and has made it unsolvable.

Exclusion has brought us the current crisis that poses a threat to the survival of our civilization.

Since the time of its emergence, humanity has tried, often desperately, to end the seeming endless chain of disasters and catastrophes that have plagued our civilization. So far, humans have utterly failed to stop these cycles of violence and destruction. However, as this study shows, this goal is not unattainable. We have a powerful tool that can help us succeed in achieving this goal. We have the process of creation. This process represents the most powerful level of organization of reality. There is nothing in our universe that is more powerful than this eternal and infinite process. It is the source of everything that exists.

Since we have failed to embrace and understand this process, our capacity to use this tool is limited. By recognizing the full importance of this process, by studying and understanding it, we can establish our control over this process and use it for the benefit of humanity. We must make it the main organizing principle of our practice.

The current social practice that has roots in liberalism cannot bring inclusion and equality and achieve human liberation. This practice tries to achieve liberation through selective inclusion that, as this study argues, is nothing but a form of exclusion. Contrary to liberal theory and practice, exclusion is not an equal counterpart of inclusion. Exclusion has no role in the process of creation that works on universal inclusion and equality. Exclusion is not part of the process of creation and has none of its powers. It has no autonomous existence. Rather, it is an effect of our failure to embrace the process of creation; a product of our myopic gaze that fails to see something that is right in front of us and stares us into face. Since exclusion and inequality are not part of the eternal process of creation, they must come to an end. We have pursued the goal of eliminating exclusion and inequality for a very long time. We will achieve this goal because all exclusion and inequality are not part of the eternal process of creation. As a result, they are finite, and like all finitudes they must come to an end. Only that which is part of eternal creation will continue forever—for all times to pass.

There are numerous voices today that call for changing our current social practice. Like these voices, this study also sees the need for transitioning to a new practice. It may agree or disagree with specific recommendations made by other works, but the recognition of the need for transition is common to all who try to secure the survival of our civilization. All these works seek to stimulate the search for the solution that will end the tortuous ordeal that our civilization has been experiencing.

This study is a part of these efforts. As a solution, it proposes to adopt a new social practice. The distinct and unique feature of the proposed practice is the fact that it uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle. There are very few proposals that focus on the process of creation, that try to embrace and understand this process. Despite some advances, we know pitifully little about how this process works; as a result, we cannot use its full potential and gain control over it. Working toward a better understanding of this process is a vital component of the social practice this study proposes. Although this study explains some of the aspects of the process of creation, much more explanatory work must be done. The introduction of the new practice will certainly advance our understanding of the way that the process of creation works.

This study has also outlined some effects that the new practice will produce in various spheres of our civilization: political, economic, and social, as well as the sphere

of art, morality, and the protection of the environment. This study has also addressed one issue that is very important in our civilization. It represents hopes and aspirations of many people—one would even dare say of all people. The issue is the pursuit of happiness that has been and is one of the main motivations in lives of many humans. The new social practice will bring change in all these areas. It will end stagnation and will take use on the path of innovation.

It remains to be seen whether the recommendations advanced in this study will attract attention, whether this study will produce a desired impact, and whether enough people will recognize the need to end status quo and move forward. No matter what happens, this study does the only thing it can possibly do: it offers a difference and a choice. Including or excluding this difference, taking or not taking this choice is a decision that only the readers can make. This study argues that human ordeal that originated in exclusion and ignorance does not have to last forever; it must, and it will come to an end. The process of creation will prevail because there is ultimately nothing in this world that is more powerful than the process that sustains our universe; certainly not the failure of recognizing and embracing the most important part of reality. The end of exclusion and inequality is not in question. It is only a matter of how many more conflicts, wars, and turmoils our civilization will still have to go through to achieve this goal, how much more destruction we will have to endure, and how many more precious lives will be lost. For those who will perish in this continued ordeal, life ends, and nothing will bring it back; nothing will make up for them their lost dreams and hopes, and nothing will replace their wasted infinite creative potential. Death will put an end to their personal hopes and aspirations; their lives will forever remain unrealized and unfulfilled; and all of humanity. Moreover, all this will not be just their personal loss; it will be the loss for all of humanity.

When considering whether to take a realistic course that can end this cycle of violence and destruction or to let our civilization continue on its present course, each individual should ask of himself or herself one question: Would I want such end for myself? If the answer is no, we should choose the path of eternal life and try to take our fellow humans along with us. The refusal to take the path is not difficult. It requires no efforts. It does not lead to transcendence that plays such an important role in our lives. All one has to do is to follow the established course of tired truths and failed visions. This course is a one-way street to perdition. Choosing the alternative to this course means choosing the path of hard work, innovation, creativity, and constant change in which only the process of change, but not its products, remains constant. This path will give to all those who take it a chance to transcend the biological limits of our lives and leads us into the transcendent space of eternal existence and life everlasting.

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