

## SOME FUTURES FOR CULTURES

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### I. CULTURES PAST

It is easy to discuss the future of the culture of a stable, cohesive society. Its future is clearly seen in the present. While there will be some elements of change, for the most part, the future of a stable culture is the culture of the present, just as the culture of the present was clearly foreseeable in the culture of the past.

Language, the most conservative of all human inventions (always forcing us to think and communicate in the terms and forms of the past), would be the key to forecasting the future of a culture, and for differentiating the future of one culture from that of all others. Groups sharing an identical, or similar, language could be expected to have very similar cultures. The more different the languages, the more different the cultures. I suppose you believe that it goes without saying. But it doesn't: different "saying" means different "going."

To know one language means to be caught in one culture. To know more languages, means to be multicultural--except for those cultures for which knowing several languages is the norm.

Language means speech; the oral culture. It is the basis of all others. But much of modern culture is based on different media. Books predominate. But there are also other artifacts--paintings, sculptures, buildings, landscaping, and the ordinary utensils of living: pots, cups, plates, hashi, knives and forks, chairs, beds, futon, zabuton, pillows, hats, pants, kimono, shoes, zori, belts, obi, veils, turbans...on and on. These heavily bear culture.

Certain social institutions have played special roles in defining and passing on culture--the family, education, religion, the state.

Of course, not all of the past has made it into the present. Not everyone's past experiences have been remembered, imitated, memorialized as "culture." Only those of the dominant few, from privileged classes, races, or sexual orientations. The ways of entire groups of people have been purposely forgotten. Books have been burned, languages forbidden, dress outlawed, temples destroyed. And at the same time, lies about the past have been fabricated as truths upon which new cultures have been built. Sun gods and goddesses, mandates of heaven, nations under god, chosen people have been invented to glorify the culture of thieves, murderers and military adventurers.

Each person partakes of her culture differently, according to her sex, race, class, cohort, education, accidents and other experiences. Subcultures within larger cultures may command more or less of her attention. These variations may be praised or condemned by the arbiters of the broader culture.

Thus, culture is both organic and artificial; holistic and partial; unique and common; laudable and damnable.

But, until recently, at least it was predictable. Baring wholesale foreign invasions, successful internal revolutions, or calamitous natural disasters, the culture of the future was known in the culture of the present.

No more. While the pace of change may vary around the globe, the fact of change does not. The future is now permanently discontinuous from the past. It is no longer predictable. It is hardly forecastable. The future is no longer singular (THE future). It is multiple (futureS). There is uncertainty. And hence there is choice. What cannot be predicted can now--must now--be invented. The cultures of the future which can not be foreseen must be, and are being, created.

## II. PAST CULTURES' FUTURES

Two of my former students and present colleagues (Ramsey Pedersen and Sohail Inayatullah) have thought hard and well about the futures of cultures. They themselves embody many of the aspects of futures cultures (as, indeed, do many members of the World Futures Studies Federation including, most certainly, our President, Eleonora Masini. But I will let her tell you that herself, if she wishes).

Ramsey Pedersen is chairman of the Social Sciences Division, and teaches futures studies, at Honolulu Community College, in Hawaii. Ethnically, he is part Hawaiian, part Sioux, part Danish. He recently completed a draft of a monograph entitled, "On the Creation of a Progressive Future for Hawaii." Among other things, in it he describes five different perspectives on the culture, or cultures, of Hawaii in the present which I believe bear on our discussion here. This is because I believe that Hawaii in the present is in many ways a possible model of the cultural future of the globe. In Hawaii presently, there is no numerically dominant ethnic group. There is no clearly dominant single culture.

Population statistics for 1985 show the following percentages of ethnic groups in Hawaii:

Caucasian	25%
Japanese	23
Part Hawaiian	19
Filipino	11
Chinese	5
Black	2
Korean	2
Samoan	1
Pure Hawaiian	1
Puerto Rican	1
All others	10
TOTAL	100%

Even these figures mask enormous cultural diversity. Within the broad "Caucasian" category are Portuguese, who are a very distinct group in Hawaiian history. In contrast to the situation everywhere else in the world, Jews are accorded no separate cultural status

whatsoever in Hawaii. They are counted as "Caucasians." Swedes, also, "Caucasians," have a distinct cultural history markedly different from, say, the Portuguese locally, and on and on.

Similarly, the category, "Part Hawaiian" fails to indicate what the non-Hawaiian part is--Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, German, British...some of each, or what? And what part(s) carries the "culture?"

Among the "Others" are a significant number of "Indians," meaning native North American peoples, as well as growing numbers of recent immigrants from Southeast Asia.

In addition, there is a strong trend towards increasing numbers of out-marriages among all ethnic groups in Hawaii. People are tending more and more to marry outside of their own ethnic group in Hawaii, creating a new and distinct "Island Culture." At the same time, immigration from all over the world into Hawaii continues at a brisk pace, preventing the full attainment of an integrated, stable, Island Culture.

Nonetheless, the time is not far off when well over half of the people of Hawaii will be of "mixed ethnicity," and it is more likely than not that the percentage will increase towards, but never reach, 100%. We will then have created what Hawaii's most popular governor, John Burns, called "the Golden People of the Pacific."

Prof. Pedersen identified five cultural styles in Hawaii. He labeled them, "Anglo-Conformity," "The Melting Pot," "The Cruise Culture," "Cultural Pluralism," and "The Hawaiians."

1) By Anglo-Conformity he means to designate the primary assimilation model in Hawaii. The centrality of English language and mainland American culture is assumed. Regardless of one's ethnic background, to "succeed" in the world of business and the professions, one must dress like and talk like mainland Americans to the greatest extent possible. Some people, desiring to attain an Anglo identity, have even removed the epicanthic fold in their eyelids in order to look less Oriental and more Caucasian.

Of grave concern presently is the question of "proper speech." While most Island-born persons grow up speaking so-called "pidgin" English, to attain Anglo-Conformity means also (or instead) to speak "standard American English" in situations where mainland Americans, or their culture, prevail.

2). The Melting Pot--to lose one's immigrant cultural identity and to attain a new common identity--is part of the American Dream. But, on the US Mainland, it is seldom attained. In Hawaii however, as the phrase "the Golden People of the Pacific" cited above captures, the "Melting Pot" is a working and lower class reality in Hawaii. "Local Culture," or the "Island Mainstream," is a true culture of amalgamation and tolerance. The language is pidgin, which clearly distinguishes the local-born "Haole" (essentially a Hawaiian term for "Caucasian") from the Mainland Haole, and the local-born Asian from recent immigrants.

3). Pedersen designates the local-youth variant of the Melting Pot as the Cruise Culture. According to Pedersen, Hawaii's youth are faced with a future of what seems to be a series of insurmountable difficulties if one is to achieve in the traditional sense of Western materialism. In a society where the majority of new jobs available require very minimal skills, and which offer the worker only boring, unchallenging, repetitive tasks, and very low pay, there is little impetus among local youth to relate to their future potential.

Thus, the future is wholly discounted; only the present exists. Home is "forever" with your parents, or else it is a place shared with other single people. Customized automobiles and trucks, drugs and beer, are the status symbols of the Cruise Culture.

Pedersen correctly observes that something like the Cruise Culture is probably the working class norm for Western youth everywhere. Punks and squatters are part of the modern urban scene. But in Hawaii, the Cruise Culture is close to being a majority youth culture, Pedersen believes.

Indeed, it is not limited to youth. It has become an increasingly dominant adult lifestyle as well. Although pregnancy and births are frequent, marriage and lasting nuclear family relations are extremely

rare. Living on the meager offerings of public welfare, the culture seems able to perpetuates itself indefinitely in a situation of "no future."

4). Cultural Pluralism is the way many in Hawaii prefer to think about themselves, and to be known by others. It has enough reality for this to be so.

According to this model, each immigrant group to Hawaii vigorously keeps its own culture, its own language, its own religion, ritual, and ways of behavior. And yet, while each cultural group maintains its own identity, at the same time each truly admires and does not denigrate, the others. The norm is the mutual admiration of difference, a difference which is to be preserved, lived, and sustained without assimilation or diminution.

5). But what about the Hawaiians--the indigenous people of Hawaii? They are the most ethnically-diverse of all groups because most of them are "part-Hawaiian." Thus, they are found throughout the class structure, from power-elite millionaires to welfare recipients.

But they are overwhelmingly at the lower end of the scale. They have not shared the upward mobility of the Orientals and they have often hampered the "rise" of other Hawaiians. Instead of being individually competitive, Hawaiian culture encourages cooperative, group efforts. Moreover, the outward appearance of a fun-loving, carefree, good-natured but slightly irresponsible native, which is perpetuated by tourist-oriented Polynesian stereotypes, hides the reality of a people beset with enormous social problems and a deep sense of dispossession.

Thus there is a swelling revitalization movement sweeping through the Hawaiian community presently. Some Hawaiians seek no more than just reparations for their stolen land. Others are organizing to achieve complete political and economic independence for Hawaii and ethnic Hawaiians. Others seek only a genuine chance to integrate into the Anglo mainstream.

I said that the Hawaiian cultural present might offer a glimpse of a global cultural future. I believe this is so because all five cultural styles are clearly apparent (or at least emergent) at the level of a global culture, even if they are not always part of every specific local culture in the world today.

But it seems to me that there are few local cultures which will be free of these characteristics much longer. Some of this is captured in the very lives of certain people today.

Another former student and present colleague of mine has recently reflected on the global futures of culture from his own experience and observation. He is Sohail Inayatullah, a futures researcher for the Judiciary of Hawaii.

Inayatullah has spent all his life traveling from nation to nation, city to city. He feels at home everywhere--and nowhere. And he describes the trips not just terms of aeronautical miles. They are, he says, journeys across linear and cyclical time; through economic, political, and psychological space. They are journeys to the self. With each "trip," an old self dies, and a new self emerges.

Inayatullah has met so many other people like himself that he believes it captures part of the emerging culture of the future. Yet he also notes that although it is possible to talk about an emerging global culture, based on jet travel, tourism, international conferences, telecommunications, television, and VCRs, the actual process is very complex. Much of this "new culture," he says, is nothing more than different cultures attempting to deal with the problem of the presently-dominant West.

This is not his preferred cultural future. He prefers a new transcendental global/spiritual culture, created out of more equitable encounters between East and West, and North and South, than is presently the case. But, because the European/American Empire of the Atlantic may be dying, and a new locus in the Asian-Pacific being born, he sees reason for hope, if not for utopian optimism. Nonetheless, the birth of new cultures will not be easy. It will be fraught with pain, anxiety, uncertainty, and accompanied by death.

I also believe I am a participant in the future-tending culture. My father died shortly after I was born, and I have never known, as an adult, any of my father's family. I do not even know my ethnicity. What is the origin of the name, "Dator?" I do not know. It is very, very rare. What is my cultural heritage? I do not care in the slightest. As I frequently like to say, I am a human becoming, not a human being. My culture lies ahead, not in the past. Perhaps that is why I am a futurist. I yearn for new cultures, try to live in them, and have no (or very little) special interest in the past. Of course, I do not scorn it. As Santayana said, "We must respect the past, remembering that once it was all that was humanly possible."

That is so. But past facts should not inhibit future possibilities--or those of the present for that matter. Why wait? If you wish to live a new life, to create a new culture, do it now.

### III. Futures of Cultures.

Presently, I see three major alternative futures for culture, globally speaking (that is to say, I realize that many specific cultures may not immediately partake of any one of these three).

1). Chaos. The most likely future lying immediately ahead is the emergence of what I call A Chaotic Society. Chaos lies ahead because our leaders--in government, commerce, education, and the rest--have chosen to blind themselves to the clear trends and trajectories of the present, and to busying themselves with (and to diverting the rest of us to worrying about) obsolete fears and demons. Old ideologies and religions are propped up to frighten and confuse us. We waste our resources, human as well as natural, on preparations for wars we must never fight. We concern ourselves with real, but personal and small, problems while ignoring the equally real and personally-important, but social and immense, problems of the global transformation through which the entire world is passing.

Given this, given our almost total lack of preparation for the world that is actually unfolding, and our fixation on a world that never again can be (if it ever was as we imagine it), I must forecast the real possibility of a chaotic, violent future for all but a few lucky pockets of the world.

2). Discipline. In this case, it is necessary also to forecast the continued growth of the various repressive forces in societies--religious, political, militaristic, familial, racial, and other forces of "discipline" which will attempt to end the chaos by ending freedom and diversity. But they will surely fail, each and every one of them. For better or worse, chaos cannot be controlled by false, externally-imposed, order. Any and all such attempts will simply breed still greater chaos, and subsequent futile attempts at still more oppressive order.

3). Transformation. The only order that will effectively control in the future will come from within each individual. The culture of the future will be--if it is to be a positive future, and not either chaos or oppression--derived from the recognition, acceptance, and elevation of each individual's differences. It will celebrate difference, not conformity. It will accept the conflict, confusion, and uncertainty that comes from not knowing the mind and desires of others. It will not try to force others to think and behave like oneself. It will come from understanding the forces and causes of the transformation. It will view "chaos" as hopeful anarchy to be enjoyed, not disorder to be disciplined.

#### IV. NEW NATURES

Until recently, humans have lived in one of two (or a combination of two) "natures." One was the "nature" of direct experience: the nature that comes from speaking, seeing, feeling, sensing the environment pressing around and through you. For the last several hundred years, a second nature, dependent upon the medium of print, through books, magazines, and other written reports, has come to dominate the lives of more and more people.

Thus while all people still live to some extent in the first nature of direct sensory experience, more and more persons in industrialized societies--though certainly not a majority in many of them, and definitely not in the world as a whole--live also in the second nature of print literacy.

An important part of the difference between people living in the two natures has been well understood. People who derive their impressions of what is "real" through reading and print-based research are said to live in an "Ivory Tower"--remote from the "natural" world of direct experience which was the only world of the "common man." Dwellers in the Ivory Tower, however, stress the importance of formal, print-based, education as the essence of higher culture, and force people, with great apparent difficulty and resistance, to learn to live in the literate world.

There is a big cultural gap between the dwellers in the Ivory Towers and those living in the fields, plains, valleys, and villages of essentially unmediated reality.

But part of the cultural transformation of the present is sweeping aside the print-based culture as well, and is creating a new meaning to "living in the Ivory Tower." There is a third nature zooming towards dominance. Indeed, I would argue it already has outdistanced first, as well as second, nature.

This is the world of video, film, radio, and of electronic audio-visual communication technologies in general. To increasing numbers of people, the real world is no longer either that which is frozen in old books or locked in human brains. The real world is loose among the electronic impulses which flood from VCRs, cinemas, radios, and electronic games all over the world.

The culture of the future is being created in the surround of that electronic environment. And it will not be denied. Compared to either first or second nature, it is faster, more vivid, more intense, more exciting, more dramatic and emotional, more inward and personal (though the impulses often are communally-shared). It is essentially no more nor any less subject to manipulation for evil purposes by evil people than are the worlds created by the spoken or written words. However, because dwellers in the first and second nature are so ignorant of its processes, the electronically-mediated world is currently often being used for the most crass kinds of commercial, ideological, or diversionary purposes. But it is hard to argue that the world of print, or the world of direct experience, is any less under the influence of a few people who wish to control others. It is just

that the audio-visual world is relatively new, and poorly understood by the people living within the old Ivory Tower.

But outside that Tower, especially among the young (whose numbers swell, proportionately, throughout the world), Third Nature, and wholly new cultures, are being born.

But that's not all! Space exploration and settlement will also play a forward role in the creation of new future cultures. Within the next few decades, more and more humans will move into space and settle there. As they do, new cultures, unimaginably different from any on earth, will emerge. Indeed, new forms of post-human life can soon be expected.

But even here on Earth, we must reflect upon the effect of the biological revolution--genetic engineering, test-tube babies, cloning, and all the rest. We need not wait for life in outer space alone to foresee the emergence of wholly new cultures on earth. What will the cultures of genetically-engineered test-tube babies be like, in comparison to that of persons conceived and born the old-fashioned way?

But closer to home: many electronic engineers and computer scientists are trying to develop what they call Artificial Intelligence. If they do--no, when they do--what will be the culture of such entities, in contrast to those of us with old-fashioned "intelligence?"

And even closer to home: Ramsey Pedersen described the members of the Cruise Culture who are being economically marginalized by the demise of old industrial jobs and the lack of new, post-industrial ones. This is not an isolated problem. Given the continued movement towards automation, robotization, and artificial intelligence, I believe that there will never again be enough "jobs" for full employment. If so, then we all have much to learn from the Cruise Culture. How is it possible to be an adolescent forever?

In sum, "culture" no longer means adherence to a real or imagined past. It comes bounding to us from the future, fully alive, fully oriented towards change and novelty, and wholly beyond prediction.

