

Processes of Societal Transformation

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In the not-distant past, natural resources, the environment, strategic locations, ambitious leaders, gifted individuals, creative ideas, and cultures and states played important, at times decisive roles as agents of change and forces of transformation. Lately, however, the roles of all such agents have been vastly and irreversibly diminished, and the roles of the societal processes of change have been enhanced at their expense. These processes are defined as the sociocultural, the political, the economic, and the infomedia processes; they are social mechanisms developed over time to facilitate the functions of the many systems in society. And unlike social systems, the societal processes do not abide by certain rules or laws, and are not subject to effective control by any authority. Nevertheless, the degree of sophistication and activism of the dominant process always reflects the philosophical orientation of society and the developmental stage of its economy. Together, these processes form the larger framework within which all systems function, and through which all change is introduced and managed in society.

Each societal process has specific tasks to perform, objectives to pursue, and logic to follow. But since no change can occur without affecting the roles and relative positions of other players in society, no process can function freely or independently; every process affects other processes and is affected by them. Despite this relationship, in each civilization or stage of societal development one of these processes distinguishes itself as the major vehicle facilitating societal change and influencing its direction. While the sociocultural process had dominated the life of tribal and early agricultural societies and determined the general direction of change, the political process dominates the life of mature agricultural and early industrial societies and determines the direction of change. The economic process, meanwhile, dominates the life of mature industrial societies and influences the nature of societal change. Today, the infomedia process, in association with the economic process, determines the nature and influences the direction of change in almost all societies, particularly those passing through the transitional

period to the knowledge age. Nevertheless, there are indications that the infomedia and economic processes are slowly merging and forming one process that would be hard to tame or challenge.

In an effort to become more effective in performing targeted tasks, each process exhibits, in varying degrees, a tendency to change, adapt and be creative. This tendency is shaped by a desire to gain more power and outperform one or more of the other processes, which dictates that it must compete and sometimes cooperate with one or more of the other processes. Each process, therefore, is subject to change under the influence of four factors:

1. A built-in mechanism to adapt as circumstances change to remain relevant;
2. A desire to influence other processes and make them more responsive to its goals and needs, and less obstructive of its path;
3. A need to anticipate change expected to be initiated by other processes, particularly change perceived as threatening to its position and societal role; and
4. An impulse to react to actions taken by the other processes and changes experienced by them.

The sociocultural process is the oldest process of all; it was born as the first human society was born to provide it with a system to organize and sustain itself over time. When religion and the idea of God were developed thousands of years ago, the belief system built around them emerged as the core of the sociocultural process. And because religions in general claim to be based on universal values and eternal truth, the sociocultural process became a force of stability and continuity. But with every societal change, the sociocultural process and its religious core were forced to adapt to remain relevant and retain a societal role.

Centuries after the development of agriculture, political authority began to emerge and play a pivotal role in societal life, leading the political process eventually to become a major force in every society. In the beginning, the political process was limited in scope; but with the maturity of the agricultural society and the growth of populations and the expansion of trade, it assumed more powers and responsibilities, spurring the formation of large states and empires

and the building of large fighting armies. In a later, more advanced stage of the agrarian era, the economic process evolved slowly and began to play an active role in societal life, causing the roles of the other processes to change. However, relations between these three processes had remained largely stable until the middle of the 20th century.

The Sociocultural Process

The sociocultural process includes the social forces, institutions, ideas, values, and beliefs that define, shape, and manage the social and cultural affairs of nations. It performs its tasks by taking actions and sponsoring activities to preserve the cultural heritage of nations, emphasizing traditions and traditional values and belief systems; clarifying the dividing lines between ethnic and cultural and religious groups; and responding to external and internal challenges and altered circumstances. Since the major organizing principles of this process are values, traditions, and religious convictions, it has traditionally represented the social forces of stability and continuity that almost always opposed social and cultural change.

A stable core of values and convictions, and a simple, rather changeless agricultural way of life have given the sociocultural process the opportunity to dominate societal life and determine the course of change for centuries. The development of politics into a full fledged societal process around the middle of the agricultural age and the emergence of the great empires of the past put an end to the dominance of the sociocultural process. And by the dawn of the Renaissance, life conditions began to change slowly but steadily, causing the sociocultural process to enter a period of transformation characterized by chaos and crisis.

The expansion of trade, the discovery and exploitation of a new world, the questioning of religious teachings and Church behavior, the increasing complexity of life in large cities, the advancement of philosophy and science and technology, and the emergence of the nation state had combined to weaken traditional values and question the rationality of certain beliefs. During the industrial age, the role of the sociocultural process was weakened; it could not lead unchallenged or influence societal life greatly as before. Nevertheless, it continued to provide the social glue that held people together, giving them a community to belong to, while giving

each nation an identity to differentiate itself from other nations.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the sociocultural process faced serious challenges that forced it to lose balance; which caused it to influence change in more negative than positive ways. While the dominant political and business elites began to promote social change and advocate building new relationships on the bases of interests rather than values, the conservative forces, fearing consumerism and materialism, began to call for resisting change and retreat into their cultural shells. Consequently, traditional value systems and relationships, as well as the societal role of the sociocultural process were weakened. Although this change has influenced all societies, Third World societies were more traumatized by it, causing them to experience sociocultural polarization.

Two camps consequently emerged; the first represents the liberal forces that are able to understand the nature of global change and appreciate the role technology and science is playing in transforming world society and economy. Having changed the way they view themselves vis-à-vis the other and the world, these forces are advocating rapid change and promoting modernization. And because they see change as a force serving their interests, they claim that the economic and technological imperatives of the time demand a positive response to almost everything that is modern, including non-traditional lifestyles. The second camp represents the conservative forces that lack the capacity to understand the nature of change and appreciate the role modern technology is plying in transforming the economic and non-economic aspects of life. As a consequence, these forces are resisting change and calling for preserving traditional values and identities. Generally speaking, Third World forces of traditionalism and nationalism view the values promoted by the West and its media as a new wave of imperialism that must be resisted. Meanwhile, no balance between the old and the new is sought, and no serious efforts are being made, almost anywhere, to reconcile the differences between the ideas of conservatives and liberals.

Due to its inability to adapt to rapid technological and scientific and economic changes, the sociocultural process in every society is today in a crisis. This gives rise to a new phenomenon in which a fragmented society is created in every city and state. One is characterized by

affluence, consumerism and liberalism; the other is characterized by poverty, traditionalism, and conservatism. And in between, there are few more sub-societies that represent cultural, ethnic and religious minorities that feel lost and deprived of most things in life, except traditional values and convictions and memories that hold them together. People belonging and claiming allegiance to the same culture, nation, state and oftentimes religion, are living different lives socially, spiritually, economically and intellectually. "The idea of culture as an identity... is going by the wayside in the realm of geopolitics." (Von Barloewen, "Overcoming Differences," *Deutschland*, June/July 2000, 46)

While growing socioeconomic gaps and sociocultural divides in every society are causing social fragmentation, economic and cultural globalization is creating three major cultures. One is global, to which the rich and the well-traveled and educated elites of the world belong; the second is national, to which the majority of each society belongs; and the third is a minority subculture based largely on ethnicity and religion, to which the poor and the ill-educated and culturally conservative and alienated minorities belong.

The Political Process

The political process includes the forces, activities, ideas and institutions that shape and manage the political affairs of nations. It performs its tasks by responding to political needs at the local level, defining goals and strategies at the national level, and dealing with trade and security issues at the international level. Usually, political decisions are taken by the state, most political activities are carried out by national institutions, and goals are defined by the nation's overall philosophy and perceived need to advance the national interest, which usually reflects the views and interests of the dominant elites.

With the disappearance of the tribal society and its social structure, the political process emerged as an extension of the sociocultural process to replace the tribe's head and play his role. The growth of populations and the establishment of agricultural communities in need of a superstructure to keep law and order and regulate the sharing of farmland and water resources were instrumental in forming states and defining the prerogatives of politics. Due to the

enormity of these tasks, the political process was able to acquire substantial powers and dominate societal life in general for a long time. But as economic activity increased and trade expanded and democracy spread in industrial countries, the state was impelled to recognize the rights of people to participate in shaping policy and determining the direction of politics. Consequently, the grip of the political process on societal life began to weaken, and the popular commitment to a national interest began to fracture.

Today, economic and cultural globalization, global environmental concerns, world poverty, international terrorism and a growing commitment to human rights are making political decisions and most politicians answerable to a world public opinion and subject to scrutiny by nongovernmental organizations. Meanwhile, the gradual disintegration of traditional society, wider recognition of the legitimacy of cultural diversity, and increasing life complexity have changed the way politics are organized and how political institutions are shaped. Consequently, the political process of nations, particularly the democratic ones, has begun to lose coherence and focus. Politics today is seldom able to develop comprehensive and coherent sets of national objectives capable of winning popular support, causing the national interest to become a concept easy to speak of but hard to define; and this has enabled internal and external forces and economic and non-economic considerations to influence political decisions and state actions.

Global developments since the early 1980s have reduced the ability of the political process to focus on issues of public concern. Such developments include international terrorism, the recurrence of economic recessions and financial crises, an open international trading system, economic migration, the easy movement of jobs and investment capital from one country to another and the consolidation of many industries worldwide. "Entrepreneurs built the national companies that destroyed local companies at the end of the nineteenth century, and they are building the global companies that are destroying national companies at the end of the twentieth century." (Lester Thurow, "Building Wealth," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1999, 46) Forced to respond to many groups with varied and oftentimes contradictory objectives, the political process has become more reactive than proactive, and more vulnerable to the influence of the

other societal processes, particularly the economic and infomedia ones.

The Economic Process

The economic process includes the forces, activities, ideas and institutions that shape and manage the economic affairs of nations. It performs its tasks by responding to market forces that reflect the preferences of consumers on one hand, and the forces that motivate business people to engage in economic activities on the other. New opportunities created by technological developments and changed domestic and international conditions provide strong incentives for the economic process to expand and diversify its activities. Because profits are made by producing and selling goods and services, and since demand for such goods and services exists everywhere, the economic process functions at all levels, in all places, at all times, and pays attention to all potential markets.

As a consequence, the state's role in managing national economies was weakened, and the role of the economic process was strengthened, leading the multinational corporation to resort to expansion, merger, downsizing, outsourcing, investing overseas and pressuring local and national governments to change laws and regulations in its favor. And as it seeks to increase market share, reduce production cost, improve competitiveness and maximize profits, the multinational corporation creates winners and losers among states and regions. As a result, corporate social responsibility declined, the national interest lost much of its appeal, and economic considerations began to outweigh all other considerations. Mergers of important industries, the internationalization of trade and investment markets, and the increasing mobility of money and knowledge as well as knowledge workers are leading the economic process to become global and more powerful and ruthless.

Since profits are the major organizing principle of business decisions in general, economic considerations rather than political or social ones guide this process and shape its relationships to other processes. And due to the power it has gained since the mid-1950s, the economic process has begun to manipulate all political and nonpolitical actors to strengthen its capacity to function freely. The political process, unwilling to surrender its traditional authority, is

struggling to impose its will on the economic process, and provide adequate protection for consumers and the environment. While some states like China are able to control economic decisions; states like Germany and France are only able to influence such decisions; other states like the United States seem to have lost their capacities to do much to align corporate goals with the national ones.

In response to these developments, local politicians in America have become more active, demanding that the federal government gives more attention to job creation and worker training, while moving to acquiesce to corporations' demands and offer them subsidies and preferential tax treatment. Such actions are intended to provide financial incentives to entice new corporations to move to their communities and discourage others from leaving. But in both cases, local communities lose revenues that could otherwise be used to provide much-needed services related to education, labor training, health, poverty, homelessness and the like.

Economic and technological changes that occurred since the Industrial Revolution have increased the power and elevated the status of economics and businessmen in society. Most of the prestige and moral authority commanded by religious, political, and intellectual leaders in the past have gradually been transferred to the domain of money. Corporate managers in the West in general and in the United States in particular, have acquired more power than most politicians, are listened to more often than intellectuals, and are followed by more people than most religious men; the 2008 financial crisis however has changed this slightly. In his book *The Buying of the President*, author Charles Lewis wrote, "The wealthiest interests [in America] bankroll and, in effect, help to pre-select the specific major candidates months and months before a single vote is cast anywhere," causing the people who elect presidents, senators and congressional representatives to become a mere afterthought of those elected. (Quoted by David Broder: "Frontline in Exaggeration," *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1996, A23)

According to the conventional wisdom, 'necessity is the mother of invention.' But the institutionalization of research and development, and the media's involvement in the commercialization of products, ideas and services, has changed this perceived reality. While

many new products and services are becoming byproducts of scientific investigation and technological developments, media promotion of all types of products has been creating new human needs never existed or felt before. Decades ago, need was the mother of invention; today, invention has become the father of need. Every human need leads sooner or later to creating an invention to satisfy it; every new invention leads sooner rather than later to creating a new need for it. So need instigates invention, invention feeds need, and the interaction of both makes economy more dynamic, life more complex, and people's ability to reach a comfortable level of satisfaction weaker.

The Infomedia Process

The infomedia process includes the forces, activities, organizations and groups that control the flow of information and news and manage entertainment in society. It performs its tasks by responding to events and crises, analyzing official policies while giving priority to certain issues over others, providing educational and entertainment programs, collecting and disseminating information, facilitating the flow of ideas worldwide, and following trends of change. And for a price, the infomedia provides leaders, politicians and business concerns with the means to promote their causes and reach their targeted constituencies in a timely manner.

The twin revolutions of communications and information have vastly energized the media and expanded its reach. They enabled it to enhance its contents and diversity its activities, expand its national and international coverage, and transform itself into a powerful societal process. The ability of the infomedia to reach everyone, everywhere, at all times, and its willingness to provide information and entertainment programs continuously has given it the power to influence people's attitudes, mold and remold public opinions, and transform world cultures. And since all information and news has to pass through its channels, it is able to manipulate facts, politics, and people's hopes and fears as well as business decisions.

The infomedia process began to develop steadily and play a transformational role in society after printing was revolutionized in Europe in the fifteenth century. "Books became in the sixteenth century things for entertainment as well as instructions – a transformation as great as

any in human history.” (Thomas, 232) Before that time, most people in the world communicated by means of the spoken word, not the printed one. But since the spoken word is limited in its accuracy and ability to reach a large audience, ideas could not travel or spread easily; they encountered obstacles and were subjected to distortion and misinterpretation. But with the printing, ideas were able to spread easily and exert an increasingly powerful impact.

During the transitional period that took Europe from the agricultural to the industrial age, the media played a double role, facilitating the spread of new ideas on the one hand, and helping absolute rulers to control the flow of information and limit freedom of speech on the other. “In states that succeeded in controlling the press, most notably in Spain but also in Eastern Europe, the monarchs maintained their grip on religious, social and political thought.” (Garraty and Gay: *The Columbia History of the World*, 729) In the twentieth century, the media also enabled states, especially Third World and communist states, to gain unprecedented power and use it to manipulate people and control most spheres of societal life. “Before the twentieth century, states could seek or claim such control. They could not exercise it. Now they can,” writes Thomas Hugh. (Thomas: *World History*, 369)

Due to the immense power of the media, the political and sociocultural processes have tried to control it, subjecting its activities to certain regulations and ethical codes, but without any discernible success. Meanwhile, the economic process tried with great success to purchase media outlets and transform them into business concerns dedicated to promoting its ideas and making money ethics. In the West, particularly in America, the national media functions freely, and the standards it has agreed to abide by are of its own making. As a consequence, media elites, having their own unique identity, emerged to promote a culture that reflects attitudes and values not necessarily shared by the public at large.

Members of these elites who own the major media companies and manage the news and other educational and entertainment programs find themselves almost always in conflict with forces managing the institutions of the sociocultural process. The culturally and religiously conservative forces in America, realizing the power and influence of the media, were quick to establish their own media outlets, not just to counter the disinformation of the liberal media

only, but also to launch their own misinformation and disinformation campaigns. And by so doing, the media has confused the public and vastly limited freedom of speech to everyone, except to those who own a media outlet. In the Third World, the media cannot escape government control; it is strictly regulated and often owned and managed by state organs, causing freedom of speech to be denied to everyone, except to those who promote the ideas and lies of the ruling class and justify whatever mistakes rulers make and crimes commit.

As the media was gaining the power and freedom to collect, analyze, manipulate, and disseminate information regarding most aspects of life, this power was increasingly being concentrated in the hands of a few conglomerates and smaller groups of media elites. "Our 25 leading newspaper corporations own a third of all American newspapers, control two-thirds of circulation and have more than \$30 billion in annual revenues, half of which come from non-newspaper activities," wrote Richard Harwood back in 1994. (Harwood: "Thinking Small," *The Washington Post*, March 25, 1994, A23) Merger activities since then and expansion in other fields have made media ownership and power much more concentrated than before. Freedom of expression, which most western elites and states preach religiously, has consequently become a victim of monopoly on news, commercialization of programs and opinions, and lack of effective democratic participation. Freedom of speech has two basic requirements: having the freedom to say whatever you want to say, and having the ability to reach your targeted audience, which the media controls and seldom facilitates.

Moreover, media entrepreneurs have become increasingly more interested in making money than in educating or informing the public. They favor profitable programs that feature violence, crime, drugs and sex, most of which are socially harmful and morally corrupt. Richard Harwood found that the dedication of corporate leaders "to journalism and its essential role in a democratic society is suspect. They are more responsive to the short-term demands of the stock market than to the values their industry supposedly represents." (Harwood: "A Loss of Nerve in the News Business," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1995) In fact, while the economic process is busy polluting our physical environment, and money is busy corrupting politics and politicians, the media is busy distorting our views, undermining our values, and polluting our

minds and social and cultural environments.

In the Third World, the development of the transistor radio and the television set came at a very unfortunate time for the majority of the masses. They came while illiteracy rates were very high, giving the radio and television the opportunity to become the major sources of news, information, education and entertainment. As a consequence, the television and radio enabled the spoken word to make a great comeback, causing the desire for reading by students and the public to decline, while causing book publishing, critical thinking and intellectual thought to suffer a tremendous setback. Being the major source of information and education, a state controlled media is able to manipulate the masses and mold and remold their opinions and color their views. The media has also created a consumer society in every Third World state whose members are interested more in conspicuous consumption and less in learning and production.

Nevertheless, modern means of communications and the Internet and social media have created a more alert world public. Communications is in fact making people on all sides of the economic, political, cultural, and ideological divides more aware of what exists on the opposite side. It also provides people with the opportunity to link together, causing unprecedented social and cultural interactions that undermine the barriers which made communications across cultures very difficult in the past; they also expose the excesses of dictators and sometimes the corrupt economic and political elites as well. The revolutions that swept Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen in 2011 underscore the power of social media. In addition, fast and cheap means of communications have enabled the economic process to establish service centers in states where labor is cheap to service customers worldwide; it has also encouraged the development of a world culture and facilitated the rebirth of minority subcultures. "The digital revolution allows once-ignored and even shunned groups to become organized." (Rosenblum: "Digital Knowledge," *Civilization*, April/May 2000, 54)

And as it facilitates the formation of subcultures, the infomedia also facilitates the creation of global cultures that link young people and knowledge workers together across political lines. Kenichi Ohmae wrote over 15 years ago, "In those societies open to the influence of the

multimedia, the critical balance is already beginning to shift. Children and teenagers are, at deep levels of sensibility and knowledge, becoming much more like their counterparts in other societies similarly influenced than they are like the older generations within their own culture.” (Ohmae: *The End of the Nation State*, 30) As a result, the young in societies exposed to the full influence of the infomedia have largely lost their ties to their traditional cultures and national identities; they have become followers of an emerging global culture that recognizes no political borders and abides by no ideological convictions. Ohmae adds, “The link among generations has been broken; a new link with those sharing similar experiences has been forged.” (Ohmae, 30)

Dynamics of Change

As explained earlier, the sociocultural process was the first societal process to emerge in history, followed by the political process. These two processes, concentrating primarily on continuity and stability, worked together and reinforced one another to dominate societal life for many centuries. The economic process emerged slowly and grew gradually during the agricultural age, gaining momentum only after the Industrial Revolution. However, as it began to mature, the infomedia process emerged to challenge its dominance but not its goals. These two processes have worked together and continue to reinforce one another, concentrating primarily on change and transformation rather than on continuity and stability. The sociocultural process produced great ideas and ideologies, of which religion was the most prominent one. The political process produced great leaders, empires, and political philosophies, of which nationalism, colonialism and democracy were the most notable ones. The economic process produced great technologies, entrepreneurs and industrial and trading companies as well capitalism and communism. The infomedia process is producing great technological innovations, virtual communities and global cultures, while systematically destroying many of the old ideological and cultural barriers.

The sociocultural process worked relentlessly to transform early human settlements into stable communities, using kinship, traditions and belief systems to give each community an

identity of its own. The political process, motivated by ambitious leaders and an ideological zeal, created nations, states and empires that facilitated cultural interaction and helped expand trade. The economic process developed many products and activities that impelled people to build new associations on the basis of interests, causing all nations to eventually become interdependent. The infomedia process works to link individuals together, create virtual communities on the bases of shared interests, and transform the world into a global village that progressively renders political borders less meaningful, national cultures less particular, and ideology less sacred.

In addition, the infomedia provides the elites and masses with the means to communicate instantly and exchange information and ideas constantly. It uses sophisticated technologies and networks, as well as psychological methods to change attitudes and cultures, promoting certain values, undermining others, and encouraging the creation of new, unconventional ones. Since values are the heart of all cultures, some people accuse the media of cultural destruction, while others call it cultural imperialism. Both views seem to acknowledge the importance of the infomedia but fail to find a way to use its potentialities to their advantage. And in conjunction with the economic process, the infomedia works to create a new world society free of rigid traditions and moral constraints, and an individual free of national and cultural attachments.

In each age, the societal process that enjoyed most authority in society has claimed most of its talent. In the agricultural age, the sociocultural process attracted some of the most talented people, employing them in the service of religion to spread the faith and develop its doctrine. When the political process became the most dominant, it attracted the most talented individuals, employing them as bureaucrats, military commanders and tax collectors. As a result, the sociocultural and political processes denied society the opportunity to use its talent to develop its economy and technology, directing talent instead to ensuring continuity and maintaining stability.

The economic process also attracted most of the talented people, employing them in industrial production, innovation and technological development, and marketing and financial activities. Today, the infomedia process, along with the economic one, attract almost all the

talent in industrial and post-industrial societies, as well as a good portion of the talented of the developing world. Such people are being employed by profit making enterprises in the fields of research and development, information technology and telecommunications. As the economic and infomedia processes employ world talent to develop the economies of nations, they cause the socioeconomic gaps in every society to widen and the sociocultural divides to deepen.

Every social, cultural, political and economic activity involves the four processes of change and transformation. All change that societies have experienced throughout history has been the result of actions and reactions precipitated by agents of one or more of the four processes. When relationships between these processes are well defined and in balance, which rarely occurs, stability prevails in society, but only for a short time. When one process moves to expand its influence at the expense of another, conflict ensues, causing instability and change. Instability, just like stability, is neither permanent nor necessarily bad. But for balance to be restored temporarily, a new relationship has to be built on new bases that alter the relative powers of all social forces involved.

Today, the sociocultural process is being pushed to abandon its traditional role of unifying nations and communities around shared values and traditions. Emerging circumstances are forcing this process to move in two different and largely contradictory directions at once: the first is dictated by a need to accommodate the desires of an expanding economic process; the second is dictated by a need to accommodate the interests and needs of minorities for cultural and political recognition. While the development of a global culture based on the lifestyles of western consumerism accommodates an economic process eager to expand, the creation of subcultures and '**cultural ghettos**' accommodates the demands of minorities for cultural and political rights.

Since the sociocultural and political processes are always searching for followers, and the economic process is always looking for new consumers and markets, the infomedia has become the main vehicle facilitating the movement of all social actors, helping other processes achieve their goals. And by so doing, the infomedia has become the major forum to debate public issues, define national goals and set national priorities. As a consequence, it is able to assume

the traditional role of political parties in democratic states, causing the democratic institutions to be undermined and become less able to function properly.

The sociocultural process tends to perform well at the communal level, fostering group unity and cultural identity. The political process tends to perform well at the national level, building nation states and developing national cultures and identities. The economic process tends to perform well at the international level, linking economies and major markets and industries together and creating economic and political interdependences on the basis of mutual interests. The infomedia process tends to perform well at all levels; it helps integrate economies and industries at the global level, facilitate the fragmentation of societies and cultures at the national level, strengthen cultural ties and deepens religious beliefs at the communal level, and spread knowledge and make it accessible worldwide.

Interaction among the four processes causes the balance of power relationships in society to change constantly. During periods of rapid change, relationships usually become chaotic, causing rules and regulations to become less effective and traditional ways of thinking less helpful. At such times, intellectual activity and creativity is usually revived and encouraged to go beyond the known and traditional, which often leads to undermining the conventional wisdom and its logic and causes new worldviews to emerge slowly. In transitional periods, however, it is always easier to explain emerging situations than control them or predict their outcomes.

Chaos and order exist together in one world; they are two sides of one social process, and therefore neither one can survive long without the other. Order without some chaos, just like total cooperation without any competition, characterizes social systems that lack dynamism and are unable to adapt to new circumstances. Uncontrolled chaos, just like cutthroat competition, characterizes systems that are badly conceived, unproductive, and thus headed toward disintegration. Chaos and order are needed to build and sustain healthy societies characterized by dynamism and creativity. As Lester Thurow once said, "America has more than enough chaos to be creative, but too little order to use its ideas in the most efficient ways. Japan has more than enough order to be efficient but too little chaos to be creative." (Thurow: "Building Wealth," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1999, 63)

A new theory of social change capable of explaining chaos and order and how and why they erupt often unexpectedly is badly needed to bridge the widening gap between the reality of politics and the imperatives of economics in the evolving age of knowledge. Such a theory should make it possible for us to use the certainty of order to regulate chaos, use the dynamics of chaos to transform order, and employ the propensities of both chaos and order to resolve conflict peacefully and make progress a reality shared by all.

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