

## Teaching World-Views: H. Richard Niebuhr's Paradigm

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The span of dissimilarity in Western value systems, most visible in political parties and religious organizations, often baffle Japanese students majoring in Policy Studies. An appropriate model to help students sort out important differences is hard to find, particularly one that is non-doctrinaire. H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), an American theologian, articulated a paradigm, based on typology, for understanding various approaches of Christianity to culture in *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr's paradigm is easily enlarged to include the secular world, as I have been doing with my advanced English classes for many years. Though Niebuhr himself was ambivalent about categorizing people, his model is an ideal pedagogical tool to help students appreciate fundamental ways of looking at life. While I regret oversimplifying his profoundly thoughtful approach, I believe it can introduce undergraduate students to basic world-views, helping them gain valuable reference points from which to generalize. I hope my introduction of the paradigm here will encourage teachers to aim higher with advanced English students, to focus more on teaching critical thinking skills.

**Key Words :** Of Culture, Against Culture, Above Culture, Culture in Paradox, Transformer of Culture, Conservative, Liberal, Fascism, Totalitarianism, Communalism, Monarchist, Separatist, Idealistic, Pragmatic, Radical Right, Radical Left, Center Left, Progressives, Socialists, Social Engineering

You shall not look through my eyes either,  
nor take things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from  
yourself.  
--Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

When I first began teaching in Japan and found myself leading discussions on current news in my English classes, I saw that students had trouble understanding why people took the positions they did, especially when the topic originated in American culture. Our discussions went well on why gun control was "good," for example, but we never got very far with the reasons why some may see the right to have a gun as "good." Students, I soon felt, tended to become acquainted with foreign news events in fragments, so it was difficult for them to gain an overall sense of the beliefs underlying a

position and the reasons some might disagree with it. I wanted students to understand a bit more about why certain groups of people, based on their values, invariably line up on opposite sides of almost every contentious issue of the day.

I remembered while in college reading H. Richard Niebuhr's (1894-1962) classic work *Christ and Culture* (1951). I was struck at the time with the way he described fundamental world-views and I began using his model to help my discussion classes understand a little more about what makes a person "conservative" or "liberal." I began with some trepidation in presenting it to first and second year college students in a very simplified form, and it was only after many failures that I found a working formula. I introduce the model now in my third year Judeo-Christian Values class after we have considered the Reformation, the culmination of a

year-long course on Western religions. The model captures something of the extraordinary power of beliefs, my emphasis in the course.<sup>1</sup>

Niebuhr intended the paradigm, based loosely on Ernst Troeltsch's *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*,<sup>2</sup> for understanding Christian world-views, of how divergent Christian groups come to terms with what it means to live as a Christian in culture. I do not think he would have agreed with my secular/political application of it. We are, nevertheless, all part of the human family, in contrast to Niebuhr's "Christian family," and all of us struggle to some degree with how we should participate in political life, in seeing what we value approximated in the world around us. America's politics, nevertheless, is more closely connected with religion than perhaps anywhere else in the world, making it very difficult for anyone to understand the images and rhetoric that surround elections--and almost every political controversy--who is not tuned into this reality. Niebuhr's model, therefore, is more relevant than ever for offering a comprehensive overview of America's tortured politics, where religion is the haunting force behind much of it. But I believe it is also useful for understanding the values underlying all Western politics, which has seen a powerful conservative backlash in the past twenty-five years. Today, even European countries, by and large so much more liberal than America, cannot unite in a European Union because of ethnic or national aspirations. Niebuhr's model addresses some of the reasons for these reactionary movements. I will begin by defining a few of the terms from the paradigm.

First, what is politics? From Niebuhr's model politics is the interaction between the ideals people have of the way cultures or societies should be and the way they actually are, in their basic inertia. This interaction touches on other, equally fundamental questions:

- the source of social pathology--crime, poverty, etc.--whether caused primarily by individuals or by social systems
- whether people are essentially equal
- whether social change (experimentation) or continuity from traditions is seen primarily as good or not good
- what importance, if any, people place on their own racial, ethnic, religious, or political community in relationship to what they perceive

as "mainstream culture"--mainstream today meaning both the culture of their own country and/or regional or international culture

- the source of values or ethics, whether from tradition, religion, what is evident in "nature" or from humanity itself and its interaction with a changing social environment

What is culture? I will paraphrase Niebuhr's summary of it:<sup>3</sup> 1) it is made up of a community; 2) it celebrates human achievement; 3) it is based on certain values; 4) these values are seen as good for people to follow; 5) it concerns the realization and preservation of these values; 6) it also allows for diversity among people. Niebuhr, however, goes on from this rather dry introductory summary to capture something more ephemeral in how people imagine culture, their own subjective sense of it. The model, for me, is about what people *bring* to culture. This begins, of course, with what people have internalized from their cultures, yet these choices determine what continues to be affirmed and what does not. The history of world-views is really the history of how peoples, based on their beliefs, have remolded the cultures that have molded them. No fixed, objective culture actually exists--though we can use such terms as "community," "human achievement," or "values" to describe it--since people are constantly changing their cultures with their ever-changing beliefs of the way it is or should be. What are the essential values or beliefs that shape a culture?

A person's sense of human nature, of her own nature first, then generalized to others, underlies all politics. The world-views on the left of my chart (please see Appendix 1), the *Against Culture* and *Culture in Paradox*, affirm that people are more "fixed" in the way they are, in their basic selfish nature. Since people are not orderly by nature, social order is extremely important here. Traditions, the workplace, basic law and order civilize people by placing *restraints*, obligations and accountability, on them; these hold people in check and keep them from being a lot worse than they are. The *Transformer of Culture* and *Of Culture* world-views take an opposite view and see human beings as more malleable, capable of changing, improving and learning, and tend to have more trust in people, who are not essentially bad by nature. Traditions--moral and social--thwart, even damage, people and actually get in the way of realizing a better society.

We often do not define our way of looking at life in such broad terms, but if we consider our view of human nature for a moment, of whether people

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are naturally fixed (selfish) or changeable (able to improve), we may find it is in fact a large part of how we view issues in the political arena. In conjunction with our vision of human nature is our fundamental sense of moral values, of whether they are fixed or changing. Do these values originate from traditions--religious, ethnic or otherwise (*Against Culture* or *Paradox*)--or from the people themselves interacting in their communities (*Transformer* or *Of Culture*)? For the former, moral traditions are timeless, applicable to the group for all time, for the latter they are changeable, based on the way people are and what they need. One's world-view is seen in the extent to which one holds one or the other of these opposing beliefs as an absolute. Which orientation is right? When asked, I say both are. Just how our beliefs about human nature determine the way people are cannot be known.<sup>4</sup>

The second--really an extension of the first--is one's concept of equality, which I continue to stress with my classes is rare among world cultures, even in ones like America's where equality was declared as central in its founding charter. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1878), no partisan of liberal democracy, correctly identified the origins of equality with Judaism and the Jewish people, which Christianity incorporated, of the poor, the meek, the weak, the outcasts' nobility--as proclaimed by Yeshua of Nazareth--a concept that never fully developed in such traditional cultures as China, India, or Japan.<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche's insight centered on the conflict between two classes: the "aristocratic" or "knightly" class with the "priestly" or "slave" class; Nietzsche was chagrined the slaves' values were winning out in Western civilization, what he called "the slave revolt in morals."<sup>6</sup>

Niebuhr goes further and shows the *degrees* to which people, groups, or institutions believe in equality. Of course, one is a liberal if one believes in equality and one is a conservative if one does not, yet we are considering degrees. Do we actually believe in equality and how do we act on that belief? People or institutions with an *Of Culture* world-view usually hold equality as absolute and want to overturn or temper traditions and distinctions that create inequality (the free market, property, class, titles, ranks, traditional hierarchies, ethnicity or race, even religion), while *Against Culture* does not accept equality, usually based on one or more of the points above, and seeks to maintain or increase distinctions between themselves and those considered outsiders. While equality seems to have won the day in the postwar world, it is always an equivocal victory and today many assumed gains are in fact cosmetic. Yet,

internationally, governments acknowledge they must pay more than lip service to equality to remain in power. One can believe in legal equality, of course, without believing in essential equality. The question remains, however: Can there be legal equality without the belief in essential equality?<sup>7</sup>

Though I "secularize" Niebuhr's paradigm, my thesis remains that political or secular world-views have their origins in religious movements. We tend to underestimate not only just how powerful religious movements are in the way their beliefs take on the absoluteness of divine revelation but also their pervasive impact on every level of society. Again, the relationship is more obvious in America. All of the great reform movements--the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, and racial integration--were born out of liberal Christian groups that actually believed in equality; such reactionary movements as racial segregation and Prohibition came from religious movements that did not. World-views, like well-worn ruts in a road, continue to be followed long after the religion fades in importance, simply because people have become accustomed to certain ways of looking at life, originally derived from the religion, whether or not they actually practice the religion. Max Weber's claim that the Protestant Work Ethic was "the ghost of religions past" applies equally to world-views.

Niebuhr matured as a thinker when broad movements of history, from Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Charles Darwin (1809-82), and Karl Marx (1818-83), were the norm for how people looked at life, particularly among intellectuals. Niebuhr's paradigm is in fact a turning away from those grand theories that left individuals out of the sweep of history. It is called "typology" and focuses squarely on the individual, on what she or he values, but Niebuhr also cautioned us regarding its limitations: No one conforms perfectly to a "type." Each person's inner life in relationship to culture is truly unique and Niebuhr certainly did not want to reduce individuals to cogs in yet another paradigm. Nevertheless, we are social creatures and tend to follow paths set down for us in our cultures, and in reality we have only a few broad options available to us: to separate (*Against Culture*) or to overturn (*Of Culture*), with three basic degrees in between. We human beings, by and large, are not very creative in our fundamental perspectives and I am always struck each time I teach the paradigm with how consistent I am, to my utter dismay. Niebuhr also cautioned that the model was only for understanding and appreciating, not for evaluating or judging. No single world-view is superior. The teacher must be

“disinterested,” with biases kept firmly at bay. In presenting the contentious issues of the day, from abortion to capital punishment, I always ask students this question: Who is right? After a moment, I delight in declaring that both are. People, based on all they believe, can only affirm what they can affirm (In my conclusion I mention a few of the ways people change).

The three world-views of the center--*Culture in Paradox*, *Above Culture*, and *Transformer of Culture*--form over ninety-percent of the West's politics, with the extremes (*Against Culture* and *Of Culture*), while marginal, remaining potent forces in mainstream politics. Niebuhr understood how the radical world-views animate those of the center and was wise in expanding Troeltsch's model to include them. America's 2004 presidential election, for example, featured George W. Bush using language and symbols perhaps understood only by the *Against Culture* Religious Right, who made up almost half his supporters, as John Kerry reached out in similar ways to his *Of Culture* base, feminists and gay rights activists, among others.

Students are challenged to think in much broader terms than they are accustomed to, of looking at the world through lenses that present Nazi Germany and Switzerland (*Culture in Paradox*), the United Nations and the former Soviet Union (*Of Culture*), the Amish and the Nation of Islam (*Against Culture*) sharing the same world-views. This can be unnerving at first, especially when none is evaluated as fundamentally good or bad, only an extension of communal beliefs. Very different political, religious, or social institutions may share a world-view, but it is the way each acts upon it that makes the difference, actions we may judge as good or evil. The paradigm helps students break away from looking at the world through only one ideology, to take a big leap back to consider political controversy in a larger context, as a conflict between value clusters. Studying the paradigm is really an opening up, a call to understanding, not necessarily to action. Students really become engaged, the lights actually come on, as they begin to see the connections and the differences in the world-views, since most have only studied political beliefs in fragments, usually from liberal biases. I think many of my students today have a *Culture in Paradox* world-view (conservative)--in contrast to fifteen years ago when a liberal orientation was stronger--but who feel pressed upon by teachers to take liberal positions on the major issues of the day. Learning the model may actually help some accept themselves, when they understand it is a viable option to affirm traditional

values.

World-views in Western civilization are very old, some thousands of years old, but are reincarnated under different labels or political tags. The socialist and communist labels have fallen out of favor, but the *Of Culture* world-view they were founded on is tremendously compelling and no doubt in the next hundred years will return more powerfully than ever, albeit under different names. Today, people in the West are more inward, less committed to traditional polarized party politics, less likely to accept universal ideological solutions to all challenges, perhaps from an ideological burnout of the twentieth century. It is a more conservative time, but people may have to work together more closely in an *Of Culture* framework in future challenges, especially as the world population peaks at about fifteen billion in the next hundred years, sharing technology, general know-how, and ever scarcer resources.

Below I will summarize the types in the order Niebuhr placed them: *Against Culture*, *Of Culture*, *Above Culture*, *Culture in Paradox*, and *Transformer of Culture*. I focus primarily on the *Culture in Paradox* versus the *Transformer of Culture* world-views in my classes, the most important in nearly all Western politics today and therefore the most relevant for students. My political identifications do not always conform to Niebuhr's categories: *Paradox in Culture* is not always conservative, nor is *Of Culture* always a radical liberal, according to common, widely accepted secular definitions. These identifications are only to help students with a few reference points for orientation. Most of my examples below are from American culture. I usually spend about six weeks on the model and I never feel I do justice to it--Niebuhr is so much more nuanced, comprehensive, insightful than any representation I can offer. In my conclusion I will offer a few comments that may answer questions about the paradigm, particularly on the fluidity of cultures, the basic fragility of the world-views people hold, a few reasons why people may have the world-views they do, and some thoughts about which world-view may win out.

### Against Culture/Radical Right

- The *Against Culture* world-view, with the most tension toward mainstream culture, holds that people are basically unequal, usually based today on both political and religious ideologies, but still on race in some cases.

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- Mainstream culture, often seen as hostile toward the person or group, is deteriorating not progressing.
- Separation is a way to preserve integrity or to avoid contamination. It is less affirming of social traditions than the *Culture in Paradox* world-view.

Some may think I will be describing the disenchanted and clinically paranoid, yet the *Against Culture* world-view is embraced by many thoughtful people, policy makers and many articulate voices. *Against Culture* for me is characterized by a basic sense that mainstream culture is inimical to spiritual fulfillment, fundamentally at odds with a meaningful life--outlooks that many across the political spectrum could share. Since those with this world-view do not believe they can change the values society is based on, it is better to withdraw, if not physically then spiritually and emotionally. In Western countries today it usually represents voices of protest and shares a basic agreement with the *Culture in Paradox* world-view, *Against Culture* being more radical in its approach and less trustful of social or national traditions. Though not dominating any major industrialized country at present, it could easily revive in our erratically changing times. It is the most fragile of the world-views, since people over time find it very difficult to maintain the extreme tensions that come with turning away from mainstream life. "The Radical Right" is not a suitable term for many who share this world-view and should be considered a generalization.

This world-view is very ancient. Monastic groups have been withdrawing from normal social life for thousands of years to focus more deeply on spirituality. Its basic approach to culture, as it is known in America and the West today, emanates from Protestant movements in Central Europe after the Reformation, particularly from the Anabaptists and Mennonites. The Amish, its purest expression, have continued the tradition from its sixteenth century inception. Originally from Switzerland, and living in small farming communities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa, the Amish have successfully avoided many dependencies on the state, including electricity, automobiles, and public school education. No Amishman has ever served in the military or has ever gone to court for any reason.<sup>8</sup> The Jehovah Witnesses, another prominent American *Against Culture* group, not only refuse to salute a flag or say a pledge of allegiance, but as the Amish also decline military service, for which they

suffered persecution during the Second World War, both in America and Nazi Germany. The American Supreme Court, however, has sided with them most of the time in affirming their basic rights for privacy and freedom of speech (The Jehovah Witnesses have actually won more civil liberties cases than the NAACP).<sup>9</sup> The Amish and the Jehovah Witnesses, as is typical of many with this world-view, eschew voting and all other participation in the political process. *Against Culture* revivalist and fundamentalist religious organizations, together with sympathizers, may number anywhere from between ten to twenty percent of America's population. *Against Culture's* great contribution to Western tradition is the complete separation of church and state and the right to privacy.

All with this world-view believe mainstream culture is degenerating rather than progressing. *Against Culture* Christians, for instance, may take seriously Saint John's injunctions: "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man loves the world the love of the father is not in him.....And we know that we are of God and the whole world lies in wickedness."<sup>10</sup> "Wickedness" is in governments or institutions that may threaten their freedom to congregate, to educate their children, to practice their religion; institutions support power elites, preserve unjust policies, or control the nation's wealth for the rich; public school systems and higher education merely indoctrinate young people with godless or unhallowed values.

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the great novelist of *War and Peace* (1866) and *Anna Karenina* (1876), after becoming an *Against Culture* Christian in late mid-life refused to participate in Russia's political system because "[a]ll the state obligations are against the conscience of a Christian: the oath of allegiance, taxes, law proceedings and military service."<sup>11</sup> He also renounced most high art, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, and even some of his own earlier writing, as insincere efforts to entertain the ruling classes. Tolstoy, applying the typically severe distinctions of *Against Culture*, pointed to only a few artists who sincerely expressed "Christian Truth," among them some books by Charles Dickens, George Elliot, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Separating to maintain integrity is a common impulse here and would include a wide-cross section of citizens in most Western countries. Henry David Thoreau's (1817-62) essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849), written after a night in jail for refusing to pay a voting tax, speaks for an *Against Culture* approach. In 1849 Thoreau wrote

against slavery and the Mexican American War declaring "I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also."<sup>12</sup> Non-participation, a time-honored tradition, can be undertaken for many reasons: to escape urban materialism, to protest military spending by withholding taxes, to educate your children yourself, to refuse military service. Individuals unlikely to associate with religious sects or extremist politics may choose alternative lifestyles that reject mainstream culture for matters of conscience.

Most with this world-view are neither deluded by visions of grandeur nor are violent (most are actually pacifists), yet their basic values serve as a seminal exploration of reasons for various types of social prejudice, since *Against Culture* groups tend to be ultra-traditional in their distinctions based on religion, ethnicity, race, or ideology. Making some such distinctions is a common human trait, *Against Culture* is characterized by its intensity. Wary of those outside their ideological or religious group, some extremists harbor a fierce racism: international Jewish bankers secretly control financial markets or polluted races or religions poison the minds of people. Group membership is sometimes exclusive: white Protestants only in most Ku Klux Klan groups and blacks only in Louis Farrakan's Nation of Islam, though these race-based groups have seen membership declines the last few decades.

Louis Farrakan and the Nation of Islam, though ardent supporters of Jessie Jackson's bids for the Democratic nomination in 1984 and 1988, hold an *Against Culture* world-view, as did Malcolm X. They believe that African Americans should separate to form their own nation, a form of black nationalism. Their support of Jessie Jackson was based more on race than his actual politics, which are *Transformer*, as were Martin Luther King, Jr.'s. While most *Against Culture* groups avoid participating in the political process, as have the Amish and Jehovah Witnesses, this changed with Ronald Reagan's presidency (1981-89), which enfranchised such Christian revivalists and fundamentalists as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, whose precedents for political activism and nationwide mobilization of this large subculture is partly credited for George W. Bush's reelection in 2004. Falwell's Moral Majority grew out of a Southern Baptist tradition (*Paradox*), but Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition (*Against Culture*) moved a bit toward *Paradox* with its newly found success in the political process. As groups engage in mainstream political life, needless to say, mainstream political life engages them in a

very different direction from where they want to go: accountability on secular terms.

The Nation of Islam, as other religious or race-based groups, will move from *Against Culture* to *Paradox* if it becomes institutionalized. After establishing a college, for example, it may come share positions with American conservatives in the political process, say, of the right to privacy and freedom from government interference. The Church of the Latter Day Saints in Jesus Christ (Mormon) began as *Against Culture*, with its intense anti-mainstream lifestyle that included "multiple-marriages," but moved to *Culture in Paradox* as it abandoned extreme practices, such as polygamy, and became an institutional entity over the generations. Theology, on the other hand, can prevent any world-view movement. The three branches of American Judaism remain fixed in three world-views: Orthodox and Hasidic (*Against Culture*) Conservative (*Paradox*) and Reform (*Transformer*). Members of the Nation of Islam and Hasidic Judaism would be surprised to share a designation on any level, but Niebuhr's paradigm examines a group's own values or beliefs about itself in relationship to mainstream culture, apart from theology or ideology.

As I implied in my introduction, the *Against Culture* world-view today animates America's politics more than the *Of Culture*; they are fiercely anti-abortion and gay rights and favor capital punishment and prayer in public schools, based for them on literal biblical interpretations. These groups, remarkably, have also been changing racial and ethnic equations in American life during the past several decades by bringing those at the bottom of the social scale, but including some of the middle and upper-classes, together in fellowship: white-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans--something that no court mandate had been able to do.<sup>13</sup>

In government policy, where the waters are murkier, we can identify similar drifts, while understanding the purest expressions of this world-view are found today in fringe communities. During the Cold War the nonaligned nations of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, and Austria shared something of this world-view in their foreign policies. Believing both NATO and the Warsaw Pact woefully mistaken, they chose to disassociate from the conflict altogether. The Swiss are particularly proud of their neutral stance toward all the great conflicts of the twentieth century. Ethnic and national aspirations, expressed in policies of non-engagement, are basically *Against*

*Culture* (i.e. the international culture). Both Albania and the People's Republic of China, though originally adopting *Of Culture* Marxism in their revolutions for equality, purified their nations and avoided compromising their revolutionary stances by separating in the 1960s from the international system. Like religious sect leaders, Enver Hoxha and Mao Tse-tung believed they were the only ones true to the original socialist vision. Today North Korea and Cuba are among the few attempting a similar posture.

Whenever I meet people with an *Against Culture* world-view I always marvel at their spiritual singularity. While some may be put off by their supreme confidence in seeing the world in terms of black and white, their simple lifestyle flies in the face of Western materialistic values. Their against-culture stand, like the ancient Greek cynics and Hebrew prophets, serves as a powerful critique of ego-driven self-aggrandizement in the First World, showing us that life is more than endless accumulation in all its forms. Who can say whether Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity and the Amish, with so many others like them, are mistaken not to accept normative life? Perhaps it is the rest of us who are mistaken.

### Of Culture/Radical Left

- The *Of Culture* world-view holds that people are essentially equal, but favors more radical methods than the *Transformer of Culture* to make social equality a reality. Its basic ethic is away from tradition and toward what is humane, useful, or natural. Christian socialism, according to Niebuhr, is its purest expression.
- The *Of Culture* and the *Transformer of Culture* world-views agree that the social system bears a great deal of blame for social ills, with *Of Culture* more idealistic about making necessary changes. Both share an abiding trust in the common person.
- The *Of Culture* world-view is oriented toward two very different ideals: 1) an agrarian, communal way of life with little or no government; 2) or complete state control of the economy to enforce economic equality, as was seen in the People's Republic of China and former Soviet Block countries.

On the opposite end of the paradigm is a world-view that feels an essential agreement between

its ideals and culture, holding that a complete social restructuring along humanistic or scientific lines is possible. This world-view is the most "worldly," but it intends to change the world on its own terms. The *Of Culture* world-view, often bearing the "secular humanist" label today, flowered during the Enlightenment when thinkers began to apply the scientific method toward improving society. John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Frederick Hegel (1770-1831), and Karl Marx (1818-83) are just a few of its eminent thinkers. Most believed a Universal History, or humanity's rational ingenuity, would create a society that harmonized with a citizen's basic needs. Its earlier intellectuals were Peter Abailard (1079-1142) and Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). *Of Culture* thinkers, the source of most analytic models, often subscribe to all-encompassing visions and can be as uncompromising and as militant as the quasi-religious fundamentalist *Against Culture*. *Of Culture* has taken center-stage in many twentieth-century political struggles, offering students plentiful and compelling examples.

Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), speculated after the fall of the Soviet Union if the basic question of government had finally been answered. Fukuyama, scorned for the phrase "The End of History," merely used the term Hegel coined and Marx appropriated ("The Last Man," by the way, was coined by Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* to describe what humanity would ultimately become); events do not end, only a social development has come to an end. According to the theory of Universal History, the form of government with the fewest internal contradictions would triumph eventually; would it be Hegel's Liberal Democracy or Marx's Socialism?

The Cold War (1946-1990) in this context was a conflict between the *Transformer* Left (Liberal Democracy) and the *Of Culture* Left (Socialism). The paradigm, never fitting perfectly, is applicable here on a geopolitical level. The *Paradox* Right in the United States and other Western nations undermined the Left by asserting that liberals were sympathetic to Communism. Indeed, their world-views are very close: Franklin Roosevelt's (1882-1945) New Deal that established safeguards for the middle-class in the 1930s was essentially an *Of Culture* program; Henry A. Wallace (1888-1965), Roosevelt's Vice President, ran against Harry S. Truman in 1948 on the Progressive Party ticket, closely tied to the Socialist Party.

American conservatives blamed Democrats for losing China, for example, out of their own Communist sympathies; Senator Joseph McCarthy's Committee on Un-American Activities (1952-55) persecuted many left-leaning Chinese scholars, including Harvard's John Fairbank. "Only Nixon could go to China," the conventional wisdom in 1972, meant that President Nixon (1913-1994) had earned an anti-Communist Cold Warrior reputation in ways no Democrat had. The "soft on Communism" charge may have pushed the nation into war in Vietnam (1961-75). After the loss of China, the "domino theory" made Southeast Asia the new front line against Communism, with the Democratic leadership eager to prove its commitment to halt its spread. It may be more than coincidence that from 1968 to 1992 only one Democratic President served for only one term, Jimmy Carter, or that the Democrat Bill Clinton was elected after the Cold War ended.

*Of Culture* holds that all people are equal when nurtured under similar conditions. Governments, if they are unable to create a conducive environment, bear some responsibility for crime, poverty, and other endemic social problems. They can also remedy social injustice that comes from such traditions as the free market. Higher taxes in socialist-leaning European countries close the gap between rich and poor. The Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and Cuba confiscated everyone's property, the source of inequality, to ensure social justice after their revolutions. Radical Leftist movements and ideologies contend that social traditions--among the greatest hindrances to human progress--cripple humanity and must be modified or overturned: feminists assail the restrictions of traditional family values for stifling a woman's full potential; the gay rights movement challenges religious moral values on sexuality that isolate them; socialists curse the capitalist free market system for crushing the lower classes and propose ways to bring everyone along; atheists deprecate religion for making people psychologically ill with excessive guilt and conformity based on illusions. *Transformer* and *Of Culture* essentially agree on root causes but differ in solutions, with *Of Culture* favoring more radical, revolutionary approaches. Socialism or an agrarian communalism, for this type, are often better forms of government than representative democracy in a free enterprise system, which they may feel supports business power elites, the new aristocracies that oppress the poor.

In the 1960s and 1970s revolutionary movements in Africa and parts of East Asia embraced Marxist ideology to challenge right-wing dictators. Roman

Catholic "Liberation Theology" provided *Of Culture* inspiration in Latin America. Several priests and nuns, for instance, became Nicaraguan officials and cabinet members in Daniel Ortega's government after the Sandinista revolution overthrew the American backed President Somoza in July 1979. Movements like the Sandinistas, tremendously effective in articulating a message and rallying support, posed a greater menace to the status quo than dictatorships (*Paradox*), whose goal was often social stability. America and other Western democracies often sided with right-wing dictators against *Of Culture* movements during the Cold War.

Each end of the paradigm--*Against Culture* and *Of Culture*--sees mainstream culture as degenerate and favors communalism. The hippie movements of the 1960s and more recent "back to nature" movements believe that once freed from society, nature will teach members how to create a superior lifestyle, since they are finally in touch with their basic "good" selves (this is Jean Jacques Rousseau's legacy: social institutions corrupt but nature heals).<sup>14</sup> *Against Culture* groups, usually content to be left alone, are not interested in exemplifying a social experiment; some may proselytize, but this is for saving people *from* the world. *Of Culture* retreats for the opportunity to fully grasp an ideal, like the kibbutzim in Israel, as torch bearers for a brighter future; they are more visionary than reactionary and, believing in equality, declare their visions will create a new humanity, indeed a new world.

Enlightenment thinkers designed the United States government based on truths that were self-evident: equality, freedom for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; these ideals originally were *Of Culture*, at least on paper. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), typical of this world-view, saw himself as part of a movement toward a universal family and wrote to a friend that his ideal of brotherhood extended "not only to kindred and friends, to neighbors and countrymen, but to all mankind, gathering all into one family under the bonds of charity, peace, common wants and common aids."<sup>15</sup> Some claim *Of Culture* liberals rationalize away their responsibilities toward the world's less fortunate, yet Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), an *Of Culture* Christian, spent much of his life as a missionary doctor in Gabon, Africa where he founded a hospital. Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 for his "reverence for life."

The semi-socialist governments of Scandinavia and Northern Europe, and The United Nations, which envisions a universal family, are examples of *Of Culture* leanings. The Unitarian Church, the



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Society of Friends (Quakers), Greenpeace, and the American Civil Liberties Union are a few religious and humanitarian counterparts. Immensely popular in the early twentieth century among Western intellectuals, socialism and other *Of Culture* movements lost viability after the state-controlled economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union collapsed. Yet, as I mentioned above, world-views continue though current incarnations collapse. Since most of the world is made up of common people, in crises others will inspire new *Of Culture* visions to challenge the status quo. Governments understand this. The People's Republic of China, for example, began its Open Door policy in 1981 that allowed some free market reforms because it feared a massive revolt of its poverty-stricken people. The Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, parts of Central and South America and Africa are a few of the places where leftist movements are on the rise.

Equality is the radical idea underlying the *Of Culture* world-view. Where did it originate? It is traced back to what scholars believe are the authentic sayings of Yeshua of Nazareth, for example in Matthew 5:44, 45 (King James Version):

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.

Has anyone else ever articulated a more radical lifestyle, so simply stated, that shatters all divisions and moral judgments? This is essential equality--the most extreme idea since the dawn of civilization--with the Heavenly Father over all, including those we label "evil" and "unjust." Both Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) understood the radical ramifications of these sayings: Nietzsche was aghast while Kierkegaard was bewildered why his Christian Denmark did not actually follow them--he felt it only needed an existential leap of faith. Karl Marx said he based *Das Capital* (1867) in part on Acts 2:44, 45 (King James Version): "And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." Marx elaborated on this in summarizing his theories: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." A third of the world is nominally Christian, who read their Bibles at least some of the time, so the *Of Culture*

world-view will not go away. Yeshua of Nazareth's words will go on igniting revolutions.

### Above Culture/Center Left

- Closely connected with monarchies, Roman Catholicism, Anglican and Orthodox Christianity, the *Above Culture* world-view was once the West's most prominent world-view but faded as empires fell in the wake of the First World War and as the Church's influence weakened in modern life. Today, it can represent an approximate synthesis of *Transformer of Culture* and *Culture in Paradox*. In America and in some European nations, it is represented as the "Catholic Left."
- The *Above Culture* world-view tends to see people as unequal, fixed in an hierarchy, though people can be socially mobile. Its basic ethic is derived from what is evident in "nature."
- The *Above Culture* world-view encourages a sense of duty toward the less fortunate in society, something both the *Paradox* and *Against Culture* world-views tend to do less of, giving it a "progressive" or "liberal" leaning. Though it can be reactionary toward social change, it is less so than *Paradox in Culture*.

Relatively few monarchists are in the West today, its purest representatives, but this world-view remains a potent force in more modified forms. The West's most prominent world-view until the early twentieth century, it receded as European empires collapsed after the First World War. A product of feudalism that pushed Europeans to the ends of the earth, it is blamed for a virulent racism and worldwide destruction of indigenous cultures. Spain and Portugal conquered the Americas for the Pope and their Kings. Great Britain and the Netherlands, though Protestant, embraced this more "monarchical" world-view and reshaped much of the world by their governance.

*Above Culture* is essentially the catalyst for the other world-views. Without the Reformation, historians claim, the modern world as we know it may not have been realized, but Catholicism's austere economic and social control for over a thousand years created the ferment that made the Reformation possible. A lowly but feisty Wittenberg monk, after nailing his ninety-five theses to the door of the university's chapel in 1517, opened the flood gates to many dormant ideas, but these were given voice

through a fierce and violent reaction against Roman Catholicism. Would we have the range of diversity in Western civilization without Catholicism's towering monolith of beliefs? *Above Culture* fascinates students, since Roman Catholic and royal personages attract enormous media attention.

The origin of the *Above Culture* world-view may be the ancient temple-state societies of the Near East: the Egyptian, Persian, and Hebrew in particular, which combined priesthoods, representing purity, with Kings, who represented power.<sup>16</sup> Though the Greek (333 to 63 BCE) and Roman Empires (63 BCE to 410 CE), by imposing the Greek "polis" or city-state as they conquered and governed, destroyed all Near Eastern temple societies (the Romans destroyed the last functioning temple in Jerusalem during the Jewish-Roman war, 66-73 CE), its ideal remained, incorporated by Christianity, the new religion that grew out of Judaism. This world-view reincarnated in Western civilization when the Emperor Constantine (274-337 CE) authorized Christianity as the Roman Empire's official religion in 306 CE. The Church, as it evolved in subsequent centuries, assumed the role of moral superior to ensure that civil law (power) reflected the law of the Church (purity), the source of all authority, following temple-state patterns.

The Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (742-814), for instance, was crowned by Pope Leo III in a ceremony symbolizing that his authority came from God through the Church. In reality, of course, emperors often gave only lip service to the Church (politics and manipulation remained intense between these two for centuries and centuries), but this ideal of the Church blessing the State and keeping it on the straight and narrow path continued in Europe until the First World War (it is still strong in Latin America, some Mediterranean countries, and Ireland). Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), *Above Culture's* major thinker, combined Christian teachings with Greek philosophy and civic virtue, synthesizing the highest Western intellectual achievements with church theology. Aquinas, perhaps best known today for his "Five Ways to God" in which he laid out rational evidence for a Prime Mover, showed that reason and faith could arrive at the same conclusion. This remains very important today: Reason from nature provides an ethical basis in modern Roman Catholic theology.

While *Against Culture* affirms as little as possible of normative culture, *Above Culture* does not believe that all or even most culture is necessarily bad and actually makes aspects of it "divine," by incorporating cultural triumphs into its teachings and

outlook: its music, painting, philosophy, literature, engineering, to name a few. The moral synthesis of culture, its chief goal, is a perpetual possibility and results in less tension with culture than the *Against Culture* and *Paradox* types, both of whom expend a great deal of energy in negation. This world-view is more affirmative of culture, of all cultures. As *Of Culture* and *Transformer of Culture*, *Above Culture* is "active" and tends to be in harmony with modern liberalism today on social justice issues, but not usually on moral issues.

*Above Culture* religious organizations today reflect this world-view in the way they visualize their role toward culture: the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church of England and the Commonwealth countries, the Episcopal Churches of America, the Russian, Greek, and Eastern Orthodox Churches seek to raise society to a higher moral level through their examples. Imperialist nations, in reflecting this vision, also tried to blend indigenous colonial cultures into their own political and economic systems. This world-view has tended to see people as unequal, fixed in a hierarchy, with authority figures fulfilling paternalistic roles as guardians of culture, builders of educational institutions, sanctifiers of souls, protectors of family and religion. Since it has been fundamentally paternalistic, its colonial children were not allowed to grow up.

In political life, as it developed after the Reformation, it envisioned the monarch as the embodiment of civil, moral, and religious authority. The Queen of England still heads the Church of England. A question regarding Prince Charles' ascension continues, since Church law forbids a divorcee from assuming headship. "The divine right of kings," though determined by heredity, is similar to the Pope's election by "Apostolic Succession" in its spiritual vision. The monarch, who was widely believed until recent times to have the power to heal, could transfer his authority to officials acting on his behalf. The Spanish Conquistador Francisco Pizarro (1478-1541), meeting the Inca leader Atahualpa in 1532, claimed Peru in the name of the Pope and the King of Spain; Atahualpa retorted, "Your god is very generous with other people's land."<sup>17</sup>

The importance of heredity as a right to reign appears strongest today in Great Britain. British monarchists were thrilled at first with Princess Diana (1961-97) because her Spenser family line was more "noble" than Prince Charles' Windsor line; they were soon displeased with Lady Diana's celebrity status, however, which they felt demeaned the monarchy. In times of uncertainty a longing for national or ethnic symbols may include calls for a return of the

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monarchy. Some older Russians have advocated for a constitutional monarchy under a czar; the same has happened in Romania, Albania, and Serbia. Today monarchies and democracy are compatible: Juan Carlos ascended the Spanish throne in 1975 to restore democracy under a constitutional monarchy; even a 1981 rightist coup failed to reinstate a Francisco Franco style, anti-leftist dictatorship. Monarchs, shadowy presences in modern times, have a modifying responsibility as overseers, safeguarding the ship of state in the choppy waters of petty political passions.

The Roman Catholic Church, more than any other *Above Culture* religious body, continues to persuade with its moral reasoning. With an ethic based on what is evident in nature, the Vatican was first to protest the cloning of the sheep, Dolly, in 1997; most Western nations followed. Following this example, most nations have also banned human cloning. From the Roman Catholic Church's perspective such practices as homosexuality, abortion, genetic engineering, in vitro insemination, birth control pills and devices are either inherently unnatural or interfere with nature and so should be forbidden. Modified versions of this ethic are likely to become more relevant as scientists experiment in new ways with nature and nations and individuals grope for appropriate levels of acceptance.

The Pope also abides as the world's most powerful moral advocate. In the late 1970s Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), during a visit in the Philippines, castigated the government's dismal human rights record; former President Ferdinand Marcos (1917-89) repented before the nation on his knees (though he later backslid). In the 1980s Poland's Solidarity movement under Leah Walesa found a reservoir of support in the Polish Catholic Church and from the Polish Pope, thus launching the end of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Historically the Catholic Church has deemed modern capitalism a Protestant creation, in an unnatural moral vacuum, and has called for more ethical accountability. Most with a *Transformer* or an *Of Culture* world-view would completely agree with the need for more ethical accountability.

Papal authority has been threatening in recent times. After its 1949 Communist Revolution the Chinese leaders allowed the Catholic Church to remain but blocked any contact with the Pope and in 1999 refused to allow Pope John Paul II to visit Hong Kong's three hundred thousand Catholics. Similarly, when the Catholic John Kennedy (1917-63) ran for President in 1959, some were concerned about him following the Pope's dictates.

In a well-publicized speech Kennedy reassured the nation that the Pope would have no say in the American government (Kennedy, by the way, is the only Catholic ever elected President). The Catholic Left remains important in American politics, and with its convincing moral critique was partly responsible for the decline of Kennedy/Johnson style liberalism. Though it divided the Democratic Party, its more moderate approach, of Eugene McCarthy's (1916-2005) 1968 candidacy for example, won voters who were terrified by the turmoil of the 1960s, an *Above Culture* Left against a *Transformer* Left conflict in Niebuhr's model.

South Africa, after apartheid (1948-1994) ended, faced a tremendous challenge of accountability for the crimes committed against black South African civil rights workers. Desmond Tutu, Anglican archbishop of Johannesburg and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1985), applied an *Above Culture* Christian approach when he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995-1999). Its purpose was to reincorporate violators back into society. Police and soldiers, following orders in suppressing opposition to apartheid, had only to publicly confess their crimes for national forgiveness. While many of the victims' families who wanted justice were upset, Tutu's moderate and "Christian" approach was for healing the country so it could move forward, making the transition to democracy smoother than it might otherwise have been. Synthesis, the goal for *Above Culture*, suggests a patience, an exemplifying of a higher moral ground rather than confrontation; it has a more cautious approach toward reshaping society. *Above Culture* is more conservative than the *Transformer* and *Of Culture* types, more affirming of social traditions.

Many are still struck with the theological beauty of *Above Culture* religious bodies. Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, and Tennessee Williams are just a few artists who became Roman Catholics because of this world-view's aesthetic splendor.

### Culture in Paradox/Conservative

- The *Culture in Paradox* world-view honors social traditions that developed on their own, apart from those manufactured by human planning: the family, the ethnic group, the marketplace, religious practice and many other customs rooted in history and affirmed by practice.
- People are basically "unequal," though equal under the law, made that way by nature who

distributed differences in innate capacity. No social engineering can change this fundamental reality.

- The traditional social system is “good,” or at least necessary, since it *restrains* the destructive tendencies of human nature. Without the *restraints* of tradition, people would be a lot worse. People are responsible for their behavior regardless of their social conditions.

The *Culture in Paradox* world-view, although holding firmly to particular “absolute” values, is the least ideological in Niebuhr’s model. With its steely pragmatism, it is the de facto catchall, seemingly internalized by the largest numbers in our complex age.<sup>18</sup> Without a thorough understanding of this world-view, students in Asia will not only be unable to understand America’s politics, but Western politics in general. Its place in Niebuhr’s paradigm, we should remember, is between *Against Culture* and *Above Culture*, so those with this world-view are sympathetic to both. I am often surprised by its affinity with the *Against Culture* world-view in political life today--something rare thirty years ago--evident not only in America after the Reagan Revolution, but in Argentina, Italy, Israel, Russia, and most of Eastern Europe. Most governments in the industrialized world are in fact conservative, with France, Canada, Northern Europe, and Scandinavia the notable exceptions.

What defines a person with a *Paradox in Culture* world-view? I mentioned earlier that it centers on a vision of human nature, generalized to society at large--of what people need to live happy and fulfilling lives. Yes, these are very subjective qualities, but the paradigm is all about subjectivity and it is this sense that creates hard and cold realities. This value system is not less humane, however, the common accusation by liberals, but people here are considering what is best for most in society, indeed for the society as a whole. World-views, we should remember, are in part the way people come to terms with very complex issues--perhaps because of our limited capacities for understanding them--and we tend to follow certain patterns of thinking from our societies. Our social class, of course, largely determines our outlook, but not always. The hard edge often identified with this world-view is a “value threshold,” for lack of a better expression, for what people must “live up to,” only the expectation *Paradox* has for minorities to actually live up to this threshold is weak. Self-responsibility is its trademark, along with a certain resignation to the

way life is.

The second characteristic is its engagement with what we loosely call “social traditions.” Liberals are correct in saying these traditions cause inequality, since they are majority values, often imposed mercilessly on those who can neither understand nor follow them: Those growing up middle-class, therefore, are so much more advantaged than a poor resident of the inner city. Can anyone expect the latter to fulfill the same expectations or to compete equally in America’s competitive job market? When people affirm social order, they do so vis-à-vis some “type” of person or group, since world-views are also a vision of “others.” And this is precisely the “paradox,” the heart of conservatism, the “Us versus Them.” Conservatives and liberals differ in the degree each believes the poor--or racial and ethnic minorities--can enter mainstream life: *Paradox* tends to think the possibility limited, regardless of what is done, and so is occupied with preserving its own values vis-à-vis others; the *Transformer* believes it is possible, under realistic standards with the proper education and social planning. *Of Culture*, incidentally, defers to those at the bottom--as with Lenin’s proletariat revolution and Mao’s peasant revolt--because the commoners’ social experience has given them a purer vision, they should take the lead. There is no “bringing up” of anyone, only a turning over, putting the bottom on top.

When I say that one type is more traditional, some will rightly ask: Which traditions? Both sides in the political debate are traditional. Those with a *Paradox* world-view tend to affirm traditions tied to social order, the *Transformer* to traditions of social progress or justice. Both are subjective, changing almost every political season, different in most Western countries, but invariably each lines up on opposite sides of all the important issues. Those with a *Paradox* world-view are not characterized by a position on any single social issue, but by their “value constellation,” with most of the issues they affirm related to social order. In 2001, as I mentioned in a footnote, over two million Americans were in prison; about twenty-percent of the population has a criminal record, with five to six million arrested each year. America has one of the highest levels of criminality of any industrialized country (I believe it is second to South Africa), showing its dominant *Culture in Paradox* world-view. Does America simply have more criminals or does the stress on social order create more criminals? One’s world-view determines which one believes. Moreover, I tell students that wherever capital punishment is practiced, the society is conservative, with a social vision of law and order.

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The *Paradox* world-view must be the most ancient, coming down from the dawn of civilization, perhaps when most still lived in tribes, practicing their traditions and passing them on to their children.

Niebuhr identified Saint Paul (?-67), writer of much of the New Testament, and Martin Luther (1483-1546), leader of the Reformation (1517), as its prime articulators for our modern context; both were social conservatives who took such conditions as slavery and the inferiority of women for granted; their visions, reaffirmed in aspects of Christianity today, continue. Stressing that people should adapt to the world rather than change it, *Paradox* adherents have a pragmatic approach to social problems and the responsibilities of government, while steadfast in their divisions of what is acceptable and unacceptable, just and unjust, moral and immoral. *Paradox* Christianity is the most widespread religious expression in the United States today, and includes many Baptist denominations, some Methodists, even the Church of Christ and the more established Pentecostal groups. The Mormon Church is a non-Protestant *Paradox* religion.

Niebuhr called this world-view "Paradox" because of its "Us against Them" mindset that sees its own nation, religious group, political party, race, ethnic group, or class as superior. All of us do this, of course, to some extent but it is the degrees to which distinctions and discriminations are made that create the paradox. Double-standards, based on this sense of superiority, are actually the goal--thus the primary motive for oppression of all kinds. American multiculturalists, whom most would consider liberal, have actually taken a more protective (or reactive) *Paradox* stance. Because they believe public education is biased in favor of white cultural norms, only African-Americans, therefore, can teach African-American history, Asian-Americans alone should teach their history, Arab-Americans of Arab-American, women of women, and so on. This sense of duality can be traced to biblical times when Saint Paul urged separate sets of behavior toward the redeemed and the unredeemed. Martin Luther later expounded on this in his ethical treatises:<sup>19</sup>

There are two kingdoms of the world...God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy...but the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity....Now he who would confuse these two kingdoms...would put wrath into God's kingdom and mercy into the world's kingdom; and that is the same as putting the devil in heaven and God in hell.

Social traditions are necessary, usually seen as good, since human beings would undermine all order if allowed to express themselves freely. In democratic societies, of course, people leaning toward this world-view may cherish civil liberties--or believe they do--yet the threshold for conflict between certain values and civil liberties is much lower. Burning the American flag arouses fierce indignation among the American *Paradox*. The free enterprise system, as an original social tradition, reflects life's fundamental realities, its primal competitiveness rewarding the industrious and punishing the unmotivated. The entrepreneur is highly esteemed here, since she or he contributes to building society, single-handedly creating prosperity. After the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, the Republican Housing Secretary Jack Kemp proposed private investment to help revive the decimated community, intending to unblock free market forces that create prosperity. Kemp's challenge was to bring Wall Street to the ghetto. The policy had mixed results, yet the fact a policy was articulated shows that conservatives are challenged when their laissez-faire approach does not create enough magic to cure urban poverty.

Society, though imperfect, does not cause anyone to break the law--the choice is personal, even for those disadvantaged by poverty, and lawbreakers must be held responsible for their actions. Prison is primarily for punishing lawbreakers, not reforming them. *Transformer* and *Of Culture*, on the other hand, see social conditions as partly to blame for crime--indeed the cause of criminality. In 1989 the Bush senior Administration applied a *Paradox* approach to addressing the violent crime and drug problem in Washington, D.C. William Bennett, the appointed Drug Czar, proposed hiring more police officers and building more prisons. This policy was perhaps the most apropos, for those with this value system may not feel responsible for changing conditions or unraveling root causes, believing instead that once people understand the boundaries they may finally begin to reform themselves.

The National Rifle Association enunciates the *Paradox* view perfectly in its slogan: "Guns don't kill people. People kill people." The culpability for violence is not in a social tradition but in criminal behavior, so take lawbreakers to jail rather than interfere with the tradition. American conservatives, usually supporters of the death penalty, seem in this instance to contradict their objective for limited government, yet remain consistent from their point of view. The government, with its primary function to preserve order, should have the supreme authority

to execute criminals. *Of Culture* and *Transformer* usually consider the death penalty institutionalized racism or discrimination against the poor.

For conservative Americans, the government should not infringe on religious practice, the nation's economic life with high taxes or unnecessary regulations, or with a person's right to privacy. This belief in privacy does not make them civil libertarians, however. As social conservatives exalting traditional values they usually oppose homosexual marriage, women's abortion rights, and minority designations for government benefits (this, as mentioned above, is energized by *Against Culture* religious fundamentalism). Again, we see the "value threshold." In the 1960s American *Paradox* violently fought racial integration--since it sought to overturn a social tradition: segregation--and they are antagonistic to such programs as Affirmative Action, designed to give minorities a chance to compete in entering college, but for them a slap in the face of honest competition. Conservative Europeans and Canadians, on the other hand, *believe in* government and take a more liberal view on all these social issues.

*Paradox*, as *Above Culture*, believes its values are superior but does not feel as much responsibility for helping the less fortunate. Often saying that social charity perpetuates poverty, conservatives are unlikely to support welfare programs. "The poor need the spur of poverty to motivate them to take responsibility for their condition" was a common mantra during the Reagan Revolution. Nietzsche, who divided society in some of his writings between those with the right to lead and the weak who needed to be led, articulated the feelings of the embattled European aristocracy, displaced from reigning (*Above Culture*) to defending itself for survival (*Paradox*). Disbelieving the world is progressing morally, conservatives feel something of the aristocratic angst in fighting a losing battle. Homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, welfare mothers, drug addiction, rebellious teenagers, godlessness in schools are from liberalism's minimization of traditional values. The Right, often blaming President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" (*Transformer*) policies for the dismal condition of America's inner cities, have something of Nietzsche's critique of weak liberals leading a nation to ruin.

All world-views emanating from a culture have consequences, and the confidence of each is often shattered by a culture's inertia, its resistance in conforming to ideological ideals. Mainstream Americans seemed genuinely shocked in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005) by the tens

of thousands of poor, mostly African-American, residents of New Orleans stranded without sufficient food and water. Even network news programs asked the question many were thinking: Would twenty-thousand middle-class Americans have had to wait for three days before help arrived? Indeed, it was a shocking reproach of the nation's belief system. Why does the "trickle down" theory not work for everyone? Of course, the poor can always be blamed.

The American invasion of Iraq (2003) was planned by those claiming to be Neo-Conservative, and perhaps most are still bewildered about the reason for the invasion: Was it to depose Saddam Hussein, to find and destroy weapons of mass destruction, to control the world's second largest oil reserves, to assert control of the Middle East, to promote democracy in Iraq, to provide lucrative contracts for American oil companies? The answer may be all the above and more. If it were only for oil, then it would be a purely *Paradox* policy. This still may have been the deciding reason, but government policies are usually tortured mixes of world-views. On the surface the invasion appeared *Transformer*: to depose a tyrant and to bring democracy to a people who sincerely hungered for it. We found, however, after the invasion that there had been very little planning for making Iraq democratic. The fact that many other Western democracies, including members of the United Nations security council, did not participate, showed a deep skepticism of American motives. Neo-Conservatives have a *Paradox* world-view. What separates them from nationalists is their international perspective. The invasion may very well have been to impose order on an international scale. Oil is too vital for the world's economy to be controlled by a tyrant bent on undermining the international order.

Though its past is checkered from enforcing social inequality, many consider *Culture in Paradox* representative of an ethnic group's or nation's finer qualities. With prejudice softened by today's multicultural ethic, its belief in traditional values and personal responsibility has attracted many. Both former American President Ronald Reagan (1981-88) and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) won respect internationally by popularizing pride in home and country. Criticized for callousness toward society's less fortunate and for an unwillingness to understand social complexities, *Paradox in Culture* recognizes some of government's limitations and places the responsibility on individuals to better themselves.

### Transformer of Culture/Liberal

- The *Transformer of Culture* world-view honors the innate universal qualities of humanity and the continued renewal of institutions that perpetuate "democratic" procedures.
- People are basically equal but are made unequal by their social environment, which includes many long-held traditions. The environment that shaped people can be reshaped in ways that are beneficial rather than harmful.
- People are basically good but are led astray by the social environment they are living under. People improve once their social conditions improve. Social conditions are at least partly responsible for criminal behavior.

The *Transformer of Culture* world-view has lifted our vision toward the universal in humanity. Without it, there would be no modern society as we know it, no middle-class, no relative equality--such as it is. Slavery, male only suffrage, white male dominance of political life could still be the norm in the West had it not been for the large numbers internalizing aspects of this world-view. Niebuhr never speaks of his own world-view, but by placing the *Transformer of Culture* world-view last in his book we perhaps see where his sympathies lay.

Niebuhr traces its comprehensive articulation, at least our modern sense of it, to John Calvin (1509-64), second generation theologian of the Reformation. This may be surprising for some, but I believe it is true both in a religious and political context. At the very origins of the Reformation, which revivalists today continually hark back to, are liberal beliefs crystalized into religious truths, and their impact remains unfathomable. We often forget the connection between the Reformation and liberal democracy, modern economics, and empirical science. Why were these created or perfected in Reformed Protestant Europe? Why were those who ended slavery, promoted women's suffrage, overturned racial segregation all Christians in the Reformed tradition? When people on a large scale see certain values as absolute, every level of society is affected: this is the power of religious beliefs. Karl Barth (1886-1963), in *The Theology of John Calvin*, wrote that Calvin cannot be claimed by either the left or the right exclusively.<sup>20</sup> But Barth was too narrow according to the modern meaning of liberalism. R. H. Tawney's (1880-1962), the British economic historian, is right on the mark regarding

### Calvinism's social radicalism.<sup>21</sup>

Where Lutheranism had been socially conservative, deferential to established political authorities... Calvinism was an active and radical force. It was a creed which sought, not merely to purify the individual, but to reconstruct Church and State, and to renew society by penetrating every department of life, public as well as private, with the influence of religion.

Many today challenge the thesis of the Reformation giving birth to modern life, but all the alternatives critics mention, while perhaps important in reinforcing the trends, to me seem weak: it developed from city-states in Central Europe or the rise of European nationalism against Catholicism or it was from minority peoples, both religious and ethnic, or from the necessities of trade. When we consider beliefs regarding how society should be, and a value system that made it more conducive for people to cooperate on a large scale, where else could they have come from but a religious movement? The first and foremost quality, as I mentioned throughout, is a vision of human nature--from Calvinism remarkably positive--which Niebuhr elaborated on: "Man's good nature has become corrupted; it is not bad, as something that ought not to exist, but warped, twisted, and misdirected."<sup>22</sup> "Not bad...but...misdirected" are the key words: How could our basic good nature be redirected? Answering this brought about the transformation of Western civilization Tawney wrote of. As it spread like wildfire in Northern and Central Europe, people believed they were creating a new age, as indeed they were. Churches, accustomed to electing church leaders, now wanted to elect political leaders; trade exploded from the trust created by a shared value system; scientific inquiry was an easy step for those who believed they could "renew society by penetrating every department of life...with the influence of religion."<sup>23</sup>

We might be tempted to see the *Transformer* world-view as "the better angels of our nature." Yet world-views, more complicated than simple divisions between good and bad, overlap; and no world-view is morally superior in itself (we cannot judge beliefs in any moral context, only the actions that come from them). But it seems the West, America in particular, is proud of its *Transformer* accomplishments. With the abolition of fascism (*Paradox*) in Germany, Italy, and Japan after the Second World War, the Marshall Plan's goal for stable democratic governments expressed a remarkable trust in people: the citizens



of those countries who waged war would willingly choose what was right once the unjust system was demolished. This trust remains a prominent *Transformer* feature, as does a faith in democratic institutions: people are basically good but are led astray by corrupt social systems. Once the system is improved, people improve. The *Transformer* world-view also resonates with students, since it has brought about the equities we enjoy in life today. Even those too cynical to embrace this perspective still acknowledge its basic humanity. Animosity is rife between the *Paradox* and *Transformer* positions, following "class warfare" politics in Western nations: the well-off defending their status (*Paradox*) against demands for equality (*Transformer*).

The *Transformer* consecrates the institution as the primary means for social redemption. One reason, perhaps, for the enduring nature of institutions in countries with a Reformed-Protestant heritage. Institutional mechanisms alone--a free press, an independent judiciary, a parliamentary system--propel democracy. Western liberals frequently support civil rights activists in countries like Myanmar and the People's Republic of China because they attack institutionalized one party rule. Conservatives, on the other hand, exalt the free market as a primary link in the democratic evolutionary process, with prosperity creating a middle-class and business sector that demand a say in government policy; Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines have moved from dictatorships to democracies on this basis. Debate is intense on this point. Liberals counter that Taiwanese, South Korean, and Filipino reformers worked for decades to make those democratic transitions possible. The Center for Democracy, founded by former President Jimmy Carter, which promotes democratic institutional reform around the world, is one example of a *Transformer* organization.

In foreign policy we can see general type tendencies. *Transformer* goals for democracy were displayed in Haiti in 1994 when the American military returned Aristide to power as the elected president. The NATO policy in Bosnia and Kosovo became a *Transformer* initiative, a rebuilding for democracy. *Above Culture's* prerogative, by contrast, has been on administration rather than democratic reform. Hong Kong under Great Britain never became democratic, though the last governor, Chris Patton, initiated a framework for elections. The Gulf War in 1990, and later policy toward Iraq, brought punishment rather than reform, a *Paradox* approach.

The weakness in the *Transformer of Culture* has been its demand for conformity, its highhandedness

in imposing its values (the lesson here is that gains come with losses). This, perhaps more than any other single factor, has created furious reactionary movements worldwide, now with conservative governments in most of the industrialized world. Even as a boy growing up in Florida, I was encouraged in the late 1960s as I watched the signs "Colored" and "White" taken from public water fountains and restrooms (this was from the 1964 Civil Rights Act, not enforced until years after, that made public discrimination illegal). Nearly forty years later the results of these policies are mixed.<sup>24</sup> Why? The federal government imposed the North's own experience of race onto the South, and though with less open discrimination the North had a weak history in upholding racial equality itself; in fact it was downright duplicitous. Was the goal only about appearances after all? "You are trying to make us like you"--the South declared during the Civil Rights movement, and this was not necessarily good.

Public school integration, with the hardship of forced-busing and Equal Opportunity legislation in employment and housing, embittered people, often more from the spirit in which the policy was imposed than from its goals; this alienated the middle and lower-middle classes, its natural constituents. The consequences may have been more positive had the southern state governments and citizens been more involved. Today we still see generational poverty, based in part on more insidious racial prejudices. Yes, the discriminatory hierarchical culture of the South was unjust, but were the *Transformer* policies innocent in tackling only the most superficial forms of discrimination, for the sake of fulfilling check lists? African-Americans also reacted to some Civil Rights policies--and not just radical groups like the Nation of Islam--claiming that integration was actually destroying their own culture. They, too, sensed its basic destructiveness of uniqueness.

Standardization, conformity, one-size-fits-all is the double-edge of the *Transformer* world-view in its modern manifestations, based, I believe, on the premise that conformity is equality. *Against Culture* and *Of Culture* allow for differences, on spiritual and humanistic grounds respectively--even *Paradox in Culture*, despite its severe judgments regarding superiority, recognizes cultural uniqueness and refrains from disturbing it. Canada, still unable to agree on a constitution--mainly because of Quebec, and European countries, consistently voting "no" on entering the European Union, both show concerns over a loss of autonomy, a fear that individual cultures will be regulated out of existence.<sup>25</sup>

The *Transformer* world-view shares the belief



with *Of Culture* that society *can* become what it *should* become, but elevates education and democratic institutions as the primary agencies for change. America's Democratic Party and Europe's liberal parties today follow this tradition of creating a better society. The belief that governments should safeguard the quality of life and an optimism that even the most daunting social problems can be solved with enough effort and goodwill are two of its greatest legacies.

### Coda: Now and Later

I should repeat some of my earlier questions: What is a world-view? It is a set of beliefs about human nature and culture. Niebuhr's paradigm is a way to recognize and compare general belief patterns people have that attempt to answer such questions as: What is the common good? Should governments promote the common good? Where do values come from? Why are there social evils? How should government deal with its evils? To what degree can people be trusted? In what ways do people define themselves within their groups in relationship to mainstream culture?

What is culture? It is normative society. In a world-view context, culture is what people conceive "mainstream" to be and the value judgments they place on it. Categorizing society, or beliefs about society, is like drawing lines on water because its movements are so swift; generally the movements have been progressive in the postwar era. Until the mid-1960s African-Americans throughout the southern United States had to drink from separate water fountains, use separate public restrooms, attend separate schools, and live in separate neighborhoods. Today, because *Transformer* values have become more normative (at least in terms of appearances), even social conservatives feel the ending of segregation was indeed social progress. Apartheid fell apart in South Africa by 1994 and I doubt the former racial ruling class would want to turn the clock back, since they were castigated internationally as pariahs. Social justice and basic decency have become norms worldwide and few violators today escape censure. One's view regarding legalized abortion, corporate accountability, environmental protection, capital punishment, homosexual marriage, the preservation of one's national culture, the promotion of human rights internationally, among many other current issues, would demonstrate an individual's or a group's world-view in our time. One's world-view in the next generation may center on different issues (homosexual marriage

and the abolition of capital punishment may become normative--both already have in many places), yet whatever the position it will emanate from basic world-view values, hinging particularly on equality, whether or not to affirm it.

John Calvin was a leftist radical in his time, as were all Protestants in sixteenth century Europe. Today these early Calvinists seem radically conservative, with their strict doctrines and belief in capital punishment for heresy. Since liberalism has become standard we can compare Calvin in a different light. If liberalism had failed, however, he might seem as radical to us as he was in the sixteenth century. Normative values have an entropy, appearing to us more absolute than they in fact are. At any point history could have shifted, imbuing us with a different reality-base. It was not very long ago that slavery and women as nonpolitical entities were normative, as were public torture and beheadings; today we cannot imagine how these things were allowed. In considering world-views, we enter the dusky world of "What if?" and understand our fundamental sensibilities are relative, largely contingent on the vicissitudes of history, culture, upbringing, generational experience, temperament, gender, and age.<sup>26</sup>

As I mentioned in my introduction, the model does not follow the current political designations: not all *Transformers* are Democrats, nor are all *Of Culture* socialists; hardly any *Above Culture* liberals today are monarchists. Niebuhr's model is broader than current political labels and considers fundamental beliefs underlying politics. A Libertarian, for example, who believes that government should not interfere with an individual's privacy, may vote Republican and consider herself a conservative, yet she would probably not have a *Paradox* world-view, as do most "law and order" conservatives. This "Vermont" conservative believes that people should be allowed to follow their consciences, reflecting a more positive view of human nature, perhaps along the *Of Culture* lines of Henry David Thoreau. For this person, a belief in limited government may not come from supporting traditional values that keep people in check but from a belief that people will be just fine if you leave them alone.

When did world-views originate and why do we have them? World-views are very old in Western civilization and all five discussed here were articulated very early, some hundreds of years before the birth of Christ in ancient Greece and Israel, but their modern rebirths came from the Reformation (sixteenth century), the Enlightenment

(eighteenth century), and the Romantic Movement (nineteenth century), all incredibly powerful movements that brought diversity of thought, indeed technological and social progress, to Western civilization. Before these movements, Westerners by and large were in the slumber of *Above Culture*, under Church leaders, aristocracies, monarchies, and emperors. The appropriation of a world-view may have arisen from a division in modern life between the public and private self, as communal life broke apart during nineteenth century industrialization. A world-view is in one sense an attempt to come to terms with the incredible stimulation of modern life, in a process of negation and affirmation. The private self remains a mystery, with the public self part of a patterned way of approaching daily life, molded and channeled by political trends. The public self that once reveled in political labels has suffered a crisis of identity after the Cold War (1946-1990), since politics is no longer a substitute for religion as it was under Trotsky, Lenin, or Mao. People today seem more skeptical, less idealistic, and so fall under Niebuhr's less ideological types, *Above Culture* and *Culture in Paradox*.

People are more consistent with a world-view than with a political designation. A world-view emanates from a deeper place, similar to a sense of what is right and proper. If a political stance is the personality, then the world-view is the soul or spirit; at times politics and world-views are in harmony. Charismatic leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher seem to convince people to accept *Paradox* sensibilities, yet another leader seems to turn the majority in the opposite direction; later we wonder if underlying world-views actually changed, since political expediency conflicts with internal integrity in politicians and citizens, and both compromise.

People can change their world-views during their adult lives and move from one end of the paradigm to the other, though the change is usually to the right or left in the next world-view. People tend to become more conservative as they get older, for example. For others the changes can be more abrupt. Some may join a religious fundamentalist group and accept its intense *Against Culture* belief system. Others may leave a fundamentalist group and reject its world-view in favor of an *Of Culture* feminist one. We may question a person's sincerity, however, or even emotional stability, if her or his world-view changes too frequently. Institutions sustain a world-view more successfully than individuals. If the institution is related to politics, religion, or the social services it often converts its employees to its

world-view. The religious, the political, and the socially concerned define their public selves more concretely and are more consistent with a world-view than the general population. They have simply thought through the issues of the day or someone else has done so for them.

The model points to the inner life of a person before politics, of what she or he genuinely believes, but this is very complex, since people are not always what they say they are or what they appear to be. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is perhaps alone among the great artists in showing our capacity both for self-deception and for the tolerance of--indeed blindness of--contradictions between the private and the public self. Sociologists always have trouble measuring the gap between what people say they value and how they actually live. Erotic life is part of this. All may say, for example, they believe in family values, but are they faithful to their spouses? Are adulterers more likely to be liberal? This may depend on the extent one feels the pangs of having violated a traditional value (i.e. in the West where monogamy is normative), evidence of its personal importance, or if one is attempting to champion a nontraditional, promiscuous lifestyle. A homosexual in America would automatically seem more sympathetic to civil liberties, as one at odds with mainstream life (though this is in flux), yet some compartmentalize, separating private from public life, and practice an alternative lifestyle while publicly supporting traditional values. What of a homosexual business person? Business people tend not to believe in equality, for them based on differences in ability, and favor social stability--an unregulated free market (a social tradition) with limited taxes and fewer regulations protecting workers--while minorities, sexual or otherwise, favor government safeguards of civil liberties (*Transformer* policies). This person's world-view may depend on the degree of compartmentalization. It is all about the inner life and how a person's acts on it--both what a person believes in her heart of hearts and whether she affirms or chooses not to affirm the status quo--that reveals a world-view.

Why do we not all have the same world-view? A question I also delight in asking classes. If one is a Hegelian or a Marxist, we all will have the same world-view, eventually. As mentioned above, before the Reformation, almost everyone uncritically had an *Above Culture* world-view. The fundamental ways people view life today are very complicated and involve a myriad of factors. If the study of world-views teaches anything, it is how mysterious people can be. Recent studies have also shed some

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light on this question, in more narrow contexts. Frank J. Sulloway, *Born to Rebel* (1996), points out that birth order shapes the personality in more profound ways than previously imagined, more so even than heredity. In his chapter on "Political Trends" Sulloway shows that firstborns, who as parental surrogates formed more rigid orientations in their outlooks, tend toward extremism, whether of the Radical Right or Radical Left. Firstborns are the stern absolutists, the terrorists. Famous left-wing militants, remarkably, were all firstborns: Maximillien Robespierre (1758-94), Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971), Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976), Ernesto (Ché) Guevara (1928-67), for all of whom Lenin's famous statement "To make an omelet one must break eggs" could have been a personal creed. Laterborn reformers, unlike their savagely tough-minded oldest brothers, tend toward moderation and are actually more creative. Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Karl Marx (1818-83), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68) are laterborn moderates, sympathetic to social welfare and winsome in their causes for social equality. Sulloway, whose study shows the same characteristics in both genders, did not address why some are for the status quo while others are for social change, but he certainly gives compelling reasons for extremism.

Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture* (1994), examined the "middleman" minorities--Jewish, Greek, Indian, Lebanese, Chinese, Korean--who tend to be liberal and concludes that a basic liberal predisposition may come from ethnicity. The liberal middleman minorities at first seem to contradict Niebuhr's paradigm: the more one is oriented toward tradition, the more *Paradox* the world-view. Moreover, the middleman minorities, as the ultimate capitalists, should be arch-conservatives. These minorities, among the strongest supporters of social reform in America, preserve their traditions wherever they have gone but are politically liberal. Jewish Americans, for example, vote overwhelming liberal in elections, usually at eighty-percent. While I know of no studies showing the percentages for Greek and Lebanese-American voting patterns, I suspect it would be similar. Overseas Chinese and Indians show similar left-wing characteristics in all their adopted homelands, as have Jews, Greeks, and Lebanese. Oddly, Sowell speaks of guilt from success as the reason for a liberal orientation. Why would religion not be a factor? As mentioned above both Reform Judaism and Orthodox Christianity

have strong liberal social leanings. Perhaps also these minorities, particularly Asian and Indian, from generations of suffering prejudice and discrimination, are simply more sensitive to the value of equality.<sup>27</sup>

World-views are in clusters, with the manifestation of one belief or value indicative of others in the type. I use quotations and films to underscore this, so students can learn to identify a type by a short statement or a short film segment (please see Appendices 2 and 3). I want students to be able to understand, for example, if a person they meet is in favor of promoting human rights for workers in sweatshops managed or contracted by international corporations in the People's Republic of China, this position is merely the tip of a whole cluster of beliefs: beliefs about government responsibility and business accountability, of confidence that change is possible, even a sense that humanity is universal, with everyone deserving of basic rights, reflecting a *Transformer of Culture* or *Of Culture* world-view. The *buzz* words people use, moreover, show predispositions: "human rights," "social justice," "equal rights" (*Transformer/Of Culture* with inclusive language) versus "family values," "the free market," "personal responsibility" (*Paradox* with exclusive language).

Finally, is there a limit to equality, to the degree people can be equal biologically, racially, even spiritually? Do human beings really want to be equal? Nietzsche said that only fools want equality and no doubt many are still in agreement with him: When commonality is the standard, there is no excellence and the best of people will forever go unrealized. However much most may feel that legal equality is important, social equality is a different matter altogether. The powerful *Of Culture* movements of the twentieth century seem to have produced even stronger conservative movements that pushed them back. This makes one wonder if our basic spiritual nature, animating a sense of personal dignity, itself has innate limits on how much similarity with others, based on our yielding, we can accept. Put another way: our vanity drives us to rise above others, often at their expense. Furthermore, humanity's erotic nature is fundamentally discriminatory, based, as far as we understand, on some degree of biology. Is a balance between personal excellence and harmony with others possible? Do people need to always look down on someone somewhere, some of the time, to feel good about themselves? In today's political life underlying the images and the rhetoric, particularly in America, we see the same questions churned around and around, over and over again: Are men

and women basically different? Are some ethnic or national values actually superior? Do certain values regarding human freedom hurt society? Are some religious beliefs more true than others, in terms of social vision? Do some religions embody a divine revelation while others do not? To what degree should the government affirm some traditions, religious or racial, at the expense of others in public life?

I tell students that an *Of Culture* world-view is probably the human race's destiny. I say this not as a Hegelian or a Marxist, but as a humanist who believes humanity will survive and flourish. As the world doubles in population by 2050, we will simply require greater social organization to care for so many people, and though the balance between human distinction and social restraint will remain, restraint may take precedence. How individual freedom contributes to the welfare of the rest of humanity may be the most important question, as well as the degrees to which people will yield for the sake of others, even when they are on the other side of the world. If life in the future is more equitable, in terms of sharing basic resources, it will come from sustained discipline and close cooperation. The experience of the *Of Culture* world-view has taught us how.

## Notes

- 1 America has had only a handful of great theologians (or philosophers) and H. Richard Niebuhr and his brother Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) are two of them. In rereading *Christ and Culture* this year, I am always grateful to Niebuhr, not only for his depth of insight in the way he effortlessly weaves all the great theologians and philosophers over the past two thousand years into his comprehensive world-view descriptions, but also for the humanity and gentleness with which he writes. Niebuhr has no designs on us and aims only to open the world of ideas to us. I also felt a pang of regret for America's lost intellectual tradition, a time when Niebuhr was valued, which I believe came to fruition in about 1920, but by the early 1970s it had already begun to diminish, destroyed by the ideological polarization of the 1960s. The tradition may continue, but for me it is difficult to find, drowned out by ideologues speaking in sound-bites. Clearly, the commercialization of ideas, with the lowering of standards for excellence, has taken its toll on intellectual life. We have no Niebuhr's today, as far as I can tell. I encourage everyone to read *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr was a devout Christian in the Reformed tradition, so some may be put off by the Christian terminology at first, but one must let his ideas unfold, since he is painting the wide landscape of Western belief systems.
- 2 Ernst Troeltsch offered three basic world-views, which would correspond to the three at the center: Culture in Paradox, Above Culture, and Transformer of Culture. Niebuhr added Against Culture and Of Culture and offered compelling descriptions of each.
- 3 H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 29-39.
- 4 Perhaps Goethe (1749-1832) is a good guide: "When we take a man as he is, we make him worse; but when we take a man as if he were already what he should be, we promote him to what he can be."
- 5 Jared Diamond, in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, has an interesting chapter "From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy" on the inequalities created by agriculture. Hunter-gatherer societies that lived in small bands had "leaders" but members were generally equal. Kingdoms developing after agriculture created the amalgamation and centralization of power, and therefore centralized control. All kingdoms, whether in Asia, Africa, Europe, or the Americas, were hierarchical. This may be where the concept of equality begins.
- 6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, please see the first essay: "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad." Nietzsche is unnerving because I have to admit, despite my own liberal biases, he is right regarding liberalism: when all standards for excellence are lowered, the values of the lowest common denominator become standard. I agree that mediocrity, in mass culture, is one of the prices we pay for equality,

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however debased in modern life. Aristocratic cultures have produced the great artists who achieved perfection: Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. Maybe we should be humbled, as a society, that when all voices are equal, the great voices, the ones worth listening to, are drowned out. Nietzsche was a prophet of the right, but I think he continues to speak to our age of mediocrity.

- 7 In considering world-views, we see the "power of beliefs." How much of civilization do we create by our beliefs? There would be no racial underclass in America if the nation actually believed in equality. Today, about half of all African-Americans live in poverty and nearly half of those prosecuted on criminal charges are African-American. When a culture cannot believe in the capacity of people to improve, it puts them in prison. In 1971, for example, about there were about 300,000 prisoners nationwide, by 2001 there were 2.1 million. About one in five Americans has a criminal record.
- 8 The Amish were involved in a Supreme Court case in 1972, which non-Amish people brought on their behalf. Wisconsin school authorities wanted Amish children to attend public school until they were sixteen years old. The Amish custom was to have their children attend only through the eight grade, or until about fourteen years old, the age they begin their apprenticeships. The case became known as Wisconsin Versus Yoder, and the Court ruled in favor of the Amish.
- 9 Please see *A People's History of the Supreme Court* by Peter Irons, pp. 335-47. Irons points out that many communities enacted laws against the Jehovah Witnesses and between 1938 and 1955, ACLU lawyers brought forty-five cases to the Supreme Court and won thirty-six, with one affirming their right not to salute the flag, handed down on Flag Day, June 14, 1943. The NAACP won thirty-two Supreme Court cases during the same years, 1938-55.
- 10 I John 2:15; 5:19.
- 11 Quoted in *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr, pp. 60, 61.
- 12 Henry David Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience*, p. 7.
- 13 Please see Seymour Martin Lipset, "Religion and Politics in America, Past and Present," *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, pp. 309-314, also referred to in *Trust* by Francis Fukuyama, pp. 289-290. The most overlooked determining factor in America's politics is its religious revivalism, which is invariably *Against Culture* in its origins. The great movements that have transformed American life: the Puritans (Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Quakers) of the eighteenth century, the Methodists and Baptists of the nineteenth century, and the Pentecostals of the twentieth century have shaped America's political debate and kept the nation on a relatively conservative path. The Amendment to the Constitution for Prohibition (1920-33), Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist Committee on Un-American Activities (1952-1955), the Reagan Revolution, of which we are still a part, are reactions to *Transformer* and *Of Culture* universalism. The Puritans with the Methodists and Baptists have moved from *Against Culture* to *Transformer of Culture* (this excludes most Southern Baptists). The Pentecostals, with Pat Robertson the most prominent example, are beginning to move toward *Culture in Paradox*.
- 14 John Morley, *Rousseau and His Era*, I, p. 127, quoted in *Rousseau And Revolution* by Will and Ariel Durant, p. 19. Rousseau's philosophy grew out of a spiritual experience he had at the age of thirty-seven during a visit to Paris: "Unable to walk for difficulty in breathing, I sank down under one of the trees by the road, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement that when I rose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with tears.... Ah, if ever I could have written a quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clarity I should have brought out all the contradictions of our social system! With what simplicity I should have demonstrated that man is by nature good, and that only our institutions have made him bad!"
- 15 Quoted in *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr, pp. 91-92.
- 16 The Psalms speak eloquently of the serenity people experienced during the Hebrew temple-state, cared for by a concerned priesthood and protected by the king. Surprisingly, talk continues among Orthodox Jews and Christian fundamentalists of rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple. Orthodox Jews believe Yahweh's presence, the Shekinah, will return to the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. Christians believe the reinstatement of the Temple, with its sacrifices, is the last sign, according to the Book of Revelation, before the Second Coming of Yeshua. While some speak of the stone slabs already cut in preparation for rebuilding an exact duplicate of the Second Temple (516 BCE to 70 CE), it is difficult to see how this could be accomplished, with the Al Aksa Mosque, or Dome of the Rock, on the ancient Temple site.
- 17 William Sullivan, *The Secret of the Incas*, p. 3.
- 18 The *Culture in Paradox* world-view for me is pervasive today. You see it in the smugness and condescension of First World people, their "better-than-thou" attitudes. Perhaps the technological revolution really has produced a new aristocracy. Nietzsche might have been pleased over this development, except I doubt that mass culture computers games, cinema, and television series, and general lack of excellence, would have counted for very much with him.
- 19 Quoted in *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr, pp. 171, 172.
- 20 Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. 226.
- 21 R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p.

- 102.
- 22 H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, p. 194.
- 23 Please see J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, pp. 85, 86 and David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, p. 176. The Calvinist Protestants became ardent supporters of scientific inquiry. From 1666-1866, ninety-two foreign members were elected to the French Academy of the Sciences. Of these, seventy-one were Protestant and only sixteen were Catholic (the five others were either Jewish or another affiliation). This from an estimated pool of 107 Catholics and 68 million Protestants.
- 24 Please see Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, p. 411. Research shows the Civil Rights Acts helped to expand the black professional class. Black families earning \$25,000 a year, based on the dollar's value in 1982, went from 10% to 25% of black families from 1960 to 1982. Programs have also helped, particularly Affirmative Action. In 1970, 522,000 black Americans were in college, but the number nearly doubled to one million in 1980. Unfortunately, poverty has increased for the other 75% of black families that were unable to enter middle-class America. From 1960 to 1980 the number of single-parent families, usually with a single mother, increased to 40% of all black families; it is 70% in the inner city neighborhoods, compared to 12% of all white families (single-parent families are more likely to be poor). By 1980 black Americans, with 13% of the population, made up 43% of all the welfare cases (government payments for basic food and housing needs).
- 25 In education we see a microcosm of *Transformer* policy gone awry. What is never questioned is its fundamental proposition: conformity gets results; but what are the results? People who know how to conform. Today these are tied to market place concerns, as the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (quoted in *The Twilight of American Culture* by Morris Berman, p. 46) pointed out:

The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete and will become even more so....Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases the goal is exchange.

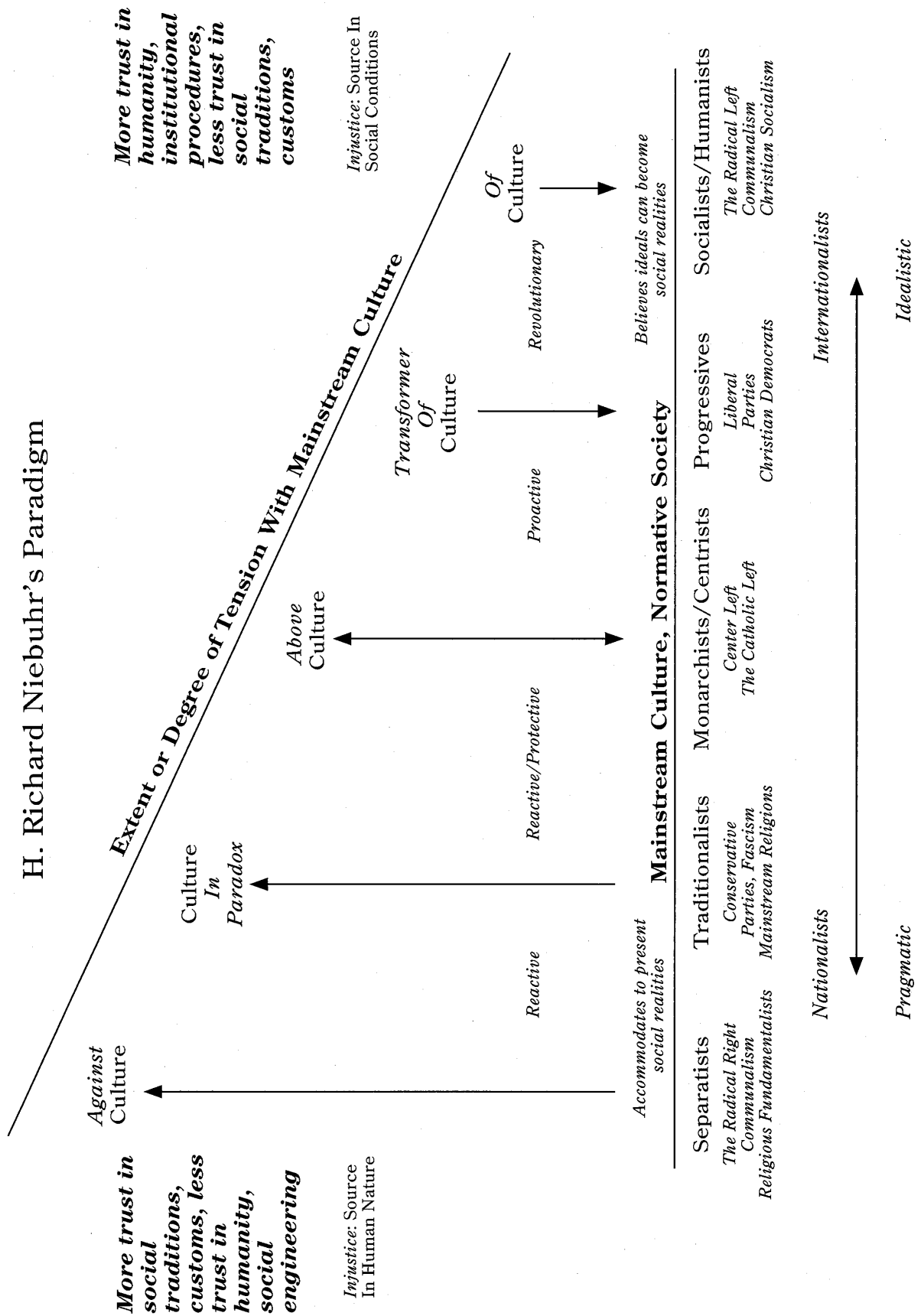
Standardization might be fine if indeed it were for "the training of minds," but this is often not the case. We may applaud the lessening of gender and racial discrimination in the workplace, among other safeguards, but the trade off has been uniqueness, creativity, the diversity of ideas, experimentation. The best students are always those who sense that

institutional conformity is destructive of true learning.

- 26 Please see Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality*, for a remarkable study on just how fragile our sense of reality is. The Romantic movement, Berlin asserts, is actually responsible for so much of the diversity in Western life, of a remarkable opening up of one's inner life.
- 27 Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture*, pp. 58, 59. Sowell recognizes the connection between middleman minorities and left-wind politics, but he is hard pressed to say why this is so and only says more study is needed. The feeling of not being accepted is a double-edged sword, however. On the one hand, group solidarity in a foreign land gives one a feeling of security, particularly if one's group maintains ethnic traditions, but always feeling an outsider, when one contributes as much to the country, the economy, as indigenous peoples and yet does not enjoy the same status presses hard upon them all and so it is an easy step for them to raise the banner of equality.

Appendix 1

Political World-Views Based On  
H. Richard Niebuhr's Paradigm



## Appendix 2

### Excerpts and Designations

1. **They said, 'You have a blue guitar. You do not play things as they are.' The man replied, 'Things as they are, Are changed upon the blue guitar.'** Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), American Poet

*Reactive Versus Proactive*--The poet Wallace Stevens expressed something of the "ethereal" or non-empirical nature of world-views, the reason debate between them is often so fruitless. Before any politics, people have a basic sensibility or orientation. For the *Transformer of Culture* and especially *Of Culture*, human nature, and thus society, is mutable, capable of fundamentally changing. For the *Culture in Paradox* and *Against Culture* both human nature and society are more fixed and immutable; the way things are will remain that way. It is, therefore, things as they "are" versus things as they "may be."

2. **Some men see things as they are, and say "why?" I dream of things that never were, and say "why not?"** Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968)

*Transformer of Culture* or *Of Culture*--The statement quoted by Robert Kennedy, though he was talking about social justice, is similar to Wallace Stevens's poem and captures the fundamental questions people ask throughout their lives: "To what degree should I be oriented toward the way things actually are? To what degree should I work for change?" A person's view of human nature will determine the answers to those questions. The *Transformer* and *Of Culture* are more oriented toward the ideal of a humane and equitable society.

3. **In Macon County, Alabama, I read Marx, Freud, T.S. Eliot, Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Hemingway, books which seldom, if ever, mention Negroes were to release me from whatever segregated idea I might have had of my human possibilities.** Ralph Ellison (1914-94), black American novelist

*Transformer of Culture* or *Of Culture*--Both world-views, as a goal, attempt to step outside racial designations toward what is universal in human nature.

4. **We (black Americans) have a different way of responding to the world.... The job requires someone who shares the specifics of the culture of black Americans.... Let's make a rule. Blacks don't direct Italian films. Italians don't direct Jewish films. Jews don't direct black American films.** August Wilson (1945-2005), African-American playwright

*Culture in Paradox* or *Against Culture*--August reflects the more *Paradox* or protective view of multiculturalists, who tend to see the history, literature, and art forms of a people the domain of that group of people alone. Therefore, only those from that group can truly "understand" and "convey" that history, literature, or art form. *Of Culture* and *Transformer* types tend not to see race or ethnicity this way; with their focus on the commonality of humanity, the art of one group is the gift to all, the tragedy of one group the tragedy of all. All people, regardless of cultural background, can internalize the experience of others because of their shared humanity.

5. **Imagine there's no countries.... Imagine no religion.... Imagine no possessions.... Imagine all the people living life in peace.** John Lennon (1940-80), 1971

*Of Culture*--Students always get this right, because it is so clearly stated. If the traditions that divide people--countries, religion, possessions--are taken away, then there may be peace. Everyone could live as one.

6. **Commerce is the grand panacea which...will serve to inoculate with the healthy and saving taste for civilization all nations of the world.** Richard Cobden (1804-65) British economist and politician

*Above Culture*--Cobden expresses the more liberal *Above Culture* belief, that through a social tradition--commerce--the world would become civilized. Surprisingly, this view is also expressed by American



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conservatives today who tend to see trade as the vehicle for democratic reform. Most would probably be *Above Culture* liberals in Niebuhr's paradigm.

7. **We rejoice in the movements, appearing in many parts of the world at once, which are inspired by the desire for social justice, equal rights for all races, and the dignity of the individual person.** Quaker Declaration, World Conference, Oxford, England 1952; commemoration of 300th anniversary

*Of Culture*-- Of course, *Transformer* would also agree with this. Notice the language: social justice, equal rights, the dignity of the individual. Here is an articulate expression of universalism.

8. **All the state obligations are against the conscience of a Christian: the oath of allegiance, taxes, law proceedings and military service.** Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)

*Against Culture*--As mentioned above, this great writer became an *Against Culture* Christian, really a sect of one, after middle-age, expressing here a commitment not to participate in his government on any level, since it is against a Christian's conscience.

9. **I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.** Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) *Civil Disobedience*, 1849

*Against Culture* or *Transformer of Culture* or *Of Culture*--I have a lot of fun with this statement. As I mentioned above, a world-view is seen by how a belief is acted upon. What will Thoreau do? Will he separate (*Against Culture*), will he work within the system to change it (*Transformer of Culture*), or will he try to overthrow the government to change everything (*Of Culture*)?

10. **The dissenting opinion has continued as a great American tradition. It is as true to the character of our democracy as of free speech itself.** William O. Douglas (1898-1980), U.S. Supreme Court Justice

*Transformer of Culture*--Students, almost ninety-percent of the time, mistake this statement by Douglas for *Paradox*, because of the word "tradition." But when the tradition is a "dissenting opinion" the society is always changing. The *Transformer* type is much more comfortable with freedom of speech than perhaps all the other types (excluding communal *Of Culture*), who tends to see it in a social justice context.

11. **The basic fact of segregation, which warps and twists the lives of our Negro population, [is] itself discriminatory.** Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

*Of Culture* or *Transformer of Culture*--Mrs. Roosevelt located the source of injustice, the warping and the twisting of lives, in a social tradition. The tradition itself is discriminatory, and so must be changed for the good of society.

12. **The Soviet Union is an Evil Empire and must be contained.** President Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), 1982

*Culture in Paradox*--This statement often fools students, too, who see it as *Transformer*, since Reagan identified "evil" in an institution, something *Transformer* tends to do. The word "contained" is the key. *Paradox* often see themselves as having their fingers in the dike that prevents a flood of evil from coming through.

13. **It is necessary for him who lays out a state and arranges laws for it to presuppose that all men are evil and that they are always going to act according to the wickedness of their spirits whenever they have free scope.** Niccoló Machiavelli (1467-1527)

*Culture in Paradox*--Machiavelli seems to jump right into modern times through his famous book, *The Prince* (1513). If he were reincarnated today he could easily become a leader of a conservative party almost anywhere in the world. Notice his view of human nature: people are fixed in their selfishness and a ruler must act accordingly and not allow them free scope. This could be on the charter of almost any current conservative

party.

**14. Not inferring, But co-inhering...We are all brothers. None faceless Others.** W.H. Auden (1907-73),  
*Hymn to the United Nations*, 1971

*Of Culture*--Both the *Of Culture* and *Transformer of Culture* world-views are sympathetic to universalism. The United Nations actually embodies *Of Culture* ideals. Though it has no real independent power today, it could be a model for future governance, if the world one day cooperates more closely internationally. *Of Culture* honors the universal family, as the poet Auden expressed in inclusive language.

**15 These unhappy times call for the building of plans that...build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.** Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), 1932

*Of Culture*--I tend to see most of the New Deal policies as *Of Culture*. Here Roosevelt expresses a typical *Of Culture* position, of respect for the common people, those at the bottom, and from them as the starting point to determine national policy. Of course, *Transformer of Culture* would agree with this, but *Culture in Paradox* definitely would not.

**16. I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver--no, not I.... I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare!** Malcolm X (1925-65), Cleveland, Ohio April 3, 1964

*Against Culture*--As I mentioned above, people with this world-view often have little respect for the state. For Malcolm X, America's history of oppression has made it unacceptable for African-Americans to participate even in the most rudimentary displays of patriotism, saluting the flag.

**17. All subjects are bound to obey that for divine law which is declared to be so by the laws of the commonwealth.** Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

*Above Culture*--Hobbes, the brilliant British philosopher, expresses the more ancient monarchical world-view; people are subject to obey the laws which come from God. I think he implies the monarchy is the mediator in this process to the commonwealth.

**18. [T]o separate them (black children)...solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to be undone.... We conclude unanimously that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.** Justice Earl Warren (1891-1974) *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954

*Transformer of Culture*--Earl Warren was a Republican, appointed by Eisenhower, but the former governor of California took a very different view from traditionalists, showing that the paradigm transcends political labels. Notice that Warren points to a social tradition, segregation, as crippling or scarring a race of people. Once the tradition is changed, he implies, people will be assured of their status in the community. Warren exalts equality and deprecates segregation as enforcing inequality.

**19. Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.** Governor George Wallace (1919-98), January 1963

*Culture in Paradox*--Wallace expressed complete faith in a social tradition. As I mentioned in my introduction, those with a *Paradox* world-view believe that certain values are for all time. Wallace, himself, is a study of change, however. He was elected governor of Alabama again in the 1980s with the support of African-Americans; Wallace evolved with the Democratic party.

- 20. ...but this time [The Civil War] we must make it a whole country, for all who live here, so that all can speak.... We fight for men and women (slaves) whose poetry is not yet written, but will presently be as enviable and as renowned as any.** Captain Robert Shaw (1839-63), in letter from Antietam, Maryland, 1862

*Transformer of Culture*--It is surprising that people growing up in a country with slavery would disagree with it, but we find the nineteenth century abolitionists remarkably modern. They really did believe in equality. Notice also the inclusive language, typical of the *Transformer*: *whole, all*. Shaw, a native of Massachusetts, also expressed faith that once their oppression is overthrown, slavery being the social tradition, African-Americans will rise to heights equal to any other people.

- 21. Now, I do not believe the Almighty ever intended the Negro to be the equal of the white man. If He did, He has been a long time demonstrating it.** Stephen Douglas (1813-61), Northern politician, 1838

*Culture in Paradox* or *Above Culture*--Douglas, in considering the nature of life and what appears "normal" or "natural" expresses something of a past ethic of both *Paradox* and *Above Culture*.

- 22. To maintain that Slavery is in itself sinful, in the face of all that is said and written in the Bible upon the subject...seems to me to be little short of blasphemous!** Alexander P. Stevens (1812-83), Confederate Vice-President

*Culture in Paradox*--This statement upholds a traditional way of life, in this case slavery, based on *Paradox* teachings in the New Testament by Saint Paul. It may not express an *Against Culture* world-view, who are more skeptical of social traditions and may find them as unjust as *Transformer* or *Of Culture*.

- 23. We intend to make the world safe for democracy.** Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), American President

*Transformer of Culture*--Typically an active, *Transformer* belief that it is possible to change the world, if not making every nation democratic, at least making sure that democracy succeeds.

- 24. We have dedicated ourselves to serve all men in everything that can be helpful to the preservation of men's lives, but we find no freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in any thing by which men's lives are destroyed or hurt. We beg the patience of all those who believe we err in this point.** Benjamin Hershey, an Amishman, 1775

*Against Culture* or *Of Culture*--Here the Amishman expresses the Amish insistence on not participating in a war, or in any other purpose, that would hurt other people; this could also be *Of Culture*, since it expresses a universalism. *Of Culture* would like to see this universalism spread, but *Against Culture* does not expect others to change very much.

- 25. We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people--the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world.** Herman Melville (1819-1891) in *White Jacket* (1850)

*Transformer of Culture*--Melville expressed a central belief of American culture from a very early time, of its responsibility for bearing democracy to the rest of the world. I suspect there is some irony in this statement, too.

- 26. People are homeless in America because they choose to be.** Reagan administration statement

*Culture in Paradox*--This statement expresses the belief that people are absolutely responsible for themselves regardless of experience or social conditions.

- 27. All temporal things are placed under the dominion and power of the church and especially of the supreme pontiff.** Aegidius Romanus (1247-1316)

***Above Culture***--Romanus reflects the medieval belief that all authority on earth is derived from God through the Pope and the Roman Church.

**28. No man ever followed his genius till it misled him.** Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

***Of Culture***--While Thoreau advocated for non-participation in his essay *On Civil Disobedience* (1849), his fundamental vision, as a Transcendentalist, was *Of Culture*, of following one's genius apart from social standards, empty values and conventions.

**29. For here on earth, the work of God must truly be our own.** John F. Kennedy (1917-63), Inaugural Address, 1961

***Above Culture* or *Transformer of Culture* or *Of Culture***--What is the work of God? Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, may have been thinking of the gospels, where the work of God was ministering to those in need, and so government policy should in some measure address issues of poverty. Also, Yeshua of Nazareth is the Prince of Peace and perhaps in foreign policy his government would promote peace. The statement can be read as proactive and could have been part of any of the world-views above. Why not *Against Culture* and *Culture in Paradox*? For them, God is more distant from the cultures of the world, though he may help his elect. God has no part in the wars, the poverty, the diseases of this world. In *Paradox* theologies in particular, God is removed from the world, which is destined to pass away, so there is little commitment to social transformation.

### Appendix 3

#### *World-Views in Films*

Students sometimes ask whether film makers intend to sell their world-view and of course the answer is "yes." It is also an opportunity for students, in studying world-views, to identify biases in the presentation of dramatic material. I show the segment, then ask students to identify the world-view and explain why. Most are clearly one world-view or a conflict between two.

#### *Against Culture*

***The Apostle (1998)***: This film, produced by Robert Duvall, is a gold mine for understanding American culture. I use the first fifteen minutes or so, where the apostle stops his car to preach the gospel to a couple severely injured in an automobile accident. Later he goes on an evangelistic crusade. The film shows present-day revivalists bringing people from various backgrounds together in fellowship. Students gain a sense, I believe, of the powerful evangelical Christian subculture that has become increasingly engaged in politics.

***Malcolm X (1993)***: About one quarter through the second section of this two part film, Malcolm X is giving a speech, first in Harlem and later in a Nation of Islam Temple, expounding on the reasons why African-Americans cannot be both "black" and "American." Inserted into these scenes is the real film footage of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his nonviolent approach. It shows a powerful contrast between two world-views.

Malcolm X (1925-65) reflected the more ultra-nationalistic *Against Culture* world-view that both Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) and Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) held before him. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68) maintained an integrationist, *Transformer* world-view, as does Jessie Jackson today. Frederick Douglass (1817-95) and W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963), also *Transformer*, were earlier advocates of equal rights for African-Americans within American society.

***Witness (1985)***: The scene about a third into the film shows Eli Lapp, the Amish grandfather, with his grandson Samuel, sitting at a table with a gun in front of them. Eli begins to explain the Amish beliefs of nonviolence. Following is a scene between Rachel, Samuel's mother, and the owner of the gun, John Book--the policeman the Amish are protecting. Rachel tells Book about Amish beliefs regarding the way they dress and their refusal to use modern utilities. Toward the end of the film is a realistic portrayal of an Amish barn-raising, showing the closeness of community life.

***Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972)***: This marvelous film by Zeffirelli on the life of Saint Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226) impresses students with its simplicity, of a person turning from materialism to serve God. I use the same section for *Above Culture*, where Saint Francis, after going through a transformation at church, begins giving his father's merchandise (cloth) to a hoarding crowd. His father brings him before the bishop for this. Francis tells his father he is no longer his son, throws off his clothes in front of the crowd, and begins his mission of following the words of Yeshua: to take no thought for your life and to live as the birds. There are many scenes in the film where Francis, sensitive to social conditions of the poor and ambivalent about accumulating wealth, shows an *Against Culture* world-view: to love God and everyone else, outside the power structures of society.

#### *Of Culture*

***Patch Adams (1997)***: Based on a true story, I believe this film very clearly shows the *Of Culture* world-view (students invariably answer correctly), of someone leaving the system, in this case the inhumane medical system, to begin something new. About half way through the film, Adams gets the idea for his new clinic after seeing a woman, who had just lost her husband in an automobile accident, forced by a nurse to fill out insurance forms. Adams says that he wants to open a clinic where everyone is treated with respect, where no one has a "title," where everyone is "equal." His free clinic is thriving in northern Virginia today, operated by volunteers.

***Dead Poets' Society* (1989):** Though the private school is Presbyterian (*Transformer*) the teacher, Mr. Keating, is *Of Culture*. Todd, a student crippled by shyness, is encouraged by Keating to be in touch with a deeper part of himself. About a third of the way through the film, Keating brings Todd in front of the class to spontaneously make a poem. Here is a positive view of human nature, that people can heal themselves if given the chance. After this section, Keating encourages his students not to conform, but to follow their own inner voice--an *Of Culture* vision from Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman.

***Mosquito Coast* (1986):** In the first ten minutes of the film we see why a slightly paranoid environmentalist, who despises American culture and the international trading system, wants to take his family to an isolated part of Central America. What makes the main character, Mr. Fox, *Of Culture* instead of *Against Culture* is his attempt to start a new way of life in the jungles, using his invention, which without electricity turns water into ice.

***Reds* (1981):** This film is based on the life of American journalist and socialist John Reed (1887-1920), the only American buried in the Kremlin. Reed helped found the American Communist Labor Party, but after he was indicted for sedition fled to Russia in 1917, where he wrote *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919) of the Russian revolution. The film realistically shows socialists and their organizations in early twentieth America. Several sections midway through the film show the "ideological" orientation toward changing society as they argue about the future. The film also has many fascinating interviews of Reed's associates, including the writer Henry Miller (1891-1980).

***Easy Rider* (1969):** About twenty minutes into the film, the two motorcyclists arrive at a commune in the desert, where young people from the city are attempting to farm. Before they eat a communal meal, one member prays, affirming their commitment both to "make a stand" against urban materialism and to be generous to others. *Of Culture* attempts to blaze a new path, a new way of life, in this segment a social experiment back to nature.

***The Grapes of Wrath* (1940):** John Steinbeck (1902-1968), a socialist, believed government sponsored programs were morally superior to the unrestrained free market. At the very end of the film, after the Oklahomans had been abused by free enterprise mercenaries, they stumble upon a government operated camp during the Roosevelt years. Roosevelt's New Deal was an *Of Culture* program for its time, with the government taking the lead in creating jobs, something that had never happened before in America. The New Deal program that Steinbeck portrays has free elections; all the duties are shared by a committee, of which everyone is part. We see the vision of *Of Culture*, that people will flourish once they are treated humanely and have a measure of say in how they are governed. The segment, about five minutes long, ends with Mr. Joad turning off a running water facet, showing his more respectful attitude toward his environment after he and his family are finally treated with a measure of respect.

### *Above Culture*

***Moonstruck* (1988):** Some students have trouble distinguishing between Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity, so I show the scene where Loretta confesses her sins to a priest, about a third of the way through the film. Loretta is forgiven, the priest tells her to be careful and to reflect on her life, but she must do some penance. Here is the hierarchical nature of *Above Culture*, where the priest forgives Loretta in place of Christ, as his representative.

***Gandhi* (1982):** At the very beginning of this historical film (1893), Mohandas Gandhi (1862-1948)--who had been thrown out of the train in South Africa because he refused to leave the first class compartment--with other Indian Hindus and Muslims, organizes a rally to burn their passbooks, which restrict them in British controlled South Africa, an example of the hierarchical and racial nature of colonialism. Gandhi's great courage shines through as he continues burning the passbooks even as he is beaten mercilessly. Later, when Gandhi tells British administrators that they will have to leave India, the administrators assure him that India is British (from their point of view, India has been already completely incorporated into the Empire).

Here, Gandhi represents the *Transformer* world-view because he is working for change within the institutional

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framework, appealing to its own ideals of fairness and decency. *Of Culture* is more radical in its approach and may try to overturn the existing power structures.

***Chariots of Fire (1981)***: The film is based on the true story of two British Olympic Gold Medalists, Harold Abrahams (Jewish) and Eric Liddell (Christian). About midway through the film, after the team arrives in Paris (1922), Eric Liddell refuses to run on the day scheduled for him, a Sunday, the Lord's day of rest. The Prince of Wales meets with Liddell to persuade him to change his mind, out of respect for his country's honor. Here is the paternalistic relationship between the ruling class and British subjects and also an assertion of the value of one's nation (*Above Culture*). Liddell, however, will not back down, since he is following the Bible. Liddell, by the way, represents a universal, *Transformer* world-view. As a Presbyterian, he sees God's law as higher than any nation's. Liddell became a missionary in China and died in a Japanese camp during the Second World War.

***Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972)***: About thirty minutes into this story of Saint Francis' life, Francis begins to throw his father's merchandise from a window after a spiritual transformation. His father takes him to the Roman Catholic bishop, showing the civil responsibilities of religious authorities.

### *Culture in Paradox*

***Wall Street (1987)***: Close to one third of the way through the film, Gordon Gecko, a financier, speaks to the stock holders of Teldar Paper, where he, as the largest stock holder, affirms that the free market and human greed will win out in the end and save not only the company but also a debt-ridden United States. Students must listen carefully--often they say he is *Transformer*, but Gecko is affirming a social tradition: competition in a free enterprise system.

In a second scene, a little after the one mentioned above, Lou, an older stock broker at the company he and Bud Fox (the main character) work for, tells Bud about his beliefs in the "goodness" of the free market. What investors do contributes to society by raising money for both business and education. This is good for the country and they should be proud of what they are doing.

***Serial (1980)***: Traditional values are important in this film set in Marin Country California. After a dizzying experience with all the social experimentation possible, from drugs to religious cults, the family finds peace in the end by reaffirming traditional marriage vows and by moving away to Denver (it is a comedy). The "reaffirmation" of the wedding vows at the end of the film shows the importance of returning to traditions in a rapidly changing society.

### *Transformer of Culture*

***The American President (1995)***: At the end of the film the Democratic President, at a press conference during a campaign for a second term, admits he is a card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union. While the ACLU probably falls in the *Of Culture* type, the President is *Transformer*, reflected in his absolute belief in the freedom of speech, which he expounds on.

***A River Runs Through It (1992)***: A scene about halfway through this film based on the autobiographical book by Norman Maclean, shows Norman, his brother Paul, and their girlfriends entering a Speakeasy during Prohibition. The doorman, Murph, at first refuses to admit Paul's girlfriend, Mable, because she is Native American. Paul and Norman, Presbyterians, stand their ground, examples of the more progressive *Transformer* attitude toward the equality of people.

### *Transformer Versus Paradox* A Few Social Issues

***Cider House Rules (1999)***: Abortion, one of the controversial issues that divides people in America, is dealt with here in a short scene, about twenty minutes into the film. It shows a young woman coming to the orphanage where the doctor, Doctor Larsch, illegally performs abortions. The woman was hopelessly injured

already by someone who tried to perform an abortion. After they bury her, the doctor and his young assistant (Homer Wells) each expresses the different positions on abortion: the doctor saying that people must be given a choice (*Transformer*), but the assistant declaring that people should be responsible for themselves, for not making the wrong decision in the first place (*Paradox*). Students are able to correctly identify the world-views and their reasons most of the time.

***Dead Man Walking (1996)***: The Roman Catholic nun, Sister Helen Prejean, probably has an *Of Culture* world-view, seen in her humanitarian, educational program in New Orleans in the beginning of the film. The film is based on her book about her efforts to help Matthew Poncelot, a man condemned to die for murder. One scene between Sister Helen and the parents of one of the murder victims portrays the *Paradox* view; the parents feel it a duty to punish people for the harm they have done. Sister Helen, however, believes in the capacity of people to change, and so after Poncelot loses his appeal she helps him admit the truth of what actually happened, liberating him from his guilt and anger prior to his execution.

I often use the scene, about halfway through the film, where a hearing is held in the prison for an appeal for clemency, since Poncelot did not have proper representation (a tax lawyer represented him). The lawyer for Poncelot said only poor people are on death row, affirming the *Transformer* tendency to believe that discrimination, in this case against the poor, is institutional. The government lawyer affirms that justice must be done, regardless of Poncelot's social status. Since he always will be a criminal, it is time to carry out the sentence.

***Forrest Gump (1996)***: This segment, about thirty minutes into the film, includes the network news footage (NBC) of Governor George Wallace (1919-98) blocking the doorway of the University of Alabama, where Forrest is a football star, to show his disapproval of enrolling the first black students, Jimmy Hood and Vivian Malone, in May 1963.

The *Transformer* ruling (*Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*) to integrate the nation's public schools and colleges directly challenged a social tradition (segregation) that Governor Wallace publicly resisted. The *Transformer* world-view holds that once an unjust social practice that enforced inequality is overthrown, people will want to follow what is "good" and "right," since the social system has warped people. Many southerners, however, saw *Brown v. Board of Education* as government tyranny that threatened a way of life, a tradition the majority of local people supported.

We see the "reactive" *Paradox* and the "active" *Transformer* positions, with the *Paradox* seeking to preserve a tradition and the *Transformer* overturning it to enforce equality. Governor Wallace's position was popular at the time. He ran independently for President in 1968 and over ten million people voted for him.

***Glory (1989)***: The film is based on the true story of one of the first black regiments, the 54th Massachusetts. About midpoint we first see abolitionists who followed the Union Army in its occupation of the South (the scene is in South Carolina). Abolitionists, typical of *Transformer* beliefs, organized to teach former slave children to read and write, since education for them fosters social progress.

Following this is the attack on Darien, Georgia (1863), which the 54th Massachusetts took part in. Colonel Montgomery, Shaw's superior, represents the attitude of many Northern soldiers, offering clear differences between these two most prominent world-views. Those holding the *Paradox* world-view are social conservatives, who strongly believe in social order: violators of the order must therefore be punished. So Montgomery burned the small village to the ground, though only civilians were there, to punish southerners for their rebellion against the Union. Soldiers like Montgomery, who did not believe in equality, were fighting not to overthrow slavery but to keep their country together. Shaw, of course, believes in equality; his participation in the war was to lift the status of African-Americans.

***Biloxi Blues (1988)***: Surprisingly, this autobiographical Neil Simon film shows the two positions on homosexuality, at about midpoint. When one member of their platoon is accused, most of the soldiers feel it is against nature, but one of the soldiers--actually the one least likely to say this--believes people should be



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allowed to do what they want as long as they do not bother anyone. The scene ends with the accused young man arrested and taken to Leavenworth. The two positions are clearly shown: *Transformer* or *Of Culture* (live and let live attitude) versus a *Culture in Paradox* perspective based on tradition.

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