



America BEFUDDLED

What's Killing our Beloved Country and How to Fix It

or

The Perfect Storm that's Destroying Democracy

By Robert Porter Lynch
Abridged Version 1.0 August 2021

The aim of this alert is four-fold:

1. To explain the ***underlying causes*** of the bizarre behavior in America
2. To examine the ***onerous methods*** used to perpetuate this behavior
3. To project the ***consequences*** if nothing is done to change course
4. To specify what ***must be done*** to turn the tide

CONTENTS

Part 1 – What’s Happening to our Beloved America	3
Mass Manipulation	3
BEFUDDLED Unmasked	3
Blame.....	3
Enemies	3
Fear.....	4
Uncertainty.....	4
Doubt.....	4
Distrust	5
Lies	5
Extremism.....	5
Discord.....	6
Part 2 – The Onerous Methods	6
The Worm-Holes in Humanity.....	6
Belief Systems.....	6
3 Archetypes Hard Wired into Humans and Cultures	7
The Permanent Campaign	7
History’s Sobering Lessons.....	8
Hitler’s Secret Propaganda Sauce	9
America’s Political Game Schemers.....	10
Polarized Partisanship	11

STRATEGIC ALERT

Mass Manipulation with 21st Century Technology	12
How to Combat Being BEFUDDLED	12
Part 3 -- Examining the Underlying Causes and Consequences	13
Looking for Answers in New Places.....	13
Collapse of Trust.....	13
America's Soft Underbelly Today	14
How Far Have We Fallen?	15
Consequences if Nothing is Done to Change Course	15
Part 4 -- A Collaborative Architecture for the Future.....	16
Can the Centre Hold?	16
Culture by Chance or Design?	19
Choosing Between the Three Archetypes	19
Beware the Red Queen	20
Institutional Cultural "Arrows"	20
Role of Business	20
Role of Education	20
Role of Religion	21
Role of Politics & Government	21
Role of Media.....	22
Role Legal System	23
Part 5 --Do We Continue to Muddle Through?	24
The Time is Now	25
Required Sea Change Shift in Leadership & Culture.....	25
Leadership is the Primary Lever for Change.....	26
Call for Action	28

Media commentators are constantly asking the questions:

"What has happened to America?"

"Why are we destroying the very democracy that has given us social freedom and economic prosperity?"

"What can we do to turn around this relentless march into chaos?"

History has many guideposts into this heart of darkness, if we choose to take heed.

But first we must realize what's happening to us at this moment.

PART 1 – WHAT’S HAPPENING TO OUR BELOVED AMERICA

We all are recognizing there is something wrong in America. We hear it from the right, the left and the center. It’s been happening for the last two generations, it’s dangerous to our democracy and the very foundations our society is built upon. We sense that if “it” continues, “it” will become terminal, with the most dire of consequences.

Mass Manipulation

America’s brain is being BEFUDDLED with a constant barrage of attacks, ill-intentioned messaging, and a deluge of disinformation, sowing of doubt and distrust. It’s like we are now in foxholes and dug into trenches, weary, disillusioned and desperately shell-shocked.

The best term to describe this phenomenon is BEFUDDLED, which is an acronym (see sidebar). This is primarily a psychologically driven experience – the causative issues run much deeper. While no one issue is enough to cause psychological breakdowns, taken together, and given critical weaknesses in social structure, the BEFUDDLED factors can impact cause bizarre behavior in entire groups, even nations, as evidenced in 1930s Germany under Hitler, and in North Korea under Kim Jun Il today.

Today in America, the January 6th (2021) insurrection, mass belief in conspiracy theories, defiance of Covid vaccines, and ill-behaved airline passengers are just a few examples of being BEFUDDLED.

BEFUDDLED Unmasked

Blame

Continuously finding fault with others and reveling in scorn, while never accepting responsibility.

It’s everywhere you look. Whether it’s blaming Covid on the government, or even claiming the government created a hoax, or blaming Trump or the Liberals, or blaming family members who don’t think alike, or blaming other drivers in road rage, the stress levels in America are destroying our collective mental health. Someone else has to be wrong, and no one is ever accountable. The problem with the blame game: it’s endless and always escalating.

Enemies

Polarization, casting those who act or think differently as evil-intentioned, conspiring adversaries.

Tribalism runs deep into the roots of human civilization since the days of the caveman. Historically the branding of a group as an “enemy” has been a sign that some person or group was a threat to the tribe’s survival. In the past, internal enemies were fringe groups, such as the American Nazi Party. What’s different now is we have made large proportions of our own population that we have “enemized” – people and groups we see as threats just because they think differently. The tolerance George Washington espoused to build a great nation has been replaced by the fanaticism of the Inquisition.

Blame
Enemies
Fear
Uncertainty
Doubt
Distrust
Lies
Extrémism
Discord



Fear

Triggering extreme anxiety that others pose a dangerous threat to my existence and my beliefs.

Fear has been used for millennia to influence decisions. Religion has used it to maintain control of their flocks, politicians to gain adherents, even insurance companies to sell life insurance. Fear, in its heavier forms, is dangerous. Fear's stress induces radical changes in behavior. Simply stated, fear triggers pathways in the brain's decision-making that bypasses important cerebral logic circuits, causing people to act on impulse, not rational thinking. Further, fear also short-circuits other brain pathways, triggering anger and inducing an adversarial, fighting instinct that can often be highly destructive, initiating revenge in the opponent.

Uncertainty

Causing the perception that nothing is stable, nothing is real, what I dislike must be "fake news."

Uncertainty is affiliated with *Insecurity* and *Ambiguity*. Flood the brain with these factors and brain's pattern recognition capacity to interpret signals and patterns, then make prediction about what they can do to control their destiny, will be scrambled. These three forces are very prevalent in a rapidly changing, fast moving world where everything seems to be in the state of flux. Make vision, values, and valor uncertain, then society's moral compass will oscillate wildly in every direction – everything goes, every man for himself – a *survival of the fittest* mentality.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Old Testament, Book of Proverbs

Doubt

Undermining reality by asking questions designed to shake beliefs about the motives of others.

Fill a society with doubt and it loses both its identity and its values that are the guardrails of civilization. Then fill this void with abounding conspiracy theories about enemies at our doorstep – the Qanon Game Plan – then people will latch on to simplistic answers that make them feel stronger and gain a new identity that they have destroyed.

Doubt is stripping us of our national identity and into the void Authoritarians fill that emptiness with firmly stated empty noise.. Doubt is the stream feeding cynicism and anger, then doubt spirals into the destroyer of belief and possibility. One who doubts everything believes in nothing, cannot love, and cannot follow the guideposts that lead to courage and wisdom – this is what happens when we become a nation of cynics. Coupled with fear and anger, relentless doubt leaves one an impotent victim ready for manipulation.

A person attached to doubt h becomes a horrible cynic. And worse, deep doubt attached to relationships makes a poor friend as Buddha observed:

There is nothing more dreadful than the habit of doubt. Doubt separates people. It is a poison that disintegrates friendships and breaks up pleasant relations. It is a thorn that irritates and hurts; it is a sword that kills. -- Buddha (B.C. 568-488)

Distrust

Spreading misgivings and casting aspersions for the purpose of creating cynicism and suspicion.

If any one factor stands out as the most deflating, discouraging, and destructive of all, distrust stands preeminent in our modern age.

Great civilizations are built on the foundation of great institutions guided by trusted leaders, who mold the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of those within their realm of influence. They create unity within the diversity of vision and values, ideas and ideals. They are trusted because they bring out the best in people, and forge collaborations for achievement and innovation.

Stripping away trust in leaders and the institutions they guide results in a crisis of confidence that sets off chain reactions that undermine, corrode, and destroy the essence of a people's faith in their society itself.

Lies

Purposefully spreading disinformation, usually connecting a half-truth with a falsehood.

The problem with a sophisticated lie is that there is usually some inner logic (albeit twisted) that resides in the falsehood. For example, every problem has a cause – that's logical; and if the problem is thorny, then the cause must be attributable to something equally prickly, such as a conspiracy theory (i.e. the Deep State did it!).

Disinformation, coupled with diversion (for example "Well, cyberattacks could be coming from some 400 pound guy in his bedroom in Hoboken"), is designed to distract and deter attention from the real facts.¹

Extremism

Radicalization, multiplication, and amplification to provoke action based on inflaming emotions.

Nearly all tactics to arouse a BEFUDDLED audience will capitalize on intensifying passions, pouring salt and vinegar into existing wounds, dumping gasoline on smoldering embers of anger, hate, and enraging needs for righting an endless multitude of transgressions.

For people who feel victimized by their own impotence, who have no meaning and purpose in life, value little but materialism, come from a broken family, and lives from paycheck to paycheck (or no paycheck at all), there are seething volcanos under the surface ready for a collective eruption.

These conditions make it easy for people to "go rogue" and be radicalized by right and left wingers who seek to foment a revolution or insurrection.

¹ In July of 2021, at a rally, Donald Trump revealed that "fake news" was news that he didn't like, and "real news" was what he favored.

Discord

Using these tactics in a manipulative way to benefit one person or group who alone can fix it.

Actually, few people like discord – it scrambles our pattern recognition circuitry, and prevents accurate prediction and preparedness for future events, often preventing people from taking reasonable action on thorny issues, or sending one into an ever-widening delirium of analysis paralysis antics and a blitzkrieg of entangled riddles. Like all BEFUDDLED tactics, this too is designed to boggle the brain,² disconnect logic circuits, and manipulate behavior.

A careful manipulator can sow discord, playing a sadistic game of “Perpetrator-Victim-Rescuer,” first being the “perpetrator,” then claiming to be a victim like everyone else, and then acting as the glorious “rescuer” who alone, playing the role of savior (if you give him or her the power) can fix the problem and punish perpetrators in the name of justice.

After being hit with a BEFUDDLED barrage like this, your brain is scrambled, which is the exact intent. With this concoction, each of the ingredients reinforces the potency of the others.

What’s most disconcerting is that the BEFUDDLED tactics are now firmly engrained in our culture – they’ve become normal habits.

*Where there is neither Vision,
nor Values, and nor Valor,
the BEFUDDLED Vacuum is
filled with Politics, Power, and
Policing*

PART 2 – THE ONEROUS METHODS

One might be tempted to conclude that the eradication of the BEFUDDLED factors will solve our society’s problems. This would be an erroneous supposition. Why? Because these factors are simply tactics used to exploit underlying causes embedded in our collective angst. We must look deeper first to understand the problem and then to find solutions.

The Worm-Holes in Humanity

Belief Systems

Humans are wired to form beliefs – paradigms of thinking – that color what they *perceive*, formulate what they *conceive*, direct what they seek to *achieve*, and guide what they think they *receive* as results. This is called a Learning Loop. If one cannot crack into the belief system, then other attempts to change thinking and behavior will wither. Many would rather die than change a belief system, that’s why soldiers will die in a war, even if the foundational beliefs were wrong.



People will gravitate toward affirming their beliefs, conceptions, perceptions which guides their actions and results, holding on with a clenched vice-grip iron fist. Most will never examine their deep beliefs, never question the consequences, and never address the contradictions; blithely adhering to hollow opinions coming from those who speak with an aura of confidence.

² From a neuro-chemical perspective, the adrenaline produced in fear and anxiety will shut down key neuro-transmitters, first cutting off oxytocin that enables teamwork, trust, empathy, and caring, then certain opioids that induce creativity, and then as anxiety continues to increase, dopamine that focuses on goal achievement narrows the focus to how to rid oneself of the anxiety.

STRATEGIC ALERT

3 Archetypes Hard Wired into Humans and Cultures

Personality is not the primary determinant of human behavior; culture is. That's why the ancient Greek culture spawned so many prominent thought leaders, like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to name just a few. Similarly the Dark Ages was aptly named because it did not build a culture that supported new thinking nor innovation. And the Age of the Enlightenment fostered champions of democracy like Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison, among scores of others.

Studying civilizations over the last human are simultaneously wired *Adversarially*, *Transactionally*, and *Collaboratively*. (see Figure 1)



These three archetypes can be seen clearly in any civilization, nation, organization, or group. Generally, all three show up in some proportion, with one archetype predominating.

For example, a championship sports team will perform *collaboratively* within the team, but *adversarially* against another team, and *transactionally* when it comes to salary negotiations or trading players. The difference between winning the big games is how strong the *collaborative culture manifests internally*. Teams where egos dominate creates an *adversarial* atmosphere that destroys the team from within.

The reason why the BEFUDDLED tactics work now, but were thwarted in other times, is because the culture is cracking, becoming far more fragile: *adversarial* and *transactional*, while scorning those who attempt to be collaborative bridge builders. That's why Congress is so deadlocked, and bipartisanship so scarce.

The Permanent Campaign

Our political culture has now fully embraced the age of the permanent campaign – a *dog eat dog*, *survival of the fittest* strategy every day of the year.

Every two years the American politics industry fills the airwaves with the most virulent, scurrilous, wall-to-wall character assassination of nearly every political practitioner in the country - and then declares itself puzzled that America has lost trust in its politicians.

—Charles Krauthammer

History's Sobering Lessons

Even a cursory glance at history tells us that when leaders and institutions fail to be trusted, revolutions are percolating and upheaval is in the wind. Complete civilizations have fallen when their leaders have failed to take heed. We must understand these lessons to grasp what is happening in America today:

Rome's Fall into the Dark Ages: The Roman era was always falling apart at the seams because of distrusted leadership. Only the force of the military kept the system together. There was a civil war on the average of every generation. Eventually no one trusted the institutions that held Roman society together, and the culture imploded upon itself.

Machiavelli's Trickery and Cunning: After the Dark Ages had transitioned through into the Middle Ages, often known as the feudal era, Niccolo Machiavelli produced a game book that outlined the basic tactics of trickery and cunning that would ensure Authoritarians would maintain control in an *adversarial* world. His book, *The Prince*, (1513) is considered one of the most influential books of our times, and has acted as the roadmap for many power-hungry business and political leaders to this day. His ethics were that *the ends justified the means*, which gave carte-blanche for virtually every breach of civil conduct.

"It is better to be feared than loved" is one of Machiavelli's most poignant aphorisms. However, Machiavelli overlooked the third (and best) option: *"It is better to be trusted than loved or feared."*

Machiavelli's ignominious rules are perfect for dictatorships, but disastrous for democratic republics. Yet they are used today by Americans -- "Machiavellians" in the guise of patriots -- whose wish to gain power exceeds their desire to create a more perfect union.³

Machiavellian rules of engagement, because of their oppression, eventually implode, but the damage done is often horrific, long to heal, and the replacement system may be worse than the one overthrown.

Hitler Codified the Modern Manipulation Game: Machiavelli's 20th century disciple, Adolf Hitler, amped up the game, employing BEFUDDLED tactics as the chief objective of propaganda. It's important to understand Hitler's game book, because it is being used in the 21st century – on steroids.

Propaganda is the conscious and deliberate effort of an organized group desiring to influence the active or passive behavior of individuals by using social or psychological manipulation techniques.

Hitler calculated that, to be effective, he had to aim at taking advantage of specific weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and points of contention in German society. He also knew that an effective propaganda machine must be highly scientific in nature, using established formulae and methodology (today these are called algorithms), analyze interpersonal and psychological conditions, control its use, measure its results, and define its effects. Today, eighty years later, these fundamentals are rocketing on steroids fueled by advanced computer technology.

Hitler's mastermind propagandist, Josef Goebbels, recognized that to be effective, propaganda must be *pervasive* and *continuous*; otherwise it becomes prone to rebuttal by opposing forces, leading to negation by opposing forces. (Today this is called the "Daily Tweet Storm"). Moreover, the strategy was to make propaganda *total* – an indoctrination barrage leveled at the masses from every direction – using radio, newspapers, flyers, billboards, and public gatherings. (Today we would include television and social media.)

Additionally, propaganda had to infiltrate the educational system where young minds are programmed to bond with the government's message based on biased "half-truths," distorted statistics, and quotes out

³ See: [How Newt Gingrich Destroyed American Politics - The Atlantic](#) (November 2018, McKay Coppins)

STRATEGIC ALERT

of context. The game plan was to invade a child's mind with a coherent belief system of ingrained values that would continue into adulthood.

To implement these strategies, Hitler's propaganda machine had to master gaining the trust of the masses, which would be solidified into a unified bastion of confidence. Gaining this trust, which would normally be a very slow process, could be accelerated when all forms of opposition were eliminated. If, however, the public was conditioned to mistrust the government, then all propaganda emanating from this source would be ineffective. Yet, if these same people had faith in key elements of the mass media, such the broadcast media's trusted voices along with other believable sources, then the government's desired goal would be readily achieved.

Hitler's propaganda campaign quickly came to understand that the public trust would be gained by:

1. Always publicizing the truth, (although seldom the complete truth, thus a "half-truth," commonly known as a "myth")
2. Never contradicting personal experience (thus focus on issues where the public has little experience, such as international affairs or insider politics).

The aspect of "always telling the truth" is one of the most distressing, yet intriguing, facets of the propaganda problem. Propagandists must maintain public confidence by stating only the facts. Usually this amounts to publicizing half-truths, one-sided truths, limited truths, and contextual truths. The overwhelming majority of the masses will never "fact check" to determine the real, whole, deep truth, especially if the government controls freedom of the press or discounts the press as being an "alien creature" filled with "fake news." Thus the masses become incapable of deciphering the other side of the argument, if in fact, they are clever enough to realize another side truly exists. Sadly, most people assume the truth cannot be propaganda and thus make themselves even more susceptible to its influence.

Hitler's Secret Propaganda Sauce

To influence thoughts and actions of the German people, Hitler had to raise emotional turmoil to a level it had to be resolved for each individual. This was done in the form of labels, slogans, and ready-made judgments:

1. **Name Calling** – giving an idea or person a bad name makes the public reject and condemn without examining the evidence.
2. **Glittering Generality** – association of something with a "virtue word" or a "condemning word" used for the public to accept/approve or reject/doom something without real evidence.
3. **Testimonial** – having someone respected (or hated) say that a given idea, program, or person is good or bad.
4. **Transfer** – carries the authority, sanction, and prestige of something respected or revered over to something else in order to make the latter acceptable; or it carries authority, sanction, and disapproval to cause us to reject and disapprove of something.
5. **Plain Folks** – the method used by a speaker to convince his audience that he and his ideas are good because they are "good for the people" – the common man, just "plain folks."
6. **Card Stacking** -- selectively presenting facts or falsehoods, illustrations or distortions, and logical and/or illogical statements in order to give the best or worst possible case for an idea, program, person, or product.
7. **Band Wagon** – using the theme "everybody – at least all of *us* – is doing it;" thereby the propagandist attempts to convince the public that all members of a group, to which we belong, are accepting his program and we must therefore follow *our* crowd.

STRATEGIC ALERT

A psychological magician, Goebbels realized that, for maximum results, propaganda would blossom in an environment that appeared to bless *freedoms* enabling the masses to act voluntarily. On the other hand, he believed, when the masses are *forced* to hold opinions, or *forced* to act in a particular way, such constraints diminished the impact of the messaging because people would repress their fear and the tremendous anxiety it induced would eventually be unleashed.

Goebbels' ultimate intention was not to agitate German society, but rather to unify and integrate. Creating a socially stable status quo would enable the German people to find a position of security – the lowest energy level. However, Hitler's grandiose plans of world domination often overturned Goebbels' objectives.

Goebbels sought primarily to influence *actions*, not *opinions*. He cared less for how people thought, and more about how they *behaved*. Political and social *movement* was paramount, feelings were irrelevant. This is where public *opinion* polls were useless in his line of thinking, because they didn't gauge future *actions*.

In these ways Hitler and Goebbels codified social, political, and moral standards, standardizing warped ideas, hardening prevailing stereotypes, furnishing pre-packaged thought patterns, and normalizing abhorrent behavior. Through the continuous process of intense, albeit false, rationalization propaganda actually eliminates inner conflicts, tensions, self-criticism, uncertainty, and doubt. Each individual's needs for self-affirmation is reinforced by other accomplices that reinforce each other as the propaganda machine directs.

America's Political Game Schemers

Certainly reading the list on the sidebar: *Hitler's Secret Propaganda Sauce*, one can see Donald Trump reading straight off the play-card. But Trump actually didn't start this political manipulation trend; it began with Newt Gingrich in the 1980's and blossomed in the '90s. Gingrich, astute and cunning, added to Hitler's repertoire by finding a way to polarize and vilify people *inside* the nation, playing Americans off against each other, for his party's political benefit.

After being defeated twice for a Congressional seat, he won the third time, honing a divide and conquer approach to *adversarial* politics, removing any semblance of propriety or civility, just going for the throat and tearing the heart out of the opposition. Gingrich believes human nature is that of the beast -- Darwinian⁴ "survival of the fittest" "dog-eat-dog" – attack first, and relentlessly.

"It's not viciousness. It's natural."

"One of the great problems we have in the Republican Party is that we don't encourage you to be nasty ... We encourage you to be neat, obedient, and loyal, and faithful, and all those Boy Scout words, which would be great around the campfire but are lousy in politics."

*"If you're not in The Washington Post every day, you might as well not exist ... The No. 1 fact about the news media is they love fights ... When you give them confrontations, you get attention; when you get attention, you can educate ... Noise [is] a proxy for status."*⁵

⁴ Darwin, like Machiavelli before him, realized his first book – *Origin of the Species* (1849) -- was being interpreted as a "survival of the fittest" handbook for humanity; the term "survival of the fittest" was never used by Darwin (it was coined by Herbert Spencer). Darwin's thesis of evolution was intended principally for plants and animals, not humans, whose rapid evolution could not be explained by simple adaptation and mutation. In Darwin's sequel – *The Descent of Man* (1871) – he concluded that it was the creation of *collaborative cultures* that propelled rapid human development. (see [:The Great Hoax](#) for a synopsis). Gingrich likely never read Darwin's second book.

⁵ Quotes from [Atlantic Monthly](#) & [Mother Jones](#)

STRATEGIC ALERT

Gingrich engineered a combative strategy of polarizing partisanship, with a deliberative intent to infect the staid but civilized status quo Republicans with his firebrand style of adversarial, divide-and-conquer skullduggery. Taking cues from Goebbels, he resorted to making name-calling, conspiracy theories, and strategic obstructionism deliberate weapons in his arsenal.

Schoolyard phrases like “Daffy Dukakis,” and “the loony left” were part of a premeditated repertoire of poisonous psychic warfare Newt recommended to his growing band of disciples to drive into the minds of their constituents that Democrats were *sick, pathetic, liars, anti-American, traitors, radical*, and of course *corrupt*. Using GOPAC as his vehicle, he delivered a daily dose of cassette tapes, memos and coaching tips to candidates who wanted to emulate Newt’s strategy: make politics a “war for power” where candidates should shoot first, keep shooting, and ask questions later after the election. He advised his party to “raise hell,” refrain from acting “nice,” and tap into the “very deep discontent that the system isn’t working.”

By the 1990s Gingrich’s tactics propelled him to the powerful position of Speaker of the House, where he could use his clout to launch his game plan to thrust Washington into a death spiral of dysfunction – a tail spin that continues to this day. America’s political philosophy shifted into low gear: retrogressive, appealing to our primal emotions of anger and hatred. As Newt revved his engine, he cast aside wisdom, civility, reason, and the greater good – the elevating nature of humans that is also part of our genetic roots. Like Hitler before him, Newt brought out the worst in people, while bombing the innards out of the world’s most prominent of legislatures representing the essence of democratic principles.

Instead of condemning Newt’s dark crusade, Republican strategists reveled in the glory of new-found power in the form of “principled obstructionism.” One of the GOPs rising stars was Kentuckian Mitch McConnell, who joyously proclaimed that obstructionism of any Democrat’s initiative “gives gridlock a good name.”

Polarized Partisanship

Polarizing Partisanship is aimed primarily at obstructionism to diminish the other side. And worse, it has become a means not just of gaining power in Congress, but overturning the delicate system of Madisonian checks and balances that has prevented egregious abuse of power.

Newt’s defiance -- filled with invective, anger, victimization, and tribalism -- would pollute politics for decades to come. Bipartisanship – the source of how major legislation has moved from idea to action – would be effectively stopped cold in its tracks. Politics was no longer the art of compromise, ingenuity, and diplomacy; it became a glorified blood sport. Like piranhas, the news media is having a feeding frenzy, further inflaming raw emotions and open wounds.

Fomenting hatred and disgust for the other party is preeminent. Any chance of building trust across the aisles of Congress is effectively dead. Cynicism now reigns, both in Washington and among the masses.

Polarized partisanship is today’s *central organizing political principle*, embracing *no vision, nor values, nor valor, thus no future* other than a Middle Eastern world of continuous combat that has prevailed since Biblical times. That’s why the Republican Party had no policy platform going into the 2020 election, until one was hastily fabricated at the last minute.

In 2015, in commencing his Presidential campaign, Trump went to Gingrich to map out his game plan of assault and ascendance, first to win the primaries, then the White House. Newt’s strategy worked again.

Mass Manipulation with 21st Century Technology

Now everyone can be part of the blood sport – with access to Twitter and Facebook (which owns WhatsApp and Instagram) has now engaged billions of people not just as passive observers, but active participants. Today while nearly 3 billion people participate in the video gaming world, what goes unrecognized is that the nearly 3 billion people on Facebook are also engaged in being gamed by the Facebook algorithms and unknowingly becoming engaged in the game of BEFUDDLED, but don't realize they've been hooked on the opioid of passionate exhilaration.

How to Combat Being BEFUDDLED

Certainly one could blame the political parties for allowing this to happen, but in the end it's the voters who elect partisan candidates who are at fault. That's why billions of dollars are spent every election cycle on dubious propaganda – to trick the voters into believing in candidates whose BEFUDDLED intentions are to stay in power. The beat goes on.

There are, however, several strategies to defeat BEFUDDLED schemes:

- ✓ **Exposure:** A ruthless gambit exposed is no longer effective. BEFUDDLED maneuvers are actually quite easy to spot – if you tune into the “signals.” Americans are quite astute (when they want to be). Voters don't have to be students of propagandists' methodologies to spot the techniques.
- ✓ **Outrage:** What's more, no one likes to be duped and manipulated. When voters realize the insidious plots and ploys against them, they get very angry and consciously resist. Then voters, at least a significant chunk of the electorate, can simply cast their ballots in the other direction.
- ✓ **Centrist Neutralization:** A large proportion of the electorate – between 30%-35% in most states – have chosen to be identified as “Independents.” These are, by in large, centrists who detest partisan politics; they deplore “obstructionists” and want bipartisan governance. In reality, these centrists decide who wins or loses a race – they are the actual electoral power-brokers. A modern candidate who understands this disenfranchised “middle,” and appeals to their common sense, has an edge.
- ✓ **Monetary Starvation:** Don't donate a penny to politicians who are entrenched in BEFUDDLED games. Politicians have to get past their respective partisan primaries before getting onto a final ballot. Make it clear that campaign donations must pass the Bipartisan Test. One excellent criteria for this test at the Congressional level is membership in the Bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus – that's a good proof that the candidate is seriously acting upon the need for good governance and statesmanship, not just blowing smoke and spewing hot air.

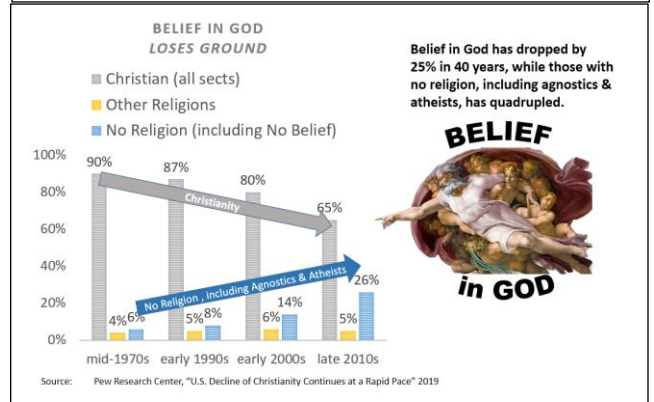
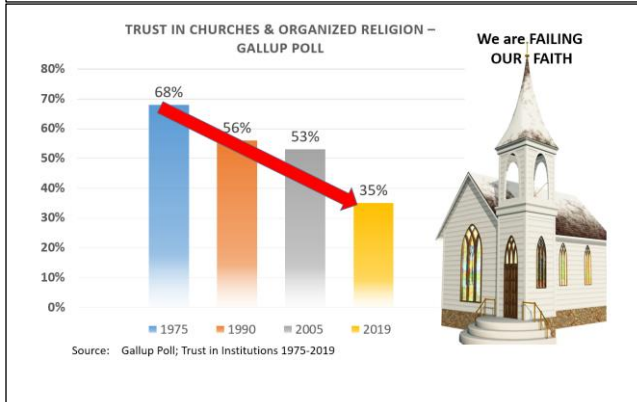
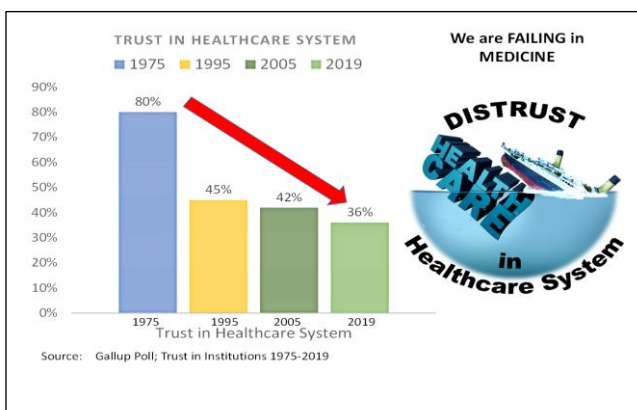
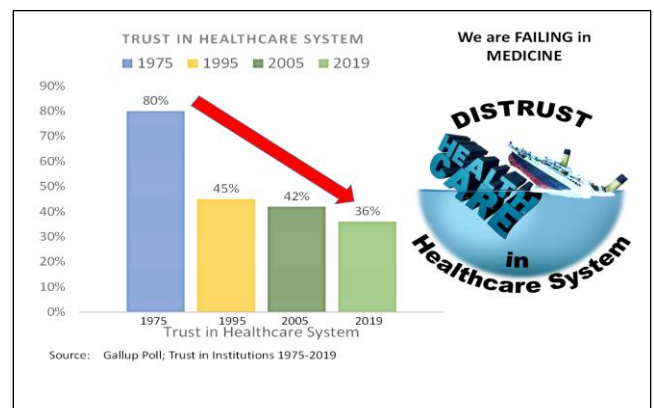
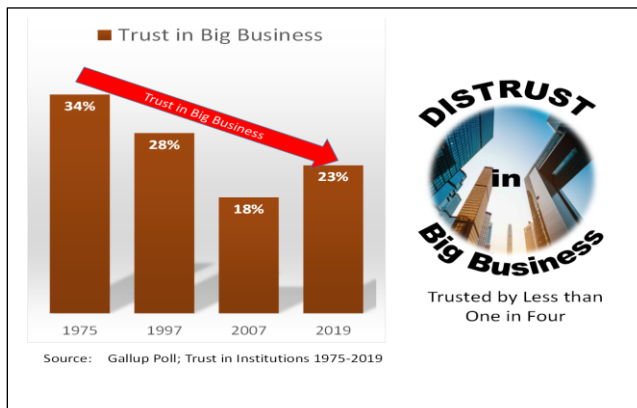
PART 3 -- EXAMINING THE UNDERLYING CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Looking for Answers in New Places

In searching for answers, speaking with sociologists, anthropologists, economists, political scientists, psychologists, educators, or economists, each will give their myopically framed perspective that fits their field of academic study. Each sounds too narrow to provide sufficient answers, and consequently incapable of providing either highly useful insights into the problem or an effective action-plan going forward. If they had such insights and strategies, they would have been deployed decades ago. None want to mobilize for action. Let's embark on a different analysis that inserts some fresh new thinking into examining the problem of why we are BEFUDDLED and how to realistically address concrete solutions.

Collapse of Trust

One highly documented cause has been the *continuous erosion of trust in our institutions for the last fifty years*. Examine these charts, which tell a clear story of the changes that began in the Vietnam era.



*It is Distrust -- the Lack of Confidence -- more than anything else that Destroys Civilization.
We can kill civilization by Cynicism just as effectively as by Bombs.*

-- Kenneth Clark, Civilization 1969

Despite the central issue of trust in any collaborative enterprise -- Business, Government, Community or Family -- the issue has largely been overlooked. Why? Mainly because it has slipped through the cracks in Civilization's evolutionary quest, mainly because there is no placeholder for it in academic study.⁶ Thus it has not been imbedded in the precepts of core professions, like business, engineering, or medical schools. Academics don't know what to do with it, thus it has been cast aside, relegated to obscurity.⁷

Distrust is like Termite Invasions, silently but steadfastly undermining the structure of the Institutions that support civilization itself. Distrust is the spawning ground for predatory propaganda and authoritarian leaders.⁸ Strong institutions give stability and purpose to people. Without meaning and purpose life becomes filled with emptiness, despair, and disillusionment.

As long as distrust continues to run rampant, propagandists will flourish and authoritarians will dig their predatory teeth into unsuspecting victims. While our cherished institutions are holding by a fragile thread, another decade of decline will see the breaking point. Stopping the decline in trust must be a high priority, for if we don't trust our institutions, they will cease to be useful, as we are currently experiencing.

America's Soft Underbelly Today

Our schools, our businesses, and our churches are failing us. Our national culture is no longer fundamentally *collaborative*, it has become *transactional* at best, and *adversarial* at worst. School psychologists report major breakdown in the mental health of our children. These were underlying conditions that have been exacerbated by, not caused by, the Covid Crisis isolation.

Our younger generations have little sense of roots or heritage; we come from broken families where many children most likely to come from an unwed single working mother⁹ with no father present or from divorced couple.

⁶ Paul Lawrence, (now deceased) at Harvard Business School tackled this problem in earnest with me *after* he retired. Paul Zak at Claremont University has done ground breaking work in the field, especially on the neurochemistry of trust.

⁷ Because trust is a subject that crosses numerous academic silos, thus it has been an orphaned subject. Over the last fifteen years, I have interviewed scores of doctors, mediators, and social service workers. When asked the question "What is the number one factor in having a successful relationship with a patient or client?" the overwhelming response is associated with trust. I will then ask them "Do you have a framework or architecture for building trust?" No one has ever answered affirmatively. No one has ever taken a course in trust. They all imply 'you are just supposed to know how to do it,' like it was an inbred trait. If that were true, the decline in trust would not be severe.

⁸ See [Beware the Authoritarian Dark Triad](#)

⁹ According to 2017 data from : Congressional Research Service, Center for Disease Control, and the Social Capital Project, nearly 30% of white children, nearly 70% of black children, and over 50% of Hispanic children are born out of wedlock.

How Far Have We Fallen?

As illustrated in Figure 2, our younger generation, who serve like canaries in a coal mine, exhibit an extremely high level of distrust, far greater than any other age category.

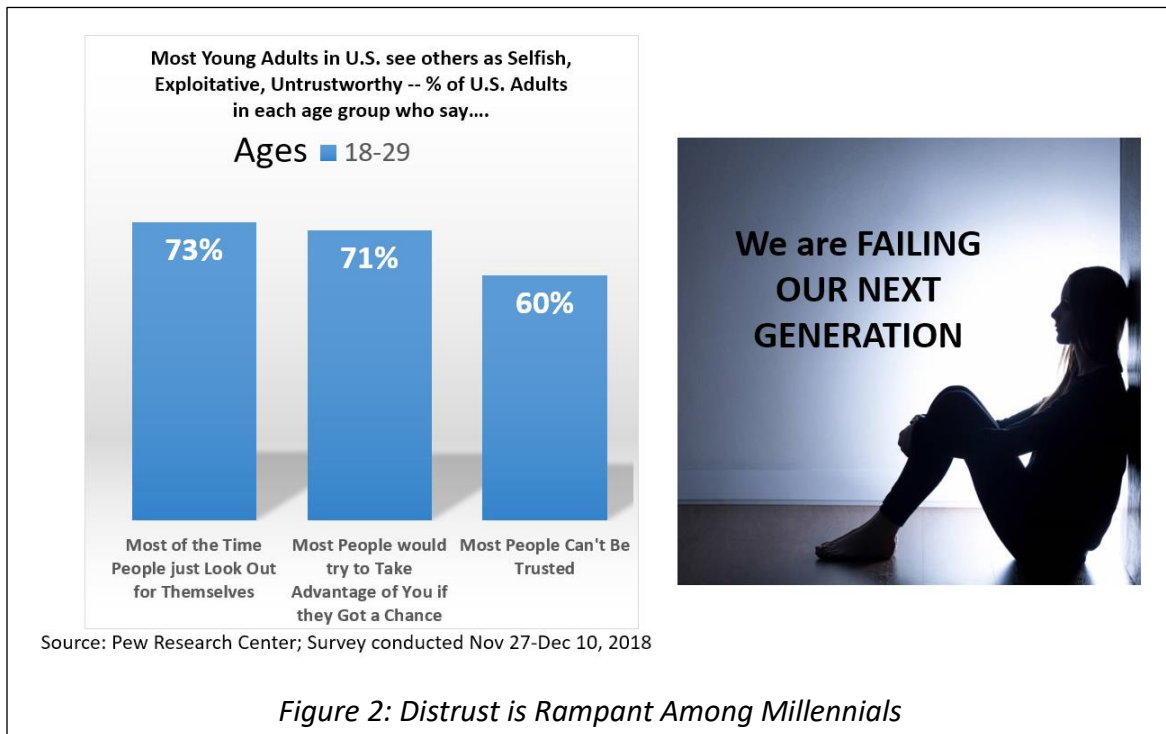


Figure 2: Distrust is Rampant Among Millennials

These are the future leaders, workers, and of our nation, our community, and as well as family fathers and mothers of our future families. Given how discouraged and fearful of the future, they are now, they are setting the stage for self-fulfilling prophecies; imagine what their perspective will be in another two or three decades. This does not bode well for America.

Our schools pound science into students' heads, but they reject the value of science, waging a war of aggression on Covid data that would save their lives – like an indignant collective self-righteous death wish. Too many of our citizens seem intent to reject science, wisdom, and common sense. How can a democracy survive when its citizens purposefully don dunce caps? Can those with some semblance of common sense protect us against those who callously reject verification of the evidence that is the foundation of their empty opinions? Instead they reject science, relying on charlatans, snake oil salesmen, and bogus imposters who lead the disinformation deluge

The lack of trust has severe consequences to marriages and divorce. In a survey of over 100 family counselors, the question was posed "In what percentage of divorce mediations and counseling does the breakdown in trust play a central role?" Nearly unanimously the answer was 100%.¹⁰

Consequences if Nothing is Done to Change Course

Unless something changes, things will get worse, every trend points in that direction.

The chances of something catastrophic increases every day.

The continued barrage of disinformation and agitation from the news and social media agitates more anger and chaos. When chaos reigns, people seek hierarchical authority

¹⁰ Survey conducted in Trust Building workshops by the author.

PART 4 – A COLLABORATIVE ARCHITECTURE FOR THE FUTURE

Can the Centre Hold?

The problem of our essential core culture is not new to our 21st century angst, the difficulties have been with us since the First World War (which was to be the war to end all wars). Following WWI, William Butler Yeats pled his lament after the horrific devastation in a prophetic poem:

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre.....
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand!¹¹

That was one hundred years ago. Modern commentators today cite this poem frequently in our troubled world, but none seem to have much of a clue finding the “centre that will hold” or even what the essence of what that centre might be.

Now we are so far afield from finding Yeats’ “centre” that we don’t seem to know where to search, nor do we seem to have an idea in our mind of what it would look like if we found it.

But what Centre? If it was to hold, what would that great unification idea or ideal be? What would it look like? I have asked myself these questions, and many more, since returning from Vietnam in 1972.

Millennials Disillusionment

Failing to have such a “centre”—a core theme that gives deep meaning and purpose to the life of people, communities, or nation -- is causing a deep malaise – as evidenced by studies conducted prior to the Covid epidemic: America’s Millennial Generation (as of 2019 they were 18-34 years old) have a bleak view of their world. According to recent Harvard studies:¹²

- Fearful about America’s future
 - 67% Fearful
 - 31 % Hopeful
- Greatest Threat to America is not from the outside, but from the inside
 - 67% Inside
 - 31% Outside
- Half No Longer Believe in the American Dream
 - 50% Agree: My life will not be better than my parents.
 - Only 15% Agree: America is headed in the right direction.
 - Nearly 50% Agree: Politics today are no longer able to meet the challenges our country faces.

¹¹ Cited in Clark, Kenneth; *Civilization*, Harper & Row, 1969, p 347

¹² Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, Surveys conducted 2016-2018, approximately 2,500 Millennials participated in each study.

Clearly cynicism, depression, and disillusionment are the mode of young adults. They are culture's "canary in the coal mine." This is not just the fault of our educational institutions; the malaise is engrained in our dysfunctional culture. The insights of historian Kenneth Clark lend insight into what's happening today:

"Thinking about the almost incredible epoch of the Roman Empire tells one something about the nature of civilization.

"It shows that however complex and solid it seems, it is actually quite fragile. It can be destroyed. What are its enemies?

"First of all fear – fear of war, fear of invasion, fear of plague and famine,¹³ that make it simply not worthwhile constructing things or planting trees or even planning next year's crops. A world of fear and darkness [was] ready to inflict horrible punishment for the smallest infringement of a taboo.¹⁴

"It is the lack of confidence [distrust], more than anything else that kills civilization ... Confidence [trust] in the society in which one lives, belief in its philosophy, belief in its laws, and confidence in one's own mental powers... a vigorous belief in law and discipline.

"Vigor, energy, vitality: All the great civilizations ... have had a weight of energy behind them.

"People sometimes think that civilization consists of fine sensibilities and good conversation and all that. These can be among the agreeable results of civilization, but they are not what make a civilization, and a society can have these amenities and yet be dead and rigid.

"We can destroy ourselves with cynicism and disillusion, just as effectively as bombs".¹⁵

Looking back at the founding of America, when one reads of writing of Jefferson and many of his contemporaries, one is struck with the sense of optimism, vision, and expanding possibilities that the new America will provide. It was the Age of the Enlightenment – a time when people believed in and sought solutions aimed at the ultimate perfectibility of human nature and humanity's conditions of the world. The harmonized integration of governance, nature, economics, technology, and community was the aim of many of the leaders of the time. Jefferson's vision of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"¹⁶ was an aspirational goal universally accepted as worthy of collective engery.

"It may in truth be said, that in no part of the world are the people happier ... or more independent than the farmers of New England. – Encyclopedia Britannica 1797 ¹⁷

The "Arc" of the Age of Enlightenment aimed at a "collaborative excellence" that would have evolved to find an end to the constant chaos and warfare brought by Machiavellian connivers whose feudal Authoritarian manipulations threw humanity into a perpetual maelstrom of war and tenuous peace.

Had the Industrial Age not intervened, that arc might have been completed.

¹³ Author's Note: *[I might add fear of cruelty and injustice]*

¹⁴ Clark, Ibid, p; 2

¹⁵ Clark, Ibid, p 4 & 347

¹⁶ In Jefferson's philosophy, happiness could only be attained by leading a moral, ethical life.

¹⁷ See Marx, Leo; *The Machine in the Garden – Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*; Oxford University Press, 1964, page 73 (this book is a noteworthy documentation of the exuberance of the era).

STRATEGIC ALERT

The only “centre” that can withstand the constant barrages and assaults of BEFUDDLED Authoritarians is a highly Collaborative Culture that has vision, mission, purpose, values, and valor.

Collaborative Cultures can only be created and sustained by highly committed Collaborative Leaders who transmit their wisdom and system of what they believe, perceive, conceive, achieve, and receive through a well-designed “architecture” that is clear, understandable, and actionable at the grass roots – the ordinary man, woman, boy or girl. This architecture will exhibit “simplicity on the far side of complexity.”

The Collaborative Leader will make the *primacy of trust* the *central organizing principle* of any efforts to mobilize for action.

His or her *strategic intent* will be to ensure that collaborative best practices will be used extensively to ensure swiftness of accomplishment and to accelerate innovation.

Collaborative Leaders are not “nice guys” who don’t want to hurt people’s feelings and need to be loved by an adoring throng of sycophants. They are principled, strong, but caring and embrace the idea of teamwork to produce the best results. They aren’t necessarily be charismatic; but wise and clear about what is necessary for a centre that will be created and will hold against the onslaughts of oppression.



The central focus of an “Architecture of Collaborative Excellence” is to understand the “inner design” of the collaboration side of our DNA, to break the morass that has caused people to learn the wrong things about human nature and make the same mistakes generation after generation.

In the larger picture, Collaborative Leaders are, foremost, creators of Collaborative Cultures.

Today, we need to rekindle the flame of the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment with fresh new thinking, and a shift to a foundational culture that is based on strong moral character, trust, and people aiming to work together to build strong communities. This was the aim of the cultural arrow Jefferson envisioned and valued. It’s time to get back on track.

Unless we capture the hearts and minds of people -- from rich to poor, from highly educated to highly intuitive -- with a powerful message of *collaborative excellence* and build a world on collaborative (holistic, synergistic) beliefs, we are doomed to the fate of roller-coaster, chaotic, tumultuous, upside-down world, or worse: reenter a Dark Age.



Yet these are also exciting times. To paraphrase Charles Dickens in the opening sentences of the *Tale of Two Cities*:

It is the best of times, and the worst of times.

It is the brightest of days and the darkest of nights.

It is the morning of our hope and the twilight of our despair.

It is the birth of our dreams and the struggle of our anxiety.

It is the spring of our glory and the winter of our discontent.

STRATEGIC ALERT

Culture by Chance or Design?

Culture is the prime determinant of human behavior because it transmits the values, learnings, spirit, adversity responses, norms, rewards and punishments to the next generation. On the one hand, cultures must adapt to the conditions of their times, while on the other they must also know what to preserve and protect from the past that are essential and universal to stability and growth. Most leaders' attention is focused on daily pressures and reacting to urgent problems that need solving, with no time left to think much about architecting their culture – leaving it to sway unguided in the wind as forces shift the ground upon which culture sits.

Winning sports coaches are probably the best at architecting culture, because they deeply understand what it takes for championship teams to win consistently, knowing the importance of:

S – Spirit of Collaboration, a “one for all, all for one, attitude

T – Trusting each other, knowing each player will do their best

A – Adversity Response:

Rising together to beat the odds as one, winning when all looks bleak

T—Teamwork enabling everyone to contribute to creating synergy

These simple ideas form the heart and soul of a Collaborative Culture, yet are so often overlooked.

Choosing Between the Three Archetypes

Consider the 3000 year morass in the Middle East – an example of the “perpetual maelstrom” that has plagued modern civilization. We haven’t come to grips with the Three Archetypes of human and cultural behavior. The history of the Middle East has whipsawed primarily between the *adversarial* and *transactional* modes, leaving countries, communities, families, and people dead and impoverished.

THREE BASIC ARCHETYPES OF CULTURE, LEADERSHIP & ECONOMICS



While these three archetypes are hard-wired into our psyche, we know that excellent leadership can bring out the best (collaborative behavior) in humans and poor leadership can trigger the worst.¹⁸

Instead the human race has traditionally either defaulted into dark *adversarial* modes or opted for a muddled, mongrelized morass that mixes all three into a muddy mishmash of signals that result in humans getting trapped in adversarial games and mass manipulation and wondering what hit them – America today.

It’s high time we got clear on a collaborative vision and mission that will elevate the dignity of the human spirit, and cast out the demons that have plagued humankind for eternity.

¹⁸ See [“Union from Hell” Case Study](#)

Institutional Cultural “Arrows”

There are six highly influential institutions that could make a massive difference if they could be persuaded to *shift paradigms*: business, education, government, media, and religion. These constitute the major cultural “arrows” that must guide us to a greater heights, out of the abyss and away from the paths to perdition.

Role of Business

It may be surprising to many that business, by far, has the most to gain immediately from a “collaborative shift.” Our research and experience shows that most businesses can gain a 20% (or more) competitive advantage from adopting the architectures of collaborative excellence. In most cases the results begin happening quickly and become cumulative over time. As companies increasingly become part of eco-systems and value networks, the fruits and necessities of collaboration become more evident.¹⁹

Role of Education

Academia, particularly at the collegiate level, has been stuck in the paradigms of departmental siloes since medieval times. Further, in the twentieth century academia shifted from a grounding in developing the trinity of *Mind-Spirit-Body* that builds moral character,²⁰ to one that emphasizes future employment. This shift, while necessary to some extent, abandoned the commitment to building trustworthy citizens. Educators have turned their backs on the need to impart wisdom to their students, instead making knowledge and skills paramount. We are now turning out too many highly intelligent Machiavellians who use their skills to manipulate and enrich themselves – not building solid foundations for civilizations where all can thrive.

To begin the paradigm shift, education needs to aim higher – to make “elevating the dignity of the human spirit” its strategic intent.



Beware the Red Queen

“The **Red Queen**,” a term derived from *Alice in Wonderland*, sets the world on its head. She symbolizes the unrelenting forces in nature, business and politics where competing interests vie for resources, causing massive disruptions and perpetual adaption. The winner forces out the losers, often reproducing faster and more prolifically than the older version.

During the **Red Queen’s** influence, things change rapidly, old ideas and traditions fall by the wayside if they don’t produce value, and paradigms shift dramatically. Lack of attention to the **Red Queen** results in competitive and destructive forces gaining superior advantage, resulting in a species or idea being marginalized or even going extinct.

Reestablishing the Power of the Moral Compass

As esteemed educator Henry Merritt Wriston proclaimed in the 1950’s:

“Educationis wasted if you do not develop morally; if you do not acquire morale courage to call what is right and wrong and take the consequences.”

The problem with today’s civilization is we have lost our moral compass; our cultural gyroscope is wobbling badly. In a devolving world, this is especially troublesome. Where corrupt leaders reign, the transfer of power to a new educated electorate must be linked to a higher set of standards of excellence.

¹⁹ See [Trust- The Economic Game Changer](#)

²⁰ See [Education on the Edge](#)

Mission & Purpose

In his landmark book, "Crisis and Hope in American Education," Robert Ulich stated:

If our schools fail to help a person discover his or her purpose [in life], they fail in almost everything that really matters.

How true, how relevant, and how lost in our modern age.

At one time Education and Religion were the two centerpieces of building Character. Today both have exited the center-stage. American social structure has suffered.

Role of Religion

This is probably the most resistant institution in our culture. It tends to get stuck upon a massive accumulation of thousands of years of heritage. Many are out of touch with the realities of their congregations. The **Red Queen** has attacked the structure of Christianity. Congregations are being decimated. Parishioners in the last forty years have been leaving in droves.²¹ Churches are closing. The number of priests and ministers retiring far outnumber new seminarians entering the ministry. The average age of parishioners is getting older. Young people are yearning for a more spiritual, engaging religious experience, but the hierarchy is not responding well.

Churches are essential to our modern age. In the past they not only nurtured their communities, but also provided an essential guidepost for our culture. As Ronald Reagan commented:

"Without God, there is no virtue, because there's no prompting of the conscience. Without God, we're mired in the material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceive. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society. And without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under."

By spurning God, nations are sucked into a vacuum where they are enticed to embrace the bleak seduction of demagogues. In this atheistic vacuum, people become drawn to those pretenders and felonious substitutes who proclaim that their personal power and judgment reigns above all, denouncing and denigrating the Holy Spirit yearning to serve and guide our daily conscience. Our shared belief in God is the essential higher divine power that will prevent the devolution of our civilization into the abyss of narcissistic self-interest and adoration of demagogues.

Role of Politics & Government

If any of our cultural institutions had gotten out of balance, it's the political side of government. Once upon a time there was some semblance of the executive and legislative branches of government adhering to core principles of public service.

Today there is so much noise about castigating the other side, few seem to realize the purpose of government is to *govern* – to serve the people, to keep them safe, secure, and prosperous. Citizens don't need or want to be yanked and cranked by endless turmoil, accusations, and chaos. We need trusted leaders who aspire to collaborative excellence.

*"We face more than a deficit of dollars ...
We face a deficit of trust – deep and corrosive
doubts about how Washington works that
have been growing for years."*

Barack Obama, State of the Union Address; January 27, 2010

Nothing changed, then it got worse.

²¹ See [Christianity at the Cross Roads](#)

STRATEGIC ALERT

Winning doesn't mean annihilating the other side. Just like any service industry, it means providing the best, most effective service to its customers: its citizens. The only way this will change is if the customers (citizens) demand a change. This is not just our right but our responsibility. It's also the role of education to ensure that youth understand how their rights must be balanced with responsibilities.²²

Moreover, public service carries a responsibility for Moral Character, an issue Thomas Jefferson wrote extensively. Here is a short representative sample:

"Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this [objective]. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong ... This sense is as much a part of his nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling ... The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings ... State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules."²³

"Morals [are] too essential to the happiness of man"²⁴

"Self-interest, or rather self-love, or egoism, has been ... substituted as the basis of morality... I consider our relations with others as constituting the boundaries of morality. Self-love, therefore is no part of morality. Indeed, it is exactly its counterpart."²⁵

Role of Media

Like other social institutions during the last two generations, the media, including television, news-casting, social media and newspapers have dropped dramatically – from 50% trustworthiness in 1975 to less than 25% today.²⁶

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed."

Mark Twain

The U.S. Constitution grants both individuals and institutions, the sacred right to freedom of speech. Without freedom of speech our democracy would cease to exist.

However, with every right there is also a responsibility to use that right for the purposes of good, for honorable purpose, and to ensure the safety and security of our people now and in the future.

Abusing that right is irresponsible, especially when it's for the purpose of (in the words of Thomas Jefferson): "Self-interest, or rather self-love, or egoism," and therefore is immoral. As citizens in a democratic republic, we have the responsibility to act with moral character to fellow members of our greater community. This is a standard not just of ethics, but of excellence. Today many in the news media abuse the right of freedom of speech for self-interest, for gaining ratings, and for making the masses BEFUDDLED, thus manipulating minds, with no vision, nor values, nor valor -- just noise to anger and obfuscate reality.

We must never let our emotional triggers be our sentinels for rationality and ethics, lest we surrender the dignity of our human spirit.

The responsibility to change rests equally with both the *deliverers* of messages and the *receivers* – we ought simply to turn off the noise and the mass manipulators whenever we sense we are being BEFUDDLED.

²² See [Teddy Roosevelt's "Duties of a Citizen"](#)

²³ --Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, 1787. ME 6:257, Papers 12:15

²⁴ --Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, 1786. ME 5:443

²⁵ --Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Law, 1814. ME 14:140

²⁶ Gallup Poll, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>

Role Legal System

We tout, with pride, being “a nation of laws.”

The primacy of law is a false flag. Recall that Hitler was careful to use the law to certify the validity of his horrific crimes. Today the legal system has become a force of division, not justice.

The only honorable laws in a democracy are ones that demonstrate principles of justice and fair play designed to create a “more perfect union.” Laws that fail this test, especially for giving one party or group an “edge” over the greater good of the people, are not morally justified. Our legal system must be an extension of our moral code of conduct, not a gladiatorial arena of power and guile.

The roots of our legal system go back a thousand years to the Magna Carta and the old English system of justice. In this structure, *justice* was derived from a *balance between law and equity* (meaning fairness, compassion, and moral actions). However, about a century ago, as university law schools respond to the growing demand for attorneys, their focus shifted away from the *equity* foundations of justice toward the strict basis of *law* as an end in itself. Today nary a law school teaches equity in law, and hardly any lawyers even know what equity means.

In medieval thinking, argumentation was believed the best way to find the truth. This approach overlooked the ancient Greek methods of creative problem-solving, leading to an unfulfilling “either-or” resolution in Court. Thus law schools have traditionally taught law through an *adversarial* lens, leading to the presumption that justice can be best derived from a battle of wits, using the process of discovery (i.e. subpoena everything imaginable) to find some way to outsmart or find embarrassing information to smear the other side. This has led to our judicial system becoming more and more *adversarial* as it pits plaintiff and defendant deeply divided against each other. Consequently their lawyers serve not simply as advocates, but as hired gladiators in a survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog combat game using the courtroom and a spider-web of laws and procedures as their gladiatorial arena. In the final analysis, only the rich can sustain such battles as legal fees mount and drive the poor into destitution on the flimsy hope they might win in a game stacked against them.

Judges, often having built their careers as trial lawyers, are blind to *equity* principles, thus they let opposing gladiators engage in legal constipation, giving the advantage to process, procedures, and who can outlast the other. Judges, loathe to having their decisions overturned on appeal, thus again giving the advantage to those who can pay their lawyers to drag out what has become a proliferation of injustices.

We must make the legal process far less *adversarial*; reuniting law with justice by reinstating the *balance between equity*²⁷ and *law*. Law must not be primarily a divisive wedge. In the final analysis, it is the collapse of socially engrained trust that creates a feeding frenzy for lawyers; and they perpetuate distrust through contracts and procedures that often “poison the well” for future relationships.

²⁷ See [12 Principles of Equity](#) , Collaborative contracting, equitable solutions, and mediation need more emphasis.

PART 5 --DO WE CONTINUE TO MUDDLE THROUGH?

Many of the older generation raised in the post WWII era of the 1950s and 60s still remember a childhood where *Trust was a Central Organizing Principle of social order*. We didn't think about locking our doors at night, or having our bicycles stolen, or being kidnapped or raped, or making our schools armed fortresses. America was the "land of the free and the home of the brave." We loved our neighborhood policemen, and were optimistic about our future. The world ahead was bright. Today's children have far lower expectations.

The central question of our times is:

Do we continue to muddle through or strive for a higher, more enlightened quest?

Our nation's Founding Fathers were products of the Age of Enlightenment. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights was a brilliant codification of years of debate and wrestling with the issues of freedom, democracy, and social order. However, the glorious vision of the Enlightenment, which sought the progressive perfection of humanity was sidelined by the explosive Industrial Revolution and its need for mounting labor to run the mills, social and racial stresses leading to the Civil War and draining World Wars .

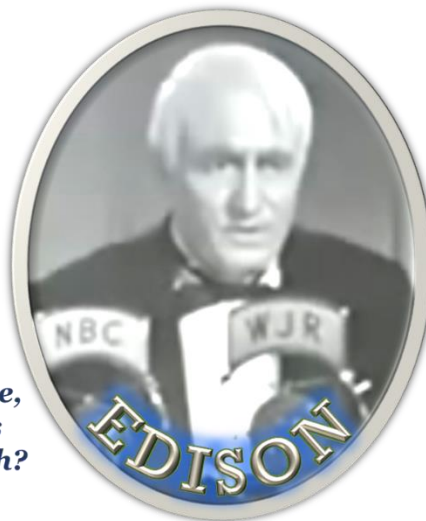
The ideal of fusing scientific and technology with practical social change has not been idyllic. America's greatest inventor, Thomas Edison, pleaded to reinstitute the balance between science and humanity for the good of the earth -- the dilemma we still faces today:²⁸

*The dynamo of man's God-given ingenuity is running away
with the dynamo of his equally God-given humanity.*

*It's a troubled
world -- full of
doubt and
uncertainty.*

*Men of science
have been
helping it.*

*Are we going to
discover, too late,
that science was
trusted too much?*



*Has science
turned into a
monster
whose final
triumph is
man's own
destruction?*

*It's a problem
of balance and
alignment.*

*We must put those dynamos in balance, make them work in harmony as the
Great Designer intended they should. It can be done; what man's mind can see,
man's character can control. Man must learn that. Then we need not be afraid of
tomorrow. And man will go forward toward more light.*

²⁸ From the MGM 1940 movie, *Thomas Edison – the Man*, starring Spencer Tracey (from which this quote is taken)

STRATEGIC ALERT

Now we live in a chaotic, confusing time, filled with a muddled, mongrelized view of culture, leadership, and the human race's relationship to itself, its institutions, its economy, its businesses, and its environment. The Corona Virus has exposed how *adversarial* and *transactional* our world has become.

Across the globe, we are searching for solutions about how to conduct the future of humanity, and not finding them.

People are distrustful and anxiety ridden. Our economies are not creating prosperity for many. Across the globe, eighty-five percent of employees are disengaged. Capitalism, the only truly competitive economic system, is under attack, and for good reasons. Our political and civil institutions are highly distrusted and often dysfunctional.

Time is Quickly Running Out

After the Bubonic Plague decimated half of the population in Europe in the mid-1300s, society realized it was a time for deep reflection and introspection. People began searching for better answers, new ideas, and new paradigms of perceiving and thinking – people sought a transformational shift.

This resulted in the Renaissance, which began in the 1400s – a rebirth of new thinking, a reengagement with the discovery of both wisdom and knowledge, and a positive progression for the future of human kind. It rekindled a desire to lift the dignity and spirit of humanity. Colleges and universities began to blossom across Europe, as people saw education as the pathway toward a bold new future.

By the 1600s, the Age of the Enlightenment grew out of the Renaissance – new ideas and deeper understanding about bringing the best out of human nature. It was a time of both intellectual and spiritual flourishing. Thought leaders in education and religion began exploring how *rationality*, *science*, and *ethics* could combine with *religion* and *spirit* to revitalize civilization. This became the inspiration for America's Founding Fathers to begin their quest for the triumph of democracy.

Today we have lost much of that verve. With the Corona Virus Pandemic, we have a chance to do for modern civilization what the Bubonic Plague did for Europe eight-hundred years ago – rekindle the quest for lifting the dignity and spirit of humanity – to put our world on a trajectory of progression, to align the energies of technology with those of humanity.

Required Sea Change Shift in Leadership & Culture

New thinking, new ideas, new inspirations, and new models are in order.

When great intentions yield mediocre results,
When the tried-and-true ceases to work,
When every attempt to fix things is met with frustration and failure....
Then probably the design architecture itself has reached its limits,
And the paradigm is ready to shift.
Opportunity is present,
Creative vision is called for,
And bold action in new dimensions is the nature of things to come.....

Truly great revolutions in world history have not been fought on the battlefield.

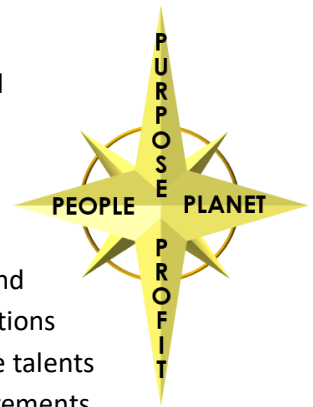
STRATEGIC ALERT

Foremost, they have been *revelations in the mind and heart*; first conceived by a handful of people, who, together, see, believe, and are committed to a higher order for civilization and humankind. Then these revelations are transformed into righteous action.

For prosperity to flourish, the aim of a world that works must be implanted in fertile soil – rooted in a culture of cooperation led by enlightened, trusted leaders committed to a long-term greater-good for all. It requires a melding of humanists and scientists.

For an economy to function, governmental policy must be supported by a higher standard – a shift in thinking and beliefs – a shift away from the chaotic disorder brought about by two generations of “greed is good,” self-interest focused leaders²⁹ and toward a more competitive economic system based on more collaboration in organizations and value chains where people are not just “labor,” but use their collaborative creative talents to solve problems, innovate, and find new ways to align and balance, needs and requirements for people to prosper with a deep sense of meaning and purpose.

A sustainable social order and planet cannot be attained by *distrustful, transactional and adversarial, authoritarian* leaders. The very basis of America’s founding and early growth was based on a belief in the perfectibility of the human experience. This was the central principle of the Age of Enlightenment, of which our Founding Fathers were pivotal architects, especially for the governance portion of the human equation. We need to rekindle that fire of freedom and the reaffirm our grasp of value of freedom and liberty.



Victor Hugo astutely observed:

There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

However,

Ideas don't change the course of human events; Leaders do.

Leadership is the Primary Lever for Change

Given the current state of affairs, it is unlikely these inspired leaders will come from Academia. Their professional schools are simply not embracing a Collaborative Shift. Nor will the shift likely start with Law, Politics, Religion, or the Media.

Business has the Most to Gain

Unlike other institutions that will try to hang on to a thread of archaic hollow hope, today’s successful commercial enterprise is moving at blazing speeds and change is not just rapid, but continuous. Successful commerce is relinquishing the power paradigm of “survival of the fittest,” recognizing that “thrival of the most adaptive and collaborative” is the road to success.

The benefits of collaboration to businesses are rapid and quickly impact the bottom line. Productivity goes up, good people stay, innovation escalates, and the speed of getting things done accelerates.

²⁹ As advocated by Ayn Rand: *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), and Rand & Greenspan: *Capitalism the Unknown Ideal* (1966) where Greenspan advocates the “greed is good” argument – p 111. This is the argument that contradicts Thomas Jefferson’s fundament premises about building a democratic social order for the greater good.

STRATEGIC ALERT

The Collaborative Shift is already happening with leading edge businesses, as evidenced by the creation and proliferation of strategic alliances *between* companies around the world in the last twenty years.

Successful alliances practitioners are ardent users of collaborative architectures, solely because they produce solid track-records of achievement, demonstrating collaboration works in the most challenging of organizational interactions. So too *within* companies that become committed to a culture of collaboration, rejecting the *adversarial* and *transactional*³⁰ counterparts.



We must give people a stronger sense of meaning and purpose.

We must reinforce the collaborative nature that yearns to be free within humanity.

*Great Civilizations embark on a continuous upward journey
seeking to bring out the best in humanity*

– our ability to collaborate, create beauty, find truth, innovate, and inspire wisdom –

Historian Kenneth Clark in his brilliant book *Civilization* observed about the Dark Ages:

“... the dreary fact remains that, even in the darkest ages, it was the *institutions* that made society work, and if civilization is to survive, society must somehow [make its institutions work].” “Western civilization has been a series of rebirths. Surely this should give us confidence in ourselves,”³¹

Civilizations are only as strong as their underlying institutions.

Vibrant institutions advance great societies.

Mediocre ones fail to bear the stress of changing social and economic needs.

Together we must begin establishing a “Centre of Gravity” for our age – a centre that elevates the standard of excellence of humanity rebalancing and realigning civilization's floundering ship, preventing it from capsizing in storms of disillusionment and adversity, BEFUDDLED as it sinks.

If we fail to find humanity's centre, then batten down the hatches: *Rough Seas Ahead*.

³⁰ *Transactional* Cultures can work in situations where routines are formal and environments very stable.

³¹ Clark, *Ibid*, p 346

STRATEGIC ALERT

The rise of the Authoritarians is not to be taken lightly. Their reemergence is a danger to every democracy on the planet. Authoritarians exploit the fault line of distrust in institutions, sowing fear, uncertainty, distrust, and divisiveness.

Unless our democracies shore up the leadership of our cherished institutions, Authoritarianism will continue to grow, and its prosperity will become civilization's poverty.

We must resurrect the wisdom from which our Founding Father's high standards of human excellence emerged -- a continuum of thinking from "enlightened realists" to generate a new, compelling, multi-dimensional vision of humanity (not some New Age hocus-pocus, but something that is simultaneously enlightened and realistic/practical to be sustained for generations to come).

Time is dangerously short.³² Currently many of our cherished institutions are suffering and on the verge of disintegration. People are losing their faith in democracy itself; this means people have lost faith in its leaders. Any shift to a higher order must embrace a vanguard of higher leadership standards.

Great Leaders create great organizations trusted by the people they influence. Distrust is a termite invasion: slowly and silently eating away society's foundations, creating cynicism and disillusionment, sucking out civilization's life-giving spiritual energies.

In the larger sense, Rome fell because its people could trust neither their government, nor their fellow man, nor their culture for its lack of vision and ideals.

When Rome finally crashed, its leaders had no more will to fight the evil barbarians at their gate; instead they made a Faustian bargain, and ultimately sold whatever semblance of their souls to an evil even greater than they.

Fear drained their energy; fear is the greatest destroyer of trust. Ultimately the Roman culture lacked a conscience, which put Rome on a pathway to perdition.

We are now following the path of the Romans.

Call for Action

However, all is not bleak. The cultural "arrow" must be aimed by enlightened, realistic, collaborative leaders; the point of the "arrow" must be sharpened, primarily by ethical, trustworthy, guidance. Building trust in our institutions; understanding that times of rapid change require both simplicity and synergy; and proactive trust-worthy leadership are essential in these challenging times.

It is absolutely essential that our citizenry become attuned to the methods and guile of Authoritarian Dark Triad³³, then preemptively identify and push them to the periphery as soon as they are recognized, not after they have risen to power.

³² See [Distrust in America](#)

³³ see [Beware the Authoritarian Dark Triad](#)

STRATEGIC ALERT

As Edmund Burke said 250 years ago:

***“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil
is for good men to do nothing.”***

Twenty six hundred years ago Heraclitus said that:

“Character Becomes Destiny.”

In that single phrase he embodied the nature of the insightful solution – those who create real trust in their world have the personal potential to design a powerful, bold future for themselves based on a soulful vision and belief that they (along with everyone on the planet) have a higher reason or meaningful purpose or even a noble mission; and it is each individual’s personal quest to identify that destiny.

Trust Determines the Course of History, the Destinies of Nations, and the Fate of People

-- Paul R. Lawrence, Professor, Organization Behavior, Harvard Business School

Today, we are at a Cross-Road in this Planet’s Destiny.

Is this a period of Danger or Opportunity? Darkness or ReEnlightenment?”

The path we choose will make all the difference. ³⁴

Are You Ready to Lead a Collaborative Shift?



 **International Collaborative Leadership Institute**

³⁴See [Creating the Age of ReEnlightenment](#)