

Emerging Planetary Futures

Sohail Inayatullah

Professor, Tamkang University, Taiwan; University of the Sunshine Coast

Those who have been displaced by Modernity have come back to contend for ownership of the global future. In its quest for progress, the modern story cast off religion and fundamentalism (too tribal) and the planetary and spiritual (too idealistic and irrelevant for progress).

But the displaced have come back and are challenging the modern—first in the global imagination and then as global reality.

Under threat are the modernists: globalized, yet champions of the nation-state; secular, but values based. They had assumed the future was clear: more freedom of capital, prosperity overtime for all, and the end of religion and other isms. But this has not happened. Fundamentalists, cultural creatives and techno-utopians all lay claim to the future.

In the last elections in the USA and Australia, it was the fundamentalists, as in other nations, who were pivotal. They voted for the imagined past, when men were really men, when it was god and a big stick that ruled the polity. God does take sides and one can vote for Him. Modernists acceded to this, unconsciously knowing that deep underneath the myth of progress was the myth of heaven.

Cultural creatives had hoped that their values and practices of gender partnership, sustainability, global ethics, global governance and a personal spirituality would have swayed the election to different results. But fear of terror and fear of the loss of accumulation meant that the present looked to the past as its future.

Still it is too easy to rule out transformation. With study after study showing that our patterns of thinking, our behavior are dramatically implicated in our personal and civilizational health (those with strict deadlines are more likely to get heart attacks; those who forgive have healthier immune systems), the cultural creatives are here to stay. This demographic group also does not shy away from the latest technologies; their children are the digital natives.

But what augurs well for the fundamentalists is the speed of change. Dramatic advancements in genetics, brain science, virtual reality will continue. In response, most will seek comfort in what was.

However, what is new is the blending of the Gaian image (sustainability, planetism) with techno-utopianism—resulting in the green techie. There is even a new videogame that links biofeedback to computer gaming. The seeds of a linked Gaia with technology are emerging.

While it appears that the future will see more fundamentalism tied to modernism (and both are in unsettled tension) the spiritual and techno-utopians are slowly creeping in and transcending the walls by making them virtual and seeing them as illusory changing the nature of the wall.

An episteme earlier, the battle in the medieval city between priest and knight was resolved by those who lived outside the city walls—the traders—and modernity was born. We are in the midst of the end of the modern system as well. All signs lead to a break from the present, even as the past desperately clings to our unconscious fears.



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