

# Swan Song: Death and Creativity

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awareness of death than any other. For many of us, science has removed the comfort of superstitious beliefs about an afterlife, or, for that matter, of a supernatural God outside of creation itself. Science can not tell us what to value, but it can frame what is probably true about creation. Even with science, or perhaps because of science as it probes farther into what is real, the ultimate meaning of creation becomes an ever deeper mystery. We progress from Galileo, Newton, and others to Einstein and special and general relativity, to the cosmological constant, and from there to string theory and discussions about extra dimensions.

Evidently, the universe started 13.7 billion years ago, more or less. Astronomers tell us the universe is expanding due to the repulsive force of dark energy, which makes up 75 percent of the universe. Observations by NASA from its Chandra X-ray satellite suggest the universe is expanding a little faster than previously thought. However, there is also a chance, although less of a chance, that dark energy is weakening, leading to a big crunch, because tiny differences in quantification produce very different results over very long periods of time. Either way, our individual deaths are insignificant compared to that of the universe, which is expected in 100 billion years, give or take.

## **Creativity**

Death can be countered by creativity, at least for a few tens of billions of years. The human species, so aware of death, is also full of creativity. Our brains, our senses, our opposable thumbs supported the development of culture, language, technology and, recently, science itself. We think about the creativity of the individual in society because that is what we can naturally understand and, thus, value. Individually, we ponder the mysteries that existence exists, that we are part of a creation, and that we can sense transcendent meaning for our lives, whether expressed in secular or religious terms.

Creativity, like death, can also be seen in terms of a larger creation, from a stance less centered in one life. We experience consciousness and free will, so it is hard to see ourselves as tempo-

rary products of a continuous history. Our physical being gives rise to the experience of individuality but our individual creativity is part of a

killing off some, nurturing others, as wood or flowers, as pets or as food.

Our heritage is, essentially, tribal. It is based on territory and alpha males controlling small groups of hunters and gatherers numbering 150 or fewer humans. The tribe defends its territory and tries to expand it. The dominant alpha male and his lieutenants define the rules and enforce them, with women's roles well-defined and subordinate to men. Women raise the children, there are rituals for boys becoming men, and marriages are arranged. Deviants may be tolerated but also may be executed or expelled. These patterns are typical of all social species with males physically stronger than females. The defining phrase is "sexually dimorphous territorial animals."

### **Religious fundamentalism**

The negative aspects of tribalism are evident in religious fundamentalism. The greatness of the world's great religions is how they transcend tribalism, how they teach tolerance and inclusion of other tribes in a more loving and creation-centered society. Fundamentalism distorts these transcendent teachings back into tribalism, back into narrow dogmas of belief, restrictive rules, and social control. Belief by the brain displaces the faith of the heart, and the human spirit withers.

All fundamentalisms share five characteristics rooted in tribalism.

1. Fundamentalists insist on an exclusive monopoly on truth, requiring control of all people in all areas of life. Church and state must be one; nor is there separation of the private from the public, nor separation of thought and ideas from action and behavior. In fundamentalism, there is not much distance from Pat Robertson to Osama bin Laden, from Falwell to Khomeini, from religious right fundamentalism to the Taliban, from Islamic Jihad to Israeli settlers, or from Fox News to al-Jazeera.
2. Men rule women by right, enforced by strength. The leading men set the rules for other men and for women, for whom a

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On this issue there is an odd kind of cultural blindness in American politics, which focuses on Palestinian terrorism while ignoring Zionist settlement on Palestinian lands, human rights abuses, and terrible suffering perpetrated by the Israeli occupation. Israeli imperialism is possible only because of American support and it makes us hated, for good reason, in the Arab world. Israel can become secure only by ab

2. The US refuses to support the International Criminal Court even though our position weakens protections for American citizens abroad.
3. The US refuses to support the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Land Mine Ban Convention despite the lack of real military need and the mayhem that continues from landmines.
4. The US does not support the Convention on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons despite their role in violence in failed states and the voluntary nature of the convention.
5. The US continues to train and equip militaries in non-democratic countries, with no comparable effort to support democracy.
6. The US has refused to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, without which it will be difficult or impossible to stop the spread of nuclear weapons to rogue states.
7. The US has abandoned our historic support for Strategic Arms Reductions.

the price of tribalism, rose to \$956 billion in 2003, nearly one trillion dollars, of which 47 percent was by the US alone. The US has 725 military bases in 130 nations costing \$400 billion per year.

11. The US without UN or NATO support invaded Iraq with small contingents of “coalition” forces, based on false “intelligence” and in violation of international law as understood by most experts. The invasion failed to meet the requirement of imminent threat required by the doctrine of preemption. Over 1,000 Americans and many more Iraqis have died and more will die as Iraqis resist occupation and anti-American militias dominate large urban areas. The cost of upwards of \$5 billion per month, combined with tax cuts, job losses, and a weak economy, is leading to a US fiscal crisis.
12. The US has refused to support UN resolutions relating to Palestine and Israel.
13. Ignoring many UN resolutions, the US has embargoed Cuba, bolstering the Castro regime it purports to oppose and lowering the standard of living of average Cubans.
14. The US supports repressive regimes in Latin American countries exporting illegal drugs to the US, overlooking human rig

- tion now degrading 2.2 billion acres of arid lands throughout the world, affecting hundreds of millions of people.
19. The US has refused to ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, despite its meeting all US objections. The treaty entered into force without the US. The US is now barred from membership in the Tribunal and other forums established by the treaty.
  20. The US has refused to ratify the Basel Convention on the export of hazardous wastes.
  21. The US has been resisting EU efforts to get a meaningful



the passionate middle to engage in the details of balancing judgments among competing values, to sort out what is good and what is bad about corporations. While the media and the political debate stress hopelessly simplified and polarized pro- and anti-corporate ideologies, both corporate leaders and reformers are, in very different ways, reshaping how corporations work.

Abuses of corporate power first emerged in the industrial capitalism and financial capitalism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their excesses were moderated by the Progressives, the New Deal, and various movements since World War II. In recent decades, corporations are changing from within. Some corporate leaders are forging new models of flat organization, cross-departmental working relationships, culture-driven creative work, and even managers chosen by their employees. New standards for social accountability are gaining ground, and concern for sustainability and best practices motivate many managers to raise standards, and not just for the bottom line. Spates of scandals over the last 20 years involved few corporations in comparison to the whole. Corporations are too big and important to condemn wholesale; they reflect human nature.

Citizen reformers of corporations are also effectively changing them, but only when they publicize specific abuses rather than attack corporations in general. Like the Fabians of England, research and advocacy links outrage to clearly identified evils of labor exploitation and environmental degradation. Citizen groups seek specific legislation, regulations, court decisions, and corporate policies to effectuate change. And there are hybrid efforts, such as socially-screened mutual funds and stock-holder actions, helping investors to do a little good while trying to do a little better.

In general, the corporation and its multitudinous junior partner, small business, have produced a far higher standard of living than any tribalism or centralized state ownership ever could. The corporation mobilizes science and technology, talent and capital, organization and resources, in a competitive environment to meet consumer demand. Economic freedom is as important as social and political freedom for creativity.

Corporations do have systemic problems. Corporate leaders' understanding of short term threats and opportunities for their businesses is greater than their grasp of larger, longer term trends. Corporation leaders bias elections, where their money is a megaphone  
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## **Sustainability: the new contest between death and creativity**

As nations, corporations, and metro-regions overcome tribalism and religious fundamentalism, the totally new problem of environmental sustainability has emerged. The economies that have lifted the quality of life now threaten to destroy the new world they have created, a money world isolated from nature.

Environmentalism deals with many serious issues: population growth, public lands and preservation vs. resource extraction, protection of species and biodiversity, pollution and recycling, forestry and grazing, agriculture, the ocean and fisheries, open space, urbanization, highways vs. transit, and so on. Over the last twenty years, however, a new problem has emerged which dwarfs previous issues. Global warming is by far the biggest threat now facing humanity.

Humanity evolved with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the range of 200 to 300 parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere. In fact, for the last 400,000 years, going way back before human evolution, CO<sub>2</sub> rarely rose above 300 ppm. Since the dawn of the industrial revolution, CO<sub>2</sub> levels are up exponentially, from a base of about 280 ppm in 1800, to over 370 parts per million today. Global average temperatures are up exponentially, directly following carbon dioxide trends. On a graph with a geological time scale, or even just the last 1000 years, large recent increases in warming gases and in temperatures are concurrent, nearly vertical, and higher than all previous human existence.

Global warming has already radically transformed world climate. Global warming has caused incredible changes in polar ice, the Greenland ice sheets, all glaciers on all continents, and huge areas of permafrost and tundra. Ocean temperatures are rising and ocean currents are changing. Sea levels and storm surges are rising; rainfall patterns are changing. Spring is coming sooner and fall later, and the weather is changing. Plants and animals, including disease vectors, are on the move globally, by altitude, season, and geography. Global warming adds to already extreme problems



of over-grazing, over-cultivation, conversion of land to urban uses, use of fossil fuels to grow food, and loss of species.

The money economy doesn't care. Our global economy, whose accounting system is divorced from the environmental reality that sustains it, has driven off a cliff, is in free fall, and does not realize it. Our accounting system fails to consider indirect costs of environmental degradation and external costs to persons.

Just as old narrow tribalisms threaten death, so now does the new reality of environmental overshoot of the earth's carrying capacity. We need creativity to confront the new challenge. We can dismiss projections of catastrophe if we wish, they have often been wrong. But the evidence already of massive environmental decline is overwhelming, and there is always the case of Easter Island, whose pre-scientific society destroyed itself by growing beyond the carrying capacity of the island. Science, a human process, is not perfect, but it produces the best knowledge we have, ignored at our peril.

The nation, the corporation, and the metro-region are equally relevant for tackling environmental problems, including global warming. The political pattern which is overcoming social injustice is relevant for environmental reform. The campaign for social justice involves political action to put a price on inequities, usually through regulation and use of the police power, and sometimes through economic incentives. The "free" market is not, ultimately, free or value-neutral, but structured to reflect the power of the elite and the myths and values of the participant public. Slavery is no longer acceptable, but environmental abuse still is.

Concerning the environment, if there is some protection of wilderness and endangered species, it is not because of their market value as bananas or carrots. It is because, like expanding the tribe, we place a value on creation apart from narrow economic needs, because our lives become larger by respecting life as a whole, an expansion of the tribe to all life. The calculation is not a monetary one, but part of a balancing of values that frame markets.

## **The nation and sustainab**

While a carbon tax is not yet on the political agenda, a re-

credit given what needs to be done and the destructive practices of certain industries, but the pressures of law, public opinion, and conscience have impelled technological revolutions. The redesign of industrial processes to value energy, resources, and pollution has not only dramatically reduced environmental impacts but also improved the bottom line. Technology has been the joker in the deck, foiling some projections of gloom and doom. Tail pipe add-ons, for example

## **The metro-region and sustainability**

For many years I have been interested in metro-region sustainability. Metro-regions have become auto-dependent and dispersed, and continued suburbanization is not sustainable. Land is running out, oil is running out, resource wars are killing people, and the world climate can't take it. Yet regional leaders emphasize the need to compete with other regions with ever-more economic and suburban development. They do not recognize that population growth and economic growth are not correlated. Some regions are expanding in population with little gain in income; others have more stable populations and are increasing their incomes: "growth without growth," the mantra of sustainability.

Regions continue to honor broken accounting systems, ignoring important costs in the pursuit of false progress. The problem is not only sprawl, but also imbalances between job locations and housing locations. Successful cities in a region attract job concentrations, and up to a point their agglomeration economies—increased productivity from the geographic proximity of factors of production—contribute to the economy. The winning cities do not, however, have to provide enough housing and can externalize that cost to other cities. The winning corporations and cities benefit, but there are six costs not accounted for in the regional product:

1. The cost of housing soars because the winning city restricts supply in order to improve its fiscal balance. Housing costs more money to serve than it generates in taxes, so housing which the market could supply is stopped by zoning regulation.
2. Commute distances and durations and congestion get worse because employees must travel from housing that is further away.
3. Air pollution gets worse because of longer and congested commutes.
4. Low-wage workers live in crowded housing so they can afford high rents.

5. Cities with housing surpluses have fiscal stress because their tax and service bases are unbalanced.
6. Long-distance commuters and their families suffer stress due to extra time on the road.

These costs can be called “job location externalities,” and they are not adequately considered by the money economy.

Another major problem has been subsidies and indirect pricing of auto use, which promotes sprawl and excessive road construction. Without artificially low prices for auto use, sprawl would not be possible. The land use pattern does not cause auto dependency; auto subsidies created the land use and the dependency.

In 1978 I started the Hayward Area Planning Association (HAPA), with big challenges to save open space and to stop a freeway. In June 2004 we mostly completed our efforts to save open space on Walpert Ridge, the undeveloped hills southeast of the campus of California State University, Hayward. The Blue Rock project will have 412 acres of housing and golf course and 1,732 acres in open space, or 76 percent of the whole property. We settled of litigation in exchange for \$1,512,000 to buy additional open space in Union City. Earlier HAPA efforts on Bailey Ranch, which is next to Blue Rock, won dedication of 87 percent of the development to East Bay Parks. HAPA also played an important role in acquiring the Meincke property, all of which is leading to a significant expansion of Garin and Dry Creek Parks. Given local politics, in which golf courses have more political value than habitat, HAPA has been fairly successful.

In 1978 HAPA also started a long fight against the Foothill Freeway, which would have gone through five miles of existing housing and across the face of the East Bay hills. Finally, in spring 2004, the state appellate court denied an appeal by Caltrans, ending Caltrans’ effort to take money voters approved for one project and spend it on another. Meanwhile, the City of Hayward got permission from the voters in 2002 to do something else. The city initially proposed an overwidening of Mission Blvd. that would have taken almost two miles of developed commercial frontage on the east

side to make eight lanes of road width. Expanding pavement, however, has fewer benefits than claimed because of induced demand, which is the increased traffic due to more free road capacity. Build it and they will come, at least to a significant extent. HAPA in June 2004 helped stop the Mission overwidening, but a widening proposal still threatens downtown Hayward.

In these open space and freeway issues, it has been frustrating for me that the more sophisticated arguments about habitat, auto pricing reform, urban systems, and sustainability do not have much traction. HAPA's success seems based more on a popular gut-level desire for open space and against more pavement.

Sustainability requires that car transportation become more of a private good and less of a public good. People need to pay directly for the real costs of their behavior, or they cannot make responsible and economically productive choices in the market place. Sustainability also requires that environmentalists pay much more attention to economics and that economists pay much more attention to the environment—not to deny the role of markets, but to make them work more economically.

To sum up a bit, we can see the role of nation, corporation, and metro-region in overcoming tribalism, but at the same time they are still vulnerable to tribalism and other problems. We see their succe





In 1992 and 1993 I could see the neocon rush to war—the disinformation, exaggeration, misuse of intelligence, and media propaganda. I could see that the war, while short, was wrong; the aftermath would be difficult; and it would undermine the war on terrorism. The people of this class, however, believe in WMD, in some link to Al Qaeda, in the evil of the neocons' former friend, Saddam, and, thus, in invading and occupying Iraq. I would have refused to serve in the military rather than undermine US security. They, however, were willing to die, and hundreds have died, because they thought it would help US security. The learning process during Vietnam took many years at the time, but this social class mostly did live through it, did not learn much from it, and did not study it afterwards. I feel sorry for these people. Perhaps I am an over-educated intellectual patronizing them, but the problem is that their votes threaten my security as well as theirs.

### **The Neocon Counter-Revolution**

I turn, now, from the chorus to the main actors. The neocon revolution, which is really a counter-revolution against historic progressive trends, has taken over the US government with the support of a partisan Congress, an inept media, and an uninformed citizenry. Right-wing Republicans have embraced religious fundamentalism, betraying the concept of religious tolerance and secular government on which this country was founded. Decades after the Scopes trial and Roe v. Wade, and ,ctrip.0000 T00 0.00e00 TD(e)Tj5.2800 0

## **Iraq**

In previous eras, faced with far worse dangers abroad, both political parties pursued, generally successfully, a policy of aggressive rhetoric and prudent containment. No one complained that containment left brutal dictators in power; few wanted to invade the Soviet Union. George W. Bush had not planned on conquering Iraq when he took office. Like most Republicans, he had criticized Clinton for “nation-building” in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and had called for a humble foreign policy. Once in office, however, a far right network of advocates of unilateral use of US military power captured his imagination.

Similar to the credibility the Johnson administration had prior to the Tet offensive of 1968, the Bush regime managed to wage a war of aggression on false pretenses. The doctrine of preemptive war was not itself to blame, but it requires imminent threat, and there was none. Most non-ideological observers around the world believed there was none; no credible intelligence supported imminent threat; and any doubts were eliminated by extensive inspections prior to the invasion. There was no nuclear program; there was no yellow cake from Niger. The aluminum tubes were for artillery mortars, not centrifuges, as the Iraqi nuclear program had moved beyond that method for refining uranium. There were no mobile bioweapon labs; only two trailers sold by the British to fill helium balloons. There was no missile threat; any warhead in the missile reduced its range to a permitted distance. Iraqi military capabilities had been hugely damaged in the Gulf War, and inspections after the invasion found what those before had found, essentially no Weapons of Mass Destruction. It seems clear the neocons really believed there were such WMD, but that was a result of a paranoid bias in the use of intelligence so that no matter what Saddam did, he was about to kill us. Most neocons did not believe there were links between al Qaeda and Saddam; that was only for a cynical manipulation of a credulous media and public



for ransom on April 9, 2003. Little Farouk answered a knock at the door and was snatched. The police were powerless and advised paying the ransom. Three days later a note was dropped at al-Obeidi's door with a cell phone number: the kidnappers wanted \$30,000. He told them he didn't have it; they would have to ask for less; and he hung up. Both sides knew the kidnappers would have to deliver another note with another number to call. Al-Obeidi pulled out his Kalashnikov and waited a few days. Finally, at 4 a.m. three men drove by and dropped off a note. Al-Obeidi ran after the car and fired. The speeding car got a flat tire and the men tried to escape on foot. Al-Obeidi and his neighbors caught one of them. Al-Obeidi pointed his rifle at the man and demanded to know where his son was.

The man—a 34 year old career criminal—led him to a house, from which al-Obeidi and his relatives quickly retrieved Farouk. Al-Obeidi did not turn the man over to the police, because he knew the Americans would let him loose, leading to tribal enmities between the al-Obeidi clan and the kidnapper's tribe, the al-Hayali, based in the city of Balad. He demanded \$120,000 of them because the rules allowed him to multiply the first sum by four. I am not making this up, and I hope the newspaper did not either. Al-Obeidi detained the kidnapper at a relative's house for six weeks waiting for the al-Hayali to do the right thing.

Finally, on May 23, the elders of both clans met under a tent near al-Obeidi's house, wearing tribal costumes. The newspaper reporter in attendance reported, "Tea and sweets were served." There was a long discussion. In the end, al-Obeidi agreed to give up the kidnapper in exchange for an apology from the al-Hayali. Why? Al-Obeidi said, "it would be shameful for us to take any money that came about as a result of criminal activity," and expressed some sympathy for the plight of the other tribe. His philosophy: "the head of the family considers his family the most precious thing he has in his life. And he's ready to sacrifice his own life for their safety. Indeed, that would be a very cheap price to save his family." He has his son back, the tribes are at peace, and honor has been served.



and arrogant contempt for multilateral international institutions to control the use of force.

Aggression against Iraq necessarily diverted attention and resources away from Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda, Taliban, warlords, and poppies keep their grip outside of Kabul and in North-west Pakistan. Neocon allegations of links between sworn enemies, Al Qaeda and Iraqi Baathists, were a sham that continues to deceive **large numbers** of Americans. After the War for Oil undercut the War on Terror, the neocons asked our allies for help in Iraq while freezing them out of contracts to rebuild. We continue to pursue policies offensive to Muslims, contributing to a pool of alienated youth ripe for recruitment to extremism.

At home, Homeland Security makes some progress but criti-

in Guantanamo beyond reach of any lawyers or courts, not entitled to any rights, and has only changed course, slightly, under orders of the US Supreme Court. In 2002 US officials arrested a Canadian citizen and turned him over to Syria for

Florida panther habitat, bull trout in the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain trumpeter swans. Many statistical series on the environment have been cancelled.

## **Environment**

The attack on the science of global warming is prolonging our dependence on foreign oil and thus damaging our national security. US global warming gases are the major cause of global warming, but the energy industry—gas, oil, coal, electrical power—now has political influence unprecedented in American history, with the President, Vice-President, and numerous top level appointees from the oil industry. Conflict over climate change is a major source of friction with the European Union.

Bush, always skeptical about warming and hostile to Kyoto, promised in his campaign to reduce emissions from new coal-fired electrical plants, but abandoned even that pledge early in his administration, squelching an initiative by his EPA Administrator. Then, when the White House edited an EPA report too severely, the EPA simply dropped the whole warming section from the report rather than go against the scientific consensus.

The neocons want to expand use of coal for electricity and of oil for cars. There is too little oil on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to matter, but they want to break the protections for wildlife there, and then to drill off-shore and in national parks. The neocons removed federal wildlife maps from the web and fired the offending cartographer; they removed the poetry from a Smithsonian photo exhibit on Alaska and moved the exhibit to the basement. The Kyoto Treaty, a faltering, fragile international effort, is greatly weakened by US hostility and unilateralism.

Linked to global warming, yet with a vastness all its own, is the ocean. The Pew Oceans Commission and the Commission on Ocean Policy in 2004 reported in depth on the ocean crisis. The large fish—swordfish, tuna, sharks, marlin—have declined 90 percent in fifty years. Once gigantic fisheries have collapsed through the magic of the marketplace, the political influence of fishing interests, and the tragedy of the commons. (The tragedy of the commons



occurs when a public resource is uncontrolled, such as the commons of a village which become over-grazed because there is no control over how many cows it can have.) Trawlers haul heavy nets across ocean floors, scraping up five tons of ocean life, including endangered sea turtles, for each ton of shrimp while destroying habitat. Cruise ships dump raw sewage into the ocean. Bush supported weakening the Marine Mammal Protection Act, including allowing exposure of marine mammals to high levels of sonar noise and crippling the “dolphin safe” program. He has removed protections for the waters of Bristol Bay in Alaska and recommenced weakening the Coastal Zone Management Act while the commissions recommend strengthening it.

In other environmental areas, Bush has supported self-policing by polluting industries, stopped enforcement of pollution laws, and announced dozens of roll-backs of environmental protections (timed to avoid news coverage). The administration has sought litigation from industry and then avoided defending the law in those court cases in order to get rulings adverse to the environment. In this way, Yates Petroleum was able to junk an environmental monitoring program required by the Clinton administration on drilling close to Teton National Park. Biologists believe hundreds of new gas wells will threaten antelope and other wildlife in the area, and air quality has already declined.

Bush has allowed snowmobiles in Yellowstone Park, permitted the collapse of fisheries, and opened a vast area of public land—244,000,000 acres, ten percent of the area of the nation—to increased exploitation. The neocons are trying to repeal the Roadless Area Conservation Rule which bans building roads in 60 million pristine areas. The rule was developed during several years of the Clinton administration, which held 600 public hearings and collected a record of over two million public comments, almost all in favor of protecting the land. Bypassing Congress, neocons are allowing avoidance of environmental reviews of logging projects and of new-source review of power plants. The Forest Service builds logging roads at greater cost to the taxpayers than the income it receives for the logs.

From 1982 under Reagan to 2002 the EPA cleaned up more toxic waste dumps than it discovered. By 2003 the number of clean

He promised billions for education; he has not delivered. He attacked Head Start, one of the most successful programs in US history, trying to lower its standards, reduce its funding, and turn it over to the states. Bush promised billions to New York after 9/11; most of it was not delivered. He promised a huge program to deal with AIDS in Africa, but tied it to the global gag rule, emphasized abstinence, and cut the funding.

With support from the religious right, the Bush administration has undercut the status of women. Uneducated women especially tend to be controlled by men, to have limited economic opportunity, and to have high birth rates, which in turn are a major cause of the world labor glut driving down wages and destroying the environment. The neocon alliance with the religious right slashed \$34 million promised to the UN Population Fund, based on allegations known to be false. Anti-abortion hysteria takes a high toll in infant and maternal mortality; by one estimate, 77,000 children per year die due to staffing cuts and clinic closures. Bush keeps nominating anti-choice judges to take women's rights away.

Bush's religious commitments are not fundamentalist; his basic faith is ecumenical and not dogmatic. He did well to praise Islam in the aftermath of 9/11, to make positive references to mosques, and to commemorate Jewish holidays. However, he does not talk about the need for the rich to help the poor nor about discrimination against women and gays. He cites religious motives for the AIDs program in Africa, then undercuts its effectiveness by refusing to fund policies that work. He feels compassion for seniors, but the drug benefit enriches the pharmaceutical companies. He winds up supporting many policies of fundamentalists even though he does not have their hard-edged theology.

Neocon opposition to big government is limited to social spending; they have expanded government by cutting taxes on the wealthy, waging war, and burdening future generations with debt. Not all of the budget deficit is Bush's fault; the recession would have caused budget problems. Bush policies, however, have made the deficit much worse. He has been helped by a Republican Congress which has no commitment to fiscal conservatism. Bush took

Clinton's on-budget surplus of 2 percent of GDP and made it a 5 percent deficit in just three years. The national debt has not been so high since 1952. The tax cuts have not boosted employment, but gone into over

the expense of poor farmers at home and abroad. The Iraq occupation and energy policies benefit Cheney's business associates at Halliburton. Campaign contributions to the Bush campaign from benefitted corporations are breaking world historical records--the exuberant, uninhibited, self-confident triumph of crony capitalism, an apotheosis of legalized corruption.

### **The challenge to progressives**

The neocons are about power: power to benefit client corporations and power to control other nations, using a dangerous language of moral absolutism. 9/11 made public opinion susceptible to a self-righteous unilateralism and tribalistic fear-mongering. The neocons assume the ends justify the means: aggression to stop aggression, imprisonment without habeas corpus to ensure the rule of law, manipulation of evidence to claim intelligence of threat. In their view, everybody should play by the rules, except the US, and they can say anything to advance their goals.

For progressives, politics is part of life. For neocons and other fundamentalists, life is a part of politics. Since politics is so total and narrow and desperate, the ends tend to justify the means. Winning is everything. Empathy for another person's point of view is impossible because the other person is wrong, in fact, probably evil, or an evil-sympathizer, or at least dangerously naive. Threats and rhetoric quickly escalate without any reasoning process; the tribe, identity, life itself is threatened by the other tribe.

Progressives are up against formidable money and jingoism. The Republic is in peril, but the solution is not to attack tribalism directly, quite the opposite. The solution is use the rhetoric of tribalism for purposes of expanding the tribe. We need a tribalism detection meter for ourselves, to understand why we feel alienated from religious fundamentalists and neocons, to understand that secularism can be a kind of religion itself, one that cuts itself off from the power of religious language, and which fails to understand that such language can be used to expand the tribe.

There is an important difference between a universal religious language and religious sectarianism, and more broadly be-

tween inclusive language speaking to fundamental human values and divisive language that dehumanizes enemies. Great religions born in pre-scientific cultures have difficult words that inspire some while alienating others, yet can have deeper meanings. God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind and says, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” God carries on in this vein for many verses, with beautiful images of nature. “Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars?” Does it matter whether this is literally true or not? It could be the literal truth and be ignored. But it can be an inspiring poetic truth far more important than a literal truth, celebrating a joyous humility in the face of a larger creation.

The passionate middle is a balancing act between contradictions. We must find a way to be intolerant in a tolerant way of intolerance, to be militant but not militaristic against military threats, to suppress undemocratically those who would destroy democracy, to hate—in a loving way—hatred, to oppress those who would oppress others. We must use the rule of law, a long set of arguments and procedures, to work out these balances. I feel anger and contempt for the neocons, the exact opposite of the intelligent moderation I am trying to achieve, and expressing my feelings is not persuasive to anyone. How do I critique ne

## Conclusion

I hope this lecture has been more swan song than honking. We are creatures of evolution, created by DNA to keep the DNA going, necessarily servants of what we cannot see built into us. We can experience an odd consciousness of our own dependency on our DNA, and can understand how culture and intelligence improved our ability to survive and proliferate. Now we face the peculiar dilemma of how to redefine ourselves, using the resources supplied by our past but rejecting the destructive tribalism and religious fundamentalism which are a part of it. Without unduly risking our security, we must redefine our species to enlarge the tribe to all tribes and to all life. We can hope that DNA may support creativity of intellect and culture to avoid death and evolve anew. Somehow those of us who understand the challenge need to reach those who do not, to sustain the creativity of the larger human experiment.

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