

## Creating an Integral Culture

Observers have noted that contemporary society is characterized by three sets of opposing forces:

1. BUSINESS-AS-USUAL forces that want to maintain the existing institutions and ways of doing things. They want to keep the mechanisms of institutional and governmental control pretty much as they are, keep the economy global and growing, and keep the world's economic wealth in the hands of those who currently possess it.

2. NOSTALGIC forces that want to go back to an earlier time and way of doing things — to a simpler, less anarchic period characterized by traditional values and a slower pace of change.

3. INSIGHTFUL forces which recognize that neither of the above approaches are viable. This group's vision is rooted in a deeper-than-ordinary understanding of our existential situation, and incorporates a new ethics which values both the-good-of-the-whole and the well-being of individuals. These forces advocate

- the long term sustainability of human society,
- economic justice (e.g., an adequate material standard of living for all, and an equitable sharing of resources and the fruits of technological innovation), and
- the establishment of cultures and institutions which allow people to develop their innate physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual potentials, facilitate a deep understanding of our existential situation, and lead people to voluntarily choose an empathetic, caring-based personal morality — a morality that is compatible with our existential situation, and which must become widespread if this vision of the future is to become an actuality.

This INSIGHTFUL group is surprisingly large. For more than a decade, pollster and values researcher Paul H. Ray studied the lifestyles, interests, values, expectations, preferences, and choices of Americans. Based on his work with hundreds of focus groups, dozens of surveys, and especially a highly-focused values survey at the end of 1994 [1], Ray reports that the insightful group, who he calls cultural creatives, total 44 million people. He says:

"American culture is changing rapidly. . . . Three different streams of cultural meanings and worldviews are evident at this moment in history: Traditional, Modern and Trans-Modern (i.e. becoming Integral), each comprising distinct subcultures of values. I use the terms Heartlanders, Modernists, and Cultural Creatives to denote, respectively, the bearers of these three subcultures.

"Today's Heartlanders believe in a nostalgic image of return to small town, religious America, corresponding to the period 1890 to 1930. It is a mythical image that defines for its adherents the Good Old American Ways. The Heartlanders, America's cultural conservatives, are 29% of the population, or 56 million adults.

"Modernism emerged 500 years ago in Europe at the end of the Renaissance. . . . The dominant values are personal success, consumerism, materialism, and technological rationality. Bearers of Modernism represent about 47% of the population, or 88 million adults.

"Cultural Creatives (CCs) are so called because they are coming up with most new ideas in American culture, operating on the leading edge of cultural change. CCs have two wings: Core Cultural Creatives and Green Cultural Creatives.

"Core CCs (10.6%, or 20 million) have both person-centered and green values: seriously concerned with psychology, spiritual life, self-actualization, self-expression, like the foreign and exotic (are xenophiles), enjoy mastering new ideas, are socially concerned, advocate "women's issues" and are strong advocates of ecological sustainability. They tend to be "leading edge" thinkers and creators. They tend to be upper middle class, and their male:female ratio is 33:67, twice as many women as men.

"Green CCs (13%, or 24 million) have values centered on the environment and social concerns from a secular view, with average interest in spirituality, psychology, or person-centered values. They appear to be followers of the Core CCs and tend to be middle class.

"This new subculture is busily constructing a new approach to the world: a new set of concepts for viewing the world, an ecological and spiritual worldview, a whole new literature of social concerns, a new problematique for the planet in place of the old set of problems that Modernism set out to solve, a new set of psychological development techniques, a return in spiritual practices and understandings to the perennial psychology and

philosophy, an elevation of the feminine to a new place in human history.[2]"

Ray explains his use of the word Integral:

"The appearance of the Cultural Creatives is about healing the old splits: between inner and outer, spiritual and material, individual and society. The possibility of a new culture centers on the reintegration of what has been fragmented by Modernism: self-integration and authenticity; integration with community and connection with others around the globe, not just at home; connection with nature and learning to integrate ecology and economy; and a synthesis of diverse views and traditions, including philosophies of East and West. Thus Integral Culture."

Other studies support Ray's analysis. Duane Elgin has reported on a massive 43-nation World Values Survey[3] which revealed a major values shift in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Britain, Canada and the United States. Ronald Inglehart, the study's coordinator, calls it the "postmodern shift." The study revealed:

- A loss of confidence in all kinds of hierarchical institutions including government, business, and religion.
- A shift in emphasis from external authority to the authority that comes from an inner sense of what is appropriate.
- A shift from concern about material well-being to subjective well-being.
- A tendency to subordinate economic growth to environmental sustainability.
- A growing interest in discovering personal meaning and interest in life.
- An interest in roles for women that allow for greater self-realization.

In the "Wisdom in Action" section of THE WISDOM PAGE there is a list of 80+ links to organizations working toward a sustainable and more equitable world. Also on that web site are reviews of two integrative books — books that link the inner and outer, the personal and the societal, to give us a clearer sense of how we can heal and transform ourselves, our institutions, and the global society: Ken Wilber's A THEORY OF EVERYTHING, and a Michael Lerner's SPIRIT MATTERS. (A link to THE WISDOM PAGE appears with the author information at the end of this article.)

NOTES:

[1] Ray, Paul H. 1996 - The Integral Culture Survey: A Study of the Emergence of Transformational Values in America - a study sponsored by the Institute of Noetic Sciences and the Fetzer Institute, and available from the Institute of Noetic Sciences as Research Report 96-A, 415-331-5650.

Note: A more recent work which covers much of the same territory but updates some of the numbers is The Cultural Creatives by Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson. It was published in 2000 by Harmony Books, New York. You might also want to check out the Cultural Creatives Web site.

[2] Ray, 1996, pp. ix, x, 72.

[3] Elgin, Duane, 1997. Global Consciousness Change: Indicators of an Emerging Paradigm. San Anselmo, CA: Millennium Project.

## About the Author

### About the author:

Copthorne Macdonald is a writer and independent scholar concerned with the nature of reality and the development of wisdom. He has written extensively in these areas, and his published writing to date includes 8 books (3 on the subject of wisdom) and over 130 shorter pieces. Since 1995 he has tended **The Wisdom Page** — a website devoted to wisdom resources at <http://www.wisdompage.com/>

