

Confronting Cherished Certainties

*Every age is fed on illusion, lest men should
renounce life and the human race should
come to an end.*

—Joseph Conrad

*States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an Axis of Evil, arming to threaten
the peace of the world.*

—George W. Bush

*"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build
a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.*

—R. Buckminster Fuller

Because our seven themes each link one with the other, we could begin with any of them. But the theme of uncertainty gets at Cultural Maturity's necessary changes with particular directness. Effective future leadership—from the most intimate and personal to the most encompassing—hinges on our ability to better understand, tolerate, and manage uncertainty. Our world is becoming not just less certain, but often frighteningly so.

Today's uncertainties have multiple origins: rapid technological change and the expanding world of globalization; the risks that accompany the rewards of progress, from environmental degradation to the potential for ever-more-dangerous weaponry; along with deeper changes reordering human identity, relationships, and social structures. The concept of Cultural Maturity helps us make sense of today's new uncertainties. It also provides guidance for confronting them. And it goes further. It proposes that while much in today's new uncertainty simply makes life more difficult, the larger portion ties directly to the possibility of living more creative lives and gaining new, more mature understandings of order and purpose.

We begin with two dialogues drawn from the stretching exercise. The first dialogue concerns war, terrorism, and global safety. The second takes a broad look at leadership.

Vivian (a social worker): Tom and I teamed up—which was fascinating. We chose the same basic question, but the backgrounds and political beliefs we brought to it couldn't be more different. Tom made his life in the military. My politics haven't changed much since I marched in the streets during the Viet Nam war.

Tom (a retired general): To put it bluntly, we wanted to know how humanity can keep from blowing itself up. The growing number of nations with nuclear weapons makes major calamity seem almost inevitable. And the growing threat of terrorism means we don't need hostile governments for great destruction to happen. I assumed that once we'd defeated communism, the world, at least for a while, would stay calm. But it certainly hasn't.

Vivian: I interpret the end of the Cold War quite differently. But I certainly hoped that it meant that the world peace we had fought for so long had finally arrived. I thought the planet could now be a more caring place.

Tom: Instead we've had Somalia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Bosnia, September eleventh, Afghanistan, and Iraq twice over.

Vivian: We don't have huge nuclear arsenals pointed at one other like before, but the dangers feel at least as great. And I don't see obvious solutions. In World War II the task was pretty clear. Vietnam was trickier, but Tom and I were both pretty sure we knew what was right—even if we totally disagreed. Most of today's conflicts just seem messy and confusing. Our best-intentioned efforts often make things worse.

CJ: What has changed? Is there anything good at all?

Vivian: One thing is positive. At least in more developed countries people seem less inclined to view the world in terms of good guys and bad guys. We seem to have less need for "evil empires."

Tom: I agree. Things have gotten more complicated of late with the growing risk of terrorism. For people in the United States it has been a long time since we've faced threats so close to home. But even in the U.S., while leaders have attempted to play the demon card, I think it has been less effective than in times past. In the eyes of the perpetrators of terrorism, the United States may loom as the Great Satan. But to a surprising degree, people in the West have not returned the projection. At our best we've realized that while terrorism is horrendous, its roots are complex.

CJ: If you are right, what you observe is very significant—something quite new in the human story. Bonds of cultural identity in the past have always been based on a mythologizing of social identity—on viewing one's own people as in some way "chosen" and attributing humanity's less savory parts to others. This creates an illusion of certainty, but we pay the price of distortion. If we are even just beginning to leave such protective distortions behind us, that's pretty major stuff.

Tom: And increasingly important because of how interconnected the world has become. We are in real trouble if we can't.

CJ: Definitely. Proximity combined with the broad availability of highly lethal weaponry makes it an increasingly dangerous world in which to be viewed as evil. War will still have a place in the future. Indeed, we must be even better prepared for conflict. But war based on polarization and vengeance will become an increasingly unacceptable proposition. That we see hints of a greater maturity—

even if at times only small hints—is of major importance. Without it we don't have much hope.¹

Vivian: If these changes are real, why aren't we seeing greater peace on the planet? I guess it's because we're just not that far along in the changes we are talking about. And they aren't happening everywhere, or at least everywhere at the same rate. Won't globalization help?

CJ: Globalization cuts both ways. Dissolving cultural boundaries offers the possibility of greater understanding. But at the same time it significantly ups the ante with regard to what maintaining mature perspective requires. As Robert Frost reminded us, "Good fences make good neighbors." Cultural overlap can stretch social systems beyond what they can handle. Polarization and lashing out is a common consequence.

Tom: Globalization could result in greater conflict.

CJ: And even if it doesn't, even if we succeed at getting beyond our historical need for evil others, we will still confront a "messier" reality. It is important to recognize that successfully realizing this maturity of perspective isn't an answer in the sense of replacing uncertainty with new certainty. In fact, it increases uncertainty. Dividing humanity into clear allies and enemies provided an easily understandable world. Without this polar picture, reality becomes much more multi-hued. And it becomes much more challenging both to understand and to live in.

Vivian: So even with the best of outcomes, we need to be okay with a more complicated, less easily predictable world?

¹ I think of the end of the Cold War as watershed time in this respect. We see significance both in how quickly grievances were surrendered and in a general reluctance to find new sources for our projections.

CJ: Certainly none of the social realities ahead will be as readily analyzed and pinned-down as those they replace. For example, boundaries between countries in the future should become increasingly permeable and social allegiances ever more multi-layered—some layers defined by place, but as many by shared economics, spheres of interest, or belief. All sorts of questions become more complex in this picture: What is to replace nationalistic definitions of social identity? What does it mean to govern? How do we protect diversity—both human diversity and natural diversity? And your question, that of safety, protecting against aggression—in the future we will need to understand and manage conflict in much more subtle and sophisticated ways.

Vivian: How does terrorism fit in?

CJ: It gives us no choice but to think differently. We talk of a war on terrorism, but this is not war in any familiar definition. Wars as conventionally conceived have beginnings and endings, distinguish soldiers and civilians, and are waged between states. Terrorism will at different times be more or less prevalent, but it is here to stay; the status of those perpetrating it is often ambiguous; and national boundaries as often obscure what needs to be done as as much as they clarify it.

The biggest variable with regard to terrorism will likely not be terrorism itself, but the West's ability to tolerate the uncertainty terrorism produces—to avoid responding by regressing and losing its faint hold on that needed greater maturity. Terrorist acts have been so disturbing less because of the destruction itself than because they have ripped away the modern world's mythic veil of invulnerability. The West must be careful not to make ultimately destructive choices—both at home and abroad—in the hope of regaining that past illusion of impenetrability.²

Because the industrialized world sits closest to that ability to transcend polarization, it must provide leadership in creating a safer world. Such leadership

² This motivation was clearly one contributor to the second Iraq war.

will stretch us mightily, liberals and conservatives alike.³ But we can't afford to make terrorism the new communism. We face the possibility that Cold War animosities will be replaced by an even more risky polarization between the modern West and the Islamic East, or even worse, between the world's haves and have-nots. At the least the outcome would be great pain and destruction. With the weapons of mass destruction genie irretrievably out of the bottle, the result could be calamitous.

Vivian: What about China? It seems unlikely that the U.S. will be the lone superpower much longer.

CJ: Certainly it is essential that the U.S. not respond to China's challenge to its dominance by making China an enemy instead of just a competitor. Even another "cold" war could have unacceptable consequences. We face so many challenges that will require global cooperative: climate change, nuclear proliferation, global poverty and the potential for famine, the likelihood of pandemic at some point, and more.

Tom: A pretty demanding picture.

CJ: It is not as idyllic as idealized images of world peace, and not as reassuring as notions of a final victory of freedom over tyranny. But I think what this sort of picture depicts is ultimately richer—and more interesting.

³ Liberals will have to accept that necessary interventions might not be pretty. At times, acting effectively might mean not only acting militarily, but also preemptively and unilaterally. The issue is not whether preemption is appropriate, but rather what it means to act before the fact effectively and wisely. Conservatives will need to recognize that any longterm solution to terrorism must be based on global cooperation and a deepened understanding of other cultures. Security lies ultimately with the felt security of humanity as a whole.

Vivian: I wish what you've described made me feel more comfortable than it does.

CJ: I think the comfort has to come not from surety, but from confidence that we are asking the right questions. Simplistically conceived images of final peace or ultimate victory lead us ultimately in directions that would undermine exactly what they promise. What I propose certainly doesn't guarantee safety. I think it highly likely that we will see today's increasingly cataclysmic weaponry used more than once in the future—perhaps in wars between nations, more likely in ethnic conflicts or at the hands of terrorists. But the greater maturity reflected in the emerging picture offers hope that we might respond to such potentially world-ending situations in the most constructive ways. In the end, that is all we can ask.

Gary (CEO of a small manufacturing company). The topic of uncertainty ties directly to my question. I'm interested in leadership—what it takes today. I think quite exceptional leadership will be required in times ahead. I mean not just governmental leadership as with Tom and Vivian's example, but leadership of all sorts. I think being able to handle great uncertainty will be a huge factor in effective future leadership.

CJ: Say more.

Gary: A lot in leadership today is just less clear-cut. That makes things harder. I think it can also undermine confidence in leadership. I've seen pretty scary statistics about the diminished trust people today often feel in leaders ... of all kinds—along with politicians, doctors, teachers, leaders in business and the media.

I can understand this lack of confidence. Twenty years ago I understood what it meant to be a good leader, even if I sometimes came up short. Today, as often

as not, I feel like I am walking on quicksand. And I am not alone. Most of the best leaders I know feel the same way.

CJ: What creates new uncertainty for you?

Gary: Some of what makes what I do less predictable comes from obvious changes in world. Globalization promises new economic opportunities. And at the same time, it creates the need to do business with cultures that have different practices and assumptions than my own. The Internet makes much more possible. Yet it also increases the pace of interactions and the speed with which surprises can have their effects.

But the most significant factors, at least those that impact me the most, feel like they have less to do with external realities than leadership itself. What it means to be a leader is changing—and in some pretty basic ways. I wish I could be clearer. I guess that lack of clarity is part of the uncertainty. But leadership is definitely making new demands and at a deep and basic level. Changes are happening that make effective leadership a different sort of enterprise.

CJ: Say what you can.

Gary: A big piece has to do with how my role is seen—from both outside and inside the organization. With regard to the outside world, I'm expected to be more visible in my interactions than before, more immediately accountable. Decisions made in smoke-filled rooms with the doors closed don't cut it the way they once did.

At the same time, internal relationships are becoming less predefined and my role less protected and elevated. That doesn't mean that suddenly my job is to be everybody's friend or that the final word lies any less in my hands. But people think of me differently than they did twenty years ago when I took this job. I've become less as a symbol, more a person with tough work to do.

I think I end up with more power as a leader. But the new picture changes what exercising power looks and feels like.

CJ: Do you like these changes?

Gary: At times I don't. Greater transparency and more engaged leadership each make my job more difficult. I have to understand both the organization and the larger world in which we do business more deeply. I also have to better understand myself. But, I'm sure that, in the end, these changes are for the good. They make the business environment more creative and make much more possible than in times past. There is also something in these changes that just feels right—and important.

CJ: If viewing leaders less as symbols and more simply as people is, as you suggest, something we see, it certainly would be significant. It would also be something quite new. Throughout history, exaggerating the capabilities of authority—putting leaders on pedestals—has always been part of leadership. It has been key to making leadership work.

But I agree with you that today we see changes. The false security that comes with notions of an invincible and unswerving leader can be pretty seductive. And sometimes faking it a bit is exactly what good leadership requires. But we are better recognizing how such false security can get us into trouble. I find the most innovative and capable leaders increasingly seeking out the kind of more mature leadership relationships you describe.

Gary: If nothing else, we seem more ready to put our leaders' failings on display. I think of the growing litany of scandals within my world of business—the recent financial collapse and our blindness to the house-of-cards risk taking that produced it, the Enron debacle, insider trading on Wall Street. We seem, too, more ready to confront political wrongdoings. And there is our greater willingness to address sexual abuse in the clergy and elsewhere. Shortsightedness, corruption,

and deceit are not new to any of these realms. But we seem more willing to challenge it.

CJ: I think more important than admitting mistakes is something implied in your earlier comments—simply being upfront about the uncertainties that are just a part of how things are.

I'm drawn back to my training in medical school. Much that we did—from the wearing of white coats to thirty-six hour ritual stints in the emergency room—in the end had more to do with the assumption of a ceremonial role than the learning of medicine. I was critical of this then. Now I better recognize its historic purpose.

I remember once wondering as I watched a surgeon cut into the jello-fragile tissue of a young woman's brain, whether he could have still carried out this God-like task—there with life or death balanced on the tip of his scalpel—had he not had medicine's mythic trappings to protect him from the full uncertainty of his craft.

Over the last few decades, physicians have made significant strides toward setting aside past deific imagery and approaching their work more as ordinary human beings with demanding roles to play. Working from a place of deeper humility ultimately translates into greater effectiveness and subtlety. But this more mortal posture also requires a willingness to hold life more complexly, and with a much fuller cognizance of how much we do not, and often cannot, know.⁴

Being more humble to what we don't know and often can't know will be increasingly important wherever we look.

⁴ The raised "price" extends beyond the doctor/patient relationship. For example, these changes make both doctors and patients more willing to acknowledge the dangerous prevalence of medical mistakes—something we are beginning to see. I suspect people are as safe or safer than they have ever been in hospital settings. The significant change is that surrendering protective sureties makes dangers that have always been present more acceptable to talk about. Of course this price, too, is ultimately a benefit—a huge one. It means we can start taking essential steps toward making health care safer. (Later we will look at how the surrendering of other health care-related mythologized truths will be essential to addressing either the health care delivery crisis or any of the specifically death-related modern health care quandaries—assisted suicide, abortion, stem cell research.)

Gary: Recognizing that many of the changes I'm dealing with pertain to all kinds of leadership is helpful.

CJ: I think they pertain ultimately to more than just formal leadership. We see parallel changes in how we understand authority more generally. The shifts—and the accompanying new uncertainties—are just as present with authority in private interpersonal relationships—between men and women, between parents and children. And this kind of change is just as dramatic, and arguably even more fundamentally important, in how we relate to ourselves, in what the future will require if we are to effectively direct our daily lives.

Gary: None of those changes make things easier.

CJ: Definitely not. More mature authority dynamics—of any sort—make for greater demands and greater uncertainty all the way around. But these changes also expand creative possibilities in ways we should find increasingly critical and fulfilling.

Paradoxically, the same shifts that amplify uncertainty in the end make possible greater precision and specificity in how we act and think. In the most big-picture sense, they help us be more certain. For example, they offer that we might much more accurately evaluate risk. The changes we are talking about make our world more complicated. But they also result in a more full, more deeply engaged, relationship with ourselves, with whatever we might choose to do, and with truth itself.

Gary: Do you believe we will succeed in making these changes?

CJ: I don't think we have any choice. The need for more mature understandings of authority—and for the greater comfort with uncertainty they require—is

fundamental and inescapable. It will be necessary everywhere if we are to succeed at making decisions with the sophistication the future will increasingly require.

An Uncertain World

The small handful of questions to which we've thus far given special attention—those presented by love, global conflict, and formal leadership's new challenges—could not be more different. Yet they reveal fascinating parallels. Of particular importance in getting started is how each of these concerns challenges familiar certainties. The tasks of love, global safety, and the effective exercising of authority have each of late become more complex and less readily pinned down. When we engage them in ways that work, they propel us into a world that is decidedly more multifaceted, change-permeated, and tricky to predict than what we've known in times past.

It is essential to our future comfort and happiness, and ultimately to our survival, that we learn to make better tolerate and make sense of uncertainty. It is not that we haven't before confronted unpredictability. In war or in the midst of a natural disaster everything can be up for grabs. But, today, most every aspect of our lives confronts us with new uncertainties. Often they are uncertainties that are new to us as a species. And there is every reason to assume that the trends that created them will continue.

We can miss major parts of it. Like with Mark Twain's frog who sat happily in a cook pot as it came to a boil because he had been placed there when the water was yet cold, many of today's ambiguities have come upon us gradually. But they affect us nonetheless. They are the source of much of modern anxiety and inextricably linked to our modern crisis of story and purpose.

The concept of Cultural Maturity alerts us to how greatly today's new uncertainties stretch and stress us and how immensely dangerous the consequences could be if we do not engage them effectively. It also helps us understand what engaging them effectively will require of us and to appreciate uncertainty's larger relationship to the tasks of our time. Of particular importance, Cultural Maturity helps us recognize how uncertainty is more than just something to put up with. It describes how the uncertainties ahead often

present not just inescapable new demands, but critical new possibilities. And it supports the conclusion that we are capable, at least potentially, of bringing to bear the creativity that realizing such possibility will require. The topic of uncertainty, in turn, provides a ready doorway for making sense of Cultural Maturity's nature and necessity.

The Origins of Uncertainty

The most tangible sources of modern uncertainty don't involve Cultural Maturity in ways that are obvious. Most immediately, there is today's rapidity of change—both technological and social. In fact we can't make full sense of change's rapid pace in isolation. We are left with questions of how it is we see this much change is why we see the particular changes that we do. But rapid change by itself contributes to uncertainty. We end up beginners much more frequently than we might choose. And it has secondary effects that further increase complexity and uncertainty. For example, rapid change means that the time when we could confidently teach our children from the experiences of our own lives has come to an end.

Many of the specific products of today's changes also contribute to uncertainty. Globalization puts once-reliable truths in jeopardy by bringing belief systems into contact that before have been protected by their separateness. It also risks clashes between once-distant civilizations. The immense power of modern invention also increases uncertainty. We confront new direct dangers—ever more deadly weaponry, certainly, but also the unknowable consequences that come with even the most obviously beneficial of new technologies. There is also the way many activities we once took for granted can have much less benign consequences when human advancement pushes against limits to planetary resources. Progress has brought not just new possibilities, but also new risks.

But these first two sources of uncertainty capture only part what is going on. And neither the causes of each nor what they will ask of us can be understood fully without larger perspective. The needed vantage requires that we shift our attention from circumstances to ourselves—or more precisely, our collective selves, to the evolving "psyche" of culture. Doing so illuminates some of the most disorienting of modern

uncertainties and also helps us make sense of what uncertainty more generally will require of us.

These additional insights are layered—each builds on the one before. Each ties directly to the concept of Cultural Maturity

We confront the first layer in that challenging of familiar cultural guideposts—once assumed truths—we witness today in so many parts of our lives. We've seen how love, war, and leadership are each today changing in ways that pull the rug from beneath traditional assumptions. I've described how modern love requires that we revisit past beliefs not just about love and marriage, but also about identity. Tom and Vivian struggled to make sense of a world defined not just by changing allegiances, but where traditional notions of allegiance would less and less constitute a basis for workable policy. Gary recognized that he needed not just new leadership skills, but a new definition for leadership, if he were to continue to be effective.

The second layer has particular pertinence to how fundamentally unsettling modern uncertainties can be. Shifts that replace one worldview with another, while certainly of consequence, don't adequately explain the depth of current uncertainties. Often, today, it is not at all clear what, if anything, exists to replace what has been taken away. We can seem to be reaching the end of anything solid to rely on. Earlier reflections on gender and love described how leaving behind past cultural dictates involves not just the surrender of familiar guideposts, but in an important sense, the surrender of guideposts altogether. We scan the horizon for something reliable with which to replace past truths and come up empty much more frequently than we might prefer.

Life requires increasingly not just that we leave behind familiar truths, but that we leave behind our familiar relationship with truth. Vivian and Tom had to confront not just that we hadn't realized world peace, but that our old idealized pictures of what success on the world stage should look like needed to be replaced with images of a much less absolute and obvious sort. Gary had to deal not just with the loss of old definitions of leadership, but also with the realization that even the best new concepts of leadership would never be as cut-and-dried as the old.

Major transitions, however unsettling, have reordered understanding frequently in times past—indeed we use them to demarcate history.⁵ In contrast, this most disorienting source of modern uncertainty is new. We've left familiar truths behind many times during past periods of cultural transition. But always before we've replaced them with new truths; more "enlightened" absolutes, but absolutes nonetheless. We've never before had to surrender final truths altogether—except perhaps during the collapse of civilizations.

With this second layer in uncertainty's new picture, uncertainty comes to reflect something deeper than just the ambiguities of change. In the end, its implications go beyond particular personal and social truths to challenge our most basic ideas about what makes truth true. It not only challenges any truth—social, scientific, religious—that claims to be the last word. It challenges the whole notion that there is a last word—at least in the familiar sense. No final truth, however seemingly inviolate, escapes unscathed.

This more fundamental change links directly to the post-modern argument. Psychiatrist Victor Frankl summed it up this way in *The Will To Meaning*, "Unlike an animal, man is not told by instincts what he must do. And unlike man in former times, he is no longer told by tradition what he should do." Today's world throws us into a finality of uncertainty we could not have conceived of prior to the age in which we live.

That might seem like the end of the story. But, as I've suggested, it can't be. If it were, the future would surely overwhelm us. In itself, such final dislocation only leaves us wandering aimlessly. It removes the fundamental underpinnings of order—at least our understanding of them. Given the enormity of the challenges ahead, this presents a most dangerous situation.

⁵ Small leaps accompany any major innovation or cultural insight. Now and then we encounter larger reorderings, transitions that redefine the human endeavor. The advent of agriculture, the emergence of monotheism, the new individualism that marked the Renaissance and the Age of Reason, the rise of the Industrial Age—these not only altered circumstances, they fundamentally altered the rules. As novelist Edward Bellamy's observed, "On no other stage can the scenes switch with a swiftness so like magic as on the great stage of history when once the hour strikes."

If we are to proceed, at least in any healthy way, there must be a further chapter in the story of meaning, an additional layer in uncertainty's new narrative. The future must have more to tell us about if it is to be a place worth inhabiting. And it must be a particularly interesting and significant sort of more.

Good evidence suggests that the future does have more to tell us. For now, it is enough to note that none of our examples of fundamental dislocation have resulted in the aimlessness and chaos we might fear. Changes in worlds of love, global safety, and authority each today throw us into realities where the rules are less obvious than in times past. But in each case, the greater ambiguity and complexity inherent in these new realities, rather than resulting in a loss of order and meaning, begins to reveal the possibility of engaging order and meaning more creatively and potently.

Cultural Maturity asserts that today's loss of final truths need not at all be the end of the story—at least if we can summon the courage and foresight today's new questions demand. It reveals shifts already happening in who we are and how we understand that can help us better make sense of and manage uncertainty. Culturally mature perspective is a strange antidote to uncertainty. In challenging familiar absolutes, it represents uncertainty's greatest contributor. But it also provides new tolerance for the brute fact of uncertainty and supports a growing capacity to get our thinking around uncertainty and its implications. In the end, it invites us to engage uncertainty as something creative, to recognize it not just as an absence, but as an essential ingredient in life and purpose.

Culture as Parent

The loss of absolutes that so marks our time has been interpreted through the last century in multiple, often conflicting ways. Prominent historians early in the last century concluded that Western civilization as a whole was entering a time of decline. Religious writers have often described this loss of final truths in even more condemning terms—as evidence of moral downfall and impending chaos. Social reformers have tended to view it more positively, seeing a loosening of absolutes as liberation from social constraint. New Age types have often interpreted it more positively still, as a step toward ultimate realization.

The concept of Cultural Maturity proposes that today's loss of past absolutes reflects neither downfall nor liberation. Rather it represents a predictable characteristic of a necessary next chapter in culture's evolutionary story. I've describes how today's changing realities both demand and make possible a new, more mature relationship between the individual and society. Cultural Maturity describes a new depth of ownership in the larger story that our personal and cultural realities together tell. This shift and uncertainty's new picture are inextricably linked.

The phrase "growing up" is too general and too prone to pejorative interpretation to remain helpful for long. But it helps get at how Cultural Maturity and uncertainty's new picture relate. History, we've viewed culture as something distinct from ourselves. If we had any responsibility in its making—most often we've considered it divinely prescribed—it was only through the effects of invention. From a more systemic perspective, culture becomes an expression of who we are that at various times fulfills particular needs. Of culture's multiple functions, one of the most important in times past has been to serve as a parent to our individual and collective lives. Political, spiritual, and moral absolutes have protected us so that we, like children, could engage our all too unpredictable lives with at least a perception of safety.

Both how much uncertainty we experience at any time and how we interpret its significance have been intimately tied to culture's parental function. Culture's parental mechanism has reduced how frequently we encounter uncertainty in two different, but ultimately related, ways.

Most obviously, the rules and roles of culture, like those of a family, have coordinated behavior and spared us from having to deal with questions that are more complex and demanding than we may yet be ready—sufficiently mature—to address. We can draw on changes I've described in how we think about gender for example. While today we may view traditional gender roles only as shackles limiting our freedom (caught up as we are in the timely task of challenging gender assumptions), from a more systemic perspective gender roles can be equally well understood as historically critical cultural "inventions." Among other things, they have limited our perceptions and options so that the amount of uncertainty involved in daily choices becomes tolerable. Gender dictates have given us clear rules for who we should be—eliminating in the process all manner of

easily overwhelming decisions. And by suggesting that we might come together like two sides of a single coin, gender roles have allowed us to engage that most vulnerable and frightening thing we call intimacy with only the most beginning knowledge of either ourselves or the other person—handy whether love was arranged by a matchmaker or born from romantic impulses. We find a similar absoluteness of definition with familiar ideas about war and peace, or about leadership and authority.

Stepping beyond culture's parental function as a limiter of options is no small thing. It makes possible new alternatives—and that is good. But it also increases complexity and uncertainty. It dramatically increases what we must take into account and makes answers we might reach if not less reliable, at least less obvious. Arriving at good decisions requires both greater self-knowledge and much greater sensitivity to everything around us.

The second way culture's parental presence has protected us is through the mythologizing of experience. Recognizing this additional dynamic is key to understanding how Cultural Maturity might do anything more than increase the uncertainty we must tolerate. It provides important clues about what future ways of thinking will need to look like. It also helps us make sense of how more mature understandings of uncertainty are more realizable than we might at first suppose.

The relationship between a parent and a child is always at some level symbolic. The parents of a two-year-old are more than simply people. To her they are all-knowing and much larger than life. It is critical that she see them this way. She needs them to be deities if she is to find the courage to venture forth into an as yet foreign and easily confusing world.

In a similar way, through time and across continents, our cultural beliefs have provided us with grand tapestries of elevated—mythologized—images. Some like the ancients' pantheons of gods, have been all-encompassing in their sovereignty. Others have been more specific. Our country's flags herald the divinity of each nation state and proclaim the status of each of us—however tenuous in a global world—as special, chosen. We've symbolically elevated leaders and experts of all kinds—political leaders, professors, ministers, renowned scientists—giving them a status and a perceived level of knowledge beyond that of the mere mortal. And we relate to our own culture's beliefs

about what is morally right—however disparate such beliefs may be from one culture to the next—with an emotional charge which makes obvious that their significance lies beyond mere conventions of behavior.

Mythologizing necessarily distorts reality. But when such distortion is timely, it serves us. It keeps conceptual uncertainty within manageable bounds and guarantees social order.⁶ Today, however, it serves us less and less well. Set in the context of current realities, it leads to narrowly simplistic answers—religious, intellectual, political, scientific. It also keeps people dangerously at odds. I'm reminded of Emerson's reflection on national allegiances: "When a whole nation is yelling patriotism at the top of its lungs, I am fain to explore the cleanliness of its hands and the purity of its soul." The absence of such emotional/conceptual "cleanliness" puts us at risk as never before—and not just in relations between nations. Ultimately, it leaves us short of the kind of thinking the future requires in every part of our lives.⁷

Over the last century we have seen significant cracks appear in nearly all of culture's symbolic edifices. Each of our examples illustrates the need to wrestle with such changing symbolism. I described how idealized projections have provided predictability in the attractions of romantic love. Vivian and Tom observed the comforting—and increasingly dangerous—simplicity of having "God on our side."⁸ Gary saw how the parental role assumptions of traditional authority increasingly get in the way of today's needed more powerful kind of leadership.

⁶ We can talk of these two parental functions—establishing rules and mythologizing experience—separately. But in practice they most often work together. Mythologized leadership roles have connected with them assumptions about how one should act. And no culture views its mores as simply a set of good and practical rules. From the veil worn by a woman on the streets of Tehran, to the singing of the national anthem at the start of a baseball game in Yankee stadium, a culture's rules and traditions are symbolically charged, responded to as if inseparable from the bosom of life.

⁷ We must be careful when using any idealized term or image, even those that seem most benign. Inevitably, they express but half of the truth, with that truth's less savory complement lurking safely out of sight. Calls for freedom, liberty or even peace, for example, as often as not hide unacknowledged manifestations of quite opposite sentiments.

⁸ Martin Heidegger famously proposed that "no one dies for mere values." The effective execution of war has always required mythologized projection, Emerson's lack of emotional "cleanliness."

We reside in an easily precarious in-between stage in these changes—a fact that can amplify the ambiguity, or at least the confusion. For example, we may say we want our leaders to get off their pedestals—and increasingly knock them off if they will not step off voluntarily—but we often respect them less when they do. A political leader today must walk the line between the mythic and mortal like a tightrope if he or she wishes to be elected, much less stay in office. And the transitional nature of new realities in every sphere makes the posture of anyone in authority (and indeed any exercising of authority—even the most personal) equally precarious.

But with the greater number of the challenges we face, we have made at least a solid start. I am not claiming that we are somehow beyond mythologizing experience. With the multi-million dollar salaries paid to modern sports heroes and the front page notoriety given to the tabloid lives of Hollywood "superstars," one could argue that mythologizing has never been more prominent.⁹ But if we look to dynamics closer to the core of everyday personal and cultural decision-making—such as those we've addressed with our examples of love, global relations, and authority—we see that projecting parts of ourselves onto individuals and institutions, whether to idealize or demonize, less and less serves a creative cultural function and for a growing number of people has diminishing appeal.¹⁰

Maturity as Antidote

The way Cultural Maturity's changes challenges mythologized truths explains a lot, but we need more still if uncertainty's new picture is to make full sense. Like with the leaving behind of traditional guideposts, giving up past symbolic projections would only

⁹ CST proposes that we would expect to see in our times both a leaving behind of the need for such mythologizing and exaggerated manifestations—often to the point of ludicrousness—of past mythologizing tendencies. (See the concept of Transitional Absurdity in Chapter Seven.)

¹⁰ The growth of this new capacity does not necessarily follow a smooth trajectory. Sudden increases in uncertainty as with war (most often we rally round the flag) or economic instability (the rise of Hitler in the economic uncertainties of Weimar Germany makes good illustration) can make more mythologized realities newly attractive.

add to uncertainty. If giving up cultural dictates and mythologized truths were the end of it, we would in fact be in deep trouble—the sheer magnitude of ambiguity and complexity would be our undoing. (The reader might as well set the book down and turn to more comforting pursuits.)

Fortunately, Cultural Maturity's contribution with regard to uncertainty does not stop with creating more of it. The essential added piece is that the larger picture mature perspective reveals also makes possible the capacities needed to effectively manage such ambiguity. It helps us both to better tolerate uncertainty and to better make sense of it.

Our developmental metaphor helps fill things out. Maturity in an individual life involves becoming better able to "hold" uncertainty, to get our arms around it, even if often we can't fully understand it. We become more tolerant of things that are not absolutely predictable. Part of our personal growing up is confronting that life is bigger—and less readily pinned down—than before we knew or could have handled knowing. Eventually we embrace this fact and recognize that we would not want it any other way.

Our developmental metaphor also suggests the possibility of better understanding uncertainty. With personal maturity (the real thing, not just getting older) we come not just to be more accepting of uncertainty, but also to understand in ways that better take uncertainty into account. Our thinking becomes more nuanced, less dogmatic, less cut-and-dried.¹¹ And there is more, with wisdom, uncertainty's significance changes. Less is it only an absence of truth. Increasingly it becomes something that comes with truth, a necessary element in meaning.

On both fronts—both better tolerating uncertainty and making better sense of it—we appear to be seeing something analogous at a cultural level. Each of our extended examples support this conclusion. There is also how the best of new thinking in every sphere—from new foundational insights in the physical science, to fresh ideas about the mysteries of biological life, to conclusions about how individuals and social systems function that radically challenge past belief—better acknowledges uncertainty's inescapable presence. Very often, new ways of thinking not only factor in uncertainty, they embrace its presence. At their best, more than merely better tolerating uncertainty,

¹¹ If it is not the real thing, we get the opposite—a "hardening of the categories."

they help us appreciate how uncertainty may be essential to understanding—and ultimately to our experience of purpose and substance.

What is new in our time from the perspective of Cultural Maturity, whatever the sphere, is not just new uncertainty—though that is definitely a part of it. In addition, we see a growing acceptance of the fact of uncertainty, new appreciation for its necessary role in how things work (however we frame it), and ways of thinking that can take that role directly into account. We are coming to understand uncertainty—and reality when it comes into play—in new and fuller ways. This greater maturity of perspective (both emotional and conceptual) reveals and allows options that before could not have been conceived, much less realized.

Uncertainty's New Picture

A brief, more specific look at how conceptual advances of the last century have altered our picture of uncertainty helps fill out and affirm this creative interpretation. Two pieces are new. The first recognition is that uncertainty is inescapable. By this I don't just mean that there is always more to learn, though that is true. In the new picture, uncertainty becomes inherent to how things work. Even when we know everything there is to know, like it or not, uncertainty remains.

The second part changes how we interpret uncertainty's role. The new picture reveals that uncertainty need not be an antithesis to truth—if not a synonym for chaos, its harbinger. Conceptual advances in nearly every sphere of inquiry reveal thinking that at once robs us of the ability to predict absolutely and suggests that we might learn to understand—and predict—in ultimately more useful ways. Increasingly, the best of contemporary thought recognizes uncertainty not as an absence of order, but as a necessary ingredient in any deep understanding of order.

I've organized these descriptions starting with the "hardest" realms of inquiry and progressing toward the most fluid and ineffable—first the sciences, then the social sciences, the arts and humanities, and religion. The order implies nothing about greater or lesser importance. Later we will find this way of ordering our observations useful for

making sense of changes specific to particular domains and for mapping culture's systemic organization.¹²

Parallel changes in such diverse realms—from the hardest of scientific understanding to the most ephemeral of inquiries—might seem startling. But this is exactly what we would expect if the leap our times are about is as fundamental as I suggest. In the real world, "I'll believe it when I see it" is joined necessarily by its twin, "I'll see it when I believe it." We can understand only what we have become capable of understanding. And when we confront major cultural leaps, the significance is deeper than just how much we can understand. Such leaps reorder what it means to understand. We come to see the world—in all its manifestations—through new eyes.

In presenting these examples, I am not arguing for their rightness, only that in each case uncertainty plays a new role. But that it does, and in related ways across realms of understanding, is of major significance.

Uncertainty's new role in the sciences, especially the hard sciences, is of note if for no other reason than that it marks the collapse of certitude where certitude in our modern age has been most unquestioned. Twentieth-century science challenged classical deterministic beliefs at every turn.¹³

Most celebrated in this respect is the new role uncertainty has come to play in the calculations physicists use to address the Lilliputian world of the sub-atomic.¹⁴ Quantum mechanics asserts that where an electron is and what it is doing can never both be known precisely—pin one down and the other inherently eludes us.¹⁵ This "imprecision" is more than a product of imperfect measuring devices. A quantum reality is inherently

¹² See Chapter Ten.

¹³ In one sense, uncertainty has always had a place in good science. The scientific method is about asking good questions and waiting until all the data is in (and being always open to the possibility that even better questions lie ahead). The new ingredient is that uncertainty now shifts from an attribute of inquiry to an inherent characteristic of what we inquire about.

¹⁴ Though we must note that the celebration is often based on misinterpretation. Popular writings often use indeterminacy in physics to reach decidedly unwarranted conclusions. (See Chapter Six and Nine.) My point is only that thinking in new physics introduced the idea of fundamental uncertainty (and to a realm of science that before was a cornerstone of determinism).

¹⁵ Heisenberg's famous "uncertainty principle."

probabilistic. The early controversy this claim aroused is now familiar scientific lore. Einstein, finding this fundamental indeterminacy unacceptable, bet the radical upstart proponents of such thinking that "God does not play dice with the universe"¹⁶— and lost. In the words of Steven Hawking, "God not only plays dice with the universe, he also sometimes throws the dice where they cannot be seen."

Uncertainty is inherent to physics's emerging picture of order. It has also claimed an increasingly central role in the assumptions of chemistry. (Later we will look at Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine's demonstration of indeterminate order in thermodynamic systems¹⁷) We also see something related in mathematics. (The work for which Kurt Gödel won the Nobel prize in mathematics not only demonstrated fundamental uncertainty in the world of numbers, it extended this argument to demonstrate fundamental uncertainty within truth as a whole¹⁸). And uncertainty's role in physical systems has gained further notoriety with chaos theory and its demonstration that even deterministic processes can produce wildly unpredictable outcomes.¹⁹

We don't as immediately associate uncertainty with the life sciences, but its new role in the formulations of biology has been arguably even more provocative. Biological evolution, in juxtaposing random variation with selection lacks ultimate predictability. This indeterminism, as much as natural selection's breakdown of the absolute barrier between the human and the creaturely, brought Darwin's radical new ideas in conflict with religious precept. More recent attempts to formulate the workings of intelligence (it is increasingly clear that no one part of any creature's brain has final control over all the

¹⁶ He later went on to exclaim: "This theory reminds me of the system of delusions of an extremely intelligent paranoiac, concocted of incoherent elements of thought ... If correct, it signifies the end of physics as a science."

¹⁷ See Chapter Four.

¹⁸ In his words, "No finitely describable system, or finite language, can prove all truths. Truth cannot fully be caught in a finite net."

¹⁹ Chapter Five will look at how, as with uncertainty in physics, indeterminacy in complex systems is often misinterpreted. For now, the important observation is the simple fact that uncertainty is recognized and appreciated.

others²⁰) and to make sense of life as a process (that deterministic formulations don't explain life has perplexed biologists as much as philosophers²¹) have brought uncertainty even more fundamentally into biology's landscape.

Related incursions of uncertainty into the social sciences during the last century reshaped our understanding of ourselves—both personally and collectively—and just as fundamentally. At the most surface layer, we see more honest, less mythologized, evaluations of our human capabilities. I'm reminded of John Kenneth Galbraith's quip that there are only two kinds of economic theorists, those who don't know the economic future and those who don't know they don't know.

More deeply, we find insights that highlight uncertainty's role in our basic natures. The pioneers of modern psychology and psychiatry—Freud, Jung, Adler, and others—argued that what we can't see and articulate might be as important as what we can. Modern sociology and anthropology have alerted us to how different—indeed often fundamentally contradictory—the experienced worlds of different social and cultural groups can be. And research in education has demonstrated how variations in learning styles and the intelligences people most draw on can make the realities of different individuals just as fundamentally at odds.²²

The humanities have provided equally striking assertions of uncertainty's new centrality. Philosophy has presented particularly explicit challenge. Many of the most influential threads in twentieth-century philosophy—most notably existentialism, social constructivism, pragmatism, and process philosophy²³—directly confronted deterministic doctrines. And philosophical assertions often went further, calling into question the

²⁰ Indeed control in any conventional sense is not what neural functioning seems to be about. It is jazz more than marching band. In Chapters Three and Four, we will examine how this is particularly so when it comes to the mechanisms of human (conscious) intelligence.

²¹ Biology might be the study of life, but as biologists increasingly acknowledge, when it comes to the more fundamental question of what makes one thing living and another not, classical biology is not very helpful. The biologist's conventional language of anatomy and physiology, even with refinement, is simply not up to the task. (See Chapter Five).

²² See Chapter Five.

²³ See Chapter Eight..

seeking of fundamental truth itself—the central endeavor of philosophy since Plato. Early in the century, Bertrand Russel concluded that "all knowledge is uncertain, inexact, and partial." Pragmatist Charles Renouvier put it even more pointedly: "Properly speaking there is no certainty; there are only people who are certain."²⁴

Questioning of final truths had a central place also in twentieth-century literature. Becket, Joyce, Pound, and Lawrence opened our eyes to an increasingly participatory esthetic world, one where what we see is explicitly as much about who we are as what we may try to understand. Lawrence proposed that: "We are merely crammed wastepaper baskets unless we are in touch with that which laughs at all out knowing."

The visual and performing arts in the twentieth century not only affirmed uncertainty, they affirmed uncertainty's necessary role in any deeply creative relationship to experience. The visual arts gave us the cubism of Picasso and Brach with its emphasis on multiple perspectives and thus multiple realities, the abstract expressionism of Pollack and DeKönig that abandoned representation altogether, and Duchamp and the Dadaists going further to proclaim the outright death of art (at least art with a capital A). In music, we hear in the compositions of Schoenberg and Webern an abandonment of classical structures for atonality. And we witness more generally in music an increased openness to improvisation and the unexpected (most strikingly with the popularization of jazz). In dance, the works of Cunningham and Tharp radically confronted the boundaries between art and the everyday.²⁵

Religion's twentieth-century confrontation with uncertainty has been for many people particularly disorienting. Growing contact between the planet's diverse faiths has made any notion of one true religion increasingly suspect. We also saw deeper questioning. Post-modern philosophy's prediction of God's demise has proven at least premature (the latter part of the century witnessed increased interest in religious and spiritual concerns).²⁶ But the fact that such a prediction became, if not a widespread

²⁴ Nietzsche argued famously the century before that "there is no immaculate perception."

²⁵ We will later explore how one of art's tasks is to presage emerging cultural truths.

See Chapter Nine.

²⁶ In Chapters Seven and Ten, we will look at how the concept of Cultural Maturity suggests such predictions of God's demise simply miss the point.

conclusion, certainly legitimate conjecture, is something new. The Reformation placed the religious experience more directly in human hands, but it did not question the religious experience itself. And while history has always had its doubters, doubt has never been so broadly considered.

Through the last century, in every sphere of activity and inquiry, uncertainty, has come to have a newly acknowledged, and even respected, presence.²⁷ At the least, it has become a valid topic. By highlighting limits to what we know (and most often limits to what we can know), these contributions suggest a beginning ability to more consciously accept and find significance in uncertainty.

Of more ultimate significance, these contributions support the conclusion that uncertainty need not mean a loss of order and structure. With the best thinking in each of these spheres, uncertainty links not to chaos but to a deeper understanding of how things work. Quantum mechanics makes indeterminacy inescapable—but in so doing it reveals both an amazing new richness in the world of the subatomic and a new predictability in its patterns. Evolutionary theory observes that life evolves through processes that can never be fully anticipated—but it also articulates how the immense diversity and complexity of life would be impossible without them. Psychology and psychiatry argue that there are inner depths we cannot plumb—and at once they offer that in this deep uncertainty lies much that is most profound in our natures. The challenges of Picasso, Brach, Becket, Joyce, and others to the foundations of esthetic truth similarly offered glimpses of a more complex and immediate relationship to truth. And religion's growing acceptance of diversity in belief—and even questioning of core assumptions—hints at the possibility that faith might acquire a new creativity and resilience.

That an apparent loss of order might reflect something deeper is at the least intriguing. In addition, the notion that significant portions of the uncertainty we witness

²⁷ This is not to make uncertainty the center of the puzzle. Physicists remind us, for example, that quantum uncertainty applies only at the scale of the very small, the existence of unconscious thoughts does not make everything a mystery, and the multiple perspectives of cubism do not negate the esthetic. Uncertainty is just one piece of the equation, and often a minor one. This does not lessen its significance. We simply must not misinterpret its significance.

Later we will see how doing so is a red flag for common conceptual traps.

may have positive implications is reassuring. It suggests that we might be more on the right course than today rapid increases in uncertainty might lead us to fear. And that today we see formulations that specifically acknowledge uncertainty supports that we might just be up to thinking and relating in the ways the future's easily overwhelming uncertainties more broadly will require.

Biologist J.B.S Haldane described the ambiguities and easy confusions inherent to the life sciences—and, by implication, to understanding as a whole—with these now famous words: "It is my suspicion that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose." His claim was not that ours is a world without truth and order, but that truth and order may be more rich, complex, and wondrous than we have before imagined.²⁸

The Integrative Task

This historical picture supports the prediction that we might see greater acceptance of uncertainty. But we are left with critical questions. We have only the most general sense of why new formulations might include uncertainty. And the question of where new formulations ultimately take us—what beyond just the inclusion of uncertainty they describe—remains untouched. Reflections of a more theoretical sort help engage these deeper considerations.

A general observation helps gets us started. A striking characteristic links these advances. Each requires that our thinking create links, bridges—and not just between

²⁸ Reference to uncertainty's role in truth is not unique to the twentieth century. We find uncertainty mentioned frequently in writings from classical times in both the West and the East and in reflections from mystical traditions in any period. I think of Heraclitus' familiar assertion that "you can't step in the same river twice." Fourteenth century Buddhist priest Renkō proposed that, "Truly the beauty of life is its uncertainty."

Later we will examine how such earlier reflections, while they can provide useful reference, have ultimately different significance. (We will see related parallels—and for similar reasons—with several other of Cultural Maturity's defining themes.) Cultural Maturity both predicts that we might expect to see references to such earlier assertions in present formulations and notes that misinterpretation of their significance is a give-away to the presence of specific conceptual traps. (See Chapters Seven and Nine.)

phenomena we've regarded as different, but often between things that before we've treated as opposites. We witness something related with maturity in our individual development. F. Scott Fitzgerald proposed as the sign of a first-rate intelligence (we might say a mature intelligence) the ability to hold two contradictory truths simultaneously in mind without going mad. Culturally mature perspective involves something similar at the level of our collectively shared intelligence.

Such “bridging” of traditional conceptual polarities provides one of the most accessible ways to talk about how culturally mature formulations are new. It also offers insight into the kind of order we increasingly recognize. We've seen how mythologized truth involves the giving away of parts of ourselves to others (whether with idealized projections in love or the demonizing of others on the global stage) and the importance of more embracing perspective. Cultural Maturity proposes that polar juxtapositions more generally reflect—and hide—larger processes, larger wholes. Culturally mature perspective helps us both better understand the workings of polarity and get our minds around the larger relationships that perceived polar differences have kept us from recognizing.

That polarities²⁹ reflect larger systemic realities might seem obvious, but more often than not we miss how this is so. We assume that it is right to think of minds and bodies as separate even though daily experience repeatedly proves otherwise. And we comfortably accept that a world of allies and “evil empires” is just how things are even as one generation’s most loathed of enemies becomes the next’s close collaborator. Culturally mature perspective paints a larger picture and offers that we might engage this more complete picture more directly. It also helps us appreciate how such polar

²⁹ I will use the word polarity as an encompassing term for a variety of different, but related, types of conceptual juxtapositions. Some are most defined by opposition—for example the polarities of warfare. With others the relationship is more of a “separate worlds” sort—for example, with the polarity of objective versus subjective. We tend here, often, to speak of duality rather than polarity. I will also use the word to include juxtaposition, such as that between rhythm and melody in music, in which “opposite” elements are expressly complementary. CST describes how these differences in the character of polarity reflect time- and space-specific creative dynamics. (See Chapter Eight and the Appendix.)

perception has had a developmental purpose. When timely, thinking in the language of polar opposites has protected us from realities that otherwise would overwhelm us.

One particular “bridging” in effect defines Cultural Maturity. Today’s changes link ourselves and our societal contexts in a way we have no before seen. This most basic “bridging” produces the surrender of society's past parental function. Cultural Maturity is not about culture's role disappearing, but about a new and deeper recognition of how individual and culture relate, how each informs the other. It is also about making our understanding of both being an individual and living in an interpersonal context more dynamic and complete.

This most encompassing linkage holds within it a multitude of more local “bridgings.” We've seen how mature gender identity and love link masculine with feminine, individuality and connectedness. We've observed how effective addressing global safety requires that we “bridge” the polarity of ally and enemy. In the end, it also requires that we “bridge” usual ideas about war and peace. Similarly, today’s new leadership challenges require “bridging” conventional polar assumptions about leaders and followers—along with the internal worlds of organizations and their cultural contexts.

Nothing more characterizes the last century's defining conceptual advances than how they have linked previously unquestioned polar truths. Physics' new picture provocatively circumscribes the realities of matter and energy, space and time, the object with its observer, and more. Evolutionary biology links humankind with the natural world, and by reopening timeless questions about life's origins, joins the purely physical with the organic. And the ideas of modern psychology, neurology, and sociology provide an increasingly integrated picture of the workings of conscious with unconscious, mind with body, and self with society.

The "problem" with polarity is not an intrinsic difficulty. Rather, as we shall examine closely, it is an expression of where we reside in the story of understanding. In times past, polarity worked. The polar antagonisms of church and crown in the Middle Ages, for example, were tied intimately to that time's experience of meaning, as were later Modern Age conflicts between competing positivist and romantic worldviews. The

problem is not with polarity itself, but with its lack of timeliness as a generator of truth and meaning.

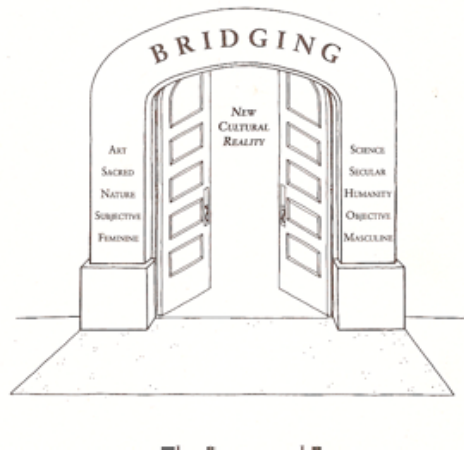
Another thing to which we shall give close attention is how “bridging” is a more demanding—and also more enlightening—concept than we might initially assume.³⁰ Fail to appreciate all it entails and we can end up with naive and unhelpful conclusions. Bridging involves much more than just bringing two sides together, adding or averaging. (I’ve made reference to how simple middle-of-the-road political positions get us no closer to mature policy than the extremes of partisan advocacy.) And the result is explicitly different from simple oneness. “Bridging” is as much about fully recognizing multiplicity as it is about connectedness.³¹ Confuse “bridging” with things it is not, and we can get not just misleading results, but conclusions that undermine exactly what we wish to accomplish.

But just recognizing the historical role polarity has played and the emerging potential and pertinence of bridging takes us a long way. Earlier I used the simple image of stepping over a doorway’s threshold to depict initial engagement with Cultural Maturity’s changes. In *Necessary Wisdom* I fill out the image by making each leg of the doorway’s arch one half of a polar relationship. From either polar position, or from simple compromise, the doorway’s threshold remains invisible. Recognizing polarity brings us up the threshold, but by itself still leaves us short.³² If we wish to step over the threshold we need at least a beginning ability to bridge pertinent polar relationships.

³⁰ This difference is the reason I put the term in quotes.

³¹ Where “bridging” takes us differs fundamentally from either liberal inclusiveness or spiritual unity. Spiritual, politically liberal, socially humanistic, and philosophically idealist or romantic views all in some way stand for an “undivided” worldview. Each in different ways talks a language of wholeness. But most often this is less the wholeness of not leaving out important parts in a mature systemic sense (the kind required for Whole-Person/Whole-System relationships and truth), than an identification with (or at least a strong bias toward) parts of experience (note parts—here those of more poetic or emotional bent) that tend to define experience in terms of connectedness). Polarity at its most fundamental juxtaposes oneness and difference. When we identify with oneness we are very much taking sides. CST calls the various forms of such identification Unity Fallacies. (See Chapters Six and Nine.)

³² Actually, more than just recognizing polarity is needed even for this. Cartesian dualism does so quite explicitly. It just doesn’t recognize any need for polarity’s resolution.



*Maturity's Threshold*³³

A good way to see how “bridging” invites us into new territory is the way the conclusions it produces can on first encounter can seem paradoxical. Mature love makes us both more separate and more deeply connected; mature leadership is both more powerful and more humble than what it replaces. Cultural Maturity argues that this paradoxical appearance simply reflects polarity's necessary role in how we think. Blindness to polarity constrains us within a world of absolutes (and projections). Maturity's threshold alerts to the fact that poles exist and that a polar picture is inadequate. Step over that threshold and into mature territory and we begin to see more of a whole, a more dynamic—generative and multifaceted—kind of whole than we are used to, but one in which the opposites of paradox are not ultimately at odds.

To say they are not at odds is not to say the result makes perfect sense. What we get, whatever the polarity, remains challenging to understand, indeed impossible to understand—at least when limited to usual ways of thinking. In *The Character of*

³³ This image might suggest that bridging is about joining the two sides of the archway. In fact, it requires something very different: stepping over that threshold. Later we will see how this distinction helps us distinguish “bridging” from things we might confuse it with like compromise or oneness. We will also examine how this distinction relates to the broader challenge of representing culturally mature perspective (that Dilemma of Representation). See Chapter Six.

Physical Law, physicist Richard Feynman described the situation in the physical sciences with particular eloquence. "It is fine and well," he said, "to string together words: 'atoms are both waves and particles.' But it is quite a different matter to make sense of them. You can't. I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics." (And Richard Feynman could understand it if anybody could.)³⁴

In spite of this elusiveness, the recognition that truths adequate to the challenges ahead “bridge” conceptual polarities provides a touchstone we will draw on repeatedly. We will see how it helps us separate the conceptual wheat from the conceptual chaff as we look to the future. We want always to ask, does an idea succeed at being maturely integrative—and if not, how does it fail? We will also examine how it provides us with one of the most ready approaches for developing culturally mature policy. Noting the multiple polarities pertinent to a particular challenge and attempting to articulate more integrative formulations, both with regard to particular polarities and to how various polarities relate, takes us a long way toward more complete and systemic understanding. We will explore, too, how an understanding of the mechanisms of “bridging” can help us with some of the most eternal of philosophical quandaries. When developed in more detail in future chapters, the recognition that needed perspective “bridges” traditional conceptual polarities will also assist us in the critical task of crafting detailed “pattern language” maps for the territory ahead.³⁵

³⁴ Appreciating the particular way this is so provides an important safeguard when it comes to culturally mature conception. Later we will examine ways the perspective of either half of any polarity can masquerade as integrative. (See Chapter Five.) We will also look at how recognizing limits to representation and articulation inherent to mature conception helps us see when we might fall prey to the seduction of easier kinds of truth. (See Chapter Six.)

³⁵ As with a positive role for uncertainty, the notion that ultimate truth circumscribes polarities is not new. It has popped up throughout history. Plato observed that "we are all like pieces of the coins that children break in half for keepsakes—and each of us is forever seeking the half that will tally with himself." We see related ideas in the writings of Aristotle, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus as well as in the classical mythic juxtaposition of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. We also encounter it in Eastern philosophy—think of the Yin and Yang of Taoist thought. The Sufi poet Rumi observed that "good turns you from one feeling to another and teaches by means of opposites, so that you will have two wings to fly, not one."

Bridging and Uncertainty

So how exactly does the fact of bridging tie to our needed new relationship with uncertainty? We see the most obvious tie in the direct relationship between that most basic “bridging,” between ourselves and our societal contexts, and the surrender of society’s past parental function. It plays an essential role in today’s loss of traditional guideposts and reliably mythologized truths. But there is also a deeper tie, one that is key to understanding how new uncertainties could in the end support order. My references to paradox and to the way bridging can produce results that elude usual ways of thinking are suggestive of such a connection. But we can be much more specific. When we “bridge” any polarity, a newly integral role for uncertainty in reality’s workings is a natural result.

Take a close look at any conceptual polarity and we see that each half can be described quite adequately by deterministic rules. We can reduce both political left and political right to ideology. Similarly mind (at least rational mind) and body (the body of anatomy and physiology) each conform to simple cause-and-effect description. We also see that if we put the two halves of polarity together, such simple deterministic order abandons us. At the very least, we recognize that both halves can't hold final truth. More deeply we appreciate how the act of “bridging” produces a less once-and-for-all world of experience. Transcend either half of any polar relationship and before-hidden uncertainties step to the forefront. That each of the “bridgings” noted in this chapter

Again, the significance of these references from earlier times differs fundamentally from that suggested by Cultural Maturity. The most immediate distinction is how the reference in these observations is to personal wisdom rather than the more embracing task of culturally mature truth. Chapter Seven looks at other more basic distinctions.

We also find more recent references to circumscribing polarities. Some are more pertinent to our task, though most still stop short of maturely integrative conception. Examples include the philosophical writings of Leibnitz, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Whitehead; the psychological theories of Jung; and the systems concepts of Ludwig von Bertalanffy (with the ideas of the last two making successful first steps into culturally mature territory). Post-modern theorist Jacques Derrida speaks of the pivotal role played by “binary operations.”

would propel us beyond the comforting surety of a wholly deterministic world is exactly what we would predict.

“Bridging” and how it works sheds important light not just on the necessary fact of uncertainty, but also on how mature conception alters our understanding of uncertainty's significance. Most immediately, it helps us further grasp how greater uncertainty need not produce chaos, how it might be tied not just to order, but to an ultimately more reliable kind of order. The simple fact that none of the “bridgings” found with twentieth-century conceptual innovation resulted in disorder empirically supports this conclusion. Later we will find more theoretical support in a creative framing of order. The “living” order that makes creative processes creative not only finds uncertainty tolerable, it requires uncertainty's contribution.

We can also find important support for this direct relationship between uncertainty and order by looking more theoretically at uncertainty itself. Seen through the lens of Cultural Maturity, uncertainty—at least the kind we find with “bridging”—itself becomes a “bridging” notion. With regard to order, it “bridges” the paradoxical-seeming juxtaposition of certainty and its opposite. It challenges absolute prediction. And at once it points toward something different from either ignorance or chaos.³⁶

We see the importance of this fact when we confront the challenge of thinking about ourselves in ways that reflect the fact that we are alive (and even more, if we wish to describe human life). The old picture provided only two options, each mutually exclusive to the other. Life could be in the end a throw of the dice, capricious, an expression of Shakespeare's "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Or it could be predetermined (its direction provided either by balls-on-a-billiard table laws of material cause and effect, or by teleological intent). Neither view, at least when interpreted narrowly, is adequate for understanding life as something alive or human

³⁶ As we would predict—and will see—each of our themes is similarly a bridging concept. Each takes notions that we have viewed as irreconcilable—responsibility and impulse, change and stability, complexity and simplicity, limits and limitlessness, going forward and going back, truth and its absence—and reveals a further perspective beyond the vantage of either.

life as purposeful. The recognition that uncertainty is itself a “bridging” notion offers a way beyond this ultimately terminal conceptual impasse.³⁷

The recognition that uncertainty is a “bridging” also does something else that might seem almost opposite. It helps us get beyond thinking of uncertainty’s new picture as esoteric. While where it takes us may seem paradoxical and mess with usual understanding, where it takes us could not be more ordinary. Any “bridging” is, in the end, about better getting at what is, and in an important sense always has been. It is about seeing whatever is our concern more systemically. We would expect the result to be the same with uncertainty. The more dynamic picture of uncertainty that the fact of “bridging” produces may stretch how we commonly think. But ultimately it is about nothing more than engaging ourselves and the world we live in with greater maturity and completeness.

Creativity and Uncertainty

We are left with a one last question. It is key to making sense of where uncertainty’s new picture takes us and to the essential take of developing detailed culturally mature conception. That question: Why do we think in polar terms in the first place? Is it not curious that we say there are "two sides to every question" when there is no reason to assume reality is anything but whole?

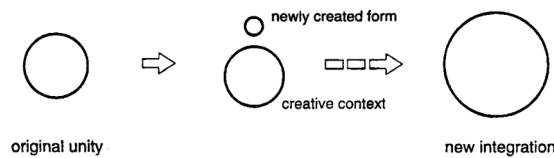
I’ve hinted at the answer. Creative Systems Theory proposes that we think in polar terms because polarity is essential to how conscious awareness works and to the mechanisms of creative process. It is thus central to being human. Earlier I described how Creative Systems Theory takes as its starting point our tool-making, meaning-making—creative—natures. Creative Systems Theory proposes that thinking of reality as creative³⁸ can serve us in a similar way to how the Age of Reason described the world as "a great

³⁷ CST calls concepts of order that effectively “bridge” determinism and indeterminism Meta-Determinant.

³⁸ The reality of human systems, certainly, but, as we shall examine, also, in a more limited way, reality more generally. See Chapter Five.

clockworks.” It provides a general defining metaphor, here for the more dynamic truths of Cultural Maturity, as well as a template for thinking more generally. And like with how Newton and Descartes translated the Modern Age’s machine imagery into detailed conception, we can similarly use a creative frame to develop “pattern language” concepts for making the future’s needed more “living system” distinctions.

The important recognition, to start, is simply that creation cannot happen without polarity. For anything new to come into being, it must appear and distinguish itself from what has existed before—set this as opposed to that. Later we will look at how the differentiation stages in any human formative process evolve through a predictable sequence of polar relationships. New content and original context juxtapose in evolving, creatively-specific configurations. Of particular pertinence to these observations about polarity and bridging—and our task in these pages more generally—is how the mature stages of anything creative are marked by related integrative processes, by a growing capacity to draw a circle around what before may have seemed conflicting impulses.



Polarity and bridging in formative process

Seen through a creative frame, the assertion that there are two sides to every question becomes an expression more of the creative way we organize and process experience than how things actually are. Get beyond polarity's simplifying lens and we

find always a more richly complex and dynamic picture (rich both in terms of here-and-now complexities, and temporally rich, complex in terms of differences over time).³⁹

A creative frame also helps us make deeper sense of uncertainty. It supports that uncertainty is inescapable—creation cannot happen without uncertainty. It also helps with that central theoretical quandary of how we best understand uncertainty as something other than order's absence. And it affirms the more general conclusion that uncertainty can be a positive force. At least with regard to human systems, fundamental uncertainty becomes essential to our experience of life, and in daily life, to our experience of direction and coherence. Leave uncertainty out of the creative mix and we are left only with the dead and predictable.

While what an artist does captures only a small part of what a more generic use of the word "creative" encompasses, artistic creation at least helps us recognize how creativity and mature truth might be linked. It also helps us appreciate how uncertainty can be about more than just ignorance or disorder. When a painter stands before a canvas, there is much he or she can, and indeed must, know—how to hold the brush, what happens when we mix one color with another. But the painter can't know ahead of time exactly where the painting is going, or how it is to get there (or even, really, whether it will be finished or prove worth the effort)—otherwise we would not call the act creative.

The artist's uncertainty is real, not just the invisible hand of mystery, though our more veiled sensibilities play an important role. It is fundamental discontinuity—any

³⁹ In chapters ahead, we will see how change in human systems of all sorts—individuals, relationships, cultures—follows patterns that mirror the generative architecture of formative process. (See Chapter Four.) A more detailed look reveals that the progression of any formative process (including the broad history of human thought) can be understood in terms of sets of creatively evolving polar relationships.

We will also look at how a transitional period exists between the truths of polarity and the future's needed, more integrative sensibilities. During this period polarity no longer defines meaning, but nothing exists to replace it. It is a topic of particular importance to making sense of the times we live in. CST proposes that much of what is least pleasant in current cultural realities is a function of such dynamics. We will look at how meaning as polar opposition, and even the less conflicted but still polar meaning-making mechanisms of rationality and objectivity, are often today replaced by meaning as little more than artificial stimulation. (See Transitional Absurdities in Chapter Eight.)

creative effort requires us to confront things we cannot know and every successful creative act makes a leap. But as human experience, we cannot separate it from order and meaning. It is only through the courage to confront such uncertainty that the creative work can become creation—and, very possibly, creation that matters. We find in things creative something better than order in the old definition. We don't get surety—this is order in the sense of pattern and possibility. But it is a kind of order in which much more becomes possible.

Each of the examples to which we've given extended attention provide good illustration not just of the necessity of bridging, but also of how bridging produces a more creative sort of order. Each, too, affirms uncertainty's deeper significance.

We can capture some of what happens in love—and human interaction more generally—with mechanical, cause-and-effect, I-do-this-to-you, you-do-this-to-me, thinking. But what makes something relationship in any living sense requires more. And while our conventional romantic interpretation of love might seem to provides a counterbalance to this mechanistic picture, in the end it is just as polar and just as effectively keeps ultimate uncertainty at bay. Romantic language frames relationship in terms of magic and oneness, in the extreme as somehow "fated." More accurately, we think of love—and relationship of any sort—as a creative process. Love is about being together in ways that make us mutually more alive—or more creative in the sense of generative and purpose-filled. It always has been, but greater acceptance of uncertainty is needed to see this larger picture. In return, today, we get not just more options in love, but also, the possibility of more ultimately stable and fulfilling love.

In a related way, our historical picture of nation-state identity and relationship has presented a static picture that protects us from uncertainty. We've assumed that a country's status as ally or enemy reflects the goodness or badness of its people. Or with somewhat greater insight, we've condemned the fact of projection as only ignorance. Better we understand relationships between peoples as dynamically interactive, and our projections, when timely, as fulfilling creative needs. Past mythologized beliefs have protected us from needing to confront more uncertainty than we could tolerate. Here we've seen how creatively moving forward requires that we understand both ourselves and others more systemically. We could say more creatively if we mean engaging who

we are with the needed greater completeness. Such a more whole-ball-of-wax vantage increases options and produces, ultimately, a much safer world. But it also requires that we engage the uncertainties of identity and relationship with a not-before-possible directness.

Similarly, leadership has traditionally been defined in polar, cause-and-effect terms—leaders lead, followers follow. In fact, here too, reality has always been more interesting—more two-way and more creative. Leadership is about approaches to social organization that at particular times and place are most likely to have generative outcomes. In times past, engaging this more complex picture directly would have overwhelmed us. But today it is becoming increasingly important to do so—in part just to see things more clearly, more because doing so, when we are ready, reveals new (and newly necessary) creative possibilities. But, again, such can happen only with a newly mature relationship with uncertainty.

Later we will look at how we can use the concept of “bridging” to gain important insight for developing more the more consciously systemic social structures a culturally mature future will require. For example, we might ask what effective education in the future must look like. We can make important first steps toward the needed understanding by examining how good future education will require a series of critical “bridgings”—between school and society (as more and more learning happens globally and electronically), between young and old (the need for life-long learning), between various realms of inquiry (if learning is to be sufficiently interdisciplinary), and more. Notice how in this picture schools as institutions become much more dynamic—we could say creative—not just places where we learn, but themselves ever-evolving “learning organizations.”⁴⁰ The structural demands of government, business, science, or religion beyond Cultural Maturity's threshold shift in an analogous way. Such expansion of perspective is again impossible without new appreciation for uncertainty's role.

We can similarly apply a creative frame—and the fact of “bridging”—to the broader significance of our time. We've seen how culture's new story must somehow be more systemic, more effectively addresses the whole of who we are. If what most defines

40 To borrow Peter Senge's helpful term.

us is our creative, "tool-making" abilities, then the new story we need must be about creating more consciously and wisely. We can effectively understand both the necessary new human story and the needed new human capacities in terms of a new ability to stand back from, fully appreciate, and more responsibly apply the full complexity of our creative, tool-making, meaning-making capacities. What we get when we step back in this way "bridges" polarities at every turn. It also necessarily confronts us with a finality of uncertainty that before now would have overwhelmed us.

Uncertainty, the bridging of polarities, and a creative frame come together to present a more "living," more whole-ball-of-wax picture wherever we look. In the process, stability and uncertainty come suddenly come to appear collaborators rather than adversaries. This new, more creative picture both helps clarify how things have always worked and provides solid direction for making sense of the world in the ways good future decision-making will require.

A creatively perceived world presents significant new demands. But it offers much in return. While less predetermined, it is in the end both more solid in the sense of resilient and more solidly consistent with options that will serve us. With regard to uncertainty, it at least suggests at that we might engage uncertainty in more realistic, even friendly terms. Linguist Alfred Korzybski, reflecting on the need for a mature relationship to uncertainty in our daily lives, commented, "There are two ways to slide easily through life, to believe everything and to doubt everything. Both save thinking." Creative, whole-ball-of-wax perspective confronts both means of escape from uncertainty's challenges. More, it shows how such escape—at least today—is not something we would want.⁴¹

⁴¹ These observations about uncertainty, polarity and the creative nature of integrative thought help make some needed distinctions with regard to twentieth-century perspectives cited earlier. Not all the examples noted are rightfully considered culturally mature, at least in a full sense. The ideas of Einstein, Freud, and Darwin, for example, are all are best described as straddling worldviews. Each can be regarded equally well as a final hurrah for mechanistic understanding and a critical first voice for what is to come. Later we will look more deeply at the implications of this observation.

For now it is enough to note that while Einstein's thinking dynamically joined time and space, it remained ultimately deterministic (quantum mechanics took a next step). And while Freud's formulations linked conscious and unconscious, they were in the end more hydraulic than creative (id pushes superego

Managing Uncertainty

Cultural Maturity's altering of our relationships to uncertainty has immediate application to the practical tasks of leadership. The simple fact of better tolerating uncertainty makes us less prone to reactivity in uncertainty's presence. And culturally mature perspective helps us develop more dynamic ways of thinking that better take uncertainty into account. As we look to the future, few capacities will be more important than the ability to effectively manage uncertainty and to make good decisions in its presence.

Just better acknowledging uncertainty will play a key part in the needed new leadership. If we are afraid of uncertainty, it is hard to make good choices. Accept uncertainty's presence and appreciate its role and we can choose to limit its effects when that is possible and appropriate. In designing a car, I want to anticipate and eliminate as many problems as possible. We may also choose to do the opposite—to increase room for uncertainty. In brainstorming, in love, or just in how we live our daily lives, it is often constraints to uncertainty that most limit possibility.

As important, ultimately, is how Cultural Maturity helps us more accurately evaluate uncertainty's magnitude and significance. Overestimating uncertainty or distorting its implications can impede good decision-making as much as denying it—and often represents just another version of mythologizing and denial. Distorted interpretations of uncertainty can be used equally well to justify not taking needed action or taking action that can only result in harm.

pushes ego ... a situation rectified by the more kaleidoscopic view of the unconscious that followed). And while Darwin's concepts helped get us beyond familiar teleologies, they are in the end mechanical (variation and selection can be modeled quite well with any computer). Thus, while they help make sense of how biological life changes, they stop short as fully encompassing explanation. (They offer little assistance, for example, with that more fundamental question of what makes life alive.)

We can make similar observations for the larger portion of twentieth-century thinking in the social sciences. Much of what drove the development of the social sciences was a desire to bring classical scientific thinking to questions that before had seemed beyond it.

We see an example of the first in people who point out—accurately—that we can't know for certain whether global climate change is a product of human activity, then use this observation to justify not responding to the threat (a distorted use of an accurate observation). I often ask people who resort to such logic what they think the odds are that global warming—and the human factor in its causation—is real. I then ask them how they feel about their children playing Russian roulette. Few people are willing to claim that the odds are less than Russian roulette's one in six. (And those who do have a hard time escaping that their conclusion has more to do with ideology than reasoned evaluation.)

Over-blowing uncertainty's magnitude can also have the effect of justifying mythologized action. We see this tendency today with terrorism. Terrorism-related content dominates the news and terrorism-related fears commonly shape social discourse. Yet any individual is many hundreds of times more likely to be killed by being hit by a car while crossing the street than by a terrorist. This is not to make light of terrorism. Terrorism should become an increasing concern as globalization brings diverse peoples into ever closer proximity. But we need to take great care when we observe such distortion of perspective. Fear makes us extremely vulnerable to poor decision-making and manipulation.

Cultural Maturity opens the door to better recognizing and appreciating uncertainty and makes possible newly sophisticated frameworks for understanding why we see the uncertainty we do when we do and where the most creative responses may lie. Sometimes the more complete and nuanced picture it provides translates into being better able to predict (even if outcomes can never be as sure as we might like). In other instances, it might mean accepting that we can't get even close to prediction—a coin toss remains a coin toss. Either way, the greater acceptance and understanding of uncertainty that comes with Cultural Maturity makes us better able to make wise and effective—ultimately creative—choices.

Hope and Uncertainty

The most important uncertainty-related recognition when it comes to hope is simply that making better sense of uncertainty is possible—if we can stretch sufficiently. We also find hope in how a developmental metaphor implies that the potential for engaging uncertainty more effectively may be built into our natures. These two factors combine to suggest that handling future uncertainty may well be within our means.

As important is the way a mature relationship to uncertainty makes understanding, if not simpler, at least more direct. Sometimes circumstances are the source of today's new uncertainty. But Cultural Maturity proposes that more often modern uncertainty is a simple product of engaging "what is" more accurately. In doing so, we don't necessarily better understand uncertainty—though we may. But we do become better able to get our arms around it, and in so doing, to better embrace experience as a whole.

A simple image captures much of what our times are about from the perspective of uncertainty. The fundamental task of our time may be not unlike that of a bicyclist, who in learning to ride, at a certain point sets his or her training wheels aside. Initially the bicycle feels less stable. And indeed much more can happen, both good and bad. But if the cyclist has done sufficient preparation and the time is right, setting training wheels aside is only in the most limited sense about chaos or instability. It is about discovering a new, more complex and dynamic kind of stability.

No guarantee exists that the future presents a bike we can ride. And this simple image captures only part of what we must deal with. But it usefully reframes the task with regard to uncertainty in times ahead. And it offers that uncertainty's challenge presents possibilities that are at the least intriguing.

The Price and the Prize

I will end each of our theme-specific chapters with some summary reflections on that theme's consequences—the "price" (both in the sense of how those demands stretches us and the price we pay if we fail to stretch) and the "prize" (what we gain if we are successful).

The price in the first sense for uncertainty should now be obvious. A more mature relationship to uncertainty means living in what at first glance can seem a much less

secure world. Thriving in uncertainty means surrendering many familiar reassurances and recognizing that truth will never again be as absolute as we might have once preferred (and might often still prefer).

But the price we will pay if we run from that apparent insecurity is immense. Fail to get beyond the knee-jerk reassurances of being "chosen people," and we risk endless and increasingly dangerous global conflict. Fail to appreciate the great dangers as well as the great benefits that can accompany new technologies—and the impossibility of sure prediction—our own inventiveness could be our undoing. Fail to transcend the reactive pettiness of political polarization, and we risk that governmental leadership will become increasingly misguided and irrelevant. Fail to accept the uncertainties that accompany interpersonal relationships—of all sorts—and the diminishing power of culture's handholds will undermine our capacity for relationship and lead to overwhelm and poor judgment. The list is endless.

A newly mature relationship to uncertainty promises great rewards. It brings greater calm and perspective in the face of conflict and complexity. More deeply it helps us make sense of and respond to challenges that less and less conform to simple one-cause/one-cure solutions (of any persuasion), challenges that if not engaged will result in real disorder. In the end, a mature relationship to uncertainty opens the door to new human possibilities and new and deeper understandings of our human significance and the nature of meaning.

Weaving the Threads

The short version:

- 1) Effectively addressing the tasks ahead will require an expanded capacity to tolerate, understand, and manage uncertainty. Better appreciating uncertainty is necessary just to comprehend the new questions.
- 2) Such expanded capacity will demand an important kind of "growing up" as a species. It will require that we surrender parental notions of authority, abandon

mythologized truths, and get our arms around realities that before would have seemed only disturbing and contradictory.

3) The evidence is good that we are making progress with this necessary stretching. The most significant conceptual advances of the last century at least begin to succeed with the task. And if the concept of Cultural Maturity is accurate, we should see further successes in the future.

The theme of uncertainty implies the need for a new order of human responsibility—the topic of the next chapter.

