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Divisions in Society

Since the dawn of man, cultures have been in constant opposition to one another. The system of tribal warfare and each clan's own society meant that turf and resource wars were a constant threat. Societies were small, at most thirty to forty people, and anyone outside your clan was automatically labeled an enemy. Being exiled from a community was almost certainly a death sentence, as living without a tribe was a difficult task. Only centuries later, with the advent of larger societies, did trade and specialization become feasible.

The onset of these local economies led to expansions in civilization and a more intellectual populace. Societies developed writing systems, governing bodies, and artisans helped to create new and innovative commodities. Communities began to grow into larger city-states and soon became small kingdoms. These tiny empires contained large populations, but they still remained strongly isolationist, and each civilization had almost no contact with other groups. The divisions of each were well defined, as each had a different language, culture, writing system, and code of law. Intermingling of cultures was something that almost never occurred.

The world grew in innovation and empires rose and fell, but this theme of division and segmentation continued on for centuries. Empires like the Romans faced off against Persians, the Mongols warred against the Song Dynasty, and the Aztecs fought the invading Spanish conquistadors. Each faction remained distinct and fairly isolated until the dawn of globalization and trade, which only cropped up in the more recent centuries. The introduction of international trade routes brought a flourishing prosperity to the world that has led to our current society today.

The divisions present in early society were the main forces holding back human innovation. Earlier civilizations had a very low volume of trade, and each had almost no cultural significance on any other. Any brilliant thinkers of a nation could not share their ideas with the world as a whole. Instead, their innovation was contained to specific area due to the powers of state, culture, government, and, in some cases, geography. This 'worldwide quarantine' of ideas and culture greatly slowed the tide of human progress.

The most important inventions in the early first millennium after the birth of Christ, namely paper, gunpowder, timekeeping, and the compass came out of China, but because of their isolation from the outside world, many of these brilliant inventions were not commonplace until after the Italian merchant Marco Polo brought them back to Europe. The manufacturing process of Damascus Steel, an important invention in medieval times, was lost over the past centuries due to cultural isolation. Japan, who until the recent past had been extremely isolated, was centuries behind other

civilizations technologically, and used swords while other nations had already developed gunpowder weaponry.

The divisions among societies helped to create a cultural isolation that impacted the world for millennia. The simple idea of factions and hunter/gatherer societies simply scaled up and continued to manifest itself. During the renaissance, these ideas finally began to dissipate; kingdoms in Europe were united under common rule, and nations began to start international trade. This trend was exacerbated by the rise of colonialism, in which nations would take over and conquer lesser ones for land, resources, and international power. Increasingly large ships were created to support increasingly large human populations and cultural differences were put aside for the benefit of trade routes. Democracies sprung up and global trade skyrocketed, with the driving force of capitalism forcing nations to outsource resources and prioritise innovation and research. Even Japan, who as previously stated had been historically isolationist, eventually succumbed to the idea of international trade, as access to a global economy was too hard to pass up. Divisions were broken down not because of the idea of a communal human nature, but rather because of a global need for a large scale economy, befitting to the modern era.

The rise of democracy all over the globe has been a dominant factor in this large scale trade, but it has not prevented disputes because of these new connections. While cultural barriers were being taken down for the necessities of trade, they still had their impact long after free-commerce was in place. Even if the physical walls and legislature

of these divisions were eliminated, their ghosts still remained in the form of cultural and national identities. While the global economy today is free and prosperous almost anywhere you could go on the globe, the cultural differences still remain. You can see these everywhere. Tariffs and import taxes exist almost solely to strengthen a nation's own economy. If a free worldwide economy was truly present, these would be nonexistent. Certain nations choose to avoid trade with certain partners, whether due to culture or creed. The presence of these barriers suggests more than just an impedance to international trade, but rather, could suggest that it might take more than trade benefits to take down cultural divisions.

Many of the current divisions in society are due to differences of opinion or a lack of understanding of the opposition. This is especially prevalent in America where it seems to be impossible to take a neutral ground, as each side declares an enemy of any who are not allied with them. These opinions can lead to more consequences than a general disagreement, they can and have led to a national predicament; politicians pit citizens against each other and the sense of general opposition has become a war of differences. People who were once friends can become estranged due to a difference of opinion and the current political climate is exceedingly polarized. While America has always known to harbor political controversy (think Vietnam or the Civil Rights Movement) and a mix of cultures that can be in opposition, the current situation seems more dire than ever.

This same predicament occurs on the international scale as well. The prospect of xenophobia and racism are present in many nations. Perhaps even worse, the increase in social divisions in recent years has led to a climate of condescension and labeling, where people who are not racist are labeled as such for holding a certain opinion. Religious differences among regions can create international uproar and a communal idea of fear. These are present in the international fear of terrorism, whether in the name of Islam (who it is most commonly associated with, conceivably to a fault.) or otherwise. Differing religious groups in close proximity often create strife and animosity. Even divisions among those of the same religion have caused strife, as is the case in many sects of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.

The problem of division is not one localized to the U.S., however much it may seem that way in the current state. Even with a growing international economy and increasingly diversified populations, differences in culture or creed are always bound to create issues. Even before the time of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. when he promised to "...make real the promises of democracy...to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice." people in democracies were constantly fighting for their rights, making sure that the promises that were made to them were fulfilled. In the U.S. today, debates rage on about the true extent of our Constitutional Rights and liberties, and deciding how much influence the government should really have. The arguments over the centuries have changed in the U.S., but they almost always involve different cultures arguing about differing ways of life.

Most of the debate on divisions is ungrounded. That is, many people who have differences of opinion simply regurgitate facts given to them by their cause. They cannot, or aren't willing form their own opinions and arguments because this would mean facing opposition without a solid base of argument. Because of this recursive cycle, the polarization of political climates is inevitable and each side gets ever more agitated with the other. Media cycles on both sides become biased and as each side makes an argument, it triggers a response, creating a tit-for-tat situation that exacerbates the problem. The course is simply repeated with different topics of discussion and controversy until a toxic mix of unfounded debate, unnecessary hatred, and self-indulgent quarrels is formed.

The main issue with this division is its tendency to be completely irrational and that it doesn't tend to solve any real world problems. People in first-world nations are so absorbed in issues that they cannot recognize the need for help in other countries outside their own. The problems that we originally try to solve in our own community turn into debate, which ends up creating the political climate that makes us so self-centered. Our need to try and create a solution for cultural divisions has led us astray from problems that really matter.

If we think about America's current social climate, you can pick examples everywhere. Is the issue of what gun modifications we need really more important than solving world hunger? Are unending and fruitless investigations about Russian collusion in an election more world changing than finding a global solution to terrorism? In this

sense, I am not trying to say that America's problems are not important, however I think that as a whole, America has lost its sense of purpose on the global scale. We have become so interested in issues that are specific to our own country, and ones that might not even affect us directly that we cannot recognize the world of hurt that is around us. One could say that we are "losing the forest through the trees".

For the betterment of humanity, and for the betterment of America as a whole, I believe we need to return to a truly bipartisan Congress once again. America needs to work as a whole, for the people, by the people, to help defend and protect the ideals of democracy on a global scale. Our internal strifes and arguments get us nowhere and lead only to hate. Imagining America without and disagreement is a pipe dream, and the idea is not even worth entertaining, but if we could all step back to see the bigger picture, we might be more willing to help others. That is the America I want to see, one that helps protect others at all costs, where people of all color, culture, or creed can live in harmony with one another, and where we can all live "as one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all."

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