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*“Each society views its own patterns of marriage, family, and kinship as self-evidently right and proper, and usually God-given as well. Much of the current concern about the fate of the modern family stems from this kind of ethnocentrism. If we assume that there is only one ‘right’ family form, then naturally, any change in that particular form will be interpreted as heralding the doom of the whole institution. It is important to recognize, therefore, that there is an immense range of marriage, family, and kinship patterns; that each of these patterns may be, at least in its own context, perfectly viable; and above all, that, the family, like any other social institution, must inevitably change through time, in our own society as in all others.”*

– Ian Robertson, *Society: A Brief Introduction* (1989)

**All in the Family:** Fortunately, not every family has an Archie Bunker:

- ✓ “Ants, bees and wasps, known collectively as the hymenoptera, all share an unusual genetic system in which males carry only half the normal number of chromosomes, receiving a single set from their mothers. But a hymenopteran female, in the more conventional fashion, receives one set of chromosomes each from her mother and father. Dr. [William D.] Hamilton [Oxford University] was the first to point out that the unusual genetics of the hymenoptera have the curious effect of making a female more closely related to her sisters than to even her own children, since she shares three-quarters of her genes in common with her siblings, but only half in common with her offspring. As a result, in order to propagate more of her genes into future generations, she can do better by staying in her mother’s nest and helping to raise sisters rather than reproducing herself.” – Carol Kaesuk Yoon, “Social Castes Found to be Not So Rare in Nature,” New York Times Archives, 1993.
  - “Archie was also known for his frequent malapropisms and spoonerisms. For example, he refers to Edith’s gynecologist as a ‘groinacologist’ and to Catholic priests who go around sprinkling ‘incest’ (incense) on their congregation, whereas he referred to incest itself as ‘committing ‘insects’ in the family.’” – from Wikipedia article, “Archie Bunker,” September 8, 2019.

*“‘One thing for sure is that the **social stability contract** that has worked for so long – that the people tolerate the **authoritarian rule** so far as the government warrants economic prosperity and provides good governance – is broken in a big way,’ [Ho-Fung Hung, a professor in political economy at Johns Hopkins University] said.”*

– quoted in Lily Kuo, “‘They’re chasing me’: the journalist who wouldn’t stay quiet on Covid-19,” The Guardian, March 1, 2020 (emphasis added)

**Cohering:** Cohere means to hold together, to bring together in principles, relationships or interests, to be consistent. Cohering in GGDM is about creating asabiyyah (Ibn Khaldun).

- ✓ Merriam-Webster Dictionary at *cohere*: **1a**: to hold together firmly as parts of the same mass; **2**: to hold together as a mass of parts that cohere; **3a**: to become united in

principles, relationships, or interests, **3b**: to be logically or aesthetically consistent;  
transitive verb: to cause (parts or components) to cohere.

Activation of the Culture Power for the purpose of Cohering attempts to change some inactive Constructural Elements (see, 2 Constructural Elements and 2 Disruption, generally, *supra*) to active status on Friendly, Naturalized and Converted Colonies and ships currently located in a system with a Friendly or Naturalized colony (but not Converted Colony). Social stability contract.

It is my sincere hope that GGDM coheres well.

➤ The ‘Getting on the Same Page’ Meeting: When the Culture Power is activated for the purpose of Cohering, the position must inform the Concierge which one of the three Constructural Elements (Epistemological, Ideological or Symbolic) is to be reactivated throughout the position.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the position must provide the Concierge with a range of RPs that will be spent on Cohering; 1 RP will automatically be spent per two undisrupted Government Titles held by the position, rounded up (so that five GTs will cost 3 RPs) plus a variable number of RPs will be deducted from the Treasury for successful Cohering up to the limit set by the position. The RPs must be in the Treasury at the beginning of the Regular Turn.

✓ For example, a position with four undisrupted Government Titles wishes to Cohere the Epistemological Constructural Element. The initial cost is 2 RPs for the Government Titles, and the position dedicates another 6 RPs to Cohering.

➤ Status Quo Ante: Active and inactive states of Constructural Elements are an over-simplistic game mechanic, a concession to playability, for a very complex and fluid process. See Artifice discussion, 2 Constructural Elements, p. 191, *supra*. The default choice of most populations is the *status quo*, the world they understand and know; thus, Constructural Elements should be active until something occurs that makes them inactive. One possible definition of the active state of a Constructural Element is passive acceptance of the status quo, whatever that might be in a particular situation. Would Russian-speaking colonists on Mars suddenly decide to invent a new language, new dress, and new customs overnight?

By extension, for game purposes, an active Constructural Element could be defined as the ability of the civilization (represented collectively as the position) to expect and cause a particular population group or ship to act in a way consistent with the desires of the position. An inactive state is whatever would cause that not to occur, for example, local resistance, a different view, inability or refusal to act, apathy and indifference, lack of cohesion, lack of structure, confusion, misinformation, or even bad maintenance, poor manufacturing.

➤ Money Can’t Buy You Love: Unlike in fiction, conspiracy theories, or historical hindsight, the invisible hands that shape public perception are often daft and ham-fisted, and public funds have not solved many social problems. Each inactive Constructural Element of the type chosen at a Friendly, Naturalized or Converted (but not Conquered) Colony, or on a *ship* (or System Boat) owned by the position located in a system with a *Friendly or Naturalized Colony* that has that Constructural Element currently inactive, will be checked to determine if it becomes active again; this will produce variable results throughout the position.

✓ Prior to each Cohering attempt at a colony or ship, a check will be made to see if the Cohering attempt fails due to inactive Constructural Elements (see Power Off, 2 Constructural Elements, p. 193, *supra*), i.e. the target colony or ship fails to obey the Power Activation.

- A failed Cohering Attempt due to inactive Constructural Elements is like trying to parent a teenager who doesn't hear anything you are saying, or trying to instruct someone who does not want to hear or doesn't care. Everyone has experienced the frustration of trying to get through walls; 'talk to the hand.' You just have to keep trying, especially in parenting.
  - ✓ The base chance for any inactive Constructural Element of the type chosen to change back to active is 30%;
    - 10% is added if the position has a Unitary Structural Government Title *and* no currently disrupted Government Titles,
    - 5% is subtracted if the target colony is a Naturalized Colony and 10% is subtracted if the target colony is a Converted Colony,
    - 5% is added if the position has a number of endowed Colleges equal to the number of undisrupted Government Titles, *and* there are no currently un-endowed Colleges.
    - Checks will be made in random order at each ship and colony that currently had the chosen Constructural Element *inactive* until stopped by running out of funds or when all target Constructural Elements are checked.
    - Enlightenment can be applied to Cohering attempts and applied to either check (see 2 Colleges generally, *infra*).
- Cohering Casino: The percentages offered in this game, especially as to social issues, are at best a guess, a number mainly for the purpose of creating a suitable game result. Considering interstellar culture, 20-35% seems appropriate. In wargame design, especially well-studied historical periods and battles, the effectiveness, or combat power, of a unit in battle vs. the enemy can be reduced to a qualitative analysis (see QJM and TNDM, *The Problem of Immersion*, 1 Culture, pp. 352-353, *supra*) – for example, a qualitative analysis article I read once that described why Pompeii could not have won the Civil War against Caesar. The qualitative analysis process has been fairly perfected by military professionals, but even there, there are still a lot of judgments that go into the numbers crunching. In the situations discussed in this game, we are on far less solid ground than military science. As in a war-game, players must accept that the Law of Large Numbers<sup>2</sup> will operate, and that 'luck' (i.e. outlier results) will run both ways in the short term.<sup>3</sup>

In a Unitarian government structure, it is not that other or dissenting opinions don't exist, but just that they are less likely (it seems) to be heard publically. At the bottom of this process is that there are simply too many factors that act on public opinion or perception – opinion is often shaped or driven by micro-events reported in the daily news cycle – so the game has to pick a few of the big ones to act as modifiers. The Concierge is free to *carefully* modify as suited to the situation. For example, regardless of your religious beliefs, the execution of a troublesome heretic, possibly Essene, probably Aramaic-speaking preacher in Palestine, was of relatively small importance in the Roman Empire on that day, would have occupied between 15 and 20 seconds on the evening news, and most certainly did not seem at the time to have the vastly outsized importance attributed to it by Christians and subsequent history.

- You Can't Always Get What You Want: One RP will be subtracted from the Treasury for every three ships or 100 Friendly or Naturalized population factors affected by Constructural

Elements that are activated as a result of Cohering this turn. Fractions will be rounded up at the end of the process such that one extra RP might be taken to satisfy the rounding.

Funds dedicated to Cohering cannot be used for any other purpose on the turn of Cohering, even by Power Activations that come later in the Regular Turn Action processing sequence. Funds not used will be returned to the Treasury for the next turn.

- ✓ Continuing the previous example, the position had dedicated 6 RPs to Cohering *after* paying the initial 2 RPs for Government Titles. These funds cannot be used for any other purpose during the Regular Turn. During the Cohering checks, Friendly Colonies containing 57, 60, 80, 120, and 100 population factors have their Epistemological Constructural Element reactivated, and a Carrier and two Cargo Ships have their understanding of things corrected (probably by the local *Chekist*<sup>4</sup>). Thus, 317 populations on five colonies, and three ships were Cohered, costing 5 RPs, a very good result (even at 35% unless there were a lot of inactive ECE to check)! All of the other checks failed or possibly no further checks were needed, the results in any case were random. The remaining RP is returned to the Treasury at the end of the turn processing. The checks would have also stopped if the Cohering had run out of funds.
  - The preceding example does not account for the possibility that a number of colonies or ships may have refused or failed to obey the Cohering Culture Power activation due to inactive Constructural Elements. Failed attempts cost nothing regardless of the cause.
- **Bridge Repair:** “Never let the urgent things get in the way of the important things.” – Coach Kay Yow. With all that is happening and being plotted turn by turn, some inactive Constructural Elements may seem only a minor worry. It is a problem that can sneak up on players, like a bridge that looks safe and normal on top, but has significant rust and concrete deterioration underneath. Constructural Elements will suddenly become a problem, like cracks in a bridge, when a planet that produces a quarter of the position’s RPs during Taxation fails to pay their taxes due to having three inactive Constructural Elements. Or when ships don’t move when ordered, interfering with vital defense, trade and new colonization.

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*“Americans have often fought bitterly about how large our safety net should be and about the precise forms it should take. But once the country commits to a fundamentally more generous, decent safety net, it becomes an accepted part of society. Poverty, disease and misfortune that had been accepted as normal became rejected as cruel. Once we stopped allowing 10-year-olds to work in factories and fields, we didn’t go back on it. Once we outlawed 80-hour work-weeks at miserly pay, we didn’t reinstate them. Once we made health insurance and Social Security a universal part of old age, we didn’t repeal them.”*

– David Leonhardt, “A Vote for Conscience and Courage,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 2017

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**Social Safety Net:** Liberal policies, especially those costing resources into an indeterminate future – i.e. social safety nets – are based on a perception of abundance, even an illusion of superabundance.

This perception or illusion is part of modernity in the West; in previous times when resources were scarce, conservative and even bigoted views prevailed and served as justification in those scrabbling for domestic subsistence.

Modern liberal thinking has been the process of unraveling deep-seated status quo preservation views, i.e., traditional families, nuclear families, religious views, phobias and racism that placed barriers between the haves and have-nots, judgments of a person's worth based on their hereditary economic class and personal wealth, traditional labor relations, attitudes considered heartless by progressives and sentimentalists, etc.

- ✓ “[Lane] Kenworthy argues that over the long term, U.S. welfare and social policy will become more generous as liberal policymakers expand old programs and create new ones and their conservative opponents fail to wholly undo them. Eventually, he said, he is confident that the country will offer its citizens universal health care – despite the likelihood that Republicans will retrench Obama’s reforms.” – Max Ehrenfreund, “Why the Republican plan to repeal Obamacare is so extraordinary,” *Washington Post*, January 17, 2017.
- ✓ A slightly different view: “It is a lot harder to dismantle a bad system than to put it in place. The new beneficiaries treat their newfound largesse as an eternal entitlement. Hence efforts to return to the *status quo ante* of 2010 is treated like a cruel and heartless return to the dark ages.” – Richard A. Epstein, “Memo to GOP – It’s too late for a full scale Obamacare repeal,” *The Hill* (blogs), June 28, 2017.

Now, if you are thinking along with me ... I have asserted previously that interstellar societies have potentially infinite resources available to them. It follows then, that except on local levels where resources might be scarce during certain times, overall, it is expected that the abundance of current modernity would continue and very likely, interstellar civilization would be liberal, especially as to progressive social programs and safety nets.

- ✓ See also Illusion of Superabundance and Great Chinese Famine discussion, 4 Commerce, p. 1231, *infra*.
- Liberal: In these commentaries and throughout GGDM, the terms ‘liberal’ and ‘liberalism’ are of the meaning in the United States during my lifetime, the general understanding of such held by normal people; but liberal doesn’t mean the same in all places and times:
  - ✓ “However, the term ‘liberal’ does not have the same political connotation in all English speaking countries. In Australia it has the opposite connotation to that which it enjoys in the US. While social liberalism is generally associated with the Labor Party, the Liberal Party is a conservative party whose name is based on their objective to liberalise the market economy within Australia. In the UK, the Liberal Democrats occupy the political centre between the rightist Conservative and the leftist Labour parties, though the term ‘metropolitan elite’ is frequently used in reference to Labour politicians too.” – from Wikipedia article, “Liberal Elite,” captured September 23, 2018.

I personally have no sense of what ‘liberalism’ means in other places now, but I learned when I was young that certain hand gestures that are harmless in the United States (like the OK signal) are taken as insulting in other countries or even in other places within the same country (e.g., Winston Churchill’s V signal in *Darkest Hour* (2017)). Politics is probably like

that too; in England, I would automatically be considered a “Republican” (i.e. those in favor of abolishing the monarchy) – an even dirtier term there than here currently (but I would be historically excused there because I am an American).

**The Bargain:** Progress necessarily implies movement or change toward a goal, ideal, or defined/known or anticipated end point. Without an end point, even if it is only in the mind of the observer, it is just movement without purpose (that is, *non-teleological movement*). Progress can be good or bad, but curiously, is rarely neutral because it is relative to the observer; for example, the progression of a cancer is almost never considered positive, but one could construct a situation where it is positive to someone, for example, the impatient heirs or the undertaker.

Social progress implies that the population, or a significant part of the population believes their society (or more broadly, civilization) is not perfect, and that they expect society – politically and culturally – to move toward some *ideal future*. Thus a utopian society must believe that no further social progress is necessary or possible, and that any change would destroy the perfect society. See *The Devil’s Argument*, 1 Entropy, p. 216, *supra*.

The concepts of progress in a civilization are linked very strongly to *ideology*, which one might define as a set of ideas on what constitutes progress – it would be difficult to imagine otherwise.

- ✓ “[Sen. Bernie] Sanders, [Pete Buttigieg] said, would prioritize ideological purity and pie-in-the-sky policy proposals, while doing nothing to remedy the country’s political divisions.” – Reid Wilson and Max Greenwood, “Buttigieg sounds alarm after Sanders wins Nevada,” *The Hill*, February 23, 2020.
- ✓ Empirical science and technology are almost *inseparable* from modern concepts of progress (and core to modernity), thus another 2020 Democratic candidate is running TV adverts promising to “end the war on science” by the incumbent administration.<sup>5</sup>

There is never agreement on what exactly constitutes social progress; the devil is always in the details, as they say. In the current Western political spectrum (in the U.S. at least), liberals are usually most associated with social progress and grand futures and ideals. Conservatives are not anti-progress, as is sometimes claimed (those few who actually are, are called reactionaries or regressives), but they disagree on what constitutes progress and on the pace of change.

- ✓ “This suggests opposition to humanities degrees is based more on prejudice than on actual job prospects. And it’s also often linked to politics, according to [Matt] Gabriele [at Virginia Tech]. The right-wing media has spent decades demonizing university professors and students; some conservatives seem to fear humanity professors in particular will indoctrinate students or intimidate budding conservatives.” – Noah Berlatsky, “Are millennials really to blame for the decline in the liberal arts?” *NBC Think*, October 10, 2018.
- ✓ “The tragedy is that society ...keeps drumming the genius part out. The problem is that our culture has engaged in a Faustian bargain, in which we trade our genius and artistry for apparent stability.” – Seth Godin.

Everyone thinks there is something that could be positively changed, bettered, or improved about their own lives and about the society or milieu in which they live, everyone wishes something was different or had not happened. Progress happens whether we want it or not; for example, we get older whether we want to or not.<sup>6</sup> Since death is the known end point of living, aging is con-

sidered progress (that is, the phrase “age progression” is not nonsensical in our language). Progress exists simply because we are sapient. All living things die, not all living things are sapient; if there is no understanding of the relationship between living, the passage of time, and death, or even what is death, then aging is just change, the passage of time, without ‘progress.’

Progress is therefore the default state of sapience. But the direction of progress is dictated by what a society considers important; for example, in a cleric-ruled civilization, progress might be defined by creation of a religious state, religious control of critical institutions and the economy, and individual adherence to the ideals, rituals and doctrinal purity of the religion. For example, the South China Morning Post ran an article titled, “Indonesian TV censorship: cartoons cut, athletes blurred as conservative Islam asserts itself and broadcasters fear sanctions,” on December 31, 2017. The title says it all very clearly, what is happening there, the article that followed is just details. The current Western civilization is based on legitimate secular authority but the goals and ideals against which we define social progress arise from our religious past.

Current Western civilization rests on a bargain, it might be called The Bargain, between liberal drift and oligarchic drift. Every civilization has bargains, and they are usually multisided, interlocking multiple bargains. In the West, The Bargain is that oligarchic drift is tolerated and considered somewhat beneficial as long as a liberal drift counters it – that is, if the social safety net is maintained and expanded and the appearance of social progress continues,<sup>7</sup> and the government and courts operate to curb the biggest abuses of both, then business and personal wealth accumulation will be tolerated, encouraged and allowed<sup>8</sup> to influence and dominate the systems.

- ✓ “Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. The results provide substantial support for theories of Economic-Elite Domination and for theories of Biased Pluralism, but not for theories of Majoritarian Electoral Democracy or Majoritarian Pluralism.” – Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, abstract of “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” Princeton University, pub. September 18, 2014.
- ✓ “The theory of ‘biased pluralism’ that the Princeton and Northwestern researchers believe the U.S. system fits holds that policy outcomes ‘tend to tilt towards the wishes of corporations and business and professional associations.’” – Zachary Davies Boren, “Major Study Finds The U.S. Is An Oligarchy,” Business Insider, April 16, 2014.

Each nation has a tolerance balance; when the oligarchic drift goes too far, a more socially progressive government is empowered, when it is thought that liberal and progressive forces (most recently, “liberal globalization” is the conservative term of derision) are ascendant, *sometimes* the conservative oligarchic drift takes power. But the Bargain cannot be violated.

- ✓ “First, I do think we have to remember ... how many people were lifted out of poverty around the world. I think that the reason that we have seen a rise in populist nationalism and a backlash against globalization is because of the way that it was ... mismanaged in terms of its impact on certain community. I mean, Brexit, for example, is an example of the backlash. And that is because what ... a lot of policymakers forgot is that right around them in their own backyard ... there was an impact that was not being addressed. That is, I think one of the mistakes. ... the other is, you have to go



back to the financial crisis and the extent of the financial crisis. Often, when you have big shocks ... not all the ramifications are felt right away. Some of it comes with a delayed reaction. And I think ... the new sort of sentiment of being anti-E.U., anti-globalization has to do with the fact that inequality has widened in the last decades, and nothing was done about it. We were just moving ahead and thinking about the stock market. ... it's a wakeup call. It's a wakeup call to say, OK, what has gone wrong? How do we reset capitalism? What should be the policies that are more distributive, without losing sight of the benefits of globalization? ...we are ... advocates of free trade and free markets, because we think that that is where the economic benefit is for everyone. But we also have to take into account the pitfalls ... where it needs to be reset and reformed.” – Roula Khalaf, Editor of the Financial Times, Amanpour & Company, PBS, June 8, 2020 (from CNN rushed transcript).

Within GGDM, the tension is this: I have argued regarding the relationship of abundance, modernity and liberalism; I have argued here about a balance tension between oligarchic drift and the perception of social progress. I have also argued elsewhere about the probable great expense of starships, the necessity of starships to hold together an interstellar civilization, and the potential for tyranny and exploitation, and even coup and rebellion by those who crew the starships; the tension between the vast ground populations and the ‘starship elite’ minority who holds the power above and beyond.

- ✓ “The proliferation of billionaire and super-rich political candidates is partially a function of the collapse of the campaign finance legal regime enacted after Watergate. As political parties seek candidates with deep pockets, rising wealth inequality is leaving the super-rich with even more excess wealth, and much of American political culture continues to assume that, due to their success, billionaires are uniquely qualified to solve complicated domestic and international problems.” – Paul Blumenthal, “Bloomberg’s Presidential Bid Comes Amid A Golden Age For Super-Rich Politicians,” Huff Post, November 30, 2019. (Hint: The Roman Republic had the same problem.)
- Secular Revolution: The secular revolution in religious philosophy is that any religious leader or speaker can be stripped of mystical trappings and treated, examined, and criticized as any other philosopher (e.g., Jesus Christ). This tends to infuriate fundamentalist believers. Consider the following disclaimer by Avi Sion:
  - ✓ “Needless to say, the following comments are not an attack on Buddhism, but an attack on the rhetoric of Nagarjuna. Buddhism is not well served by such games. I think of Nagarjuna whenever I read v. 306 of the *Dhammapada*, ‘He who says what is not... and he who says he has not done what he knows well he has done... sinned against the truth.’ For me, he is just a philosopher like any other; his interest in Buddhism is incidental (as is his saintly status in the eyes of many).” – Avi Sion, Paradoxes and Their Resolutions: A Thematic Compilation, FN 99, p. 208.
- Cultural War: Politics can be defined as proxy for culture war. There is ample evidence in our time that many believe this to be true, both in our country and over much of the world; everything is a culture war and one side or both are itching to fight, looking for the right ‘events’ (even if contrived) to push their narrative. The more extreme a group’s political views, whether right-wing fall-off-the-cliff whackos, or left-wingnut looneys, the more likely it is that they believe they are involved in a culture war, which politics is one component.<sup>9</sup>

- ✓ “There is an ominous dark cloud of self-seriousness, legalism, and binary thinking that threatens to suck the Gospel life and joy out of nearly everything. The culture wars, worship wars, confessional and missional wars have made religious life about as morose as a 15-stanza hymn sung too slowly.” – Rev. Craig Donofrio and Rev. Bill Cwirla (“The Manly Doctors of Divinity”), from godwhisperers.org

This entire process, taken as a whole, is what is called in law an *adversarial system*, a truth-finding process where truth is discovered by both sides presenting their best (and opposing) cases. In this view, the actions of politicians are always seen as *playing to their base*, some do it with nuance and subterfuge, others are more ham-handed.<sup>10</sup> In GGDM, this adversarial process will play out on an interplanetary and interstellar scale between conflicting Conflict Checks in Government Titles, competing Power Activations priorities, and later among the spheres of different technologically-advanced species. This is the stuff of space-opera trope and nascent interstellar culture.

- ✓ There is a difference between being a partisan and an ideologue: The former requires loyalty to a party, to a fault; while the latter requires loyalty to an idea, to a fault.
- Losing Coherence: There are plenty of tools in GGDM for participants to introduce local cultural drift and political fragmentation (see Human Drift-course discussion, 3 Entropy, p. 246, *supra*). As a historical example, consider the cultural, religious and political fragmentation of the Mongol Empire in a century, aided by rivalries between the hordes, the devastation of the Black Death, and contact with Islam and Christianity. The rivalries between Mongol groups became religious wars between Hordes that had adopted different religions.

If participants wanted to introduce a society to the game that does not, for example, have oligarchic drift, they would have to look outside of our time and outside of Western Civilization for inspiration. Perhaps the Northwest Native American *potlatch ritual* might be construed as an anti-oligarchic cultural practice; where prestige gained from the potlatch has religious and cultural significance greater than what was given away in material wealth.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever direction the participants decide their society or the game might take, should be considered in terms of belief systems, for everything we do is backed by our beliefs and meanings. If you wanted to develop a non-oligarchic society, what would be required? In some ways, modern philanthropy by billionaires somewhat counters the perception of wealth accumulation for its own sake detached from social progress. If a non-oligarchic society did exist in the game, what other changes would exist, would it curtail liberal social progress?

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*“Phillips’ argument is that it takes time for a newly dominant state to use all its resources efficiently, which he defines as ‘..high output or return per unit investment’ (1979: 140). Efficiency ... though, leads to inflexibility in resource allocation. The mechanism is this: a newly dominant state controls a large territorial base, but has not yet developed (or come to depend on) complex institutions that will derive a significant return for this resource base. In such situations, a large proportion of the new resources will always be used in non-critical or low return ways.... But through time social and political institutions emerge that use this resource base more fully (in Phillips’ terminology, ‘efficiently’). Eventually, most resources are allocated to support of ‘efficient’ institutions ... leaving no reserves or flexibility in resource allocation.”*

– Joseph Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (1988), p. 55

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**Conquest by Entitlements:** Though formulated to describe the process of Mesoamerican culture, this description applies to the history of the United States. The closing of the Western Frontier in 1896 was no small matter; thereafter the ability of the United States, absent an imperialist policy (e.g., The American Empire of 1898-1945), to make up deficits by expansion, was limited to the space and resources within the borders of the United States and what could be imported, which is where the globalization became important concerns.

- ✓ *Entitlements* in the United States and other Western countries have *locked down resources today and into an infinite future*, hampering reserves and flexibility.

The entitlements problem is the modern version of a classic quandry, except that in the modern nuclear-armed, globally enmeshed world, overt military conquest is a deprecated option:

- ✓ “When population in the Preclassic became sufficiently dense that productivity fluctuations were a matter of serious concern, the solution to each local group so affected must have been obvious: raid neighboring groups to make up a deficit. Since the only alternative over the short-term was famine, the development of warfare ... was entirely expectable. Long-term solutions included agricultural intensification and the establishment of a hierarchically managed economy. These were not permanent solutions, however, for the archaeologically-evident pattern of population growth indicates that, with each establishment of a higher-capacity production system, population simply rose further. The military option must have been perpetually tempting.” – Joseph Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (1988), p. 171.<sup>12</sup>

By this analysis, the United States and Western civilization has reached a kind of maturity that suggests collapse may occur, unless outside resources are obtained, by which is meant, possibly from space. Entitlements and infrastructure problems may be the best and deepest sounding argument for space exploration and exploitation, to wit:

- ✓ “However, Tainter is not entirely apocalyptic: ‘When some new input to an economic system is brought on line, whether a technical innovation or an energy subsidy, it will often have the potential at least temporarily to raise marginal productivity’ (p. 124). Thus, barring continual conquest of your neighbors (which is always subject to diminishing returns), innovation that increases productivity is – in the long run – the only way out of the dilemma of declining marginal returns on added investments in complexity. And, in his final chapters, Tainter discusses why modern societies may not be able to choose to collapse: because surrounding them are other complex societies which will in some way absorb a collapsed region or prevent a general collapse; the Mayan and Chacoan regions had no powerful complex neighbors and so could collapse for centuries or millennia, as could the Western Roman Empire – but the Eastern Roman Empire, bordered as it was by the Parthian/Sassanid Empire, did not have the option of devolving into simpler smaller entities.” – from Wikipedia article, “Joseph Tainter,” captured November 22, 2018, quoting *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (1988).

I did not expect this discussion to become one supporting space exploitation, I surprised myself with the intellectual turn of the argument. But it makes sense in the context of the resource- and diminishing-returns arguments leading to the collapse of classical civilizations; the next frontier – the only resource and living space available, is out there. Return to the top and read it again. ☺

*“Much of the news coverage attempted to explain why anyone would have been tempted by Singer’s scheme. A common attribute among the defendants was that many were rich, but not ultra-rich. According to The New York Times, college admissions at certain elite American universities had become so selective that a family would have to make a minimum donation of \$10 million to inspire an admission committee to take a second look at their child. And even for families of such means, there would be no guarantee of return on investment, while Singer was selling certainty. ... The Los Angeles Times explained that there was probably also a social signaling element at work, in that admission to an elite university based purely upon an applicant’s apparent merit publicly validates both the child’s innate talent and the parents’ own parenting skills in a way that an admission coinciding with a sizable donation does not.”*

– from Wikipedia article, “2019 college admissions bribery scandal,” captured July 2, 2019  
 13[Full Quote]

## Endnotes.

<sup>1</sup> Commentary: In a case I worked on, corporate counsel sent an email to an employee who was the subject of a subpoena from the state attorney general to appear and testify; in the email the employer’s attorney wanted to have a “getting on the same page meeting,” meaning he wanted to insure the employee didn’t tell the whole truth (i.e. suborn perjury) during testimony before the state attorney general on the loss of taxpayer funds in investments.

<sup>2</sup> Citation: Investopedia at *Law of Large Numbers*: “The law of large numbers, in probability and statistics, states that as a sample size grows, its mean gets closer to the average of the whole population.... In statistical analysis, the law of large numbers can be applied to a variety of subjects. It may not be feasible to poll every individual within a given population to collect the required amount of data, but every additional data point gathered has the potential to increase the likelihood that the outcome is a true measure of the mean.... If a person wanted to determine the average value of a data set of 100 possible values, he is more likely to reach an accurate average by choosing 20 data points instead of relying on just two. For example, if the data set included all integers from 1 to 100, and sample taker only drew two values, such as 95 and 40, he may determine the average to be approximately 67.5. If he continued to take random samplings up to 20 variables, the average should shift towards the true average as he considers more data points.”

- ✓ “The LLN [Law of Large Numbers] is important because it guarantees stable long-term results for the averages of some random events. For example, while a casino may lose money in a single spin of the roulette wheel, its earnings will tend towards a predictable percentage over a large number of spins. Any winning streak by a player will eventually be overcome by the parameters of the game. It is important to remember that the law only applies (as the name indicates) when a large number of observations is considered.” – from Wikipedia article, “Law of Large Numbers,” October 6, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary: The choices that designers make. In the card game *Race for the Galaxy* (2008), it is possible sometimes to conquer/colonize two planets in a turn, but it’s never possible to put down two developments in a turn (thus, when you fall behind in a developments race, you will likely never catch up). This was, of course, a choice by the designer that speaks to the perception that even with advanced technology, it is faster and easier as a process to gain planets than to advance social developments. Likewise, in *Race for the Galaxy* there is no individual ability to choose to both develop an ability and conquer/colonize a planet in the same turn – you can do one or the other and hope that someone else plays the other phase – this might have been an interesting use of prestige points, but it clearly was rejected by the designer. If there is a great designer of this universe, our problems are the design choices that were made; one must wonder at the alternatives.

<sup>4</sup> Citation: “‘We will resist to the end,’ the KGB colonel said. ‘We’ll show them how Soviet soldiers can fight!’ ‘I admire your spirit, Comrade Colonel.’ He walked over to the corner and picked up a rifle. ‘Here, you may take this to the front yourself.’ ‘But—’ ‘Lieutenant Gasporenko, get the colonel a driver. He’s going to the front to show the Americans how Soviet soldiers fight.’ [Gen.] Andreyev watched with dark amusement. The *chekist* could not back down.” – Tom Clancy, *Red Storm Rising* (1983).

<sup>5</sup> Citation: “But while Ms. Thunberg is merely hammering home the science – that 97 per cent of peer-reviewed climate studies agree with the scientific consensus that manmade global warming is real – Ms. Seibt appears to have

more interest in ideology. Alongside her interest in climate denial, she has voiced concerns about immigration and feminism, and has previously spoken at events run by Germany’s far-right AfD (Alternative for Germany) party. She has denied being a member of the far-right group, but previous reports suggest she is or has been a member of the party’s youth wing.” – Harry Cockburn, “Anti-Greta: Far-right groups trying to turn teenager into climate change-denying version of Greta Thunberg,” *The Independent*, February 25, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Commentary: Sometime after 2000, or maybe around 2010 at the grocery store I witnessed a 30<sup>ish</sup> female leading a much older male through the store; she was teaching him how to shop for groceries. I got the impression somehow that he had just got out of jail, probably had served a long time. Think about it, if a person went to jail in the late 1970s or in the 1980s and served 30+ years, how different the world was when they were released?

<sup>7</sup> Commentary & Citation: I once read that Chief Justice Earl Warren did not do what President Eisenhower wanted. Conservatives in the United States have consistently sought to pack the court with conservative and pro-business justices as a long term ‘cure’ to what they perceive as a tide of liberalism. But “the only thing new in the world is the history you do not know” (Pres. Harry Truman) and the close of the latest Supreme Court term with two newly-appointed conservative Justices points to some moderation of the new conservative bloc, much to the dismay of the current President’s backers, e.g., Jacqueline Thomsen, “Conservative justices surprise court watchers with swing votes,” *The Hill*, July 2, 2019. And the Constitution, Article 3, grants U.S. judges ‘life terms,’ specifically:

- ✓ “‘Article III federal judges’ ... serve ‘during good behavior’ (often paraphrased as appointed ‘for life’). Judges hold their seats until they resign, die, or are removed from office.” – from Wikipedia article, “United States federal judge.”

This protects them from being removed for political reasons (you can bet President Trump would try to fire them)...

<sup>8</sup> Commentary: There are some arguments that can be offered in favor of individual wealth accumulation. For example, promotion of the arts, available money for business investments, incentive to individual innovators and inventors, management and job creation, and so forth. Because accumulation of wealth in the West has not been any difficulty for the last few centuries, these are often *weaker* arguments compared to the arguments in favor of curbing individual wealth accumulation. But they are sufficient, in combination with a general sense of wellbeing in the population (and wealth sharing through taxation), to prevent a full scale revolt against the wealthy elites.

<sup>9</sup> Commentary: Religion, advertising, publishing, college campuses, public school curricula and textbooks, television programing, criminal law, internet and twitter trolling are among the others.

<sup>10</sup> Citation: “There are three criteria for every decision we make: It has to be moral, ethical and legal. Ethical, you have to follow the rules, legal you have to follow the law, and moral you have to follow what you know to be right. And either way, that’s just not right. You’re not going to use ... whether it’s the military, the National Guard, or the police forces to clear peaceful American citizens for the President of the United States to do a photo-op. There is nothing morally right about that.” – Adm. William McCraven (Ret.), *Morning Joe*, MSNBC, June 5, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Commentary & Citation: However, even ‘Big Man’ systems can lead to poor or strange consequences, to wit:

- ✓ “The indigenous societies of Melanesia were typically characterized by a ‘big man’ political system in which individuals gained prestige through gift exchanges. The more wealth a man could distribute, the more people in his debt, and the greater his renown. Those who were unable to reciprocate were identified as ‘rubbish men.’ Faced, through colonialism, with foreigners with a seemingly unending supply of goods for exchange, indigenous Melanesians experienced ‘value dominance.’ That is, they were dominated by others in terms of their own (not the foreign) value system; exchange with foreigners left them feeling like rubbish men.” – from Wikipedia article, “Cargo Cult,” citing to Theodore Schwartz (1976).
- ✓ In any foreign contact, colonial setting – such as possibly any situation in GGDM – the value system of a ‘non-oligarchic society’ can be overwhelmed or corrupted by foreign cargo, contact and exploitation. Traveller RPG had the concept of ‘novelty technological items,’ which were usually high tech items on lower tech or indigenous worlds that were left behind or were bought and imported at great expense, which could not be duplicated locally, and whose technology was not fully understood. Consider for example, a solar-powered charger and flashlight on Endor; among the Ewoks it would be a religious artifact upon which they might build a cult concept of light and enlightenment. Traveller didn’t do well at explaining or exploiting this, but it was there for players who understood. The other danger of non-oligarchic, big man systems is the possible confusion of wealth, indebtedness, with social good and leadership: Does the son of the ‘big man’ get to rape the daughter of the ‘rubbish man’ because of the indebtedness of wealth distribution? I have often wondered if something like this might have played in the rape of Lucretia.
  - ‘Rubbish man reaction’ may also adequately describe how one feels when a non-parental, and even non-related other (especially another who is much wealthier) gives them expensive gifts or is

constantly buying for them (with the implication of such being unearned, i.e., not employment bonuses and expected to be unrequited). I am not sure if this has ever been identified in psychology, but it is a useful tag for the concept. It is also an internal fight between the appearance of social graciousness in accepting, not embarrassing the gift-giver or causing personal conflict, and feeling terrible, inferior inside for doing so and impossibly indebted to the other.

<sup>12</sup> **Citation:** See 2 Government Titles, EN 9, p. 604, *infra*, for full quote.

<sup>13</sup> **Citation:** “Much of the news coverage attempted to explain why anyone would have been tempted by Singer’s scheme. A common attribute among the defendants was that many were rich, but not ultra-rich. According to The New York Times, college admissions at certain elite American universities had become so selective that a family would have to make a minimum donation of \$10 million to inspire an admission committee to take a second look at their child. And even for families of such means, there would be no guarantee of return on investment, while Singer was selling certainty. ... The Los Angeles Times explained that there was probably also a social signaling element at work, in that admission to an elite university based on ... apparent merit publicly validates both the child’s innate talent and the parents’ own parenting skills in a way that an admission coinciding with a sizable donation does not. In turn, others examined why certain universities had become so selective in the first place. The Atlantic pointed out that college seats are not scarce in the United States, except at a handful of universities which became selective on purpose: ‘Scarcity has the added benefit of increasing an institution’s prestige. The more students who apply, and the fewer students who get in, the more selective an institution becomes, and, subsequently, the more prestigious. And parents are clawing over one another to get a taste of the social capital that comes with that.’ Arizona State University (ASU) president Michael M. Crow described the ‘crisis of access to these social-status-granting institutions’ as a full-blown ‘hysteria.’ It was alleged in court filings that one of the defendant parents had named ASU as a university they were specifically trying to avoid; the non-selective university has been the ‘butt of jokes’ in American television shows for many years, as well as the 2015 film *Ted 2*. The inevitable result, according to Newsweek, was that the most elite institutions had created a situation in which purely meritocratic admissions had become impossible because they were already turning away too many overqualified candidates – former Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust had once said, ‘we could fill our class twice over with valedictorians.’

HuffPost explained that such anxiety barely exists in Canada, whose four-year universities do not show such extreme disparities in selectivity and prestige, and in turn, most Canadian employers do not rigidly discriminate between job candidates based upon where they graduated. In contrast, selective American universities have evolved into gatekeepers for the highest echelons of certain socially prestigious and financially lucrative industries like law and finance. University of Oklahoma history professor Wilfred M. McClay told Newsweek: ‘I’m not going to pretend there isn’t a difference between Harvard and Suffolk County Community College, but I think this situation where the Supreme Court is made up entirely of Harvard or Yale Law School graduates is wrong. The thing driving the current scandal seems to be that ultimately parents were willing to do anything to game the system to get their kids these advantages, not because the education was better but because the legitimation of social position would be better.’” – from Wikipedia article, “2019 college admissions bribery scandal,” captured July 2, 2019.

- ✓ “[Sciences Po] was founded in 1872 to promote a new class of French politicians in the aftermath of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, and has since educated, among others, 32 heads of state or government, 7 of the past 8 French Presidents, 3 past heads of the International Monetary Fund, heads of international organizations (including the UN, UNESCO, WTO, IMF, EP and ECB), and 6 of sitting CAC 40 CEOs. The school is also the alma mater of numerous intellectual and cultural figures, such as Marcel Proust, René Rémond, Paul Claudel, and Raymond Aron. ...

Due to its prominent alumni, its selectivity and its alumni’s high profile, Sciences Po is broadly perceived as an elite institution. However, it has been criticized, along with the *École nationale d’administration*, for creating in France an oligarchy that is out of touch with reality, ‘...blinkered, arrogant and frequently incompetent people.’ ...

The institution is partly state-funded, and some, especially institutes of political studies in the provinces, have accused it of receiving a disproportionate share of public money. ... Critics have accused Sciences Po of prioritizing access to professional networks over education and expertise. ... Sciences Po has also been accused of being unduly helped by the media. ‘Almost every French newspaper is run by an alumnus of Sciences Po,’ and most of the journalists in France are alumni from Sciences Po, so it would give the school ‘an unparalleled media coverage’ and permit it to ‘cultivate a culture of secrecy’ about its internal affairs. ... The journalist Ariane Chemin stated in 2013 that, because so many journalists come from Sciences Po, the school has an undue good public reputation.” – from Wikipedia article, “Sciences Po,” captured July 2, 2019.