

Dreaming of a Flat Earth – Disease and Insurrection in a Disconnected Age

The Political Sphere of the 21st Century

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Abstract: Since the turn of the Millennium, it has become increasingly difficult to understand the socio-political landscape using the traditional models. Although this is a global phenomenon, it is particularly evident in the United States, which is where we will focus the majority of this article. The current era is dominated by a series of overlapping phenomena, rooted in a series of what we term “disconnections,” that bring into view a new “spherical” political reality. These disconnections describe situations where the empirical, or observable, world differs from the actual, but often hidden, reality. Deriving from these disconnections, the traditional “flat” understanding of political structures, focused on “traditional” axes of Liberal to Conservative and Libertarian to Authoritarian, ignores an important third dimension that we will examine. This third axis relates to issues of rural / nationalist / science-skeptical versus urban / globalist / science-positive. This article explores how this third axis informs, and is informed, by the three most significant issues facing the world at this moment: climate change, COVID-19, and the attempted coup of January 2021.

Keywords: Politics, Social Science, Identity, Religion, Urbanism, Globalism, Nationalism, Skepticism

Introduction

The earth is flat.

This is what my eyes tell me. I stand in the middle of Kansas and look to the horizon, and I see no indication of the curvature of the world.

The sky is a dome.

This is also what my eyes tell me. I look up and the sky seems to be a gigantic dish, from which hang the stars and the clouds.

It is only when I go to the open ocean that I have a hint of the curvature of the earth.

Even then, the earth cannot be perceived as round, only as curving at the horizon.

These are the things that I see. I know that they are not true, they are only my perception, and the earth is spherical. However, experientially, I have no way to prove this. Even going up in an airplane does not give sufficient elevation to actually see the world spherically.

Therefore, I must discount the information that my senses give me, and trust that something that I have no way to empirically prove is the actual reality.

Theoretical Framework

In a very real sense, in many situations, humanity must often cope with life as a schizophrenic, and at those times, accepting that what we see is not real, and that truth comes

from what we are told, not what we experience. (There are a surprising number of people even today who do not accept that the earth is round. Look up the Flat Earth Society to see what we mean.¹ Even though they don't believe in a round earth, they do believe in the World Wide Web. The main point behind their argument is "well, my personal experience tells me it's flat, therefore it must be.")

It is this disconnect between the experiential narrative and the actual nature of reality that is at the core of why so many people, especially in the United States, fail to accept facts and prefer to live in a parallel reality summed up by Karl Rove's statement: "when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out."² These attitudes that the Second Bush Administration represented stem from a mix of Protestantism (that there is no intermediary between humans and God), Biblical Literalism (that the Bible should be read exactly as written, without interpretation), and the Scottish Enlightenment. (The emphasis on the empirical and practical)³

The reason that we single out the United States in this statement is that, more than most societies, Americans tend to have particular form of skepticism, one that tends to value the anecdotal lived experience and personal emotional impetus above expert opinion and rational logic. This likely stems from the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, such as Locke and Hume, on the founding fathers. This influence later spread through the "humanistic Calvinism" promoted by a number of colleges, and also by the number of Scottish teachers in these colleges and universities.⁴

This national tendency to skepticism is captured by the "Show Me" state slogan of Missouri. This skepticism can be traced back to early Protestantism, and the idea that the understanding of God is derived from personal study of the Bible, rather than the mediated word of a priest. In the world of Calvinism, the medium is no longer the message.

To return to the American tendency to skepticism, in some, and possibly many cases, this is not a bad thing; we are by no means condemning this attitude with broad strokes. At this current time, however, this American tendency towards skepticism is aggravating the country's problems. It is this tendency to discount the statistical and factual in favor of personal opinion that has brought the country to its current situation with COVID, tribalism, and insurrection. As a modern society, we are disconnected: disconnected from the land, disconnected from the metaphors we use to describe the world around us, disconnected from each other and ultimately disconnected from actual reality.

This observation about being disconnected from each other is jarring to many people, as on the surface we live in the information age, ostensibly the most connected that humanity has ever been. We are connected to social media, connected to instant messages, connected to email, and connected to the World Wide Web. Despite all these surface level connections we are not connected in any significant way. We "flame" people in chat rooms, flip them off on the freeway, and scream at them on the TV screen. None of these are things we would do if we were actually "connected" to them. (Unless we were sociopaths, which raises some other disturbing possibilities...) While these disconnections can describe many societies, there are particular permutations in the United States that amplify this problem.

1 Pete Svarrior, Tom Bishop, and Xasop, "The Flat Earth Society," The Flat Earth Society, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://www.tfes.org/>

2 Mark Danner, "Words in a Time of War: On Rhetoric, Truth and Power," Mark Danner, accessed January 15, 2021, <http://www.markdanner.com/articles/words-in-a-time-of-war-on-rhetoric-truth-and-power>

3 Douglas Kellner. "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the "War on Terror"." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37 (4) (2007): 622-45. Accessed March 7, 2021. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1111/j.1741-5705.2007.02617.x>

4 Daniel N. Robinson, "The Scottish Enlightenment and the American Founding," *Monist* 90 (2) (2007): <https://doi.org/doi:10.5840/monist200790211>

In America, we frequently do not know our neighbors; we rarely step outside of our social comfort zone. We typically live in tract homes, with the garage in the front, and in those homes, we have an automatic garage door opener that allows us to pull into the garage without ever getting out of the car. We have neighbors that we have never seen in the entire time we have lived in our houses. (We know that someone lives there, because somehow the grass is cut, and the mail is taken in, but that is the only way. We couldn't point out many of them in a lineup.)

This disconnection from our neighbors, coupled with the increase of substituting social media for social contact, which has dramatically increased in the Covid Era, has restricted our social circles. Because we don't often talk to people outside of a tight group, we lose access to competing opinions. All sides of any debate can easily "other" their opponents because we have few connections to them. Our information has become increasingly siloed, with many (and possibly most) Americans existing in echo chambers that only amplify their own preconceptions (or the preconceptions they have been fed).⁵ When alternative viewpoints are presented, they are done so in a manner designed to ridicule or discount the validity of not only the idea, but especially of the person presenting it. Increasingly, they even question the very humanity of the person holding the opposing view.

Ultimately, this reinforces the skeptical attitudes of Americans. As a society based on empirical evidence, the lack of exposure to competing worldviews flattens our cultural experiences, which makes us more skeptical in two ways. First, we rarely have our beliefs challenged, nor do we have occasion to directly debate the opposing viewpoints, causing us to be able to discount the validity of those points of view. Second, because we tend to exist in very isolated circles, our empirical rationale is that "everyone" agrees with us. For example, for a person who only knows a handful of people who voted for the opposing side in an election, it becomes easy to imagine there is little actual support for that contrary point of view.

Disconnected from Actual Reality

People disconnect from actual reality. We use this term (with apologies to Jonathan Larson) to describe the disconnect between what they call "reality" and the actual reality that they do not seem to be able to acknowledge. For example, more people die every month from traffic accidents than from terrorism, but which one frightens people more?⁶ Which one are they willing to throw aside all traditional liberties to prevent? People should rationally fear the traffic accident most, but instead put far more fear into an act that has roughly the same likelihood of killing them as a lightning bolt.

The first disconnect from reality that plagues Americans (and people in many parts of the "Developed World") is that they are disconnected from their own mortality. In general, humans do not assess risk accurately, and this makes us fearful of the extraordinary, while complacent about the ordinary.⁷ People tend to overestimate the dangers that are sudden and strike without (much) warning. They frequently underestimate dangers that are either mundane, like traffic, or slow moving, like a changing climate. Adding to that is the fact that they tend to underestimate a danger that is far off on the horizon.

The second disconnect from reality is that many people tend to think that somehow, though some sort of Deus-ex-Machina, something will save them. Again, as with the first disconnect,

⁵ Dominic Spohr, "Fake News and Ideological Polarization," *Business Information Review* 34 (3) (2017): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1177/0266382117722446>

⁶ Agata Sobkow, Jakub Traczyk, and Tomasz Zaleskiewicz, "The Affective Bases of Risk Perception: Negative Feelings and Stress Mediate the Relationship between Mental Imagery and Risk Perception," *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): <https://doi.org/doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00932>

⁷ *Ibid*

this is not only an issue facing the United States, but as this article is focused on the United States, we will address this in terms of the particularly American aspect of this disconnection.

An interesting aspect of this Deus-ex-Machina thinking is that this further divides into groups that are also disconnected from each other. To one segment of the population, technology can save them. They like to think that no matter what they do, technology will come up with some sort of solution to any problem they have. The official term for this is “TechnoUtopianism” and is increasingly becoming a part of many aspects of life, especially in Climate Change.⁸ It can also be observed in the veneration of Elon Musk.

To another group, it is a literal Deus that will be the Savior, and God will prevent any real harm from coming, at least to those who hold the faith. For this group, failure is often equated with a lack of faith.⁹ Then there is a third group, sometimes but not always, overlapping with the second, that considers technology itself to be the problem, and that a return to a more “primitive,” natural state will be the salvation.

This is not to say that humanity won’t find solutions to its problems through technology, but generally when people apply a technological solution to a problem, it often creates new difficulties. This expands exponentially when they apply that sort of answer to a breakdown in a complex system. (For an example of this, look at the importation of the cane toad to Australia, to control the cane beetle. The toad went feral and is decimating the native fauna. Now they are trying to find a biological control, but everything they have tried also wipes out native frogs.)¹⁰

Still, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the pro-technology group still believes that they can always engineer their way out of a problem, and they don’t have to make any sacrifices, or change their behavior to solve a problem. They think humanity can keep doing the same thing over and over and still expect different results. (Which, according to Einstein, is a definition of “insanity.”)¹¹

On the side of religion, there are groups of people for whom the statement “God will provide” is the only answer that they need. For this group, a loving God will protect them, while the stern aspect of the same Deity will provide punishment for those who deserve it. In this worldview, everything functions to a Divine Plan, is subject to Divine Providence, and that in the end, problems are a part of that system and will resolve in their own ineffable and inscrutable time.¹²

The final group in this trio is possibly the most important to today’s politics, as to them, modernity, progress, and civilization itself is the problem. This viewpoint leads to the idea summed up by the quote from Derrick Jensen: “Every morning when I awake, I ask myself whether I should write or blow up a dam. I tell myself I should keep writing, though I’m not sure that’s right.” This position can also be seen in the “primitive technology” videos by John Plant on YouTube, and this quote from Art Markman about why his videos are so popular: “There is a lack of faith in government institutions and when you distrust institutions you may

8 Alexander Ruser and Amanda Machin, "Technology Can Save Us, Can't It? The Emergence of the "Techno-Fix" Narrative in Climate Politics.," in Proceedings of Technology Society Future, proceedings of Technology Society Future, Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts, Momir, 138th ed. (Durovic: Momir, 2016)

9 A. B. Franzen and J. Griebel, "Understanding a Cultural Identity: The Confluence of Education, Politics, and Religion within the American Concept of Biblical Literalism," *Sociology of Religion* 74 (4) (2013): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/socrel/srt051>

10 Christopher J. Jolly, Richard Shine, and Matthew J. Greenlees, "The Impact of Invasive Cane Toads on Native Wildlife in Southern Australia," *Ecology and Evolution* 5 (18) (2015): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1002/ece3.1657>

11 Jon Glasby, "Conclusion 'Insanity: Doing the Same Thing over and over Again and Expecting Different Results'" (attributed to Albert Einstein)," *Evidence, Policy and Practice Critical Perspectives in Health and Social Care*, 2011, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1332/policypress/9781847423191.003.0008>.

12 Blaise Pascal and Isaac Taylor, *Thoughts on Religion and Philosophy* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Pub., 2007)

want to be able to do things for yourself, which can add to the appeal of this kind of self-reliance.”¹³

The Political Flat Earth Disconnection

It is this third group, the group that considers “modernity” to be the problem, which illustrates what we term “the Political Flat Earth Disconnection.” To understand this disconnection, it is important to briefly review the history of the mapping of socio-political views.

Historically, the political spectrum was viewed by political scientists and journalists as unidimensional and binary, a left-right continuum that ranged from radical-progressive, ultra-liberal to far right reactionary-traditionalist, ultra-conservative. This linear spectrum derived from the seating locations of the National Assembly after the French Revolution of 1789, where the liberals sat on the left and the conservatives on the right. This “Left Wing / Right Wing” dichotomy informed political speech and thinking for over a century, and political positions were framed in this realm. In this analysis, the means to accomplish political ends and the views about how to govern were not considered; the only thing that positioned a person’s politics were where they stood in relationship to the “existing order.” This is shown in the “two-party” concept in America, even though the reality has never been linear, and the political parties have never actually been binary.

Later, a more nuanced political spectra viewed it not as a line, but as a plane, comprised of two axes, Liberal-Conservative and Libertarian-Authoritarian. On this planer version, Stalin and Mussolini were roughly similar in terms of authoritarianism, but vastly different in political orientation. This seemed to capture the world of political belief far more accurately and has been the widely adopted model in the 21st century.¹⁴ With this change, it became possible to differentiate styles of governance, ranging from an essentially laissez-faire libertarian style of governance to a much more regimented, top down, hierarchy. With this shift, it became possible to acknowledge that political policies were separate from methods of implementing those policies. This also does a much better job of explaining much of the 20th Century politics that had “Liberal Democrats” and “Progressive Republicans” forming coalitions against the more conservative members of their own parties. This mapping also allowed for a better explanation of what has frequently been termed “bipartisanship,” where many major acts of Congress were executed by across the aisle coalitions rather than by members of a single party.

However, this model, like the middle of Kansas, makes the world look flat; it flattens the actual three-dimensional political reality. The 21st century has shown that it is no longer possible to live in a politically flat world, as the third axis that we will describe demonstrates. Politics is spatial, and unless the third dimension is introduced, there can be a simplistic and polarized understanding of what is really happening socially. We see this in the emergence of smaller parties in the United States and elsewhere, and in the confusion of the mainstream press to try to explain current events using a “flattened” system of only two axes.

To better understand politics, it becomes important to consider the idea that there exists a third axis, perpendicular to the two-dimensional political plane, which operates as an independent driver of politics. The third dimension is difficult to name, as currently there aren’t easy terms like “radical,” “progressive,” “libertarian,” or “conservative.” The directions and labels of this axis are much more dimensional, just like the phenomena they describe. The

¹³ George Pierpoint, "What Is 'primitive Technology' and Why Do We Love It?" BBC News, August 27, 2018, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-45118653>

¹⁴ J.C. Lester, "The Evolution of the Political Compass (and Why Libertarianism Is Not Right-wing)," *Journal of Social and Evolutionary Systems* 17 (3) (1994): [https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/1061-7361\(94\)90011-6](https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/1061-7361(94)90011-6)

closest terms we can use at this time are possibly “rural/nationalist/technology-skeptical” and “urban/globalist/technology-positive,” but even those terms leave out elements of this third axis.

To help describe this axis, it is useful to look at the representatives of the opposite ends of the spectrum. On one end would be the Amish and other groups who want to limit technologies in whole or in part. The utter extreme on the rural/nationalist/anti-technology side could be classified by (self-described) Neo-Luddite Chellis Glendinnin, or more violently Ted Kaczynski.

While some of these groups are “conservative” or “religious” others are socially liberal, economically egalitarian, or “new-age spiritual.” In less extreme versions, you find the “shop local” proponents, community activists, and similar ideologies. The standard “flat” political plane cannot reconcile the political diversity of the “anti-technology” alliances. In this end of the axis, you have farmers who consistently vote Republican, but are against international trade and pesticides teaming up with urban community activists, who describe Sanders as a “centrist,” setting up local farmer’s markets.

Similarly, on the other end sits Silicon Valley and the tech giants, as well as many futurists and techno-utopists. Paragons of the opposite side would include James Lovelock and Elon Musk, who advocate for a future of humanity that involves technological enhancements that are commonly referred to as “cyborgs.”

Again, as with the opposing group, there are overlaps with some traditional politics, but overall, this end of the spectrum also produces strange allegiances. You have the Ayn Rand devotee Elon Musk beloved by California liberals, despite his stated concept of creating a John Galtian empire on Mars.¹⁵ Similarly, Sam Harris, despite his advocacy of climate science and other “liberal” values, is often derided by those on the “left” for his pushback against what is currently termed “woke” culture.¹⁶ Again, the alliance between the traditional “left” and Musk or the embrace of Harris by the “right-wing” Charles Murry throws the political flat plane into disarray.

This axis can also be understood when we look beyond America and discuss nationalism. Much of the media uses the terms “nationalist” and “far-right” interchangeably, as if being politically “right-wing” was a fundamental requirement for being “nationalist,” and being a “nationalist,” inevitably meant that you were also “far-right.” The reality is quite different, although some “nationalist” world leaders are ALSO “right-wing.”

While, for example, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has done some things that are certainly pleasing to conservatives, such as returning Hagia Sophia to use as a mosque, his nationalism is quite separate from his conservatism.¹⁷ This is more clearly seen in Nicola Sturgeon, who is a strong nationalist who wants Scotland out of the United Kingdom. However, she is also a strong proponent of Nuclear Disarmament, gay rights, and closing the poverty gap.¹⁸ To constantly equate nationalism with conservatism is to ignore that they operate independently of each other.

This isn’t to say that this axis is entirely new. It was visible in the conflicts between Jefferson and Hamilton, with Jefferson advocating for a de-centralized, agrarian society, while Hamilton advocated for an urban, industrialized nation.¹⁹ While both sat on the “liberal” end of

15 Masha Gessen, "The Persistent Ghost of Ayn Rand, the Forebear of Zombie Neoliberalism," *The New Yorker*, June 05, 2019, accessed June 25, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-persistent-ghost-of-ayn-rand-the-forebear-of-zombie-neoliberalism>

16 Sam Harris, "Can Liberalism Be Saved from Itself," Sam Harris, October 7, 2014, accessed May 22, 2021, <https://samharris.org/can-liberalism-be-saved-from-itself/>

17 Ece Temelkuran, *How to Lose a Country: The Seven Steps from Democracy to Dictatorship* (London: 4th Estate, 2019)

18 Michael Fry, "Why It's Ridiculous to Suggest Nicola Sturgeon Is a Neoliberal Right-winger," *The National*, April 06, 2021, accessed May 15, 2021, <https://www.thenational.scot/news/19211455.ridiculous-suggest-nicola-sturgeon-neoliberal-right-winger>

19 Carson Holloway, "Hamilton versus Jefferson in the Washington Administration," *Perspectives on Politics* 16 (2) (May 16, 2018): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S1537592717004194>

the political spectrum, and diverged somewhat on the authoritarian/libertarian axis, their true divergence existed on the third axis. The conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson to a significant extent formed this frequently ignored aspect of the American Political Sphere and has echoed through the years in many of the major internal divisions in the country.

This conflict carried forward and became a primary, although hidden, driver in the Civil War between the Northern Industrialists/Bankers and the Southern Planters. While the overt causes of the Civil War revolved around the issue of slavery, in the background was a continuation of the disparate visions of Jefferson and Hamilton, with the North advocating an urban industrial future for the country, and the South holding on to the idea of the rural agrarian society.²⁰

Moving forward, this Third Axis shaped the discussions around both World Wars and isolationism versus interventionism, with the isolationists opposed to entry into either conflict, advocating, while the interventionists had a vision of Empire. As with everything in the spherical political society, this discussion did not follow so called “traditional” politics, as both sides drew bipartisan support for their positions.

Part of the reason that this axis remained hidden and obscured until the turn of the millennium is that generally, the politicians on the “Urban/Globalist/Technology-positive” end of the axis have tended to win the big arguments, and this has kept the other side marginalized and ignored. America today is far closer to Hamilton’s vision; the industrialist North won the Civil War, and American intervention in the two world wars led to the United States becoming a Superpower. Further, it is this marginalization of the opposite end of the axis that is driving many of the social problems today, such as the mutual antagonism between urban and rural cultures, and without understanding it, things stop making rational sense. If we don’t acknowledge this axis, we can’t fully understand the roots of the conflict between the Globalists and the Nationalists, and its effects on American and world politics.

Again, it is also important to remember, as stated earlier, this axis, like the libertarian/authoritarian one, exists outside of the traditional liberal/conservative binary. It emerges in otherwise inexplicable alliances such as “conservative” farmers finding alignment with Anti-WTO agitators, and anti-vaxxers agreeing with anti-maskers. Failure to understand the importance of the spherical political spectrum is as problematic in today’s world as failure to accept a round globe would be. This is an issue we will return to later in this article.

The Climate of Disconnection

Another important disconnection between the “empirical” and the “actual” is found in the discussion and rhetoric around climate change. In today’s suburbanized, manicured, and pedicured world, people are disconnected from the earth. If they had the environmental awareness that the general population possessed two hundred and fifty years ago, humanity would likely have immediately recognized the dangers of the changing climate. This is because people who need to grow things have day to day lives that are absolutely dependent on the climate. A traditional agricultural society is utterly in tune with weather.²¹

In America’s suburban sprawl, with its perfect Kentucky bluegrass lawns, petunias and automatic sprinkler systems, people have divorced themselves from nature. They no longer

20 Carole E. Scott, "The Very Different but Connected Economies of the Northeast and the South Before the Civil War," *B>Quest*, 2015, <https://www.westga.edu/~bquest/2015/connected2015.pdf>

21 Gugulethu Zuma-Netshiukhwi, Kees Stigter, and Sue Walker, "Use of Traditional Weather/Climate Knowledge by Farmers in the South-Western Free State of South Africa: Agrometeorological Learning by Scientists," *Atmosphere* 4 (4) (2013):, <https://doi.org/doi:10.3390/atmos4040383>

notice that things are not right in the growing season. This is also true of the modern industrial agricultural complex with fertilizers, pesticides, sprinklers, and mechanized tractors.²²

What they do in their yards, gardens, and factory farms does not give them feedback. They plant grass and cut it before it blooms. They plant annual flowers from the tropics that bloom from the moment that they stick them in the ground until the first frost. They plant alien species for food. They use automatic sprinkles, and no longer have to pay attention to when it rains; the system takes care of it for them.²³

Adding to this, the media have adopted metaphors that are likewise disconnected from reality. Most stories currently use the term “Global Warming,” a term based only on half of current scientific thinking. The scientific idea of climate change involves increase in the standard deviation as well as the mean and median of temperatures. “Global Warming” refers to the second but ignores the first.²⁴ We currently see this occurring in the state of Texas, which had possibly the coldest temperatures in recorded history last winter, after a summer that was the hottest on record. All over the globe, the extremes are being amplified, with far warmer summers, winters that are also on average warmer, but are subjected to sudden unprecedented cold, increasing droughts, but also increasing rain. All the trends in weather are being amplified, but also becoming unmoored from traditional patterns.

Because of this amplification, warming is far too benign to describe the phenomenon that is currently occurring. (Ask a settler/colonial resident of Fargo, North Dakota, if they’d like a “warmer” climate.) Climate instability or better ecosystem collapse, although dramatic and scientifically less accurate, are terms that would resonate with people, because they do not sound benign or pleasant

Doing something about “Ecosystem Collapse” carries an embedded imperative: it is a metaphor that would quickly connect to a serious danger. Returning to the early discussion of risk assessment, using this sort of language would alter the discussion, and work towards overcoming the very human tendency to ignore slow moving risks that are far in the future.

But this is only the beginning of the disconnection. In the disconnected, experiential world, winter is still winter. People don’t remember how much colder on average it used to be. Senators can still bring snowballs to the Senate floor and wave them around as “proof” that global warming is a hoax and use the extremes of cold brought about by climate change as evidence of their point.

And then, deliberately, we disconnected “Actual Reality” experts from being a primary source of information. Media flattened the earth and in the name of balance gave weight to people who had no credentials, or at least not the appropriate scientific credentials, so that the “opposing view” could be heard. Expert understanding became even more politicized and Patrick Moynihan’s statement about opinions and facts essentially ceased to describe the world. Suddenly, society was entitled to not only their own opinions, but were entitled to their own facts. In the aftermath, it was no longer a battle between conflicting scientific theories, it was a war between science and empirical or emotional experience.²⁵

22 Michael Pollan, *The Omnivores Dilemma the Search for a Perfect Meal in a Fast-Food World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014)

23 Meredith T. Niles and Nathaniel D. Mueller, "Farmer Perceptions of Climate Change: Associations with Observed Temperature and Precipitation Trends, Irrigation, and Climate Beliefs," *Global Environmental Change* 39 (2016): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2016.05.002>

24 "Overview: Weather, Global Warming and Climate Change," NASA, June 22, 2021, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://climate.nasa.gov/resources/global-warming-vs-climate-change/>

25 Stecula, Dominik A. Stecula and Eric Merkley, "Framing Climate Change: Economics, Ideology, and Uncertainty in American News Media Content From 1988 to 2014," *Frontiers in Communication* 4 (2019): <https://doi.org/doi:10.3389/fcomm.2019.00006>

The Disconnection Disease

These disconnections of empiricism, language, risk assessment, and failure to think in all three political dimensions, intersected to create a perfect storm in the response to COVID-19.

On the risk assessment side, because fortunately many people do not have personal experience with the deadly nature of the disease, it becomes easy to discount the preventive measures adopted to fight the disease as “an overreaction” to a “simple flu.” There are still quite a few people who don’t know anyone who has had the disease. Even fewer know someone who has become seriously ill or died. Job loss and damage to a person’s individual economic stability becomes far more present and frightening than a disease that most recover from.²⁶

And in this, we must return to the third political axis. To those subscribing to the dominant paradigm of science positivity, the developed nations have become accustomed to a world in which they believe disease can be vanquished. In their worldview, in the last 100 years, Smallpox has been eliminated, traditional “childhood” viruses are almost never seen, and antibiotics convert infection from a death sentence to a few days of feeling ill. If everyone takes all the vaccines on offer, there will no longer be a world where a trip to a pool can result in lifelong paralysis from Polio or an outbreak of Measles can paralyze an entire city. Certainly, there are parts of the world where these things can happen, but they are far removed from the comfort of America and occur in places that the country can hold a condescending pity for. The Science positivists believe that expert opinion, especially scientific theories, should always be the guide regarding most issues, including our approach to the pandemic.

But to the science-skeptical end of the third axis, the health scientists, especially ones connected to globalist organizations like the World Health Organization, could be (and to many of them should be) ignored. It is in the arena of health science that the breakdown of “traditional” politics first became apparent near the end of the millennium. Andrew Wakefield published a now discredited study associating vaccines with autism in the late 90’s and in doing so crystalized the fears of the science-skeptics.²⁷ This movement united adherents from all sides of the political spectrum, from Robert F. Kennedy Jr to Donald Trump, people who are completely opposite on any traditional flat political world, but who are suddenly much more aligned in a three-dimensional world, where they can both question the safety or efficacy of vaccinations.²⁸

As this alternative medical science world evolved, it became a point of unification in the third dimension. People on the left who were concerned about the influence of Big Pharma and the Medical Industrial Complex found common ground with people on the right who were concerned about tainted science and bioweapons. Across this entire spectrum, faith was emphasized as a true healer; it didn’t matter whether that was faith in the power of “positive thinking” or in a “higher power.”

Interestingly, Obamacare became a significant breaking point for old alliances, and provided opportunities for new alignments on the third axis, tearing people away from their historic voting blocks and creating new allegiances. Obama, ever the consummate broker, realized that Wall Street didn’t oppose medical care for all, provided that they got the entire profits from universal health insurance. He had his plan passed on the basis that it would lock in the existing structure, and further, make every single American have to become a consumer of that system. As with many initiatives described in the previous section, this was a victory of

26 Tom Avril, "Don't Know Any COVID-19 Patients Who've Died or Been in the Hospital? That May Explain a Lot." <https://www.inquirer.com>, October 12, 2020, [PAGE], accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/covid19-know-someone-died-empathy-risk-perception-trump-20201012.html>

27 Mark Lacour and Tyler Davis, "Vaccine Skepticism Reflects Basic Cognitive Differences in Mortality-related Event Frequency Estimation," *Vaccine* 38 (21) (2020): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.vaccine.2020.02.052>

28 Jonathan Jarry, M.Sc., "The Anti-Vaccine Movement in 2020," Office for Science and Society, May 25, 2020, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/covid-19-pseudoscience/anti-vaccine-movement-2020>

globalist / urban / science-positive end of the third axis, as it empowered the wealthy Wall Street moguls, and their urban supporters, uniting the plutocrats with the urban liberals that elected Obama. And similarly, because the nationalist / rural / science-skeptical end was completely marginalized and discounted in the discussion, it fueled deep anger in a previously ununited part of the electorate.

For some on the nationalist left, Obamacare was simply a giveaway to Big Pharma and for-profit medicine.²⁹ They felt betrayed because, to them, it wasn't about medical care as much as it was about profit and a continued corporate hold on the system. For some on the nationalist right, it was further government control of every aspect of their lives³⁰ and would lead to "death panels" and mandatory abortions like what existed in China. For all of them, again, the uniting factor was that the "wrong" people were in charge of health care. Although these two groups did not team up to try to bring Obamacare down, this dynamic set the stage for the true emergence of a Third Axis alignment on health issues.

And then COVID entered into this already fractured political world, inflaming tensions, firing up organized politicized analysis, and cementing new alliances.³¹

Politicians on the Right (and also some on the far Left such as Jill Stein) made, vaccines, masks, social distancing, and any other preventive measures a sign of fealty to one or more of these groups "big pharma," "liberalness," "godlessness," and "hatred of Freedom." Politicians on the Left (and a handful of the Business Right) made failure to wear masks or to distance proof of a person's cruelty and misanthropy. People on all sides blamed the medical scientific complex for wanting to destroy the economy, or of wanting to line their pockets, or, despite the cognitive dissonance, do both of these at the same time. Pandemic behavior ceased to be about anything about science and became a badge of tribal allegiance. However, it is important to note, that many of these tribal allegiances were actually on the Third Axis and revolved around issues of Globalism and Science rather than the narratives offered by most of the press.

Together, these disconnections have created a crisis across the globe, but this is, due to the current media coverage, particularly visible in the United States. The underlying conditions of America make these disconnections particularly destructive compared to much of the rest of the so-called Developed World, and further, they lit the fuse for the current socio-political disruption. However, as we will explore in the next section, the bomb had already been made in the Lincoln Administration and became fully weaponized in the Reagan Administration.

The Birth of the Precariat and Social Disconnection

Dalton Conley coined the term "Precariat" in his book "Elsewhere USA" to describe the ostensibly Middle-Class people who are generally one to two paychecks away from economic disaster. On the surface, this 21st Century version of the Middle Class looks like previous iterations, with a nice house, two high-end cars, children attending good schools, luxury vacations, and all the positional goods that mark them as people who "have it made."³²

However, as described by Benjamin Barber in "Consumed," and in the writings of Thomas Piketty, this status is entirely an illusion. Even people making \$150,000 a year are currently

29 Sean Petty, "The Neoliberal Restructuring of Healthcare in the US," *International Socialist Review*, Fall 2014, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://isreview.org/issue/94/neoliberal-restructuring-healthcare-us>

30 Rep. Pete Olson (R-Texas), "ObamaCare's Real Goal Was Control over Our Lives," *TheHill*, February 04, 2016, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/192668-obamacares-real-goal-was-population-control>

31 Hana Shepherd, Norah Mackendrick, and G. Cristina Mora, "Pandemic Politics: Political Worldviews and COVID-19 Beliefs and Practices in an Unsettled Time," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 6 (November 2, 2020): accessed February 3, 2021, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1177/2378023120972575>

32 Dalton Conley, *Elsewhere, U.S.A.*: (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2010)

struggling to make ends meet when their monthly debt to income ratios hovering at 1.0, meaning that their entire income is completely consumed by their monthly bills, leaving nothing to set aside for an emergency.³³ However, to maintain the social status, they must spend.³⁴ Their house is fully mortgaged, with little to no equity. Their cars are leased, not owned. One parent's income is completely devoted to keeping the children in the good school or having the dog walked at \$20/half hour--or both. The parents take their laptops and work constantly while sitting on the beach. The positional goods have all been purchased on credit cards. Their entire affluence is simple vaporware, dispersed in the slightest ill wind.³⁵

And this is how the actual "Power Elites" want it. We use the term "Power Elites" to separate them from the other uses of the word "elite." In this term, we refer to the specific cadre of upper bourgeois who control the levers of power. In America, this group influences both political parties and includes the politically active billionaires, economic pundits, "superdelegates" who can override the selection of nominees, the neo-liberal globalists, and other players who have an undue influence on the course of politics.

A discussed by Nancy MacLean in "Democracy in Chains," in the modern age, revolution generally comes from the disaffected bourgeoisie, people with sufficient free time to contemplate abstract thoughts such as freedom, liberty, equality, and happiness. Certainly, the mass of people who die in the revolutions are the poor, the so-called "wretched refuse." But the leaders, the thinkers, the organizers, the ones who send the old elites to the guillotine, they are the bourgeois. This model developed and is most evident in the French and Russian Revolutions, although many of the so-called "Color Revolutions" of the late 20th century followed this model as well.³⁶

To prevent that, and to keep their pampered backsides firmly in the seat of power, the "Power Elites" must preoccupy the minds of those who have the ability to question them. The powerful need to get them so concerned with mere survival that they cannot dare challenge the order, because if they disrupt things, their house of cards will collapse. Because they cannot openly dispose of the "middle class," they must hollow it out and neuter it.³⁷

They have to craft a system where healthcare is completely dependent on employment. They have to build a world where opportunities are closed off unless the children go to the absolutely right school and/or the dog to the very best doggie day care. They have to construct a consumer culture of image, planned obsolescence and emulation. They have to get people to willingly put on the shackles of economic slavery.³⁸

But that isn't the entire plan. The elites also have to get the poor to despise the group above them: the ones that could lead them into battle to tear the system down to the ground. They have to make alliances with the poor, get them to support things that are completely against their own self-interest, to ensure that they do not enter into alliance with the bourgeois. The elites preach prosperity in churches that cost tens of millions to people for whom a weekend in Las Vegas is the height of indulgence.

These seeds of hate have to be spread widely, to ensure that there can be no allegiance between the poor and the bourgeois. They have to sow discord between the cities and the

33 Anne Helen Petersen, "America's Hollow Middle Class," Vox, December 15, 2020, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22166381/hollow-middle-class-american-dream>

34 Benjamin R. Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2008)

35 Thomas Piketty and Arthur Goldhammer, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017)

36 Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Rights Stealth Plan for America* (NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2018),

37 *ibid*

38 *ibid*

farms. They have to fertilize hatreds between the races. By creating a fractious, divided populace, they think they can rule forever.³⁹

But he who sows the wind, will reap the tempest.

Weaponized Disconnection

Twice before, the American "Power Elites" weaponized social disconnections to protect their interests. First, they unleashed the monster to create literal Civil War in order to protect the source of their wealth and power, the Factory Worker in the North and the Slave in the South. Shortly after the Civil War, they created the KKK, the Pinkertons, and other organizations to crush the radical Labor movement, smash down the rising Black populace, and build a mostly unstoppable political machine.

This worked, until the black swan of the Stock Market Crash of 1929, followed about a year later by the dramatic drought that would usher in the Dust Bowl of the 1930's. These twin disasters, striking the heart of Wall Street and the agricultural heartland paved the way for the Roosevelt Age, a period in which the elites were at war with each other and a foretaste of the third dimension in American politics began to emerge.

The Roosevelt era was the high point of the alliance between the Solid South, the tamed labor unions, and progressive urban cosmopolites: a very strange alliance founded, among other things, in racism.⁴⁰ Roosevelt used this alliance to bring about the American version of the welfare state -- something despised to this day by conservatives and libertarians. He also successfully bought off a large section of intellectuals and artists with various public grants, really the beginning of the federal grants system, which controls the intelligentsia.

Perhaps most significantly, he was part and parcel of the collapse of the family farm and the industrialization and cartelization of American agriculture. Born out of the Dust Bowl that raged for almost a decade, America became the homeland of the dust bowl refugees.

Between these bizarre alliances the American political world began to take on a spherical character as old alliances were broken and what had been a flat plane became a three-dimensional maze.⁴¹ The Old School half of the Power Elite declared Roosevelt to be a Class Traitor and Class Enemy.

All this worked until the second economic collapse of 1938 and the bizarre alliance between Japan and the Axis countries. Roosevelt saw no other way out of economic collapse except war. He provoked war with Japan, put Japanese Americans in concentration camps, and maintained the allegiance of the cosmopolites by masking his war with Hirohito as if the enemy were Hitler and Mussolini. To do this, it became a political necessity to forge an alliance with Stalin.

The post-war financial dislocations necessitated a breaking of the alliance with the Soviets, and the Cold War replaced the hot war as the fuel of the military-industrial complex that Roosevelt had created. The anti-Nazi, anti-fascist propaganda machine of Roosevelt went bankrupt under the cold-war and the internal tensions over the red scare.

Many American progressives, if not most, to this day see the Roosevelt Era as a high point of American liberalism.⁴² They focus on the creation of the welfare state, on the anti-Nazi and

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Adolph Reed, Jr., "Race and the New Deal Coalition," *The Nation*, June 29, 2015, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/race-and-new-deal-coalition/>

⁴¹ Sidney M. Milkis, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and The Transcendence of Partisan Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 100 (3) (1985): <https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/2151069>

⁴² James T. Kloppenberg, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Visionary," *Reviews in American History* 34 (4) (2006): <https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/rah.2006.0062>

Anti-Fascist rhetoric, and conveniently edit out the Solid South and the Concentration Camps for the Japanese Americans. This restricted narrative keeps most of them locked in the flat world, and unable to respond to the spherical political reality.

Truman came to power and the civil rights movement was born. The Solid South began to collapse, eventually the Southern Strategy emerged, and the American political world became flattened and polarized. The Princeton-Harvard-Yale elites saw all of this and decided that this cannot be allowed to continue. They became furious. This fury gave rise to the battleground of the sixties.

For the last 50 years, since Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated for preaching about equity, the Power Elites of both parties have stoked the fires of fury. They have deliberately severed the connections that bind people together, for the purposes of ensuring that they themselves remain on top. They ended the draft, the Cold War, the labor movement, and most importantly, the dominance of the historic three media networks that unified the country.

“E Pluribus Unum” became “What’s in it for Me?” Social bonds based on the idea that a rising tide lifts all boats were washed away and replaced with a zero-sum game where there were only winners and losers. Under the new national motto, if someone else got something, it diminished those who did not get it.

And this ultimately led to the first actual coup attempt of the new millennium. It is important to note here, although we use the term “coup attempt” as a descriptor of the events of January 6th, we are using this in a mostly neutral manner to describe what appears to have been the intent of the invasion of the capitol. It is also important to remember that the people who invaded the capitol would absolutely NOT use this terminology and would describe their actions as attempting to prevent a coup by Biden and restore the constitution.

The Disconnection Coup

Two decades of sowing social disconnections and the strengthening of other arising disconnections set the stage for both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump and ultimately the recent coup attempt.

However, this conflict wasn’t as simple as it seems on the surface, and some of the roots baffle “flat earth” political scientists. Books like “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” question why people vote against their own self-interest.⁴³ Pundits are confused by Reagan Democrats and the small-in-number but very important Bernie to Trump voters. These things only make sense when the Third Dimension of Politics is explored. Both Sanders and Trump saw the third axis and recognized that working in the political sphere rather than the political plane was the key to victory. They deftly addressed issues that had been completely ignored by the two traditional axes and built what seemed to be strange coalitions.

This shift changed what defines a swing vote in ways that polls and other fictions cannot quantify. It is no longer the Liberal-to-Conservative spectrum, or even the libertarian-authoritarian axis that determines who wins the election. Those two are baked in with people who identify with a specific party and are at this point mostly unmovable. The real swing vote is now the third axis vote.

Currently, the left is winning mainly the technocratic end of the spectrum, which is a significant reason they are branded “elites.” They are not elites in any definition of the flat earth, but when the third axis is introduced, they become “elites,” as they stand for many of the things the actual elites also champion. The “Power Elites” subtly (or overtly) reinforce this view as it means that their perceived right to rule remains mostly unchallenged. Because of

⁴³ Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Picador, 2005)

this, with the exception of the Sanders (not the general Democratic) wing of politics, the “anti” crowd is mainly flocking to the right, because they say more things that appeal to this group of voters.

Mastery of this other axis gave life to Donald Trump’s first campaign, ultimately landing him in the White House. While these “swing” voters were not large enough in number to grab a popular vote majority, and likely never will be, they are more than enough to win the Electoral College, and likely will win it again in the future, because of the profound skewing weight given to the rural states. He masterfully worked with messages to people who had for years had to resign themselves to a flat political world where the Power Elites and the Globalists might lose a few battles, but they tended to always win the war. Suddenly, these people had a public voice.

After years of sowing distrust in experts, and in the media that reported those experts, Donald Trump created a new public reality for millions of his followers. He took Weaponized Disconnection and made it thermonuclear, and he did this because the core of his message was not aimed at the traditional politics, but the new spatial spherical world.

Out of this reality rose QAnon, and AntiFa. And through this, they built a myth, one that was so powerful that people on all sides of the political continuum would lay down their lives for it.

The Left and Social Justice sides of the spectrum erupted over the Summer of 2020, fired by the rage of realizing a war that they had long believed to have been won actually might have been lost.

AntiFa grew from the militarized response to the Black Lives Matter protests but devolved to a violent situation that the Portland Mayor claimed was the result of “some people who just want to watch the world burn.” Although the statements on this side often lacked the banner headlines of their opposites, their ultimate goal was actually similar to their counterparts, overturning the American System and replacing it with something new. In this, they saw the existing American System as corrupt, tyrannical, and oppressive.

On the Q side, it created a world where Biden “stole the election”; a reality where COVID-19 didn’t exist, and doctors were being paid bonuses to terminate patients; a reality where Democrats were literally satanic pedophiles running sex rings out of Arlington pizzerias; a reality where the woman Trump defeated to become president flayed the face off of a child and wore it as a mask on video. This group of people also saw the American system as completely corrupt, tyrannical, and oppressive. In this, their biggest difference from the other side was who they held responsible for the upending of America.

This was aided, and to many, validated, by most of the media and a Democratic Party that claimed anyone who voted for Trump was a literal Nazi. The Left built their campaigns not on issues, but on demonizing Trump himself. The opposition blamed Trump for everything bad that was happening and campaigned on Ad Hominem attacks painting Trump as an insane demon rather than on issues. Suddenly the news, from all quarters, was about one thing, and one thing only, Donald Trump.

This demonization of Trump dramatically improved his stature for some Americans. In him, they had found their Judge, a man who was not honest, maybe not even Godly, but who would restore to them the Kingdom they had thought they lost. However, this Kingdom is not what the pundits proclaim it to be, instead it is a Kingdom of the third axis, one where fears of Globalists, Mainstream Science, and Urbanism are validated.

And given the social disconnection of the precariat, it is no surprise that, as revealed recently, many of the insurrectionists were in financial difficulties, and a number of them had been removed from the military under less than honorable discharges.⁴⁴ They were a group of people severed from all traditional politics, economically precarious, distrusting informed

44 Rachel Bucchino, "Most of the Defendants Charged in Capitol Riots Had a History of Financial Difficulty," The National Interest, February 10, 2021, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/most-defendants-charged-capitol-riots-had-history-financial-difficulty-178007>

opinion, and clinging to the words of a man who made manifest Bush's words "when we act, we create our own reality."

And that was the final disconnection of the attempted coup. It wasn't merely an insurrection against the government, it was an attempt to reject one reality and substitute their own.

The American Political World had become Spherical.

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After graduation with his Master of Architecture, he was tapped to be a Lecturer at the University of Colorado. While teaching there, he led a collaborative live project to assist in the rebuilding of Ground Zero after the 9/11 tragedy. This was a joint project where the students worked with Rebuild Downtown, Our Town (R.Dot), the Lower Manhattan Redevelopment Corporation (LMDC), Raphael Pelli, Pentagram, and SHoP Architects. This project produced the first draft of the development guidelines employed by the LMDC in the final project. This project also led to him being listed in Who's Who of American Teachers.

In 2007, he was appointed a Professor at the Savannah College of Art and Design, where he worked on a number of live projects with Jacoby Development Corporation, including the redevelopment of the town of Marineland. While at SCAD, his students also participated in the Leading-Edge Design Competition, where they won several awards and honors.

As a practicing architect, he has built numerous projects in Colorado, one of which resulted in his firm being named the Firm of the Year for Full Service Historic Preservation. In his professional practice, he worked in Design/Build partnerships with deb Construction and helped pioneer innovations in concrete tilt-up construction.

Joseph Juhasz is Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Environmental Design at the University of Colorado. He is author and co-author of well over 200 professional publications and has published extensively in the press and other media for a more general readership. He produces his own radio programs on KGNU radio in Boulder, Colorado.

He has won numerous design competitions and is former President of the Division of the American Psychological Association devoted to Psychology and the Arts. He was an active-duty Naval Officer from 1961 to 1965. He graduated with Honors and Cum Laude from Brown University in 1961 and was awarded the Ph.D. from UC Berkeley in 1969. He has been a Professor at Bennington College, Bucknell University, U.C. Santa Cruz, University of Toronto, and University of Otago. He has received numerous grants and fellowships.

He was born in Hungary in 1938, where he survived the Holocaust, was a refugee from there, and immigrated to the United States in 1951. He resides in Boulder, Colorado.