

The Seven Billion Musketeers **All for One and One for All**

By
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As a kid I always enjoyed watching movies about *The Three Musketeers*. Their swashbuckling adventures were lots of fun, as far as myths of redemptive violence go. But I was always a little confused about why they were called *The Three Musketeers* when there was clearly four of them—Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and the greatest swordsman of them all, d'Artagnan. Their heroic escapades always began and ended when all four put their swords together and shouted their signature line, "All for one and one for all!"

What I really like about this saying is that it could be used as a definition of our faith, *All for One*, Unitarianism, and *One for All*, Universalism. But I'm thinking that if this principle has any real value, it must apply to far more than three or four musketeers, or even to a million or so Unitarian Universalists. It must apply to everyone in the whole wide world. Imagine how much better things might be if this were the common human rallying cry, the fundamental morality, of the nearly seven billion people alive today, "All for one, one for all!"

Instead the morality of many, especially in our nation, seems to be based on some type of Darwinian economics, often promoted, oddly enough, by people whom profess not to believe in Darwinian evolution. God made the world in six days, populated it with consumers to "subdue and have dominion over it," then instructed us to compete against our neighbors, and assured us the best thing we can do for everybody is to always act in our own self-interest. I haven't actually read this anywhere in the Bible, but I'm sure it must be in there because I hear it from an awful lot of God fearing folk.

Just this week, in fact, Presidential hopeful, Mitt Romney was asked what exactly he meant when he complained our nation is being divided by "the bitter politics of envy." He responded by explaining, "I think it's about class warfare. I think when you have a President encouraging the idea of dividing America based on 99% verses 1%, and those people who have been most successful will be the 1%, you've opened up a whole new wave of approach to this country, which is entirely inconsistent with the concept of one nation under God."

He seems, at least, to agree that we should be *All for one*, that the 99% needs to support the unfortunate wealthiest 1% now being so terribly discriminated against. After all, since when has having far more than you will ever need at the expense of just about everyone else been a crime? As Romney went on to say, after being asked if it's ever legitimate to talk about the distribution of wealth, "I think it's fine to talk about those things in quiet rooms and discussions about tax policy and

the like, but the President has made this part of his campaign rally. Everywhere he goes we hear him talking about millionaires and billionaires and executives and Wall Street. It's a very envy oriented, attack oriented approach and I think it will fail."

What seems to be missing from this equation is the "one for all" part—that the 1% also has a moral duty toward the other 99%. Sure, there's a lot of talk about providing them with opportunities, but very little about providing for their actual needs. The attitude seems to be that if the poor are too lazy or stupid to take advantage of the abounding opportunities to become billionaires themselves, it's no one's fault but their own. Of course we must wonder why any sane person among the 8.5% currently without a job, or the former owners of the 1.2 million homes repossessed last year alone, or the 16.3% without health insurance of any kind, wouldn't take advantage of these abundant opportunities if they actually existed.

I don't mean to make this about numbers, however, but about a common paradigm that is shared by far more than 1% of the population. I'm talking about the sinful paradigm of separation, the age-old notion that some of us are better than others, and, therefore, deserve to have more. We may think this is so because we are of a royal lineage, or belong to a certain religion, or have a certain skin color, nationality, gender, or income level. We've come up with multiple reasons throughout history to justify the feeling that some of us are more deserving than others.

In terms of developmental psychology this reflects a very juvenile awareness. As children move into adolescence, they normally begin separating themselves from their families in order to become members of the larger community. Developing chum relations and puppy love is a crucial part of this stage because it enables them to build a persona, the face we present to the world, by seeing ourselves through the eyes of others. So teenagers, in particular, can become very group oriented, and tend to exclude those who aren't in their circle of peers, or in their gang, or from their school, or neighborhood, and the like. Although this is a step in the right direction, as we continue to mature beyond adolescence, we need to eventually realize our interpersonal skills are portable, that we can take them with us into any relationship with people everywhere. As we mature we ought to become even more social and more cosmopolitan in our ability to relate to others, even to those who live quite differently than us. As we mature, if we mature, our relationships ought to become more inclusive and eclectic. So I call a culture juvenile that manages to segregate some from the full benefits and rights of society based upon meaningless distinctions—like color, gender, sexuality, nationality, education, and income—even though I personally know a lot of teenagers who understand this better than many adults.

The point is, a mature psyche, a psyche that has developed closer to its fullest potential, understands and appreciates the lives of others, of all others. It has a "one for all" mentality. But what we're mostly seeing in the world today is, at best, a "one

for all in my group,” mentality, or, at worst, “a one for me alone,” mentality. And, sadly, this seems to be the pattern of most societies throughout human history. As suggested by the 19th century Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, “There is no progress in human history. Democracy is a fraud. Human nature is primitive, emotional, unyielding. The smarter, abler, stronger, and shrewder take the lion’s share. The weak starve, lest society become degenerated.”¹ Pareto is credited with having discovered that 80% of his country was owned by 20% of its population. He soon found such disparity to be true of just about every country, and went on to describe what he called, “the vital few and the trivial many.”

This view has since been called, “Pareto’s principle,” or the 80-20 rule, and is applied to many economic and business principles these days. Although the 80-20 split is more symbolic than precise, experts know, roughly, that 80% of sales come from 20% of customers, or 20% of their products get 80% of their sales. We tend to spend most our time with 20% of our friends, or wear our favorite clothes 80% of the time, or, as already noted, 20% of society holds most its wealth. The significance of Pareto’s principle today is that, according to official testimony, during a 1997 meeting in San Francisco, involving 300 politicians, including the likes of George W. Bush and Margaret Thatcher, “they were openly talking about what they called the 80-20 society.” The historian who said this went on to explain:

The 80-20 society is one in which the economy only needs 20 percent of the population to drive the corporations. The 80 percent is surplus. The future they were talking about was that this model would eventually apply across all nations. We would no longer have First World nations and Third World nations. We’d have nations in which the best and brightest 20 percent in each nation were fully employed, in very challenging careers, to operate the economy of the transnational corporations. The other 80 percent would be surplus.²

One outgrowth of this meeting was the Multilateral Agreement on Investing, which came dangerously close to being quietly passed. In brief, it would have placed corporate profits above the rights of governments. If a country passed laws or regulations that interfered with a company’s profits, real or projected, the country could be severely fined or sued. Fortunately, numerous human rights organizations and NGOs found out about it and launched a massive Internet campaign that caused its host country, France, to drop its support at the last minute.

And that’s the good news in all of this. While it’s pretty scary to think that some of the world’s most powerful figures are attending meetings claiming 80% of

¹ As summarized by Benoit Mandelbrot in Mandelbrot, Benoit; Richard L Hudson (2004). *The (mis)behavior of markets : a fractal view of risk, ruin, and reward*. New York: Basic Books, p. 154f.

² Special Committee on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, 1998/99 Legislative Session: 3rd Session, 36th Parliament, British Columbia, Transcript of Proceedings (Hansard), Friday, March 12, 1999 (Burnaby), Issue No. 23, p. 875.

the human population is unnecessary, “the trivial many,” an International agreement treating them as such was soundly defeated before it even came up for a vote. So I’ll give you another example of the 80-20 rule, a statistic I can’t prove, but that I’m hopeful is true: The majority of people believe in fairness and equality. It is only a minority who don’t. Could this explain why so few are able to rule over so many, because the majority of us have no desire to rule over others? Could it be that the majority of people in the world desire justice and equality for all, and relatively few are responsible for inequality and injustice?

Perhaps this is too optimistic a point of view. If the majority of us believe in equality, why is the world so unjust? Why is there such disparity between the haves and have-nots? If there are so many of them, why don’t the have-nots simply rise up and take what’s theirs? Why do the masses continue to support systems that work against their own interests?

I would suggest this is so, not because they fundamentally don’t care, but because the majority of us, despite our innate sense of fairness, feel powerless to make a difference, and we feel powerless because we believe we are alone. And, perhaps it is true, that our numbers don’t warrant calling us the 80%, but I’m confident they are much higher than most of us can imagine. We believe we are alone because we simple don’t know others like us exist. We seldom organize and have very few networks that help us realize just how large our numbers really are, though, when we do find ways to come together, we’re large enough to soundly defeat things like the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

Let’s say you go down the chip aisle at the grocery store, and you see it’s filled with a variety of potato chips, corn chips, crinkled chips, baked chips, Tostados, Doritos, family sized, snack sized, chips in bags, cans, and boxes, and you think to yourself, “I’m free! Free to make whatever decision I want!” But the truth is, as soon as you walk down that aisle, your choices become limited to just one. You’re either going to buy chips or you’re not. There may be other options, healthier options that you’ll never know about because they’re not on the chip aisle.

Now imagine you’re going down the social values aisle, and you see Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, Right and Left, Blue and Red, and you think to yourself, “I’m free! Free to make whatever decision I want!” But what if there are other options, options you don’t know even exist because the store doesn’t carry them?

I propose to you that this is precisely the case; that there is an enormous subculture that exists here in the U.S. and around the world that most of us aren’t even aware of. In 2000, social scientists Paul Ray and his spouse Sherry Ruth Anderson published *The Cultural Creatives*, disclosing their research and discovery of a subculture that has steadily grown from less than 5% of the population in the 1960’s to over 26%. They estimate there to be more than 50 million of them in the U.S. alone, and have since discovered millions more around the globe.

The Cultural Creatives, as compared to cultural conservatives or progressives, share numerous values in common, including a love for nature and concern about its destruction; a willingness to pay higher taxes to clean up the environment and stop global warming; consider it important to care for others; volunteer for one or more of the causes they care about; want more equality for women; are concerned about violence against women and children around the world; want our government to focus more on children's education and building up local neighborhoods; and don't care much for materialism. They are also deeply spiritual in their own unique ways, seek ways to inwardly grow and develop, but are concerned about fundamentalist extremism. They love the arts and like meeting new people and learning about exotic places. They pay lots of attention to developing and maintaining relationships, want to be involved in making a better world, and are unhappy with both the left and right in politics, but still want something more than the mushy middle.

If this sounds like you, then you're probably a Cultural Creative, part of a huge subculture that you don't tend to find on the usual chip isle at the grocery store. As Anderson and Ray put it, "The Cultural Creatives are a coherent subculture—except for one thing: they are missing self-awareness as a whole people."³ I believe this subculture describes most Unitarian Universalists. We are an entire religion made up of Cultural Creatives. We currently have far less than a million members, but imagine what we could do should our ranks swell to include the other 49 plus million of us out there. Right now we're not aware of each other because the values that define us are not reflected in the larger culture, but imagine what might happen should we find each other, "a tribe of millions of *cultural* relatives," as Anderson and Ray envision, "with the same values and worldview and life priorities you thought you invented virtually by yourself."⁴

Martin Luther King Jr. once said the thing that gave him the strength to carry on, even when his life and the life of his family had been threatened, was the promise that he was "never alone." Today we can find the same strength, the power to transform our world, in the awareness that we are not alone; that there are millions of people, tens of millions, maybe hundreds of millions of people who share our values. Yet, Anderson and Ray say, "The critical question is this: Once they discover their common values, will they work together to implement them?"⁵ In light of all that's going on in the world right now, I'd have to answer a resounding, *yes!* This past spring, we saw millions in the Arab world come together to topple age-old dictatorships because they could no longer stand to live in a world where one percent has everything. Why have they done this now of all times? Could it be because, in this age of mass communication, they have seen how others live in the

³ Ray, Paul H., and Anderson, Sherry Ruth, *The Cultural Creatives*, Harmony Books, New York, NY, 2000, p. 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

world, perhaps even know some of them, and now realize they are not alone? Right now in Russia millions more are refusing to accept a government where every voice isn't heard. Why now, after decades of uniformity and conformity are they so willing to revolt? Do they suddenly realize they are not alone? And even here in the U.S., millions in the Occupy movement, who were nowhere in sight just a decade ago, are everywhere demanding an end to an elitist economy that leaves almost everyone out. Have they too realized they are not alone?

As Unitarian Universalists, we have long considered ourselves an obscure, marginal group, but now, as we see people standing up for the very values we believe in, we too can feel confident we are not alone. There is a place for us in the world, a need for us, and the best way to connect with the millions of others like us, is to see to it that the world does reflect our common values. And because there is strength in numbers, we can have the confidence and courage to make this happen because we know, like Dr. King, that we are never alone. We can join hands with the millions like us around the globe and boldly declare, "One for all, and all for one!"