

Cultural Consensus

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While sharing beliefs with people is the foundation of intimate social relationships, reaching a functioning consensus is what's important to large-scale social structures.

You don't need to agree with someone else's beliefs to respect their right to have them, and you don't need to like them personally to be able to peacefully co-exist in spite of any differences.

Though it may seem frustrating when people don't just have the same "common sense", it's an impossible thing to achieve universally, and seeing the world differently is actually a plus for larger communities.

Different fundamental beliefs lead to the development of different cultures, and the more cultural diversity that you're willing to tolerate, the more symbiotic your community can be. What costs a little to one is worth a lot to another just by virtue of having different cultural preferences and aversions.

Fostering more cultural diversity creates a more robust and resilient socioeconomic foundation. But we can't get there unless we focus on cultural consensus instead of ideological correctness.

Cultural Consensus refers to the norms agreed upon by all community stakeholders. Its not based on any specific identity or ideology, but instead represent what all identities and ideologies in the community are willing to agree to for ground rules.

We must grow out of debating ideas with the assumption of whatever is the "correct" idea is going to be used to control everyone, even people who disagree. It's this authoritarian conditioning that makes discussing ideas so hard, not the differences themselves.

We don't need to share beliefs, and we definitely have no justification to force beliefs onto others. We just need to guarantee some practical safeties to each other, unanimously willing to defend those safeties regardless of the differences between us; ideological, physical, or socioeconomic.

That's what it means to be a free country. Always has and always will, even as everyone tries their best to pervert it.

In this post, I will address the Capitalism and Communism paradigms that seem existentially opposed to one another and highlight how they perfectly capable of achieving a practical, co-existing consensus.

In doing so, I invite you to consider whether the reality of global conflict has ever truly been about competing ideologies, or whether these are nothing more than distractions from the much more primal factors driving the decisions that humans.

But first, let's talk about what we should be aiming for in achieving consensus with others, because it has nothing to do with being friendly (although it certainly doesn't hurt if you are)

The Purpose of Consensus

Consensus is not total agreement. It's an *effective* agreement that seeks to clarify boundaries and responsibilities within a relationship. Two people who don't like each other at all can reach a perfectly respectable consensus on how to handle their interactions with one another.

Ironically, you should be putting in the most effort to reach a functioning consensus with the people you like the least, for you get along more naturally with people you like, and it's the people who frustrate you that you need to worry about falling into conflict with.

When it comes to achieving consensus on a societal scale, it's important to focus on the parts that matter and minimize any emotional distractions. The fundamental goals of societal consensus are:

- ~ Determining how individual people and subgroups contribute to collective social car
- ~ Determining how to handle failures of social responsibility
- ~ Determining what constitutes harmful behavior
- ~ Determining the appropriate response to harmful behavior

- ~ Determining how to request updates to the agreement
- ~ Determining what cancels the agreement

These agreements should be as concise as they possibly can be while still being functionally complete in terms of resolving the 6 points above.

When you try to extend beyond what is needed for consensus or is the result of natural collaboration, you risk bigoted correctness.

Bigoted Correctness

Worrying more about correctness than consensus can lead to a form of bigotry. While people may have well reasoned structure meant to be as objective as possible, humanity's perception of reality will always be inherently flawed, and it will almost always be flawed in ways that favor us.

When we accept that there's a fundamental likelihood that we're misunderstanding the situation no matter how much we do to avoid confusion, there's hardly an ethical justification for controlling or otherwise harming others.

Bigoted correctness is when we ignore intellectual humility and use our sense of correctness to justify the mistreatment of others. We become judge, jury, and executioner in deciding someone is worth ostracizing, talking shit about, or otherwise trying to harm in some way, all because we think that we're right and they are wrong. We're smart and they're dumb. Etc.

Now don't get me wrong, I call people dumb all the time. I call myself dumb all the time. To me, being smart or dumb is a relative state of being. We can say smart things or we can say dumb things independently of if we're a smart or dumb person. I tell people if they're being dumb because I think they can be not dumb and they'd want to be not dumb.

But when it comes to being a free person living among other free person, you need to understand the difference between friendly debate and you imposing your perspective on others forcefully.

If people don't agree that it's the objective truth, and they haven't agreed to abide by the same principles as you to determine truth, there's no rational justification a free person could make to

impose their truth on another.

To punish people for what they believe when it doesn't cause harm or prevent them from performing whatever social duties they agree to is a violation of human rights, which we'll get into more on those shortly.

To ostracize people because they're objectively wrong *as judged by you* is to be a bigot. To assume you understand their entire disposition because of a few beliefs is to be a generalizing bigot. To risk consensus so that you can claim objective superiority is to be a dangerous bigot.

Being trusted to change someones mind comes with lived, present experience, not any immediate empirical proof, especially across cultural divides.

Different cultures have different values, and while the global engineering and scientific world needs some shared language and structure, it's important to remember that the structure is meant to serve the truth and must be adjusted as needed to ensure that it does.

Adjusting the truth as needed to serve the structure is how we often find ourselves using objective language and structures to justify our own bigotry and biases. Labs, newsrooms, and courtrooms have all seen their fair share of self-serving lies that are well-evidenced merely because it fit within the common structure of proof.

But the biggest problem with believing we have an absolutely objective perspective is that we approach discourse with others from the fundamental assumption that we can dismiss anything they say that doesn't immediately agree with what we already think. As much as structures such as science are meant to combat confirmation bias, they also provide the means to enable systemic bias on a society-warping scale while calling it an attempt to be objective.

However, thinking we're objectively correct isn't the only reason that we resist consensus.

Not Consenting

While general consensus is more practical for the many, absolute control is more practical for the few. And when the many are beholden to the few, it can be hard to get people to engage

with consensus-driven dialogue opposed to control-driven debate.

Here are common things that derail the pursuit of consensus:

Protecting Existing Hierarchy

Many who oppose consensus are merely self-preserving. They have a desirable position in the system of imposed authority and don't want to sacrifice it to do what the general population all agrees to.

Deflecting Personal Responsibility

This is a sneaky one that a lot of people miss on the citizen side of things, but if everyone was in relative agreement with everyone else, there would be no bad guys to blame for why your day/life sucks. For people in certain positions, being anti-peace in regards to broader society is how they maintain their personal peace. Quite diabolical, if you ask me.

Ideological Insecurity

Many people are genuinely unsure why they are doing what they are doing. They have high-level reasons, but they don't know why those reasons are the reasons.

These people are the most likely to be threatened simply by the discussion of alternative ideas. They either don't believe their ideas themselves, or they are not confident in their ability to argue for them in an open forum. Either way, that is the issue, not the pursuit of consent.

Hate-based Personality

Some people base a significant amount of their personality around the things that they don't like. While that's a behavior to address in a different post, it's relevant here as a major distraction from consensus. Some people pride their entire being on an unwillingness to cooperate with others. While this can be effective as a target protest, it's destructive to society if it's a default state of being.

Dogmatic Absolution

Some people will pass on 90% of what they want simply because it's not 100%. The only way that the world will be 100% what you want it to be is if you meet it where it is at. If you seek to impose your view of perfection onto the world, that's the first step to dictatorship.

Personal Grievances

When someone is wronged, the best thing society can do is prevent such a wrong from happening again.

Unfortunately, to the person that it happened to, they generally thing some sort of retribution is the top priority.

As such, it can be quite difficult to get people who feel they have been personally wronged to reach consensus with those they perceive as wronging them, even if such a consensus is the best way to prevent further harm.

When Compromise is Defeat

There are many cases where compromise feels like defeat, but few where it is actually so. Most of the time, resistance to compromise is nothing more than the primal ego wanting to fight to the death for the whole lot. It's not a rational choice unless you're intending to be a warring psychopath for the rest of your life.

As we get into the main course here, keep an open mind, and see if you can see how such extreme ideological differences such as capitalism and communism can achieve consensus.

Capitalism & Communism Sitting In a Tree

Let me start this off by saying that I don't think capitalism or communism actually exist. These are abstract monoliths that hardly share a consistent meaning depending on who you ask, even among well-educated people. They are generalizations of a collection of principles that serve as pseudo-religions, when the only true defining factor between them is a matter of clerical ownership.

They are questions of ownership and a bunch of assumptions about how that impacts human behavior. In capitalism, private owners regulate property. In communism, public ownership regulates property.

Ironically, collective ownership is possible, both on the producer and consumer side, within current American structures. Nothing is preventing from collective own enterprises from competing with private ones. Nor is there anything stopping from people forming NGOs to fulfill community needs.

The reality is that even people who claim to be communist, when presented with the option, pursue individual success within capitalist structures instead of finding or creating collective structures, as they are free to do without making it all about their little pet religion.

This isn't to say that "capitalists" aren't equally ridiculous. Outside of the basic ownership principle, it's hardly more than a collection of excuses to be a piece of shit. However, anti-capitalism is essentially nothing but talk when collective structures have been available this entire time, some with pretty great tax benefits.

The reality is that while people who don't understand the world act like these debates matter, the world has never and likely will never know pure forms of either capitalism nor communism. It's simply not how human behavior works.

In many ways, this capitalism vs communism debate is a proxy for a debate around fundamental human nature. Are humans fundamentally selfish and individualist or selfless and collectivist?

All of us were born into already existing societies and conditioned by people born into already existing societies. None of us have the lived experience to say for sure what's pure human nature vs social conditioning. We still have no meaningfully holistic explanation for human behavior. All of that to say, the question of whether humans are naturally selfish or selfless is a perfectly fair one to ask.

While that's a discussion for a different post, it's important to realize the depth of nuance to such vague ideological monoliths.

It's also important to call out how people on both sides of the capitalism/communism debate will blame all of their personal incompetence on the presence of the other ideology. Instead of reaching the consensus needed to allow each person to live the life that they wish, each side blames their lack of self-actualization on the other.

They are both trying to prove they have the right answer and getting nowhere as a result. There are seeking conquest, not consensus, so they achieve only conflict.

When we put consensus over determining who's objectively correct for the sake of one group controlling the other, the conversation becomes much more productive.

Instead of arguing over ideological purity, we should be asking: What practical structures already exist that allow these ideas to coexist? How can we better leverage them to provide people with options that align with their values? Is the collective/private ownership debate even relevant to individual success or social care?

I'll give some quick answers:

What practical structures already exist that allow these ideas to coexist?

Something that isn't talked about too much is that it was highly unlikely that the Founding Fathers of the United States intended for the federal government to ever have as much centralized and autonomous power as it does today. Most of it exists off of shaky interpretations of the Commerce Clause, and the chaos we're experiencing currently is exhibit A through Z of why it's dumb to put all of the power and money in one basket. (eggs are power and money, especially in this economy)

While the government is often reduced to, well, "the government", it's actually a nested structure of relatively autonomous entities. The United States is a constitutional federal republic, meaning that it's guided by a constitution as the supreme law of the land and a federal government to protect the republic of individual states, both from each other and from outside threats.

The centralization of power in the federal government that occurred throughout the 1900's was arguably unconstitutional. And while that's definitely a separate debate, I mention it here to highlight how the United States is operating more under a singular, shared rule set than it potentially should.

All of that to say, why the hell can't we just have capitalist state and communist states co-exist? Why not be the ones to do the experiment and see which works better? If both sides are confident that their methods are best, we already have the structure to allow different states to diversify a bit more culturally. As we said earlier, that's a good thing.

Even within single states, you could experiment with a single communist city.

But the most important thing is the possibility of true integration; we already have the ability to form various legal entities to facilitate both collective production and collective consumption. In other words, there are no major systemic barriers to co-existence currently. They are almost entirely cultural, exacerbated by the extreme inequality caused by corruption, a factor that exists independent of the overarching idealism being blamed for scummy human behavior that's needs to be accounted for regardless.

To remove the bite of the overarching ideologies, I'll phrase it like this: the current system, if freed from coercion and corruption, can accommodate both individualist and collectivist social structures rather easily.

How can we better leverage existing structures to provide people with options that align with their values?

The most important step in ensuring that social structures represent public interest is to minimize the influence that private influence has over public offices. Ultimately, the ideologies offered by our politicians today are nothing but covers used sporadically to justify and provide cover for whatever backroom deal they made.

The people who actually care need to ensure that their values are being genuinely represented, otherwise they are just voting for panderers who use the people's principles as scapegoats for their own personal gain.

While many people say that resolving corruption is about taking money out of politics, I'd argue that it's more effective and pressing to bring awareness into it.

If we can establish a non-propagandized network to share information and reach a consensus on the scale of corruption impacting the entire US political and socioeconomic system, we can be much more tactical about our organized response.

When we stop playing the oligarch-refereed red team/blue team and unite around the collective corruption of both sides, we can help each other live by our own values better than our corrupt federal government ever has allowed.

And once we show enough collective force, the roaches will scatter. The only reason why they are still being scummy is because they are still convinced it's going to pay off. Once we make it abundantly clear that it will not, enough will change course that the remainder will be much easier to address head on.

Does public or private ownership even matter in regards to social care commitments?

Whether or not private or public entities own the means of production has no direct impact over what fundamental social care commitments are made to the general population. Nor does it impact whether reckless greed and corruption will be allowed.

The non-ownership Marxist principle of allocation based on need ignores the capability for abundance in modern society. It's more than easy enough to provide for the basic needs of all people. The fact that we're not doing so currently is an egregious failure of humanity, not capitalism or communism.

While this isn't the post to do a proof here, I'd reckon that only about a quarter of people need to work to provide for the needs of all, and as a result of being the ones to work for the benefit of the whole, those individuals can reasonably be rewarded differently based on their productivity.

So while there is technically a separate component to communism that stipulates people getting paid based on their needs, the technological abundance of modern society makes this less of a consideration. The only reason why we should ever have moments of life-threatening scarcity with the knowledge and resources available to us today is because of egregiously corrupt leadership.

And as stated before, that's its own separate issue; corrupt human behavior is something we need to worry about regardless of what ownership structure is listed on paper.

Focusing in on social care commitments specifically, these are really just reflective of people's personal ideologies. How much do productive individuals wish to provide to others? That's the more important question than who owns the means of production, unless you're foolish enough to think that you can consistently force meaningful productivity without risking sabotage and eventual collapse from innovative atrophy.

When thinking outside of an authoritarian purview, social care commitments have nothing to do with overarching ownership structures and everything to do with the individual generosity of productive workers. Are people who are productive willing to take care of people who are not?

Are social obligations a function of systemic enforcement, or do they rely on the goodwill of those who contribute the most?

Will those who create excess value willingly support those who do not?

These questions exist independently of whether the means of production are publicly or privately owned.

Kissing In A Tree

I realize that I'm an outlier here, but I'm fairly confident in my reasoning. I see no reason why individual and collective structures can't co-exist in both integrated and voluntarily segregated fashions within the United States.

Regardless of ownership structure, we still have questions of social care commitments and motivating more productive people to take care of less productive people.

If people really think who fundamentally owns stuff matters, let them fuck around and find out. There's nothing disallowing that from happening today now that the whole totally unconstitutional Red Scare is over.

Capitalism and Communism could easily co-exist in America. Nothing is stopping communist individuals from creating competing organizations for privately held enterprises, nor is anything stopping them from creating entities that better facilitate collective consumption.

This is the glory of freedom, and as much as people willingly give it up, we can take it back whenever we're ready to stop pursuing ideological conquest over consensus.

The Power of Consensus

The greatest trick ever played on humanity is the illusion that our differences are greater than our common interests. Driven by decades of centralized control over radio and TV, scope manipulation has led Americans and other western democracies around the world to believe that their two party systems represent polar opposites and offer a choice that resembles meaningful democracy.

We are led to believe that ideological battles between capitalism and communism, left and right, individualism and collectivism, are existential conflicts—when in reality, they are distractions from the far more pressing matter: the concentration of power in the hands of the few.

The ruling class—the ultra-wealthy, the corporate elite, the entrenched political dynasties—do not maintain power because they are more intelligent, more capable, or even because they have more resources in their direct personal possession. They maintain power because they are unified in their self-interest while the masses are divided over the *illusion* of ideological incompatibility.

But consensus is the great equalizer. If the masses—across political, economic, and cultural divides—can agree on even the most fundamental principles of coexistence, the influence of the ruling class collapses overnight. Their wealth, no matter how concentrated, holds no power if the people collectively refuse to accept the conditions it imposes.

No government, no corporation, no dynasty can stand against a population that is fully aligned in its demand for fair treatment and mutual respect.

This is why consensus is not just a tool—it is a weapon. A weapon against manufactured division, against engineered scarcity, against the narratives that keep people fighting among themselves instead of recognizing their shared power. The moment we stop letting ideological labels dictate our alliances and instead focus on the practical agreements that serve all of us, we become unstoppable.

We don't need to share the same beliefs—we only need to guarantee each other certain fundamental safeties. We don't need to erase our differences—we only need to respect each other's freedoms while ensuring no one's rights are trampled. If we can achieve that, the ruling class loses its leverage, and for the first time in history, power truly belongs to the people.

The only thing standing between us and that reality is our willingness to embrace consensus over correctness.