



There are dreamers like John Lennon who imagined: “a world with no countries ... and no religion too.”

Let me be the devil’s advocate (if only for a moment). John Lennon grew up in Liverpool row housing. To find your home, you needed to check the address number on the front, the way you check a gym locker number. In Lennon's youth, Liverpool had a uniform socio-economic class, language, culture, and even similar housing. —And yet there was conflict, and crime.

Suppose his dream comes true. Then what. Universal bliss and true lasting peace? Think again. Martin Luther (the German priest) caught a parishioner looking at icons in an inappropriate way. (That is, icons on church walls, not on your phone or computer.) Martin took down the icons and nailed a proclamation to the church door. Apart from nobility and commoners, German society was the same. Up to that point, a noble’s dress and dialect did not set them apart from other nobles. A commoner’s dress and speech did not set them apart from other commoners. In essence there was: one country, the same language for the same people, the same traditions, the same

culture. What ensued was not a class war. Nobles fought nobles, commoners fought commoners, over what the church insides should look like. The Protestant Reformation spread across Christian Europe. It crossed the channel, all the way to England. It started the Thirty Years' War, and even the Hundred Years' war. What is now modern-day Germany lost one third of its population, a ratio that exceeds that of World War I or World War II. Interestingly, these wars did not spread into Moslem countries. War spread only to countries that had some thing common—their religion. Muslim countries also faced conflict; Shiite and Sunni Muslims fought over which lineage had the true descendants of the prophet Mohammed. Once again, as with Christians, Moslem conflict had religion in common. Historically true, Christians fought Moslems. Yet they shared the same God, Abraham's God. The same ten commandments (phrased somewhat differently) and they all worshipped once a week in a house of God.

Civil wars, or wars of ideology, tend to be more vicious than wars between countries. "Familiarity breeds contempt." The saying goes. Case in point: the American Civil War. More Americans died in that war than in either World War I, or World War II.

So, is the answer to make everything the same like in Madam Mao's China of the early seventies? In her quest to make everyone the same, millions of Chinese died (the entire population of Canada during that decade).

Morality and ethics arose in prehistoric times. Some people realized that caring about each other offered them support and mutual protection. Others who did not—were eaten by wolves or some other

pack of predators. It does not matter what language you use to care about each other —as long as you do care about each other. Our planet can be a global village with different countries who keep their word, by sharing a common value system based on morality and ethics, that is caring about others. Actually, this is what can mitigate war.

In contrast, a lack of morality and ethics almost made humanity extinct. During the Neolithic period the genetic diversity of the human male population decreased by around 95%. The cause is argued to be prehistoric warfare. Mass Neolithic gravesites have been uncovered holding male bones broken by stone axes spears and arrowheads were found (a notable one is in Herxheim Germany). In these places DNA analysis of the Y chromosome found a reduction in diversity by 95%. Back then there were no countries or even tribes, just clans. There was no written language. It is hard to know if spoken language was different. Words like "mama" appear to be derived from a common ancestral language. Except for differences in settlement locations, people seemed to be similar. Yet warfare still occurred.

Not to anthropomorphize but... There is an interesting analogy with chimpanzee wars. Researchers discovered that violence was more prevalent among chimpanzees within a single group than between different groups. (Chimpanzees, War, and History: "Are Men Born to Kill?" Oxford University Press.)

Countries are administrative entities (some have been around for over a thousand years). Countries can form unions like the European

Union and the United Nations. Why not make what we already have work better? Wouldn't that be easier than remaking a new world from scratch? Paving stones stop cracks from growing in pavement. Bricks stop cracks from growing in walls. A cracked brick or paving stone can be replaced or repaired. A cracked wall is harder to repair. A larger entity is not always a guarantee against failure. When large corporations fail, they become newsworthy. Even worse are failures involving the loss of life. The classic example of this is the "unsinkable" Titanic. One of the largest ships of its time; yet it sank. A failure in one city is a catastrophe. A failure in a country is a disaster. A failure in an empire would be even worse.

Then there is the notion of safety in numbers. A large group should be more likely to defend itself than a small group. However, are you safer in a large city where people do not know each other, or in a close-knit smaller community? There are arguments to both sides. In large cities there are bigger hospitals, with experienced staff, that can better handle serious medical problems like gunshot wounds.

You might say people aren't similar enough to avoid war or civil conflict. Suppose that after some successive wars, people agree to become even more the same after each war. Let's imagine things go to absurdly ridiculous extremes. (There are incidences of this throughout history.)

First people dress alike then they paint their skin gray. Then comes the problem of hiding gender, or height, or weight. The solution could be to put each person into their giant human sized hamster ball,

similar to the smaller version that hamsters scurry about in. Of course, each ball would have to be the same size and the same shade of grey.

Ah perfection, you might say, no reason to fight. But wait, what if two individuals, each in their own ball, roll towards each other? One might yell to the other: “Turn right or left! I want to go forward.” The other responds: “No. You turn left or right. I want to go forward.” One yells to the people in balls behind: “I am being blocked join me.” The other in the opposing ball does the same by yelling to those behind him or her.

Oops, there are no longer countries to stop, or contain, the spread of war globally. So, after a lot of cause and effect of unfortunate events, World War IX breaks out. Sounds ridiculous, but it makes a point as to why making everyone the same is a band-aid solution. It does not address the actual underlying cause of conflict.

People have always found reasons to fight. They could fight about keeping things the same or making them even more similar. Things being the same will not necessarily stop a fight. Familiarity can breed contempt. However, if you have been taught tolerance toward other people’s differences, you are less likely to fight them. Tolerance arises from accepting and becoming accustomed to people's differences.

For future generations: What should be done is to teach people to care about each other. —To really care about each other—especially even if they are different, whether that be: gender, race, religion, ethnicity, skin colour, sexual orientation, or culture.

Ultimately what matters is knowing right from wrong, or moral correctness, or knowing good from evil (however you want to phrase it). The language you use to describe this concept does not matter as much as the practice. Respect other peoples' languages even if you aren't fluent in them. Knowing more than one language will raise your I.Q. People are different. Over the ages this difference caused many languages to arise. Respect other people's ethnicity. Respect other countries, even if you don't live there. Respect other peoples culture even if it is different. Provided that the difference does not conflict with morality and ethics, (the notion of caring for others).

When people are the same, they may be prone to lose the knowledge of being tolerant towards others' differences —simply by lack of practice.

Variety in the gene pool makes future generations stronger, more robust, and resilient to genetic diseases. A homogeneous population may be stricken by some disease outbreak, but a more diverse population will more likely have survivors.

In a Nutshell

What causes conflict? It's when a person (or group) wants something and another person (or group) objects. You may say that things being different enables conflict, like race or income level. Not so. As noted previously, even when things are the same conflict can arise. Why? The causes are not differences but a lack of morality and ethics. No

matter which language you use to define morality and ethics: right vs. wrong, correct vs incorrect, good vs. bad, etc. The lack there of, spreads intolerance, hatred, pride, envy, etc. And this will allow a conflict to happen.

We want people to tolerate us. For that to happen, it means that people need to tolerate each other. The way to tolerate each other is to become accustomed (acclimatized if you will) to other people's differences (provided these differences are not morally and ethically objectionable.) Tolerance is a two-way street for people to tolerate you —you in turn, need to tolerate them. Tolerance comes with practice. It is a skill like playing a piano, or chess, or athletics. When things are the same, atrophy causes people to lose the skill of tolerance. Remember people still need their space and privacy. Be friendly without being intrusive. However, there is one thing we all should be the same at —morality and ethics. That is to be kind, tolerant, patient, and caring.

Remember! As far as starting a conflict: *People will always find a reason, when there is no reason.*

If you have something to say about this discourse, please say so. I hope this writing does not cause conflict but inspires thought.

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