

# The Fourth Turning

An American Prophecy



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## RHYTHMS IN HISTORY

In 1969, amid all the howl on college campuses, a young sociologist named Peter Harris quietly published a two-hundred-page monograph in the Harvard journal *Perspectives in American History*. Therein Harris reached a striking conclusion: Over three centuries of American history, a wide variety of social indicators—birth rate, marriage age, wage growth, social mobility, political activism—have always turned an abrupt corner every twenty-two years or so. Emerging out of reams of archival evidence, this insistent pattern compelled Harris to rethink the standard-issue linearism of his academic specialty—and ultimately prompted him to switch fields. (He is now a history professor at Temple University.) Maybe, he wondered, those long-term trends toward urbanization, industrialization, and education are *not*, after all, the primary forces of history. Maybe, instead, “it is possible to see, through long periods of American history, a surprisingly regular pattern of growth and change in the social system”—in other words, “a truly cyclical system of human life.”

Calling this twenty-two-year period a “growth cycle interval,” Harris identified the essence of the turning. He observed that “the ‘mood of the nation’ also goes through swings or cycles adhering closely to the familiar interval.” Placed end to end, these cycles serve as a natural metric across the topography of American history. He pointed out, for example, that “it was a span of almost exactly two growth cycles from the English Civil War to the colonial revolts of the 1680s (the Glorious Revolution at home), while the War for Independence broke out about four cycles later still.” Had his theory been used in 1689 to predict the future, he noted, “the hypothetical date for a crisis in the cyclical timing during this period would have been 1777.”

In recent decades, many distinguished scholars have joined Harris in identifying what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. has called “patterns of alternation, of ebb and of flow, in human history.” What is the *timing* of these cycles? Very often, their duration is either a full saeculum or a half saeculum. Cycles that last a full saeculum are usually divisible into four seasonal phases. Cycles that last a half saeculum (such as the economists’ Kondratieff cycle or Harris’s own growth interval) are usually two-stroke cycles—meshing neatly, like a double-time beat, with the full saeculum. What *causes* these cycles? Like Schlesinger, most theorists point to generational change—even if they can’t say exactly how it works. Harris suggests that “the modal personality” of each generation “fluctuates according to cyclical variations in the environment in which socialization takes place.”

Perhaps the main reason these cycle theorists have failed to attract more attention is because mainstream academia evaluates each newly discovered cycle as an isolated curiosity. Most academics neither look for cycles nor

ponder the causes of those they happen to stumble across. And so long as the experts aren’t paying attention, it doesn’t matter how insistently or eloquently the seasons of history may speak to them. The saeculum remains as unheard as if it were still lying in some Etruscan tomb, still etched in a language no one can decipher.

Some cyclical trends are handicapped by the fact that no one can quantify them precisely—a deficiency skeptics use to their advantage. Consider the attitude of the rising youth generation toward political and family authority. Over the half saeculum between 1935 and 1975, survey data confirm that this attitude shifted from one extreme to another. For earlier eras, no such numbers exist. If, for example, we wanted to look at the half saeculum between 1690 and 1740, we can only infer from primary sources and historians that the distance between the CCC Youth Corps and Wheeler Ranch hippies is *analogous* to the distance between the crisp “Family Well-Ordered” essays of young Cotton Mather and the frenzied vanity bonfires of young John Davenport. We need the same imaginative power to compare the cheery young rationalists who debated *The Federalist* papers in the 1780s (using pseudonyms like “Publius”) with those whom Ralph Waldo Emerson described in the 1830s as “young men born with knives in their brain . . . madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-Outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-Day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers” who gathered not to reason or build but “to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest.”

Yet even when the core trend cannot be measured directly, related indicators sometimes can be. Ask yourself what the above swings in youth attitudes imply for campus rebellions. Would you figure swings of similar timing? If so, your answer is confirmed by what the record shows ever since Thomas Hobbes (born the same year as John Winthrop) denounced universities as “the core of rebellion” against the English Crown: Once each saeculum, an Awakening ushers in a dramatic surge in the number and fury of collegiate riots against symbols of social authority, with memorable peaks in the 1740s, 1830s, 1880s, and 1960s. Another telling indicator is the founding of utopian communes in America. This pattern is so overwhelmingly clustered in Awakening years (especially around 1840, 1900, and 1970) that political scientist Michael Barkun says it “strongly suggests the existence of a utopian cycle with a moderately predictable rhythm.”

Describing a historical cycle requires both interpretation and quantification, within an objective framework that allows dates and magnitudes to be compared. With these caveats in mind, let’s turn to other cycles that keep time with the saeculum.

## Politics

The best known cycle theory of American politics was first suggested by Arthur Schlesinger Sr. Working off a casual remark of Henry Adams's, Schlesinger discerned a somewhat irregular oscillation between liberal and conservative eras since the Revolutionary War. Later, the theory was more fully developed by his son, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who relabeled the eras as those of public energy and private interest.

The Schlesinger cycle lines up with the saeculum as follows: The public energy eras overlap largely with Awakening and Crisis turnings, the private interest eras with Highs and Unravelings. This should not be surprising: Crises and Awakenings both require a dramatic reassertion of public energy—the former to fulfill the need for social survival, the latter to fulfill the need for social expression. No such need appears in Highs or Unravelings.

Schlesinger's match is not exact and would be closer if his cycle (about fifteen years per era) were not so rapid. He justifies this rapid periodicity by pointing to Ortega's fifteen-year "generation" span—a hypothesis that Ortega never actually tested against history. One would expect a fifteen-year cycle to deviate from the saeculum rather quickly. But by identifying anomalous periods, Schlesinger has kept his cycle fairly close to the saecular rhythm. Recently, though, it has started to go awry. By his extrapolation, America was ready for a major new dose of big-government liberalism in 1988. But that didn't happen. Four years later, when Bill Clinton won the White House, Schlesinger again heralded a new dawn of such liberalism. Again, that didn't happen. Timing aside, though, Schlesinger is right about the fundamental rhythm of American politics. Authoritarian government isn't dead; it's just hibernating, poised to return in the Fourth Turning, rested and refreshed.

The second best known cycle theory of American politics is the party realignment cycle, which coincides perfectly with the saeculum. Every forty years or so—always during a Crisis or Awakening—a new "realigning election" gives birth to a "new political party system." According to Walter Dean Burnham, these elections occurred in 1788 (Federalist-Republican); 1828 (Jacksonian Democrat); 1860 (Lincoln Republican); 1896 (McKinley Republican); 1932 (New Deal Democrat); and 1968, 1972, or 1980 (Nixon-Reagan Republican). By this count, Burnham reckons we are now in our sixth party system. Though these realignments don't coincide with his own cycle, Schlesinger does concede their regularity. "Over the last century and a quarter," he notes, "each realignment cycle has run about forty years." What causes these cycles? Political scientist Paul Allen Beck suggests that children who grow up during realignments come of age shunning them, whereas children who grow up during eras of "normal" politics come of age seeking them. The result is *one* realignment every *two* phases of life.

The Schlesinger and Burnham cycles both describe a two-stroke alternation, lasting a half saeculum; as such, both can be improved by reinterpreting them within the seasonal quaternity of the full saeculum. The public energy of an Awakening cannot be equated with that of a Crisis. SDS-style 1960s radicalism was hardly a reenactment of the New Deal, nor was circa 1900 muckraking reminiscent of Lincoln's Union Party. One type of public energy undermines the authority of government; the other type builds it up. Likewise, the private interests of a High cannot be equated with those of an Unraveling. In a High, private interests want to cooperate with public institutions that appear to be working; in an Unraveling, they want to flee from public institutions that appear to be failing.

The saeculum improves the two-stroke realignment cycle in several respects: Eras of partisan solidarity, high voter turnout, and mannerly campaigning typically begin near the end of a Crisis and run through a High, while eras of partisan splintering, low voter turnout, third-party crusades, and vitriolic campaigning typically begin near the end of an Awakening and run through an Unraveling. The steep slide in voter participation from 1970 to 1990 resembles a similar decline between 1900 and 1920. Ross Perot's share of the 1992 vote was the largest for a third party since the Bull Moose ticket in 1912, which was the largest since the Republicans in 1856—all Unraveling eras. In an Awakening, voters seek to disconnect from civic authority they increasingly distrust and don't need. In a Crisis, by contrast, voters seek to rebuild civic authority they increasingly trust and need. Most Awakening-era elections can be called *de*-aligning to the extent that they reflect a loosening of party discipline; most Crisis-era elections can be called *re*-aligning to the extent that they establish or reinforce one-party rule.

## Foreign Affairs

Many people might suppose that nothing could be more random than changes in America's foreign policy. What pattern, after all, can possibly account for the global accidents of war and statecraft? Most diplomatic historians supposed the same thing until 1952, when the scholar Frank L. Klingberg discovered a "historical alternation of moods" in American foreign policy. He explained the clear difference between a mere *event* and society's *response* to that event. Whatever the provocation, he showed, America's response depends on whether the prevailing mood is ticking toward "introversion" or tocking toward "extraversion."

With each two-stroke alternation lasting about forty-seven years, Klingberg's cycle closely matches the saeculum, except during and just after the Civil War. In general, his introversions overlap with Awakenings and Crises; his extraversions, with Highs and Unravelings. During an Awakening or Crisis, while people are absorbed with internal social change (the New Deal un-

til Pearl Harbor; the Age of Aquarius after the Tet Offensive), they become an introverting society. During a High or Unraveling, while people look beyond their borders (either to engage in gunboat diplomacy, Manifest Destiny, or global coalition building), they become an extraverting society. During the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, the Klingberg cycle deviates entirely from the normal rhythm of the saeculum, probably because the Civil War issued in catastrophic suffering and no triumph over a foreign power.

Klingberg explains his cycle by pointing to “generational experience”—in particular to the desire of aging national leaders to repeal the “failures” of their midlife years and return to the policy style that prevailed during their earlier “formative years.” In the early 1980s, Klingberg wrote that an era of introversion had begun in 1967 and was due to last until 1987; by his clock, a subsequent era of extraversion is supposed to last until 2014.

## Economy

In 1930, Stalin arrested the economist Nikolai Kondratieff and shipped him off to Siberia. His crime: daring to defy that most linear of ideologies—Marxism—by suggesting that the long-term performance of market economies is cyclical. Soon after his death in the gulag, Kondratieff became a cult figure to historical economists around the world. Today, his name is attached to a popular family of two-stroke economic “K-Cycles,” some traceable back to the fifteenth century and all having a periodicity of forty to fifty-five years.

K-Cycles vary in their details, but most of them closely fit the saeculum. Cycle peaks occur near the ends of Highs and Unravelings, and troughs occur near the ends of Awakenings and Crises. (Right now, this implies that America is in a long-wave upswing that began around 1980 and will last shortly past the year 2000.) Here again, a two-way pendulum doesn’t do justice to the seasonality of the saeculum. During a High, wage and productivity growth is typically smooth and very rapid. During an Awakening, a soaring economy hits at least one spectacular bust (the mid-1970s, mid-1890s, late 1830s, or mid-1730s) that is darkly interpreted as closing a golden age of postwar growth. During an Unraveling, economic activity again accelerates, but now the growth is unbalanced and fitful. During a Crisis, the economy is rocked by some sequential combination of panic, depression, inflation, war, and public regimentation. Near the end of a Crisis, a healthy economy is reborn.

The presence of public authority in the economy shifts radically from one turning to the next. During a High, government plays an obtrusive planning and regulatory role. Witness the royal trading patents of the 1610s, the congressional land grants of the 1870s, and the “military-industrial complex” of the 1950s. The rules of the game encourage saving, favor the

young, and protect organized producers (monopolies, trusts, guilds, unions). During an Awakening, the popular consensus underlying this public role begins to disintegrate. During an Unraveling, public control recedes, while entrepreneurship, risk taking, and the creative destruction of the market prevail. Meanwhile, the rules of the game encourage dissaving, favor the old, and protect individual consumers. During a Crisis, a new popular consensus emerges.

A similar rhythm governs trends in income and class equality. The two most sustained and measurable poverty-rate declines (1946–1967 and 1865–1890) have roughly coincided with the last two Highs. Yet the historical moments of greatest estimated income inequality (the late 1990s, late 1920s, late 1850s, and late 1760s) have all occurred near the ends of Unravelings. Highs promote income and class equality, and Awakenings change that. Unravelings promote *inequality*, and Crises change that.

## Family and Society

When Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 at a trough in the public status of women, she observed that the history of women’s rights is like a series of gathering tidal waves, each sweeping over American institutional life at discrete intervals before sweeping out again amid rips and eddies. The timing of these waves follows the saeculum. Feminism, as a popular movement, bursts on the scene during an Awakening. During an Unraveling, the gap between acceptable gender roles shrinks to its narrowest point. The efficacy of masculine power (and feminine morality) is reidealized during a Crisis. During a High, the gap between acceptable gender roles grows to its widest point, after which the cycle repeats.

As with turnings, so with archetypes. Prophet generations always include impassioned women (from Anne Hutchinson to Susan B. Anthony to Hillary Clinton) who are deemed the civic equals of their male peers. Hero generations favor a rational paragon of leadership (a Thomas Jefferson or John Kennedy), which reasserts the public-private division of sexual labor. Through the centuries, young Nomad women have displayed some variant of the “garçonne” look that hides sexual differences, while young Artist women have flaunted the hoops and beehives that accentuate sexual differences. In midlife, both of these latter archetypes struggle to reverse course—Nomads to expand gender differences, Artists to shrink them. Friedan implicitly had these seasonal rhythms in mind when she observed that just after World War II younger women had been steered out of public vocations and thrown “back” onto the domestic pedestal. Others have made similar observations about earlier Highs.

Seasonal shifts in gender roles are linked to shifts in the family as an institution. During a High, the family feels secure and child rearing becomes

more indulgent. During an Unraveling, the family feels endangered and child rearing becomes more protective. Prior to the American High, the previous golden age of indulgent families was the 1870s—an era that family historian Mary Cable likens to the “Dr. Spock 1950s.” Prior to today’s Culture Wars, the previous age of family pessimism was the 1920s, a decade whose shrill hysteria over the lost family has yet to be matched.

Paralleling these family rhythms are the changing ideals or metaphors that Americans use to express their attitude toward society at large. In a High, people want to *belong*; in an Awakening, to *defy*; in an Unraveling, to *separate*; in a Crisis, to *gather*. Among racial and ethnic minorities, these attitudes play a very conspicuous role in shaping the dominant strategy for group advancement. During the saeculum following Appomattox, the image of an effective black leader progressed from Booker T. Washington (conformity) to W. E. B. Du Bois (defiance) to Marcus Garvey (separation). During the saeculum following V-J Day, cutting-edge African-American movements have retraced many of the same steps—from the Council on Racial Equality (conformity), to the Black Panthers (defiance), to the Nation of Islam (separation).

Whatever the size of a person’s group, he or she is more likely to feel fairly treated in a High, where a shame ethos fosters togetherness and gratitude—and victimized in an Unraveling, where a guilt ethos fosters separateness and blame. When individuals see themselves standing outside the system, as a minority or as individuals, their objective varies with the season. In a High, they want to show they *are able* to join; in an Unraveling, they want to show they *don’t need* to join.

## Population

The onset of war causes birthrates to fall, and the onset of peace causes birthrates to surge. In traditional societies, this pattern is attributed to the iron laws of biology and economics. In modern societies, it is assisted by the rhythm of the saeculum—in particular, by the resurgent popularity of family life and the widening of gender role divisions that occur during Highs.

Over five centuries, every Fourth Turning has been marked by a fall in birthrates; thus, Artist generations (most recently the Silent) are typically baby bust generations. On the other hand, every High but one has been marked by a marked rise in birthrates; thus Prophet generations (most recently Boomers) are typically baby boom generations. The only exception was the Missionary Generation, born 1860 to 1882. Yet here the exception proves the rule, since the two decades after the Civil War mark the only fertility rate plateau along an otherwise steady downslope from the 1820s to the 1930s. Awakenings (when Nomads are born) and Unravelings (when Heroes are born) show a less pronounced bust-and-boom pattern. During the

recent Consciousness Revolution, fertility plunged to its lowest rate in U.S. history but rebounded sharply when that era neared its end.

Immigration to America has also followed a saecular rhythm: It tends to climb in an Awakening, peak in an Unraveling, and fall during a Crisis. The climb coincides with quickening social mobility, rising public tolerance, pluralist-minded leaders, and loosening social controls. The Unraveling-era reversal is triggered by a sudden nativist backlash (in the 1850s, 1920s, and 1990s). The subsequent fall coincides with aggressive new efforts to protect the nation—and by the time a Crisis hits, immigration is often seen as unsafe by the community and unattractive by those who might in better times wish to relocate.

Across the centuries, most immigrants to America have been children or young adults when they arrived. Thus a Nomad archetype that comes of age during an Unraveling acquires a relatively large number of immigrants. Conversely, an Artist archetype that comes of age during a High typically shows a sharp decline in its proportion of immigrants. The Silent Generation, for example, is the *least* immigrant generation in American history, whereas the 13th and (very old) Lost Generations are the two *most* immigrant generations alive today.

## Social Disorder

Rates of crime and worries about social disorder rise during Awakenings, reach a cyclical peak during Unravelings, and then fall sharply during Crises.

“It seems to now become dangerous for the good people of this town to go out late at night without being sufficiently well armed,” the *New York Gazette* lamented in 1749. Many have echoed this complaint during subsequent Unravelings, each of which has given birth to a mythic American image of violent crime—from roaring ’49er gold towns to gangland Chicago to *New Jack City*. Each time, the crime peak has coincided with equally memorable public efforts to suppress it: The term *lynching* dates from the 1760s; *vigilante*, from the 1850s; *G-Man*, from the 1920s; and *three strikes and you’re out*, from the 1990s. Ultimately, public reaction has its desired effect. By the end of the Crisis, most indicators of violence and civic disorder decline to cyclical lows, where they stay through most of the following High.

Trends in substance abuse (and related pathologies) mirror and slightly precede these crime trends. In fact, indicators of per-capita alcohol consumption follow an astoundingly regular cycle: They begin rising late in a High, peak near the end of the Awakening, and then begin a decline during the Unraveling amid growing public disapproval. The sharpest drop in alcohol consumption in American history occurred near the end of the Second

Great Awakening, when it fell from an all-time U.S. peak in 1830 (four gallons per person per year) down to less than one-third of that level by the eve of the Civil War. The second-sharpest drop occurred between 1900 and 1910, near the end of the next Awakening, followed by a further decline during Prohibition. In recent decades, per-capita alcohol consumption began rising around 1960, peaked around 1980, and has since been falling. For mind-altering drugs, from opiates to hallucinogens, the trends are similar. Remarking on this eighty-year cycle, Yale medical historian David Musto notes that “a person growing up in America in the 1890s and the 1970s would have the image of a drug-using, drug-tolerating society; a person growing up in the 1940s—and perhaps in the 2000s—would have the image of a nation that firmly rejects narcotics.”

Since youth is the age in which most crime and drug experimentation occurs, these trends leave a special mark on the generation moving into adulthood. Young Prophets pioneer the dysfunctional slide while indulgent elder Heroes look on. Young Nomads, habituated to this slide as children, later suffer a reputation as *undercivilized*. Young Heroes reverse the bad trends while moralizing elder Prophets applaud. Young Artists, habituated to this reversal as children, later gain a reputation as *overcivilized*.

## Culture

In the realm of ideas, the saeculum regularly oscillates from a focus on the spirit (in an Awakening) to a focus on the world (in a Crisis). Eminent historians have noticed this pattern—as when Edmund Morgan observed: “In the 1740s America’s leading intellectuals were clergymen and thought about theology; in 1790 they were statesmen and thought about politics.” Metaphorically, this is a shift from the outer to the inner. The 1930s was an outer-focused decade; its culminating public event, the 1939 World’s Fair, was a celebration of science and mankind’s power to shape its environment. By contrast, the 1970s was an inner-focused decade, what Marilyn Ferguson called America’s “Voyage to the Interior,” the first step toward a “Higher Consciousness.”

As it moves along this cycle of inner and outer ideals, the saeculum reveals how a society periodically rejuvenates and replenishes its culture. A Crisis totally alters the social framework for the expression of thought and feeling. In a High, the culture optimistically if blandly reflects the public consensus about the fledgling civic order. New currents arise only on the fringe, where they subtly and unthreateningly begin to undermine the consensus. Come the Awakening, the civic order feels secure and prosperous enough to enable a new culture to erupt—conforming to Cao Yu’s dictum that “art for art’s sake is a philosophy of the well-fed.” New norms, styles, and directions first assault and then firmly implant upon the post-Crisis or-

der. In an Unraveling, the new culture flourishes, splinters, and diversifies. As the post-Crisis order weakens, the now regnant cultural themes begin to feel less original and more like parodies and plagiarisms. When a new Crisis hits, the culture is cleansed, censored, and harnessed to new public goals. Where art was previously allowed to disturb, now its purpose is to strengthen social resolve. Afterward, the new order creates a fresh slate upon which cultural activity can (again) serve benign and decorative yet also subversive ends—establishing the beachhead on which a fresh Awakening vision will soon land.

All forms of culture reflect these patterns. Consider musical styles over the past three saecula. With Awakenings have come spirituals and gospel songs; then ragtime and early blues; and more recently soul, rock ‘n’ roll, and protest folk. With Unravelings have come minstrels; then blues and jazz; and more recently country, rap, and alternative rock. With Crises have come camp songs and marches and more recently swing and big bands. With Highs have come ballads; then musicals and bandstands; and more recently crooners and vintage rock.

Consider architecture and fashion. A High produces styles that are expansive yet functional, and features romantic revivals that combine confident masculinity (and large constructions) with yielding femininity (and standardization). An Awakening returns to natural, spiritual, folk, rural, and primitive motifs, always starting with a thaw in conventional social discipline and an emergence of conscience-driven lifestyle fetishes (regarding food, dress, language, sex, and leisure). An Unraveling is the most eclectic era, with a deliberate mixing and crossing of styles, periods, and genders. A Fourth Turning brings new interest in the rational and classical, in simplicity, restraint, and decorum—while gender-related fashions begin to reformalize and return to elegance.

While every turning can lay claim to cultural innovation, some shine more in certain media than in others. In music, Awakenings have been eras of special creativity. In literature, Highs and Unravelings have usually come out ahead ever since Shakespeare and Milton. During the last three saecula, Unravelings have been eras in which American culture has exercised a profound influence over the rest of the world—perhaps because this is when it exports the fruits of its recent Awakening. Surely no decades match the 1850s and 1920s for the dazzling reputation enjoyed by American authors in Europe, and surely none matches the 1990s for the global appetite for American popular culture of every variety (books, journals, news, film, software, and electronic games).

Peter Harris closed his monograph on the “cyclical system of human life” by inquiring whether it might offer “the hope of developing a predictive social science of the future.” This hope, of course, goes against the linearist



## Turnings in the Anglo-American Saeculum

	First Turning (High)	Second Turning (Awakening)	Third Turning (Unraveling)	Fourth Turning (Crisis)
Generation Entering:				
ELDERHOOD	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
MIDLIFE	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>
YOUNG ADULTHOOD	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>
CHILDHOOD	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>
LATE MEDIEVAL SAECULUM			Retreat from France (1435–1459)	Wars of the Roses (1459–1487)
REFORMATION SAECULUM	Tudor Renaissance (1487–1517)	Protestant Reformation (1517–1542)	Intolerance and Martyrdom (1542–1569)	Armada Crisis (1569–1594)
NEW WORLD SAECULUM	Merrie England (1594–1621)	Puritan Awakening (1621–1649)	Reaction and Restoration (1649–1675)	Glorious Revolution (1675–1704)
REVOLUTIONARY SAECULUM	Augustan Age of Empire (1704–1727)	Great Awakening (1727–1746)	French and Indian Wars (1746–1773)	American Revolution (1773–1794)
CIVIL WAR SAECULUM	Era of Good Feelings (1794–1822)	Transcendental Awakening (1822–1844)	Mexican War and Sectionalism (1844–1860)	Civil War (1860–1865)
GREAT POWER SAECULUM	Reconstruction and Gilded Age (1865–1886)	Third Great Awakening (1886–1908)	World War I and Prohibition (1908–1929)	Great Depression and World War II (1929–1946)
MILLENNIAL SAECULUM	American High (1946–1964)	Consciousness Revolution (1964–1984)	Culture Wars (1984–2005?)	Millennial Crisis (2005?–2026?)

## Gray Champions

ONE AFTERNOON IN APRIL 1689, AS THE AMERICAN COLONIES boiled with rumors that King James II was about to strip them of their liberties, the king's hand-picked governor of New England, Sir Edmund Andros, marched his troops menacingly through Boston. His purpose was to crush any thought of colonial self-rule. To everyone present, the future looked grim.

Just at that moment, seemingly from nowhere, there appeared on the streets "the figure of an ancient man" with "the eye, the face, the attitude of command." His manner "combining the leader and the saint," the old man planted himself directly in the path of the approaching British soldiers and demanded that they stop. "The solemn, yet warlike peal of that voice, fit either to rule a host in the battlefield or be raised to God in prayer, were irresistible. At the old man's word and outstretched arm, the roll of the drum was hushed at once, and the advancing line stood still."

Inspired by this single act of defiance, the people of Boston roused their courage and acted. Within the day, Andros was deposed and jailed, the liberty of Boston saved, and the corner turned on the colonial Glorious Revolution.

"Who was this Gray Champion?" Nathaniel Hawthorne asked near the end of this story in his *Twice-Told Tales*. No one knew, except that he had once been among the fire-hearted young Puritans who had first settled New England more than a half century earlier. Later that evening, just before the old priest-warrior disappeared, the townspeople saw him embracing the eighty-five-year-old Simon Bradstreet, a kindred spirit and one of the few original Puritans still alive. Would the Gray Champion ever return? "I have heard," added Hawthorne, "that whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again."

## Archetypes in History

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Archetype	Hero	Artist	Prophet	Nomad
<b>Generations</b>	Arthurian Elizabethan Glorious Republican — G.I. Millennial	Humanist Parliamentary Enlightenment Compromise Progressive Silent	Reformation Puritan Awakening Transcendental Missionary Boom	Reprisal Cavalier Liberty Gilded Lost Thirteenth
<b>REPUTATION AS CHILD</b>	good	placid	spirited	bad
<b>COMING OF AGE</b>	empowering	unfulfilling	sanctifying	alienating
<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	outer-	inter-	inner-	self-
<b>COMING OF AGE</b>	world	dependency	world	sufficiency
<b>YOUNG ADULTHOOD</b>	building	improving	reflecting	competing
<b>TRANSITION IN</b>	energetic to	conformist to	detached to	frenetic to
<b>MIDLIFE</b>	hubristic	experimental	judgmental	exhausted
<b>LEADERSHIP STYLE</b>	collegial, expansive	pluralistic, indecisive	righteous, austere	solitary, pragmatic
<b>ENTERING ELDERHOOD</b>				
<b>REPUTATION AS ELDER</b>	powerful	sensitive	wise	tough
<b>TREATMENT AS ELDER</b>	rewarded	liked	respected	abandoned
<b>HOW IT IS NURTURED</b>	tightening	overprotective	relaxing	underprotective
<b>HOW IT NURTURES</b>	relaxing	underprotective	tightening	overprotective
<b>POSITIVE REPUTATION</b>	selfless, rational, competent	caring, open-minded, expert	principled, resolute, creative	savvy, practical, perceptive
<b>NEGATIVE REPUTATION</b>	unreflective, mechanistic, overbold	sentimental, complicating, indecisive	narcissistic, presumptuous, ruthless	unfeeling, uncultured, amoral
<b>ENDOWMENTS</b>	community, affluence, technology	pluralism, expertise, due process	vision, values, religion	liberty survival, honor

their dedication to the future but who now comprise the largest consumption lobby in American history. We see this among the Silent, who were once chided for their “lonely crowd” conformism but who now are enjoying a lifestyle of exuberant individualism full of “choices” and options. Boomers once dreamed of a Pepperland of tolerance, pleasure, and love but now sternly police the perceived excesses of youth. The first 13ers engaged in high-risk behavior coming of age, but today’s fledgling householders are beginning to turn against personal and public risk. The beat goes on.

## Moods of the Four Turnings

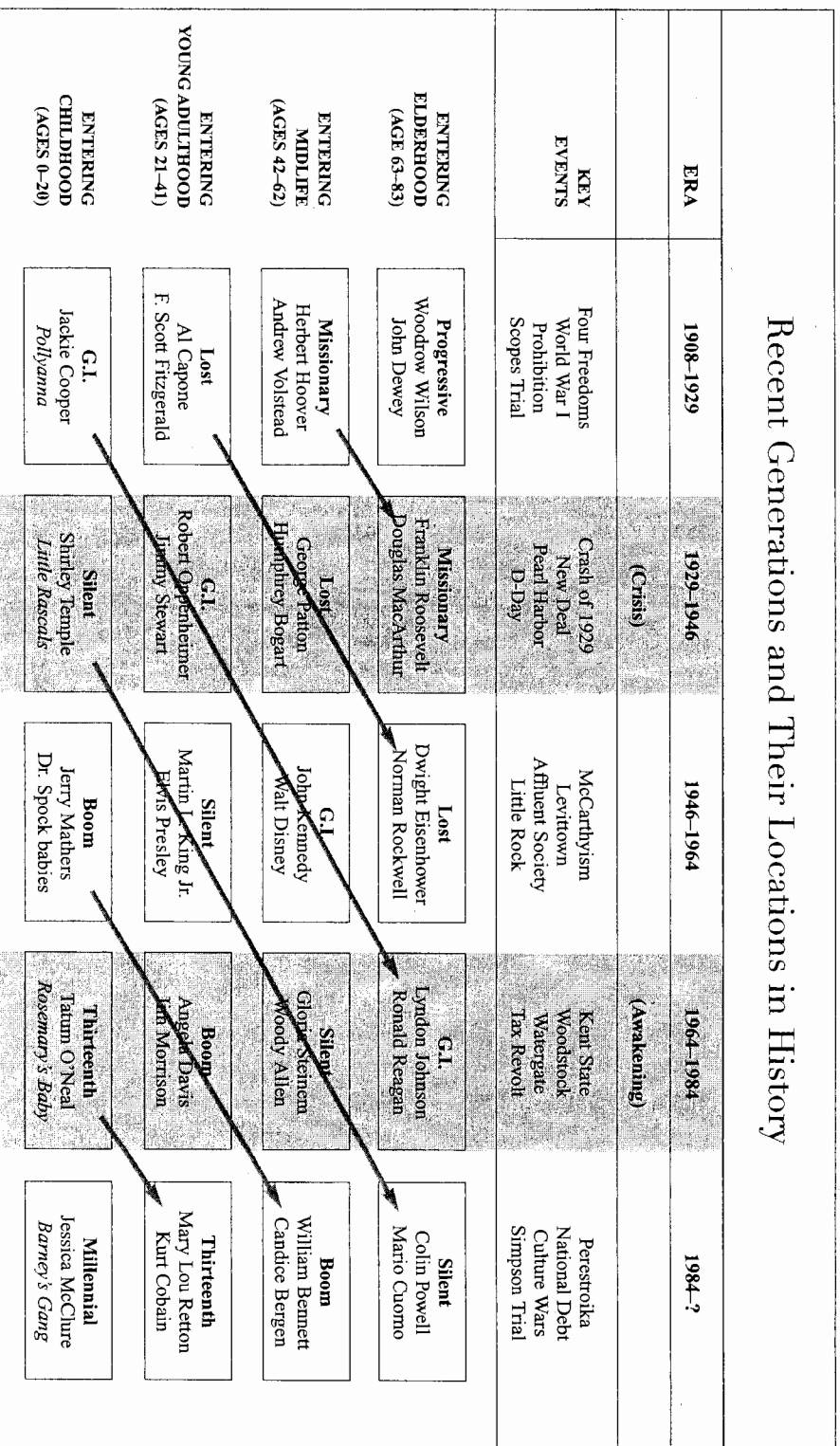
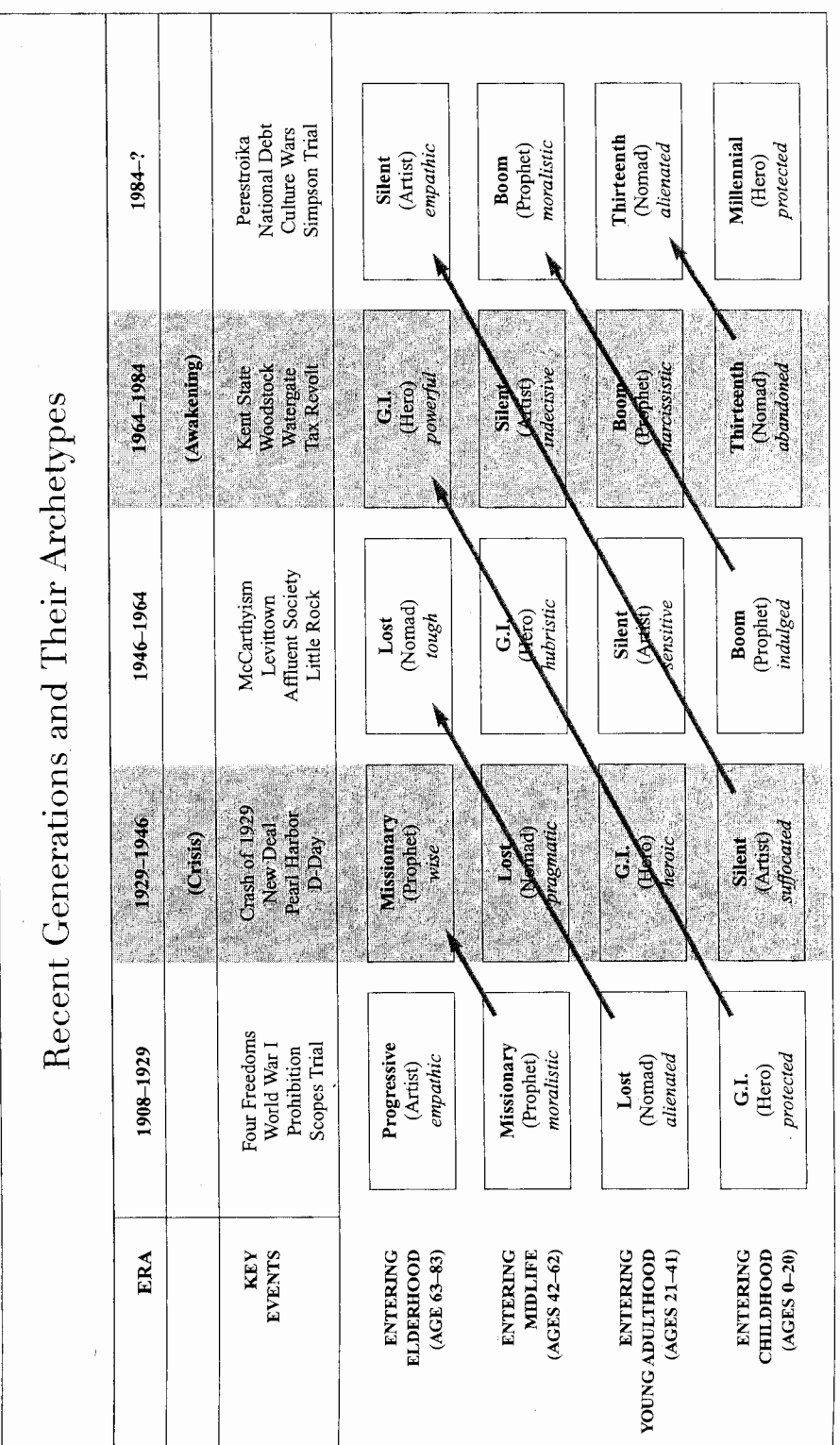
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	First Turning (High)	Second Turning (Awakening)	Third Turning (Unraveling)	Fourth Turning (Crisis)
<b>Generation Entering:</b>				
<b>ELDERHOOD</b>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
<b>MIDLIFE</b>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>
<b>YOUNG ADULTHOOD</b>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>
<b>CHILDHOOD</b>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>
<b>FAMILIES</b>	strong	weakening	weak	strengthening
<b>CHILD NURTURE</b>	loosening	underprotective	tightening	overprotective
<b>GAP BETWEEN</b>				
<b>GENDER ROLES</b>	maximum	narrowing	minimum	widening
<b>IDEALS</b>	settled	discovered	debated	championed
<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	reinforced	attacked	eroded	founded
<b>CULTURE</b>	innocent	passionate	cynical	practical
<b>SOCIAL STRUCTURE</b>	unified	splintering	diversified	gravitating
<b>WORLDVIEW</b>	simple	complicating	complex	simplifying
<b>SOCIAL PRIORITY</b>	maximum community	rising individualism	maximum individualism	rising community
<b>SOCIAL MOTIVATOR</b>	shame	conscience	guilt	stigma
<b>SENSE OF</b>				
<b>GREATEST NEED</b>	do what works	fix inner world	do what feels right	fix outer world
<b>VISION OF FUTURE</b>	brightening	euphoric	darkening	urgent
<b>WARS</b>	restorative	controversial	inconclusive	total

given row would read just like the one before, except with a higher multiplier. The 2020s would be a mere extrapolation of the 1990s, with more cable channels and Web pages and senior benefits and corporate free agents—plus more handgun murders, media violence, cultural splintering, political cynicism, youth alienation, partisan meanness, and distance between rich and poor. There would be no apogee, no leveling, no correction. Eventually, America would veer totally out of control along some bizarre centrifugal path.

In cyclical time, a society always evolves. Usually, the circle is a spiral of progress, sometimes a spiral of decline. Always, people strive to mend the errors of the past, to correct the excesses of the present, to seek a future that provides whatever feels most in need. Thus can civilization endure and thrive.





- The **American High** (*First Turning, 1946–1964*) witnessed America's ascendancy as a global superpower. Social movements stalled. The middle class grew and prospered. Churches buttressed government. Huge peacetime defense budgets were uncontroversial. Mass tastes thrived atop a collectivist infrastructure of suburbs, interstates, and regulated communication. Declaring an "end to ideology," respected authorities presided over a bland, modernist, and spirit-dead culture.

*Lost entering elderhood*

*G.I.s entering midlife*

*Silent entering young adulthood*

*Boomers entering childhood*

- The **Consciousness Revolution** (*Second Turning, 1964–1984*), which began with urban riots and campus fury, swelled alongside Vietnam War protests and a rebellious counter-culture. It gave rise to feminist, environmental, and black power movements and to a steep rise in violent crime and family breakup. After the fury peaked with Watergate (in 1974), passions turned inward toward New Age lifestyles and spiritual rebirth. The mood expired during Reagan's upbeat reelection campaign, as onetime hippies reached their yuppie chrysalis.

*G.I.s entering elderhood*

*Silent entering midlife*

*Boomers entering young adulthood*

*13ers entering childhood*

- The **Culture Wars** (*Third Turning, 1984–2005?*), which opened with triumphant Morning in America individualism, has thus far drifted toward pessimism. Personal confidence remains high, and few national problems demand immediate action. But the public reflects darkly on growing violence and incivility, widening inequality, pervasive distrust of institutions and leaders, and a debased popular culture. People fear that the national consensus is splitting into competing values camps.

*Silent entering elderhood*

*Boomers entering midlife*

*13ers entering young adulthood*

*Millennials entering childhood*

- The **Millennial Crisis**, the *Fourth Turning* of the Millennial Saeculum has yet to arrive. Its projected generational constellation:

*Boomers entering elderhood*

*13ers entering midlife*

*Millennials entering young adulthood*

*New Silent entering childhood*

The **Boom Generation** (*Prophet, born 1943–1960*) basked as children in Dr. Spock permissiveness, suburban conformism, *Sputnik*-era schooling, Beaver Cleaver friendliness, and *Father Knows Best* family order. From the Summer of Love to the Days of Rage, they came of age rebelling against worldly blueprints of their parents. As their flower child, Black Panther, Weathermen, and "Jesus freak" fringes proclaimed themselves arbiters of public morals, youth pathologies worsened—and SAT scores began a seventeen-year slide. In the early 1980s, many young adults became self-absorbed "yuppies" with mainstream careers but perfectionist lifestyles. Entering midlife (and national power), they are trumpeting values, touting a "politics of meaning," and waging scorched-earth Culture Wars. (*American: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Steven Spielberg, Candice Bergen, Spike Lee, Bill Gates; Foreign: Tony Blair, Binyamin Netanyahu*)

The **13th Generation** (*Nomad, born 1961–1981*) survived a hurried childhood of divorce, latchkeys, open classrooms, devil-child movies, and a shift from G to R ratings. They came of age curtailing the earlier rise in youth crime and fall in test scores—yet heard themselves denounced as so wild and stupid as to put *The Nation at Risk*. As young adults, maneuvering through a sexual battlescape of AIDS and blighted courtship rituals, they date and marry cautiously. In jobs, they embrace risk and prefer free agency over loyal corporatism. From grunge to hip-hop, their splintery culture reveals a hardened edge. Politically, they lean toward pragmatism and nonaffiliation and would rather volunteer than vote. Widely criticized as Xers or slackers, they inhabit a *Reality Bites* economy of declining young-adult living standards. (*American: Tom Cruise, Jodie Foster, Michael Dell, Deion Sanders, Winona Ryder, Quentin Tarantino; Foreign: Princess Di, Alanis Morissette*)

The **Millennial Generation** (*Hero?, born 1982–?*) first arrived when Baby on Board signs appeared. As abortion and divorce rates ebbed, the popular culture began stigmatizing hands-off parental styles and recasting babies as special. Child abuse and child safety became hot topics, while books teaching virtues and values became best-sellers. Today, politicians define adult issues (from tax cuts to deficits) in terms of their effects on children. Hollywood is replacing cinematic child devils with child angels, and cable TV and the Internet are cordoning off child-friendly havens. While educators speak of standards and cooperative learning, school uniforms are surging in popularity. With adults viewing children more positively, U.S. test scores are faring better in international comparisons. (*American: Jessica McClure, the Olsen twins, Baby Richard, Elisa Lopez, Dooney Waters, Jessica Dubroff; Foreign: Anna Paquin, Prince William*)

The Millennial Saeculum's *Artist* archetype has yet to be born.