

Daily Evolver Podcast
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THE BANNON DOCTRINE: DEMOLITION AHEAD

Jeff Salzman: Hey everybody, Jeff Salzman here and welcome to The Daily Evolver. My intention for this podcast was to take some of my favorite questions and comments I get from listeners and respond to them. I guess I did that but it was only one question and after a 40-minute answer I decided to call it a podcast, so that's what I got here for you today.

I do think it's a topic though that warrants the attention and that is, well the topic is Steve Bannon who is the Chief Strategist and philosopher, if you will, for Donald Trump and the Trump Administration. His worldview matters and that's what we're going to look at. The question is from a long time listener, Catherine from Arizona, and before we get into it I just want to say that I love hearing from you and you can email me at jeff@dailyevolver.com or send me a voice recording to that address, or you can go to my website dailyevolver.com and on the right of the opening page there's this vertical orange button that says "Send Jeff a Voicemail" and you can do just that right there.

One last thing before we get started, I do use a bit of jargon, I try to keep it to a minimum, but if you want to understand particularly the levels of cultural and consciousness development that is so key to integral theory, you can go to my website dailyevolver.com and scroll down a bit ... there's a section called "about integral theory"... click on that and at the top of the page are a couple charts that I think will really help you follow along and understand all of this better.

All right, so this is the question from Catherine in Arizona. Thank you Catherine and I hope I can shed some light on what is happening.

Catherine: Hi, Jeff. This is Catherine from Arizona and I'd like your help with something. Specifically what I'd like is for you to help me understand Steve Bannon through an integral lens. Bannon seems to be the main brains behind Trump's remaking of the United States into a populous nation state. His membership on the National Security Council seems to position him well to redefine America's engagement in the world, and I believe to move our country in the world backwards about 100 years.

I'd really appreciate it if you could address his worldview through an integral lens and specifically the four tenets of his worldview.

Jeff Salzman: Okay, thank you Catherine. Yes, Steve Bannon and particularly the four tenets of his worldview, by which I'm thinking you mean the Four Turnings philosophy

that he subscribes to, which is very interesting particularly from an integral view so we'll take a look at that. I know I have talked about Bannon in the past, particularly in my podcast, "Pre-Truth, Post-Truth and Beyond". I haven't discussed this Fourth Turnings stuff and I think it's extra interesting in the light of the current, for me nauseating charges, tweets, whatever ... that came from Donald Trump this weekend accusing Obama of wiretapping him. In another one of Trump's amazing fits of psychological projection, he wonders if Obama is bad or sick.

Anyway, I don't want to get too much in the weeds on the story itself but what we know right now is that well first of all, Obama couldn't order a wiretap, but that there are indeed rumors that various intelligence agencies were surveilling certainly Sergei Kislyak who is the Russian Ambassador and anybody he talk to. If that includes the Trump organization then that's where the chips fall.

It does seem to me kind of suspect that Trump is going so far out of his way to discredit the two sources of information that could be incriminating, and those are the media and the intelligence agencies. Then again, that might just be what a good autocrat does as part of good autocrat hygiene. I just don't know.

I just spent a couple hours checking in on the mainstream pundits and the Washington establishment, and the consensus among these folks is that the tweets that Trump sent out this weekend are reckless and dangerous, because they undermine the order of things, they undermine the institutions that protect this country and hold it together.

I think that's true and that institution destruction, or as Bannon puts it, "the deconstruction of the administrative state" is one of the key deliberate doctrines of the Trump administration. Which brings us back to the subject of Catherine's question: Steve Bannon. It turns out that Steve Bannon is very influenced by a book called The Fourth Turning, which presents a philosophy of history that says that history moves in cycles, and that each cycle has four seasons, much as the cycle of a year has four seasons. In fact, they call it "the seasonal view of history".

Each season is 20 years or so long, so that adds up with four seasons to an 80-year span, which is the lifespan of a human being who lives to old age. The authors of the theory, William Strauss and Neil Howe, have actually mapped out the history of Western civilization according to this pattern, and it works out pretty well. There's actually a lot to like about the theory and not least of which is the very fact it looks for patterns in history and I'm just the sucker for that. I think a lot of integralist are always looking for the new patterns, and I think they actually have identified one.

They have also missed one, unfortunately, which I think renders the whole theory dangerous and which I'll get too in a minute. In the meantime, what actually works and how they overlay it on contemporary American society is interesting. Let's look at the

four turnings, the four seasons of our generational cycle, which we move through collectively, the whole society moves through each season together. The beginning of our generational cycle is situated at the end of World War II. World War II was the fourth turning of the previous cycle, and fourth turnings are ugly places to be. We'll get to that in a minute.

Anyway, we start the **first turning** of our generational cycle at the end of World War II. First turnings are typified by the high that comes after a crisis era, so there's a new attitude about things, an upswing economically, people are feeling unified, positive. In a funny coincidence I received a message from one of my listeners last week that was very well argued and he was challenging something that I put on a previous podcast where I was quoting Barack Obama in one of his final speeches where Obama was arguing for the "progress of history," as he does. Obama offered this thought experiment, "If you were to be reborn as a random American, would you choose to live now or sometime in the past?"

The obvious answer for many reasons, to me and most people when you really think about it, is now, or the very recent past (say, before November 8th). Anyway, my listener Frank writes, "To answer the original question I would choose to be born in the early '40s. This way I would be too young to go get myself killed in World War II. When I did grow up I would be living in a world of great prosperity whether I had a high school diploma or an advanced college degree. By the time the Vietnam war came around I would be too old to get drafted."

I can come up with a number of arguments against this point of view -- economic and civil rights and cultural -- and I made some and wrote back to him and I didn't change his mind. But I get it, I get that idea that it's great when things are in the upswing and kicking into high gear and everybody is in it together. Upon reading about the post-war "first turning" of the new generational cycle and the upbeat unified emotional tone of it, I think I have a better understanding of the piece of the truth that my listener was getting at.

Now, the **second turning** of this generational cycle, the second season in the four season year of an 80-year cycle, is what they call the awakening turning. This is characterized by a spiritual awakening, an awakening to higher principles. And this came online right on schedule in the mid '60s with the consciousness revolution (green postmodernism). Of course this is my generation, the generation of the baby boomers, and Steve Bannon's generation as well, although he is no friend to the baby boomers whom he has described as the most spoiled, most self-centered, most narcissistic generation that this country has ever produced.

He blames the values of the baby boomers, and the fact that we turned our backs on the values of our parents, for the coming problems of the third and fourth turning.

So let's look at the **third turning**. The third turning is referred to as *the unraveling* and in this generational cycle it started taking place in the '90s. It's characterized by a loss of faith in institutions, economic instability, booms and busts and people get really busy with culture wars. Think of the Clinton era in the '90s and it sort of fits.

The third turning has continued through the early 2000s and has culminated with the beginning of the **fourth turning**, which started in 2001 with the financial crisis (which the authors of *The Fourth Turning* predicted). They wrote the book in 1997 and predicted that the fourth turning would start in 2005 with in economic crisis. Okay, they were off by a couple years, it was 2007. That's pretty impressive.

So okay, the financial crisis then kicked off the fourth turning, which we're in now, and the fourth turning is referred to as the crisis period. To quote Neil Howe who is the surviving author of the book, in writing in the Washington Post just a few days ago ... It's an interesting article, it's titled "Where Did Steve Bannon Get his Worldview? From My Book" and I'll tweet it out so you can take a look at it.

In every fourth turning our institutional life is reconstructed from the ground up, always in response to a perceived threat to the nation's very survival. He writes, "despite a new tilt towards isolationism, the United States could find itself at war. I certainly do not hope for war, I simply make a sobering observation that every total war in US history has occurred during a fourth turning and no fourth turning has yet unfolded without one." He points out that the fourth turnings of the last three generational cycles were marked by war: the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War II.

All of which were followed by a new era of growth and optimism and the cycle repeats itself again. As I said, there is actually a lot of intelligence to this and the book was well-received when it was published in 1997. Al Gore sent a copy to every member of the US Congress, and it was popular book among liberals. Strauss and Howe coined the term the *millennial generation* and spoke of them in very laudatory terms. In fact, the millennials will be the generation that is in leadership during the next American *high*, the next first turning, which will kick in according to this theory sometime around 2030.

So really, it's just this next dozen or so years that we have to worry about where the shit is going to hit the fan and we are going to experience if Steve Bannon, gets his way, the "systematic deconstruction of the administrative state." He means that both nationally as well as internationally, with Brexit and the weakening of the EU and NATO and the rise of populist nationalism throughout the developed world. It's all a little spookily right on schedule for a book that was written in 1997, and as I said I do think it has a lot to offer.

Even if you look at the four turnings, the first two turnings are creative - there's the *high* of the first turning and the *awakening* of the second turning. Then we have the third and fourth turnings, the *unraveling* and the *crisis* turnings, which are contractive and negative. That's basic polarity theory which states that the oscillation between positive and negative poles are just part of the basic makeup of the cosmos. As Walt Whitman said, "Out of the darkness opposite equals advance."

Strauss and Howe seek to embed their theory in deep history and so they go back to the ancient conception of time as being circular, this idea of seasonal time. They reprised a word that was used for thousands of years in ancient cultures, specifically the Etruscan and Roman culture: the concept of the *saeculum*, which is a human lifetime, a good, long, well-lived lifetime of 80 years. So a full life would mean that you live through all four seasons or turnings. And that pattern is part of the substrate of the system itself.

I like that sort of thing. It shows a desire to bring something that you don't run into very often in modern materialistic social science: the idea of big karmic patterns that repeat themselves, and integrate the interior and the exterior dimensions of life.

There's nothing in integral theory that would deny that humanity arises in 80 years *saecula* that are divided into four seasons that represent a cycle of creation and destruction. In fact, I think that can add to the granularity of our understanding of reality, and you know we integralist just love that! But here's what we don't love, at least I don't love, about this theory ... What I think is its fatal flaw and what is ultimately I think quite dangerous in the hands of somebody like Steve Bannon who is making very consequential decisions based on this theory.

The flaw is that there's no developmental aspect to it. There's no sense or acknowledgment that the cycles we're going through now are qualitatively any better than the cycles that people went through in the 1500s. There's no idea that we're progressing as a species. There's no moral development, there's no consciousness development. There's no cognitive development or spiritual development that is taken into account at all. It's not like they're just underplaying it or even ignoring it. In fact, Strauss and Howe spend quite a lot of time in this book making the case that linear time is an illusion. There's a section of the book called "overcoming linearism."

And of course they have a point. The idea that time is only linear and that we are on some great march to a triumphal end is the stuff of the romantic nationalism that brought us to the horrors of the first half of the 20th Century. As they write, "Over the last century, faith in progress has suffered many blows, perhaps none so devastating as Friedrich Nietzsche's critique. Nietzsche believed that delusions about never ending progress towards an unattainable standard had become a root malady of the western psyche. This dilution he believe constituted 'a cruel vehicle of self-loathing, spawning ground for hypocrisy and a cage around the authentic human spirit. His invented prophet Zarathustra identifies the problem as the spirit of revenge, a resentment against

history itself, against the one way pilgrimage whose lofty goals keep proving mankind's actual condition to be one of contemptible in significance.'

As an alternative, Zarathustra teaches the doctrine that every event is perpetually reenacted, that everything, anyone does has been done before and will be done again forever. Jesus, I can't imagine a more depressing philosophy than that. And I would just like to offer that there's another way to spin this thing. Why does it have to be either/or? I mean why do we, in order to develop an appreciation for circular time, why do we have to reject linear time? Why can't we have both?

In integral, we do. We have linear time married to circular time, which gives us the spiral, which has been spooling its way forward *linearly* for the past 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang. That is, I think, a far more inclusive and complete model of how things move.

Not so with the fourth turnings people. They're very clear, no linear time, just circular time, things repeat over and over again. If you're running a country then of course you might consider, as Steve Bannon apparently does, that war is inevitable, war with the Muslims is inevitable. That war in the South China Sea is inevitable, because we've always done war and why would we stop?

Actually, the reason we would stop is the same reason that we stop cannibalism, even though it had existed for millennia or human sacrifice, or animal sacrifice for that matter, which had existed for millennia.

Or slavery, which still exists but now it's a crime everywhere that it exist, it used to be state policy everywhere. Those days are over we have moved forward through linear time, *we have progressed morally* and that progress continues. Now, what we're realizing that we want to be rid off is violence in general, and that is a marker of a fully modern worldview: that violence is not the way to move your life or the life of your people forward.

In fact, modern people realize that violence causes more trouble than it solves. Conquering and subjugating and enslaving isn't all what it's crack up to be. It turns out it's a lot of work, people don't like it they resist it. In the modern world there are just so many better ways to move the ball forward, so people who have a modern or postmodern or integral stage of consciousness developments center of gravity they get this.

People who resonate more with traditionalism and the previous stage of warrior red culture they really don't get this, which brings us back to the problem of being governed by two men at the center of power, Donald Trump and Steve Bannon, who have centers of gravity in important lines at premodern stages.

I'll start with Trump. Trump is in many ways red in terms of moral development, in terms of some self-sense. He civilized enough to be able to work in the orange and

green container, but where he lives is at red. He's the "bomb the hell out of them and take their oil" guy. This worldview of "to the victor goes the spoils" is classic red. It's how Trump always lived his life, it's paid off for him, and it did matter too much to the rest of us until about a month ago when he got a hold of an army.

I do note with some reassurance that a couple weeks ago General James Mattis, Trump's new Secretary of Defense went over to Iraq to reassure them that we're not there to take anybody's oil. It was interesting just the casual insubordination of that. Also, the fact that you never heard a peep from Donald Trump after his Secretary of Defense went over and basically stated a doctrine that was the polar opposite of his own. It makes me hope that the worst impulses of Donald Trump may be contained by an orange container that he himself has set up. That would be I think roughly equivalent to how he run his business; he was a crazy guy at the center but he allowed people to run a clearly semi-organized ship.

If that is the case, Then Trump's role is to be basically a bullshitter-in-chief, in the sense that he is doing that sort of premodern thing of spinning a fantastical reality that everybody then agrees to live in. In the case of the Trump business empire it was "we're the the best, the most refined, king of the hill, top of the heap." Premodern psyches resonate with such bigger-than-life stories and great myths.

So what's the great myth of the Trump presidency? In the myth he's weaving here as President, he is the leader of a great movement, a great, great movement. No, a very great movement. I love that his favorite adjective is 'very', I mean I just love that. ... A very great movement of people who are the backbone of this country and who have built this country into a place of safety and abundance and freedom and who are under threat from people who are trying to corrupt it, take it over, whatever.

That's the big super story, that's the great myth, and some important aspects of truth, that is behind this Trump movement. And Trump himself believes it as do his traditional and warrior stage followers, which is he has a hard core probably 30% of the population.

I think we're seeing the Trump presidency coming into focus here. We're going to have him storming around the palace and the tower. (I mean this literally, people: the palace in Florida and the tower in New York. It's just perfect!) He'll be spinning (and by that I mean tweeting) this great tale of this great movement against this great enemy. And then he's going to farm out the details of governing to the adults in the room.

Unfortunately, one of the adults in the room is Steve Bannon. I talked a good bit about Steve Bannon in my *Pre-Truth, Post-Truth and Beyond* podcast. As I pointed out there's a lot that liberals could like about his anti-globalist agenda. A joke that Trump makes behind the scenes about Bannon is that he doesn't know whether Bannon is alt-right or alt-left. Bannon's economic nationalism is embedded in a deep ethnocentric

sense of ... Well, ethnocentric means my ethno is centric, that my people are the chosen people. My tradition is superior to other traditions.

That's what he thinks about western civilization and the Judeo-Christian tenets that it's based on. It's not just a matter of saying that this tradition is precious, that it needs to be valued and preserved and integrated. That's would be more of an integral way of holding the value of western civilization.

But no, when you hold that idea at a traditionalist, ethnocentric stage then it's about "my tradition is at war because it has always been at war." In fact, all traditional worldviews see that they are at war ... In one form or the other they all have a basic teaching that life is a cosmic battle between good and evil.

For the traditionalist Christian or Jew it is a cosmic battle specifically against Islam, which we have been fighting in one way or the other for nearly a thousand years. When you with that kind of deep, emotional, romantic, spiritual, juicy worldview and then wed it with a theory such as the fourth turnings theory that organizes history into an endless wheel of creation and destruction, but no progress, then that's a dangerous place to be. Especially when your theory shows you that we are on the cusp of a crisis and almost certainly a war.

If you believe that, you'd be remiss to not rise to the challenge and do whatever it takes to achieve victory. Now you wed this guy Steve Bannon with the guy who has the world's largest military at his command, Donald Trump, then you have a match made in, well to me, somewhere other than heaven. I know people wonder just how much influence to Steve Bannon has on Donald Trump and has he just colonized Trump's mind. I don't think so, I don't think we're as colonizable or as persuadable as people think . I think to the degree that Trump understands Bannon's worldview he believes it himself.

We'll just have to see if the larger container of government can contain these two guys. By that, I mean, I think principally about General Mattis, the Secretary of Defense: is he going to follow Donald Trump's cockamamie ideas of sneak attacks in the middle of the dessert with satellites everywhere? Or is he going to, with Donald Trump's full permission and cooperation, run a professional modern and postmodern military? As I said, I think Trump has basically signed on with this kind of an arrangement.

I think Bannon may have as well, I don't know. I think Bannon may think that Trump is fourth turning enough. He's enough creative destruction to drain the swamp and dismantle the administrative state and so forth, and that we won't need anything more violent than that. I hope so, because we've got a few more months of this Trump presidency. How many I don't know, because I truly think that virtually every Republican congressperson would prefer to have a President Pence. But hat's not true of their Republican voters, who are in the thrall of this grand story of this great leader who has come to defeat the enemy and set things right.

Okay, well, I think that's enough for now. I think this story will continue and there will be plenty to talk about in the future. You can find more of my stuff at my website Dailyevolver.com. I love hearing from you so send me a voicemail at Jeff@Dailyevolver.com and maybe I'll use it like I used Catherine's question this time.

You can also find my work, and the work of Ken Wilber and a lot of other terrific integral thinkers, on Integrallife.com they have a new site there. It's well worth it, it's 100 bucks a year and it is the pre-eminent site for the integral movement on the planet at this time so check it out.

Ok ... I think I'll let our Dear Leader play us out with an audio montage of one of his greatest hits called "Take the Oil," -- live from the red warrior meme! Now, I do offer a trigger warning because this is Donald Trump, so if you need to put a pillow over your head now would be the time.

Thanks, folks. Jeff Salzman signing off. See you next time!

Donald Trump: I would bomb the hell out of those oil fields. We'll circle it and we'll take the oil and we should have taken the oil when we left. I would take away their wealth. I would take away the oil. What you should be doing now is taking away the oil. I've always said, 'Shouldn't be there, but if we're going to get out, take the oil. If we would have taken the oil you wouldn't have ISIS.'

If we're going to leave, keep the oil, keep the oil, keep the oil! Don't let somebody else get it. Remember I've been saying for two years: attack the oil. Everybody said "Oh Trump" but I said attack it, take it, and keep it. So we should have kept the oil, but, okay, maybe we'll have another chance.

