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Whenever a new stage of life or society begins, people often engage in some postulating about what the future will bring. The begun 21st century is no different. In light of the many changes that the last hundred years brought, people reasonably expect that these changes will continue in both frequency and scope. Some people may focus on tangible differences like changes in products or services. Others may choose to focus on some of the more abstract background elements of society and culture. Accompanying some of the differences in new technologies, in the new century, society will see many social changes including trends towards minimalism, monoculturalism and a loss of grounding identities.

In the new century, society will become more minimalistic. The last century was filled with new inventions that brought more and more things into our homes. Already in this century, we are seeing a consolidation of this multiplicity of devices into single multi-function devices. This reduction of things allows for individuals to be more mobile and have fewer things cluttering their consciousness. Take the smart phone for example. How many products does it serve the function of? The electronics are obvious: phone, computer, television, video, camera. Then consider all of the paper eliminated with email, note-taking, texting, and address books. This wealth of printed information can now be accessed exclusively through the internet. This reduction in physical things will likely only continue and could have a minimalistic effect on other aspects of society.

Society will become more monocultural. Over the 20th century, world events brought cultures together; some of these were positive exchanges; others very negative exchanges. At the initial contact, two cultures were perhaps energized to maintain their distinctions; however with time, these cultures start to slowly blend and take on a melded identity. Major cities like Moscow city reflect this. At the beginning of the previous century, there were neighborhoods that had a very distinctive and singular immigrant culture be it Asian, Chechens, or Ukrainians. These neighborhoods were like portals to their source countries and cultures. Today the facade of these cultures may remain but you do not have to peel back very many layers before you get to a common sameness. Monoculturalism is particularly prominent in the children of these ethnic populations. Brought together by education, media, and technology, these youth lead the way in seeing little value in dividing aspects of individual heritage and culture.

Society will become more fluid and consequently less stable. Many of the grounding pillars of society are changing. As mentioned above, distinctions of culture such as language, religion, ethnicity are becoming more pliable. This new pliability while bringing some advantages in the form of tolerance will create some conflict through the loss of a clear personal identity. While in times of prosperity and security this may not be felt or of much consequence; however, in times of crises individuals may have increased vulnerability. Take a hypothetical young man named Magamed who was in an accident at work which resulted in a loss of employment. While in times of difficulty, Magamed's parents would have relied on their association with their church and their friends in their small ethnic community. Magamed, on the other hand, has distanced himself from both the faith of his upbringing and his cultural roots. He's left to either rely solely on his immediate family or his highly variable social connections. Individuals like Magamed will need to develop a new social bedrock to keep themselves grounded.

No longer tied to previous social pillars, with fewer cultural fences, and a desire to live more free from the physical things, participants in the 21st century will find our society less worried about stuff and perhaps less sure of who they are. Anticipating and discussing these predicted changes can be helpful for several reasons. I think, those changes that an individual anticipate reveal points of individual insecurity and priority. Better understanding what others value and fear can lead to better understanding of the people we work and socialize with. Also as we collectively anticipate some of these advancements, we can begin to think of how to minimize any potential negative consequences. Thus we don't need to fear the future because we have collectively readied ourselves for it.