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Our New ISCSC Social Media Presence

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Two Modes of Cyclicality in the Ancient World
The Future of Civilization: A Systems Approach
Nationalism in the Context of Globalization

Wilhelm Reich and the Fascist Personality
The Psychology of Fascism: Wilhelm Reich Et Al

Small Claims

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Editor’s Note

Fall 2022

From July 28 to July 30, 2022, it was my pleasure to serve as the Program Chair of the 51st International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations conference — *The Future of Civilization(s)*. This issue of the Comparative Civilizations Review contains a selection of articles presented at the conference.

Monmouth University, situated in West Long Branch, New Jersey, served as a beautiful setting for the conference which hosted an international group of scholars. Individuals from the UK, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Iran, Canada, Japan, and the U.S. converged to throw light on our fractured global landscape. In all, there were twenty-four papers given over a three-day period. Papers that were presented delved into family therapy, and the relationship between optimism, pessimism, and realism. Speakers explored the dominant ideology of contemporary Russia, nationalism in the context of globalization, and the progressive decay of Ethiopian Civilization.

Although many of the attendees would surely challenge my assessment, as I listened to the papers, I was struck by the feeling that presenters acknowledged that our grasp of the global landscape, although inconclusive or uncertain at best, is attended by a desire or ache to make out the ultimate context in which our lives are set.

In “The Laws of History and Big Data,” Professor Gregory Lewicki of the War Studies University of Gdansk, Poland explored the work of Polish historian and social philosopher Feliks Koneczny (1862-1949). Koneczny founded the original system of the comparative science of civilizations and labored to discover the laws behind the clash of civilizations. Lewicki’s paper spoke to the importance of Koneczny’s quest.

Independent scholar Peter Hecht in “Crusading as Philosophical Construct” illumes the continuing conflict between Western Civilization and Islam by deconstructing modern misconceptions about the Crusades.

“Modern opinion,” he argues, “is largely that the planners of the crusades instigated religious prejudice to provide political support for violence, in the name of Christianity.” Peter advises that his analysis serves to “expand our understanding of how the Church justified the distinctly non-Christlike behaviors of the Crusaders.” He examines not only the social context but the personal goals of ecclesiastical leaders of the time.
On the other hand, Dr. John Grayzel, in *Artificial Intelligence/Quantum Computing, and the Coming Transition from Civilization to Harmonization*, contends that the coming expansive use of artificial intelligence and quantum computing will alter the relations and understanding on which civilizations have traditionally been built. Grayzel insists that there will develop a new paradigm of civilization, a new reality that he says, “will flip our emphasis on delineating differences and conflicts between civilizations.”

In addition, Professor Tatyana Yakhontova of Ivan Franko National University, Lviv, Ukraine, proposed a critical analysis of contemporary Russian discourse. She sought to depict how every-day written texts reveal the way ideologies are reproduced and enacted in Russian life. Her analysis suggests ideologies that have given rise to the tragic war in Ukraine are hidden in plain sight. As she says, they are a product of the articles, websites, and interviews that are a part of daily and professional life.

Is it possible the meaning we find in the world, conflicting ideals, principles of conduct, and differing ends that guide our living, challenge any attempts to arrive at collective decisions? Or maybe these analyses are calling for a system of global politics that is, what I would call, minimally dogmatic. Such a politics would sanction the importance of a critical understanding of the global landscape — an understanding that is inherently inconclusive, indeterminate, and undefined.

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Our New ISCSC Social Media Presence

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Social media presence is essential, we could say even critical to any organization today. Social media can for itself be a topic for a discussion on civilization, as social media is today shaping mindsets, for better or worse.

Realizing this major development in our ever-more digitalized world, the ISCSC has undergone, in the past year, significant changes in the direction of establishing its social media presence.

The Story

Whilst attending the 2021 ISCSC conference in Romania I wanted to let friends and colleagues know through social media where am I and why I am at the conference, but apart from Facebook this was not possible. Discussing this issue later with the ISCSC leadership I was asked by our President Lynn Rhodes, Editor-in-Chief Joseph Drew, and members of the Board to create accounts on several social media platforms and establish a social media presence.

The first step was taken in December 2021, revamping the ISCSC website and branded material with the creation of a new, recognizable logo. To the already existing Facebook channel, our society added LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to our social media accounts.

Establishing the ISCSC social media presence, building it from scratch, we needed to answer two important questions:

1) What is the purpose of the social media platforms?
2) What content should we post?

As newcomers to social media, the purpose was very simple: build brand awareness. We live in a digital world where organizations are mainly discovered and understood through their social media presence.

Supporting the idea of successful brand awareness, it was important to decide what content to post. We decided to offer a combination of ISCSC history, interviews, articles, quotes, and trivia concerning civilizations, as well as content shared by our members. We also discussed then that a major goal was to start creating ISCSC original content.
During the months leading up to the 2022 ISCSC Conference at Monmouth University in late July, our goal of establishing a basic social media presence was accomplished on all selected social media platforms.

Following my presentation on social media presence at the conference, a key realization for all participants was the necessity to boost original ISCSC content by conducting interviews with members to be uploaded on YouTube and shared across the social media platforms as well as by uploading presentations from the conference, thus strengthening brand awareness through content designed to highlight the ISCSC to the broader public.

**Other key decisions from the conference:**

1. Recognition of the critical importance of growing the social media channels by clicking the *like, follow* button; sharing posts with friends and followers; and asking them to join. Using the hashtag *#iscsc2022*, members were encouraged to post footage from the conference on their social media accounts. Facebook and LinkedIn immediately recorded a 10-12% rise in follower numbers.

2. Sharing content which is of interest to fellow members.

   A survey was conducted amongst members at the conference. Here are responses to questions which show the most used platforms amongst present members and the type of content they prefer.

   ![Comparison of social media content preferences](chart.png)
What social media channels are you most active on? Choose as many as are applicable.

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

What type of content would you share on ISCSC platforms?

Answered: 9  Skipped: 0

What next?

Some might agree, some disagree, but organizations today are as strong as their social media channels. Social media platforms are windows to organizations where broader audiences can discover, explore, and communicate with the organization. With a strong media presence, we aim to attract new people and new members to the ISCSC, and to share our insights, knowledge, and great articles from the CCR with an even larger audience.
In this way, people from all over the world who are interested in all matters concerning civilization can join our community and contribute their knowledge.

Growth. This is something we can all do together.

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Hope and Pessimism in ‘Classical’ 20th Century Civilizational Theory

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This paper will involve an analysis of the relation between optimism, pessimism, and realism in 20th century classical civilizational theory, through the perspective offered specifically in Ernst Bloch’s magnum opus The Principle of Hope. Bloch, a German Jew and unorthodox Marxist, wrote The Principle of Hope during 1938–1947 in exile fleeing the Nazi holocaust. Today, humanity in its entirety now faces another set of crises — pandemic, overpopulation, climate change, political impasse, economic inequality, social unrest, growing lawlessness and nuclear threat. One can easily be tempted to give up on the future of our increasingly fragile and endangered world.

It is therefore during catastrophic times that some sort of hope is most needed. How have ‘classical’ civilizational theories conceptualized hope, and what role does it play in the analyses these theories offer? The paper will attempt to briefly situate the writings of Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Pitirim Sorokin and Andrew Targowski in this discussion and will specifically analyze the role of hope in these theories. By addressing their views from this particular perspective, I will try to offer a unique and timely focus on the theme for this 51st annual ISCSC conference: “The Future of Civilization.”

Ernst Bloch's The Principle of Hope and its Philosophical Background

During the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, a number of influential conservative thinkers produced wide-ranging narratives of cultural pessimism invoking a fallen modernity and the decline of western civilization. The most famous among these narratives was Oswald Spengler’s Decline of the West, which described western civilization as going through stages, from youth to adulthood to a sick, impotent, sterile old age, with high modernity ushering in the final chapters.2

Pessimism in many contexts is not an unreasonable perspective to hold. Pessimism recognizes the seriousness of life's negative events and the catastrophes of history, and the twentieth century was clearly a century of world wars and unprecedented mass death.

---

1 This paper is dedicated to the memory of my father, Stanley Rosner (1928-2019).
The problem with pessimism is when it leads to resignation (giving up on finding solutions to problems), or to desperate political “solutions” like Nazi fascism in Germany.³

Against this backdrop of world war and genocide, with German intellectual life marked by this pessimistic worldview, Ernst Bloch’s forward-looking, optimistic work stands out in stark contrast to this apocalyptic ethos. *The Principle of Hope* begins with the following startling introduction:

> Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? What awaits us? Many only feel confused. The ground shakes, they do not know why and with what. Theirs is a state of anxiety; if it becomes more definite, then it is fear…But now…a feeling that suits us better is overdue…It is a question of learning hope.⁴

Rather than try to recreate a past of idealized nostalgia or outline the specific parameters of some sort of imaginary “ideal state,” he stressed the noch nicht — the “not yet” — that which is yet to come, and its role in the formation of the crucial emotion of hope. He wrote: “Only with the farewell to the closed, static concept of being does the real dimension of hope open. Instead, the world is full of propensity towards something, tendency towards something, latency of something, and this intended something means fulfillment of the intending.”⁵

**Hope - Its Dangers and Limits**

Bloch’s basic conceptualization of hope (see Joe Davidson)⁶ contains within itself a number of other interesting complexities. For example, what exactly is the relation between hope and disappointment as experienced in everyday life? Do hope and disappointment assume each other? Do they somehow contain the seeds of each other within themselves? Just as one couldn’t know light without knowing darkness or darkness without knowing light, could one really know hope without disappointment or disappointment without hope? Bloch admits as much:

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Even well-founded hope can be disappointed, otherwise it would not be hope. In fact, hope never guarantees anything. It…points openly to possibilities that in part depend on chance for their fulfillment. Hope can learn…through damaging experiences, but it can never be driven off course.⁷

Are hope and optimism helpful or dangerous attitudes to uphold? It might be instructive to also inquire into hope through a lens of general psychological attitudes. Consider some of the dangers of optimism, as elucidated by Michael Milona:

A natural concern about dispositional optimism is that it is risky, leaving people open to crushing disappointment. The world is full of heartbreak and tragedy…a person that is pessimistic, or at least less optimistic, may be more insulated from the emotional damage of failure and tragedy.

But there is also some contrary data Milona cites:

There are important studies measuring optimism before and after tragedy. According to Carver and Scheier…the results of such studies indicate that greater optimism before tragedy doesn’t lead to greater distress after; and in some cases, optimism even seems to insulate against such distress.⁸

Does optimism lead to crushed aspirations and dashed hopes, or does it foster resilience through these disappointments? It appears that some people are more optimistic, and some more pessimistic, than others. It also seems that, paradoxically, some people who have experienced extreme trauma in their lives remain more positive in general outlook, while others who seemingly have experienced less trauma sometimes end up bitter, frightened and broken. Is it a matter of temperament, upbringing, or other factors?

Moreover, what if one’s optimism (either in personal or theoretical matters) is completely misplaced? Bloch’s philosophy of hope was sharply criticized as simply inappropriate, given the catastrophic backdrop of Germany in the interwar period. In a particularly memorable quote about Bloch’s Principle of Hope, Walter Benjamin writes:

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The serious objection which I have of this book (if not of its author as well) is that it in absolutely no way corresponds to the conditions in which it appears, but rather takes its place inappropriately, like a great lord, who arriving at the scene of an area devastated by an earthquake can find nothing more urgent to do than to spread out the Persian carpets — which by the way are already somewhat moth-eaten — and to display the somewhat tarnished golden and silver vessels, and the already faded brocade and damask garments which his servants had brought.9

There is some truth to this critique. Bloch was a Jewish refugee from Hitler’s Germany. How much authentic hope and optimism could he really have had? Bloch intimately knew the horrors of early 20th Century Europe. He lived through it. Was he just ignoring reality? Was he in denial about the catastrophes he had witnessed? Perhaps his masterwork illustrated the truth of TS Eliot’s phrase: “Humankind cannot bear very much reality.”

Or was it rather that Bloch took the long view of human psychology — he had the wisdom to know that in the final analysis, and after all that we experience and live through in this world, we simply have no choice but look towards the future, to dream of a better life. This is his message of salvation, his version of messianism.10 As originally said in the Biblical Book of Proverbs, and later reiterated by the scholar of utopia, Ruth Levitas: “where there is no vision, the people perish.”11 There is a need for hope in catastrophic times. Compare this with the heartbreaking passage from Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl*, written before she was sent to Auschwitz and subsequently murdered:

> It’s difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It’s a wonder I haven’t abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.12

But there is also false hope, which can also be a dangerous thing. Perhaps the most famous illustration of this comes from Thucydides' chapter “The Melian Dialogue” in *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars*. In this situation, Athens confronted the heretofore neutral city of Melos to side with them against Sparta.

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The Melians deliberated but decided not to side with Athens, citing their faith in the honor of the Spartans and their hope that the Spartans would come to their aid. What happened when their faith in such idealistic abstractions was confronted with the superior military power of Athens? Athens quickly put to death the men of Melos and enslaved the women and children. This was Thucydides' brutal lesson in political realism. 13

By this account, “might makes right”, and the military balance of power outweighs lofty and high-flown abstractions such as hope, faith, and good will. The story thus illustrates the dangers of false hope. But then again, hope is the necessary precondition for any change for the better in this world. In the political realm, when has any good come out of hopelessness?

**Hope and 'Classical' Civilizational Theories of the Twentieth Century**

How is this debate relevant to ‘classical’ civilizational theory? In this paper, I will briefly consider the perspectives of Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin and Targowski, specifically in connection with the question of hope versus pessimism about “the future of civilizations.” It is no accident that most of these theories came out of interwar Europe and its aftermath or were conceptualized by those who lived through some of its darkest hours.

That is why these theories are concerned with issues like the decline and disintegration of civilizations and the notion of calamity. Bloch wrote of the “not-yet” as the source of hope. But will the “not-yet” run out for humanity? Will it be the end of the anthropocene? What do classical civilizational theories say about the future of civilization?

One interesting thing to consider is that some of these theories offer or involve some version of hope. Some underlying questions are: Is it authentic hope? Is the notion of hope truly organic to the theories? Or is it somehow tacked on, ad hoc? Did these thinkers really believe in hope? And why should they have believed in hope, given the brutality they saw in their lifetimes?

**Oswald Spengler and Cultural Pessimism in Interwar Germany**

We already have touched upon Spengler's *Decline of the West* as the *locus classicus* for the movement of cultural pessimism of interwar Germany.

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Like many conservative thinkers of the time, Spengler was basically a romantic and his analysis invoked nostalgia for Germany’s agrarian past, a yearning for a world exemplifying simplicity, solidity, tradition and groundedness, as well as a sense of wisdom in holding on to the essentials of life. The move from pre-industrial Europe to urban modernity was depicted in the works of Germany’s cultural pessimists specifically in terms of loss — a dissolution of values, solidity and tradition, a move from a nostalgic rural utopia to an alienated industrial money-driven dystopia. These works reveal a basic impetus behind the conservative impulse: people are not able to easily process radical and rapid change.

Wilhelm Michel well expresses this theme here:

From an objective point of view, we have been besieged with too much that is new. Our powers of comprehension have been unable to keep pace with it. We stand, not in front of machines, but rather in front of the machine culture, exactly as if before a war; dragged in mid speech into the midst of the turmoil…in the face of the reality rising up all around us…

Pessimism, fear and general overwhelm can be natural psychological reactions to what are perceived as recurring negative events and trajectories. In terms of the future, Spengler also offers a pessimistic prospect for world peace in “Is World Peace Possible?”:

The question of whether world peace will ever be possible can only be answered by someone familiar with world history. To be familiar with world history means, however, to know human beings as they have been and always will be. There is a vast difference, which most people will never comprehend, between viewing future history as it will be and viewing it as one might like it to be. Peace is a desire, war is a fact; and history has never paid heed to human desires and ideals.

More specifically and perhaps more disturbingly, Spengler also says the following: “It is the great task of the connoisseur of history to understand the actualities of his age and, using them, to sense the future, to indicate and to sketch out what will come, whether we desire it or not.”

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14 Wilhelm Michel. “Dichtung und Gegenwart” (Neue Rundschau, 7, 1931)
15 Spengler’s cultural pessimism and arguments for decline have found some resonance in today’s zeitgeist of crisis as well. Hence this quote can be found on the popular website: https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/680331-the-question-of-whether-world-peace-will-ever-be-possible. Original cite: Oswald Spengler, Reden und Aufsätze (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1937), 292.
He follows this with “…ultimately, man will always resort to violence in some form or another”…a man may “be branded a criminal, a class can be called revolutionary or traitorous, a people bloodthirsty, but that does not alter the actuality” that violence is inescapable. 17

Another famous proponent of pessimism was philosopher Martin Heidegger, who wrote:

The spiritual decline of the earth has progressed so far that peoples are in danger of losing their last spiritual strength, the strength that makes it possible even to see the decline. ...in every corner...the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the massification of man, the contemptuous suspicion of everything that is creative and free has reached such proportions that such childlike expressions such as pessimism and optimism have long become laughable.18

The basic question is ‘where are these pessimistic viewpoints ultimately leading”? Pessimism may contain a grain of truth, but in the long run it seems a dead-end, leading mostly to dangerous results.19 Is there another, more helpful way of thinking through catastrophic times?

Arnold Toynbee: History, Catastrophe and the Comparative Study of Civilizations

The role of hope is somewhat ambiguous in Toynbee's writings. Toynbee was an astute observer of the horrors of the world wars and their aftermath. Hence, David Wilkinson recalls the "cascade of catastrophes" that formed the background of Toynbee's worldview, starting with World War One:

The war’s consequences — the destruction of German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian regimes and empires, the near-destruction of the victorious British and French empires, and, most of all, the c. seventeen million military and civilian death toll — justify the name of “catastrophe,” in both the senses of “unexpected reversal” and “sudden disaster.”

17 Oswald Spengler, “Introduction” to Jahre der Entscheidung.
19 Yet, while Heidegger was a Nazi, we must also confront the fact that Bloch, for all his optimism, was a staunch Stalinist, and Stalin was a mass murderer arguably as bad as Hitler. It has been theorized that Bloch’s Stalinism can be explained insofar as Bloch was a Marxist and he shortsightedly saw Stalin as the strongest existing force fighting against Nazi fascism at the time. Yet from a critical distance, both Heidegger’s Nazism and Bloch’s Stalinism could be seen as object lessons in the dangers of Caesarism in desperate times.
The onset of World War II (1939–1945, or, more accurately and less Eurocentrically, 1937–1945) was another sort of catastrophe, in that this “sudden disaster,” with c. 50–80 million dead, was amply foreshadowed, and followed years of arduous preventive efforts that ultimately failed. World War II of course contained, was capped by, gave birth to, and concluded with, the First Nuclear War (August 6–9, 1945, c. 100,000–300,000 dead), which, in Toynbee’s eyes as in those of others, menaced an even more horrific sequel.20

Toynbee in *A Study in History* had much to say about the decay and disintegration of civilizations. Situating his views into historical context, it is not difficult to see why. In light of his discussions of the disintegration of civilizations, he also appeared to see some light at the end of the tunnel, exemplified through his discussion of the cycles of love and hate throughout history, as well as his idea regarding the role of love as the ultimate salvation of mankind.

This emphasis on universal love shows the influence of Christianity on Toynbee, as well as interesting similarities with the Presocratic philosopher Empedocles, who argued that the universe is ultimately governed by endless cycles of love and strife. Empedocles wrote: “These never cease changing place continuously, now being all united by love into one, now each borne apart by the hatred engendered of strife, until they are brought together into the unity of the all and become subject to it.”21

Toynbee asked whether major religions of the world are moving towards reconciliation and progress. Or is it more the “clash of civilizations” scenario as per Samuel Huntington? Toynbee concludes: “In the universe as in the human world love is perpetually striving to overcome hate. But on this larger spiritual battlefield too, love's victory is not assured.” 22 So again, Toynbee seemed somewhat undecided and ambivalent about the role of hope with regard to the future of civilizations.

**Pitirim Sorokin: Calamity and Reconstruction**

In *Man and Calamity* and other works, Pitirim Sorokin (the first president of The International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, or ISCSC) discussed how modern western culture has become increasingly “sensate” and decadent, reflecting spiritual disintegration and the dissolution of values and higher ideals (see also similar views in Spengler and in H. Broch's novel *The Sleepwalkers*).

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In this sense Sorokin was also a cultural pessimist, an astute diagnostician of the malaise of western modernity. But he later moved on from analyzing the existing problems of western modernity, and also began to focus his attention on how to reduce our primitive proclivities towards conflict and war in the future and how to improve the human situation overall. He began to promulgate a version of altruism involving the striving towards universal love, which we see in *The Reconstruction of Humanity, The Ways and Power of Love*, and elsewhere.

For Sorokin, we ourselves could save the destructive impulses in humanity through a movement towards universal love and he outlined a number of concrete steps for altruistic action. Sorokin wrote “An increase in our knowledge of the grace of love has become the paramount need of humanity.”\(^2\)\(^3\) However, although the belief in altruism and the striving for universal creative love sounds like an impressive solution, the nagging question remains: Is altruism as he saw it basically a utopian and unrealistic idea? Exactly how would the human race as a whole, with all its dizzying complexity and diversity, actualize an abstraction as nebulous as “universal love” in a concrete, tangible way?

Today we witness the growth of a movement called ‘effective altruism’. And we know that human beings as individuals and in groups can make minor changes in the world and hopefully improve things. Some action is certainly better than nothing, and large social movements always start with small steps.

But what are the prospects and limitations of Sorokin’s admittedly admirable and inspiring doctrine of altruism, especially given what some more realist thinkers have always seen as the more violent, selfish, and competitive aspects of human nature? Some more pessimistic (or some would say ‘realistic’) thinkers like Hobbes, Nietzsche, and James Madison would emphasize instead the human propensity for factionalism, selfishness and “the will to power,” and they would be skeptical of notions like universal love as being basically unrealistic and simply not in accord with human nature. However, if we don’t even try to act on our better instincts to improve our world, if we are always citing the inevitability of selfishness in the name of ‘realism,’ of course this selfishness and factionalism will simply become a self-fulfilling prophecy and perpetuate itself — the status quo in the world will therefore remain as is or even worsen.

So, is there a real choice? We will see more on this classic dichotomy between realism and idealism in the next section.

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Andrew Targowski – Educating for Wisdom

Andrew Targowski (11th President of ISCSC) first became interested in the future of civilization through his personal experiences with suffering and tragedy in World War II Poland under both the Nazis and the Communists. Although formally trained in the information sciences, his theoretical interests eventually began to shift into more philosophical questions about humanity and its future.

In light of what Targowski calls "the death triangle" of civilization (consisting of overpopulation, ecological crisis, and a crisis of resources) currently facing the world, Targowski emphasizes the education of the next generation with “wisdom” which will hopefully help humanity solve some of these problems. This emphasis would “impact almost every kind of higher education and particularly should be practiced in educating leaders of world societies”. Of course, different definitions of wisdom have been given for centuries by philosophers, religions, and other spiritual sources, but designing a curriculum for wisdom-based education is certainly an interesting idea, especially in today’s post-modern world when so many trends in higher education seem focused more directly on material concerns.

What exactly is wisdom? Targowski seems to be emphasizing a shift away from a selfish, consumerist individualism that is now leading the world to disaster, towards the more universalist needs of the planet as a whole. This emphasis on the cooperation of human beings may also entail going against or resisting what some consider the natural human tendency towards conflict.

The problematic situation today is further compounded by the widespread phenomenon of “moral inertia”, in which a problem that doesn't seem to be affecting us personally in the here and now is often postponed and ignored, as we “kick the can down the road” for future generations to deal with. One question to ask here in light of these realities is this: does this notion of “wisdom” somehow involve changing or resisting human nature itself?

Thinkers have traditionally been divided into realist versus optimist camps. Realists may be said to include thinkers as diverse as Aristotle, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Lorenz, Madison, and Freud, while optimists might include thinkers like Plato, More, Locke and Marx. Interestingly enough, pessimists often considered themselves realists.

In any case, it is doubtful that these pessimistic thinkers would have much faith in human beings acting collectively for the greater good without this effort ultimately devolving into self-serving, competing factions inevitably moving towards conflict rather than cooperation.

**Questions, Prospects and Problems**

Ronald Aronson suggests that in light of all the foregoing we don’t need to and should not “abandon hope.” But he argues further that the catastrophes of the twentieth century underscore how we need to find:

> a chastened hope, one that is humbler, more tentative, narrowed, even if just as profoundly (but now critically) connected to...humanity’s deepest longings and visions. Realistic hope, grounded in the world we live in even if inspired by utopia, demands seeing how narrowly the window is open, how difficult and dangerous are the currents blowing in. At the same time, emancipatory struggles...have continued, will continue, and sometimes will prevail.26

This seems reasonable, but can we be more specific about the parameters of some sort of realistic middle ground between extremes of pessimism and optimism? It is true that “without vision the people will perish,” but without a healthy dose of realism about human motivation, we could end up with a civilizational theory that is interesting but ultimately utopian and unrealistic.

As hinted at earlier, the problem for some of these theories fundamentally involves the problem of the individual versus the collective. The relation between the individual and society has always been conflicted and difficult. Ideals must be true to real patterns of human behavior. For example, it is perhaps a myth of communism that the individual would willingly sacrifice many basic freedoms, opportunities, and comforts for the betterment of the larger society. How much could the individual realistically give up for the greater good of society, and at what point would this sacrifice become experienced as unsustainable?

The matter is complicated. While it seems that a more collective approach to problems like environmental degradation is what the world needs now, consider that many collectivist political systems have not worked out particularly well over time. Most communist systems, such as the USSR, North Korea, and Cuba, ultimately became brutal dictatorships. The answers here are not as easy to solve as they might first appear. Again, this tension has been present in western political philosophy as far back as Plato and Aristotle — the problem won't be solved here.

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Ultimately, and in conclusion, I believe Bloch was right about the deep need for hope in human life. His views were especially startling and original in that they arose out of such a catastrophic age. Bloch knew that pessimism, although perhaps justified and tempting to uphold in many cases, is ultimately a dead end, both in theory and in practice. We must orient ourselves towards the future, not the past. Of course, the problems and challenges facing humanity today can always be rationalized away as happening somewhere else, or to someone else, and in the future rather than the present. Only if and when these problems arrive at our own front door will people see the urgency of the situation.

It seems this is already happening in many cases. But how will we as a human race address these problems? What will be “the future of civilization”? Perhaps humanity will rally and do what is necessary to help solve the existential problems facing our world today. Or will it be “too little too late”?

As Bloch might have said: “One can only hope.”

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Two Modes of Cyclicality in the Ancient World

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Abstract

The cyclical view of time and history appears in two modes represented respectively by the Indo-Hellenic and the Chinese tradition. The former contains a conception of Mahayuga or Great Year, which signifies the periodic destruction and reconstruction in the cosmos and human world. In addition, it analogizes human affairs to the celestial cycle and therefore generalizes the mode of cyclical movements in both the cosmos and the human world as “uniform rotation.” In contrast, the Chinese tradition incorporates Heaven and human into a unity, containing no conception of periodic interruption in the movement of Heaven-human unity. At the same, it analogizes human affairs mainly to a short-term biological cycle. This leads it to forge a notion of dynastic cycle and generalize a different mode which I illustrate as the “chain of recurring links.”

Key words: celestial cycle, biological cycle, the uniform rotation, the chain of recurring links.

Introduction

The view of cyclicality in human history has played a crucial role in the ancient civilizations. This view appears in two major modes represented respectively by the Indo-Hellenic tradition and the Chinese one. The former may be characterized with Collingwood’s term of “Uniform rotation” (Collingwood 2014, 14), while the latter I would tentatively phrase as a “chain of recurring links.” This essay plans to compare the two modes, revealing the features of each of them. For the sake of clarity, it will start with a brief discussion on the opponent of cyclicality, namely the view of linearity.

I. The View of Linearity

I.1. The Jewish Tradition

The linear view of history originated from Jewish tradition. It is ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history and thus forged a new worldview whose essential premises were eventually appreciated by Christianity and Islam as well. As for the Israeliite, heaven declares the glory of God, while human history reveals His will and purpose. “This novel perception,” as Yerushalmi points out, “was not the result of philosophical speculation, but of the peculiar nature of Israeliite faith.
It emerged out of an intuitive and revolutionary understanding of God and was refined through profoundly felt historical experience” (Yerushalmi 1996, 8). Here the interlocutor of human is not Nature, but God. As recorded in the Old Testament, human history starts with the departure of Adam and Eve from Eden and develops in the process of divine challenge and human response. The way back is closed, and the history will continue until reaching its end of the final judgment, according to Christianity. This linear development with clear beginning and end not only provides people with a conception of historical “wholeness,” but also ensures the meaning of historical events and figures. It is because as Dilthey states, “The category of meaning designates the relationship of parts of life to the whole as rooted in the nature of life…the individual moment has meaning through its connection with the whole, through the relation of past and future, of individual existence and humanity” (Dilthey 2002, 253). The positive meaning comes from the actions that are helpful for human salvation; otherwise, the meaning is negative.

I.2. St. Augustine

It is widely accepted that St. Augustine first distinguished and articulated the two views of history. He writes in The City of God that, according to some philosophers, there exist the cycles of time “in which there should be a constant renewal and repetition of the order of nature; and they have therefore asserted that these cycles will ceaselessly recur, one passing away and another coming” (St. Augustine 2010, 354). This passage characterizes the key point in the cyclical view: the order of nature cyclically repeats itself; this movement ceaselessly continues with neither beginning nor end.

Against this view St. Augustine argues that these philosophers “know not how the human race, and this mortal condition of ours, took its origin, nor how it will be brought to an end, since they cannot penetrate the inscrutable wisdom of God. For, though Himself eternal, and without beginning, yet He caused time to have a beginning; and man, whom He had not previously made He made in time, not from a new and sudden resolution, but by his unchangeable and eternal design” (Augustine. 2010, 355). It is God who created both time and human; human history has a clear beginning and end which God already designed.

St. Augustine writes further in an ironical tone that, “According to those philosophers, the same periods and events of time are repeated.” For example, Plato once taught in a school called “Academy.” The same Plato, the same school, and the same disciples will reappear in countless cycles. “Far be it, I say, from us to believe this,” he declared, “For once Christ died for our sins; and, rising from the dead, He dies no more” (Augustine 2010, 355). All historical figures and events come only once; their experience is unrepeatable and irreversible.
On his opponents St. Augustin comments, “‘the wicked walk in a circle,’ not because their life is to recur by means of these circles…but because the path in which their false doctrine now runs is circuitous” (Augustine 2010, 355).

Here St. Augustine forms “a theology of history, …it is based neither upon scientific history nor upon philosophy, but upon the biblical revelation, that is, upon ‘sacred history’” (Richardson 1964, 56). It demonstrates a theological frame in which history develops toward its end. However, there exists in the frame an “interim” between the original fall and the final redemption. The speculation and disputation about its length persisted throughout early Christianity until St. Augustine. He “broke with all millenarianisms and projected the coming [of Jesus Christ] indefinitely into the future.” (Bainton 1983, 220). This “interim,” when translated into modern terms, is simply “the whole of history”; a study about it refers to the “secular history” concerning factual courses in particular space and time.

These two kinds of history, the sacred and the secular co-existed in the Middle Ages. Each of them held its own view of history: the linear and the cyclical. As Pitirim Sorokin observes, “Summing up the main features of the Ideational medieval period, we see that the eschatological (with the two ‘terminal perfect points’) conception and cyclical or endlessly undulating conception occupied the field” (Sorokin 1957, 382).

I.3. Hegel

Hegel translated “the eyes of faith into the eyes of reason and the theology of history established by Augustine into a philosophy of history which is neither sacred nor profane. It is a curious mixture of both, degrading sacred history to the level of secular history and exalting the latter to the first” (Löwith 1949, 59). His work transferred secular content into the Christian frame, and therefore modernized the linear view. He characterized the two views of history with two conceptions: “Nature” and “freedom.” In the cyclical view, human and their history are part of Nature, developing in terms of Nature’s regularity and rhythm. In the linear view, Nature is part of human historical process, submitting to human’s exploitation and manipulation.

About the origin of history, he writes that “Man, created in the image of God…lost his state of absolute contentment by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Sin consists here only in the knowledge: this is that which is sinful, and by it man threw away his natural happiness. This is a deep truth, that evil lies in consciousness…Consciousness first occasions the separation of the individual into its boundless freedom as arbitrary choice, and the pure content of will, the good (Hegel 2011, 292).
Due to their “boundless freedom,” humans took an “arbitrary choice” against God’s will. This sinful move starts human history and causes them to suffer from God’s punishment. God told Adam:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground. Since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return (Genesis 3, 17-19).

In the historical process of struggling with Nature, humans developed their knowledge and society, moving progressively toward the reconciliation with God. This is not a simple returning to the state of “natural happiness.” “The state of innocence, the paradisical condition, is that of the brute. Paradise is a park, where only brutes, not men, can remain. For the brute is one with God, yet only in principle [an sich]. Only man is spirit, which is to say, for himself [für sich selbst]” (Hegel 2011, 293). A human’s reconciliation with God contains his self-consciousness, free choice, as well as the identity of his free will and God’s will. Here is the end of sacred history.

Hegel employs the conception of “evil” in two senses. In the sacred history, it denotes human’s negation of God’s will. In the secular history, it signifies various evil actions in factual process: selfish choice, despicable conspiracy, brutal slaughter, etc. In actuality, Hegel offers positive interpretations for both of them. The evil in the sacred starts human history, while evil in the secular promotes its development. It is Hegel’s belief that “world history is nothing but the development of the idea of freedom.” (Hegel 2011, 409) “World history travels from East to West, for Europe is quite the end of history, Asia the beginning. …The East knew, and to the present day knows only, that one is free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the Germanic world knows that all are free” (Hegel 2011, 95). This “freedom of all individuals” signifies the end of secular history.

Hegel’s interpretation of the linear view, as well as his setting “freedom” as the trait of human historical activity, was echoed, enriched, and strengthened by a great number of eminent thinkers. For instance, Marx and Engels describe the Communist society as saying that “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx and Engels 1978, 491). In their mind, this will be a “new era” in which “the freedom of all individuals” which Hegel anticipated turns to be a great reality.
II. The Indo-Hellenic view of Cyclicality

Mircea Eliade writes in his research of cyclical view that “we shall begin with the Indian tradition, for it is here that the myth of the eternal return has received its boldest formulation” (Eliade 1971, 112). In the same vein, Joseph Needham states, it is “customary” to contrast the Judeo-Christian view “sharply with that of Greek and Roman world, especially the former, where cyclical conceptions were generally dominant.” However, “Roman thought was rather different” (Needham 1966, 122). He suggests replacing the phrase of “Greco-Roman” with that of “Indo-Hellenic.” Accepting their advice, I will use Needham’s term in what follows.

II.1. The Commonality

Windelband says that “Christianity…found from the beginning the essence of the whole world-movement in the experiences of personalities: for it external nature was but a theatre for the development of the relation of person to person, and especially of the relations of the finite spirit to the deity” (Windelband 2006, 256). Agreeing with his observation, I would further argue that essentially the Judeo-Christian linear view is based on an analogy to the life experience of the human individual. Its one-way-development is analogous to his/her life process, its beginning and end to his/her birth and death, its non-repetition and irreversibility to the uniqueness of every step in his/her life-practice. In contrast, the cyclical view is based on an analogy to Nature. This is the same for both the Indo-Hellenic mode and the Chinese one. The following statement about the Indo-Hellenic is also applicable to the Indian and the Chinese. “The classical view never developed beyond the identification of man with Nature; the historical process was only the human counterpart of the periodic rotation of the heaven or the seasons; the repetitive pattern will go on forever” (Richardson 1964, 57-58). The movement in Nature is cyclical. In accordance, the same occurs in human world as well.

In general, there are two patterns of cyclicality in Nature. One is the celestial, such as the regular motion of planets. Another is the biological, such as the alteration from birth to death in plant, animal, and human being. There is a substantial difference between them. What undergoes cyclical motion in the celestial is, for example, the same planet, such as Venus, Mars, or Jupiter. It travels regularly and repeatedly along the same orbit, arriving at the same point in sky at the same time. In contrast, biological beings actually experience biological cycles themselves, rather than the species to which they belong.

Analogizing human history to the celestial cycle, people easily conclude that the cyclicality in both the cosmos and the human world follows the pattern of “uniform rotation.”
Collingwood once sketched out this pattern in the Indo-Hellenic, although what he directly referred to was just the Greek tradition. “The doctrine which haunts Greek cosmology from the Ionians to Aristotle, that the total movement of the world-organism, the movement from which all other movements in the natural world are derived, is a uniform rotation” (Collingwood 2014, 14). This pattern may be understood in the sense of Nietzsche’s “the eternal recurrence of the same” or St. Augustine’s description of the infinite reappearance of Plato and his Academy. It is the first feature of Indo-Hellenic mode that its object of analogy is the celestial cyclicity, and the pattern it uses to describe the movement in both cosmos and human world is the “uniform rotation.”

At the same time, the Indo-Hellenic contains the cycle at two levels: the cosmic and the human. The first refers to the cyclical change in the cosmos, while the second that in human world. Both the Greek conception of “Great Year” and the Indian one of “Mahayuga” convey the same idea about periodic change in the cosmos and its necessary impact on the human world. They hold that a regular movement in the celestial realm, after a long travel, arrives at a particular point on which a catastrophic event occurs. Caused by the crisis in the cosmos, the human world experiences the same catastrophe. It is the end of old cycle and the beginning of new one at once. This conception, as Paul Tillich criticizes, conveys a “pessimistic” message that the world is ultimately mastered by cosmic events, and humankind has nothing to do with the predetermined destruction and reconstruction (Tillich 1948, 23, 30). This idea of periodic alteration in the cosmos and its pessimistic impact on the human world is the second feature of the Indo-Hellenic cyclicity.

II.2. The Indian

Although different religious and philosophical schools in ancient India are distinctive from each other on various issues, the idea of cosmic cycle “is a general feature of Indian mythology and philosophy” (Balslev 2009, 145, 171). It teaches that the cyclical movement repeats in the cosmos infinitely. A single cycle consists of four ages of unequal length, each of which also runs its own cycle preceded and followed by a “dawn” and a “dusk.” Originally, the cosmic cycle, Mahayuga, is considered as 12,000 years. Later these are defined as “divine years,” each of which lasts for 360 human years. This gives a total of 4,320,000 human years for one cosmic cycle. In correspondence, there are four cycles of humankind in a single cosmic cycle. Humankind passively undergoes through a progressive decrease in the length of life, a corruption in morals, a decline in intelligence, and finally perishes with the destruction of the cosmos.

On another side, “the idea of transmigration is equally a general feature of the conceptual framework in India” (Balslev 209, 146).
It is viewed as a necessary sequel of the doctrine of karma, appearing with different versions in Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism. As Vishnu, the Supreme Being tells in a well-known legend, “Life in the cycle of the countless rebirth is like a vision in a dream.” “Piety and high deeds elevate the inhabitants of the world to the glorious realm of the celestial mansions, or to the higher domains of Brahma and Shiva and to the highest sphere of Vishnu; but wicked acts sink them into the worlds beneath, into pits of pain and sorrow, involving reincarnation among birds and vermin, or out of wombs of pigs and animals of the wild, or among trees, or among insects” (Zimmer 2015, 7-8).

In contrast to the idea of humankind in cosmic cycle, this saying conveys an optimistic message about the cycle of human individuals. It tells that the acts or deeds of human individuals are the only determinant for their next rebirth or reincarnation, and that they themselves hold the key for their own next lives — to be better or worse. It should be noted that here the subject going through “countless rebirth” is not humankind, but the human individual. Essentially, this is a doctrine for human individual’s self-salvation.

The prevalence of this cyclical view of cosmos, humankind, and the human individual actually deprives the Indian of the significance of historiography. Consequently, as a noted modern scholar writes:

…the fact remains that except Kalhana’s Rajatarangini, which is merely a local history of Kashmir, there is no other historical text in the whole range of Sanskrit literature which even makes a near approach to it or may be regarded as history in the proper sense of the term. This is a very strange phenomenon, for there is hardly a branch of human knowledge or any topic of human interest which is not adequately represented in Sanskrit literature. The absence of real historical literature is therefore naturally regarded as so very unusual that even many distinguished Indians cannot bring themselves to recognize the obvious fact, and seriously entertain the belief that there were many such historical texts, but that they have all perished (Majumdar 1961, 25).

This state looks rather striking especially when compared with the stance toward history in many Indian contemporaries: the Judeo-Christian, the Chinese, and even the Greek. The correct interpretation may be that, according to the Indian metaphysics and epistemology, “both time and history are depreciated as illusory, and to be liberated from such illusion is a condition for true knowledge and ultimate salvation (Yerushalmi 1996, 7). The other forms of literature and arts are all helpful for promoting the notion of illusion, so that they flourished. On the contrary, as for the enhancement of the notion, the historiography is not only superfluous, but even harmful.
The lesson people learn from the contrast between the pessimism of humankind and the optimism of human individual is that, instead of entangling with history, a human individual should live at present, focusing his/her mind on the highest truth and practicing moral cultivation for reaching a better state in next life and for attaining eventually “the glorious realm of the celestial mansion.”

II.3. The Greek

It is broadly true that major thinkers in the ancient Greek world all hold a notion of the cosmic cycle. Plato assumes the cause of its occurrence in a well-known passage:

There is an era in which God himself assists the universe on its way and guides it by imparting its rotation to it. There is also an era in which he releases his control. He does this when its circuit under his guidance has completed the due limit of the time thereto pointed. Thereafter it begins to revolve in the contrary sense under its own impulse — for it is a living creature and has been endowed with reason by him who framed it in the beginning. Now this capacity for rotation in reverse is of necessity native to it (Plato 1989, 1034).

In this passage “rotation” is described as the way in which God runs the universe. Meanwhile it is the “capacity” of the universe by which it undergoes in a direction reverse to the guidance of God. In other words, the rotational or cyclical movement is the same for both God and the Universe. The change of motion which the universe starts, according to Plato, is a “cosmic crisis” which “we must regard as the most important and the most complete of all ‘turning-back’ occurring in the celestial orbits.” In this “great event” all the living beings in the universe must “undergo the most drastic changes” (Plato 1989,1035). About what happens to humankind in the crisis, Plato proposes two assumptions.

In the Statesman, the reverse motion in the universe destroys almost all human beings. A few remnants “began to grow backward, as it were, toward youth and ever greater immaturity, returning gradually to the condition of a newborn children in mind as well as in body, and fading finally into non-existence one by one” (Plato 1989, 1036). Later, God takes back its control, adjusting the rotation to its original direction. As a result, something dramatic occurs in our planet:

Our legends tell us that once upon a time there was an earthborn race. Now it was this race which at that moment of crisis began to return to life out of earth. …[It is] a new race formed from men dead and long laid in earth but now formed in her womb anew and thence returning to life once more. Such resurrection of the dead was in keeping with the cosmic change, all creation being now turned in the reverse direction. This race was, as it needs must be, ‘born from the earth’” (Plato 1989,1036).
Two points are remarkable in this passage. First, humankind is in keeping with the cosmic cycles of destruction and reconstruction, repeating the process of death and rebirth. Secondly, the new race comes from earth, gradually evolves to be humankind today, and will perish into the earth again. This idea, in my opinion, anticipates the modern conception of evolution. The “earth-born” may be regarded as single-celled or multicellular organisms arising out of water. After billion-years evolution, it becomes in turn to be fish, mammal, homo erectus, and finally human being.

In his *Timaeus* Plato conceives of another scenario. With the eruption of a “great event,” the destructive disasters occur everywhere. “At such time, those who live upon the mountain and in dry and lofty places are more liable to destruction than those who dwell by rivers or on the seashore.” “The survivors…are herdsmen and shepherds who dwell on the mountains, but those who…live in cities are carried by the rivers into the sea” (Plato 1989, 1157). Obviously, the city residents are more educated, having recorded important cultural events and preserved the recordings in libraries or temples. With their destruction, the cultural achievements kept there vanish as well. Hence humans have “to begin all over again like children and know nothing of what happened in ancient times” (Plato 1989, 1158).

After hearing a description of the deluge, Plato says through his narrator’s mouth that “In the first place you remember a single deluge only, but there were many previous ones; in the next place, you do not know that there formerly dwelt in your land the fairest and noblest race of men which ever lived, and that your whole city are descended from a small seed or remnant of them which survived” (Plato 1989, 1158). Here Plato proposes a new theory of cyclicality in human world. Instead of raising from the earth and undergoing a long evolution, humankind develops itself from a small lucky group of mountaineers. In other words, humankind is not totally destroyed, although the advancement of its civilization is suspended for a long time.

Plato’s notion of cosmic cycle and its human consequence seems to be common knowledge among Greek thinkers. For example, we read in Aristotle that “probably each art and each science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions, with others, have been preserved until the present like relics of the ancient treasures” (Aristotle 1941, 884).

Plato names a cosmic cycle as a “Great Year.” He himself never accurately defines its length. Among modern scholars, there are various calculations. J. B. Bury holds that “The period of its duration is 72,000 solar years” (Bury 2010, 21). However, William Strauss and Neil Howe suggest that “The 12,000-year ‘great year’ or yuga was especially popular in the Babylonian, Hindu, and Hellenistic worlds, since it roughly coincides with an astronomical cycle today known as the procession of the eclipse” (Strauss & Howe 1997, 29).
Compared with the length of cosmic cycle, that of human individual cycle/lifespan is unproportionally short. This fact entices a human individual to think about his/her relationship with the cosmic cycle, as well as that with his/her species of humankind. It is Plato’s position that:

There is a sense in which mankind naturally partakes of immortality, a prize our nature makes desirable to all of us in its every form, for to win renown and not lie in our graves without a name is a desire of this. Thus, the race of man is time’s equal twin and companion, bound up with him in a union never to be broken, and the manner of their immortality is in this wise. By succession of generations the race abides one and the same, so partaking immortality through procreation” (Plato 1989, 1311).

Humankind undergoes its human cycle within the cosmic cycle, experiencing birth, growth, aging, and death along with the path of cosmos. It is “time’s equal twin and companion” and its life can be as long as that of cosmic cycle. Meanwhile, the “immortality” is the attribute of humankind as a species, not that of any individual in the species. It can be actualized only through a collective “recurrent cycle of life” (Arendt 2000, 278). Put differently, it is human individuals that partake the immortality of humankind through their continuous “reproduction.” What Plato depicts here may be illustrated as a “chain” of humankind. It is composed of countless “links” of human individuals, extending along with the continuous recurrence of links.

Different from the Indian human cycle, what undergoes the cycle in Plato is not the same soul or selfhood, but countless individuals. In the meantime, what really concerns Plato in the present issue is not the uniqueness of each individual in the chain of humankind, but the chain itself. As will be shown in next section, the Chinese cyclicality is similar to Plato’s idea of “chain of recurring links.” At the same time, in contrast to Plato, what is emphasized in the Chinese is not the chain itself, but the individuality of each link.

III. The Chinese

III.1. Joseph Needham’s Findings

Since the 16th century, the conception of progress, which was “transformed” from Judeo-Christian linearity, emerged, and developed to be a common opinion. The European thinkers started to use it as an intellectual stick to measure other civilizations. About the Chinese they claimed that it was, “in Ranke’s famous phrase, in a state of ‘eternal standstill’” (Dawson 1967, 65). Summarizing this intellectual tendency, Hegel concluded that China stood as a country that exists today as we know it to have been in the ancient times. It is possessed of nothing “historical,” and stays “still outside the world’s history” (Hegel 2011, 105).
Especially from the 20th century, this position met serious criticism from a number of eminent Sinologists. Regarding the general conviction about the Chinese view of history in Europe, Joseph Needham raised a sharp question, “where did it [Chinese civilization] stand in the contrast between linear irreversible time and the ‘myth of eternal recurrence’? There can be no doubt that it had elements of both conceptions, but broadly speaking, …linearity, in my opinion, dominated” (Needham, 132-133). Again, “On the whole China was a culture more of the Iran-Judeo-Christian type than the Indo-Hellenic” (Needham 1966, 135).

Needham argues for his conclusion with following reasons. First, “China should have possessed perhaps the greatest of all ancient historical traditions. One can say without hesitation that the Chinese were the most historically minded of all ancient peoples” (Needham 1966, 101). His observation unavoidably leads people to ask: How is it possible that the “most historically minded” people have lived in “eternal standstill” and possessed nothing “historical,” as claimed by Ranke and Hegel?

Secondly, the conception of evolution has always dominated Chinese thinking. “As soon as one looks at the ideas of traditional Chinese culture on living things, one finds that they never had any belief in the fixity of species. This followed because they never had any conception of special creation, and that was because creation ex nihilo by a Supreme Deity was itself unimagined by them; consequently, there was no reason to believe that different kinds of living thing could not turn into each other quite easily, given sufficient time” (Needham 1966, 108). For the Chinese mind, the appearance of novelty is always possible; repetition is not the only pattern for the development in species.

Thirdly, in contrast to the Indo-Hellenic, the Chinese view of history is mainly analogous to the short-term biological cycle rather than the long-term celestial one. In China, “while cyclical recurrence was indeed prominent in the natural philosophy, it was almost entirely the cycle of the annual seasons — months, days, hours, etc., and of those which present themselves in biological or social organisms — long-term astronomical period played an insignificant part, and the ‘Great Year’ conception…with their consequence of temporal recurrence, none at all” (Needham 1966, 99). As will be shown later, it is the analogy to a short-term cycle of biological organism and the absence of the conception of “Great Year” that distinguishes the Chinese cyclicity from the Indo-Hellenic one.

Finally, similar to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Chinese has also set a telo, or end for historical development. They are “Grand Togetherness” (datong) and “Great Peace and Equality” (taiping) (Needham 1966,113). The end of history for the Judeo-Christian, according to Hegel, is freedom of each individual. In contrast, the Chinese “Grand togetherness” and “Great Peace and Equality” emphasize the collective prosperity and common happiness for all people in the world.
It is true that Needham’s conclusion is not widely accepted in the Sinologist community. For instance, N. Sivin writes, “The cyclical time sense by that time was neither Daoist, Legalist, Confucian, nor Moist; it had become, once for all the non-specialist’s mode of thinking about natural process...The other time senses — compartmented, progressive, repressive — were not in competition with that one” (Sivin 1986, 152). It is my opinion: in the sense that the dominant view in the Chinese is cyclicality, I agree with Sivin. Meanwhile, Needham’s findings are truly significant and inspiring. Incorporating the ideas from both Sivin and Needham, I would further explore the features of Chinese cyclicality in what follows.

### III.2. Heaven and Cosmos

The Chinese counterpart of Indo-Hellenic “cosmos,” roughly speaking, is Heaven (tian). This term is mainly used in two senses: the mother Nature and the supreme deity or naturalistic Heaven and anthropomorphic Heaven. Instead of asking what Heaven is, Chinese thinkers tend to question what Heaven may impact on human or how we use knowledge about it for our own service. A passage from Xunzi (third century BCE) well exemplifies this approach:

> When he (the sage) turns his thought to Heaven, he seeks to understand only those phenomena which can be regularly expected. When he turns his thought to Earth, he seeks to understand only those aspects that can be taken advantage of. When he turns to the four seasons, he seeks to understand only the changes that will affect his undertakings. When he turns his thought to the yin and yang, he seeks to understand only the modulations which call for some action on his part (Wang 1977, 310).

Thanks to this approach Heaven and human are combined into a unity from the very beginning; Heaven is often understood through its connection to humans. In general, their relationship stands in two forms: the “interactive” and the “correlative.” The former stresses that an action in Heaven or humanity directly results in a corresponding response or resonance from the other. The latter seeks to align the human world with the normative pattern of Heaven (Queen 1996, 225). The mainstream Chinese thinkers accept neither the notion of “cosmic cycle” which periodically repeats the same destruction, nor that of humankind whose destiny is fatally determined by cosmic change.

In the Chinese legend, there might be no natural disaster more harmful than the catastrophic flooding in the time of Great Yu. However, as known by all Chinese, the flood was finally channeled to the East Sea due to the endeavor of Great Yu and his people. Its message is clear: Heaven has never intended to destroy the human world; humans are capable of overcoming environmental difficulties.
Instead of the periodic interruption signified by the Great Year or Mahayuga, the Chinese describe the movement of the unity of Heaven and humanity as a chain continuously extending to the future. This is the first feature of Chinese cyclicality.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese absence of “cosmic cycle” mainly results from their non-interest in the notion, rather than their lack of philosophical imagination. For instance, Shao Yong (1011-1077 C.E.), under the inspiration of Buddhism, proposed a theory similar to the Indian Mahayuga (Fung Yu-lan, 473). It assumes that a cosmic cycle (yuan) is one of 129,600 years, divided into 12 epochs (hui) of 10,800 years each. When the cosmos, in its movement, attains the eleventh epoch, all things are closed, and all of them, including humankind in the cosmos come to destruction. The end of old cycle, at the same time, starts a new one; the same process repeats itself infinitely. On this theory Zhu Xi (1113-1200) comments, “It simply refers to the rise and fall of yin and yang. It is roughly right (dashu kejian), but the sage and the worthy have never advocated this kind of doctrine” (Zhu Xi 1986, 78). His comment reflects a view generally shared among Chinese intellectual elites that the idea of cosmic cycle is a common knowledge or truism. However, it is unworthy for people to spend energy for its exploration since it has little social and historical significance.

Dong Zhongshu (c. 179-c. 104 BCE) in the Han dynasty investigated both the cyclicity in Heaven and that in human world. He writes, “Heaven has Five Agents: the first is Wood; the second, Fire; the third, Earth; the fourth, Metal; and the fifth, Water. Wood is the beginning of the cycle of Five Agents, Water is its end, and Earth is center. Such is their natural sequence” (Su Yu 1992, 321). Here “Heaven” stands as a naturalistic concept. In another place, however, he states that “Heaven is the great overlord of the numerous spirits. If you do not complete your service on Heaven, then even the assistance of the numerous spirits will not bring any advantages” (Su Yu 1992, 398). Now Heaven seems to designate a deity. Incorporating these two uses, Dong replies to the Emperor Wu’s (r. 141-87 BCE) question as saying that, “I have heard that Heaven is the ancestor of all things. Therefore, Heaven supports and protects them all without exception. It establishes the sun, moon, wind, and rain to bring them into harmony. It regulates yin, yang, heat, and cold to bring them to maturity. This is the reason why the sages emulated Heaven and established the Way” (Ban Gu 2017, 2525). Paradoxically, the “ambiguity” of the two uses provides Dong with an advantage in conveying his message. Here the anthropomorphic Heaven plays a role of setting purpose and making decisions, while the naturalistic one materializes them in tangible natural phenomena.

Upon this account Dong proposes his doctrine of the Heavenly Way. “What harmonizes everything with no disorder and revolves cyclically with no end is called the Way…The great origin of the Way is Heaven. Heaven does not change. Likewise, the Way does not change” (Ban Gu 2017, 2518-19). The Heavenly Way is constant, moving cyclically without end.
It demonstrates itself in the human world as “a path leading to orderly government” (Ban Gu, 2499). Taking the path, the sage kings ruled their countries in harmony; deviating from it, the corrupt kings brought their countries chaos.

In conformity with his idea of cyclicity in Heaven, Dong formulates a doctrine of “Three Systems” in the human world. It tells that Xia dynasty (trad. 2205-1766 BCE) constitutes the Black System with “loyalty” as its principle; Shang dynasty (trad. 1766-1123, BCE) constitutes the White System with “piety” as its principle; and the Zhou dynasty (1122? -256, BCE) constitutes the Red System with “refinement” as its principle. He declares that “all kings must apply [one of the three].” “Now the Han dynasty is the successor to an age of great chaos. It seems appropriate to diminish some ‘refinement’ of Zhou and employ the ‘loyalty’ of Xia” (Ban Gu, 2519). Dong’s statement implies that the alteration among dynasties follows a cyclicity of “loyalty”-“piety” — “refinement” and the same cycle of Black-White-Red will repeat itself.

Superficially, Dong simply talks about dynastic change: each of the three dynasties completed its cycle and was succeeded by another one. However, an analysis in depth will reveal that what he studied is not the cycle in a single dynasty, but the long-term cycle comprised of three phases. In other words, what truly concerns Dong is not the completion of a single dynastic cycle, but the regularity in and the repetition of the long-term cultural cycle of loyalty, piety, and refinement. Guided by Dong’s thinking, Sima Qian (c. 145-c. 90 BCE) further points out that:

The government of Xia was marked by loyalty, which in time deteriorated until mean men turned it into rusticity. Therefore, the men of Shang who succeeded to Xia reformed this defect through piety. But piety degenerated until mean men made it a superstitious concern for the spirits. Therefore, the men of Zhou who succeeded corrected this fault through refinement. But refinement again deteriorated until it became in the hands of the mean a mere hollow show. Therefore, what was needed to reform it was a return to loyalty. For the way of three dynasties of old is like a cycle which, when it ends, must begin over again (Sima 1975, 392).

In addition to reiterating Dong’s doctrine of “Three Systems,” Sima enhances it with two points. First, he reveals the dynamic for the successive phases of the cultural cycle. In terms of his opinion, what causes the transition from one dynasty to another is moral factors. This theory is applied in his entire work of Records of Grand Historian and encourages Chinese historians in later times to concentrate on moral reasons when studying political events. Secondly, he assures the infinite recurrence of the same cycle of loyalty, piety, and refinement. This changes an implied opinion in Dong to be an explicit law and changes the essence of the Han’s returning to “loyalty” from a matter of political wisdom to that of historical necessity.
Sima’s theory is fully reflected in Ban Gu’s (32-92 CE) *Discourse in the White Tiger Hall*. Because of the fact that Ban’s book compiled the political and philosophical positions from a conference in which the Emperor Zhang (r. 76-80 CE) himself attended and acted as final judge on controversies, it has been viewed as representing national ideology in the later Han times (25-220 CE). This means also that Sima’s idea of the necessity of cultural cycle is widely accepted by Chinese intellectual elites then.

### III.3. The Biological Cycle and the Celestial Cycle

In contrast to the Indo-Hellenic, especially from the 6th century, the Chinese philosophy of nature often appealed to the biological pattern in its elucidation of natural cyclicity and paid attention to the individuality of short-term cycles. Due to the notion of “correlative” relationship between Heaven and human, the pattern was analogized into human affairs and helped to form a doctrine of dynastic changes. This emphasis on the individuality of short-term cycle in Nature and the unique completion of each dynastic cycle in human world signifies the second feature of Chinese cyclicality.

#### III.3.1. The Cycle in Nature

The Neo-Confucian philosophers rarely had concern with anthropomorphic Heaven. As for them, Heaven meant Mother Nature and the Heavenly Way meant the regularity in cyclical alterations in Nature, such as those in biological organisms. A dialogue between Zhu Xi and his student records that, “Someone asks, ‘When Heaven brings into being sages, is it only the effect of chance and not a matter of design?’ The master replies, how could Heaven and earth say: ‘We will now proceed to produce sages?’ It simply comes about that the required quantities of air meet in perfect mutual concordance, and thus a sage is born. And when this happens, it looks as if Heaven had done it by design” (Zhu Xi 1988, 80).

In another place, Zhu Xi defines Heaven, “What the blue sky signifies is Heaven. It is just that which moves and changes cyclically and constantly. It is definitely improper to say that Heaven is a deity who evaluates and rebukes evil doings, and the same is to another saying that there is no regulator in Heaven” (Zhu Xi 1988, 5). Obviously, “Heaven” in these two passages designates either Mother Nature or blue sky. The birth of sages, as well as that of all historical figures, comes simply from the “concordance of air,” rather than any deity’s conscious design. Meanwhile, the “regulator” of Heaven/Nature in Zhu Xi refers to the “principle” (*li*) which exists in the material element of “air.” (Zhu Xi 1988, 1690).

About the “principle” Zhu Xi says that “‘Origination, penetration, advance, and perseverance’ [together] designate the ‘principle,’ while the ‘air’ fills these four phases. When there are the four phases, in them there must be the principle. The principle and air cannot separate from each other.”
To illustrate this point clearer he picks up a case of grain. “In a grain’s life, sprouting is ‘origination,’ seedling is ‘penetration,’ earing is ‘advance,’ and seeding is ‘perseverance.’ The seed of a grain will start a new life cycle. This cyclical process will recur infinitely” (Zhu Xi 1988, 1689). About the cycles and their continuity Zhu Xi further states:

[The cycle of] ‘origination, penetration, advance, and perseverance’ goes on without interruption. After ‘perseverance’ there comes ‘origination’ again; before the hours *zi* (23:00-1:00) today it is the hours *hai* (21:00-23:00) yesterday. A thing has its summer, autumn, winter, and birth [spring]. We sense its energy of life when thinking about this. It itself possesses a ‘little origination-penetration-advance-perseverance.’ (Zhu Xi 1988, 1690).

In terms of this depiction, a category of thing, such as wheat species, continues its life through endless appearance of individual wheat A, B, C, etc. In other words, it is the life-process of individual wheat A, B, C, etc. that respectively forms their own cycles (links) in the category of wheat and ensures the continuous extension of its chain. This pattern is similar to that of human immortality through recurrent cycles of individual life, which Plato described. However, it is important to note that, in terms of Zhu Xi’s analysis, Wheat A is endowed with its own “little origination-penetration-advance-perseverance,” or individuality which characterizes it as a unique wheat and differentiates it from wheat B or C.

### III. 3. 2. The Cycle in Humans

From the beginning of the 3rd century to the end of the 6th century, the Chinese world experienced a disastrous upheaval. The long-time social and political turbulence not only interrupted the regular succession of dynasties described by Dong and Sima, but also discredited their doctrine of cultural cycle. In correspondence to what changed in natural philosophy and in political reality, there appeared a doctrine of dynastic cycle. In fact, the dynastic cycle is not a conception unique to Chinese tradition. For instance, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), a fourteenth-century Islamic historian, proposes a similar idea of “life span of dynasty.” He claims that:

In the opinion of physicians and astrologers, the natural life span of individuals is one hundred and twenty years, that is, the period astrologers call the great lunar year. Within the same generation, the duration of life differs according to the conjunctions…The same applies to the life span of dynasties. Their duration may differ according to the conjunctions. However, as a rule no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations (Khaldun 2005, 136).
Based on the correlative thought prevalent in his time, Ibn Khaldun points out a time period common to the three fields: the movement of stars, the natural life span of human individuals, and the cycle of dynasties. It is his conclusion that the years for a dynasty to complete its cycle is fixed; it is a “rule” that nobody can change or avoid.

Ibn Khaldun discusses the cause for the fixity of dynastic years. The first generation of a dynasty retains the desert qualities, desert toughness, and desert savagery. The second generation, under the influence of royal authority and a life of ease, “changes from the desert attitude to sedentary culture.” The third generation has completely “forgotten the period of desert life and toughness, as if it had never existed.” He insists that, “In the course of these three generations, the dynasty grows senile and is worn out. Therefore, it is in the fourth generation that (ancestral) prestige is destroyed” (Khaldun 2005: 137). In his mind, “these stages are natural for the growth of dynasties.” On this doctrine Grace Cairns comments, “Actually, he traces only the rise and fall cycle of a dynasty, but his generalizations by implication apply to the course of an entire civilization” (Cairns 1962, 323-4).

Ibn Khaldun’s conceptions of “fixity of dynastic years” and “natural necessity behind dynastic change” are strange to the Chinese mind. Chinese thinkers take it as a simple fact that the time for a dynastic cycle has never been fixed. The Qin dynasty lasts 14 years, while the Han 400 years. Both the Yuan and Qing are minority dynasties, but the former lasts 62 years, while the latter 257 years. As Ma Duanlin states, “the reason by which the Jin wins the whole country differs from that of the Han, and the reason due to which the Sui loses its sovereign over the country differs from that of the Tang” (Ma Duanlin 1986, 3). Moreover, partially because of Sima Qian’s influence, Chinese thinkers often believe that the dynastic cycle and its successive phases are not “the product of natural law or blind fate. The dynamic behind them was moral, and the lessons to be drawn from the study of dynastic rise and fall were moral lessons” (Wright 1963, 41).

These two distinctions bring about the third one. Chinese thinkers recognize that there has never been an eternal dynasty in the long history of China; the dynasties all completed their own cycles in this or that way. However, if the ultimate dynamic for dynastic change were moral factors, and if moral faults, theoretically, could be corrected through moral cultivation, people might have good reason to expect an avoidance or, at least, a postponement of a cycle’s completion. With this conviction Sima Guang (1019-1086) memorializes his Emperor in regard to his great General Mirror for the Aid of Government as writing that, “Disregarding my inadequacy I have constantly wished to write a chronological history…taking in all that a prince ought to know--- everything pertaining to the rise and decline of dynasties and the good and ill fortune of the common people, all good and bad examples that can furnish models and warning” (Sima Guang 1986, 9608).
He “views the rise and fall of dynasty as an established rhythm, but he implies that a wise prince can learn from past cycles to make the moral choice that will protract the prosperity of his house” (Wright 1963, 41). There exists a dilemma in his mind which I would phrase as “an intellectual tension.” On the one hand, the great historian believes that all dynasties, including the one in which he lives, must complete their own cycles. On the other hand, thanks to the possibility analyzed above, he expects that his effort will assist the Song dynasty to enjoy a cycle that is longer and more harmonious.

The same tension exists in most Chinese thinkers. For instance, Cheng Yi exclaims, “How great the human endeavor is! It always co-exists with Heaven and earth. Therefore, humans can even triumph over the command of Heaven [in a certain sense]. One who is good at nourishing his life may lengthen his years from death; one who is good at protecting his country may prolong his reign from ending. There are truly things as such” (Cheng and Cheng 2004, 1224). As for him, although both the life of a person and that of a dynasty have their limits, there is still enough room for people to choose between the good or bad, and to lengthen or shorten their lives. In fact, what is mainly conveyed in his message is not the limit itself, but the freedom for choice within the limit.

The three points mentioned above, the individuality of a dynasty, the intellectual tension, and the freedom for choice in a dynastic cycle — constitute a powerful philosophical conviction. It furnishes Chinese society with a positive energy, encouraging people, especially their rulers, to correct their moral mistakes for themselves and for the country. Meanwhile, it brings to Chinese mind an optimistic spirit, opening enough room for people to make their own choice.

Conclusion

Nicolas Berdyaev, when discussing the superiority of Judeo-Christian tradition over other ancient traditions, writes that “The completely unhistorical or anti-historical nature of the ancient cultures of both India and China is due to the fact that the freedom of the creative subject was not revealed therein” (Berdyaev 2009, 111). This saying is wrong in two senses. First, it confuses the Indian view of history with the Chinese one. Second, its claim about the nature of Chinese culture is groundless.

In contrast to the Indo-Hellenic, there exists no conception of Great Year or Mahayuga in the Chinese. It means that both the cosmic cycle with its periodic interruption and the humankind who have to accept passively the cosmic consequence are not Chinese notions. Furthermore, the Chinese frequently relate historical process to the biological cycle. This approach underlines the individuality of each dynasty and assigns morality as the dynamic for the dynastic change. Berdyaev is correct at one point that the “freedom of the creative subject” is the condition for historical consciousness.
With the same token, I would argue that the secret of great Chinese tradition of historiography lies in “the freedom for choice within the limit” and in the possibility of learning from history to prolong and harmonize the cycle of one’s dynasty.

The second mistake in Berdyaev lies in his misunderstanding of the characteristic of Chinese mode of cyclicality, as well as the specialty of their consciousness of history. Differing from the Indo-Hellenic “uniform rotation,” the Chinese mode may be phrased as “a chain of recurring links.” The chain is composed of countless links, while the links connect with each other seamlessly and each undergoes the same cyclical process. The “cyclicality” is common to all links; it is not the chain itself, but each of its links that cyclically develops. The emergence of new links is infinite, and so is the extension of the chain. Meanwhile, the links are not uniform; they may differ from each other in thickness, length, or strength. For example, a plant withers, while leaving behind weak or strong seeds that will result in a different harvest next year. A father dies, while leaving behind an uneducated or educated son who will make the same family less or more prosperous. Similarly, a dynasty perishes, but the new one established on its ruin may learn bad or good lessons from its predecessor. In this way the category (chain) of plant, family, and dynasty extend forward through the appearance of new members (links) in their categories.
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The Future of Civilization: A Systems Approach

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Abstract

Civilization is one of several stages of human evolution and forms a system of interaction. Its past dominance is now challenged by growth of three subsystems — state, economy, and science/technology. These three subsystems have matured through application of rational knowledge. The vertically integrated state now dominates society and demarcated territory. The horizontally integrated global economy and global science/technology society have become worldwide in scope. State domination is reinforced by autonomous global science and international capital. The remaining subsystem of Moral Knowledge occupies present non-material civilization and is characterized by organic knowledge and embracing the unprovable, which includes religion, art, morality, literature, and philosophy. Reflecting this bifurcation, two global political persuasions are emerging — Statism includes communists, socialists, and progressives; Civism (Civilizationists) embraces non-material humanism and regards the three rational autonomous systems as helpful tools but not ends in themselves.

Key words: System, U.S., China, state, civilization

Civilizations and States

“Civilization” is both a provocative and an evocative term to describe a great swath of mankind. With great insight and scholarship, Arnold Toynbee described its dynamics as social phenomena looking mostly backwards to what had passed before. A decade ago, Samuel Huntington analyzed civilizations as cultural units poised on the cusp of conflict. In the present paper, I argue that the age of coherent civilizations has passed and that their component subsystems have established autonomy from the birthing institutions. This development has been generated by purposive human action with roots in two knowledge-acquisition forms — organic and rational.

In his book, The Selfish Gene, (Dawkins, 2006) Richard Dawkins makes a point analogous to the common approach in the study of social and human phenomena. Writers on evolution approached the study of human evolution under the assumption that groups and species are the units of evolution. This is a complete error, he points out, because it is the individual gene which replicates itself and provides the map for the organism.
In our world of civilizations, societies, and other invented concepts, we wish to improve our understanding of human phenomena but often end in speculation without adequate identification of the mechanisms of change and stability. The future of civilization is too important not to explore its dynamic roots in individual thought and action, in its perpetual adaptation to the human and material environment.

The individual person is the fundamental unit of any group — from nuclear family to nation-state and civilization. This "human unit" is replicator and producer, destroyer and builder, originator and beneficiary or victim. We study civilization as the highest form of human construction, but as Lady Thatcher famously quipped about society’s non-existence, there is also no such "thing" as civilization — yet it is a crucial concept for understanding historical and contemporary phenomena. Starting from the individual as basic unit of society and civilization, in the same way that the selfish gene is the fundamental element in physical life, we can arrive at a different approach to larger entities. Figure 1 lists a few of the important terms and their meaning within this article.

![Figure 1 - Glossary of terms](image)

Mankind constructed societies and civilizations as total systems to enhance survival and longevity. There have evolved at least four subsystems within civilizational systems. These are:

1. **Government** — this subsystem evolved from heads of families to tribal chieftains to kings and emperors to manage defense and overall coordination by using power, law, and economic tools.
2. Science and technology — by innovation, adaptation and accumulation of material knowledge, SciTech society emerged and often ignored tribal and national boundaries.

3. Trade and production — Currency, banking, trade and distribution enabled production and transfer of goods and services within a society/civilization.

4. Religion, human will and non-material consciousness — belief system, culture, literature, art and philosophy unified thought and orientations facilitating collective action among a large population. Figure 2 presents civilization as a total system, with four subsystems making it work.

![Civilization and its subsystems](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol87/iss87/17)

The governmental subsystem underwent vertical integration through planning, meritocracy, and rational administration, emerging as the sovereign nation-state by the nineteenth century, in command of economy and society. Occupying a demarcated and defended territory, worked and supported by citizens with allegiance to the nation, the state intervened in education, culture and a wide range of activities formerly social in scope. Alone among the other three subsystems, government (which later become the state) is non-globalist, characterized by jealous embrace of exclusive sovereignty. Sovereign governments, when transforming into states, have become powerful enough to dominate civilization and humanity’s legacy of society and civilization, taking them into forms yet unrealized. My working hypothesis is laid out in Figure 3.
The science/technology subsystem evolved into the Global SciTech Society, creating and leveraging materialist rationality into common property of all, but controlled by a highly specialized elite. In theory, it has erased boundaries, though nation-states guard their security-relevant innovations from transfer to other powers. It can be regarded as a “society” in that it has prospered through cooperative interaction and knowledge sharing. State subsidies have also nourished it as positive input for strengthening state dominance within society.

Nineteenth century international commerce, driven by industrialization, made states stronger and transformed empires into trading blocs. Banks lubricated business expansion while implicitly promising endless growth — an illusion that collapsed with two world wars and an intervening depression. Currency questions, postwar rebuilding, the gold standard, and other issues have driven horizontal integration on a global scale with the American dollar as reserve currency. The digital revolution has further accelerated the importance of international capital and loosening from state controls.

The last subsystem of civilization consists of things that cannot be proven — especially religion which has been vital in the formation and maintenance of all civilizations. It consists of innovations of the mind, expressed in images, visions, sounds (music and language) and belief in a transcendent afterlife. It is the subsystem based on non-materialism and exists chiefly in the minds and expressions of individuals. The non-material knowledge subsystem cannot be planned or prognosticated by rational extrapolation. It is knowledge gained through organic means and provides transcendent meaning for individuals within a civilization. It has both global and national extent, and unlike Global SciTech Society, directly affects practically every individual directly, though unequally. It is the most human subsystem of the four and flourishes with imagination, vision, and tragedy.
Three subsystems become autonomous

These four subsystems comprised past civilizations and are now becoming autonomous systems in contrast to their integrated relationships within historical civilizations. The modern sovereign nation-state dominates in the disposition of capital and seeks ever more power over society. The Global SciTech Society claims or seeks supreme knowledge of climate, energy, medicine, and the universe. Collective knowledge of the material world is claimed and celebrated as answering the needs of humanity, mostly at the expense of the organic knowledge acquired in traditional civilizations. International capital has expressed its independence from subsystem status to become an autonomous system answering only to economic laws. Like the modern state and Global SciTech Society, its foundation in rational planning, calculation of costs and benefits and a presumption that organic knowledge is obsolete combine to detach it from traditional civilization.

Figure 5 suggests how human social evolution has occurred. The four subsystems of the civilization system evolved unequally, with growing convergence of the autonomous state, economy, and SciTech Society to form the most powerful combine in history, abandoning the one humane and organic subsystem. How has this happened? First we must recognize that the success of a civilization is in its ability to prolong the lives of its members. The Will-to-Live is fundamental to humans. Arrangements of action (institutions) which fail to serve this instinct will not be preserved.
In humanity’s journey, the family, tribes, societies and states have accompanied population and technology growth with great continuity and expansion of numbers.

![Figure 5 - The hierarchy of human evolution](image)

Life demands material inputs, which consist of food, water, shelter, and defense against predators. Territory, as a region of land and water, is vital in providing these inputs. Society is essentially cooperative and hierarchical, with a division of labor, which becomes more complex as membership and innovation expand. Its concerns are largely materialist, with members interacting under a code of ethics based on reciprocity. Governments began as tribal councils, evolved into kingships with standing armies and in modern times, became highly authoritarian or relatively democratic. Together these three elements of territory, society and government comprise the state.

These three subsystems are characterized as serving the material needs of human life, postponing individual death in the process. Human existence is primarily physical, and it is no surprise that the subsystems devoted to maximizing material accessibility have expanded beyond the boundaries of civilization. If this mundane form of existence was adequate, a non-material subsystem would be superfluous. Organic knowledge has been the source of mankind’s slow evolution into civilization but is largely instinctive and responsive to specific circumstances. The subsystem of civilization that is non-material and organic, which we often relegate as "humanities," is that which makes us human, gives life meaning and reconciles the sensate with the transcendent. It is the subsystem where morality holds sway because it promises accountability for actions, if not in this life, then in an afterlife, and is therefore more effective than social ethics.
Generations of people have lived under non-material persuasions and viewed life as more than labor and animal existence.

**Figure 6 - Evolution of action structures**

Civilization is one stage of human evolution — not physiological but organizational. Its progress was preceded by four separate stages:

1. The family, consisting of father, mother and children, is the original building block of human organization. Based on sexual and age division of labor, it is hierarchical and rooted in the biology of reproduction and life maintenance. Bloodline connected families into clans which created narratives of a common ancestor and interlinked within a common territory. Tribes emerged and established rudimentary government and maintained exclusivity of membership.

2. With demographic increase and urbanization tribal affiliation lost its solidarity and a functioning society emerged. Government became more intrusive, trade and production more specialized, and “rule by rules” expanded. Released from tribal compulsion, individuals interacted through ethics based on reciprocity. The integration of social subsystem within an emerging civilization first served life security at a material level, and later there evolved a common religious overlay.
3. Secular society saw development of markets and inputs of production as members labored to acquire life necessities. Specialized government organs imposed taxes, corvee and laws. Government also raised fulltime armies and used religion as a means of integrating diverse populations. As a society acquired an overlay of civilization, adaptation to the environment within its claimed territory became more sophisticated and productive, occasionally flourishing until resources were exhausted or it was conquered by a stronger power.

4. Until the mid-twentieth century, an advanced civilization could be described as a coherent system. As with its component subsystems, a civilization undergoes evolution and change, accelerated in the recent past. Rationalization, globalization of transport, communication, science, and technology have expedited integration of the three material subsystems and delivered autonomy, if not independence from the sourcing civilization.

Figures 7-11 summarize pre-civilization social development.
Stage Two
Families formed clans, then tribes – based on lineage.

Stage Three: Society characteristics
- **Components**: individuals, families, teams, clans, tribes
- **Bonding**: rituals, culture, myth, division of labor
- **Material basis**: exploitation of territorial resources, labor, trade, innovation
- **Secular**: organized religion not essential.
- **Norms**: customary rules, utilitarian ethics
- **Status**: part ascribed, part achieved.
- **Management**: acephalous; organic

Figure 8 - Lineage groups

Figure 9 -- Stage Three: Social evolution
Civilization is said to begin with the written word. Its appearance supplements the face-to-face interactions of a society and enables larger populations to accumulate knowledge, live longer, be more productive and build a common identity. Figure 12 describes the process of adding a superior layer over society.
As government takes on more powers and responsibilities it transforms into a recognizable state and does not abandon or dissolve the sources of its sovereignty. Power is accumulated and expanded, particularly with war when mobilization of an entire population is not only possible but necessary. A state discovers new resources and innovations that aided its victory and is loath to surrender them in peace. The most rational state has the best chance of winning a conflict.
In the present age, as traditional civilization fades, the state flexes new muscles and encounters other states with similar ambitions, leading to war. The religious element and humanism of former civilization fades as the material subsystems expand. Some conflict is mitigated with the horizontal integrative thrusts of the international economy and the Global SciTech Society.
Individual Will – the source of action and change

Using a systems approach to analyze civilization and its evolution does not mean that a system or subsystem is self-generating. The fundamental source of a human system is individuals thinking and acting to create living spaces from which they can develop and acquire life necessities. The motivation of the individual is found in the Will of the living organism to maintain life of body and mortal soul. We can identify six separate Wills:

1. **Will-to-Live** — The primary source of all wills, mostly conscious and universal in the mortal soul and present in unconscious form in other living things. It has driven productive and acquisition of life inputs for eons.

2. **Will-to-Freedom** — Consciousness of life’s precariousness directs individuals to search for means and tools to relive their subordination to raw necessity. The first freedom is freedom from nature’s iron law of early death.

3. **Will-to-Power** — This is distributed unequally among mankind and has its source in paternal families, expressed in tribal hierarchy and refined in monarchy. Control of governments and the process of state building would hardly be possible without men of strong power drive.

4. **Will-to-Comply** — A few men are leaders, and most men and women are followers. Conformity as a passive attitude is never enough to establish an organization, so there must be positive compliance. A soldier is only effective if he complies with orders in a positive fashion.

5. **Will-to-Transcend** — Men rise above animal existence because of search and belief in a higher meaning of life. In tribal settings, a shaman calls upon unseen spirits to heal or comfort. Sophisticated religions describe an afterlife where sins and merits of the present life determine eternal existence. Belief in a second existence creates a morality based on accountability — in distinction to social ethics which is circumscribed by the present sensate life.

6. **Will-to-Redirect** — Humans make choices and can change their circumstances, location or environment. This may involve risk and awareness of profit and loss. This will has been most evident in history of states, which developed out of civilizational governments experiencing reform, usurpation, rebellion, and civil wars as motors of change and redirection.

To summarize, human will has been at the base of systemic change — changes that added to the memory reservoir and were processed into the rationality of cause and effect. As the three material subsystems accumulated lessons and maxims for change, they no longer depended upon organic knowledge which was often defective and subject to unverifiable belief and speculation.
The invention of numbers and mathematics fed into government statistics, economic transactions and scientific calculations, leaving organic knowledge with concepts and visions but few verifiable statements or facts on the natural world — a world that includes physical existence.

Two Examples of Civilization Change: China and America

Ancient Chinese civilization has been replaced by three material systems — state, Global SciTech Society and a combination of internal and international capital. Fig 16 illustrates how these changes have occurred since the early twentieth century.

![Figure 16 – Making modern China](image)

Obstacles to modernization have included both the efficacy and inertia of the old civilization, fragmentation into relatively self-reliant regions and provinces and interference by industrial states, notably Japan. Communist conquest in 1949 completed the unification began by the Guomindang under Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek).
Led by Mao Zedong the Communists established a new society with antipathy towards folk and organized religion, simplified the ideographic writing system, confiscated farmland while destroying the landlord class, made art and literature subordinate to politics, and set off a famine which killed more than 40 million Chinese. After Mao’s death (1976) a series of reforms redirected a more orderly state under control of a single party — the Chinese Communist Party. “Rule of man” was replaced by “rule of law.” International capital was invited to invest in joint enterprises and technology transfer was expedited. Through foreign investment, espionage and sending students abroad, China has been able to become a very active member of the Global SciTech Society.

![Components of the current Chinese state](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol87/iss87/17)

In a reversal of Maoist attacks on the old civilization, temples and palaces have been rebuilt and classical texts republished. There is little hope for a revival since modernization has occurred at a material level for the benefit of long-suffering subjects/citizens, yet at tremendous human costs. Whether the present pace of progress can be maintained remains unanswered because society and state deal with a number of challenges, including repeated epidemics, the growing challenge from the U.S., and a shaky financial framework. Beijing has made no secret of her desire to incorporate lost territories, including Hong Kong and Taiwan (see "Territory" in Figure 17). Integrating Macao and Hong Kong is adding part of the historical loss to the motherland, and suppression of Moslem separatists in Xinjiang prevents further loss.
USA

**Figure 18 - USA vertical integration**

**Figure 19 - The contemporary American state**
With the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. became the dominant world power. For nearly two decades it appeared that the globe had entered an era of peace, democracy, and prosperity, accelerated by the digital revolution. Globalization promised a reduction of the national sovereignty which presumably caused wars and poverty. Human rights were advocated as necessary for a new world civilization to emerge.

This hope was dissipated on September 11, 2001, with the Al Qaeda attacks on the U.S. Huntington and others framed it as the persistence of antagonistic civilizations. The attack triggered a revival of national security and America established a Department of Homeland Security to warn and discourage further attacks. To many in the developing world, America is the Great Satan and must be destroyed. The idea of a multipolar world gained some currency but it relies on sovereign states for implementation. Instead of state dissolution, the post-Cold War order has actually consisted of vertical integration of nation-states aided by digital development, inter-state competition, a new arms race, demographic factors, and facilitation of capital transfers.

The 9/11 event awakened Americans to the fact that they live in a still-hostile world and opinions differed on how to deal with it. One segment of thought claimed that American hegemony and racism were at fault, and that foreign antagonism could be reduced by greater distribution of wealth to impoverished societies. Another solution was to open the gates and borders to greater numbers of migrants who would become taxpayers and workers in a society where population growth was stagnant.

An opposing opinion was that America had been a mostly beneficial force in world politics and remained on virtuous foundations with constitution, democracy, and market capitalism. A large influx of undocumented immigrants is seen as diluting the population with desperate workers and welfare beneficiaries, with greater possibility of ethnic balkanization in the future. Religious diversity is not considered a source of national strength among this segment of the population. These two opposing visions of America are reflected in the party politics as well in society, exacerbated by the Covid epidemic. In this perspective, U.S. society has symptoms of increasing disunity which reduces national solidarity and government ability to speak and act with a single voice. It is plausible that the U.S. may be undergoing a vertical disintegration as two parties seek power and hurl mutual condemnations.

**On the Future of Civilization**

China and the U.S. are prominent examples of new forces at work, and they illustrate how civilization has been diminished by the formation of new material systems out of former subsystems. China has much less political freedom than the U.S. and some claim that democracy may be untenable in the longer run. The heightening social conflict in the U.S. is facilitated by freedoms of speech and assembly but also demonstrates a possible outcome when and if humanist civilization declines.
Civilization is subject to further evolution and mankind has not arrived at a steady state or equilibrium — there is no normalcy to speak of.

Two global parties are likely to emerge in the future — the Statists and the Civists (Civilizationists). Statists will include Communists, Socialists and Progressives as the party of greater state involvement and supervision of society. The state embodies competence, science, economic equity, and rationality. In other words, its vertical integration has made an encompassing organization from the government subsystem with a performance record of accomplishment, if we examine mortality rates and population growth as measures of effectiveness. Wars seem less likely than in the previous century and to this may be attributed greater mutual interdependence of states, more stress on maintenance of the status quo and ease of communication.

Civists on the other hand, remain skeptical of states and tend to view them as antagonistic to freedom. They also do not welcome the intrusion of international capital into all aspects of national economies. There is suspicion of science and technology exhausting natural resources, replacing humans with machines and increasing the killing ability of new weapons. Civists oppose the overwhelming secularization of global society and embrace the unprovable ideas, especially religion, that have formed the human condition.

Does Civism Become the Enemy of Statism?

Civists recognize past and present contributions by state, science/technology, and market commerce to mankind’s vastly improved condition. For example, the Civist attitude to the three material systems was implied in the life of Jesus. When He drove the money changers out of the Temple, He was not demonizing money or capitalism. Rather he implicitly accepted the role of commerce, but it must not carry on in a sacred place. A second incident occurred when He was asked to comment on ownership of a coin, and His answer was that Caesar, the symbol for government, was a valid part of civilization with a part to play. Caesar belonged to the City of Man, to use St. Augustine’s term. After His Resurrection, the apostle Thomas (“the Doubter”) did not believe that Christ had risen until he actually touched the crucifixion wounds. Christ could have interpreted that as an absence of faith, but instead complied with the request for proof. This signaled acceptance of empirical validation — the crux of scientific inquiry.

Jesus Christ was the first Civist and more importantly, His words indicate a future accommodation between Statists and Civists. Civilizations already play a severely diminished role in states, and the alliance of states, Global SciTech Society and international economy could threaten that which makes us human — embracing the unprovable. The new systems have lengthened and improved our material lives — a fact tacitly accepted by current Civists.
The material subsystems have broken away from two major civilizations, leaving the mass of humanity vulnerable to the vagaries of progress and those who seek to command additional powers over society, climate, economy, education, communications, biology and even sexual identity. The vital task of Civists is to preserve the humanism of past civilizations and not to succumb to exclusive rationality — which has no guarantee of consistently coming up with the right answers to questions of existence and meaning.

Figure 20 summarizes the above discussion and illustrates how the modern states draw strength from the Global SciTech Society and domestic/international capital. The three systems have become relatively integrated at the expense of the humanist component of civilization. The subsystem of Moral Knowledge is increasingly vulnerable and isolated but remains vital in preserving humanity’s possessions of virtues, hopes, visions and passions. For individual existence to be exclusively rational and to become political, economic, and material beings is to drain meaning from a million-year struggle.
Suggested Readings


Nationalism in the Context of Globalization

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Introduction

To understand the connection and consequences between nationalism and globalism, I will start with a basic definition of nationalism. According to Websters Dictionary, nations that are focused on national, not international goals, are nationalistic. A nation comprises the same language, customs, and traditions.

Some scholars have argued that nationalism has historical roots. People have been bonded by ethnicity and politics from ancient times. Others consider nationalism as a modern phenomenon due to industrialization, democratization, and modern technology. Jonathan Hearn¹ from the University of Edinburgh has argued that some states are more homogeneous than others and they have strong senses of nationalism while others can adjust better to diversity or multiculturalism.

Globalization refers to global economy, free trade, cheap labor, and markets. There are different opinions about the beginning of globalization. In his article Nationalism and Globalization, Jorgen Osterhammel identified three schools that have equal support for explaining the beginning of globalization.

The History of Nationalism and Globalization

One school placed the date for the commencement of globalization in the 13th century, during the period when Mongols conquered the largest territory in Eurasia. Others considered the discovery of America as the time of globalization. The third school focused on industrialization, that is, when modern technology started after World War II, with the creation of transnational institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and others. It is during this period that nationalism from Europe spread around the globe.² The same authors point out that globalization can include integration and fragmentation simultaneously. When nation states struggle to build their power, they use resources outside their border; thus, they become more aggressive and get involved in economic, military, and competition with other states.³

¹ Hearn - page 8
² Osterhammel - page 695
³ Osterhammel - page 696
Saraman V. Zala, author of the article *Globalization and the Nation State*, states that globalization includes the following: intensification of political, economic, and cultural connections; the triumphs of American values in economics and politics; and the technological revolution. He argued that because of globalization, the big corporations are not accountable to officials of the countries they use, and this would negatively impact the economy of the less developed country. At the same time, nation states have less authority and the borders of nations become irrelevant. Thus, a decision taken in the United States might affect people from a different country and might create riots of local groups who pressure their government to take actions to protect them. Third World countries must adapt to the regulations set by the supranational institutions which might not be in their national interest. As a result, Saraman V. Zala indicated, the social, political, and cultural aspects of globalization are strongly connected and when you buy an object, you buy the image, too. He stated:

> When we buy a product, we buy it not only because of its perceived inherent qualities or use but also because of its image. An advertisement is not something that tells you something about the product only, of course it does, but it is also a product itself. A possible consequence of this is that somebody else's image could become my choice.\(^4\)

That would mean that culture becomes economic and what is economic becomes culture. The advertisement is a product.

**The Effects of Globalization**

Part of globalization is mass immigration. Countries like United States, Australia and Argentina became nations due to immigrants. The United States set up institutions to accommodate the foreigners. There was not a single method to deal with large scale immigrations. Some of the steps adopted were assimilation, integration, or isolation. By the end of the nineteenth century, the new countries tried to deter immigrants coming from Asia, claiming that they are inferior to the whites, and they might undermine the civilized people from Europe.

After World War II, there was devastation in Europe and a great shortage of labor, due to the absence of millions of men who had lost their lives fighting. Western countries were competing for workers. Great Britain used workers from its empire. Other countries, including France and Germany, often used their former colonies for cheap labor. One source of laboring people was Turkey and thousands moved to Germany. They did not intend to live there for good but for financial reasons, it was more advantageous to settle in Germany.

When the first recession hit the Western countries, many immigrants went back to their original countries. However, when another recession occurred, this time, most of the immigrants remained in Europe. One group particularly targeted today in Europe are the Muslims. With high unemployment and discrimination, many immigrants from the Middle East have turned to religion; others have become radicalized. Many terrorist attacks have taken place in Western Europe over recent years, and this has strengthened the idea that all Muslims are potential terrorists. September 11, 2001 was a turning point for the way the Europeans have tended to look at their Muslim neighbors. In essence, large segments of public opinion in Europe have turned against the Muslims.

Thilo Sarrazin, a German politician and author of *Germany Does Away with Itself*, complained that the Turks are taking over Germany, with a higher birth rate. “I don’t want the country of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be largely Muslim, or that Turkish and Arabic will be spoken in large areas, that women will wear headscarves, and that the daily rhythm will be set by the call of the Muslims”.

### The Benefits of Globalization

Some Westerners have begun to question the benefits of immigration. On the positive side, some demographers point to the low birth rate of Europeans. Thus, Reiner Klinholtz, Director of the Berlin Institute for Population Development, has stated:

> Even if Germany could increase its annual net migration rate back up to the levels of a few years ago (100,000-200,000), the population would decline by twelve million by 2050, a “bloodletting” similar to emptying Germany's twelve largest cities.

That means that contemporary governments must now find a way to provide assistance for a substantial number of elderly people. One route involves immigrants. They tend to be younger than the natives and they contribute to the economic growth, including support for the increasing number of elder people. The demand for workers to care for the elderly will skyrocket in the next decades, and immigration may help reduce the economic tensions on governments and societies.

Others have claimed that immigration is not necessary. More and more women are working. People are living longer and tend to work past retirement age. Also, immigrants are more likely to be unemployed, these individuals argue, and that will deplete the welfare funds. Moreover, they argue, a lot of immigrants prefer to live in communities with people from their own countries, and this lack of integration may lead to fragmentation of a nation.

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5 Global Researcher- Europe's Immigration Turmoil - page 6
6 Global Researcher- Europe's Immigration Turmoil - page 6
Many Europeans believe that Muslim culture is in contrast with the values of the Enlightenment. Many immigrants have refused to integrate, these voices say. Anti-Muslim sentiments have been growing stronger in recent decades. Far right groups were taking advantage of Islamophobia and have made immigration the main point of their campaign. Their supporters appear to be afraid that their culture will be diluted or disappear totally. For example, Thilo Sarrazin has claimed that Muslim immigrants to Germany “are dumbing down” society and are coming to Germany for that country’s rich welfare benefits.7

The economic factor has become a very important aspect of the contemporary surge of Islamophobia in Europe. Some current citizens express concerns that mass immigration would invade their country and their houses. Although many Europeans do not express their opinions freely, for fear of being accused of racism, there may well be a “silent majority” “that supports the far-right groups. Further, those with low education are afraid that their companies will be relocated to countries where the labor force is cheap. Those with high education are afraid of competition emanating from foreigners, as part of globalization.

As a result, far right groups in Europe have produced a new concept. This is “exclusionary populism,” a restrictive notion of citizenship which holds that democracy is based on a homogeneous community. It argues that only citizens of long standing are full members of civil society and that a society’s benefits should only accrue to them.”8 These groups demand the expulsion of unemployed refugees, and they call for deportation of all asylum seekers whose applications for residency are rejected by the authorities. This idea has gained a toehold, becoming a major issue in support of the purported national culture, and its advocates seek to protect what they see as Western values. Without doubt, this claim is yet another consequence of globalization.

Adapting Due to Globalization

The social and cultural changes characterized by uncertainty due to globalization have created, among men especially, a longing for security, a remembrance of the traditional family structure, with the role of the woman as mother and wife. This is what Judith Newton has stated about that historical memory:

\begin{quote}

The globalization of capitalism, economic restructuring, corporate downsizing, falling wages, the entry of married women into the labor market, the restructuring of domestic life by the dual incomes — which middle class families now require, constitute foundational challenges to the gender order by organized feminism and gay liberation in the United States and abroad.
\end{quote}

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7 Global Researcher - page 6  
8 The Growing Threat of the Radical Right - page 77
Additionally, the critiques of white, middle class, heterosexual masculinity by identity movements on every front all have contributed either to the erosion of primary bread winning as the foundation of dominant masculinity in the United States or the production of a related delegitimation of patriarchy on a global scale.”⁹

These developments, economically and politically, the supranational tendencies, have created a lack of confidence in representation of people by the establishment. Mikhael Minkenberg and Martin Schain examined the ideology of the far-right parties and wrote, “The nationalistic myth is characterized by the effort to construct the idea of nation and national belonging by radicalizing ethnic, religious, cultural and political criteria of inclusion/exclusion and to condense the idea of nation into an image of extreme collective homogeneity.”¹⁰

Political elites can benefit from nationalism. They can use the concept to gain support for their political agenda. Their goals may include additional territory, the control of natural resources or just overall benefits from the existence of conflicts. For these leaders, national interest becomes a priority for the survival of the state and the population would do what is necessary to protect their nation. Extreme nationalism can lead to war, along with discrimination against certain groups who are labeled the “enemy of the people” that cannot be trusted.¹¹

With all the consequences of globalization, including those mentioned above, one may wonder if globalization has a net positive or negative effect. It has losers and winners. In his article The Truth about Globalization, the author Timothy Taylor presents the benefits of globalization. For instance, he mentions the enhanced flow of goods and financial capital as investment in different regions has increased dramatically. Countries with elevated level of international trade have usually low unemployment. However, the new forms of technology, plus international competition, have caused the relocation of many workers or the efforts to re-training them. Although this is beneficial for the big corporations, to have a flexible workforce, it is perhaps detrimental to the workers who are forced to adapt to new conditions. Competition does not generate wealth for everyone. Additionally, many believe that globalization is all about American culture. Local cultures are dissolving. Third World countries are particularly vulnerable to globalization.

Recent events, particularly the war in Ukraine and the worldwide epidemic of Covid 19, show that the process of globalization has slowed down as proven by the rise of anti-globalist movements, extreme nationalists, and Brexit. We have seen heightened rivalry by two, perhaps three, great trading blocks for world domination.

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⁹ Growing Threat - page 87  
¹⁰ Right Wing Extremism - page 163  
¹¹ The Violent Consequences of Nationalism - page 846
It may be argued that the globalists of recent years totally underestimated the recurring power of nationalism, the desire of the people to preserve and defend their recalled traditions against the assault of the West. David Brooks, an opinion columnist, succinctly stated the impact of these developments when he authored his article entitled *Globalization is Over. The Global Culture Wars Have Begun.*

Many people around the world look at our American ideas about gender roles and find them foreign or repellent. They look at our fervent defense of L.G.B.T.Q. rights and find them off-putting. The idea that it's up to each person to choose its own identity and values is one that seems ridiculous to many, unfortunately. Some human rights are not accepted by everybody and in many parts of the world these are perceived as an imposition of the West on their own local customs. Attempting to implement Western democracy around the globe could lead to instability, and potential disruptive effects. The younger generation in Asia and the Middle East are more likely to adopt innovative ideas, values, but the older generation is more reluctant to change.

Philip Legrain is more optimistic about globalization. He argued the point in his article entitled *In Defense of Globalization.* There he wrote that the process goes both ways, there is strong influence from the immigrants on the Westerners and a strong influence of the Westerners on the immigrants.

So, it is difficult to determine definitively if globalization is very good or bad. Many people will be influenced by new ideas, values, and beliefs while others will find cultural differences too great to overcome. However, it is a revolutionary process, one that is going to continue, and it will take time to establish honest communication between the newcomers and the current citizens.

**Consequences of Globalism**

Nation states will continue to play a key role in directing transactions, setting limits, regulations, tariffs, and barriers to trade. In an article entitled *Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe,* Stanley Hoffman maintained that Europe has opted for integration, but it is still divided. The various European nations have different political goals and there is rivalry among them. However, the major problems facing the world — climate change, epidemics, environmental issues — imply the need to find global models to solve them. Nation states alone cannot deal with them.

Multiculturalism is another consequence of globalization. Many have blamed it for the numerous terrorist attacks executed across Europe.

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12 Globalization is over - page 3  
13 Defense of Globalization - page 248  
14 Perspective from the past - page 620
The lack of integration of the new immigrants, the relaxed attitude of the police towards ethnic groups and their cultural traditions, even when they are in contrast with the laws of the country, have failed to prevent crimes, such as “honor killing” in the British Muslim community. Police “may be worried that they will be seen as racist if they interfere in another culture” surmised Diana Sammi, Director of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organization.15

Some leaders in different right wing or conservative parties, such as former French President Nicholas Sarkozi, former British Prime Minister David Cameron, and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, were all somewhat skeptical of multiculturalism during their time in office. They did try different methods to encourage integration, like the building of mosques, enhanced language training, making use of the host country facilities for purposes of assimilation, and adhering to national requirements while assisting immigrants who sought to be allowed to stay.

These methods did not aim to separate the ethnic groups, but to recognize and manage diversity. However, the result was disappointing to some extent, because some right-wing Germans continue to believe that their country is being overrun by immigrants and they argue that Muslims cannot integrate successfully. In the United Kingdom, David Cameron blamed multiculturalism for “division, and fomenting terrorism.”16

Two specialists on the subject of European jihadists, French political scientist Oliver Roy and the American counter-terrorism expert, Marc Sageman, have claimed that the reason for the radicalization of some young Muslims is a combination of the lack of ties with their own communities, a lack of job opportunities at home, and the force of outside influence. Even though they are born in a Western country, these young people are still considered by some to be foreigners. Thus, they may turn to terrorist groups which provide them with a sense of belonging.17

Author H.E Baber points out the dilemma of multiculturalism. On one hand, the immigrants are encouraged to preserve their cultural identity and on the other hand, they are criticized for refusing to assimilate (Baber, 14). Multiculturalism should not be only about differences. Political theorist Bhikhu Parekh is against the idea that diversity means segregation. According to him, the goal of multiculturalism is to “borrow” parts of other cultures and then merge them together.18 This also means that people should be open and honest, able to communicate about other cultures.

15 Europe's Turmoil - page 21
16 Europeans Against Multiculturalism - page 5
17 Europeans against Multiculturalism - page 5
18 Vincent van Grondelle - page 5
However, it is also true that for many Europeans, especially right wingers, the presence of a massive number of immigrants, if they do not or cannot integrate, might lead to a backlash from current citizens who might feel that they will have to deal with the crisis on their own, and that their governments do not represent them anymore. Here is an additional point: Certain residents of the island of Lesbos, Greece, have reported that locals have been overlooked. In neglecting their concerns, the seeds have been sown for antipathy and intolerance towards refugees, sentiments exploited by an ascending right and echoed across Europe by fear-mongering politicians. By only focusing on the refugees and not on the local community who were just as much a part of the crisis, it created polarization.\textsuperscript{19}

This indicates that an innovative approach towards multiculturalism is needed to include both accommodation for the refugees and a response to the concerns of the current citizens. Benefits should apply to both groups, natives, and immigrants. That would prevent a backlash from the extant white community.

Mike O'Donnell, Professor of Sociology at Westminster University, outlines the negative aspects that he finds have characterized the philosophy of multiculturalism: it has emphasized differences between people instead of stressing commonalities. Further, he says to outlaw discrimination against the incoming minority groups, freedom of speech may be inhibited, and this leads to the constraints of so-called “political correctness.” As a result, the unity of the nation is not advanced. On the other hand, Andrew Pilkington, the author of the article \textit{In Defense of Both Multiculturalism and Progressive Nationalism}, has a different opinion. He has written that the people are very easily influenced by the political correctness zealots who have threatened the freedom of speech. It is necessary for there to be a genuine dialogue, and adjustments must be made by the government and the minority groups as well\textsuperscript{20}.

\textbf{Conclusion}

There is much research about the impact of globalization on people, but scholars have not yet agreed if the impact is positive or negative. One common conclusion is that globalization stimulates profound changes in values, religion, economy, and ideas. There will be winners and losers. Some states will prosper while others will not, and this may lead to inequality in the world. The international organizations that set up international norms have put pressure on nations to conform to these norms. What happens in a state is debated world-wide, as a result. Public opinion regarding events in various parts of the world is relevant. Tension arising between national interests and the regulations set up by international organizations might diminish the authority of the state. However, nation states will not go away.

\textsuperscript{19} Grondelle - page 11
\textsuperscript{20} A Pilkington - page 274
Modern national states should not be based on cultural homogeneity. Diversity is the mark of the modern state. The individual will be rooted in traditions, but he will be part of the world community as well.

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Bhikhu Parekh in *The Demandigness of Multiculturalism* by Vincent van Grondell, 2022, page 5.

The Psychology of Fascism: Wilhelm Reich Et Al

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There are innumerable definitions and explanations of fascism in the literature of the social and behavioral sciences. This paper only explicates one: the concept of a fascist personality. It focuses on the early work by scholars in this area, beginning with the writings of the 20th century psychiatrist and student of Sigmund Freud, Austrian and American intellectual, Dr. Wilhelm Reich.

In the short story/essay that follows this article, allusion is made by the author — the late writer and United Nations staff member Shawna V. Tropp — to the circle which grew up around Wilhelm Reich. This was a significant presence in New York and other East Coast locations, especially, during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

Below, we begin by discussing two related concepts: “the Right-Wing authoritarian” and “the authoritarian personality.”

The former is seen as the incubator of fascism without the direct use of violence to achieve its goals. Four different terms are discussed in this paper:

- The concept of a Fascist Personality
- The Concept of the Fascist Character Structure
- The Right-Wing Authoritarian
- The Authoritarian Personality

These terms are presented in a historical order, beginning with Wilhelm Reich and then followed by Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Herbert Marcuse, and finally the concepts of an authoritarian personality as developed by Theodor Adorno et al and the concept of right-wing authoritarianism as developed by Bob Altemeyer.

The broadest approach to understanding fascism is a historical-ideological one which interprets fascism as part of a long-standing tradition in Western Civilization. It forms part of the anti-enlightenment tradition. (Ziegler, 2021). Tamas Ziegler lays out in great detail the characteristics of the Enlightenment and the characteristics of the concomitant anti-Enlightenment tradition. This struggle has a long history, one parallel to the beginning of the Enlightenment arising in the 17th century and running to the present day.
According to Ziegler (Zeigler, 2021, p.24):

At the center of the anti-enlightenment lies the idea that humans are all different, should not be treated equally, should not be handled according to their deeds, and should not be respected as individuals. (This idea) stresses the determinate role of either the ethnic, religious or cultural background. The attack on the enlightenment revels in the denial of the unity of the human race.

It degrades the roles of freedom and individual human rights and promotes national myths and legends. For a nation state what is considered to be blood is more important than citizenship. This leads to a general attitude against immigration.

What Ziegler terms as Generic Fascism fits into the anti-enlightenment tradition. The characteristics of Generic Fascism may include identity politics; the creation of a nationalistic authoritarian state; the positive evaluation of violence; the extreme stress on masculinity; the exalting of youth over other phases of life; an attack on individual thinking and egalitarianism; and an authoritarian, charismatic style of leadership.

Both in the far right and in the particular form of fascism one finds the idea of the primacy of the group and the group’s victimhood. Other similarities include the dread of cultural decadence and liberalism.

Reich

Although there is little contemporary support for Reich’s later work revolving around energy and the orgone, there is much agreement that his writings on Character Structure and on the Psychology of Fascism, especially the latter, were prescient and fundamental to an integrated view of fascism as a specific product of one type of socialization of the child which produces an authoritarian and rigid character structure.

There is a general agreement among scholars as to what the essence of Reich’s position was. Fascist ideology is the product of a particular psychological structure which is irrational and related to an authoritarian patriarchal family structure.

Central to the development of the authoritarian, according to Reich, is the patriarchal family which socializes the child through either severe physical or severe psychological punishment. This type of attachment to the parents leads to a weak concept of self and sometimes to high narcissism as a compensatory mechanism. A contemporary example of this is provided by the sister of Donald Trump, Maryanne Trump Barry.

The relationship between a person with an authoritarian personality and his father is described as one of both physical and psychological abuse.
Reich does not say that all patriarchal families *per se* produce a fascist personality; rather, he is describing the “ideal type” which is the progenitor of it.

Reich’s work entitled *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* was developed during the 1930-1933 period in Germany and published in 1933. The Nazi’s banned it.

Parts of the text of another of his works, *Character Analysis*, predate the publication of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and ended up being published almost simultaneously with the latter, around 1933.

Both books can be seen as the products of Reich’s thinking from the mid-1920s until 1933. Further, both exhibit Reich’s early debt to the writings of Freud. The former book is more closely tied to Reich’s interpretation of Freud than is the latter one. *Character Analysis* is very much clinically oriented and itself does not directly connect any character type to the possession of an authoritarian personality and to amenability to the support of fascism.

Reich’s position was a holistic one, connecting the mind and the body. It predated the holistic position of Kurt Goldstein, whose book entitled *The Organism* was published in 1939. Reich felt that in order to avoid anxiety, to maintain the status quo of existence, and to minimize the threat of a neurosis, a person develops what he labeled “character armor.” This, he wrote, manifests itself at both a psychological and physical level.

Character armor is formed as a chronic result of the clash between instinctual demands and an outer world which frustrates these demands. Character armor is created by repression, and this can lead to projective defense mechanisms.

In less jargon-laden language, we may sum it up as follows: negative feelings about oneself are projected against others. Anger against the patriarchal home is displaced onto the weakest group in society: in Germany, the Jews; or onto “the gays;” or against Roma people, and so forth. Reich’s psychological solution was to promote sexual and orgiastic freedom which would un-armor the defenses of a person.

In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich outlines his social-economic position for both the explanation and for the appeal of fascism. According to Asad Haider and Tomba Massimiliano (Haider, 2021), there is a contrast between the views of Reich and that of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, et al. For Horkheimer, fascism involves mysticism. Reich invokes the Marxist-Leninist idea of false consciousness as to why the working class would support fascism. Their support, thus, is not based on being confused by the mystical ideological assertions of it but by its determinants which are embedded in their socialization in a patriarchal system.
The authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*, both Adorno and Horkheimer, believed that fascist ideology could be countered by rational thought. Given the patriarchal trap, Reich saw this strategy as a false one.

Reich argued that “the exposure to superstition by scientific enlightenment did not succeed in eliminating religious morality, which was the effect of the social basis of the authoritarian family and sexual repression” (Heider, 2021).

Sexual repression is caused, he argued, as is the morality associated with it, as a result of the development of social classes and the institutions of private property — which is organized by marriage. Ideology of all types, including fascist ideology, is an individual process, part of one’s character, as well as a societal one.

Reich summarizes his position in the next to last chapter, entitled “The Human Struggle for Freedom.” Here he makes eleven basic points:

1. Humanity is biologically sick.
2. Politics is the irrational social expression of this sickness.
3. Whatever takes place in social life is actively or passively, voluntarily or involuntarily, determined by the structure of masses of people.
4. The character structure is formed by socio-economic processes, and it anchors and perpetuates these processes. Man’s biopathic character structure is, as it were, the fossilization of the authoritarian process of history. It is the biophysical reproduction of mass suppression.
5. The human structure is animated by the contradiction between an intense longing for and fear of freedom.
6. The fear of freedom of masses of people is expressed in the biophysical rigidity of the organisms and the inflexibility of the character.
7. Every form of leadership is merely the social expression of the one or the other side of this structure of masses of people.
8. It is not a question of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the oil wells of Baku, or two to three hundred years of capitalism, but a question of our up-to-six-thousand-years of authoritarian mechanistic civilization, which has ruined man’s biological functioning.
9. Interest in money and power is a substitute for unfulfilled happiness in love, supported by the biologic rigidity of masses of people.
10. The suppression of the natural sexuality of children and adolescents serves to mold the human structure in such a way that masses of people become willing upholders and reproducers of mechanistic authoritarian civilization.
11. Thousands of years of human suppression are in the process of being eliminated.

The question of how it is being eliminated needs clarification.
Reich sees it being eliminated by what one could call a “utopian notion” of what he terms a “work democracy.” In fact, Reich provides little more than verbal encouragement as how to establish it in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. His approach is sometimes described as having affinities with an anarcho-syndicalist position. However, Reich denies that politics can help a society remove itself from patriarchal tyranny. This includes the anarchist approach which organizes people for support.

For Reich, the only possible escape from patriarchal dominance, sexual repression, and the ascent of fascist ideology and submission is by establishing a “work democracy.” This concept lacks conceptual clarity, and after reading the chapter on it, the reader tends to know more of what it is not than what it is. Reich describes it not as an ideology or a political movement but as a spontaneous collection of those people who have developed a “genital character,” having escaped from patriarchal domination.

Work-Democracy is seen by him as “the natural process of love, work, and knowledge.” Social production and consumption are naturally and organically interfaced with one another.

**Fromm**

Erich Fromm began empirical studies in Germany as part of his work at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research. Here he also developed many of his intellectual positions and concepts, including the concept of social character (Friedman, 2013). His study of German workers was conducted by the Frankfurt Institute beginning in 1929 and the data were interpreted by Fromm in 1937-1938. This interpretation had limited circulation and was not published in English until 1984.

Fromm entitled the manuscript *The Working Class in Weimar Germany: A Psychological and Sociological Study*. The purpose of the study was to gain access into the psychic structure of white collar and manual workers. According to Brunner, this work was a forerunner of the Adorno et al book *The Authoritarian Personality*, a work that was published in 1950.

Fromm’s research tended to validate some of the conclusions of *The Authoritarian Personality*. It emphasized other conclusions that were only addressed in a limited way in the book. Fromm connected the “authoritarian character” more closely to economic and family variables than did the Adorno et al work. He saw ideals and attitudes as being class-based.

Fromm defined the authoritarian attitude as one that “affirms, seeks out and enjoys the subjugation of men under higher external power, whether the power is the state or a leader, natural law, the past or God.
The strong and powerful are simply admired” whereas “the weak and helpless were hated and despised.” Sacrifice and duty, not pleasure in life and happiness, are the guiding aims of the authoritarian attitude (Fromm, pp. 209-210).

According to Brunner (Brunner, 1994, p. 629), “This definition prefigures some central elements of the Berkeley group’s (Adorno, et al., 1950) later definition of the authoritarian personality, which divides it into a syndrome composed of nine clusters. The second cluster, entitled “authoritarian submission,” is described as referring to a “submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the ingroup.” The third has to do with “authoritarian aggression” and the sixth comes closest to Fromm’s conception. That is, it describes “preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak leader, leader-follower dimension. It examines identification with power figures…and their exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness (Adorno et al, 1950. P.228).

The German worker study was highly empirical in nature. It analyzed the authoritarian personality using data, whereas Fromm’s later books such as Escape from Freedom, The Sane Society, and The Anatomy of Human Destruction” did not.

In Escape from Freedom, written in 1941, Fromm explicates escape from freedom. This involves the tendency to renounce “the independence of one’s ego” with someone or something external in order to find the power missing from the individual himself. Psychologically, such individuals are much more comfortable when their lives, their will and their minds are controlled by a totalitarian leader… (p.58).

Fromm maintained that the authoritarian “character” believes that “life is determined by forces outside of the individual’s control and leaves him with a sense of powerlessness.”

Fromm’s authoritarian character, finally, has the following characteristics:

a) The need for authority, which can be both personal (political leader) and super-personal (corporation, party, nation, state).

b) The conviction that human life is at the mercy of super-personal forces.

c) The willingness to obey external dictatorship.

d) An aversion to the idea of social equality; a belief in a hierarchal vision of a world in which the principles of domination and subjugation reign: a belief in Social Darwinism.

e) Conformism: readiness to follow the group in everything, to reproduce in their worldview and social behavior the accepted worldview and activity stereotypes.

f) Traditionalism of thinking.
g) Xenophobia expressed in acute dislike and hatred towards all those who differ in their racial, national, ethnic and other characteristics from oneself and his or her social environment, (particularly) those whose intellectual level is superior to his or her own; anti-intelligentsia.

Maslow

There is an overlap in thought between Abraham Maslow’s article titled “The Authoritarian Character Structure,” published in 1953, and the work of Fromm.

Maslow was both familiar with the writings of Fromm and knew him personally. The idea of character as related to authoritarianism had already been discussed by Reich and then by Fromm. For Maslow, character structure was viewed as an interconnected set of characteristics which were deeply embedded in the mind of the individual and were less prone to change than personality characteristics.

The Authoritarian Character structure, according to Maslow, consisted of the following:

1) Viewing the world as a “dog eat dog” one. “Your gain is my loss.” Zero sum reasoning
2) Believing that kindness is weakness
3) Exhibiting sado-masochistic tendencies
4) Containing intra-psychic conflicts and a sense of guilt that generates hostility
5) Manifesting a rigidity of thought

These “traits” lead to denigrating women and to the desire for a militarized, super-organized ideal and a desire to humiliate others.

Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse’s position is more Marxist and more political than the views of either Reich or Fromm. He does not interpret authoritarianism at the psychological level but rather as a function of the economic and political realm. His position was enunciated in his 1964 work, One Dimensional Man.

Authoritarianism is advanced by the alienation of the dominating forces over the individual. “One dimensionality” is characterized by the movement in which there is a unification of all of the production units of a society into an integrated single unit. In this “one dimensional society” education, politics, and labor are integrated into a single totality that leads to the reproduction of the existing system.
For Marcuse “one dimensional” is homogeneity. It is seen in the now popular sociological phrase, “the McDonaldization” of Western society. A one-dimensional society that lacks any opposition to it becomes an easy prey for the development of an authoritarian and or a totalitarian state.

**Research on The Authoritarian Personality**

Probably more has been written about “the authoritarian personality” than on any other topic in the literature of Social Psychology. A search of the database of the library of the University of Maryland Global Campus brings up over 6,740 items using this entry term.

The “birth item” derives from the study titled *The Authoritarian Personality* reporting the research of the Frankfurt group by Theodor Adorno and the Cal-Berkeley group. The 1950 published work exceeded one thousand pages in length. It had undergone many changes over a ten-year period since the original work. It was part of a Studies in Prejudice series sponsored by the American Jewish Committee’s Department of Scientific Research.

Much of the earlier version’s Marxist language was tempered in the later version or eliminated. The results of the study were explained through the lens of psychoanalytic thinking.

The study consisted of two parts: (1) a research survey consisting of a set of standard questions and (2) a clinical interview conducted with a subset of the population. The validity of the sample is today highly questioned.

As a result of the analysis of the data, four psychometric scales were created:

1) The Anti-Semitic Scale  
2) The Ethnocentrism Scale  
3) The Political and Economic Conservatism Scale  
4) The F scale, which identified people susceptible to Fascist propaganda

The personality characteristics of those scoring high on the F scale were:

a) Conventionalism: Adherence to conventional values.  
b) Authoritarian Submission: Toward in-group authority figures.  
c) Authoritarian Aggression: Against people who violate conventional values.  
d) Anti-Intraception, that is opposition to subjectivity and imagination.  
e) Superstition and Stereotype: belief in individual fate, thinking in rigid categories.
f) Power and Toughness: Concerned with submission and domination; assertion of strength.

g) Hostility against human nature or seeing human nature as basically being evil and competitive.

h) Projectivity: Perception of the world as dangerous; tendency to project unconscious impulses.

i) Sex: Overly concerned with modern sexual practices.

There have been major criticisms of this study involving sampling, including statistical ones and others related to the prejudices of the authors. See, for example, the following: (Brown, 2004), (Lasch, 1991), (Christie & Cook, 1958), and (Altemeyer, 1981).

In spite of the validity of many of the criticisms, the description of the Authoritarian Personality closely matches those of Reich, Maslow, and Fromm. The socialization practices that produce an authoritarian personality syndrome are also in line with the previous-named authors.

Bob Altemeyer and Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Since his early writings in the 1970’s and the publication of his first book in 1981 entitled Right Wing Authoritarianism, Altemeyer has been explicating and enunciating the dangers of what he has termed right-wing authoritarianism. He is aware of left-wing authoritarianism but does not conceive of it as being as dangerous in the United States to the preservation of democracy.


Altemeyer does not employ the psychoanalytic perspective of The Authoritarian Personality but rather a social learning one in which a child imitates the attitudes and harsh disciplinary practices of his parents with his own children. He agrees with what Reich described as the socialization experiences, seeing these to be an underlying cause of a fascist mind. However, he does so not utilizing psychoanalytic concepts.

Right-wing authoritarians are highly generally punitive of what they believe is deviant behavior that violates their moral conceptions. According to Altemeyer, this is because of belief in their moral superiority and their concern for “moral disintegration.”

Altemeyer presents to his readers a scale that avoids the statistical errors of the authoritarian personality study. This is a thirty item RWA scale, developed through much trial and error to be able for it to reach a high degree of validity and reliability.
Altemeyer conceptualizes right-wing authoritarianism as a complex system which is a determined and socially-learned cluster of attitudes with three key components: authoritarian submission, conventionalism, and authoritarian aggression.

The first component according to Altemeyer is authoritarian obedience. Here, Altemeyer seems to be incorrect, because he describes this as obedience to established and legitimate authority. The January 9th insurrection is a prime counterfactual to this. Obedience to authority is the domain of a person, an in-group or an institution which “trolls” the value set of the RWA.

The second component, conventionalism, involves a reverence for traditional beliefs regarding such matters as patriotism, gender roles, religion, and sexuality.

Third, the final component, is aggression. This “involves a willingness to harm or punish those who deviate from not established authority.” It is directed, as Altemeyer says, again towards those who do not hold the values of the RWA.

Altemeyer differentiates RWA from those that have been traditionally labeled as conservative. He sees right wing authoritarianism as being socially learned. It is a modifiable attitude and not the deep personality syndrome as described by Reich, Maslow, Fromm and the majority of researchers on the authoritarian personality.

Conclusion

Not all right-wing authoritarians are fascists nor are all authoritarian personalities, but both in the contemporary United States are prone to conspiracy theories and those who are zealous may take direct actions against a democracy. Many of the insurrectionists entering the Capitol in January of 2021 and taking part in the demonstration outside of it resemble the right-wing authoritarians as described by Altemeyer and the personality syndrome as described by Reich and Fromm.

The right-wing authoritarian personality poses not just a conflict for America but also a crisis for Western Civilization, as it is exhibited by far-right political parties and their supporters in France, Germany, Hungary, Austria, and Norway.

This article has briefly covered the long attempt by intellectual leaders, scholars, to describe fascistic and right-wing authoritarian thought. The question is: What is to be done?
References


Small Claims

Shawna V. Tropp

Had Laura Davidov not been a heavy woman in her late fifties, she would have thought that she had made a conquest. A golden young man appeared to have been following her through the Musée Rodin for over an hour; his eyes were turquoise, and he was quite old enough to be her son. There was also something disturbingly familiar about him. She therefore beamed her most maternal smile upon him and took a hesitant step in his direction.

He shrank into the adjacent gallery towards The Hand of God.

Her Indian guest caught her up. He, too, was quite old enough to be her son, though a good five years the senior of the golden boy. “Not hungry yet?” asked Vikram. This meant he was starving — probably for bouillabaisse or other piquant seafood at a nearby restaurant to which he wished to take her. He rarely came to Paris or, for that matter, any center of civilization. He preferred fieldwork in arid African terrain, where they had first met some half-dozen years before. Then a United Nations volunteer in Somalia, Vikram briefed Laura on the political intricacies of famine there, knowing full well that her strictures as a UN correspondent would preclude her breaching neutrality in any prose she might produce. Now a dazzling candidate for mid-level bureaucracy at the World Bank despite his being under thirty, he was resisting a year's stay in Washington by dallying as long as possible in Paris with his sabatticaling colleague.

“I intend to found a new department, he told her exuberantly as they made their way out of the museum. I shall call it the Bureau of Social Elimination and Poverty Development. The premise is that once one eradicates social structures — and, by extension, social programs of all kinds — poverty will develop wholly without assistance from donor governments and agencies.”

“An interesting approach,” commented Laura, taking his arm. “I believe the US government is progressively adopting it, with some success. The number of working poor seems to be rising daily — to say nothing of the homeless and the destitute.”


“I thought the objective was the development of poverty,” said Laura, covering her smile. “Don't you perceive an inconsistency?”
“Possibly,” he mused.

The golden boy had started towards them.

“Stop harassing my bride,” Vikram told him.

He colored and again shrank back.

“Vikram,” Laura cautioned, “that is not nice. And people will think I’m a pedophile.”

“So you are, luv. Who is this guy anyway?”

“Who?”

“The character with the eyes.”

“I haven't the slightest idea,” said Laura. “I've known only two people in my life with turquoise eyes. One is dead and the other was a baby, her son, no more than six or seven when I last saw him.”

“Light eyes probably grew out of congenital Vitamin A deficiency,” remarked Vikram under a raven lock that had fallen across his brow as the two took a sidewalk table. He ordered Chablis for them both. “The question for the eyes guy,” he went on, “may be less whether you're a pedophile than whether I'm a necrophiliac.”

“Thank you. But since he seemed to be following me, whereas you are merely my dear friend, the question may be whether he is necrophiliac.”

“A necrophiliac with Vitamin A deficiency…” He raised his glass. “Fine companions you choose... What have you programmed for my last three nights here?”

However, because Laura had failed to program Vikram with contemporaries that night and because she found herself inspired to return to the novel she had returned to Paris to finish, she had little time to puzzle over the golden boy — until he turned up the following morning below the windows of her sublet. There he hung in the doorway of the concierge. The weather was unpropitious, even for loitering in a flowered Left Bank courtyard.

“Who are you, Monsieur?” she called down.

“Laura?” The accent was American.

“Do we know each other?” she asked in English.
“No… Yes… I'm Nik. Nicholas Garson.”

It was, of course, possible. But so was anything else. She had not seen Nicholas since his childhood; a moustache and beard obscured this young man's features. Still, it was possible, far more so in Paris than in East Africa, she thought absently. Perhaps more in Paris than their native New York. The eyes were those of Nicholas' mother, as were those delicate features that the facial hair did not completely cover. Vikram, still asleep in the guest bedroom, could be aroused if trouble rose. Laura invited the golden boy up for coffee. “The stairs are steep,” she warned.

He arrived winded, more like someone of her age than his.

“I've been sick,” he said, although she had not asked him for an explanation.

“The stairs are very steep,” she repeated. “They cannot put in an elevator; the building is landmarked. And I must ask you to speak softly; I have a guest who's still asleep.”

“The romantic rajah type?”

“He is Indian, in fact.”

“But you were … cohabiting with an Indian here for years, weren't you?”

“Bessarabian—not quite the same physical type — Fair and European. Do come in.”

“How long is the rajah staying?” asked the golden boy, taking the armchair she indicated.

“You’re quite inquisitive.”

“I need a bed.”

“Nicholas,” said Laura, “if you are indeed Nicholas...”

“Nik. N. I. K. And I am Nicholas Garson. Your godson. At least, that's what you used to say.”

“Then I suppose that you are Nicholas. He never hesitated to ask anything.”

He did not smile.

“When you were a very little boy,” she added lamely. “Let's have coffee.” She turned towards the kitchen.
“I need a home here in Paris — here.” he called after her.

As she poured coffee for them both and scrabbled for milk, spoons and sugar, she reflected that he must be Nicholas. At last report — and for years prior to that — he had been ill. With a variety of psychological problems. Chemical, she corrected herself. Neurological. Genetic. All quite treatable with the proper combination and balance of drugs, his mother had insisted. It had been said, however, that the years of trying to find that combination and that balance had led to her death in a car accident some ten years before. Laura, on home leave from Nairobi when the tragedy took place, had not seen him at the funeral; the crash had nearly killed him, too, and he was lying in a coma in the hospital. No one was allowed to see him but his father — and on her later homecomings, whether from Africa or Paris, he had been with his father in Garson's ancestral Montreal.

“What brings you to Paris?” she asked as she served him.

“What brings you?” he countered.

“Sentiment, I'm supposedly escaping the mundane distractions of New York to concentrate on a book. How did you find me?”

“I met a UN guy the other day who talked about you. He told me you were here for a few months near St. Germaine. He gave me your address; he said he knew the woman who swapped you her apartment for yours in New York.”

“The world is a ghetto,” murmured Laura.

“You’re angry.”

“No… Stunned. Now, what brings you to Paris?”

“My dad got some money and took a place on the coast near Trouville. It's a grungy village where he thinks the light is great. Except he is not painting. As usual. Not doing much of anything. Sketching sometimes, but that is all. What is your book about?”

“I'm not sure I know any longer. When I started, it was about people clashing.”

“A war story?”

“Not exactly. Although there is a war in the background — several wars in fact. It is set in East Africa, you see.”
He did not seem to see at all.

“It's more about people stumbling around in their misunderstandings of each other,” she explained. “People of vastly different cultures, but no less so than people of the very same culture.”

“Then why put it in Africa?”

“That's rather the point,” she replied, “to point up the mutual blindness of the people who supposedly share the same values with those born into a quite unique set.”

But he was no longer listening. The creaking of the floorboards in the next room heralded Vikram's entrance, replete with toothbrush.

“I'm in computers,” said Nik, rising to greet him. “Mission models—3-D interactive.”


They seemed to understand each other wholly. Therefore, when Vikram asked Laura if he could refill her coffee, she declined and left them to their exchange of professional identities, perhaps eventually their names. It was a peculiarly young male ritual, she thought; shipwrecked and desiccated on a coral reef, they would have done the same.

It was not, after all, strange that Nicholas should ask her immediately for lodging, even a home. Their relationship predated his birth, even hers. Her father and his maternal grandfather had attended the same yeshiva on New York's Lower East Side, then became teenage Trotskyites together, medical students jointly distilling vodka for their tuition during Prohibition, brothers in Freud and at last in the fellowship of Wilhelm Reich — which had brought them to fratricide only a few years after Reich's death in 1957. The boy's claims on her therefore stretched back almost to the beginnings of the century.

“I'm glad you think the poor have wealth that's realler than just income,” Nik was telling Vikram when she returned with a tray. “I’m an idealist, too. And a realist. Everything boils down to knowledge. And that primitive knowledge of your tribal guys sounds absolutely wild. Have you put it on the Net?”

“We're just waiting to flesh out a few comparisons — you know, the proportions of goats and cows to camels in herds at different altitudes, precise vegetation mapping of the ecotones, the height at which each species browses — stuff like that. The herders have fine-tuned these balances for centuries in Africa. All over the world, actually. That is why they're still alive — and the pastureland, too.”
Nik appeared only slightly bewildered.

“Of course, it wasn't my discovery,” Vikram added, having determined that his interlocutor was an apt pupil. “It took this genius from Guyana, this guy who did science at school just because he got good grades in it. But he is really interested in social revolution.”

“So am I,” said Nik happily. “And I can get it up there very graphically for you...”

That night, Vikram introduced him to other young people and within a few days left for Washington. The two seemed made for one another, the populist technocrat, so secure in his privileged bastions, and the rootless technological wizard, groping for a toehold in the world, dependent for his very life on drugs. As Nicholas did not resurface, Laura assumed that he had found at least a bed, if not a home. Nonetheless, she made several futile efforts to locate Garson on the coast of Normandy and called her brother in New York to tell him of the boy's fleeting appearance.

“Brave lady,” Sasha commented across the ocean.

“No. This is Paris and a quartier where people still walk around gleefully at all hours. And Vikram was here in case I needed physical protection.”

“No, Laura, I meant the whole past can of worms.”

“I hardly thought about it.”

“That's just as well.”

“I was just stunned. Nicholas looked so fragile, so vulnerable.”

“I'm sure. He's been in and out of institutions since before his mother's death. And being with Garson afterwards cannot have helped much. After all, to the extent that his problems are genetic, he got the bad genes from Garson. Mind you, I never liked the boy. Even when he was small. The kids did not either, come to think of it. Yes, they took compassion on him, played with him, read to him. They probably regarded him as one of their stray animals. But they never liked him. In fact, I remember one time when one or the other of them told me that he was cruel.”

His daughter and son were the pride of all their lives. But unlike the golden boy, they were blessed with sane parents and stability, as well as prodigious natural endowments.

“Sasha, Nicholas seems brilliant as well as beautiful.”
“He always was. And psychopaths often are — both brilliant and beautiful. A student had apparently come into his office; he closed their conversation tenderly.

A sad-eyed man despite his children, Sasha Davidov taught history at Columbia and had stayed on the Upper West Side where he and Laura had been raised but for a brief 1960s stay in Argentina during which he had quietly charted the coming resurgence of fascism, despaired over the growing violence of both left and right, and wept for friends caught in the middle. He could and did leave, a dissertation in his suitcase; many of the friends were later disappeared; from New York, he managed to smuggle only three to safety. Even when the junta fell at last, he had not exulted. “I suppose I am resolutely Manichean,” he answered those who rebuked him. “For every evil overcome, another emerges.”

He smiled only slightly when he added, “Of course, some bads are far more desirable than others.” Laura suspected that he feared for his children simply because their being rejoiced the world.

When the telephone rang at 2 A.M. Laura heard herself sleepily blurting, “Nicholas?”

“You haven't gotten involved with that boy in the last six hours?!,” Sasha exclaimed.

“Sash, have you forgotten the time difference?”

“Forgive me; I thought you might be writing late. I had a premonition that you had taken that boy in.”

Although Sasha's premonitions were not to be dismissed, he needed chastening. “If anyone were to call at this hour, it would be Nicholas, not my big brother.”

“Lau, please stay away from that boy. We owe him nothing, even for Mimi ’s sake. Just remember that he killed her. Even if he did not actually crash the car. He drove her to it.”

“Neither of us was there, Sasha.”

“How can you, of all people, be literal?”

“Easily. As a novelist, I keep my fictions in a separate life. Unlike some dispassionate historians I know.”

“Lau, you were far away during Mimi ’s last months before she sent Nicholas to boarding school. He drained her utterly. She was skeletal. He was having violent screaming fits. I am not saying it was his fault; evidently, he couldn't stop himself.
But he threatened to kill her on a few occasions — and eventually, he did. He is
dangerous, even if he is on the best medication. And sometimes, you are so like Mimi —
so impulsive, so Russian.”

“Rash and self-destructive?”

“I did not say that. Please, Lau. Don't let the boy get to you. For all our sakes.”

She assured him that she would do nothing without consulting him and bade him good
night.

“Tsar Nikolai
Go fuck your mother,
Look what you married…
A rag, a whore, a German whore.
Ai, yai, Tsar Nikolai.”

So, they had sung gleefully in Russian syllables they did not understand as children,
riding their bicycles in Central Park, all three of them, in the early 1950s. The song was
forbidden in their respective homes. They had picked it up from one or another elderly
relative wandering through the gracious spaces of their parents' apartments.

Even on the Upper West Side, they suffered occasional snubs from their classmates
because of those parents’ eccentricities. Bon vivant and distinguished psychiatrist
though he might be, Ben Davidov allowed his wife to actually work despite his lucrative
practice; worse, she taught at an experimental school and did not play bridge.
Moreover, the Davidovs seemed to have turned their living room into a boarding house.
Admittedly, the guests had lost their jobs because of Joe McCarthy and the witch hunt
to which the President had only recently put a stop. But the tone of the neighborhood
had to be considered, the more so with all the Puerto Ricans moving pell-mell into the
side streets.

Then, too, there were the peculiar medical ideas; it was said that Ben Davidov had gone
beyond Freud to follow a fringe disciple of his named Reich; the man had not only
written one book called *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, but another entitled *The
Function of the Orgasm*.

Once, with his usual charisma in the lobby of his building, Ben Davidov had been heard
to avow that all handicaps and diseases, from myopia to chicken pox and cancer,
stemmed from emotional — even sexual — dysfunction. It was said, too, that his
patients had to strip down to their underwear, if not the altogether, in their sessions and
that he encouraged children to masturbate.
Not that Sasha and Laura did not seem perfectly normal kids — well mannered, too — as did Mimi Stern, despite the fact that her parents shared the bizarre notions of the Davidovs. This was odd because Dr. Stern was a surgeon and somewhat forbidding; one never spoke of him as “Simon Stern,” let alone “Sy.”

And Lily Stern definitely did not work, except for volunteer activities at the Museum. Of course, she did not need to, even without marriage to a thriving physician; a member of New York's German Jewish aristocracy, she had brought a goodly dowry to their nuptials.

From the vantage point of late middle age, Laura occasionally found the image of Wilhelm Reich coalescing with that of Simon Stern. She did not smile at memory's illusion. Her father had first presented her to Dr. Reich, who inspected the children of all his votaries, on the day when she had received her first kiss — a furtive peck bestowed by the amour of her nine-year-old life, who had abjured her not to confide their love to anyone until they could marry six years afterwards. She had betrayed him twice before sundown: first to their teacher, who had wondered why the customarily ebullient child had doodled away a quiz; second, to the family maid, who had gently taken her to task for neglecting her few household chores, only to see the youngster burst into tears, lamenting the length of six years. Consequently, that night, when Wilhelm Reich had asked Laura, after only perfunctory greeting, if she had a “boyfriend,” she had told him — politely — that her inmost life was her own.

Ben Davidov had been despondent. Two weeks before, Sasha had barely passed muster with the Master; having heard that Reich had opposed the Nazis, the boy had deflected his questions with persistent queries about Hitler. Now Laura had been declared secretive, evasive — neurotic. And Simon Stern had apparently shared the judgement, as well as that of his own daughter, the ravishing Mimi, Laura's contemporary and best friend, who had fared only slightly better in Reich's eyes.

Though neither Laura nor Sasha had ever learned why, they assumed that Mimi, too, had failed the test of submission. Her father, however, apparently did not. Simon Stern had eventually become Reich's closest confidante, shifting his practice from surgery to psychiatry, eventually inheriting the Master's mantle.

From this position, he had gradually pushed Ben Davidov towards the periphery of the Reichian fellowship. He had disowned Ben, too, when his old schoolmate had given a series of public lectures on the Master's thought. During their years of growing estrangement, Davidov had never seemed to protest. This, too, was odd; he was infamous for his Russian temper, often wreaked upon his family, then drowned in a rush of largesse, usually expensive, and always exquisitely attuned to the desires of those he had offended.
When Stern had expelled Davidov from the fellowship, the other members had regarded the punishment as disproportionate. Ben had not concealed from them his invitation to lecture on Reich's legacy and the burgeoning sexual revolution; he had shared his ideas with them and sought their counsel. But he had not formally asked permission to speak; apparently, he had not known he should have done so.

No one, however, opposed his ouster; Stern's pronouncements on matters both great and small forbade question. Consternation followed when Davidov died of a multiple coronary shortly thereafter, but it was soon remembered that he had twice before had heart attacks and had continued to indulge in rich food, good cigars and similar habits discouraged by his cardiologist. The ultimate diagnosis was that he had not wished to continue living.

Mourners overflowed the funeral chapel — patients, students, old Trotskyite associates, even Reichian comrades. But, as Laura rapidly observed, Simon Stern was not among them. He had suddenly come down with the flu, said Lily Stern, who had arranged the simple service and the reception afterwards and had managed the Davidov household in the days that followed with both compassion and efficiency as Dolly Davidov languished in the shock of widowhood and Sasha and Laura reeled back to their respective studies.

“I wouldn't let him come,” Mimi wrote Laura a month after the funeral. “He killed Ben. I told him so. My mother, too.” She did not elaborate, nor did Laura press her to do so. Grief as well as shock muted any response beyond a monosyllabic acknowledgement of the possibility. But she began characterizing her friend as “Antigone” to her brother.

In addition, the Davidovs were grappling with acute financial problems. At Stern's urging, Ben Davidov had ventured into the stock market for the one time in his resolutely Marxist life — disastrously. The Sterns, too, had suffered from Simon's own heavy investment in the doomed speculation, but Lily's inheritance cushioned their losses comfortably. Though neither of the Davidov children ever sought proof, they strongly suspected that Lily Stern, as well as scholarships, had subsidized the rest of their formal education and that Mimi’s conviction of Stern's role in Ben's death had played no small part in this.

Not that Lily was not the soul of generosity — or that Dolly Davidov did not seize the earliest occasion to re-enter the public school system at a far higher salary than her private teaching could possibly yield, as well as strip her household of every superfluity, including the theatre and opera subscriptions that ranked high among her joys.
But for all their protest, she allowed neither of her children to try earning money beyond the summer employment and the token jobs at school that she and Ben had considered essential elements of their learning. Sasha had only recently embarked upon his graduate studies. Laura, like Mimi, still had two years of college to complete.

All three children had disappointed their fathers bitterly by entering the humanities rather than medicine or, indeed, any science. For some two years, biology tempted Sasha as much as history, but he soon found himself embroiled with his father in the defense of his classroom learnings; Reich had at one time performed an experiment which, he held, demonstrated that spontaneous generation — far from having ceased eons before — was still taking place. Having little taste for what he felt unnecessary conflict, Sasha took refuge in the workings of the body politic during the late Renaissance, moving into modern times only after Ben's death.

In her mid-teens, Laura, who had long shown a propensity for writing, found herself torn between literature and physics.

By the end of her first year in college, however, she became deeply absorbed not only in all high forms of fiction, but aesthetics itself. Although she relished intellectual disputation far more than her brother, she, too, wearied early of battling Ben on the development of science — and, indeed, the whole of human thought. Both youngsters found Marxism “simple-minded” and only slightly veiled a contempt for Freud, to say nothing of Reich's rooting all behavior in sexuality. When Ben told his daughter, shortly before his death, that he would await the expiration of his children's natural adolescent rebellions, she haughtily replied she could never be a true believer — moreover, that she had been born a polytheist, as had Sasha, and that if he, her father, were not glad of it, the world would be.

Mimi took a different course, especially after Ben's death. Though passionate about philosophy, especially ethics, she changed her course of study to musicology and took up the tuba, along with a variety of non-western instruments, many of which her college did not own, and which therefore had to be bought by the Sterns at considerable expense and brought into the country with some difficulty. Each such purchase enlarged the distance between herself and her parents, her father in particular. However, much as he berated her interest in matters he called “esoteric,” even “escapist” — though he did not specify from what — he did not dare refuse to finance any of these acquisitions. Did he fear that any such refusal would lead to a rupture with his daughter, Laura wondered, or did Mimi simply terrify him generally? Sasha believed that their relationship involved both elements equally.

Yet Stern seemed bent on provoking a rupture. Whatever Mimi's beliefs about her father's role in Ben Davidov's death, the two families continued celebrating major holidays together.
At Thanksgiving of the girls’ last year in college, Mimi, eager to compare certain forms of Buddhist liturgical music with late medieval Masses, had been playing examples of both, ceaselessly on the family phonograph. As their strains rose throughout dinner, she began rhapsodizing on the glories of the twelfth century Church only to be interrupted by her father: “And the virgin birth — how do they justify that?!”

Lily Stern offered her husband another helping of candied yams and was waved away.

“How the hell do they justify that?” Stern persisted, looking fixedly at Mimi. “They can't justify it publicly for the denial of genitality that it really is, so what reason do they give?”

His daughter regarded him coldly, helped herself to the rejected dish and passed it on to Sasha before answering. “If you look at mythology worldwide, gods always mate with humans to produce heroes. Each religion has its own terms. But always there must be a union of the earthly and divine. Always. Just ask Laura; she is the literary expert.”

Though Stern did not redirect his gaze, Laura ventured timidly, “Simon, the Church had to reach out to the Greeks and Romans. It could not say that the Messiah was just the Son of Man. That wouldn't have been understood outside the culture of the Jews.”

“Who never denied genitality,” replied Stern, not once averting his eyes from his daughter. “Whatever their other faults, they did not deny genitality. And whatever the Bible keeps from us, Christ was truly a genital character.”

“Then what do you make of circumcision?” asked Sasha.

Dolly's attempt to frown her son into silence was unnecessary; Stern did not dignify the query even with a glance.

Mimi folded her napkin and left the room.

Almost forty years later in Paris, Laura recalled that Mimi as a child had wanted to play the cello but had been embarrassed at the idea of spreading her legs. Instead, she had played her mother's piano — at which she was never as talented as Lily. And only after her father's death did she find her true calling, only after the chance teaching of music to disadvantaged children — in child psychology.

Nik resurfaced two weeks later.

“Do you like music?” Laura asked.
“If I do, can I stay?”

“Nik, I'm not sure that your staying is a good idea — not just from my point of view, but yours.”

“C'mon, Laura, I know that ploy. Anyhow, I do like music. I don't know it like my mother, but I like it — especially Victorian chant.”

Laura suppressed a smile.

“So can I stay?”

“No. Certainly not now. But tonight, if you like, I'll make you dinner. Have you a place to spend the night in Paris?”

“I can crash at a friend's.”

“If you like, I’ll pay for a hotel.”

“I can pay for my own fucking hotel. I make plenty of money when I like — on top of my mother's. I could even pay for my own fucking father's house.” His fair skin flushed; his voice rose, the turquoise eyes took on a metallic glaze.

Fear rose, suffused Laura's body. “Nik,” she tried to recall him to himself, “with all that money, why don't you go downstairs and buy anything you want me to cook for you?”

The blood drained from his face. He walked out, slamming the door.

In the reverberation of the sound, she felt slightly dizzy and utterly sick at heart. A few minutes later, at the knock on her door, she feared and hoped he had returned, but could not find the strength to move.

“I'm harmless,” Nik called from the other side. “I'm sorry. What about if I take you out to dinner tonight — just like Vikram?”

She rose to let him in.

“You don't have to say anything right now,” he called from beyond the door. “If you like, just come to Vagenonde at nine. I know the maître d.' If you don't come, I'll understand.” Instantly, he clattered down the stairs.
When Laura arrived at the restaurant that night, Nik embraced her ostentatiously and presented her to the maître d' as his godmother. A bottle of Dom Perignon sat in the cooler at their table; one waiter presented her with a chalice of caviar as another more discreetly served smoked salmon and the maître filled her flute.

“I'm sorry about this afternoon,” Nik told her as soon as the entourage disappeared. “I haven't been feeling well.”

“That's what I thought,” Laura replied. “But you're feeling better now, I hope?”

He nodded. “I took my medicine. I forgot to take it this morning. And I will be good. I promise. I will take it every day.”

“Actually, I was just thinking about something else — when you were two.”

“Good or bad?”

“Quite marvelous. It was your mother's birthday, and I came home from Paris with some special champagne to celebrate the occasion. When you asked for a sip, we poured a few drops into another glass so that you could, as usual, be totally independent. And you looked up at your father after you had tasted it and said, daddy, this is really good beer.”

He did not laugh. “Were you living with that Arabian then?”

“Bessarabian. Yes.”

“What happened to him?”

“He died, Nik. A couple of years after your mother's death.”

“How?”

“Of cancer. Very Horribly.”

“Did you kill him to put him out of his misery?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Why do you ask that?”
“Because your fucking brother thinks I killed my mother.”

Again, Laura felt fear rising in her throat. “And why do you say that?”

“Because it’s true. My father told me. So, I wanted to see if you thought so, too.”

“No. Why should I?”

“Because it’s true.”

“And what do you want me to do now?”

“Whatever you like. Scream, Leave. Call the police. Call your fucking brother to tell him he is right.”

“What if I say I don't believe you?”

“Then you're lying — or you're stupider than I thought. Everyone knows I killed my mother. Even my father. Says I did it for him. Says it saved him a huge custody fight. He practically thanks me every day.”

A waiter came to take their hors d'oeuvres and offer them menus in exchange.

“Is there any point, Nik, in going on with this meal?”

“That's up to you. Don't you want to know why I killed my mother?”

“Let's order,” said Laura against her better judgement.

“If you want to do take-out, you can do that, too — and leave. Just ask the maître d. He’ll do anything I want.

Laura called the waiter over and ordered the plat de jour. Nik echoed her request wordlessly.

“Why did you kill your mother?” she asked finally.

“Because she was so fucking authoritative.”

“Authoritative?”

“Authoritative. Bossy. You know. For Chrissake, you knew her better than I did. She had to have everything her way.
Like, everything she thought, everyone else had to think. Like that I was bi-polar or schizophrenic or whatever just so it wouldn't be her fault.”

“What wouldn't be her fault, Nik?”

He summoned the waiter, asked for a rare steak in English and turned back to her, enraged. “Maybe I'm not like your fucking brother's kids — but I'm a genius. Yes, a genius. And she would not let me be. Like, she made me go to school — tried to force me to study all that crap like English and history. Just would not let me be myself with the computers. Myself. That is just what she would not let me be.”

Yet from the moment of his birth, he had been allowed to do anything he wished, except what might do him immediate physical harm. He had flouted even the small rituals of toothbrushing and baths, and Mimi had staunchly defended his right to do so [almost to the death]. He had run wild — seeking discipline, Laura and Sasha had clucked to one another after appeals to his parents had failed. Then, upon his entering school, problems had begun emerging, most ascribed at first to his curiosity and creativity.

He had been only six when the headmistress had suggested to the Garsons — well before their separation and divorce — that their son should perhaps undergo both neurological and psychiatric examinations.

Already, he could not be coaxed from the computer, even by a puppy — whom he repelled whenever it approached. Nor, with occasional exceptions, did he play with other children — largely when they manifested interest in his doings on the computer assigned him at school and then only on a strict master-disciple basis in which true access to his allegedly miraculous machine was denied.

Mimi had been enraged by the suggestion of the headmistress and, at the second such proposal, had transferred Nicholas to another school. She had begun practicing child psychology several years before his difficult birth, well before a series of miscarriages bereft her of the very fantasy of having a child. Roland Garson had not welcomed the pregnancy. He had, in fact, threatened to leave her when she refused to terminate it. Sasha speculated that he had grown too accustomed to the luxury that Mimi’s independent income permitted — especially when, on the eve of the birth, he had insisted on getting married at last. He had also demanded that Nicholas bear his surname alone. Nobody quite knew why — nor why Mimi acquiesced in this last wish. But Garson became a devoted baby-sitter, if not father; he went as far as to change his son's diapers compulsively. His work in artificial intelligence — as early as the halcyon '70s — permitted him to spend much of his time at home.
Nicholas toyed alongside him with small AI gadgets of the time, as well as the conventional playthings of a toddler. Happily, the child painted, too, as Garson dabbled in his favorite hobby, the creation of exquisite abstract miniatures in various media. For his son's sake, he even gave up smoking — as Mimi did not — and toxic visual materials. He often removed the sleeping boy from the crib to a cradle on his desk, interrupting his own work to marvel at the conversion of so much of Mimi's beauty into infant and male form.

Sasha, though, had seen in Nik traces of his grandfather — an impression everyone else had dismissed, most of all Garson, as was only natural.

Like Mimi, Garson reacted with rage at the thought that Nicholas might have an emotional problem — or, as he put it, "defect." This was not surprising; at several points in his life, Garson had been characterized as manic-depressive — to which he had replied that he was simply a mathematician and artist, an unlikely and highly desirable combination that came at a price. Mimi also scoffed at this diagnosis, both before and after their union — in part, both Laura and Sasha suspected, because Simon Stern had almost immediately pronounced him so afflicted and, of course, sexually dysfunctional as well, possibly even a gay person, the gravest illness in Reichian pathology. This last possibility seemed remote; while not stridently masculine, Garson was hardly effeminate — only passive and abstracted much of the time.

Stern had found significant faults in all his daughter's suitors — as had Ben Davidov, more mildly, with each of his own children's adolescent partners — but the intensity of his dislike for Roland Garson, whom Mimi had encountered while still in college, resulted in the young man's ban from the Stern home.

The charge of same-sex attraction, according to Mimi, had arisen from Garson's defense of Leonardo da Vinci's merit as a scientific thinker. "If this be homosexuality," she remarked to Laura — and possibly her father, "let's have more of it." Shortly thereafter, she had moved out of her parents' apartment with all her musical instruments to a Soho loft. This seemed in no way unnatural; she had completed college and claimed that she needed her own space as well as time to decide what to do with her life.

Along with several other friends, Garson intermittently used the walkup — casually and apparently chastely — as his pad. Years passed before he and Mimi regarded one another as anything more than occasional roommates. Yet he left the bulk of his possessions with her — and, when there, expected to be served.

"Why do you want to stay with me?" Laura suddenly asked Nik across his steak.

"Dunno. It is a great old building — and a very classy address."
“But surely you could rent a place of your own with a classy address and have your privacy as well.”

He shook his head. “Then my father would come stay. He is already threatening to call you.”

Shifting her eyes from his stare to the delicate golden hands clenched on the tablecloth, Laura wondered how so much horror could erupt from anyone so physically beautiful. “I hope, Nik, that you would not give anyone my number without my permission.”

“I don't have it,” he replied sharply. “You didn't even give it to me.”

She did not comment. She did not know what to say. Perhaps this might be their last encounter. Perhaps she could finally put paid to Mimi — and rejoice her brother into the bargain.

“This is a really crappy restaurant,” he muttered, pushing away his steak. “Dunno where most of these places get their reputations.”

It was late. Laura excused herself on the grounds of work the following day; it was not altogether false. She also wanted to call Sasha.

“So, you're not even going to give me your number?”

She hesitated. “Nik, I have a great deal of work to do — and friends coming up from Provence to stay.”

“That's a lie. They are staying with other friends of yours. I looked at your calendar. ‘Sebastians chez de Rugy,’ it said — with a big arrow through the end of the month. You forget that I know French even if I do not speak it very much. In fact, I decided to become Canadian when I was twenty-one. Not that that matters to you. All I want, for Chrissake, is to know I can call you from time to time. That's the least a godmother could do.”

She wrote down her telephone number, shook hands with him and moved towards the door.

“Now I know why you never had kids,” he called out after her. My mother always said that if you really tried, you could've. But having books was easier. You could just leave them whenever you liked — whenever they got too tough to write. Just like my father's fucking paintings. And you do not even write about real people. Only fucking novels about fucking Africans and all those people no one ever heard of.”
As Laura thanked the maître d’ and walked the few blocks back to her apartment, she wondered what Simon Stern would have made of his grandson — had he lived to see him. Then it occurred to her that Mimi had carried to term only after his death in her mid-thirties — and Lily’s installation in a home for Alzheimer's patients. But it was all too wearying. She found herself too exhausted to return a friend's request for confirmation of their meeting the following night, let alone call Sasha.

“I was terrified and transfixed,” she told her brother the next day. “He sat there, spreading caviar on toast, and told me he had killed Mimi. And I wanted to flee but could not. I couldn't move.”

“I'm shocked, but not at all surprised,” came Sasha's reassuring voice. “Did you believe him?”

“No. Certainly not in any literal sense. I'm not at all sure that he believes it himself. But he seems convinced that you think so. Also, that Roland does — and approves.”

“That would not surprise me at all — especially after she refused to pay him an allowance for leaving her alone. But how did Nicholas get the idea that I consider him a murderer?”

“Who knows? Maybe he picked it up on your visits during his convalescence. God knows that all of us tried to put up at least a good show of caring. For me, it was easy enough by cards and letters that he never answered anyway. You and the kids, though — something might have slipped in face-to-face encounters. Nik may be illiterate, but he is hardly insensitive. But Sash, even if any — or all — of this were true, why would he want me to believe it?”

“He's your find, dear, not mine — and you are certainly his. Did he give you any reason for killing her, that is?”

“Yes. That she kept him from being himself — the mind constantly interlocked with the computer, undistracted by anything else. He was a genius, he said.” She quoted all she could remember of that part of their exchange.

Across the ocean, Sasha said nothing.

“Why?” she asked his silence. “Why try to convince me that he had killed his mother when he says he wants to move in here with me?”

“Because you're his next victim, whatever he did or didn't do,” Sasha replied at last.
“Since his mother did not recognize his genius — not enough, at least — it is up to you, his godmother. And if you do not do so, you are forewarned that he will exact revenge. Laura, I beg of you, get rid of him. Fast. Now. Even if it means leaving Paris awhile. I mean it. For all our sakes, Laura.”

In her own silence, she considered his counsel. She could not quit Paris now; friends were coming; too much was planned. And she was due to leave with them for Provence after their visit. If Nik appeared once more, he could be put off. There was no reason whatever to let him rule her life, disrupt a calendar crafted months before. “Yes,” she told her brother. “I won’t see him again. I will tell him my schedule has changed, that I am leaving in two days.”

“And that you have no time for him between now and then,” Sasha prompted.

“Yes. I promise.” But as soon as she replaced the receiver in its cradle, she remembered that she had no way of reaching Nik. Not that she needed to tell him explicitly that she was leaving for Provence — or for Antarctica if necessary. But he could reach her, catch her in a lie — or truth. He could track her down, at least in Paris, whereas she had no way of knowing his movements.

More than a full minute passed before she realized that her inability to contact the boy could represent a dimension of freedom from him. Not only did she have no obligation to inform Nik of her whereabouts or doings; she had a perfect excuse for not doing so.

Nonetheless, the fact that the mistaken thought had paralyzed her even momentarily showed her that his hold on her was greater than she cared to think. When the telephone rang a moment later, she was so fearful of encountering him at the other end that she refused to answer.

At the fourth ring, the recorder lurched into motion and Sasha's voice commended her for having gone out into the world, ceasing her brooding on this misbegotten whelp of a departed and lost soul. “And please remember,” he cajoled, “that we really parted ways with Mimi — you especially, Lau — when she took up with the Black Panthers.”

Outside, a summer thunderstorm had unleashed fury. Laura rushed through the apartment, shutting windows, then sank into an armchair, cursing the weather that imprisoned her inside when action of any kind, even shopping, would have been consolatory. Wordless, she could not face her manuscript.

The general absurdity of things had become suddenly the general atrocity of things and the sole remedy lay in music. Distractedly, she scuttled through the discs of her hostess, finding nothing of the pure Baroque tonalities to which she normally turned for the restoration of order.
She found nothing but the high Romantics and cursed herself for having left a complementary selection in New York until amid the Wagner, she found Mozart's *Requiem*.

“I'm the only person I know who plays requiem masses when deliriously happy.” So Laura had heard Mimi say when she had first met Roland Garson. “The conciliation of heaven and earth you know. The arcs of harmony subsuming hell.”

But Garson has not understood. Not to Laura’s knowledge, at any rate. He had ignored such logical impossibilities as paradise and hell.

She put on the disc and resolved to surrender herself to the music. But the recording opened with a tolling of bells; it had commemorated in Vienna's cathedral the bicentenary of Mozart's death. Sobs overwhelmed her. She was not weeping for Mimi — or even Nik or Mozart. Simply for the waste of passion, love, and honor in fanatic creeds.

*Salva mei. fons pietatis.*

Yes, Mimi had joined the Black Panthers — to the extent that they had allowed her to do so. Fair and blond with her turquoise eyes, she had hovered on their margins, unwelcome but for her money. Perhaps that had been the point — to drown the self in a great cause and yet remain forever marginal.

It had all begun innocuously enough. In 1964, barely out of college and burning with outrage at the segregation of lunch counters even in Washington, both Mimi and Laura had joined the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, planning to take part in the Freedom Rides into the Deep South. By no means unafraid of the commitment they had made, both girls sought their parents' blessing.

Still blighted by her husband's death, Dolly Davidov reluctantly consented to Laura's boarding the bus for Alabama; she had not constrained Sasha from study in Argentina and felt she could hardly forbid her daughter the dangers of enlisting in a cause she had been taught to champion. The Sterns followed suit — not, however, without a lecture from Simon to the effect that political struggle only masked the need to bring about the revolution in sexuality that would wither oppression and all its attendant evils.

Baffled but smarting, Laura called Sasha in Buenos Aires that night to ask if Stern were not in fact a white supremacist.

“Probably, came her brother's muffled voice, “but I suspect he doesn't know it. And for God's sake, do not tell him. Or Mimi either. Just go to Birmingham or wherever else you are headed and take care. For Mom's sake, if nothing else.”
She did, registered voters for a month, was swept into prison for a week, and returned to New York. There, in deference to her mother's obvious wishes, she remained, taking a junior job in educational broadcasting — from which she joined the information staff of the United Nations. From time to time over the years that took her from her native city to Paris and Nairobi, she regretted not having followed Sasha's academic path, but reflected that her own had combined prestige and financial comfort with the heady mix of adventure and a conviction of altruism.

Mimi followed a different course.

[ ECHO ANTIGONE; MIMI 'S ADHERENCE TO A HIGHER LAW. SHE ADMITS PANTHERS HAVE COMMITTED MORAL CRIMES BUT UPHOLDS THEM FOR THE SAKE OF HIGHER CAUSE. “POWER TO THE PEOPLE.” COMMENTS ON THE BLACK FEMALE CONTROL OF THE BLUSTERING BOYS -- IS MIMI HERSELF, IN ALL HER FAIR FRAGILITY, MOLESTED???

[ CERTAINLY, KICKED AROUND PSYCHOLOGICALLY. MIMI IS ALSO THE FIRST TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST VIETNAM WITHOUT BEING PRO-COMMUNIST. SLIGHT FLING WITH LSD, THEN AVERSION TO ALL PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS, BUT ADDICTION TO THERAPY -- NO EASY SELF RENOVATION PROGRAM. UNLIKE LAURA AND SASHA, SHE DOESN'T TRAVEL -- ONLY INITIALLY AND BRIEFLY TO THE COUNTRIES FROM WHICH HER INSTRUMENTS COME (LARGELY ASIAN). THEN PREFERENCES TO WATCH FILMS AND VIDEOS ABOUT EXOTIC PLACES; PREFERENCES INNER JOURNEYS.]

[ THERAPY -- INCLUDING GROUP THERAPY -- SEEMS TO PROVIDE SANCTUARY & A MEASURE OF PERSONAL TRANSCENDENCE, AS DO POLITICAL MOVEMENTS, NOTABLY THE PANTHERS FOR A TIME.]

[TRACE MIMI 'S MOVEMENT FROM INNER CITIES (DRUGS AMONG KIDS?) INTO CHILD PSYCHOLOGY.]

[TIME INDICATION PLUS TRANSITION.]

Having spent half of June in Provence, Laura returned to Paris to find the apartment newly equipped with a computer so advanced that she hardly dared approach it — even with the laboriously handwritten instructions sitting on its keyboard, which promised the imminent delivery of a printer capable of magnificent functions for which she had no use.

“Luff, Nik,” the directions ended. That had been Mimi 's signoff in situations in which she felt diffident or uneasy.
The note gave no indication of where her son might be reached. When questioned, the concierge asserted defensively that Monsieur Nik had been impeccable in his comings and goings, returning the key to the apartment each time he had left over the course of three days; he had even been so good as to upgrade the primitive computer of her son — and for nothing, not even the material — when a plumber these days charged more than a surgeon just for replacing a screw.

But had Nik copied the key, Laura wondered aloud.

That, the concierge assured her, was impossible; a special secret code, known only to her good self and Laura's landlady, was necessary. Besides, even supposing that Monsieur Nik had managed to replicate the key, why had he stopped each time he came to obtain the one in the possession of the house, even to the point of waiting through an afternoon in which the conciergerie had been deserted? Laura marveled at the naivete of a woman otherwise paranoid about the movements even of the building's residents but asked if Nik had left a contact address or number.

"Surely, Madame, you know where to find him," commented the concierge.

Laura retreated upstairs to recheck Nik's note, even her answering machine. When neither yielded a clue as to his whereabouts, she switched on the computer. This, of course, would be his true medium of communication; she berated herself for not having thought of it earlier. She soon found, however, that access demanded a password — of which no indication had been left. None of the obvious names worked, nor even any birthday she could summon, including Nik's, for which she combed her memory. The date of Mimi's death, she morbidly concluded, must be the answer, and this eluded her. Perhaps, though, Nik had left some solution with the concierge's son.

With no hesitation, the boy typed "Welcome" in French. A full screen of options revealed itself, including one marked "Laura's Files." None of the choices, however, yielded any possibility of finding Nik.

Nor could the concierge's son tell her anything useful. Monsieur Nik had simply said he would be traveling but would stop by sometime after his return at summer's end to check if all was well with the computers. It was perhaps a confidential mission, probably a top-secret mission for which he had had to go under cover. Did Mme. Davidov think that Monsieur Nik was involved in space communication, contacting extra-terrestrial beings?

Laura tried to dismiss Nik from her mind but was successful only intermittently. Beneath the stream of engagements and excursions over the next months, even beneath rapid progress on her book, he or Mimi surfaced in her dreams, occasionally melding or gliding in or out of one another, and she would awake wondering where she was.
He had gone under cover, she reflected, in her gut; so much for her illusion of freedom in being unable to reach him.

One night she even dreamed of Simon Stern. “I didn't kill her,” he said, “your father either.”

She lunged for his throat. It should have been easy to choke him. He was clearly dying, his face bluish gray, lurching in a wheelchair among the beds and pallets of starving Somalis in a makeshift hospital. Yet constantly, he moved beyond her grasp. The hands of the starving were outstretched as well; he was the doctor. But the spittle of the dying was dribbling from the corners of his mouth. Until he spat and the starving shrank from him as a brownish jet splattered the rags in which they lay.

But Simon did not spit, thought Laura as she jolted awake. One could never have imagined Simon spitting, even in a dentist's chair; at more than 20 years' removal from his death, she could not picture him performing any natural function. Worse, in the wake of the emaciated bodies rose the memory of a photo that had fallen out of Vikram's papers during their stay in Mogadishu: four blue-helmeted white soldiers, members of a UN peace-keeping contingent, roasting a Somali boy tied to a spit over an open fire. He had been, it was said, one of the thousands of youngsters who had raped, plundered, tortured, and killed villagers throughout the famine belt. Moreover, it was also said, he had dared his captors to torture him upon stripping him of his guns and, after a brief singeing, they had let him go. The photo had been rapidly suppressed; she herself had seen it for only a few seconds before Vikram had whipped it away.

It was 3 AM still — however, a respectable hour in America. She poured herself a liberal dose of cognac to ease the horror of her nightmare and its aftermath and dialed Vikram in Washington. He was deep in a report due the next morning and remembered the photograph with considerable annoyance.

“Whatever happened to those guys?” he echoed her question disdainfully. “Well, they were punished, I guess. Court-martialed.”

Locked in a stockade and shipped home to Europe or Canada or wherever. They got whatever their country's military brass does for that kind of behavior. The kid thug they had hung over the fire was no prize, either. Laura, you are about the last person I would have figured for a sentimental fool.”

“Then why did you keep the photo?”

“I didn't. I threw it out when I left Somalia. One has to keep things in proportion. That incident was merely sensational.
Just think of all the daily horrors poverty inflicts on people. There is where the attention should be focused. That and the fact that we can now really wipe out poverty. The worst of it, at least. If we can just empower people.”

“When you say that, Vikram, you imply that you can give power — and that it also can be taken away.”

“Not when it is knowledge, Laura, and people's consciousness of their own knowledge. That's the big thing, the revolutionary thing: people's sense of ownership of their own knowledge so that they can be active stakeholders in the management of their destinies.”

“Spare me the jargon. I was writing it in one form or another for the UN before you were born.”

“Then why the hell did you call me?”

“I really don't know.” She considered hanging up, but he sounded anxious as well as angry. “Forgive me,” she murmured. “I just had a nightmare and an impulse. Of course, you're right — and bless you and Godspeed — and there will always be sadists.”

“May I send you my paper when I'm through? I'd really appreciate your comments. And you will see how all these ideas translate into data positive data. I will call you.”

Only a moment after their conversation, Laura wondered if Nik's computer prowess would help Vikram propagate his gospel. The point was moot in any practical sense; she could not reach the golden boy. More, as neither young man had mentioned the other to her, they had probably found no lasting common ground, professional or social. The cognac was producing its desired effect, closing her mind as well as eyes. She fell asleep with the comfort that she was a meddling old fool who should withdraw from involvement in the foibles of the young. She took her headache the next day as just punishment and found escape from both her manuscript and the memory of the photograph in shopping with a friend, yielding to the sensuous delights of Paris. Happily, the two women lavished money on a score of useless purchases, from the first autumn flowers to the latest plastic jewelry. They bought a funny antique pornographic woodcut for a friend.

They surrendered to laughter also, to the chagrin of a coiffeur who wanted them to concentrate on his efforts, then to the temptation of a new movie melodrama and left each other giddily exhausted close to midnight.

Recklessly, Laura checked the answering machine. A summons from the Pitié hospital demolished the day's bliss. Nik had been taken there after a mugging a few hours before.
There were apparently no severe injuries — only a black eye, a cut that required several stitches, a few superficial bruises and three broken ribs in addition to anal abrasions consistent with the young man's broken account of having been sodomized. The senior physician felt an MRI warranted, given the patient's indication of concussion and coma in adolescence, as well as his present regime of medications; his insurance papers were quite adequate.

Why had they called Laura? Because hers was the name in Garson's passport. No, no father had been mentioned — neither on the Norman coast nor in Montreal. And yes, they would appreciate Davidov's arrival as soon as possible; she might contribute to the clarification of several elements of Garson's presentation of his medical history; in addition to his shock, his French was limited. He was now sleeping only fitfully as could only be expected in this kind of trauma.

The attending physician was far warmer than her telephone demeanor had suggested, sensitive to the possible effects of sudden sexual violence on a young man so clearly unstable. She had insisted on Laura's coming largely because she felt that Garson desperately needed a familiar, reassuring presence — a feeling confirmed by his evident relief at the announcement that Davidov would momentarily be at his side.

Beyond Nik's battered, closed right eye, his face had become almost unrecognizable. Not only had his beard been shaved to permit a few stitches in his chin; swollen and discolored, he looked like a caricature of dissolution.

"It wasn't me who got you here," he greeted Laura. The turquoise eyes were dull with sedation. "I told them not to bother you until at least tomorrow."

Laura took his hand and kissed him. "I've been trying to find you since I returned from Provence."

"It was this queer who came over to my table at the restaurant. He kept wanting to buy me a whisky and would not believe that I didn't drink the hard stuff. Then, when I left to go back to this friend's pad, he beat me up him and some other queers. He was living, it seemed, in Montparnasse with two other computer enthusiasts, a young couple to whom Vikram had introduced him. There, though, he felt like a fifth wheel. And his father was off in Morocco until late September.

The police had found him unconscious in an alley, said the young doctor. He had not been robbed. Such sexual assaults were increasingly common though not yet, thank heaven, as frequent as in Davidov's New York. Pending the results of the MRI, the hospital could keep Garson for three days for observation. But for some weeks afterwards, he would need care and follow-up; he seemed to have no doctor in France.
He had also refused any suggestion of talking to a psychiatrist about the rape. While this feeling might change, it was understandable in view of his medical record.

Laura could furnish little supplementary information but volunteered to shelter him upon his release. The image of the Somali boy kept rising behind her eyes. Someone, she remembered, had traced the origins of war to assuaging a primal fear of being hunted and devoured by stronger carnivores.

When she arrived at the hospital the following morning, Nik welcomed the prospect of coming to her apartment with a show of diffidence. He was anxious, too, about the MRI; it appeared that his neurologist in Montreal, whose name he had given the hospital staff, had urged that he undergo the test. “Y’ know,” he told Laura, “I could put you up at my father’s place in Normandy. It’s really cool and you like being near the sea.”

She declined, explaining that she had to adhere to her routine; with or without him as a house guest; she had to meet a deadline for her book.

“I’ll pay for everything at your place,” he avowed, “our food, your rent, the telephone…”

“Nik, you have already given me and my landlady an enormous gift with the computer upgrade.”

He smiled, blushed, and consigned himself to the orderly who had come to take him to the test. He bore the evident pain of the movement into the wheelchair with brave silence.

Happily, the MRI revealed no anomalies other than those charted over the years by his Montreal specialist. Beyond the [Manuscript missing for two typed pages] than those syllables might well have sunk into the youngster's brain without his knowing what they meant, reverberating much later on.

Nik's fine fingers were raised almost in benediction as they conducted the chant. She took the disc case from his knee. On the cover, under the words *Requiem Aeternam*, a Virgin draped in celestial blues, haloed in heavy gold, cradled the head of her golden Son, his own halo marked by a scarlet cross; beneath scarlet flecks of blood, his face resembled Nik's own. “Death is also the Resurrection” said the booklet of notes.

Nowhere, though, did it translate the text, even the titles of the mass. But her movement had broken the boy's trance. Evidently, her face showed distress as well because he asked if she disliked the music.
She heard her voice trembling as she told him it was a mass for the dead, that the choir was entreat ing God to grant eternal rest to those who had died, and to let perpetual light shine upon them. So that they might have the serenity of the face of Jesus on the cover of the disc and be spared the wrath of Judgement Day.

“What wrath? They're so peaceful.”

“The souls and singers have looked into hell, dear, into its face and come out the other side, come into peace.”

He shook his head as the boy sopranos soared over the basses into the Sanctus and benediction. “Awesome. These guys really have it together.”

“Your mother,” Laura ventured, “loved this type of mass — for that same reason.”

He considered this information with dispassion, then asked, “Did you love her very much?”

“Yes, It was difficult not to, despite…” She stopped. “I had profound respect for her as well, even when I deeply disagreed with her. She had a kind of integrity that is hard to find these days; it's out of fashion to stick to what you believe — publicly at least.”

“So, she was a pain in the ass?”

Laura knew she should try to smile but couldn't. She wanted to invoke Antigone but feared he would not understand the allusion. “I think of her sometimes as a legendary princess who stood firm, ready to sacrifice everything for what she thought was right — position, reputation, even love.”

Again, she stopped. Antigone had not had children, had not lived even to the consummation of her love, dooming her prince as well as herself in her fidelity to her higher law. And for many, perhaps Sophocles included, she had certainly been a pain in the ass…The gods had not praised her; nor had Tiresias. Perhaps they had not known what to say.

“I think she sacrificed me, too,” the boy said, low.

“No, Nik. Certainly not consciously. You were the center of her life.”

“I was myself and she would not let me be. That is why I had to kill her.” He rose aptly, turned the music up to a roar and bolted to his room.
But he did not close the door nor repel Laura when she followed him and took his trembling body in her arms. “I just had to get out of it,” he sobbed against her, “all the pression and repression … I wanted to get out and she would not stop. I just had to get out of the fucking car. She went outa control.”

All the generations, Laura thought, of pression and repression, as she stroked his damp hair, all the rapes…

After he had fallen asleep, she thought of calling Sasha, but did not. His certitude of Nik's guilt confirmed, he would urge her to throw out her golden godson, to consign him either to the world in which rapists had found him or, at best, to the care of some clinician unable to understand that this child’s history was the century's and his crime a cry for freedom. No, she would keep Nik until he himself wanted to leave; he would kill no more. If necessary, she would keep him from Roland, too.

The next morning, she asked the boy if he wanted to see the settings in which his music had been sung. She was thinking of Sainte Chapelle, of going and returning when the light had changed, so that he might have two impressions of its glories. And if he found in those windows even a modicum of the rapture of his chant, they could plan an expedition to Chartres, where he might even hear his music as he bathed in the cathedral's colors. If the friend whom she was scheduled to see that evening assented, they might even go to Chartres that very day. They could all go together, have lunch and stay until the angelus. After his confession of the night before, he might wish to be with someone in addition to herself.

But he wanted to go nowhere. He needed to immerse himself, he said, in his new books with his chant in the background. Nor did he wish her to change her plans in any way; they could go to Sainte Chapelle or Chartres another time when he was feeling stronger; he had perhaps overdone things the day before when the doctor had instructed him to rest.

When she returned that night, he told her that the telephone had had a busy day; he had almost thought of turning the ringer off. Among the many calls, there had been one from her brother and another from Vikram. He had answered the former only because Sasha had specifically asked him to pick up if he were there. “And even then, I almost did not. Hypocrite S.O.B. He said I could stay with him and his wife if I ever came to New York. Said his kids wanted to see me. Said your nephew whatshisname, the Harvard physicist — liked to talk computers. Ha.”

“Actually, he's a nice guy.”

“Who? Your brother or his son?”
“Both. You might actually like my nephew — my niece, too. And Vikram did you also speak to him?”

“Yup. Good ol’ Vik. He's fulla crap, too. Says he is looking for a job for me — not a big one, but something that could lead to something else. But he won't do anything, I bet.”

“I would not be so sure. But these international contracts are difficult to obtain…”

“No, I scare him. He knows what I could do to him — to everyone.”

“Nik, forgive me, but if there is one thing Vikram does know, it’s that using the talents of others properly — and giving them due credit — can make him look good.”

“Not with what I can do to him.

From time to time, he reminded her strangely of his grandfather. She resolved not to ask him to reveal his secret and turned into her manuscript.

“Not very many people really understand about computer viruses,” Nik doggedly continued. “They're like a kind of life we can create ourselves.”

Laura refused to respond.

“They can reproduce themselves. They can mutate, too, all by themselves. And also, mate. So, two can get together and produce a whole new species — which can also mutate by itself and mate.”

Ordering him to his room would be useless. She could escape by excusing herself, but she balked at the notion of being displaced in what was, temporarily at least, her household.

“Of course,” he went on, “it takes somebody pretty special to create a virus like that one that will evolve according to the criteria decided by the creator.”

He was doubtless paraphrasing a notion he had found in one of his new books. And he had no idea whatever of the ancient lineage of the Frankenstein fantasy.

“A virus could be programmed to destroy very selectively. Very selectively. So that no one could even suspect that the target was specific. Or that there were several specific targets — just to drive one very specific person to whatever the creator wanted, including suicide or murder. But only a real cyborg could do it. You do not even know what a cyborg is.”
"No, except that you are undoubtedly one of them," she finally responded, rising without returning his gaze. "I'm tired and it's late." She gathered the last pages she had written into a folder and shut herself in her bedroom.

The doctor had said he could be moved into a convalescent home, she remembered. His father would doubtless be returning soon. She slept almost until noon. All was silent as she moved through the morning rituals. Nik, too, seemed to be sleeping late — or had left too quietly to wake her.

She tapped at his door gingerly; when no response emerged, she opened it. He was seated at his laptop, fully dressed with immense earphones on his head. His entire being seemed fixed on his screen, over which he slightly rocked. But the draught she had created ruffled his papers. He frowned, turned, and saw her.

"Requiem aeternam," he said, slipping off his headgear.

"I was never an early riser," she answered guiltily. "Forgive me for disturbing you."

"No problem. There is no disturbance." He smiled. "Just a pause. Maybe a necessary pause." She asked if he had eaten.

"In cyberspace," he said, "there is no race, no class, no gender. No defects, no disabilities. No fake distinctions. Just yourself. Pure selves communicating with each other. Maybe chanting if they like."

In this recitation, she recognized shreds of some old advertisement for Internet software.

He pressed a switch. The plainsong blared. "We are all aspects of one great Self."

Including his mother?, Laura wondered. She murmured that she had to get to work and that the small refrigerator was bursting with leftover delicacies.

He nodded without looking at her, rose abruptly and lowered the shutter of the room until the sole distinct object was his vivid screen. [INDICATION OF CHANGING COLORS, UNCLEAR IMAGES…ALL TO SUGGEST A CHAPEL OF HIS OWN.]

Donning his earphones once more, he took his music back to himself and concentrated [on his screen]. "I've decided not to destroy ol' Vikram," he announced to the images Laura could not see. Again, the music seized him, and he began slightly rocking, his eyes half-closing over the bright intensity beamed a second earlier on her — almost, it struck her, and she recoiled from herself as well as her thought and the boy, like some old Orthodox Jewish man.
“There is strength in submission,” he murmured to the screen.

He lacked only the skullcap, beard and sidelocks.

One great Self … Submission … Find strength in submission.
Book Reviews


Reviewed by Jeremy Smith

There are too few perspectives in civilizational analysis that examine Latin America. One exception is found in the work of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt on multiple modernities and the Americas. Eisenstadt’s research is a point of departure for Michela Coletta’s Decadent Modernity: Civilization and ‘Latinidad’ in Spanish America, 1880-1920. Through chapters on the so-called Latin Race, rural and metropolitan identities, national education, and what Coletta calls the ‘aesthetics of regeneration’, the author explores cultural, sociological, and political trends in Southern Cone countries Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina in the fin de siècle era of European and American modernities. This is a wonderfully multidisciplinary work covering problematics derived from sociology, art, literature, education, history, urbanism, philosophy, and politics. All this comes together to lead readers to questions about the conceptual apparatus of ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ in an era in which doubts about both notions abounded, but also processes of their pluralization.

The book has two strengths. First, it handles the cultural, sociological, and political trends of the region in this era superbly. Coletta’s argumentation amounts to the following insight of interest to readers of Comparative Civilizations Review. The notion of civilization underwent a pluralization of meanings in competing cultural interpretations which could not be reduced to French and Spanish sources of Romantic thought, or to new Americanisms emerging from the United States, or indeed to anti-American sentiments as they began to enter the public sphere, particularly in Argentina. Coletta demonstrates, convincingly in this reviewer’s eyes, that ‘Latinity’ and its conceptions of civilization had an originality in the environment of urbanizing Southern Cone countries. There were many contributors and forebears, from better remembered figures like Domingo Sarmiento, Rubén Darío, and José Enrique Rodó to lesser-known writers and reformers like Ezequiel Martinez Estrada, Carlos Reyles, Carlos Vaz Ferreira, and Daniel Muñoz.

The chapter on education emphasizes what might be characterized as part of a ‘civilizing process’ in the words of a later civilizational thinker, Norbert Elias, although Elias’ is not a reference point for Coletta. Debates of the day about different models and programs of education turned on the collision of national cultures with values of progress emerging from the process of civilizing the countryside and its peoples (here I use ‘civilizing process’ in the sense intended by Elias).
In addition, the interaction of national and foreign influences was greatly in question, especially in the promotion of national language and literacy.

The debates could plant the reader in a bewildering labyrinth of works for those unfamiliar with Latin American modernism and Romanticism. However, Coletta deciphers it patiently across several chapters. For this reviewer, her positioning of José Enrique Rodó’s *Ariel* as one of the best-known and most remembered expressions of Latin American ambivalence emerging from this current is excellent. Invoking the binaries of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, *Ariel* crafted a space for ‘culture’ opposed to ‘civilization’, or tradition as a check on the progressivism of the young Anglo-Saxon US Republic. The creative thrust of Latinism is laid bare when, Coletta writes, ‘Rodó inverted the paradigm of Latin America as the heir of decadent European values and projects it into the future.’¹ This was simultaneously the creation of regional and trans-Atlantic traditions of modernism while also drawing on ‘Spanish-American national imaginaries.’²

A second strength is Coletta’s ability to pinpoint how cultural transactions, borrowings, and creative adaptations between interacting civilizational sources have shaped culture and politics. The exchanges between living French, Spanish, and German currents and dynamic creole and indigenous traditions of the Southern Cone are highly visible in her analysis of the cultural artifacts, interpretations, and audiences of this period. What the reader is left with is a rich picture of the international impact of cross-Atlantic Latin cultures in pluralizing the cultural terrain of the Americas by introducing Romantic influences as an antidote to naïve and perhaps dangerous faith in the unilinear ‘progress’ of civilization, coming in the form of Brazilian positivism and US imperialism. There are enough commonalities across the three countries to talk coherently about a region. At the same time, the author does not allow the divergences between them to escape the attention of readers.

We need more works capturing the nuances of the Europe-Africa, North and South America in the creation of transnational and national registers of modernism. Moreover, sophisticated Latin and southern traditions, such as those discussed in *Decadent Modernity*, are actively nuanced in Coletta’s documentation of them. The one gap is that the book, having engaged Eisenstadt’s framework of civilizational analysis and multiple modernities at the beginning, does not re-engage his historical sociology in its conclusion, or ever declare a clear position on it. Coletta’s tendency appears more inclined to ‘decolonial’ perspectives. Further theoretical consideration of the problematic relationship between the two in light of the historical research she has conducted could lead to a complex and nuanced understanding (and more complex and nuanced than many uses of the decolonial perspective are).

But this lacuna should not prevent anyone from engaging this work. *Decadent Modernity* delineates a regional current of *modernismo* central to the intercivilizational creation of Latin American modernity. This book deserves a long and careful read by all interested in civilizations sitting outside the West yet engaged deeply and problematically with it.
Mokhtar Mokhtefi. *I Was a French Muslim: Memories of an Algerian Freedom Fighter.*
Translated from the French and with an Introduction by Elaine Mokhtefi

Benjamin Stora. *Les clés retrouvées: Une enfance juive à Constantine.*

Reviewed by Leland Conley Barrows

If one were to choose two words to characterize the books under review, they would be *ambiguity* and *nostalgia*. Both are personal reflections of how the final years of French-ruled Algeria affected the authors.

Mokhtar Mokhtefi (1935-2015) was an Algerian Muslim freedom fighter who, in 1956, having completed high school at the Lycée Aumale in Constantine, enlisted in the National Liberation Army (ALN) of Algeria. We follow his story from early childhood in Berroughaia, a small town south of Algiers, to his re-entry into Algeria from Tunisia in July 1962, just as Algeria achieved independence.

Benjamin Stora (1950- ) is a distinguished French historian of Algerian Jewish origin, born in Constantine, whose family was more or less constrained to settle in France in June 1962. They, like most Algerian Sephardic Jews had roots in North Africa going back hundreds of years, but the Crémieux Decree of 1870 had made them, willing or not, full French citizens. Thus their fate in 1962, exodus to France, was the same as that of the million or so European settlers (*pieds noirs)*.

Both authors — native Algerians — are writing from exile. In Mokhtefi’s case, exile is more of the classic sort. He left, disillusioned, twelve years after Algerian independence, having occupied positions of importance in his country. Stora left Algeria as a child but has devoted his whole life to a scholarly career that has linked him permanently to his Algerian Jewish French roots. He is the premier historian of the French-Jewish-Algerian relationship, having written or edited some thirty books and many articles on the shared history of this relationship. Indeed, in July 2020, Stora submitted his *Rapport sur les questions memorielles portant sur la colonisation et la guerre d’Algérie* [Report on Memorial Questions Regarding Colonization and the Algerian War] to French President Emmanuel Macron who had commissioned it. He later published the report as *France-Algérie: les passions douleureuses* (Paris: Albin-Michel, 2021). Macron intended the report and the book to guide him in furthering reconciliation between France and Algeria — this more than half a century after the end of the Algerian War of Independence.
Both authors are nostalgic about *Algérie française*. Stora describes a happy childhood in the older, Muslim/Jewish neighborhood of Constantine. He reminds his readers of the synagogues of the city, the celebration of various Jewish holidays, the food, the rituals, as well as his early schooling in the neighborhood public school. He indicates that Muslims and Jews lived in close proximity in this part of Constantine, that the *shabbat goy* would be a Muslim. And he evokes the bilingualism, French and Arabic, of his parents’ generation and of his own while pointing out that his maternal grandmother spoke only Arabic. And he presents the European population of Constantine as living on and to the south of the Coudiat Plateau, separate from the Muslims and the Jews — by custom, however, not by law.

Mokhtefi’s nostalgia is of a different sort given that at age 21 after mastering the French language, becoming imbued with French culture, and acquiring a French high school education he took up arms against France. He had already developed a love for French literature and the French language that he came to speak and write better than his native Arabic. He was particularly attracted to Victor Hugo. Later, as a communications specialist in the ALN stationed in Oudja, Morocco, and required to live in a dormitory with no access to radio or newspapers, he recited the poems of Verlaine, Victor Hugo, and Lamartine to himself (p. 320). French civic education with its emphasis on “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*” inspired him but also made him increasingly aware of the contradictions between the egalitarian ideology of republican France and the unequal situation of most of the Muslim population of Algeria — French subjects, not full citizens. The more he progressed in terms of his French education, the more he found the contradictions intolerable. But then, once in the ALN and playing an important role in the Signal Corps that he had helped to set up, he began to realize that the new Algeria might not be what he and many others had expected, a secular, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual republic, not an Islamic, Arabized quasi-military dictatorship. Throughout his book, his memoir, he reminds the reader of what could have been but was not.

Stora, who never questions his Frenchness, is nevertheless very conscious of the Berber origins of the Algerian Jewish community. He points out that despite what many observers had thought, Algerian Jews, for the most part, are not descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492; rather, they are descendants of Berbers, the native inhabitants of North Africa, who converted to Judaism at the end of the Roman Empire in North Africa. Unfortunately, Stora is vague as to how and why these conversions took place, nor does he cite authors who have claimed that when France invaded Algeria in 1830, they perceived that the Muslim majority despised the Jewish minority.
He remembers the Jewish community of his childhood as having been well-integrated with the Muslim population despite the well-intentioned action of Adolphe Crémieux, the most prestigious of 19th century French Jewish politicians, whose decree of 24 October 1870, promulgated while he was serving as the Minister of Justice in the French Government of National Defense, conferred, or one might say, imposed full French citizenship on the Algerian Jewish population, thus driving a wedge between Jews and Muslims.

Crémieux, who devoted much of his career to the defense of the Jews in France and in Europe, was determined to have full French citizenship extended to the Jews of Algeria whether or not they wanted it. He realized, following a number of visits to Algeria, that Algerian Jews would never voluntarily request French citizenship as per the Senatus Consulte of 1865. Doing so would have required that they renounce their personal legal status under Mosaic Law and, in their view, reject “God’s Law” for the Code Civil. Crémieux came to understand that they would not reject a change in status if it were imposed by the French government without their having to request it.

Had similar dispositions been taken for the Muslim population, they would have had the political effect of turning the European Christian settlers into a small minority in Algeria which, of course, would have been impossible in what was a nascent settler colony. Moreover, the Muslims too rejected the requirement, embedded in the Senatus Consulte, that they renounce their personal status under Sharia Law to accede to full citizenship and acceptance of the Code Civil. Doing so, according to the Muslim religious authorities, would be tantamount to committing apostasy. So, they remained second class French “nationals” denied most of the rights of French citizens. After 1947 their government identity cards listed them as French Muslims wherein the title of Mokhtefi’s memoir.

Nevertheless, in 1935 two secularized Algerian Muslim leaders, Ferhat Abbas and Mohammed Salah Benjelloul, informed the French Minister of the Interior, Marcel Régnier, that Algerian Muslims would accept full citizenship if it were imposed on them, but, like the Jews, they would refuse to request it on an individual basis (James McDougall, History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria, Cambridge, University Press, 2006, p. 92). Earlier, at the time of Crémieux’s activity, the Muslim majority did not have a defender in Paris of his stature and influence, and he himself displayed little interest in the Muslims. When full citizenship came after 1958, it came too late; the Algerian Revolution was well past the point of no return. Most of the pieds noirs settlers had opposed any liberalization of the Algerian Muslim status. Some of their leaders, indeed, had attempted to have the Crémieux Decree repealed, and it was repealed by the Vichy government of France in 1940. It was restored in 1943 after de Gaulle’s French Committee of National Liberation had installed itself in Algiers.
So Mokhtefi grew up in an environment of legal discrimination but one in which he, as a talented youth, became French in terms of culture and education while always being conscious that few Algerians had the same advantages as he. The contradiction between French republican ideals and the treatment of the Muslim population of Algeria, the evolving political situation, and the Independence War starting on 1 November 1954, led Mokhtefi to sympathize with, to work with, and then to join the National Liberation Front (FLN) and then to enlist in the ALN, the Army of National Liberation.

Mokhtefi’s memoir unfolds his itinerary through July 1962 when, accompanied by a French companion, he crosses the frontier from Tunisia into the now independent Algeria. His account ends with a description of his encounter inside Algeria with an armed and illiterate freedom fighter (moudjahid) manning a checkpoint. This individual who pretends to check Mokhtefi’s papers but cannot read them waves him through the checkpoint eliciting Mokhtefi’s comment: “Ignorance out of the barrel of a gun is preparing us for bitter tomorrows” (p. 399).

Shortly after Mokhtefi completed his manuscript and submitted it to Editions Barzakh in Algiers, he died. Given his frank honesty, one wonders what a second volume focusing on his life and work in independent Algeria might have been. Upon returning to Algeria he became the president of the General Union of Algerian Muslim Students and then went on to hold positions in the Algerian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform. He became increasingly disillusioned with the Algerian government, particularly after his American wife and translator was expelled from Algeria in 1974.

The biggest problem with Mokhtefi’s memoir comes from Elaine Mokhtefi’s translation of it from French into English — not that the translation is bad but that she has slanted it, possibly unconsciously, to the left thus interjecting her own commitments to Black liberation in the United States and radical anti-colonialism in the Third World. She had worked for the New York mission of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) where she befriended Frantz Fanon just before he died of leukemia. After Algeria gained independence, she had moved to Algeria where she had helped organize the first Pan-African Cultural Festival held in Algiers in 1969 and then had assisted in setting up the Algiers office of the Black Panthers. Because of her socio/political commitments, she makes her husband sound more anti-French than he probably was even though he was irrevocably committed to Algerian independence.

In her introduction to her husband’s memoir, Elaine Mokhtefi compares the situation of the Muslim population of Algeria confronted by French domination with the racist domination of African American Americans by Euro-Americans. There were similarities but also differences. French legislation treated the Muslim majority population of Algeria as a conquered people entitled only to restricted rights.
On the other hand, the strict commitment to Islam of most Algerians and the sequestering of women prevented what might have been a degree of “creolization” linking the French settlers and the indigenous Algerians. The barrier between the two populations, although backed by law, was more religious and cultural than racial.

One irritating example of Elaine Mokhtefi’s mis-comparison of the African American experience of racism and the Algerian Muslim experience of French domination is her designation of a poor neighborhood in Berroughaia, Dra’a Es-Souk, as “Niggertown” (p. 20), a wrong designation even if in the original French, Mokhtar Mokhtefi refers to the settlement as ‘le village nègre’ (Mokhtar Mokhtefi, J’étais français-musulman: itinéraire d’un soldat de l’ALN, Alger, Editions Barzakh, 2016, p. 25). Dra’a Es-Souk probably originated as a settlement created by descendants of freed slaves from south of the Sahara or of specialized workers, musicians, makers of charms, and the like for which a better designation in both the French and English texts would have been dar el ousfen. Also, in the era of the 1940’s that Mokhtefi is describing, the term, “nègre” was understood as meaning “Negro,” considerably less pejorative than the N-word.

Mokhtefi explains how he had the good fortune, thanks to the support of one of his primary school teachers, to be admitted with a scholarship to the Collège Duveyrier in Blida, a major garrison town located between Berroughaia and Algiers. Elaine Mokhtefi’s translation only cites the name of the town and of the school (p. 52). Mokhtar Mokhtefi’s original version includes a footnote (p. 50) giving a bit of the history of the school including the fact that it is where Benyoucef Benkhedda, the second president of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA), serving in 1961 and 1962, earned his baccalauréat.

In a discussion of the political line-up for the 1947 elections in Algeria, particularly the duel between the two principal parties, the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques/Parti du Peuple Algerien (MTLA/PPA) led by Messali Hadj, and the Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien (UDMA) led by Ferhat Abbas, Mokhtefi’s French text quotes Abbas’ well-known declaration of 23 February 1936 to the effect that he would not die for an Algerian fatherland because it does not exist (p.66) whereas Elaine Mokhtefi passes over Abbas (p. 71) only mentioning that he wanted Algeria “to remain tied to France,” an oversimplification. With time, Abbas too would go over to the FLN and become the first president of the GPRA serving from 1958 to 1961.

The value of Mokhtefi’s mémoire is that it gives an intimate and detailed picture of what it was for its author to come of age in the period prior to the outbreak of the Algerian Independence War, to become a militant within his high school, to collaborate with French supporters of the FLN, and then to join the war as a soldier. He describes how in 1956 he took the train to Oujda, Morocco, joined the ALN, and was subsequently assigned to the nascent Signal Corps headed by Abdelhafid Boussouf.
Here he took part in several missions infiltrating the Morice Line into Algeria to set up radio communication posts. Although in her Introduction Elaine Mokhtefi’s praises the work of the Signal Corps, claiming that the French could not imagine that Algerians could “invent and actually build a wartime communications network,” (p. xi), the memoir itself does not cite any victories against the French forces that the network brought about. What Mokhtefi describes in detail is his training in coding and radio transmission, a number of attempts by operators in Algeria and in Morocco to communicate among themselves, and the brutal execution by ALN soldiers of two MTLD/PPA supporters falsely accused of treason.

Stora and Mokhtefi both hint that they have regrets regarding the outcome of the Algerian revolution that required both, one as a pre-adolescent, the other as a former freedom fighter, to leave Algeria. Both authors ended up in France where Stora, thanks, in part, to the Crémieux Decree, became a distinguished professor and Mokhtefi lived with his American wife in the homeland of the civilization that he had admired both as a child and as an adult, even though he had referred to France as “the enemy” while serving as an ALN combatant. In France he wrote and published children’s books in French on the origins of Islam, a description of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and a description of Egypt, among other works.

The experiences of both writers remind the reviewer of a comment made to him by a ranking Algerian official: “Yes, we got our independence, but what we really wanted is what Dr. Martin Luther King obtained for African-Americans.”

Reviewed by Constance Wilkinson

“Never Forget National Humiliation!”? Really? Yes. This is Zheng Wang’s very interesting study of the post-Mao Chinese Communist Party’s massive re-education campaign. It was created in the years following the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 when post-Mao CCP hard-liners approved a military response to civilian protesters that would crush China’s emerging pro-democracy movement.

Zheng Wang points out that Tiananmen is one of many events “that have been formally ignored by the Chinese government…Beijing has even gone so far as to ban the mere discussion of specific events it would choose to forget.” (p.6)

Zheng Wang’s book describes “how the legitimacy-challenged Chinese Communist Party has used history education as an instrument for the glorification of the party, for the consolidation of national identity, and for the justification of the political system of the CCP’s one-party rule in the post-Tiananmen and post-Cold War eras.” (p.9)

On the face of it, it seems peculiar to recommend that Chinese patriots keep national humiliation in mind, like pouring fresh salt into old wounds, wounds inflicted by certain historic events. “Never forget!” is one thing; “continually marinate in victimization” is quite another.

Yet, as Zheng Wang informs us, that is indeed a patriot’s duty according to the CCP’s Patriotic Education Campaign platform of 1991. It is the duty of patriots to focus on China’s miserable foreign-devil-victimized past, thus, to become more motivated to work harder and harder to re-gain the stolen glory of China. Thus, the new CCP party line: “Never forget national humiliation!” Really. Seriously. Never get over it.

As Zheng Wang reminds us, even Republic of China Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek never got over it (p.80). For decades, Zheng Wang tells us, Chiang Kai-Shek wrote in his daily diary just such an exhortation: “Xuechi!” (“Avenge humiliation! Wipe clean humiliation!”) (p.81). The post-Mao post-Tiananmen CCP is happy to take this ball and run with it, to create an official state narrative of victimization, humiliation, and blame. In this book, Professor Zheng Wang tells us why and how they did so. (p.191)

In Chapter 1, “Historical Memory, Identity, and Politics,” the author presents prior studies relevant to understanding the “function of historical memory in group identity formation and how historical memory influences people’s perceptions, interpretations, and decision-making processes, especially in a conflict or crisis situation” (p.19).
Wang presents two frameworks for empirical research. The first seeks to measure collective identity and the second seeks to analyze the effect of historical memory on beliefs. This chapter sets the stage for what follows.

In Chapter 2, “Chosen Glory, Chosen Trauma,” Zheng Wang discusses how China’s past experiences have worked to shape China’s national identity — its sense of self. He makes use of Norwegian sociologist and peace-theoretician Johan Galtung’s Chosenness-Myth-Trauma lens. Three cultural dimensions comprise the: “Chosenness-Myth-Trauma-Complex” (p.41). It is worth noting that Galtung’s C-M-T complex is not a neutral concept, but one that reveals civilizational psychopathology. The chosenness-myth-trauma complex can be regarded as “the collective megalopara-noia syndrome.”

Wang applies Galtung’s C-M-T lens to China as follows: China’s Chosen Chosenness: an attitude of inherent superiority. Since ancient times, China is and always has regarded itself as special; that is, they are “chosen” because they live in tianxia, All-Under-Heaven, the Middle Kingdom, the center of the entire world. (p.42) (As Galtung points out elsewhere, “Chosen-ness induces collective sentiments of grandeur relative to all others.”)

China’s Chosen Myth: that it possesses limitless virtue and good qualities. Since ancient times, China self-perception is that it is very embodiment of civilization and good qualities. Peace-loving, benevolent, better than anyone else and everyone else (p.43) (p.125). “China is the world, not just ‘a country in the world’ (p.71). This is reflected in Zheng Wang’s mention of a Chinese official’s officious letter to Queen Victoria, in which he condescendingly scolds her, saying she must check her “barbarian merchants” and “show further the sincerity of your politeness and submissiveness” toward China (p.39).

Chosen Trauma: China’s trauma is not due to its own errors but is due to having been victimized by other, lesser nations (p.68). Since “until 1840, China considered itself…the only true civilization, (p.68) its tianxia view made China “unable to acknowledge an international world of formally equal states.”

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1 “Chosenness, the idea of being a people chosen by transcendental forces, above all others, endowed, even anointed, to be a light unto others, with the right and even the duty to govern them; trauma, of being a people hit and hurt by others, possibly out of their envy, by enemies lurking anywhere, intent on hitting again; myths of a glorious past, near or distant, to be recreated.” Galtung, J. Are There Therapies for Bad Cosmologies?” Medicine and War, Vol. II, p. 172
2 “” Galtung, p. 172
3 “” Galtung, p. 172
4 Emphasis mine.
By the time of the First Opium War and lasting over the next century, China’s mythic tianxia ego began to deflate. At the start, China had been, in her own eyes, the natural ruler of the universe. However, over time, it became shockingly clear that ignorant Western barbarian nations were oblivious to this eternal truth. Even worse, the “dwarf pirate” (p.81) people of Japan, once China’s vassal, had ceased to remain submissive. Continuing throughout “the century of humiliation” (p.47), China’s glory repeatedly was besmirched by experiences of weakness and defeat at the hands of foreign-devil Western powers and by foreign devil Japan. All these states disrespected China and humiliated China with their bullying, unequal treaties and their victorious armies, such that “with each new humiliation, the Chinese lost a little bit of their national myth of greatness,” (p.68) inflicting painful, narcissistic wounds.

Absent a century of humiliation of glorious China by mean foreign bully nations, there would have been no need for reform in China, and no need for revolution(s) (p.68). Civil war and bloody revolutions in China were the fault of mean, greedy, bloody barbarian non-Chinese foreign nations’ actions, while China remains glorious by means of its blamelessness.

Chapter 3, “From ‘All-Under-Heaven’ to a Nation-State: National Humiliation and Nation Building” concerns the Chinese Communist Party’s nation-building challenge: how to construct a new national identity suitable to modern times, and suitable to taking its place on the international stage. However, China’s mythic stance of inherent superiority “made it difficult for China to adapt psychologically to the new reality of international affairs. China was not prepared to join the family of nations as an equal member” — because how could it be equal when it was in fact superior? (p.73)

Thus began China’s process of adjusting its self-identity, painfully proceeding through the periods of the late Qing, the Republic, the initial Chinese Communist Party, the Maoist Chinese Communist Party, the post-Maoist Chinese Communist Party, and the Post-Tiananmen Square Massacre Chinese Communist Party, the latter still in power today.

Chapter 4, “From Victim to Victor: The Patriotic Education Campaign,” shows why and how the Post-Tiananmen Square Massacre Chinese Communist Party rewrote the Chinese national narrative. Having crushed the grassroots Chinese pro-democracy movement in 1989, the post-Tiananmen Massacre CCP worked on how best to regain its authoritarian power, eliminate the threat of democracy in China, and retain the Party’s iron grip on power in China. Perhaps frightened by the threat of democracy and even civil war, the Post-Massacre CCP created an inescapable propaganda framework built on a pro-CCP, anti-democracy, anti-western frame, one that historian James Harrison called “the most massive attempt at ideological re-education in human history.” (p.96)
The Post-Tiananmen Chinese Communist Party devoted years to crafting and carrying out this re-education campaign to burnish its image and gain legitimacy and popular sympathy and (of course) more political power under the frame of “making our motherland strong, the people prosperous, and the nation immensely rejuvenated.” (p.133)

Zheng Wang demonstrates that the ideological re-education goals outlined in 1994 were specific:

- to boost the nation’s spirit, enhance cohesion, foster national self-esteem and pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible, and direct and rally the masses’ patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. (p.99)

It was also, as Zheng Wang quotes William Callahan, “an effort to re-direct young people’s anger away from the party.” (p.100). Younger individuals “had to be reintroduced to the imperialist past, to re-experience its bitterness and shame” (p.100) while magically making memory of a massacre disappear.

Chapter 5, “From Vanguard to Patriot: Reconstructing the Chinese Communist Party,” explains how the post-Tiananmen CCP used the theme of national humiliation to achieve the political ends previously mentioned and create social cohesion. Wang reminds us that “the more we identify with our group, the more we will differentiate our group from other groups.” (p.125)

This process is exemplified by the work of post-TSM CCP master propagandist patriotic re-branding revisionist re-educator Jiang Zemin, who ran with that ball, dividing people “into two categories: the ‘ardent patriots’ and the ‘scum of the nation.’” One can’t get more binary than that, can one? (p.125). Patriotic citizens “should hate the foreign invaders, despise traitors, and respect patriots.” (p.125). Everyone must study and keep in mind national humiliation. Chinese leaders who followed Jiang, Hu Jintao, and Wen Jiabao among them, were happy to keep that Neo-Foreign Devil re-frame going, utilizing “China’s past history of humiliation to awaken the people’s historical consciousness and build cohesion.” (p.140)

In 1995, 100 sites were identified as demonstration bases for national patriotic education (p.105). Forty sites are dedicated to external wars (battlefields, museums, memorial), that is, military conflicts with Japan, Russian, India, the Netherlands, the Boxer Uprising’s eight ally nations, and so on. Twenty-four sites commemorate the 1927-1949 KMT-CCP Chinese civil war. Twenty-one sites are dedicated to myths of glory: wonders of architecture and ancient civilization (15 sites); prehistoric sites (4); achievements after 1949 (2 sites). Fifteen sites are dedicated to heroes: CCP leaders, model workers, patriots.
More than 350 million visitors have flocked to these patriotic education bases since the re-education campaign began. Supported by the government, these sites receive “a large number of organized visits from schools, army groups, and government agencies.” (p.106). Visitors to the “Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression” will see a huge stone wall at the entrance with the death toll inscribed as ‘Victims: 300,000.’” (p.58). The Japanese attack on Shenyang is memorialized by the September 18th Historical Museum . . . built (in 1991) on the exact site where the attack occurred in 1931.” (p.56) The Museum features a large bronze bell engraved with four characters meaning “Never Forget National Humiliation.” (p.56)

Chapter 6, “From Earthquake to Olympics: New Trauma, New Glory” analyzes China’s behavior during two world events in terms of historical memory as used by the post-Tiananmen Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese Communist Party co-opted hosting the Olympics to inflate its appreciation of itself, to harvest glorious success on the world stage, and to trumpet it in all directions. Each gold medal won by China helped to accrue more glory (although, sadly, anything less than gold equaled humiliation and defeat).

Wang next recounts China’s response to a disastrous earthquake, and how the state propaganda media coverage was used as way to accrue glory for China, as it provided an opportunity to show China’s people and show the world their bravery, fearlessness, and ability to conquer adversity.

Chapter 7, “Memory, Crises, and Foreign Relations” applies the Chosenness-Myth-Trauma Complex to explain China’s behavioral response to crises happening on the world stage. To me, most interesting among them was his discussion of the NATO-US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia.

Zheng Wang cites notes of discussions from the CCP elite in which their anger is based on feeling insulted. The US apologized repeatedly, framing the incident as due to a technical error in targeting. The Chinese were so furious that the CCP government itself incited violent student demonstrations to threaten US Embassies, the first large demonstrations to occur since the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. It was a notable over-reaction, not unlike the great re-education campaign.

Chapter 8 is entitled “Memory, Textbooks, and Sino-Japanese Reconciliation” and concerns just that, presenting a perspective of reconciliation and peacebuilding through the joint writing/re-writing of history. Chapter 9, on “Memory, History, and China’s Rise,” reviews the main points of the book, and “how the lenses of history and memory facilitate a better understanding of China’s rise, intentions, and nationalism.” (p.15)
Zheng Wang’s book inspired in this reader renewed curiosity about and appreciation of Chinese history, ancient and modern. Through his analysis, I discovered the modular nature of modern Chinese history. Deletions. Insertions. Historic events swapped IN and OUT like LEGOs—red for green; green for blue; sometimes back to red again, according to propaganda needs of the era.

Thus, for Chiang Kai-Shek:
“Never Forget National Humiliation!” narrative? IN!
“Foreign Devils, Bad Treaties!” frame? IN!
“Rape of Nanking” memory IN!
Nationalism? IN!

While, for Mao:
“Rape of Nanking”? OUT! (Delete because it reminds minds of KMT’s military victory).
Humiliation narrative? OUT! (Blame class enemies.)
Chinese Nationalism? OUT! (Too Chiang Kai-Shek-y.)
International Communist internationalism? IN!
Great Famine Due to CCP Incompetence? DELETE.
Genocidal Imperialist Aggression Toward Tibet? DELETE.

For Post-Mao Chinese Communist Party:
Damage Done by the Great Leap Forward? DELETE.
Social Trauma Due to Cultural Revolution? DELETE.
CCP Fears Losing Mandate-of-Heaven Legitimacy? NOPE. DON’T MENTION IT.
Rising Calls for Democracy? SUPPRESS. DENY.

Then, Tiananmen.
Tiananmen Square Massacre? DELETE. DENY.
Never Forget National Humiliation? INSERT. LATHER, RINSE, REPEAT: NEW ENEMY!

Zheng Wang analyzes China’s aggressive response to a spy plane incident in 2001, saying the “collision between [a] Chinese fighter plane and [a] U.S. spy plane developed into an unexpected clash of face and pride” (p.189). Although the US plane had been flying over international waters, Chinese fighter planes attacked the US plane anyway, after which expansionist China behaved as if China were the aggrieved party: “US Flies Plane Over International Waters to Insult China!”

Why so touchy? Because, says Zheng Wang, “the legitimacy of China’s current rulers is highly dependent upon successful performance on the international stage” (p.189).
Likewise, CCP China’s reaction to the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade seems an over-reaction. Zheng Wang includes in his book detailed notes of a heated discussion among CCP leaders: “A quick content analysis of those remarks indicates that, of the seven top leaders, five of them used the term provocation and insult, four of them regarded the bombing as bullying or used terms such as dignity or humiliation, four of them directly called the bombing a plot or ploy.” Zheng Wang notes China’s outsized response and he does include the possibility that the bombing was not accidental. (p.176) This makes China’s angry response more understandable, and its sense of having been insulted. It might be framed as “US Insults China by Catching China’s Belgrade Embassy Red-Handed Forwarding Secret NATO Military Targets Information, So US on Behalf of NATO Precision-Bombs China’s Embassy at Night Removing Military Threat,” all the while mendaciously maintaining in public that it was just an accident, so sorry. Humiliating indeed.

Zheng Wang’s book is inspiring and thought-provoking. It helps us to appreciate why the post-Tiananmen Massacre CCP went to such lengths to turn popular attention away from an annoying proto-democracy movement and toward inflammatory nation-building, set on a propaganda foundation whereby rejuvenating China means regaining its status as the center of the world. Its spin is anti-western-nations, anti-Japan, anti-democracy. It revives the myth of Chinese Supremacy. It encourages a pervasive contempt for all other cultures while blaming all those lesser cultures for China’s inferiority complex. Never forget national humiliation, after all. Keep those grudges simmering.

The author states:

The empirical core of this book is concentrated on decoding one of the most misunderstood and least addressed elements in Chinese politics today — historical memory. Without directly addressing Chinese nationalism, I have used historical memory to explain the cultural and historical foundations of that nationalism.

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5 Guardian article https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/oct/17/balkans. “NATO deliberately bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the war in Kosovo after discovering it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications. According to senior military and intelligence sources in Europe and the US, the Chinese embassy was removed from a prohibited targets list after NATO electronic intelligence (Elint) detected it sending army signals to Milosevic's forces. . . .The Chinese may have calculated that NATO would not dare strike its embassy, but the five-storey building was emptied every night of personnel. Only three people died in the attack, two of whom were, reportedly, not journalists - the official Chinese version - but intelligence officers.”
As this analysis has indicated, an understanding of the politics of historical memory is essential to comprehending the linkage between the top-down state nationalism and popular social nationalism, the conditions and circumstances that ignite nationalist movements, and the controversies between globalism and nationalism in China. (p.236)

This book concentrates on the CCP’s rehabilitation of itself after Tiananmen; he details this massive propaganda campaign to regain CCP power and glory, strip power from dissidents, and inflame their populace with propaganda about who is the real enemy of the people and who are the glorious patriots.

Marinating China’s populace in the miseries of their historical past seems an unhealthy response to deep socio-political trauma. It is, in fact, introducing a kind of poisoned truth as a subject for social worship. China’s classic practice of merrily re-writing history-to-order is highlighted by this propaganda campaign: delete mention/memory of certain inconvenient events (p.242) lest they diminish national self-esteem and tarnish glory; insert/highlight alternative facts/memories more relevant to preserving stability/control. By which I mean, retaining power.

This propaganda strategy has been effective; the post-TM CCP has indeed retained political power and control over China. However, this strategy of wallowing in woundedness can also be seen as unwise and morally unsound. It can be viewed not as evidence of China’s strength, but of China’s weakness, its fragile state ego, lack of insight, and lack of a social conscience. The Post-Mao, post-Tiananmen Massacre Chinese Communist Party clings to power by propping up China’s sense of self, inflating its ego, and nursing its narcissistic injuries by wallowing in them.

This is a very problematic pattern. A nation-state that can never accept blame for its own actual errors, while consistently putting the blame on inferior foreign “others,” is not a state headed toward healthy civilizational growth.

Reviewed by Robert Bedeski

Studying ancient civilizations is not a precise enterprise, and many statements are approximations, subject to validation or dispute. Several key concepts describe the flow and progress of collective human development. Individuals, families, clans, and tribes precede formation of civilization, which provides the foundation for states. Governments are managerial organizations of more complex societies, providing concentrated focus on defense, currency and infrastructure. Civilizations improve life security as urbanization, innovation, and division of labor increase, requiring more complex and powerful governing institutions.

*Making Civilizations,* in more than a thousand pages of text and charts, provides a readable and scholarly tour of latest research and interpretations of man’s quest for life security and meaning. Civilization¹ is a form of social and political association with characteristics of adaptation to the physical environment, a common or dominant religion, culture and language, a government, a degree of urbanization and occupied territory. A later layer of organization is the state, in the form of autonomous cities (the polis), kingdoms and empire. The distinction between civilization and state is crucial, and a more complete title of the book might be *Making Civilizations and States* since state-making often appears as the sub-text.

The volume begins with Hermann Parzinger’s survey of the pre-written record. Advances in archaeology and forensic technology have contributed to a rapidly expanding understanding of ancient humans and their works. Old hypotheses on the spread of humankind are replaced by newer discoveries, such as migration of peoples, not across the Straits of Gibraltar, but from Africa through the Middle East. Ancient Egypt, mother of later civilizations, adapted to its riverine environment, flourished and created a complex culture that glorified the cult of the dead with pyramids and elaborate tombs. A combination of agriculture, war and religion established a political order lasting several millennia and twenty-six dynasties. Karen Radner traces the evolution of material, social and political progress in Egypt and Mesopotamia, whose records in hieroglyphics and cuneiform provide rich sources of information. Metallurgy was a key development in improving tools and weapons, as well as requiring an increasingly complex division of labor and expanding trade for acquisition of needed ores and metals.

Hans-Joachim Gehrke examines Greco-Roman civilization, with Crete as cultural intermediary through contacts with Egypt and various Mesopotamian entities.

¹ “…complex form(s) of social and political organization and cultural conditioning.” p. 33.
The inter-polis wars of Greece led to its downfall and ushered a launching platform for Alexander to spread Hellenic culture into Asia. In its glory days, the Greek polis created the roots of the modern democratic state with government accountability. Festivals were an important part of building Greek civilization, including not only worship and sacrifices, but sport competition, dramas, and mutual learning. Participants and organizers came into contact and war was suspended during the ancient Olympics. The Roman Republic adapted parts of that culture and raised law into the essence of the state, ostensibly to provide justice in disputes, but actually becoming a major tool in enforcing compliance within an autocratic empire.

Ancient China is the third major civilization surveyed. Mark Edward Lewis traces growth of the empire from the earliest Shang and Zhou states, through the period of Warring Kingdoms, into the unification under Qin and subsequent Han dynasty, followed by fragmentation then reunification by the short Sui dynasty, which ushered in the Tang dynasty. The empire was centered on the person of the emperor, with the bulk of the military at the frontiers. A canon of texts, in a non-alphabetic orthography, became a source of continuity and stability for society and state.

Indian civilization is considered last, with more cultural than political continuity. The Harappa culture appeared early, evolved into a state and then disappeared. Axel Michaels traces religious and cultural creativity, though state forms tended to be less continuous than in other regions. Nonetheless nationalist scholars search for evidence of a past unity. Vedic civilization’s division of labor evolved into a caste system. Ancient Indian rulers and priests venerated sacred texts like the Upanishads. Hinduism, Jainism and other religions characterized the non-secular culture, with priests exercising considerable political power.

In sum, the book is a tour de force addressing the main features of four major ancient civilizations and their antecedents.

Civilization and the State – Who is in charge?

In the remainder of this review, I will consider how ancient states took civilizations to a higher stage of organization and in the process created a new form of human association — one which is rearranging modern civilization. Accompanied by violence and destruction, state building in ancient through modern eras has given societies more stable order, improved economy and moved to greater freedom from raw necessity. The state has also accompanied man’s search for meaning with emphasis on spiritual transcendence while adapting to changing circumstances. The consequence of state growth from ancient times is that it was separating from its foundational civilization, while simultaneously drawing on society’s resources and giving it greater cohesion.
Gestating within earliest societies, governments became the template for state growth and by the Bronze Age became defenders of territory and managers of society — in other words, government, as engineer of state formation, gradually captured the commanding heights over civilizations, and carved out a space for state domination through law, military force and culture. Law and the military were two main tools of creating the state and taking command over society.

**Law and the State**

Law has been a primary instrument of government management of society. Successful civilizations produced complex and powerful states when the government exercised dominance over society and control over occupied and claimed territories. Codification and enforcement of a common law have been at state foundation since ancient times. Law requires both voluntary and enforced compliance to be effective. Establishing a common law for early Mesopotamian kingdoms was accomplished by compiling a set of exemplary cases that judges could consult in reaching verdicts. Hammurabi was presented as a king of justice, invoking compliance by protecting the rights of taxpayers and other useful subjects (p.382). In Greece, the laws were considered eternal and inscribed on bronze or stone and had the protection of the gods (p.534). Solon not only presented a set of laws but also accompanied them with poems to inspire compliance (p.538). Rome took law further and placed it at the center of state activity (p.656). Law strengthened authority of the state by establishing a final legal authority which evolved into the doctrine of sovereignty (p.657). Justinian sought complete reform of the Byzantine state and collected the key texts of Roman law, a measure that shaped later Western legal development (p.694). The Chinese emperor was the source of law and his proclamations had the force of law (p.768). Roman law not only developed as a means of settling disputes but also became a way of dealing with trouble spots and making the Republic stable and orderly (p.626). Rule of law assisted in the incorporation of a state. By placing a region acquired by conquest under the conqueror’s law, whole peoples were made subject to that law, including whatever taxes or obligations were imposed (p.80). The refusal of Socrates to flee Athens after he had been sentenced to death expressed his conviction that he had been nurtured by the city and its laws and now must abide its decision (p.8). Law and the legal system was a key building block of states.

**Military Force and State Formation**

Enlightenment philosophers Hobbes and Rousseau described state formation as a peaceable Social Contract, with men surrendering their right to use force to a sovereign authority. In reality, most states were the result of credible military force maintaining and expanding political and economic jurisdiction. A civilization that constructed a state depended on a warrior class and professional military to protect territory and preserve public order.
Greece flourished with a citizen army and navy until weakened by war and taken over by Philip and Alexander’s stronger forces. The Roman Republic ended with growing militarization and civil wars (p.631). King Sargon had a large standing army which strained the resources of the Akkad state (p.352). Emperor Wu transmuted compulsory military service into a tax that he used to hire professional soldiers (p.770). In ancient China, ties of loyalty to commanders were reinforced by lineage. Private forces of armed lineages were incorporated into the state army and heads of clans were promoted to generals (p.806). The Roman Praetorian guard became a political force that raised and removed emperors (p.663). Greek development of the infantry phalanx required solid battle lines and the effectiveness of close physical proximity led to upward social mobility, or at least recognition, of the middle-class men who could afford weapons and armor (p.503). A military force often began as summer soldiers and farmers arming and drilling to fend off raiders, to be replaced by full-time soldiers as the polity prospered. With ancient state development, losers of war lost property, were enslaved, or became human sacrifices. As the military foundations of Chinese imperial power increased, a dynasty and its apparatus became separated from its social base (p.710). Military operations allowed what civil society condemned: the maximum use of force and the killing of human beings created a moral antithesis to law. This paradox matured later in positing a non-moral universe where raison d’état superseded ordinary ethics and law. It was the ancestor of “the end justifies the means.”

**Civilization, Culture and Community**

Civilizations adapted to their environment, flourished, and developed religions, governments, social and political hierarchies, armies, and writing. Not all groups accepted government rule peacefully and a government/religion/army complex evolved as manager and expediter of compliance. Its instruments ranged from liquidation of recalcitrants through assimilation. Persuasion, punishment, and reward were accompanied by alteration of myth and justification for expanding the definition of civilization as community. Integration of the Greek city-states was facilitated by their defeat of Persian army and navy, and then taken a step further by Alexander the Great who envisioned a global empire.

The relation between state and civilization became a dialectical challenge and response as government increased its partnership with military and religious powers. State sponsorship of religion, as in early Japanese adoption of Tang Dynasty Buddhism, has been one effective method. Assimilation and promotion of indigenous population has also created greater compliance with laws. Rome’s broad granting of citizenship to conquered peoples reinforced acquiescence to her laws. A conquered people may lose their identity, but the conquerors must also bend if they are to maintain their position.

I am suggesting that the state must be recognized as an entity that has become superior to civilization in terms of its power over society.
While heirs to Greco-Roman civilization have been mildly successful in keeping their respective states under control of society, partly through democratic processes and partly through constant material and scientific innovation which has produced increasing prosperity, there are signs that a stronger and more controlling state is seducing the political-intellectual-media class. Recognizing the state as more than mere government and that free society is not a product of complacency but of engaged activity, may be the challenge of our present civilization.

In defining the separation of existential entities state and civilization, a metaphor suggests itself. A civilization is a fertile field of grass and occasional bush where the wind and birds carry tree seeds which germinate, grow and become broad, tall trees, casting their shadows over rich new domain, attracting birds, insects, reptiles and mammals with fruit and security from ground-bound predators. The "tree" is like the state — nourished and supported by the "field" of civilization, yet separate and creating a new environment. Over time forest shadows blot out the fields forcing individual trees to contend for nourishment and sunlight. The fertility of the fields has produced a new form of existence, just as civilizations produce states. For a time, the new environment facilitates growth of new populations, but success breeds its nemesis, as the "trees" expand and prevent new growth below. Society, like a grassland, enhances life up to certain limits and with the advent age of the state, introduces richer and more multiform life. Civilization produces the state, which comes to dominate and overshadow society.

We live in an age when the nation-state has matured and dominates civilization. Taxation, regulation, a professional political class, government-media partnership, military-nourishing science and technology gravitate to and from the modern state. Society is no longer the first responder to healthcare including epidemic prevention and control. The state is involved in management of education, currency, banking, roads and bridges, border control, labor employment and with more areas of social life added every election cycle — all have expectation of greater state involvement and jurisdiction.

Civilizations are organic in the sense that they grow and flourish in response to basic human needs — which we can summarize as life security, the quest to Prolong Life, Postpone Death. Individuals since earliest times have sought food, shelter and safety through migration, hunting, farming, and building. The human life-force has energized actions to sustain life. The state, in contrast, is more the product of human reason and cunning that is activated and sustained by several forms of the will. Compliance with laws, taxes and demands comes from simple calculation of costs and benefits.

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2 These are enumerated and described in Robert E. Bedeski, Dynamics of the Korean State: From the Paleolithic Age to Candlelight Democracy (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2021).

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol87/iss87/17
It is more explicit while society and civilization operate more implicitly through custom, morals and habit. A state’s specific outputs are laws, policies and actions. Since the early twentieth century, these have nurtured political order, science and technology and sometimes democracy for the benefit of mankind. Where violent revolution has midwifed the modern sovereign nation-state, as in Russia or China, the costs have been heavy in human life.

Successful states, upon eliciting compliance from society, have claimed universality and use wealth and power to propagate a doctrine that their nation and belief system have more than regional or ethnic validity. Alexander’s vision of Greek and Persian conjoining expressed a concept of a universal state, which was expanded by the Roman Empire. When China was united in 221 BCE, the emperor claimed: “All under Heaven.” A unified global civilization inspired ambitious Roman emperors in announcing Pax Romana. More recently, the end of the Soviet Union heralded a new world order and an accelerated global civilization. Nonetheless, reports of the demise of the sovereign nation-state are premature.

The paradox of human civilization is that it has produced the modern state with borders and the most successful states begin to think and act as if their experience represents a superior culture to be shared with or imposed on other societies. Nazi conquests, Japanese intrusion into China and Southeast Asia/ and Soviet Communist expansion and subversion were examples of this belief in their superiority. American ascendance as a softer hegemon after the Cold War may be declining and we have no reason to think that another state will not seek to take its place. We are no longer in an age of civilizations. Their pre-eminence has been replaced by the state — a complex form of association which has done great destruction and perhaps bestowed even greater benefits to humankind.
Pointers From Sociology:  
Looking at Trevor Noah’s *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood.*  
Reviewed by Joseph Drew

1.  The book is a study of a basic change in social stratification. It is also a study of poverty in South Africa. Plus, it is a study of the changing nature of community and society in that land.

We know that almost every society organizes inequality by ranking categories of people in a hierarchy. Four important principles of social stratification are:

- Social stratification is inclusive of all, not a reflection of individual differences, and shapes our lives.
- Social stratification carries over from generation to generation.
- Social stratification is universal but variable.
- Social stratification involves both inequality and beliefs about the nature of the stratification, that is, why it is fair for people to be unequal.1

Further, societies may be characterized as open, that is permitting social mobility, up or down the ranks, or closed, allowing little or none.

Major types of social stratification might include:
- Social Class (based on birth and individual achievement, allowing social mobility).
- Caste (based on birth or ascription) (ex: India, the feudal system, apartheid), endogamous marriage

In addition, there are two horrible forms of stratification:
- Slavery (based on permanent degradation, people owning people); serfdom (people tied to a certain piece of land); bonded labor.2

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1 Most introductory texts in sociology carry a chapter on this subject. See, for example, Chapter Eight, entitled *Social Stratification,* in *Society: The Basics,* 13th ed., by John J. Macionis. Pearson, 2015.

2 An estimated forty-five million people are today slaves. The International Labor Organization estimates that, by their definitions, over forty million people are in some form of slavery today. 24.9 million people are in forced labor, of whom sixteen million people are exploited in the private sector such as domestic work, construction, or agriculture; 4.8 million persons in forced sexual exploitation, and four million persons in forced labor imposed by state authorities. An additional 15.4 million people are in forced marriages. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_the_21st_century)

Also, see Freedom United (https://www.freedomunited.org/news/); this is the premier anti-slavery society in the world, I believe. It lists materials on the following major forms or aspects of slavery today: forced labor; debt bondage; human trafficking; child slavery; forced marriage; domestic slavery; prison slavery; other aspects of contemporary slavery.
• Genocide (targeted groups are to be killed); suttee.

Noah was born at a time of apartheid, caste in South Africa. This system was a police state, racial apartness rigidly enforced, especially from 1948, with the rise to power of the Reunited National Party, to 1994. Under that system, everyone belonged to one of four groups: European whites; Cape Coloured; Native Africans; Indians. There was strictly enforced separation in all aspects of life.

However, it is reasonable to argue from this book that, as a result of political change, South Africa is slowly moving sociologically from caste relationships to social class structures. (Note: South Africa did have slavery, which ended in 1834, much to the opposition of many Afrikaners, descendants of early, mostly Dutch settlers).

This does not mean that social stratification does not exist. On the contrary — it persists, only under a social class system. It is based on race, or rather ethnic nationality, with millions of people condemned to live on the margins of society, very poor, little chance of meaningful employment, living in shantytowns. Others, mostly whites, live better.

To see apartheid in perspective, we might compare it with the US, but more profitably from the sociological perspective, by considering the varying and ever-changing white treatment of, and adjustment to, the range of Native Americans people, African Americans, other groups such as Eskimos, Aleuts, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, Guamanians, Virgin Islanders, Samoans, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands natives, and so forth. We see a whole, complex series of types of stratification.

3 Noah makes the argument that these divisions were artificial and made no rational sense. An example: He reports on Page 75 that the South African government labeled Japanese people as “white” and Chinese people as “black.” There were not enough Chinese people to make up a whole separate classification for them, but the government wanted to establish good relations with the Japanese “in order to import their fancy cars and electronics. So Japanese people were given honorary white status while Chinese people stayed black.”

4 The Supreme Court may take up the infamous “insular cases” this term. Reports the American Civil Liberties Union: In the Insular Cases, the Supreme Court spoke to whether, and to what extent, the rights and protections guaranteed by the Constitution applied to residents in the then-new territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In a string of cases decided from 1901 to 1922, the court described the territories’ inhabitants as “alien races” and “savage tribes.” The court based its views squarely on the presumed racial inferiority of the non-white people who lived there. In doing so, the Supreme Court showed obvious contempt for the predominately Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander residents of these territories. The Insular Cases are unabashedly racist, firmly rooted in white supremacy, and still haunt the day-to-day lives of millions of people. See: https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/the-most-racist-supreme-court-cases-youve-probably-never-heard-of.
Relations between Europeans and native peoples began early for both countries. Both had slavery for some and expulsion for others. In South Africa, there was some slavery, but mostly there were complex struggles involving many nationalities, which still exists. The election of 1948 destroyed forward motion, however, and this led South Africa to an ultimately doomed, detestable institutionalization of apartheid for a half century.

Finally, sociology might point out that the end of apartheid did not spell the end of social or economic inequality in South Africa, just as the adoption of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments in the US did not end social or economic inequality in our country.

2. Efforts to maintain racial segregation emerged and persisted in both societies, especially in the American South and across South Africa. In South Africa, as Noah shows, under apartheid police enforced strict personal laws — no sexual relations among the four groups. That was not the case in America, mostly. Possibly we can compare today’s South Africa to a form of Jim Crow, semi-apartheid, semi-slavery.

Overall, we can look at social evolution after apartheid as a movement from complete stasis to some social mobility. Possibly, in the future we will see a breakthrough moment, comparable to the Civil Rights Movement here in the United States, when economic and social change will accelerate.

In his book *Class and Caste in a Southern Town*, John Dollard examined the society of the South post-Civil War. We can describe Southern U.S. society by imagining a box with a horizontal line in the middle — in terms of prestige, all whites are on top, all blacks are on bottom. Education, wealth, and culture were of less importance. But, in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement and the ending of Jim Crow, perhaps that line rotated toward a more vertical position. The tilt changed.

Social separation persisted, but social class structures became more equal. As assimilation and integration proceed, it is probable that the line will begin to fade away.

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Both Justice Gorsuch and Justice Sotomayor have expressed their opposition to the bigotry found in these case and have indicated that they hope these cases will soon be overruled.

3. Moreover, we can note the importance in South Africa of language differences; these track ethnic differences. There are eleven official languages. The most popular language spoken is Zulu, followed by Xhosa and then Afrikaans. We may perhaps label Nelson Mandela, the former African National Congress leader, imprisoned for years, hero to many, who became the first post-apartheid president, the George Washington of South Africa. He pushed the adoption of the new, beautiful national anthem, which employs five of the major languages and incorporates both the song of the ANC former insurgents and that of the formerly ruling Apartheid regime.

This differs from the U.S., where in general most people speak, at least in public, one language, English. While this is not the case in some parts of the country (especially in the territories), the implication for sociology would be that we tend to think and explain in ways that are comprehensible to the vast majority of the population. This leads to social implications far beyond the languages spoken.

Sociology tells us that the language we speak conditions the way we think. Each language carries its own worldview and so each language shapes the way its speakers conceptualize everything.

According to what is known variously as the Whorfian Hypothesis, or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, we see the world through our language, and language precedes thought. Moreover, Whorf maintained that language is not a given. “Rather, it is culturally determined, and it encourages a distinctive interpretation of reality by focusing our attention on certain phenomena.” If this is so, there are structural impediments remaining that block South Africa from fully achieving a social class system to replace the old caste system. However, we can point to Switzerland, with its four official languages — five, if you count English, which is in widespread use — to argue against the power of the Whorfian Hypothesis.

It also relates to the sociological principle known as the Definition of the Situation. W.I. Thomas originally developed this. If we define a situation as real, it is real to us in terms of its consequences. What South Africans just out of apartheid define as real, they act upon as if it were real.

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7 Ibid., p. 64, quoting Sapir in 1929.
It is perception that counts. Ethnic differences are powerful; in the United States we also define the word “race” as if it were real in terms of biology, which essentially it is not, and then act as if it were real.

4. Noah refers in his book to the word “Ghetto.” This means in popular parlance a part of town where minorities reside. However, today in both countries there is no legal requirement that certain people must reside there. We see through history an evolution in that aspect.

Originally, Jews in Europe were restricted to life in the ghetto; it was legally established and coercive, crowded, poor, unsanitary. There were walls around the ghetto. When a horn blew or a bell sounded at evening time, all Jews had to be within the walls of the ghetto, and no Christians could be there. The gates were bolted shut all night. A similar pattern was found in Shi’ite countries. The ghetto as a legal mandate re-emerged in Europe under the Nazis, only in this case it was created as a waystation to mass murder.

In South Africa ghettos, or in a larger context, “homelands,” popularly called “Bantustans,” were originally not legally required. However, in the latter stages of apartheid, after 1970, they were. Many people were shoved away from urban areas, to be resettled in artificially created new countries such as Transkei and Venda. The aim was to strip Black South Africans of their citizenship in the Republic of South Africa.

Additionally, residence in the large cities was racialized for those who remained there, and, with the passage of a 1923 law, Africans were increasingly forced into certain so-called townships, often suburbs. Black people required passes to move around the country. With the fall of apartheid, the laws were changed, and residency relaxed.

In the United States ghettos developed as an urban phenomenon, and they were not legally mandated, even though redlining prevented residence for some people in certain walled-off areas. Thus, restrictive covenants in Washington, D.C., said that homes with such covenants “shall not be sold to any person of the Semitic race, blood or origin which racial description can be deemed to include Jews, Hebrews, Armenians, Persians and Syrians.” This lasted until a Supreme Court decision in 1948 outlawed restrictive real estate covenants.

Native American reservations were also large ghettos — especially horrible in their creation, such as those designated by President Andrew Jackson and seen in the Trail of Tears as Indians were moved from Georgia, Alabama, and Florida to unfamiliar territory in Oklahoma.

Also, there was the existence of “sundowner” or “sundown” locations. African Americans could do business there during the day, but they were forced to leave during the evening. This lasted in some places until the 1960s.

Thus, sociologically speaking, ghettos appeared, disappeared, re-appeared; they were legal or voluntary; massive or smaller. All were attempts to create physical barriers to separate groups of people.

5. In the book we see the powerful importance of religion in South Africa. All groups were focused on religion, including the Afrikaners, the British, and the various African populations. But we see in the book especially the centrality of religion for African people. Noah’s mother insisted on going to church four times each week, and she was deeply religious. Interestingly, he writes that of the three churches his mother and he attended weekly, one was white, one was black, and one was mixed in population.

Similarly, there is almost no social institution more central to African American life than the church. It has been a focal point for centuries, the solid rock of community that has been pivotal for Black expression of community.10 The same seems to be true of life in South Africa.

Sociologists might note that the Sunday School movement, and the stress on church attendance, arose in Industrial Revolution England as a device that would facilitate the creation of a docile worker force. You might be last in this life, but in heaven the last shall be first.

6. Another parallel Noah mentions, one seen around the world, including in the United States and South Africa, is the presence of divide and conquer strategies. This was employed by the British throughout their empire. They set one local group against the other, and thus the British were able to rule both.

Noah shows in this book the example of the terrible, mostly manufactured hostility between the Zulu people, and their Inkatha movement, and the Xhosa people, with their African National Congress movement.

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10 See, for instance, the recent book by Prof. Henry Louis Gates Jr., entitled This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song. New York: Penguin Press, 2021.
They had been convinced, many of them, that members of the other group were enemies, even though leaders of both concentrated on fighting the apartheid laws and the Nationalist government. We see in the book, in Chapter One, entitled “Run,” the manifestation of this hostility. Two Zulu drivers, angry at the Xhosas, and misogynist as well, almost killed young Trevor, his brother, and his mother. The three of them had to leap out of a moving minibus, and run for dear life, chased by the two aggressors.

In the United States we see examples of the attempt to divide minorities, although in a more subtle, less violent way. Thus, over the last several decades, Asian Americans often are labeled unfairly as the “model minority,” as opposed to other minorities, in a comparison that today’s right wing, Trump-leaning Republicans are using for electoral advantage and as a way to express their disrespect for African Americans. Similarly, the same individuals claim to oppose “illegal” immigrants but not “legal” immigrants, a new and specious argument used to garner support from some people who are already voters when, in actuality, these right wingers tend to dislike all immigrants. It was evident in the Trump administration, when many barriers were thrown up against immigrants, including “legal” ones.

7. Both societies reveal the presence of what sociologists call “the Marginal Man.”

This is a person with his or her feet in two worlds — for example, George Santayana, the celebrated Harvard philosopher, who was brought up in Spain but who moved when young to an English-speaking environment.

The marginal man sees the world from more than one perspective and thus, according to Robert Park:

The marginal man is a personality type that arises at a time and a place where, out of the conflict of races and cultures, new societies, new peoples and cultures are coming into existence. The fate which condemns him to live, at the same time, in two worlds, is the same which compels him to assume, in relation to the worlds in which he lives, the role of a cosmopolitan and a stranger…

Inevitably he becomes, relative to his cultural milieu, the individual with the wider horizon, the keener intelligence, the more detached and rational viewpoint. The marginal man is always relatively the more civilized human being.  

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11 See Parsons et al, ibid., p. 946.
Clearly, as we see in this book, the author, Trevor Noah, is a prototypical marginal man. He was born “a crime,” as the title says, because his mother was African in origin and his father European.

Noah writes of how, for example, he became a “tuck shop” hustler — he fit into no group in his school, so he could understand and relate to all of them. His marginality was revealed throughout the book — in his own family, when he was not treated equally with other children, but often in a superior way, being viewed as white; in his school, where he opted to join the less scholarly “B” group and leave the more advanced “A” group, because he felt closer to African culture; in his adherence to the white group while under arrest; and in his early roles as a disc jockey and seller of compact discs.

Another “marginal man” in the book is his mother, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah. He describes how she left her family home, both in the city and in the homeland.12 She was fluent in English and obtained training as a secretary and typist and that enabled her to get a job in a large organization, “the bottom rung of the white-collar world,” where she was hired on, given the “token hiring of black workers in low-level white jobs.”

She lived in an apartment in a location officially off-limits to Africans. She decided to have a child with a white man, against all the rules of the apartheid system.

In many ways, the book is a testimonial to the outstanding achievements of a woman who refused to be defeated by a social system set up specifically to destroy individuals like her — a real heroine for the modern world.

Trevor Noah’s remarkable success in life rests both on his natural abilities as a comic but also on his ability to express how people of various groups talk and how they see the world. It is instructive to look at many of the YouTube videos he has made on this very subject. He is able to understand the larger South African approach to life and society, for example, as well as the way the constituent elements of that culture understand it — the Afrikaners, for example; the Xhosas; the hustlers; the rich people in the expensive suburbs; the Jews; members of his dysfunctional family; the different sports played by different social class and races; the “hood” vs. the “cheese boys” (pp. 207 – 209).

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12 See Noah’s Chapter Five, “The Second Girl,” on pages 63 to 74.
Noah clearly has been able all his life to straddle the interstitial areas between many communities. Never defeated by the apartheid of his earlier life (he was still relatively young when democracy came to South Africa), Trevor Noah became an international star, I believe, because of his status as a brilliant marginal man, straddling worlds apart.

Sociologically, we may add that the theory of the Marginal Man rests close to that of “double consciousness,” as explained by W.E. B. Du Bois. To quote the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

*Double-consciousness* is a concept in social philosophy referring, originally, to a source of inward “twoness” putatively experienced by African Americans because of their racialized oppression and disvaluation in a white-dominated society. The concept is often associated with William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, who introduced the term into social and political thought, famously, in his groundbreaking *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).\(^{13}\)

8. Another parallel between the United States and South Africa emerges from this book. South Africa during young Noah’s life was clearly a society in political, social, and economic transition. It was moving from apartheid to a more open, multiethnic society. This was bitterly fought against by many of the Afrikaners, but it became evident by the end of the run of apartheid that it was holding back the country. The white people actually voted in 1992 to end the odious system, and democracy itself became a reality in 1994.

One of the great books to explain the tragic fall of progressive hopes and the rise of Apartheid South Africa is Alan Paton’s work, *South Africa Tragedy: The Life and Times of Jan Hofmeyr*.\(^{14}\) South Africa could have followed another, more progressive path had not a technical accident of electoral laws enabled the Nationalists, extremists even within the Afrikaner population, to win power in 1948.

In that election Gen. Jan C. Smuts and Jan Hofmeyr led the United Party; they advocated a path of “Christian trusteeship” in which the whites would guide the African population into the modern world. They wanted some representation on elected bodies for the non-whites.

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\(^{13}\) See: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-consciousness/.

Opposed were the (Reunited) Nationalist Party led by Dr. Daniel Malan, a bigot and advocate of complete social separation between whites (Dutch and British, principally) and the other three groups — Coloreds, Asians, and Africans.

The United Party obtained more votes in the election, but they were not cast in the correct locations, so the Nationalists won more seats in parliament. Then began their reign of terror known as apartheid. South Africa changed course in the early 1990s. It became a real democracy, one person, one vote, a government of, by, and for the people. Today it is striving toward social and economic equality.

To me, though, the voices of the racists and bigots from that long ago era of 1948 sound like historical predecessors of the similar shouts that have emerged in the United States from the Trump campaign of 2016 and thereafter. And, just like the situation in 1948 South Africa, Hillary Clinton gathered millions more votes from the electorate, but in the wrong location. Biden could have lost in 2020, even though he, too, received millions more votes than Trump, had roughly 50,000 of those votes been cast in the wrong geographical locations.

9. Here are some additional brief sociological observations that arise from reading Trevor Noah’s book:

- Women often served in South Africa under apartheid as heads of the family household, as African men were away working in mines or factories, in jail, or in exile.\(^{15}\)
- There were Black snitches and “blackjacks” (for police).\(^ {16}\) This can be compared to the Jewish Kapos and police who served the Nazis.
- We see throughout the book examples of what Kurt Lewin called “leaders from the periphery.”\(^ {17}\) Social stratification based on skin color is mentioned and discussed frequently in the book. (“If you’re Black, stay back.”) This parallels an American phenomenon.
- Note that in the US recent census reports show a huge rise in self-reported mixed ancestry. By contrast to South Africa, the United States has no history of the development of an entire population of “coloureds” such as South Africa does. We did have social differentiation and classifications as “mulatto,” “quadroon,” and so forth, however. The importance of such designations has greatly diminished, especially since the presidency of Barack Obama, it appears.

\(^ {15}\) See Noah, page 38.
\(^ {16}\) Ibid., see page 29-30.
Noah states on Page 74 the problem of “black people (who) had
internalized the logic of apartheid and made it their own.” Does this
parallel the situation for some African Americans during Jim Crow?
According to Lewin, noted above, this did apply to many Jews,
especially during the Holocaust.

On Page 196, Noah stated that the world knows about the Holocaust and
the evils of Hitler because of documentation and numbers. But in the
Belgian Congo and Angola, he has written, the Europeans didn’t even
count the numbers of Africans murdered. “But when you read through
the history of atrocities against Africans, there are no numbers, only
guesses. It’s harder to be horrified by a guess.” Since the book was
published, Germans and Belgians have moved to apologize for these
murders. Is Noah correct about the Holocaust? People knew and
wouldn’t talk about it for years.

Neither the freedmen in the United States after 1865 nor the Africans
following the fall of apartheid were provided with the economic means
to escape the situations they were in ab initio. Both larger societies
failed to repair the damage done to the oppressed population and both
failed to provide for economic escalators to bring about real equality.

Sociologist Milton Gordon coined the term “eth-class” to describe how
we in the United States might see ourselves today — upper middle class
Chinese American, for example.18 He writes that, “the intersection of
the ethnic group with the social class is fast becoming the essential form
of the subsociety in America.” Both our ethnicity and our social class
contribute to our social location. Is South Africa moving to acquire a
similar pattern? One difference is that American society encourages assimilation; South Africa divides up on linguistic and tribal lines,
geographically and socially. That might imply that “eth-class” isn’t as
relevant in South Africa as in the U.S. today.

Noah argues that South Africa as a midpoint in the Europe-Asia trade
might not have lasted in importance; it was the discovery of diamonds
and gold that brought on European settlement, violent conflict and
ultimate racially based dominance. In the United States, the benefits of
the gold rush were not evenly distributed in society. Moreover, the
Chinese who came to the United States for the gold rush in 1849 were
forced to pay a monthly tax for the privilege of participating in it. They
soon reaped mostly racist reactions from competing white workers.

Finally, we might ask, from the sociological perspective, who is a real
American? Who is a legitimate South African? Who is seen as a full member of
this state and of this society?

The concept of who is incorporated into American society, into the American community, has been evolving since the foundation years. Originally, white males were in, African and native others were out. Then, the Civil War, with the resultant 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, established that African Americans were fully Americans, too, although this was first a political inclusion and then, following the Civil Rights Movement a century later, came social inclusion, membership in the community.

When the United States won the Mexican War and the Spanish-American War, and incorporated Hawaii, it became a more complicated question as to who was an American. The debates in Congress over the Organic Act for Hawaii revealed the hypocrisy of territorial expansion as some sought to not expand the electorate while simultaneously expanding the territory.

Finally, the abolition of the horrid National Origins Quota Act and the new immigration laws of 1965 led to a revised definition once more of who is an American. A multiethnic, multicultural, more cosmopolitan American people are arising. According to the Census Bureau, as of about 2044 the Americans will become a “majority minority” people — very different from colonial days. The American definition of the American nation has steadily expanded.

We see in Born a Crime a peaceful social and political revolution working itself out. South Africa is not the United States, and it might seem that dividing up by language serves to maintain social differences, rather than encourage assimilation of the many peoples of South Africa.

Nonetheless, it is evident that South Africa has moved a great distance politically and sociologically in the past three decades or so.

Thanks to this outstanding book, we can hope that the South African journey toward social harmony will, albeit if by fits and starts, arrive ultimately at the goal of that sought by the American people as well, one nation indivisible.
CCR Style Guide for Submitted Manuscripts

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In October 1961, in Salzburg, Austria, an extraordinary group of scholars gathered to create the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Among the 26 founding members from Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, England, Russia, the United States, China and Japan were such luminaries as Pitirim Sorokin and Arnold Toynbee.

For six days, the participants debated such topics as the definition of “civilization,” problems in the analysis of complex cultures, civilizational encounters in the past, the Orient versus the Occident, problems of universal history, theories of historiography, and the role of the “human sciences” in “globalization.” The meeting was funded by the Austrian government, in cooperation with UNESCO, and received considerable press coverage. Sorokin was elected the Society’s first president.

After several meetings in Europe, the advancing age of its founding members and the declining health of then president, Othmar F. Anderle, were important factors in the decision to transfer the Society to the United States.

Between 1968 and 1970 Roger Williams Wescott of Drew University facilitated that transition. In 1971, the first annual meeting of the ISCSC (US) was held in Philadelphia. Important participants in that meeting and in the Society’s activities during the next years included Benjamin Nelson (the Society’s first American president), Roger Wescott, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, David Wilkinson, Rushton Coulborn and C.P. Wolf. In 1974, the Salzburg branch was formally dissolved, and from that year to the present there has been only one International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC).

The presidents of the ISCSC are, in order: In Europe, Pitirim Sorokin and Othmar Anderle; in the United States, Benjamin Nelson, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, Michael Palencia-Roth, Roger Wescott, Shuntaro Ito (from Japan), Wayne Bledsoe, Lee Daniel Snyder, Andrew Targowski, David Rosner, Toby Huff, and current president Lynn Rhodes. To date, the Society has held annual meetings, most of them in the United States but also in Salzburg, Austria; Santo Domingo, The Dominican Republic; Dublin, Ireland; Chiba, Japan; Frenchman’s Cove, Jamaica; St. Petersburg, Russia; Paris, France; New Brunswick, Canada; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Suzhou, China; and Bucharest, Romania.

More than 30 countries are represented in the Society’s membership. Its intellectual dynamism and vibrancy over the years have been maintained and enhanced through its annual meetings, its publications, and the participation of such scholars as Talcott Parsons, Hayden White, Immanuel Wallerstein, Gordon Hewes, André Gunder Frank, Marshall Sahlins, Lynn White Jr., and Jeremy Sabloff.

The Society is committed to the idea that complex civilizational problems can best be approached through multidisciplinary analyses and debate by scholars from a variety of fields. The Comparative Civilizations Review, which welcomes submissions from the Society’s members as well as other scholars, has been published continually since its inaugural issue in 1979.

Prof. Michael Palencia-Roth
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