No. 89 Fall 2023

Editor’s Note
Rector’s Welcome

Past President’s Essay
On the Civilizing Process and Civilizational Analysis

Featured Articles

Is Civilization a Good Thing?
The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization
The Possibility of a Global Civilization
Monitoring Wise Civilization by Creating an Index
The Mything Link: Why Sacred Storytelling Is a Key Human Survival Strategy
Why the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Shows that ‘National Security’ is Not Enough to Understand Geopolitics
Global Security in the Third Millennium of the Common Era
The Applicability of Lessons from American Society for the European Union
Buber the Radical Egalitarian and Buber and Psychology
The Economic Regions of Chinese Civilization: A GIS-Based Analysis of Grain Markets, 1736-1842

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Table of Contents

Editor’s Note
Joseph Drew ................................................................. 1

Rector’s Welcome
Robert Kosowski ............................................................... 9

Here, there, and in-between:
On the Civilizing Process and Civilizational Analysis
Michael Palencia-Roth ..................................................... 12

Featured Articles
Is Civilization a Good Thing?
David Wilkinson .................................................................. 38

The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization
Roger W. Wescott .................................................................. 46

The Possibility of a Global Civilization
Robert Elliott Allinson .......................................................... 53

Monitoring Wise Civilization by Creating an Index
Andrew Targowski ............................................................... 68

The Mything Link: Why Sacred Storytelling Is a Key Human Survival Strategy
Ken Baskin .......................................................................... 93

Civilizational Security: Why the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Shows that ‘National Security’ is Not Enough to Understand Geopolitics
Greg (Grzegorz) Lewicki ............................................................... 121

Global Security in the Third Millennium of the Common Era
Michael Andregg ..................................................................... 141

The Applicability of Lessons from American Society for the European Union: Tolerance, Demographic Change, and Social Structure
Joseph Drew ........................................................................... 146

Buber the Radical Egalitarian and Buber and Psychology
Kenneth Feigenbaum ............................................................. 160

The Economic Regions of Chinese Civilization:
A GIS-Based Analysis of Grain Markets in China, 1736-1842
Karl Ryavec, Mark Henderson, Rocco Bowman ....................... 179

Book Reviews
Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2011
Reviewed by John Berteaux ....................................................... 209

Reviewed by Constance Wilkinson ........................................... 213
Book Reviews (cont.)
University of Chicago Press, 2017
Reviewed by Robert Bedeski........................................................................................................215

Reviewed by Robert Bedeski........................................................................................................219

For Our Authors
CCR Style Guide for Submitted Manuscripts..................................................................................222
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By “a comparative civilizational perspective” we mean (1) the use of evidence from more than one civilization (the various national traditions of the modern West being regarded, if so desired, as constituents of a single civilization) and (2) a method likely to throw new light either on the origins, processes, or structures of civilizations or on the problems of interpreting civilizations.

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Readers may also access all previous issues at https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/CCR.
New ISCSC Website

After several years of faithful service, the ISCSC website has received a much needed facelift. The new site is more attractive, has more content, and is far easier to navigate. Here are a few facts and pointers about the new ISCSC website that we think may be helpful:

1. The “Home Page” is actually a bit bigger than your screen – scroll down to see all of the content. This goes for computers as well as phones. For viewing on your phone, it may be helpful to turn the phone so that the screen is horizontal. This is especially helpful for the “tabs” at the top of the home page.

2. If you want to join as a member, or refer someone else to join, follow this path: Select the “Administration” tag at the top of the “homepage” and then follow the drop down menu to “Membership – Joining ISCSC” and then you will find the membership information as well as the payment portal, which allows for “Individual with USA Address,” “Individual non-USA address,” and “Lifetime.” For institutional accounts – universities, etc., please use either “Individual” or “Individual non-USA address,” depending on the mailing address for the account.

https://iscsc.org
Editor’s Note

Claude-Henri, Comte de Saint-Simon, a father of modern sociology, observed that the history of the world alternated between two poles: organic periods (in which the social and political institutions are in harmony with the state of civilization), followed by critical periods, which are transitional and marked by conflict and destructive criticism.

He also wrote that “the crisis in which the European peoples are involved is due to the incoherence of general ideas: as soon as there is a theory corresponding to the present state of enlightenment, order will be restored, an institution common to the peoples of Europe will be reestablished, and a priesthood adequately educated according to the present state of knowledge will bring peace to Europe by restraining the ambition of peoples and kings.”

If we are now living through a Saint-Simonian critical period, one involving the conflict between civilizations, particularly between the Western Civilization and what the late Samuel Huntington labelled the Orthodox Civilization (“centered in Russia and separate from Western Christendom as a result of its Byzantine parentage, distinct religion, 200 years of Tatar rule, bureaucratic despotism, and limited exposure to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and other central Western Experiences”), then there can be little doubt that the center of the battle is the war in Ukraine.

Thus, it was fitting and appropriate that in July within an intellectual hub near the very forefront of this war, centered as in great measure it is on conflict between two contemporary major civilizations, there was convened at the Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University in Bucharest, Romania, the first World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations.

The idea for the World Congress had arisen two years earlier, principally from the minds and discussions of several prominent leaders of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, the Asian Politics and History Association, and the university.
Among these progenitors were: Andrew Targowski, former president of the ISCSC; Lynn Rhodes, current president of the ISCSC; Michael Andregg, vice president; John Grayzel, member of the board; John Berteaux, member of the board; Robert Bedeski, president of the Asian Politics and History Association; and Corina Dumitrescu, president of the Senate of DCCU and Alexandru Stefanescu, now Vice Rector of the university. A Council of Wise Civilizations was also established via a document signed at the same time.

The Congress this summer was replete with scholars in the fields of the comparative study of civilizations, cultural and social studies, history, humanities and science. Delegates hailed from all continents (save Australia). Titled “The New Enlightenment Between Traditions and Challenges: Crossroads of Civilizations,” the Congress convened at the university in conjunction with the celebration of 350 years since the birth of Dimitrie Cantemir and three centuries since his death in 1723.

As was noted in a number of significant and probing presentations, Dimitrie Cantemir was a philosopher, political leader, and author who represented the ideals of the Enlightenment and who created an intellectual bridge between East and West.

As the brochure describing the conference indicated, Dimitrie Cantemir “brought Oriental mysticism and wisdom into the patterns of Western Civilization.” Thus, the stated goal of this World Congress was to follow in Cantemir’s footsteps: to bring minds together to offer visions and responses to contemporary cultural challenges, and confluences, of civilizations, with the purpose of delivering humanity, as such study has done in the past.

Delegates lectured on many topics, and there were two major ceremonies, the awarding by the university of doctorates *Honoris Causa* to two leading comparative civilizationalists.

- The first awardee was Dr. Katherine Elizabeth Fleming; she is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust. She also holds the Alexander S. Onassis Chair of Hellenic Culture and Civilization in the Department of History at New York University, where she served as Provost from 2016 to 2022. An expert in Greek history, and widely honored, Prof. Fleming has been associated with the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the University of Piraeus, the University of Macedonia, and the Ionian University, among others. Currently she is a co-Principal Investigator on an oral history / public humanities project in Greece.

  Her laureate topic for the Congress was “How to Think About the Past.”
• The second awardee was Dr. Gombojav Mend-Ooyo, President of the Mongolian Academy of Culture and Poetry. He has not only written about Mongolian culture but has also been deeply involved in the recent revival of traditional script and artistic techniques. He has sought throughout his career to protect Mongolian nomadic herders, their culture and cultural knowledge. His works have been translated into over fifty languages. His efforts led to his selection as a Life Member of the World Academy of Arts and Culture. In 2008, he was named as Professor of Arts and Culture at the Institute of International Studies of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

His presentations to the Congress were entitled “Culture and Poetry in Mongolia” and also “The Heritage of the Reincarnate Lama of the Gobi.”

The Congress was also honored with the active presence of the former President of Mongolia, Nambaryn Enkhbayar. President Enkhbayar has served, in addition, as Prime Minister and as Speaker of the Parliament, thus becoming the first person in history to have held all of the top three positions in the Mongolian government. A sizeable delegation of other prominent Mongolian scholars, business leaders and comparative civilizationalists accompanied Dr. Gombojav Mend-Oyo and President Enkhbayar to the Congress.

Lectures to the Congress were delivered in a number of languages, including especially English, Mongolian, Romanian, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Greek. Talks were presented in person, plus, from Andrew Targowski, Robert Bedeski, Robert Allison, and David Wilkinson (all American professors and scholars) over video. It is our hope to publish several of the studies in forthcoming issues of the Comparative Civilizations Review.

A special attempt was extended by the university, as well, to illustrate the origins and development of Romanian art and culture. There were a series of music concerts which highlighted the origins of Wallachian and Moldavian culture and displayed the Turkish influence on Romania, reflecting the excellence in Eastern music, art, general culture, and languages that Dimitrie Cantemir himself exhibited through his written works, including advanced work in preserving Turkish music for posterity.

One of the finest presentations ever delivered on comparative civilizations, in my judgment, was forwarded electronically to the Congress by Prof. David Wilkinson of the University of California Los Angeles. Regrettfully, it is only available via YouTube at the following URL, which is surely well worth watching (about twenty minutes): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Np030WrmWzY
The paper is entitled “Is Civilization A Good Thing?” Prof. Wilkinson begins by asking what emotions does the idea of civilization create, evoke in us? Why are these emotions attached to that idea? What are the connotations of civilization, laudatory or derogatory? And why do we feel the way we feel about civilization? What makes us welcome civilization, fear civilization, want civilization or shun civilization?

His discussion, states Prof. Wilkinson, constitutes a dialogue with an article published by former ISCSC President Roger Wescott entitled “The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization.” (We carry the Wescott paper below, with an introduction by Prof. Wilkinson.) According to Dr. Wilkinson, President Wescott was interested in the various meanings attached to “civilization.” Thus: Do we consider the idea of civilization to be primarily denotative, referential, objective, or do we use the word “civilization” in a way that is primarily connotative, subjective, in a way that tells others about our feelings on the subject? Dr. Wescott found a rich variety of meanings of civilization, both denotative and connotative, the latter of which Prof. Wilkinson addressed.

Are our opinions of civilization laudatory or derogatory? Do we approve of civilization, or do we despise it? The presentation is peppered with citations drawn from history, great literature, art, and music; I, for one, never thought of Captain Ahab in Moby Dick as being set in opposition to civilization, derogating the decadence of civilization. But, on reflection, it is clear that Dr. Wilkinson makes a trenchant point.

The Congress ended fittingly with a Culminating Debate, entitled “Are We on the Cusp of a New Enlightenment or the Death of Western Civilization?” After vigorous discussion, the delegates voted the following:
WHEREAS Romania is a perfect setting for a discussion on civilizations, and

WHEREAS The next World Congress is encouraged to be held in an Asian country. Each person has their own civilization. Hence, it would be encouraged to have translations in the participating languages, and

WHEREAS We continue to explore whether we are on the cusp of a new global civilization of new enlightenment or the death of civilization, and

WHEREAS We resolve that the participants of the First World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations are now considered as part of the global think tank known as the Council on Wise Civilizations, it is hereby

RESOLVED: That the Council on Wise Civilizations has adopted the above resolutions.

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Amidst this wealth of intellectual activity, the year’s busy season for comparative civilizations continues. Our 52nd annual ISCSC conference for 2023 will be held from September 13 to 16 at the War Studies University in Warsaw, Poland. The title assigned is “Civilizational Security: Clashes of Civilizations, Clashes within Civilizations, and Stable Global Futures.”

According to the outstanding team of organizers, this conference affords scholars the opportunity to reaffirm our vision that Civilizations Matter. As noted on the website dedicated to the conference (see iscsc.org), the goal is to encourage new research; to elicit new thoughts and approaches; to renew discussion of what makes a “civilization” and why some are resilient but some not, and to reach a wide range of disciplines.

The War Studies University has gone to extraordinary lengths to make the September conference a pleasant and productive one. Thus, following this Editor’s Note, you will see an official letter of invitation to the ISCSC and to those who are drawn to study the concept of civilization. It is written by Brigadier General Robert Kosowski, PhD., the Rector-Commandant of the university. He writes that the university views the association as a partner and the goal “is to facilitate solutions to make the conference impactful, memorable, and internationally fruitful.”

In the letter Rector-Commandant Kosowski also refers to a noted founder of the ISCSC, British historian Arnold Toynbee, and to his concept of borderlands, “marches,” lands which lie on the periphery of contesting civilizations, and which are central to civilizational security. He observes that many in Poland, the Baltic States, and the rest of the Three Seas Region, outstretched between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas,
have seen the tragedy of the Russian invasion of Ukraine coming and have not ignored “the insight provided by comparative civilizational frameworks.”

Concludes the Rector-Commandant,

In other words, we have retained what Vytautus Kavolis, a Lithuanian social scientist and the President of your distinguished Society in 1977-83, termed the “centrality of the concept of ‘civilization’ in debates on postmodern global conditions.”

The host for the conference will be Dr. Greg Lewicki of the War Studies University; he is a member of the ISCSC Board of Directors and a popular media commentator on security matters in Poland. He can be reached at g.lewicki@akademia.mil.pl. At the War Studies University conference, our Program Chair will be Dr. Michael Andregg, the distinguished ISCSC Vice President; he can be contacted at michael.andregg@iscsc.org.

Attendees will be housed by the War Studies University, and the entire cost of room and board there is only $350.

This is a beautiful setting for our annual meeting. The program promises a fascinating array of interesting topics. And the location could not be more central, as we consider civilizational clash in the contemporary era. Please see the website (iscsc.org) for more details.
Note: According to the organizers,

- Suggested arrival Wednesday, September 13, 2023
- Conference Program 14, 15, & 16
- Field Trip and Banquet 16
- Suggested departure Sunday, September 17, 2023

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Finally, recently our Online Content Manager, Ms. Ellen Amatangelo, of the Brigham Young University, kindly shared with the Editorial Board the locations of our leading journal downloads. The list is fascinating and contains the top 175 institutions.

In declining order of number of downloads, for the top 50, we have:

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Binghamton University
University of Cambridge
University of Warwick
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North Carolina Research and Education Network
Michigan State University
University of Toronto
Chowan University
Columbia University
New York University
The George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology
University of Illinois
Trade Center Management
University of California San Diego
University of California at Berkeley
North West University
University of Alberta
University of Durham
Bilkent University
London Grid for Learning Trust
China Digital Kingdom Technology Co. Ltd.
Agis
Yale University
NUS
Harvard University
Pamukkale University
Consortium GARR
On the list of the remaining 125 are to be found many additional distinguished institutions. What an honor for the *Comparative Civilizations Review*. Clearly, the journal is being widely read, both in printed format and via electronic download. Thanks to all our dedicated readers.

See you in Warsaw!

Joseph Drew
Editor-in-Chief

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Rector’s Welcome

WARS STUDIES UNIVERSITY
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09 March 2023, Warsaw

Ms. Lynn RHODES

PRESIDENT
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Dear President Lynn Rhodes,

With immense pleasure, we welcome the beginning of cooperation of the War Studies University with the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC). As an Organizing Partner of the 2023 ISCSC annual conference entitled "Civilizational Security", we will facilitate solutions to make the conference impactful, memorable and internationally fruitful.

The War Studies University is Poland’s highest military academic institution with traditions dating back to the royal Corps of Cadets, an academic setting established in 1765 in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for future soldiers, diplomats and public servants. Owing to this tradition and the school’s successors, we educate both military and civilian students in the areas related to national defense and international security. We focus both on shaping the young generation and supporting experienced professionals. This is why among our students, you will find both secondary school graduates looking for the fulfillment of their vocation within the national security and experienced military personnel aiming to advance their professional knowledge.
Apart from education, the War Studies University also focuses on research on geopolitical, civilizational and technological trends to facilitate a stable global future and peace between civilizations. The university’s Center for Security Studies is tasked with spotting and analyzing early signals potentially disruptive to global security to relay them to relevant public stakeholders. The center currently consists of three main units: the Asia Research Unit, Post-Soviet Regions Research Unit and Civilizational Challenges Research Unit.

We are pleased to join forces and partner with the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations to organize the 2023 ISCSC Annual Conference, which aims to analyze the prospects of civilizational security, understood as security related to belonging to a cultural zone. In the last years, our Civilizational Challenges Research Unit has been developing and repeatedly applying the idea of civilizational security to unpack technological and cultural complexity and uncover new layers of understanding of international affairs.

Arnold Toynbee, a British philosopher of history and one of the founding fathers of your distinguished Society, believed that, in times of crisis, civilizational security frequently depends on the actions of nations that live at the borderlands of civilizations. He called these borderlands “marches.” We are recalling the concept of “a march” about Toynbee's belief that Central and Eastern Europe, that is to say, a geopolitical region ranging from Lithuania through Poland to Bulgaria, is a march of Western civilization. On his map of the world from 1952, Toynbee marked this region as “debatable” in reference to the ideological battle between Stalinist Russia and the West. But even though we all thought such battles were over after 1989, when we fast forward to 2023, we find ourselves in a setting where an even worse military war is raging: an unprovoked Russian invasion in Ukraine has left Europe speechless, bringing back the horrible images of the past — civilians tortured, women raped, children kidnapped and relocated to unfamiliar areas deep in Russia.

It is bitter to say, but many in Poland, the Baltic states and the rest of the Three Seas region, outstretched between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas, have seen this tragedy coming. Why? A definite answer cannot be given in a short letter. Still, perhaps an important fact to consider is that we have not ignored the insight provided by comparative civilizational frameworks. In other words, we have retained what Vytautas Kavolis, a Lithuanian social scientist and the President of your distinguished Society in 1977-83, termed “the centrality of the concept of ‘civilization’ in debates on postmodern global conditions”. 

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol89/iss89/21
We hope that during our conference entitled “Civilizational Security: Clashes of Civilizations, Clashes within Civilizations, and Stable Global Futures,” to be held on September 14, 15 & 16, 2023, we will explore those dimensions of civilizational security that will help us to make a more stable and peaceful world.

Your Sincerely

RECTOR-COMMANDANT

BG Robert KOSOWSKI, PhD
Abstract
This essay presents a cautionary tale about certain problems with systematization and abstraction in comparative civilizational studies. It advocates instead for the analysis of single works, limited events, or particular figures, within larger issues pertaining to what is understood as a “civilization” or “culture”. It prioritizes certain aspects of the civilizing process: the here, or the civilizing and interpretive gaze; the there, or the Other that is the object of that gaze; and the in-between. It further suggests that insights and methods from Mikhail Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer and others from the humanities, social sciences, and philosophy can be useful in the kind of analysis advocated here.

Keywords: classical literature, cartography, evangelization, colonizations, medieval and other journeys, The New World, Japan

Introduction

As a comparative literature scholar and student of comparative thought and axiological consciousness for more than 45 years, I am wary, along with Isaiah Berlin, of what he has called the “historical inevitability” patterns of some grand interpretations of history. He consistently draws our attention to the unease with which he views the large, overdetermined schemes favored by, in his words, the great generalizers of world history: the Schellings, the Hegels, the Spenglers, even the Toynbees, all those for whom ‘nations or cultures or civilizations’ are more ‘real’ and more ‘concrete’ than the individuals who comprise them. These interpretive schemes are, he concludes, teleological in nature.¹

I myself am drawn to analyses of single works, moments, and limited events, even when the frame of reference is as large as “civilization” or “culture”. This is partly because experience has taught me the value of focus before engaging in generalizations. In this essay, I ask how we might understand a particular work, moment, or event in relation to its context and what that might tell us about certain elements of the civilizing process:

the *here*, or the civilizing and interpretive gaze; the *there*, or the Other that is the object of that gaze; and the *in-between*.

The term “civilizing process” recalls a book by Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners.* However, I use the term somewhat differently than Elias does. On the one hand, Elias’s work is not so much inter-civilizational as intra-civilizational, dealing with manners or customs of single cultures or civilizations; and he deals mostly with Germany and France. On the other hand, his book is historical in that Elias considers how changes in manners and customs contribute over time to state formation in the evolution of a particular culture or civilization. Critical is what he calls the “self-regulation” of the citizens, who acquire the habits and self-control represented by the larger society, in other words, “manners”. He does not really concern himself with a particular kind of cross-cultural encounter: how the conquest and colonization of one culture by another may become part of a “civilizing process”. Therefore, the civilizing process analyzed by Elias is not comparative and cross-cultural in the way that I am exploring in this essay.

**The Farinati paradigm**

In 1595, Paolo Farinati (1524-1606) created in the Villa Della Torre in Verona, Italy, a series of allegorical lunettes representing the four continents, Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. Of these, the one most directly relevant to the present essay is the lunette America, which depicts the civilizing process as it was commonly understood in the Europe of the 15th and 16th centuries.

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3 There are many metonymical representations of “America” from the 16th century on. Hugh Honour has collected many of these cultural images – allegorical and otherwise – in *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time.* See his brief comments on Farinati on p. 97.
Allegorical representations of the continents are usually female, but this figure is male. He holds a bow in his left hand. Further to his left is an open fire over which a human shoulder and arm are being roasted, turned on a spit by an odd little figure resembling putti in other works by Farinati. In his right hand, he holds a crucifix which rests on the back of a turtle. His face is turned toward the crucifix, and the angle of his body suggests, both symbolically and allegorically, that by turning away from the left, sinister, side of the body to contemplate the crucifix on his right, he is open to conversion to Christianity. That is, as the native is civilized by European Christianity and culture, he will be saved. That this process is not peaceful is further suggested by the armed and aggressive man on horseback to the far right, with an odd dragon’s foot for a hoof.

A comparison of the lunette with its preliminary study gives a good indication of Farinati’s interpretive intention. In that study, above the shoulder and arm being prepared on the open flame, to the native’s left, is a blurred sketch of a Spanish caravel topped with a crucifix. That sketch is erased from the final work and the message of conversion and conquest is shifted exclusively to the right and Christianizing section of the lunette.

Farinati’s typological imagination is the result of the European fascination with man-eaters from the time of the Greeks to the 17th century. In the documents from Homer on, man-eaters were known as androphagoi or anthropophagoi. That Greek and European fascination became a Spanish obsession with man-eaters in the New World and with the metonymical identification of the man-eater with America. When, during his first voyage in 1492, Columbus heard of the existence of man-eaters on certain islands, he identified them by their Arawakan name: canib [Diary of the First Voyage or Diario del primer viaje, 26 November 1492]. Subsequently, canib was also written as carib in the documents after 1492 [see, for example, Columbus’s letter to Luis de Santangel, 13 February 1493]. Within just a few years after discovery, and increasingly after the Crown’s promulgation of the “Cannibal Law of 1503”, which permitted the enslavement of cannibals but not of other Indians, island after island quickly was classified as a cannibal island and their entire population legally enslaved.4

4 Among my publications on cannibalism, listed in the references, are the following essays: “Cannibalism and the New Man of Latin America in the 15th and 16th-Century European Imagination”; “The Cannibal Law of 1503”; “Mapping the Caribbean: Cartography and the Cannibalization of Culture”.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol89/iss89/21
In the end there was a whole Sea of Cannibals, Sea of Caribs, or The Caribbean.

Farinati’s gaze is that of the civilized eye, a gaze informed by a set of presuppositions. In this case, his gaze reflects not what he has seen through experience (literally, cannibals) but what he has understood from the Spanish and European story about the need to convert cannibals in order to civilize them. His interpretive and artistic mind is influenced by what Hans-Georg Gadamer in his hermeneutics has labeled the pre-structure of the understanding or the cultural preconceptions (Vorverständnis) formed by tradition. There are other terms which Gadamer uses to explain the dynamics and results of this process, for instance, “horizon fusion” or Horizontverschmelzung, which is the zone of common understanding or experience between the two horizons, that of the interpreter and that of the interpreted (Gadamer, 1960: passim).

A long history leads up to Farinati’s “America”.

The Homeric paradigm and legacy

Homer’s Odyssey was created, recited, and transmitted during the Greek colonization of the Mediterranean. It is a paradigmatic tale not only of the nostalgia for home and hearth, but of encounters with unknown peoples. It is a tale of expectations met and unmet, of seeing what one is predisposed to see, and of acting from the ground of one’s cultural and ethnic identity. In Book 9, Odysseus is asked by his host, Lord Alkinoös, to tell something of himself. Hoping to align himself with that court society, Odysseus narrates his confrontation not with an ordinary outsider or a foreigner (ξένος) but with a particular barbarian Other, the monstrous cyclops who eats men. He enlarges on a series of binaries that — from his own perspective, his own ‘gaze’ — reflect the distance between the civilized and the non-civilized, the human and the non-human, the ethical and the non-ethical, all for the purpose of justifying his own behavior, post hoc, and of affirming his civilized status to Lord Alkinoös.

Let’s consider a key passage from his narrative:

In the next land we found were Kyklopes, giants, louts, without a law to bless them. In ignorance leaving the fruitage of the earth in mystery to the immortal gods, they neither plow nor sow by hand, nor till the ground, though grain, wild wheat, and barley grow untended, and wine-grapes, in clusters, ripen in heaven's rain. Kyklopes have no muster and no meeting, no consultation or old tribal ways, but each one dwells in his own mountain cave dealing out rough justice to wife and child, indifferent to what the others do. (Odyssey, 9: 105-115. Robert Fagles translation)

Here is the Greek (Homer, 1984: 310):
Fagles’s translation glosses over some of the wordplay in this passage. The term “themis” (θέμις) and its derivatives are used three times: ἀθεμίστον, θέμιστες, θέμιστεύει. “Themis” (θέμις) is a mostly untranslatable term which means “right custom”, “the proper procedure”, “the proper social order”, “what is lawful”, or “what is agreed to by common consent”. The repetition in the Greek of the various forms of themis, especially in the negative, reinforces — in ways that a translation cannot — the view by Odysseus that the gigantic cyclopean louts do not behave according to proper custom; they are ignorant of agriculture as well as of the importance of assembly. They cannot live in communities, but rather in isolated caves, are indifferent to the needs of others and are domineering toward their individual families. Odysseus returns to this characterization (Book 9: 214-215) when he calls Polyphêmos savage or wild and says that he knows nothing of justice or law (δίκας dikas; θέμιστας themistas).

Turning the negative (athemiston) in Homer’s description into the positive (themis), we get a Greek definition of “civilization” that most students of comparative civilizations would likely find reasonable, though not comprehensive. Lord Alkinoös accepts Odysseus’s presentation of the Cyclopean people as uncivilized, barbarous, monstrous,5 and only partly human. The otherness and violent behavior of this cannibal Polyphêmos is justification enough for Odysseus to blind him with a burning stake.

5 In Greek, the term generally used for monster is teras (τέρας), a word that Odysseus uses several times elsewhere in his narrative to refer to the cyclops. Teras (τέρας), of course, is the root term for teratology, or the study of monsters. Another similar term that we see in the epic is “Pelor” or “Peloron” (πέλωρ, πέλωρον). Teras and Pelor also have extended meanings of “huge”, “marvel” or “portent”.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol89/iss89/21
Polyphêmos will forever remain at the edge of the civilized/non-civilized binary for Odysseus. Odysseus ignores, as Homer does not, the gentleness with which Polyphêmos takes care of his sheep and goats, milking them to make cheese and then putting a lamb or kid below each one to suck (Book 9: 244-249). A similar gentleness is evident the morning after suffering his blindness, when Polyphêmos speaks lovingly to his dear old ram (Book 9: 447), running his hands over the fleece before letting him out of the cave. Odysseus also ignores his own responsibility for violating the guest-host relationship when he and his men first enter Polyphêmos’s cave. The binary contrast, therefore, between civilized and non-civilized, self and Other, human and monstrous, is not as clear-cut in Homer as it is often subsequently made out to be.

Homer established the literary paradigm for the perceptions of the monstrous Other; several centuries later, Herodotus (c.485-424 BCE) established the historical one. He described the peoples and cultures in Egypt and generally to the East and the North, toward Persia and beyond. In comparison with Homer’s Odysseus, Herodotus was less judgmental. Though sometimes voicing skepticism about his own descriptions, he nonetheless wrote down what he saw and heard, and he heard a lot about peoples and practices he considered to be less civilized and even barbarous. For example, in Book IV, section 106, Herodotus writes that “the Man-eaters [ἀνδροφάγοι] are the most savage of all human beings. Justice and law are unknown to them. They are nomads, wear Scythian dress, speak a language peculiar to themselves, and are the only people in this region who eat human flesh” (Book IV: 106). The farther Herodotus got from the here, the more questionable some of his descriptions became. He described people whose language resembled the jabbering of bats (Book IV: 183).

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6 The island of the Kyklopes is not the only experience of Odysseus with cannibals or man-eaters (Ἀνδροφάγοι). After he escapes from Polyphêmos, Odysseus lands on the island of Aeolus, who very kindly gives him a sealed bag of wind so that he can safely sail back to Ithaca, with only the West Wind at his back, commanding that the bag not be opened. On the way, however, his men take advantage of Odysseus’s momentary neglect and open the bag, releasing contrary winds. Odysseus is then driven back to Aeolus who angrily expels him from the island. The next island he lands on is that of the Laestrygonians, who are violent and man-eaters. They eat several of Odysseus’s men and destroy some of his ships. Apart from brief references to a herding culture and the lack of agriculture, compared to the Polyphêmos episode there is little civilizational language in this description. In sum, the Laestrygonian adventure might best be considered as draconian punishment for having disobeyed the instructions of Aeolus.

7 Although in this essay, I am mainly concerned with Herodotus’s contributions to teratology, it should be noted that in general he described the Scythians and their culture with a combination of respect and restraint. For instance, he writes that one of the most prominent Scythians was Anacharsis, notable for his wisdom (Book IV, 76), as well as for being a great traveler. Yet Anacharsis, though of royal descent, is killed because of his fondness for foreign (i.e. Greek) culture and customs (νομοί νόμοι). The Greeks recognized Anacharsis as a sage because, despite being a ‘barbarian’, he reflected Greek ideals. See A. MacC. Armstrong, “Anacharsis the Scythian,” Greece and Rome, vol. 17, no. 48 (January 1948): 18-23.

8 For an extensive discussion of othering in Herodotus, see François Hartog, Le Mirroir d’Hérodote: Essai sur la representation de l’autre.

9 See Herodotus, Histories, p. 237.
There are others who “are the dog-headed creatures and the headless creatures with eyes in their breast, and also the wild men, and wild women, and a great many other creatures by no means imaginary” (Book IV: 191). Teratological ethnography, geography and iconography occupy a miniscule part of the Histories, but that teratology influenced the representation of the far reaches of the world, especially in relation to India and the “marvels of the East”. Ktesias the Knidian, Solinus, Pliny, Megasthenes and others followed Herodotus and expanded upon his views. As can be seen from Herold’s Heydenwelt (15th century), it was an alternative ethnography that continued well into the 15th and 16th centuries, nourished by legends, travelers’ tales, theological commentaries like those of St. Augustine in The City of God, and fables like those of Prester John.

The Judeo-Christian tradition adopted these Greek and Roman classifications of “the pagan world” and added to them, making them central to its moral philosophy. In Judeo-Christian texts, the Other, especially the pagan Other, is placed at the margins of humanity and made to endure the consequences. The most famous example of such a marginalization and its consequences may be read early in the Bible. After the flood, Noah passes out in his tent, drunk. As he lies on his back, his son Ham enters the tent and sees his father’s exposed genitals. For this transgression, Ham and all his descendants are exiled and sentenced to be slaves to his brothers (Genesis 9: 18-27). In medieval cartography and cosmography, Ham becomes the metonymical symbol for Africa.

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10 Herodotus, Histories, p. 261.
11 See Rudolf Wittkower, Allegory and the Migration of Symbols, pp. 46-74. See, specifically, Isidore, Etymologiae, XI, iii, where he speaks of the cynocephali and the big eared people (Panotii); Solinus Collectanea rerum, LII.
Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), in his famous T & O World Map, draws the world as a sphere, oriented to the East, with the Mediterranean (*mare magnum sive mediterraneum*) bisecting the center and separating Europe, Asia, and Africa. The world is encircled by the Ocean Sea. In this example of theological cartography/cosmography, one sees the enslavement of black Africans as biblically justified by Ham’s “sin”. Ham’s brothers, the European Japheth and Asian Shem, who do not see their father’s genitals, symbolically become the masters over Ham’s descendants. Thus did Africa come to occupy a dark and marginalized space in western religious and social consciousness.

In the theological and ideological geography of Isidore’s T&O map, the periphery is morally and culturally less worthy than the center. This view is critical to the history of Christianity. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commands his disciples to go to ends of the earth and convert everyone (Matthew 28: 18-20). This command is behind the history of the missionary orders in the Middle Ages and in the New World. The injunction is to bring those unfortunate peoples at the margins to salvation and to Christian civilization in the center of the world.

In Book XI of the *Etymologiae*, known for its “ethnographical descriptions”, Isidore of Seville writes of human beings and others — monsters, portents and prodigies — on the margins of the known world. These beings and those like them elsewhere may appear to be “contra naturam” (XI: section 3, 1), but in fact Isidore considers them to be part of the nature which was created by God, for prodigies and portents are warnings about the future more than anything else. And yet, Isidore says that the monstrous creatures mentioned by the Greeks — giants, cynocephali, cyclopes, blemmyae, panotii, sciopodes or monopods, etc. — are more fable or fiction than anything else:

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12 This awareness may be in part the legacy of Greek culture, as transmitted through Roman culture. For the Greeks, the *oikuméné* or the world is seen in relation to its center (the *omphalós*) at Delphi. At the margins were the “boundaries” (*peirata*) of the earth, beyond which were the unknown — the “ocean river” and areas of danger.
“It is also said about other fabulous human portents that they are not really such [i.e., fabulous portents], but rather that they are invented to explain the cause of things that exist” [my translation].

“Dicuntur autem et alia hominum fabulosa portenta, quae non sunt, sed ficta in causis rerum interpretantur” (XI: section 3, 28).

Part of the legacy of Isidore and others is that Greek-Roman ethnography and the Christian conversion narrative merge in medieval cartography and cosmography. Consider, for example, the Ebstorf Mappamundi, created about 1235. Here I choose the top half:

![Ebstorf Mappamundi](image)

The world is the body of Christ. His head is at the top of the world. Next to his head is the Garden of Eden. His feet are at the bottom. On his left or sinister side of his body, one can see the world’s monstrous races, in this detail. Jerusalem is in the center of the world map.

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13 The original of the Ebstorf World Map was destroyed during World War II in an allied air raid on Hanover in 1943, and we possess only copies.
This theological geography of the monstrous is like the marginalization implied with the pagan description of the Other in Johann Herold’s 15th century *Heydenwelt* (*The Pagan World*). It is noteworthy that in the Ebstorf world map, “Africa” is placed next to the representations of monsters.

In an influential book on anthropology, *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabian has diagrammed how the merging of the classical and the Christian functions.14

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14 See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*, p. 27. Before the Christian era, Herodotus also arranged the civilized/barbarous peoples of the world in concentric circles, the outer circles being occupied by the more ‘primitive’ cultures. See James Romm, *Herodotus*, p. 106.
For Fabian, the vectors of inclusion and the drive toward the center — toward Imperial and later Christian Rome, as well as toward Jerusalem — are similar for both the civilizing and christianizing processes.

Yet difficulties always remain, concerning the margins and the Others that inhabit them. Distortions occur, morally, geographically, even cartographically. In cartography, azimuthal projections, which were created to illustrate the effect of equidistant projections on a flat surface from a central point, are structurally analogous to T&O maps and world maps like the Ebstorf map. Thus, for example, an azimuthal projection with Tokyo at the center demonstrates how unfamiliar this view of the world must look to a westerner accustomed to seeing world maps centered on London and Europe.

A medieval interlude

What happens when the culture of the Other is perceived to be as strong as one’s own, while remaining alien, even exotic, and perhaps also resistant? We may point to two sets of examples. The first is from the 13th century, when Latin Christendom, building on its successes in the 11th and 12th centuries, was determined to extend its influence eastward.

In 1245, in preparation for a journey to Central Asia by Friar Lawrence of Portugal, Pope Innocent IV wrote two papal bulls addressed to the Khan, ruler of the Mongols, long viewed in Europe as the barbarians at the doorstep. In the first bull, the Pope explained Christianity to the Mongolian ruler and urged him to “acknowledge Jesus Christ as the very son of God and [to] worship his glorious name by practicing the Christian religion”. In the second, he criticized the ruler for having invaded so many countries, and for having “laid waste to them in a horrible desolation and with a fury still unabated”. If the Mongol emperor did not stop, the Pope wrote, God would punish him. The Khan replied to the Pope a year later, completely disagreeing with the Pope and commanding him to yield to Mongol rule. Otherwise, he warned, the Pope would become his sworn enemy.15

In 1253, as an envoy of Louis IX of France, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck traveled the Silk Road to find the Khan and, on meeting him, to speak to him about Christianity, and to gather information for Louis IX back in France.

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15 See The Mongol Mission, edited by Christopher Dawson, pp. 73-76 for the two Papal Bulls from Innocent IV; pp. 85-86 for the Khan’s reply to the Pope.
The Silk Road, or die Seidenstraßen, as Baron von Richthofen named it (or them) in 1877, was then, as it had been intermittently since its early contacts with the Roman Empire and the West generally, an “in-between” area of trans-Eurasian exchanges linking the East (Manchuria) and the West (Persia, Kiev, and Latin Christendom generally). Its middlemen exported silk, cotton, and paper on some of its routes, fur on its northern routes, spices and other goods on parts of its maritime routes. Ideas also came into the West along the various silk routes, as did diseases like the plague. Buddhism came into Central Asia from India and from there went east to China and beyond. Nestorian Christianity came into Central Asia from Persia and, though it still had its practitioners during William’s travels, was eventually absorbed mostly into other religions.

William remained relatively tolerant about what he was seeing and experiencing.¹⁶ He was very much aware that he was travelling between civilizations, and, as he put it at the end of the first chapter of his report of King Louis IX, as if, upon entering the lands of the Tartars (Mongols), he “were entering some other world”. He was ever conscious of his marginal status in Central Asia. William reported but did not condemn the Mongols’ excessive drinking.¹⁷ He described suffering and the lives of slaves but did not condemn the society for it (The Mission, 84). He witnessed starvation among the people and tried to help but, again, he did not condemn Mongolian culture for this situation (The Mission, 188). True, he held a series of conversations about Christianity with various tribesmen and Mongol leaders, and especially with the Great Khan Möngke at the end of his stay in Central Asia, but he was not heavy-handed with the Khan, who held his own throughout those discussions (The Mission, chapter 34: 194-197). Perhaps because William carried nothing like the papal bulls of Innocent IV and did not forcefully impose his beliefs on the people, he was well received and generously treated.

New colonizations

The second set of examples comes from the early 16th century and beyond. Toward the end of his long life, Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1498-1584), who fought alongside Hernán Cortés on his journey of conquest from the coast to Tenochtitlan (today’s Mexico City), the capital of the Aztec Empire, wrote Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (The True History of the Conquest of New Spain). He said that, as he approached Tenochtitlan, he saw great towers and buildings, all built of stone, rising as if from the water. For him and his fellow Spaniards, this all seemed like a dream, an enchantment like those in the romances of Amadís de Gaula. They had come upon a city, culture, and civilization more advanced and more splendid than anything in Spain.

¹⁶ See, in this regard, the fine essay by Duncan Weaver, “William of Rubruck: Cosmopolitan Curiosity and Restraint in an Age of Conquest and Mission”, Comparative Civilizations Review; 83 (Fall 2020).
To the Aztecs, the Spaniards were, on the one hand, terrifying monsters who rode huge deer and came from the sea in large floating houses with trees on them. On the other hand, the Spaniards were like gods who had come in fulfillment of certain prophecies. Moctezuma tried and failed to deter the Spaniards from coming to Tenochtitlan. When they finally met in the Aztec capital, Moctezuma treated Cortés in a courtly manner and offered him everything that he had. It was a generosity born of terror. Through the translations by Doña Marina, later known also as La Malinche, Cortés explained to Moctezuma who the King of Spain and the Pope were, and he summarized some of the main points of Christianity. Then he informed Moctezuma that from the moment of their meeting the Aztecs had become subjects of the Spanish Crown. This meeting and the civilizing process that followed were facilitated by the mediating presence and efforts of the woman in-between Cortés and Moctezuma, La Malinche, who translated for them both.

Words can make stark the differences between cultures and peoples, as happened with Odysseus and the Great Khan. Words can soften differences, as was the case with William of Rubruck. Words can serve the interests of empire, as was the case with La Malinche. The Spanish Crown learned this truth early in their colonizing adventures. In 1492, a professor from the University of Salamanca, Antonio de Nebrija, gave his just published first book on Spanish grammar to Queen Isabel. The Queen asked Nebrija what use she could make of a Spanish grammar since she already knew the language. Nebrija’s answer was prophetic: “Language was always a partner of empire” (“Siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio”). Lengua in Spanish means speech or language. It also means tongue. Three decades later, La Malinche would become known as “la lengua de Cortés”, the tongue of Cortés, sometimes vilified as a traitor to her people for mediating the encounters between the Indians and the Spaniards. In the Nahua drawings representing that time of conquest, she is portrayed generally as between Cortés and the natives, and always speaking.

This drawing, taken from the Florentine Codex, presents La Malinche translating for Cortés in his encounter with Indians on the way toward Tenochtitlan.
While we don’t know how La Malinche really felt about her in-betweenness and her role in facilitating Spanish aggression against the Native Americans, we do know that she converted to Christianity, eventually became Cortés’s mistress and bore him a son, Martín.

A particularly interesting account of the effects of in-betweenness on an individual during the Christianizing or civilizing process is related by the Dominican Diego Durán in his monumental history of Nueva España.\(^\text{18}\)

\[\text{I reprimanded an Indian about certain things, in particular that he had gone around gathering money, experiencing bad nights and worse days, at the end of which time, having worked so hard to accumulate so much money, he put on a wedding and invited the whole town to it, spending everything; but he, disputing the bad thing that he had done, answered me: father, don’t be frightened, for we are still Nepantla; and, though understanding what he wished to say with this term and metaphor, which means to be ‘in-between’, I still insisted that he tell me what kind of ‘in-between’ they were in. He told me that since they were still not well established in the faith, I should not be frightened. That is, they were still neutral and could completely follow neither one law nor the other, or, better said, they loved God but at the same time they followed their ancient customs and the ceremonies of the devil, and this is how the Indian used this abominable excuse to say that they were still ‘in-between and neutral’. [my translation]}

Reprendiendo yo a un indio con motivo de ciertas cosas, y en particular, de que había andado arrastrado, recogiendo dineros, con malas noches y peores días y, al cabo de haber allegado tanto dinero y con tanto trabajo, hace una boda y convida al pueblo todo y gástalo todo, y así, riñéndole el mal que había hecho, me respondió: Padre, no te espantes, pues todavía estamos Nepantla, y como entendiese lo que quería decir por aquel vocablo y metáfora, que quiere decir ‘estar en medio’, torné a insistir me dijese qué medio era aquel en que estaban. Me dijo que, como no estaban aún bien arraigados en la fe, que no me espantase; de manera que aún estaban neutros, que ni bien acudían a la una ley, ni a la otra, o por mejor decir, que querían a Dios y que juntamente acudían a sus costumbres antiguas y ritos del demonio, y esto quiso decir aquel en su abominable excusa de que aún permanecían ‘en medio y eran neutros’”’. (Durán 1967: 237)

Despite fully understanding what Nepantla is, Durán forces the Indian to define it further, considers his explanation ‘abominable’, is dismissive of the Indian’s ‘evil or bad behavior’ (el mal), and shows little or no compassion for the Indian in this time of difficult transition from one set of cultural and spiritual values to another.

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\(^{18}\) Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la Tierra Firme* [1581; 1867], pp. 199; 410-411.
In another part of his narrative, Durán writes (1967: 236) that nepantla is “a salad that mixes up ancient superstitions, laws, and sacred ceremonies” (una ensalada y mezcla de antiguas supersticiones y de la ley y ceremonias divinas).

Sometimes, through language, people on the margins can be agents — wittingly or unwittingly — of the civilizing process. This happened in the English colonization of India. In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay famously asserted in his “Minute on Indian Education” that the main reason for educating some of the people of India was to create “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect…. [These Indians are to be the] interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern”. Such in-betweenness was considered permanent. 150 years later, Salman Rushdie takes up the theme of in-betweenness as a central theme of Midnight’s Children. At the beginning of this iconic novel, the narrator recalls the experience of his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, who was studying medicine in Germany. On a spring morning in 1915, Aadam Aziz is surprised to learn that India, like radium, had been discovered by Europeans. In Rushdie’s words, that discovery knocks him forever “into that middle place” between Europe and India itself. The rest of the novel narrates the legacy of in-betweenness.

Change is inevitable when cultures and peoples encounter one another for an extended period. The result of such an encounter need not be a permanent and difficult in-betweenness; it may also result in a kind of syncretism or a reconsideration of a particular in-betweenness that reflects a new historical reality and points to a different sort of future.

Around the year 1615, a Peruvian native, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, sent a letter of more than 1,000 pages with almost 400 of his own hand-drawn illustrations to King Philip III of Spain. The manuscript was entitled The First New Chronicle and Good Government (El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno), and it merged the Christian history of the world with Andean cosmography and history. The document disappeared for almost three centuries, surfacing only in 1908 in the archives of the Royal Library of Denmark.

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21 On “syncretism”, see Jerry Bentley, Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times, pp. 6-42. Bentley asks how cultures and individuals change because of intercultural contacts. For him, a possible result of this process is “syncretism”, which he defines as permitting the co-existence, for a time, of varying beliefs and values within the same society, group of people, or even individuals. (16) For instance, early Christianity used pagan cults in their worship and associated “the qualities of pagan heroes with Christian saints” (17).
How it got there, no one knows. I extract the following two moments of spiritual syncretism, cultural adaptation and even resistance (Adorno, 1986: Plate 10 and Plate 11). Both line drawings were made by Guaman Poma himself and included as part of his text.  

22 Mary Louise Pratt, in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, pp. 2-4, prints this line drawing (taken from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno*, p. 20) and utilizes it to illustrate how the history of Christendom was rewritten to include the Andean people. See also Rolena Adorno’s extensive analysis of Guaman Poma in *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*, as well as her brief bilingual book, *Guaman Poma and his Illustrated Chronicle from Colonial Peru*.
This image of Adam and Eve in the First World sends a rather different message from that of Farinati’s America, created at roughly the same time. Guaman Poma’s drawing, though thematically Christian, is organized — scholars have noted — according to Andean symbolic space, with a male and female side. Adam, facing the viewer from the frame’s right side, is pictured under the male symbol of the sun; Eve, facing the viewer from the frame’s left side and holding the infants Cain and Abel on her lap, is marked by the female symbol of the moon. Next to Adam is a rooster, signifying maleness; on the ground next to Eve is a chicken. Adam wields the Andean staff of creation and agriculture, which marks the diagonal separation of male from female. In the background are the Andes Mountains. The use of the diagonal in this manner is characteristic of the spatial organization one sees in Andean cosmology and in other drawings by Guaman Poma.

Guaman Poma’s text, which follows this line drawing, takes us to the Christian creation story and biblical genealogical history. In some 250 words, he describes how God, after creating Adam and Eve, enabled them to engender Seth, who engendered Enos, and on through generation after generation to the time of Noah, when God punished the world for its sinfulness. The flood completed, according to Guaman Poma, the first two “European” ages. The third European Age is that of Abraham, the fourth that of David, the fifth that of Jesus Christ.

Guaman Poma interpreted these European ages as paralleled by Andean ages: the first is that of Vari Viracocha Runa, the second that of Vari runa, the third that of Purun runa, the fourth that of Auca runa, the fifth that of Inca runa. The two parallel ages come together and meet in the world’s sixth age: that of Spain in the Indies.23

The equivalent of Adam and Eve is Vari Viracocha Runa, as Guaman Poma’s line drawing makes clear:

23 Runa means Indian or Indian Man
Guaman Poma de Ayala recommended that Spaniards and colonials should unite with the Andean elites to form a new syncretistic government to replace the in-betweeness into which Peruvian culture had been thrust for so long.

Vistas

I have sometimes wondered how world history might have evolved differently if the second attempted invasion and conquest of Greece by Persia had succeeded in 479 BCE. But it did not. I have also wondered what civilizational analysis might be like if Central Asia had remained the crossroads between civilizations and more central to world culture and historical interpretation. But it did not.
World history turned western with the age of discovery and colonization in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. And that turn has continued into the 19th and 20th centuries.

Take the case of Japan, thrust into in-betweenness by the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry and the forcible opening of Japan in 1854 after almost two and a half centuries of isolation. In measured academic prose, W.G. Beasley describes the consequences of that encounter in his 1995 study, The Rise of Modern Japan:

[What the Japanese people left behind because of the Western incursion and the rise of industrialization] was both traditional and Asian. What they moved towards was both modern and Western. The transformation therefore required them, not merely to abandon past modes of thought and ways of doing things, but also to sacrifice a part of their cultural identity…. A religious and philosophical tradition based on Shinto, Buddhism and the Confucian ethic was bound to react to the challenge from scientific thought and nationalism in ways that differed from that of Christianity.25

A century before Beasley’s assessment, Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901)26 published a groundbreaking civilizational work, An Outline of a Theory of Civilization (1875). In the preface, Fukuzawa writes that the arrival of the Americans in the Kaei era (Kaei 6 and 7, 1853 and 1854) was a “sudden jolt” which threw the Japanese people “into confusion”, the “most powerful single set of events since Confucianism and Buddhism were introduced from China in the distant past. A massive upheaval … is being stirred up at the very depths of men’s souls …. The resultant complications and confusion in Japanese society almost defy imagination…. Contemporary Japanese culture is undergoing a transformation in essence …. Even to discuss [this transformation] is extremely difficult” 27

Fukuzawa traveled to the West in 1859, 1862, and 1869, returning to Japan with the first English books to be imported into Japan. He was influenced by Western historiography, especially by the civilizational writings of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers and others: Locke, Hume, Robertson, Smith, Ferguson, and Burton. Mid-19th-century geography texts also contributed to the way he viewed world history and the world: Mitchell’s New Geography (1865), Cornell’s Geography (1866). All of this contributed to Fukuzawa’s interpretation of world history in terms of western paradigms that he compared to the historical evolution of Japan.

26 I follow the Western style here, with the given name first and the family name second.
In doing so, he did not ignore the Japanese sources of its civilization (see Chapter 9 of An Outline of a Theory of Civilization) but, because of the feudalism and imbalance of power in Japanese culture and society, Fukuzawa’s conclusion was that the civilizing process in Japan had been delayed. Albert M. Craig, in agreeing with Fukuzawa’s analysis and being cognizant of his western bias, has analyzed the influences of western thought on this first Japanese civilizationist.28

Writers and researchers from both Spain and France have sought to justify such a bias, whether on religious or secular grounds. For instance, in 1552, Francisco López de Gómara introduced his La historia general de las Indias (The General History of the Indies) with the pious and evangelizing statement that “the most important event after the creation of the world, with the exception of the incarnation and death of Him who created it, is the Discovery of the Indies”.29 There are numerous examples in Spanish historiography that support this bias.

For a secular French example, Isaiah Berlin, in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, would have us turn to Voltaire, who, says Berlin, “strongly believed that the only objects worthy of historical study were the peaks, not the valleys, of the achievements of mankind. [Voltaire] had no doubt about what they were: Periclean Athens, Rome of the late Republic and early Principate, Renaissance Florence, and France during the reign of Louis XIV… the finest hours of mankind. [Darker periods of world history are] not worthy of the attention of intelligent men, [for it is of little use to know that] “one barbarian succeeded another on the banks of the Oxus or the Iaxartes” (Berlin, 2013: 54-55).30 That, at least, is Isaiah Berlin’s take on Voltaire. While it is true that Voltaire viewed much of the past through the lenses of Enlightenment values, he is broader than Berlin gives him credit for being. In his Essai sur les moeurs et l’esprit des nations (1756), translated as An Essay on Universal History, the Manners and Spirit of Nations, Voltaire reacted against Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet’s view that the Judeo-Christian nations of the West were by far the most advanced. Such a view was far too narrow for Voltaire, who is commonly acknowledged by French critics to be the first truly serious scholar of universal history in France. He began his Essai sur les moeurs in 1741, publishing it in 1756, and continuing to revise it until a few months before his death in 1778.31

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28 See Albert M. Craig, Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi, passim.
29 “La mayor cosa después de la creación del mundo, sacando la encarnación y muerte del que lo crió, es el descubrimiento de Indias; y así, las llaman Mundo Nuevo”.
30 See also Isaiah Berlin’s chapter on Giambattista Vico and World History in The Crooked Timber of Humanity.
It was the most serious and sustained work of that kind up to that time, with pages on the origins of civilization, on the wide ethnic diversity of mankind, on the religious views of the “premiers hommes”, on the Chinese, the Indians of India, the Chaldeans, and others. Only gradually does he turn his attention to the West.

Where does the judgmental confidence in the unique superiority of the West — as stated by Francisco López de Gómara, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet and many other western thinkers and writers — come from? I agree with Isaiah Berlin that in the West it comes, first, from an inherited Platonic confidence in the truth of universals and their validity everywhere and at all times; second, from the notion that there is an essential MAN, writ large, against which particular individuals and civilizations can be measured and assessed; and third, from the Judeo-Christian faith in one God, creator of the world, and in a single set of moral values valid for all human beings. As for us, as comparative civilizationists in the West, seeing the world from the fore-structure of our understanding, perhaps we have even been too easily attracted by the implied historical inevitability behind some of the influential interpreters of world history. Thus, we may have been led to slant our interpretations toward Western horizons and to overlook what specifically happens to societies and individuals caught in the middle of the civilizing process. In doing so, we may have missed some of the interesting interpretive possibilities, contributions, and dynamics of the in-between.

Yet we may ask, what then? Should we focus comparative civilizational work on in-between events, persons, and situations simply because it is interesting to do so and because that focus has been neglected? Is it not important also to ask about the relationship of the in-between to larger views or patterns, especially civilizational ones? Norbert Elias, in The Civilizing Process, does not address this issue. In fact, that is Johann P. Arnason’s most significant reservation about The Civilizing Process and Elias’s work in general. In Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions, Arnason writes that, while Elias effectively analyzes how power, especially economic power, is used over time in state formation within a single culture, he avoids the “pluralist” cultural analysis (Arnason, 320).32 In other words, Elias avoids comparative civilizational analysis.

Barbara Tuchman, in her essay “In Search of History,” published in her series of essays, Practicing History, criticized “the big thinkers, Toynbee and other systematizers” for their “obsession” with finding a particular explanation of history. She states that, to that end, they “arrange systems and cycles into which history must be squeezed so that it will come out evenly and have a pattern and a meaning.”33 As I said at the beginning of this essay, there is for these thinkers a teleological inevitability to history.

32 Johann P. Arnason, Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions. See pp. 64-65; 103-104; 201-202; 225.
But history is not so easily squeezed into systems and cycles, Tuchman insists, and it is often the humanists who recognize that the human record is often illogical and not inevitable. In other words, humanists are generally better at recognizing the in-betweenness in historical events, even in large civilizing processes.

To bring in-betweenness into a pluralist comparative analysis is not easy, for it is less a question of method than of the adoption of a certain kind of consciousness that is alive to uncertainties, ambiguities, and the sometimes untidy and open-ended processes of history. There are interpretive approaches which can help in this regard. In my view, among the more fruitful are two: the kind of dialogical and cultural analysis advocated by Mikhail Bakhtin and the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Both Bakhtin and Gadamer were critical of analyzing history using the methods of the natural sciences, which they viewed as too rigid for interpreting the vagaries of the human experience through the scientific method. Both were interested, of course, in enlarging the realm of human experience by focusing on the consequences of “the particular”. For each, “the particular” is equally the point of departure and of reference.

In this essay, I have called the time-limited epoch of most intercultural encounters as “the in-between” and an instance of what Bakhtin would identify as a “chronotope”. For intercultural encounters, one may usefully ask how the in-between influences the larger context or becomes absorbed by it, how it contends with hegemony or yields to it — or not. This larger context may be a community, an institution, a state, a culture or a civilization. Bakhtin would draw our attention to the in-between as a dialogical consciousness within the chronotope itself, and he would describe the in-between’s absorption into the larger context as the transformation of the dialogic into the monologic, which is the hegemony or authority of the dominant single voice or “utterance”. For Bakhtin, what shapes that transformation is the “discourse” in which it takes place, a discourse that, over time, tends to exert a “finalizing effect” on the in-between. This finalizing effect is akin to the civilizing process. And yet, for Bakhtin also, the finalizing effect is always tempered by “unfinalizability”. For him, history is essentially fluid, inconclusive, and open-ended. The final word about the world and history has not been spoken. Because of unfinalizability, it is a mistake to explain history through the lens of “historical inevitability”.  

The analogue of “discourse” in Bakhtin is “tradition” in Gadamer. In the ordinary sense of the word, “tradition” would seem to exert a “conservative” pressure that limits meaning.

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34Throughout a long career and a long life (1895-1975), Bakhtin developed a series of concepts which he used for the analysis of literary texts, of society, and of history, and which are relevant to my thoughts in this conclusion. Among his more significant works in this regard are the early Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics (1929: 1963), followed by Rabelais and his World (1965: 1984), The Dialogic Imagination (1975), Speech Genres and Other Late Essays (1986).
For Gadamer, however, tradition — considered as Vorverständnis — frames meaning and understanding not by limiting them but by placing them in a continuous stream of history that explains not only the past but also the present and is suggestive about the future. In this sense, tradition permits and encourages a dialogical approach, for, framed by tradition, it is in the in-between — whether that is a person, an event, or a text — where interpretation takes place. Part of our responsibility in comparative civilizational analysis is to seek to understand how the finalizing effect, unfinalizability, the dialogical, the framing effect of Vorverständnis, discourse, tradition, and the in-between function in tandem in specific situations. Bakhtin and Gadamer do not prescribe a “method” of analysis; rather, they identify a consciousness through which the civilizing process can be understood. Farinati, Homer, Herodotus, the teratological tradition in literature, ethnography and cartography, the Christianizing mission, conquest and colonization, and intercultural encounters in general — all may be viewed through the interpretive lenses provided by Bakhtin and Gadamer. Doing so, we may better understand significant aspects of the civilizing process, the here, the there, and the in-between.

William of Rubruck went to central Asia about two decades before Marco Polo did. For each, their experiences and dialogues with the Khan seemed to have been formative. Polo, of course, recounted to a fellow prisoner, Rustichello da Pisa, his dialogues with the Khan and his experiences in Asia, which then became the basis for the influential Il Milione or The Travels of Marco Polo. This book gave rise to a number of later works — autobiographies, biographies, travel sketches, novels — inspired by the contacts between the Khan and western figures. Among the more interesting of these works is the recent novel Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino, which is composed of the descriptions of invisible cities, conversations between the Khan and Marco Polo, and interlocking ‘authorial’ commentaries. In an observation calling to mind the experiences of William of Rubruck and Marco Polo, as well as the experiences of other travelers, persons or interpreters who find themselves in the in-between, Italo Calvino writes: “the traveler’s past changes according to the route he has followed: not the immediate past, that is, to which each day that goes by adds a day, but the more remote past”. To that, I would add that the future also changes according to the route we have followed. It is not a question of choosing between the finalizing effect and unfinalizability. It is more a realization that Shakespeare’s phrase in The Tempest, “What’s past is prologue” (II.i.253), is more complex, more ambiguous, more richly nuanced, more suggestive, than one first might think.

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35 Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities (1972; trans. William Weaver, p. 28. Le città invisibili: “il passato del viaggiatore cambia a seconda dell’itinerario compiuto, non diciamo il passato prossimo cui ogni giorno che passa aggiunge un giorno, ma il passato più remoto”, p. 34.
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Is Civilization a Good Thing?

David Wilkinson

Wescott on Civilization

How do we feel about “Civilization”? What emotions does the idea of “civilization” evoke from us? Why are these emotions attached to that idea? In more technical terms, what are the “connotations” of “civilization”? Laudatory or derogatory? And why do we feel the way we feel about it? What makes us welcome civilization, fear it, praise it or shun it?

This article is in a sense a dialogue with the following article, written by former ISCSC President Roger W. Wescott. He titled it “The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization” and it was published originally in the Comparative Civilizations Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 4, of Winter, 1997.

Wescott was interested in the various meanings that were attached to the term “civilization.” To begin with, he asked if we considered that the word civilization is primarily denotative, referential — it refers to something objectively existing? Or do we use the word civilization in a way that is primarily connotative, that is, emotive, subjective — do we use it to tell others about our feelings?

In fact, Wescott finds that actual usage reveals a rich variety of connotative and denotative meanings of “civilization” — too many, indeed, for me to examine in a short article! So, this article will focus upon the connotations we give to “civilization” — how we feel about it!

Wescott next asks, “If the concept of civilization is primarily emotive, is its emotive force predominantly laudatory or derogatory in effect?” Do we like civilization? Do we despise civilization? (Or, we may add, do we, or should we, try to strike some “balance?”)

Panegyrists of Civilization

For instance, John Ash (c. 1724-1779), a grammarian, lexicographer, and Baptist minister in England, found nothing but good to say of Civilization and its congeners in his 1775 dictionary, The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language, (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1775), as we may see from the following minimal selections from a plethora of collected meanings:

Civilization: the act of civilizing
Civilize: to reclaim from savageness, to instruct in the arts of civil life
Civil: belonging to a community; not criminal
Civility: the state of being civilized, compliance [sic], kindness, decency
Civilly: kindly, politely

Ash did not impose a personal bias upon his collection of meanings. Wescott notes some earlier uses of the term “civilize,” dating back to 1600; all are laudatory. To civilize was to refine, to tame, to train, to make moral, to lift out of barbarism.

So, it would seem that a Civilizer — one who lifts others out of savageness and barbarism — might well deserve high praise!

And some have indeed given such praise, sincerely or ironically. I shall cite two such, both, not entirely perchance, being Irish.

The ironic Irish source is a folksong group, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, who applaud the civilizing work of their island neighbor in the song *God Bless England!* I shall cite two stanzas.

> “When we were savage, fierce and wild  
> She came as a mother to her child!  
> Gently raised us from the slime  
> And kept our hands from hellish crime!  
> And she sent us to heaven in her own good time!”

> “So now Irishmen, forget the past  
> And think of the day that’s coming fast!  
> When we shall all be civilized  
> Neat and clean and well-advised!  
> Oh, won’t Mother England be surprised!”

This song *God Bless England!* deserves a listen from the original voices, a side excursion that I now recommend: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CySri9RAuQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CySri9RAuQ). Ukrainians, Moldovans and Georgians in the audience might want to substitute “Mother Russia” for “Mother England” in the second stanza.

My second and sincerely laudatory Irish source is a book by Thomas Cahill titled *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1995). Per the book’s publicity blurb, between the fall of Rome and the rise of medieval feudal states, Irish monks diligently copied the manuscript books of Greece and Rome, whether pagan or Christian, and then disseminated them to Europe when Europe was once more stable enough to receive and prize them.
So much for the panegyrist of civilization. Civilization teaches Kindliness, Gentleness, Politesse, Cooperation Literacy and Reverence for Learning!

Or, as per the Irish singers, civilization makes us neat and clean and well-advised!

A compelling case indeed, or so it might well seem!

**Contra Civilization**

What might then be said in derogation of civilization?

Quite a bit, it appears!

Indeed, the derogation of civilization is multifarious and multidirectional. Civilization is indicted as boring, destructive, enfeebling, unheroic, obsolescent, doomed, and dangerous. Of course, the chorus of critics is cacophonous; best to categorize and particularize.

Wescott cites several derogatory groupings. The first group is the Romantics with their lonely, alienated heroes. Notable among these is George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), and his hero Childe Harold.

Byron and the Byronic hero of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* traveled through Europe, escaping boredom and artificiality, lamenting war and oppression, and praising heroic freedom fighters and the beauties of nature. Byron himself became a patron of national-liberation revolution in Ottoman Turkish-ruled Greece.

A differently Romantic refugee from civilization is James Fenimore Cooper’s Natty Bumppo, who appears in five frontier novels:

- *The Deerslayer* (story date 1740–1755)
- *The Last of the Mohicans* (story date 1757)
- *The Pathfinder* (story date 1758-1759)
- *The Pioneers* (story date 1793)
- *The Prairie* (story date 1804)

Natty Bumppo prefers wildlands and keeps well ahead of the pursuing frontier of ignorant wasteful, destructive, arrogant civilization, while helping the hapless civilized innocents who meet dangers with which they do not know how to cope.
The waste and destruction of civilization is perhaps well illustrated by a passage from Chapter XXII “The Slaughter of Pigeons,” *The Pioneers* (published 1823, story date 1793): “It is much better to kill only such you want, without wasting your powder and lead, than to be firing into God’s creatures in such a wicked manner.”

The critical words of Natty Bumppo may best be read after a glance at an encyclopedic entry on the extermination of the American passenger pigeon, in “civilized” slaughterfests that brought it from billions to zero between 1871 and 1914.

A differently lonely life was chosen by the monstrous and detested creature made by Mary Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein. Frankenstein’s monster fled from the hostile and incomprehensible civilization of Europe to the empty ice floes of the Canadian Arctic, pursued to the end by his equally lonely creator Frankenstein.

Another monstrous loner hero is Herman Melville’s Captain Ahab, master of the whaling ship *Pequod* in the novel *Moby-Dick*. Like Victor Frankenstein, Captain Ahab has lost all interest in the accoutrements of civilization, and he has come to exist only to do final battle with Nature, in the form of the great White Whale, *Moby-Dick*:

“Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee.”

Another derogator of civilization is the French Primitivist artist Paul Gauguin, a self-styled “savage” who fled France for Tahiti, found Tahiti overcivilized, and fled to the even more remote Marquesas, declaring, “Civilization is Paralysis.”

Even as civilization pursued Natty Bumppo from the New York frontier to the prairie of the Louisiana Territory, so civilization has posthumously trailed Paul Gauguin, in the shape of an eponymous Tahiti-visiting cruise-ship the *Paul Gauguin!* (www.paulgauguincruiseline.com)

Wescott identifies as among other derogators of civilization Fascists, in a general sense, who see civilization as decadent and unheroic. Exemplary would be Hanns Johst (1890-1978), author of *Schlageter*, a play about the life of Albert Leo Schlageter (1894-1923), a nationalistic young German shot by a French firing squad for sabotaging the railways of the French-occupied German Ruhr in 1923. The play was performed for Adolf Hitler’s 44th birthday, and it contained a brief critique of “culture” spoken by the character Friedrich Thiemann, “Wen ich Kultur höre, entstichere ich meinen Browning”—“When I hear the word ‘culture’ I release the safety catch on my pistol!”

In a more general sense, admirers of heroic or aristocratic ages like those posited by the Neapolitan civilizationist Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) in his *New Science* (1725, 1744) may nostalgically regret the loss of stratified and violent societies with their patricians and plebeians, lords and subjects, linked in endless struggles for power.
In a more recent bit of cyclicalist heroic nostalgia cum anticipation we may place John Boorman’s apocalyptic dystopian 1974 science fantasy film Zardoz. Boorman’s post-nuclear class society of 2293 pits the violent sub-elite of Brutal Exterminators against, on the one hand, an exploited underclass of peasant Brutals, and, on the other hand, a feckless overlord class of Eternals who seek to rule by fraud rather than force, in the manner of L. Frank Baum’s Wizard of Oz. The Eternals are mostly tired of life, from which they are at last freed in a coup d’état mounted by the Exterminators (to the sad music of the second movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7 in A major).

Marxists like F. Engels still differently derogate civilization. In Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State, Chapter IX, “Barbarism and Civilization,” civilization is very critically compared to savagery and barbarism: “civilization achieved things of which gentile society was not even remotely capable. But it achieved them by setting in motion the lowest instincts and passions in man and developing them at the expense of all his other abilities. From its first day to this, sheer greed was the driving spirit of civilization...civilization is founded on the exploitation of one class by another class.”

But Engels’ derogation came not from a nostalgic but from a futuristic and purportedly “scientific” perspective: civilization as we know it has made itself obsolescent. Marx-Engels socialist doctrine judges affluent bourgeois capitalist society to have served its historic function and to be ready for replacement by its socialist-communist successor. “Bourgeois” of course is “urban,” and the capitalistic cities of past triumphs are the future sites of a quite different society.

This futuristic utopia has been creatively imagined, for instance, by the prolific urbanist writer Andy Merrifield. In Beyond Plague Urbanism (Monthly Review Press, 2023) Merrifield avers that, long before COVID-19, cities were already “plagged” by “economic injustices and inequalities.” To recover from such plague urbanism, Merrifield wants to resuscitate the city as “a vast open-air public library.”

And Merrifield wants us subversively to imagine the eco-cities of tomorrow, thus recalling not Marx but Sir Ebenezer Howard.

Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) was the founder of the utopian-socialist garden city movement, (Garden Cities of Tomorrow, 1902), which aimed to overcome the contradiction between city and country both by filling the country with small cities and by filling the cities with gardens!
And to close the circle, we may note that it might take a Howard-model garden city to permit the rapid commuting necessitated by Marx’s communist utopia “which makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind…” (Marx, *The German Ideology*). Such a diversified life cannot be accomplished in a society composed of overspecialized standard-model cities.

Still, I cannot help but note that within the City of Los Angeles I myself have encountered skunks, raccoons and foxes, and that within the County of Los Angeles one can fish the fish-stocked Los Angeles Aqueduct, while if it were legal one could actually hunt the intrusive bobcats who hunt pets and the bears that root through garbage cans!

But disregarding the mere reality of Los Angeles, California, Andy Merrifield and Ebenezer Howard join Marx and Engels to argue for us to view capitalist cities, like capitalism itself, obsolete, or at least obsolescent and needing to be ushered out of history! Are they in some deeper sense correct? Perhaps…. Or could it be that our urban planners admire Ebenezer Howard rather than Marx and Engels?


Boulding hopes for a transition from a civilized to a post-civilized society, warns against three “traps” enroute (the “war trap”, the “population trap”, and the “entropy trap”) and suggests strategies for evading each trap.

As a dedicated futurist, Boulding wants to safeguard the Great Transition, even as he worries about the future that he devoutly seeks! For Boulding visualizes a cityless future, a world population much at leisure, evenly spread out, every household solar-powered and algae-fed and all-recycling, its own little spaceship, video-linked to others and to libraries and cultural repositories.

But he wonders — will we miss the city when it’s gone? Might we not want to maintain a few “stage-set” museum-cities where humans might relive the past, actually stroll real streets, and meet other humans and converse face to face rather than through media? (“The Death of the City: A Frightened Look at Post-Civilization,” *Ekistics*, 1962, Vol.13 (75), pp.19-22)
Other derogators of civilization find it violent, destructive and deeply uncivil. Justin Jennings (Killing Civilization: A Reassessment of Early Urbanism and Its Consequences, University of New Mexico Press, 2016) contends that the laudatory “civilization” concept overlooks the fact that the nucleated population growth that constituted urbanism imposed unpleasant “scalar stress” in the form of unwanted social change, creating dependent “suburbs” and subordinate exploited “countrysides.”

William W. Eckhardt (Civilizations, Empires and Wars: A Quantitative History of War, McFarland 1992) examines 5000 years of history quantitatively, and finds that “civilization,” “empire” and “war” are a single phenomenon, a conceptual triangle, by which he means that they advance hand in hand in hand. The more advanced the civilization, the larger is the reach of its exploitative empires, and the more destructive are its inescapable wars.

And for whatever reason, though maybe Jennings and Eckhardt could offer a few, some groups have seen civilization go by, and have said “Thanks but no thanks, no sale — we don’t want any!” Gordon W. Hewes studied some such groups. To taxonomize them Hewes created the concept of “Anticivilization.” (See his article “Anticivilization,” Comparative Civilizations Review Vol. 55: No. 55, Article 3, 2006) “Anticivilization” entailed “deliberate, rational, informed collective choices, exercised over generations or centuries” when “non-civilized groups are found to be living in immediate geographical proximity to long-civilized neighboring communities, in regular trade and other contact” but refuse absorption, like a collectivity of Natty Bumpos.

The ambiguities and ambivalences we have thus far observed can be seen juxtaposed in Sigmund Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents. The sociopsychological duels of “pleasure principle” versus “reality principle,” and of “Eros versus Thanatos,” reflect the impracticality of full gratification of human erotic, violent and domineering inclinations within a peaceful and stable civilized society.

**Balancing, Judging**

But, so as not to end this examination of connotations on a rueful note, we may balance Freudian pessimism with the Marxian optimism of Herbert Marcuse’ Eros and Civilization! Consistently with Engels, Marcuse considers that the resources produced by modern advanced industrial (capitalist) society make it possible not only to dispense with capitalism but also to shape "man's world in accordance with the Life Instincts, in the concerted struggle against the purveyors of Death." (Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 2nd Ed, 1966, Political Preface.)
Perhaps with the books of Cahill, Byron, Cooper, Mary Shelley, Melville, Engels, Marx, Merrifield, Howard, Jennings, Eckhardt, Freud and Marcuse, and side references to Ash, the Irish singers, Johst, Vico, Baum and Zardoz, we may have the makings of an independent study course on “Connotations of Civilization: How Do We Feel About Civilization?” that might be pursued anywhere in the world with satisfactory internet access! A task for ISCSC?

So how should we feel about civilization? Shall we laud and forward its civility and learning with John Ash and Thomas Cahill? Shall we seek change, back to a Heroic Age or forward to Post-Civilization? Flee, fight, ignore, trade, evade, suffer, transcend?

Each must judge.
The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization

Roger W. Wescott

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This paper may be regarded as an effort to answer some questions concerning the conceptualization of civilization.

1. Whether or not concepts are essentially verbal, is the concept of civilization primarily denotative (referential) or connotative (emotive) in meaning?
2. If the concept of civilization is primarily emotive, is its emotive force predominantly laudatory or derogatory in effect?
3. When the concept of civilization is derogatory, is it decadence or outdatedness that is primarily derogated?
4. If the concept of civilization is primarily denotative, is its denotation primarily abstract (referring to culture and associated mentifacts) or primarily concrete (referring to people and their artifacts)?
5. If civilization is an abstraction, is that abstraction a condition (what used to be called “civility”) or a process (the act of civilizing or the experience of being civilized by others)?
6. If civilization is a process, is this process gradient (continuous) or discrete (discontinuous) in nature?
7. If civilization is discrete from other cultural states, at which diachronic stage does it make its crucial transition from effective non-existence to effective existence? Is this point at the pongid-hominid interface, the hunting-farming interface, or the rural-urban interface?

Let us take up these questions in the order posed above, attempting, as we proceed, to deal not only with the explicit problems they present but also with their implications, both epistemological and empirical.

1. In 1775, “civilization” first appeared in Ash’s English Dictionary to refer to “the act of civilizing” persons or people of a lower social condition. (Three years earlier, James Boswell had complained that Dr. Johnson, even in the 4th edition of his more prestigious Dictionary, refused to list the term, regarding it as “cant” — a word that had for Johnson approximately the same connotation that “jargon has for us.”

   Apparently, then, the term “civilization” had a marginal status academic usage, comparable to that of the bureaucratic term “finalization” in our own day.)
By 1790, however, “civilization” was not only a reputable term — freely used by Edmund Burke in formal addresses to Parliament — but also an accepted synonym for “civility,” a term which had, in turn, been used since the time of Sir Walter Raleigh to mean “freedom from barbarity” (or, in more positive and contemporary terms, “the state of being civilized”).

The verb “civilize,” dating back to 1601, meant “to refine” or “to lift out of barbarism.” But, until the late 19th century, this was only one of six senses in which the verb could be used. The other five were:

1. to behave civilly (1605)
2. to make moral (1640)
3. to train (1642)
4. to tame (1721)
5. to become civilized (1868)

2. Until the late 18th century, the word “civilization” and all its English cognates containing the base ci(vi)- were exclusively laudatory, it being taken for granted that cities were superior to villages, literacy to illiteracy, and settled life to nomadism. The Romantic Movement, however, inverted this ethos, exalting the Noble Savage, scorning the artificiality of the “Augustan” Age, and fostering the Celtic Revival and other folk-movements. And, even after the death of Lord Byron and his spiritual confrères, latter-day Romantics continued to deprecate “civilized” values. In the late 19th century, for example, the self-exiled Pre-Expressionist French painter Paul Gauguin insisted that “civilization is paralysis.” In the early 20th century, the German meta-historian Oswald Spengler employed the term Zivilisation to designate the declining phase of the Great Cultures. In India, he claimed, this decline began with Buddhism and the Maurya Empire; in the Greco-Roman world, with the Peloponnesian War and the spread of Stoicism; and in Western Europe, with the French Revolution and industrialization. In our own time, moreover, the Hippie Movement and the “drop-out” phenomenon seem to show that devaluation of civilization as an ideal is continuing. If anything, in fact, it appears to be intensifying.

3. Contemporary derogation of civilization as a value takes two very different forms. One is to disparage it as decadent and to propose, at least implicitly, a revival of pre-civilized culture-patterns. The other is to disparage it as outdated and to propose, explicitly in most cases, that the transition from civilization to whatever cultural stage is to supplant it be hastened and facilitated in every possible way.

Fascism in the broadest sense — from Mussolini’s Corporate Statism through Hitler’s National Socialism to Franco’s Falangism — looks like an attempt to turn back the cultural clock to the Heroic Ethos of the barbarian peoples who overthrew the ancient Mediterranean empires.
Marxist Communism, on the other hand, is Janus-faced with regard to the dichotomy between decadence and outdatedness. Like its totalitarian rival, Fascism, Communism scorns decadence and lauds what Friedrich Engels called the “primitive communism” of preliterate peoples antecedent to the ancient slave-holding empires and their Medieval feudal successor-states. But, like Western futurists, Marxist theoreticians of “the Socialist Camp” see Capitalism of the type which sprang from the Protestant Ethic and supplanted Mercantilist economic policy as having served its global purpose — that of multiplying human industrial productivity — and standing in need of transformation before it devolves into suicidally militaristic monopolism. In contrast to non-Marxist futurists, however, Marxists believe that the crucial change needed is social elimination of the affluent bourgeoisie (which earlier displaced the 18th century aristocracy) by a politically aroused proletariat, no longer willing to serve as wage-slaves to industrial entrepreneurs.

Since 1961, when the American Ford Foundation subsidized the prognosticative efforts of Bertrand de Jouvenel’s “Futuribles” Project in Paris, a new assessment of civilization has appeared among scholars uncommitted — at least in formal terms — to any particular political or economic ideology. These students of the future are convinced that culture has, since the dawn of the Atomic Age in 1945 (if not earlier), entered on a metamorphosis into a new phase or stage as different from civilization itself as was civilization from the preliterate agriculturalism which preceded it. Since the nature of this new culture-type remains unclear, most futurists have contented themselves with describing it in terms of its antecedence. Thus, economist Kenneth Boulding calls it “post-civilization”; sociologist Daniel Bell calls it “post-industrialism”; and theologian Paul Tillich calls it “post-Christianity.” But all seem agreed that literate urban culture as we have known it since the days of the ancient Levantine civilization cannot last much longer and that attempts to perpetuate it in toto or even to maintain some of its major institutional procedures, such as international warfare, are foredoomed to failure.

4. Insofar as civilization may be denotatively described as literate, urbanized, metal-working culture, it remains a question whether such culture is an abstract collocation of ideas, attitudes, and traditions (what Irwin Sanders calls “mentifacts”), as described by Alfred Kroeber or a concrete mechanism for the systematic and efficient utilization of energy (what Sanders calls “artifacts”), as described by Leslie White.

To complicate the picture, Sanders uses a third term, “sociofact,” to describe the social group that is formed to implement mentifacts, or cultural goals, by means of artifacts, or man-made tools. Insofar as a sociofact is a collection of people — specifically, of live human bodies — it is undeniably a manifestation of concrete culture as described by White. On the other hand, insofar as a sociofact is a network of psychological ties binding individuals into a collectivity, it is a manifestation of the abstract culture described by Kroeber.
Lewis Mumford, to be sure, would probably side with White in viewing culture-bearing social groups as concretions rather than as abstractions. For he coined the term “mega-machine” to describe a group of slaves or other social subordinates conscripted by political or religious authorities for employment as a living tool in the performance of monumental tasks, such as the construction of the Egyptian pyramids.\(^\text{11}\)

To some extent, of course, the question of the concreteness of behavior-patterns — up to and including civilization — is a philosophical rather than a scientific one. That is to say, its answer depends not so much on amassable data or adducible evidence as on the semantic and ontological definition of “concreteness.” If, for example, one makes the common-sensical assumption that matter is concrete but what the immaterial is abstract, then one must probably take the eclectic position that White is right about such artifactual manifestations of civilizations as irrigation-canals but that Kroeber is right about such ideological manifestations of civilization as religious doctrines (while such social manifestations of civilization as governing élites are at once biologically concrete and psychologically abstract).

5. Assuming, then, that the denial of abstraction is unprofitably simplistic, let us concede that civilization has significant aspects which are abstract rather than concrete in nature.

It still remains problematic, however, whether the impalpable aspects of civilization are better regarded as stative or processual in nature. Should we, that is, treat civilization as a state or condition, which any given human society may presumably be said either to manifest or not to manifest? Or should we rather treat civilization as an activity or process, in which every human society may presumably be said to be involved, so that our problem is reformulated as one of determining the extent or degree of that involvement?

Lexical history, as we noted earlier, presents us with compelling reasons for adopting a “both-and” rather than an “either-or” attitude toward this question. For all Latin-derived nominalizing suffixes containing the element -ion have at some time exhibited, and most of them still do exhibit, the dual semantic function of designating both dynamic processes and the static results of those processes. Familiar examples are the verbal nouns union, junction, and creation.

6. Focusing, for the moment, exclusively on the processual aspect of civilization — and temporarily setting aside its stative aspect — we are still faced with the problem of defining that aspect. Although all processes might seem to partake of the presumably continuous nature of the time-flow in terms of which we identify them, we should not take it for granted that discreteness, or discontinuity, can be disregarded in any consideration of the civilizing process.
If we did, we would automatically render not merely invalid but absurd all historical periodizations, such as those by which we have traditionally trifurcated history into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern phases and are still inclined to trifurcate the history of pre-Islamic Egypt into Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom phases.

As it happens, the first of these trifurcations has been largely abandoned since Spengler ridiculed it, two generations ago. Furthermore, social scientists like William Sumner and Franz Boas had already established canons of cultural relativity in terms of which later sociologists and anthropologists came to stigmatize the Ancient-Medieval-Modern triad (two-thirds of which was Western European in locale) as grossly ethnocentric.

Where such ethnocentricity is not saliently involved, however, periodization seems not only permissible but necessary — certainly in terms of analytical convenience and probably also in terms of the actual pace of cultural change. In the case of Pharaonic Egypt mentioned above, the three-fold division of its history into Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms seems as objective as such diachronic classifications can ever be, having been recognized by the Egyptians themselves as well as by Western Egyptologists, having been conspicuously marked by radical disruptions of the otherwise culturally monolithic character of its civilization, and having exhibited significantly different orientations in each of its three major pulses, as follows:

I. The Old Kingdom (1st through 6th dynasties), c. 3100-2600 B.C.: Memphite focus, with architecture - especially pyramid-building - predominant
   A. “The Feudal Age,” c. 2600-2200 B.C.: fragmentation of central authority
II. The Middle Kingdom (12th through 17th dynasties), c. 2200-1800 B.C.: Theban focus, with non-architectural arts predominant
   B. “The Hyksos Period,” c. 1800-1600 B.C.: domination by Asian invaders
III. The New Kingdom (18th through 26th dynasties), c. 1600-500 B.C.: imperialistic expansion into Asia, with increasingly heretical religious tendencies — most evident in Atonistic monotheism

Yet, just as the difference between the relative and the absolute may itself be called relative, we can likewise maintain — without, I think, any resort to paradox-for-effect — that there is a gradient between the gradient and the discrete. In the preceding case of Pharaonic “Kingdoms,” for example, the discontinuity between the pre-Hyksos and the post-Hyksos (or “Imperial”) civilization of Egypt was relative, in the sense that Coptic continued to be spoken, the trinity of Isis, Horus, and Osiris continued to be revered by a majority of both the priesthood and the peasantry, and a recognizably Pharaonic sculptural style persisted throughout the Hyksos interregnum.
And even the sharper cultural discontinuity that separates preliterate agriculturalism from literate urbanism, which some prehistorians have pictured as a cultural “cliff” separating two cultural “plateaus” and literally diagrammed as two horizontal lines connected by an equidistant vertical line, is not strictly comparable to the lift between two stairs. Either way, the point being made is, in conceptual terms, that both cultural stagnation and cultural revolution are relative to some typological standard — implicit if not asserted — of “normal” cultural evolution. Given sufficient diachronic perspective, we can nearly always see that there is a slow but unmistakable metamorphic ferment at work in seemingly changeless periods, just as there is always some carry-over of earlier cultural traditions into even the most rapidly innovative cultural restructurings.

In the case of the transition just alluded to between preliterate agriculturalism and literate urbanism in the pre-Christian Near East, we note, first, that by about 5000 B.C. farm villages were already getting so large and so heavily fortified as to justify their being called “proto-urban” and, second, that throughout the five millennia that have followed Gordon Childe’s Urban Revolution of about 3000 B.C., preliterate agriculturalism has persisted as a social encapsulation within most of the great civilizations known to history.

7. The question of the point in time at or near which non-civilization became civilization is basically, of course, a problem not so much of dating as of definition.

Some students of man’s development, such as Alexander Goldenweiser, have chosen to treat the terms “culture” and “civilization” as synonymous. For them, consequently, man became civilized when he began to chip stone tools, to bury his dead, and to talk—in short, when he ceased to be an ape.

Other scholars, such as Boulding, hold that, since the line between village-culture and city-culture is so hard to draw, civilization may be said to have made its effective appearance about 10,000 years ago, when Mesolithic food-extraction was given up by early West Asians in favor of Neolithic food-production. For him, then, it is agriculture and civilization which are synonymous.

My own preference is to accept the consensus of most exponents of the comparative study of civilizations that civilization is better identified with the urban, literate, metallurgical tradition that made its appearance in the Old World cradle of agriculture about 5,000 years after farming itself had begun.

The major question now facing both historians and futurists is that of whether civilization has become obsolescent and, if so, whether it will survive as an active encapsulation in man’s emergent cultural order or only as an amply and nostalgically documented memory.
Notes

14The same interpretive debate goes on among biologists, some of whom regard species as natural breeding-groups, while others regard them as useful taxonomic fictions.
15Egyptian, like Meso-American, chronology is a bone of scholarly contention. Early Orientalists like James Breasted tend to date the First Dynasty toward the middle of the 4th millennium B.C. More recent Egyptologists, like John Wilson, are inclined to date it nearly a millennium later. I have here pursued a middle course, while suspecting that Wilson’s “short count” is more likely to be accurate than Breasted’s “long count.”
18Kenneth Boulding, op. cit.
19In my doctoral dissertation in social anthropology (Oxford University, 1952), I sought to resolve this dilemma by recognizing an intermediate stage of “semi-civilization” or “town-culture” in the Near East of the 4th millennium B.C.
20Toynbee, of course, is the most deviant of historical comparativists in his proneness to accept preliterate societies as “civilizations.” Throughout his 12-volume *Study of History*, for instance, he recognized Viking Scandinavian culture as civilized. Till 1940, he granted the same recognition to Eskimo culture, and, after 1960, to Pueblo culture. (For details, see Roger Wescott, “The Enumeration of Civilizations,” *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1970.)
The Possibility of a Global Civilization

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Abstract

This article inquires into the question of what is civilization. It considers that a *sine qua non* of a civilization is a non-violent culture. It investigates the concept of violence and extends the concept to cover examples of citizens who live in conditions of poverty, ill health, lack of food, lack of education, lack of adequate housing, and inadequate living conditions. The argument in the article is that a civilization that allows such conditions to exist perpetrates violence upon its citizens and therefore does not deserve the appellation, ‘civilization.’ Those citizens who do not protest against such violence are not mere bystanders but are accomplices to the violence. The article raises the question whether civilization can exist in the context of nations engaging in an arms race, especially a nuclear arms race. It raises the question whether civilization can exist in nations that enable climate crisis through endorsing and permitting the use of fossil fuels. It inquires into the question of the relationship between the philosophy of man and the kinds of nation states that exist. It argues that a better understanding of the nature of man would lend itself to the concept and construction of a viable global civilization. In order to achieve a global civilization, it is argued, one needs to construct a philosophy of man that incorporates insights from Rousseau, Mencius and Confucius.

What is Civilization?

There are many ways in which we can understand what a civilization is. We can look to scientific achievements, great accomplishments in art, architecture, scholarship, medicine and literature, technological advancements, the establishment of a successful nation state, the flourishing of trade, the economic development of the country that is to considered as having attained a civilization, its literacy level, its provision of a sustainable life style for its citizens, its role as a peacemaker among nations and many other markers of attainment.

In recent years measures have been taken not only for GNP, but for GNH, or gross national happiness. What is happiness, as Aristotle noted, must be considered first, and this is no different from our times than it was for his.¹

These all sound like admirable criteria. However, we need to pay careful attention to the standards for economic, educational and political equality.

¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a16-22
• Does the country in question take care of its elderly, its minority groups, its indigent citizens? Does it provide security for its citizens from foreign and domestic terror?

• Does it provide equal educational and employment opportunities for all of its citizens? Does it provide equal working and leisure conditions for its female citizens, for its senior citizens, for its children, for its immigrant population?

• Does it provide equal opportunity for housing, transportation, water, food, and health care for all of its citizens? Does it provide equal justice for all of its citizens? Is its incarceration system fair and livable, or better yet, has it found a different and better solution to the problem of crime?

These are all tall orders. However far we may be from finding countries that satisfy all of these criteria, we still need to consider another angle and that is, freedom from violence. Violence can take many forms, from extreme physical violence and practices of discrimination to microaggressions of ignoring people on the street or in one’s workplace by looking through them or treating them with arrogance, injustice and a lack of inclusion, respect and/or a lack of positive affirmation.

The acceptance of poverty, illness, a lack of adequate health standards, or poor living standards for population groups inside one’s nation is an acceptance of violence. The concept of non-violence derives from the Jain concept of *ahimsa*, or a restraint from inflicting harm to oneself or others. When we participate in a society in which one tolerates or accepts a population of those who lack adequate housing, food, medical care and education, we are condoning violence or harm. By doing nothing about this harm, we are its enablers. There is no such thing as a neutral bystander.

Unlike some of my distinguished colleagues, who have given much detailed and meticulous thought as to how to utilize our advanced technology and superstructures to achieve peace among nations, I wish to explore another dimension, what I can call an inner normative ethical revolution.

**Human Relations**

As our discussion of refraining from harm doing or violence can range far and wide, let us focus our discussion today on the area of ethical relations.

Ethical priorities are incredibly influential in so many critical domains. Two topical examples. Firstly, climate change can be reversed by choosing not to utilize carbon-based fuels. The major obstacle to this is placing profit as a higher priority than an ethical relation to nature and to sentient life on the planet and the future of civilization. So powerful can be the influence of ethics!
Secondly, the projected fear of the loss of human control to artificial intelligence can possibly be decreased by programing artificial intelligence with ethical values.

These are topics of significant importance and can be saved for another occasion. The thesis I should like to advance today is that ethical relations are indeed the starting point of a civilization. As much as we might alter the specific structures of human society; e. g., its political structure, its educational opportunities, its economic opportunities, and so on and so forth, I contend that no country can count itself as civilized unless it has in place an honest, just, fair, respectful and a non-harm-doing, non-violent mode of human relations — as well as our relations to nature — as the foundation of all political and organizational structures. Since the phrase non-violence has become so commonly used as to lose much of its emotional connotation and therefore its meaning, let us use, ahimsa, non-harm doing, its original cognate.

Political structures, whether democratic or non-democratic, cannot function properly without a priority given to ethical considerations. In the best of democratic societies, the principles of participatory democracy can be easily warped by unethical motivations undermining the democratic processes. For example, interfering with calculating votes through gerrymandering destroys representative democracy.

For classical Greek philosophy, especially through the eyes of Plato and his student, Aristotle, one could not achieve an ethical society without proper political structures. Ethics was not considered to be functional on its own. Ethical behavior could only come into being within the right sort of political organizations and structures. Plato introduces the idea that the investigation of justice in the state needs to precede the inquiry into justice in the individual, his Republic being Justice writ large and hence easier to perceive. Plato’s student, Aristotle, follows his master and discusses in his Politics that it is only in the appropriate political structure that ethics can be realized.

Today, in the global community, we must consider reversing the ancient Greek order in which ethics can only be fulfilled through politics; we should reverse it to the priority that politics can only properly function if it is governed by ethical values. The reason for this reversal is that in ancient Greece it was taken for granted that civilized humans were governed by ethics and all that was necessary was to enable personal ethics by putting proper political polities in place. Today’s world is different. The role of personal ethics today is no longer something that can be taken for granted. In addition, since the European Enlightenment of the 18th century, we have put democratic political structures in place that function similarly to the political structures that governed ancient Greece and Rome. Ethics, however, has largely been absent.

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2 Republic 368c6-369a2
3 Politics 1253a30, 12811a1, et passim
Politics can only function to achieve egalitarianism, freedom, security, health care, senior care and subsistence for its citizens if its citizenry is strongly motivated by ethical intentions. During the European Enlightenment, notable progress was made through the reform of political structures. In the works of Montesquieu in particular, the notion of the separation of powers to achieve a balance of power was a great achievement. It created the phenomenon of countervailing powers, counteracting any branch of government from obtaining supremacy and consequent domination.

The problem in the 20th and the 21st century is that unethical behavior has undermined the efficacy of countervailing powers. The Supreme Court (I single out the United States as my primary example) loses its stature as an independent, objective council when its members succumb to influence by politically partisan billionaires. The House of Representatives and the Senate lose their ability to work together to support or if needs be to deter the power of the Executive Branch when its members are bought by Big Pharmacy, the Tobacco Industry, and the National Rifle Association. In short, the lack of ethics cripples democracy. Oligarchy replaces democracy.

Further erosions of the rule of democracy have come into being by the power of mob rule, what Plato feared as the ultimate fate of democracy. What can constrain the masses who are not governed by the political countervailing powers? The ultimate example was the invasion of the Capitol by unconstrained masses of people. What is to constrain such events? The lack of the ultimacy of the principle of non-violence, non-harm doing is the real problem, not the failure of democracy as such. Democracy today cannot function without ethics.

John Stuart Mill thought that voters who were educated should receive more ballots to vote. Education, however, is not enough. We must also consider, what kind of education? Consider Nazi Germany, where Hitler was elected Chancellor through a democratic vote despite his ardent advocacy of unethical behavior. Among his loyal followers were educated nurses, teachers, professors, lawyers, judges, and physicians, all persons of high education. Among his top Nazi officials were men with university doctorates. Joseph Goebbels, his propaganda Minister, had both an M.A. and a Ph. D. His doctorate in German literature was earned from the University of Heidelberg, Germany’s oldest university. Did this education include the subject of normative ethics? Consider the iconic example of the Angel of Death, Joseph Mengele, a physician whose behavior hardly followed the ethical principle of Primum Non Nocere. Germany just before the Nazi period was considered to have reached the high point of civilization in Europe.

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5 Felix Heidenreich, ‘Hannah Arendt in Germany Today, Between Contested Philosopher and Public Icon,’ Raisons Politiques, 2018/2 (No 70), p. 129.
And yet, look what happened. Nazi Germany and Hitler’s minions slaughtered six million Jewish people of whom one and one-half million were children. Innocent human beings. This, civilization?

What then of Rousseau? Kant thought so highly of this thinker that his portrait was hung above his desk; Rousseau wrote that it was civilization that warped mankind.

In the state of nature, Rousseau asserted, prior to reason, human beings were filled with cooperation and kindness. We possess … “a natural repugnance at seeing any sensitive being suffer, and, in particular, being like ourselves.” And “… so long as he [man] does not resist the internal impulse of compassion, he will never do harm to another man …”6 As men came into association with each other under the guise of civilization, selfishness and greed came into being.

Rousseau has been criticized on the grounds that there has never existed such a state of nature as he described, so he had no historical evidence for his starting point. However, this critique misses the mark. Rousseau did not need to have recourse to an evidentiary state of nature; it is his imagination of a state of nature that should be the proper object of our attention.

How does he reach his conclusions? Though he does not explain his methodology, it appears as if he applies the criterion of introspection in a self-phenomenological experiment. The question should be: What is the nature of human beings in their natural state? What is human nature?

What of the animal kingdom? What characterizes most animals is their cooperative and altruistic natures concerning relations among their own kind, their own species. Dolphins are known to swim under injured or sick dolphins to keep them afloat and prevent them from drowning. Jane Goodall, that remarkable anthropologist, recounts in her Through a Window: My 30 Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe, the story of a chimpanzee, no relative of the victim he rescues, diving into a river to save a young chimpanzee from drowning. There are tales of elephants working together to drag their peers overcome by sunstroke and having collapsed, away from the sun and under the shade of a tree, to protect them from dying from the relentless heat.

My point is, if this characterizes the behavior of animals in the wild, then why should the human animals’ behavior in the wild be any different?

When there is a new-born bunny or tiger cub, no one dubs that new-born evil. Animals do not come into the world under the burden of sin.

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6 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Men, 1754 https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12024/2524/seconddiscourse.htm?sequence=4&isAllowed=y
As Rousseau writes in *Émile*, there is no original sin in humankind. For Rousseau, compassion is inborn in the human being. Compassion occurs prior to reflection.

In this concept, Rousseau is at one with Mencius, the great Chinese Confucian philosopher of the 4th century BCE whose book, *The Mencius*, is one of the classic four books that for centuries formed the cornerstone of Chinese education. It is only when human beings attempt to construct a society, an artificial structure, that they become removed from their gentle nature. What then, shall we retreat to the jungles, the rain forests or the deserts? No, this is not the answer, although the extremes of climate in the years to come or the ravages that are the outcome of a nuclear war may force us to do so. In the meantime, our only recourse is to establish the right sort of civilization, a civilization that does not permit or enable violence or harm doing.

The important lessons to be taught are ethical lessons. We need to instill and repeatedly educate unequivocal ethical values that our civilization has torn asunder. A study of one year old babies at the infant cognition center of Yale University has demonstrated that infants are born with a sense of right and wrong and, when tests are given, the infants, prior to learning language or being exposed to education, tend to choose right behavior, that is, ethical, other-directed behavior over wrong behavior, that is selfish behavior that is hurtful to others.  

Rousseau had a point. The wrong sort of civilization, the kind of civilization that sanctions aggressive competition, that rewards success obtained at nearly any ethical cost, corrupts humankind. Mencius, with his famous example of the child in the well, knew this long before Rousseau, in the 4th Century BCE.

In Mencius’s justly famous example, his argument was that the human being, untainted by civilization, was prompted by altruistic motivations. In my modern reconstruction, his argument was phenomenological; that is, everyone was encouraged to imagine the situation and see how she or he would feel.

Everyone was to imagine a child, not a relative, about to fall into a well. Let us imagine the child at five years old. We may update the example to a child running into the street, about to be struck by an oncoming car.

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Mencius asks us (I have modified his approach, but not altering its meaning) to introspect and discover what feelings are suddenly and spontaneously aroused in us. He claims that we will be affected by the feelings of alarm and compassion, strangely and interestingly coinciding with Aristotle’s claim of what feelings are aroused by the spectator of tragedy.

In short, every human being, unaffected by thinking about the impact of their action by the judgment of others, possesses a nature that is altruistic, that is, full of compassion for every human being in suffering. That such emotions arise in every person suddenly in Mencius’s example mitigates against the idea that such emotions are the result of reflection, reason or thinking. Mencius’s idea supports Rousseau. One could argue that such a feeling could arise as the result of much ethical education and training in the rule to help other human beings in suffering. Following a rule, however, does not necessarily give rise to a sudden emotion.

Mencius even illustrates what happens when civilization disrupts nature. He gives the example of a mountain, once green, decimated by axes and hoes, becoming bald. Nowadays, the technologies of strip mining, surface coal extraction, oil shale mining, and open-pit mining provide even more graphic evidence of environmental destruction. It is not only technology that Mencius is pointing to as the culprit. Technology is a metaphor for the tampering with nature, in this case, the nature of the human being. The human being will be stripped of its green shoots, the sprouts of its core, essential ethical nature. The methods today include more sophisticated weapons than axes; there are digital axes now, the axes of social media, spouting untruths and encouraging violence through video games.

Someone may object. The Nazis were not kind to others. They bayoneted pregnant women and tortured people to death. This is precisely Mencius’ point. The Nazis were influenced by false thinking, by evil propaganda. They were not acting out of their true human nature. They were corrupted by false thoughts, thoughts that misdirected them away from their true human nature. So, even we can be corrupted. What is important to remember is that the entire idea of corruption implies that the roots of our nature must be good to start with.

Of course, what I am saying is debatable. The Chinese thinker Xunzi thought the opposite of Mencius. He thought that the human being was born evil, born, as he states in his classic work, with envy and greed.

From my perspective, I have recourse once again to Rousseau. For Rousseau, envy comes into being only in civilization; greed, as well.

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10 The Mencius, 6: A8.
11 The Xunzi, Chapter 23.
One becomes greedy to make sure that she or he possesses more than the next person. In a state of nature, there is no need to compete with others. Has anyone ever seen an obese coyote, tiger or deer? Animals have no desire to eat beyond what their body needs. They are not driven by envy. Hunger, in my example, is a metaphor. Animals are not by nature in competition with members of their own species. Of course, males do combat with each other in competition for mates. This, however, is a special behavior confined to this life cycle. Even here, the fights do not end in violent killings. They end in one male giving in to the other. That is all.

The point is that civilization requires that human beings, as the famed, late novelist Kurt Vonnegut says, to be kind to each other. It is as simple as that. In Buddha’s language, echoed by the late Albert Schweitzer, we must show compassion to all sentient beings. In today’s world, we must take this further. We must show compassion to all beings, including non-sentient beings. Mountains, for example, contain coal. The destruction of mountains and the extraction of coal is the starting point of the burning of fossil fuels. This burning of fossil fuel fills the air with carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide traps the heat of the sun and prevents it from escaping. The heat from coal production accounts for one third of the rising of the temperature of the world. This heat melts our ice caps and our oceans overflow. All because in the very beginning we did not care for non-sentient being.

We must also consider another extremely crucial point. When we speak of human nature, we do not need to be purely descriptive. If we remain descriptive in our account, we can only point to history which, as Simon Wiesenthal has described, is the story of man’s inhumanity to man. The investigation of human nature possesses the unique characteristic in which the subject and the object of our inquiry is one and the same. We are not mere objects of study. We are subjects, that is, active agents. We can make our nature what it is, what we want it to be. We are not simply passive recipients. We shall return to this point in the sequel.

Our modern society, governed by the race of capitalism, mitigates against ethical principles. It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve an ethical society under a capitalist civilization. An ethical world would be a world in which there would be no poverty. However, there is an abundance of poverty. Each instance of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, disease, lack of shelter, lack of water is an example of violence, of harm being done. All of these conditions are preventable. The lack of action by the human community on behalf of those deprived is an act of violence. We live in a most violent society, a society of widespread harm doing, a civilization of violence. Can we call this civilization? Have we ever reached civilization? Has there ever been civilization?

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There are other dangers, some of which I have already mentioned. There is the danger of climate chaos. This is brought on by the cooperative violence of governments and giant corporations. As scientific evidence mounts, there are clear and present dangers that the glaciers will melt to the point of flooding our coastal cities; that tornadoes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons will devastate our cities; that heat will dry up crops, that many places where human beings now live will become uninhabitable. And then, what will be the behavior of those who have versus those who have not? The violence that we now see emerging will be magnified a thousand-fold. Civilization, now a far distant dream, will become a total phantasm. Dystopia of the worst possible kind imaginable will become reality. The apocryphal reply of Gandhi, when asked what he thought of Western civilization, ‘that it would be a good idea,’ will become, ‘it was once a good idea, but now has become unobtainable.’

Then, there is the ever-present looming possibility of catastrophic nuclear war. We are still in a nuclear weapons arms race. Increasingly, new countries are obtaining and testing nuclear weapons. We may not need to wait until the climate makes our planet uninhabitable. We may beat nature to the punch.

Are there any solutions? Yes, of course. There are nations working on methods to stop climate deterioration. Norway has mandated electric vehicles since 2007. Now, a high percentage of vehicles on Norway’s roads are electric.\textsuperscript{14} This is wonderful, but only a drop in the global ocean. However, it demonstrates that we can prevent climate devastation and know how to do it. This is an important first step of the baby.

What of mass shootings that characterize America today? They are becoming more common, virtually one a day in 2023. Those enamored of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Amendment spread its illusory interpretation that it intended to provide private citizens with any number and kind of weapons and ammunition. The wording of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Amendment is: ‘A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.’ It is in order to maintain a militia, it reads, that we must not prevent people to bear and keep arms. It is for the sake of a standing army that the right soldiers, not private citizens, should not be prevented from possessing arms. This dates back to the historical need for states to raise standing armies, to allow these armies, or militia, to bear arms.

For arms were not provided by the government. Citizens who were to become soldiers needed to bring their own arms. For this, they needed a legal justification.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf., Mark Kane, “Norwegians Replaced A Fifth Of Their Cars With All-Electric Ones,” InsideEVs, January 1, 2023, https://insideevs.com/news/628846/norway-fifth-car-fleet-electric/#:~:text=Before%202025%2C%20a%20third%20of,expected%20to%20be%20zero%2Demission.&text=Norway%20is%20at%20the%20forefront,the%20country%20are%20all%2Delectric.
This was the purpose of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} amendment, very clearly stated in the grammar of the English language. Of course, no one envisioned the type of weapons of mass destruction that those who claim that they follow the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Amendment maintain should be their right to purchase and to carry, fully armed wherever they go. Even in the Wild West of America during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when those who carried guns went into a saloon, they were required to park them at the door.

The argument is that it is mentally disturbed people who indulge in mass shootings of children in elementary schools and citizens in their daily life in banks, movie theaters, synagogues, churches, mosques, and shopping malls. The point is that these mentally ill people could do no harm if they did not have access to weapons, especially military grade weapons of mass destruction. In more civilized countries, in New Zealand and Australia, at the first instance of a mass shooting, weapons were banned, and citizens turned in their weapons to be melted into metal.

My point is, at least one of the dangers that we face, that of mass destruction of a nuclear war, can be averted by taking a clear and simple measure, to wit, the abolition of nuclear weapons. We do not consider it utopian to turn in our weapons as in the case of New Zealand and Australia. We do not consider it utopian to ban private weapons as is the case in most Asian and European countries. If we can ban weapons on a national basis, why cannot we ban weapons on a global basis? The movement of No First Use is a step in the right direction.

Clearly, much has to be changed. What is most important to start with is the foundation. The foundation of a house is the most important building block. If we do not start with the right foundation, it does not matter how elaborate and how extensive the edifice is that we build. The primary foundation that has to be changed is our view of human nature. As long as we believe that human beings by nature are selfish brutes, prone to violence and devoid of a caring nature, it is not likely that we shall change our practices that strip our planet of its nature and equally unlikely that we shall give up our right to bear arms freely and openly to use against other human beings. For, in the minds of violent persons, the right to bear arms is the right to use arms.

What is needed to make civilization possible is a change in our ideas of the nature of humankind. What is needed is a deep, dedicated, consistent and long-term philosophical and ethical education. Plato calculated that one needed an education until one was at least 50 years old before one could be considered to be a ruler.\textsuperscript{15} Now, whether or not self-consciously, the majority of human beings educated in the West are Hobbesian. The majority of human beings in the Western World, in Western “Civilization,” whether or not they have read Thomas Hobbes, see man as he did, as \textit{Homo homini lupus}, that man is a wolf to man.

\textsuperscript{15} Republic 539d-540ab
What is needed prior to a revolution of society is an inner revolution. A revolution in our idea of what is man. A very crucial ingredient here is the treatment of females. One must remake the idea that man was made first. The new herstory must be that woman was made first and man was made from the breast of the female. Does this not sound more similar to biological reality?

It is a most difficult, but not impossible task. It is important to remember in this task of coming to know the true nature of man that this task be philosophical and not scientific. It does not fall in the realm of artificial intelligence. In scientific methodology, we describe the object of our investigation. This is understood as an objective methodology. We do not allow subjective considerations to affect the data that we are collecting. In natural science our human concerns do not affect the situation that when we add two Hydrogen atoms to one Oxygen atom, we form the molecule of water. We do not create this; it is the independent and objective work of nature.

When the social scientist takes a poll of potential voters, the social scientist does not (or should not) affect the polling. She or he takes the poll of the voters and describes what she or he finds. She or he does not (or should not) alter the data to be described. The work of the scientist is descriptive. The data of the scientist are what she or he finds. The scientist does not create them.

In the case of the introspection of the human being, the nature of the human being is not something apart from the human being to exist and be left undisturbed. The nature of the human being is in the making, is a facere, not a factum. We accept the idea of biological evolution as a scientific explanation of the development of the species. However, we hesitate to accept the validity of the idea of a social evolution. We can become social evolutionists as well as biological evolutionists. Our ideas of ourselves must change and this change can take place at the same time as we attempt to alter our social and political structures so that they enable ethical choices, decisions and actions. We must attack on two fronts at once.

Social Evolution

This idea of social evolution is not to be confused with the social Darwinism of biological reductionism. There are social biologists who attempt to reduce all human activities as serving the cause of biological evolution. This is an entirely different approach.

The approach of social evolution is to consider that in the case of human nature, the subject and the object are the same. This is a core philosophical concept. The object is not separate from the subject.

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Hence, one can prescribe as well as describe human behavior. Just as I may alter my behavior to become less selfish and more altruistic, my subjective change alters my objective nature.

As Aristotle famously wrote, ‘we become just by performing just acts.’\(^\text{17}\) Our behavior shapes our nature. With philosophy we do not merely describe, we prescribe. Our nature is not something static and unchangeable; it changes under our own hands. We can become evil, and we can become good. As it says in Deuteronomy: ‘I have created both Good and Evil; therefore, choose Good.’\(^\text{18}\) This is not a logical choice; it is a moral one.

There is no logic here. However, it does reveal that we have a choice. We can make things better. It is up to us to do so. The outer revolution, the change to society, the change in our eating habits, the change in the way we can creatively cooperate with nature, the change to ethical relations with our fellow human beings and other sentient and non-sentient denizens of the world, this is all dependent on an inner revolution, the revolution of understanding that our true nature is one of compassion, to be the ongoing caretaker of the world.

How do we know that this is our true nature? As the philosopher Aristotle has written, the full development of something is its true nature, the fulfillment of its purpose, its telos, what it is meant to be. The full development of the acorn is the mature oak tree. The oak tree in its maturity is what the oak is meant to be. The acorn is not the nature of the oak tree. It is the beginning of its nature.

The human being in its infancy is not the full nature of the human being. In its self-interest, in its throwing of temper tantrums, the infancy of the human being resembles the current stage of nation states, aggressively displaying their weapons and plunging from time to time into war, much as infants throwing temper tantrums, when they cannot get their way.

The human being in maturity is a nurturing parent. The mature human being is a caretaker of those who are dependent upon her or him. *The full and real nature of the human being is to be a caretaker.*

Since we are not there yet, we need to nurture this nature. Just as a plant needs good soil, moisture and sunlight, human beings need a good political system, equally distributed economic sustainability and ethical relations. While the ancient Greeks thought that ethics found its realization in a political system, we must think that a political system finds its realization in ethical relations.

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\(^{17}\) *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b

\(^{18}\) *Deuteronomy* 30: 15-20.
As Aristotle thought, the purpose of the State was to achieve the good life. Now, we must move beyond the contours of the nation state. In order to achieve the good life, it must be achievable by all planetary citizens. We must become citizens not of any particular nation state, but citizens of the world.

The question is not of this civilization or that civilization. The question is the building of a global civilization with global concerns. A global civilization is a civilization of nations in which there is no violence, no harm doing. The sign of poverty, of homelessness, of migration on a local or a global scale is a mark of violence. We live in a time neither of a state of nature nor a state of civilization. We live in a state of oozing barbarism marked by unprecedented violence, where child soldiers have become murderers. We not only murder our children, but our children murder our adults. This is new in history. This is something new under the sun. And this is not good.

We need an inner revolution, a philosophical revolution. We need to envision ourselves and our sorority and fraternity of humankind as one family, as it is stated in Confucius’ Analects, where all men within the four oceans are brothers. 19

This was known long ago in the 5th century BCE. And yet, we are far from achieving this ideal. We must work together, as a community of scholars to bring ourselves to change. We cannot leave the change of the future in the hands of the governments of the world, to international organizations or simply to the sheer passage of time. The governments of the world cannot act in time to save the planet. International organizations are too beset by politics. Time by itself is a passive enabler. It will enable the inequities of power to reduplicate themselves. Those in power increase in power; those who are weak become weaker. The gap between the rich and the poor will continue to widen.

It is us, as educators, as philosophers, as ethical, as global scholars, that is, as lovers of wisdom, who must assume the role of the philosophical Atlas of the world. 20 We must hold up the world. For, if we do not, the world will not stand on its own. Our task is to be builders, to build a global civilization. For a global civilization to come into being, it requires a plan, and it requires planning. It is the philosophers of the world, those who hold the repositories of wisdom in their minds and hearts to whom we must turn. To turn to all the civilizations that have existed in the past to mine the wisdom that all have to offer, those are the resources that we have at our command. We must not turn against each other; we must cooperate with each other. We must take the wisdom of Confucius together with the insights of Rousseau and Montesquieu, in short; we need a new Enlightenment.

19 Analects, XII, 5.
I shall finish with two final points. Asia influenced the European Enlightenment. This knowledge that existed in the eighteenth century has become forgotten and only recently remembered. We need to delve into our history to know that revolutions in human history have been fertilized by the philosophies of multiple civilizations. Voltaire cites Confucius as a source for breaking free from the superstitions and dogmas of the religion of his time. In our current epoch, it is not religion that possesses an iron fist that suppresses humankind. The oppression of mankind has taken on a different oppressor or, I should say, oppressors. Capitalism has, in many instances, as Marx had not envisioned, turned into feudalism. What is our clear and present danger now are rogue states, that is, states that like feudal lords of old, feud with each other and vie for supremacy. Extraordinary technological progress in communication and transportation has brought nations closer together. Ethical relations have not progressed to keep up with such technological advances.

As the renowned, innovative French filmmaker who recently passed away at the age of 95, Jean-Luc Goddard, famously quipped, there is, as Aristotle said, always a beginning, a middle and an end. However, as he famously amended, not necessarily in that order.

For Mao Zedong, the PRC passed from capitalism to socialism, in the order that Marx envisioned. Now, it is passing from socialism to capitalism, an order of change that Marx did not envision.

In terms of the world at large, it would seem that the large nation states practice international capitalism. However, this is only an economic description. In terms of the relations of the world, the states function like feudal lords, warring with each other with nuclear weapons races, tests, and warring threats. We exist now in a period comparable in ancient Chinese historical times to the times of the Warring States. Most of our wars, but not all, remain as cold wars. However, cold wars do not always remain cold. All hot wars were once cold.

What have we to hope? In the time of the warring states of China, great philosophers came into being. Two of the most remarkable, in the history of Chinese thought, Mencius and Zhuangzi, both lived in the time of the Warring States, in the 4th Century, BCE. Perhaps, as in Hegel’s famous image, the owl of Minerva flies at twilight. This is that for which we can hope and that which we must take on as our responsibility.

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We must, as philosophers, as ethicists, as intellectual scholars of civilization, take on our role as guardians of the world. Let us join together to do this. We do not have any other choice.

References


Monitoring Wise Civilization by Creating an Index

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The Wise Civilization Index is to be an algorithmic set of the Sustainable Society Index and Wise Society Index. To practice sustainable activities, people must be wise. It is suggested that a non-governmental organization or an academic center be placed in charge of caring for this index.

Keywords: civilization, civilization future, wise civilization, Death Triangle of Civilization, Sustainable Society Index, Wise Society Index, Wise Civilization Index, ecologism, Semantic Ladder, cognition units, wisdom, knowledge, concept, information, data, brain, mind.

Introduction

The Wise Civilization Index will assess how wise we are in developing and living in a sustainable civilization.

Recently, people have started to worry about the state of the climate. This has been reflected in the finding that the climate temperature should be kept to a growth of below two degrees Celsius by 2100 to save our species from a slow death (The Paris Agreement of 2015). After all, raising the human body temperature by two degrees threatens illness and even death by four degrees. The same (relatively) can be done with Earth. However, apart from the climate, the problem is the depletion of strategic raw materials and the dwindling supply of drinking water. To this end, the concept of the sustainable development of society arose, and then, its index was introduced.

However, monitoring this sustainable society index is not enough for us as a species to survive. For this to happen, people must be wise as they relate to the civilization they create. For this purpose, monitoring of people's wisdom in civilizational proceedings is introduced; at the same time, the Wise Society Index is created. These will enable us to assess our chances of survival as a species in relatively tolerable conditions.

Further development and cyclical updating should be carried out by a non-governmental organization or via a university center, which can count on financial support from UNESCO, the World Bank, or the IMF. This center should also be responsible for training and publishing the index and the results of research and applications. In other situations, the development of non-governmental organizations has enabled the creation of types of rankings successfully.
We should note that the United Nations itself deals with political and inter-governmental matters and is not a knowledge-oriented institution.

**The Plight of Civilization**

The universe gave birth to the solar system and to the Earth, a planet which has remaining roughly four and a half billion years to function until the sun enters a supernova status, burns out and stops heating the planet. It is such a long time that we can consider it an eternity. However, the situation is not very optimistic because Earth is a small planet with insufficient strategic resources. These resources are estimated to be enough to last 5,000 more years; thus, our 6,000-year-old civilization can still last for as long as it has been around—if it is wise. Judging from its present plight, however, civilization is threatened by the Civilization Death Triangle. This is created by three time bombs being structurally planted within: population, ecology, and resources. These can explode as early as 2050. However, if we defend civilization, we might last beyond 2300, when coal is still available. Alternative energy can improve this situation.

![Figure 1. The Fate of Civilization in the Universe](image_url)

The model in Figure 1 shows the fate of civilization in the universe. It follows that man reached the limits of automated civilization in 2000. By that time, the applications of technology had made human life more manageable. Still, since then, increasingly advanced technology has been developing business quickly, stimulating growth of the global population and using up resources fast. Man can be eradicated by the knowledge it has created. The universe's dynamic, combined with human short-sightedness, has caused the plight of civilization.
Civilization as we know it on Earth, that is, creative and automated, has no chance to last forever. It can last up to five thousand years longer, should it be wise and prudent.

The Future of Civilization

The fate of civilization may be already determined, perhaps, but the future of civilization in a timeframe we are accustomed to is determined by the following crises:

A. The crisis of civilization (2050-2300) is caused by the threat of the Civilization Death Triangle (Figure 3), resulting from human lifestyles. Civilization can mitigate this as long as it is wise.

B. The crisis of a small planet, Earth, whose resources will run out by about 5000 CE, may only be mitigated by human will, knowledge, and wisdom – by reducing its population and discovering new energy systems that support the functioning of automated civilization.

C. The crisis of the sun (4.5 billion years away), caused by that star’s becoming extinct, confronts man with a situation that we cannot possibly affect. It is not ruled out, though, that in the event of the activity of an external system, of chaos, possibly humanity can face a new task and an exciting adventure. We can wish that such an outcome could come true.

The model in Figure 2 presents the future of civilization depending on the reaction to the current and planetary crises.

![Fig. 2. The future of civilization depends on the reaction to the current crisis](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol89/iss89/21)
Mitigating the contemporary crisis of civilization resulting from the Civilization Death Triangle is possible only if we transform modern, wasteful civilization into a wise and universal civilization.

**The Need To Rank Civilization Wisdom**

The state of civilization in the 2020s is characterized by uncontrolled population growth that motivates global business to super-consumerism and to the depletion of strategic resources, leading to the Death Triangle of Civilization (Figure 3). This triangle consists of the Population Bomb, the Ecological Bomb, and the Resource Depletion Bomb. These bombs interact strongly with each other, causing an enhanced impact on the deteriorating state of civilization.

![Death Triangle of Civilization](image)

**Fig 3. The Death Triangle of Civilization in the 2020s. (Targowski, 2015a s.60)**

Humanity must impose certain limits to achieve true sustainability in such a situation. We live on a planet with finite resources where continuous growth is impossible. Despite significant technological advances, the natural world will not support much economic or population growth beyond 2100. We have only the next decade to decide which path we will take.

Therefore, for human civilization to survive and develop, societies must be wise. Having big data and vast knowledge is not enough. It is necessary to transform them into the wisdom and will of people to act. Although Big Tech promotes the widespread use of artificial intelligence, it is a strategy that could lead to an even faster collapse of civilization because it will make people redundant.

Therefore, the first step is to monitor civilizational wisdom by indexing and ranking organizations, states, regions, continents, and planets. Human beings are competitive.
We won't know who is the strongest, who is the richest, and who is the cleverest (Erdi 2020). Eventually, based on the ranking, we can find the motivation to correct our actions in specific cases.

**Existing Rankings of Certain Human Activities**

A. Gross National Product per nation (GDP/n)) – This is the popular index ranking productivity of countries.

B. Gross Domestic Income per capita (GDP/c) – This is a trendy index that ranks citizens' income given a country's productivity.

C. The Sustainable Society Index (SSI) – This may be obtained by measuring the following 21 key performance indicators (KPI)\(^1\) and can be updated by the Sustainable Society Foundation

1. Sufficient food
2. Sufficient drink
3. Safe sanitation
4. Education
5. Healthy life
6. Gender equality
7. Income distribution
8. Population growth
9. Good governance
10. Biodiversity
11. Renewable water resources
12. Consumption
13. Energy use
14. Energy savings
15. Greenhouse gases
16. Renewable energy
17. Organic farming
18. Genuine savings
19. G.D.P.
20. Employment
21. Public debt

Using data from scientific institutes and international organizations, the SSI has been developed for 150 countries with data that allows the SSI to be calculated. The resulting SSI scores allow a quick comparison between countries and – as updates become available – show developments over time. The underlying data enable in-depth analysis of the aspects that cause the differences between countries.

A sustainable society is a society (definition provided by the Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987):

- That meets the needs of the present generation.
- That does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- In which each human being can develop in freedom, within a well-balanced society and in harmony with their surroundings.

\(^1\) These KPIs are taken from 21 other indexes listed by Michaela Saisana and Dionisis Philippas (2012)
The application of the SSI is provided for the United States (Figure 5), for Poland (Figure 6), and for Romania (Figure 7).

Figure 4. The Three Spheres of Sustainability [J. Clark, C. and R. Gragg III. (2011)]

Figure 5. Index of American Sustainable Society in 2016. 10-best, 1-worst indicators. The solid line stroke defines the average values for the world.
Figure 6. Index of Polish Sustainable Society in 2016. 10-best, 1-worst indicators. The solid line stroke defines the average values for the world.

Through the ten points obtained for the Sufficient Food and Sufficient Drinking Waters indicator, Romania presents itself in a favorable situation from the viewpoint of sustainable development, representing the Max EU (European Union). The case is not as good for Romania concerning the Safe Sanitation indicator with a value of 8.7, as it means the Min EU, and compared to the Max EU of 10 points, there is a difference of 1.3 points (Balacescu et al. 2022).

Figure 7. Romania's place in the range of SSI values registered in the EU27 states (Balacescu et al. 2022).
In the case of Romania, the SSI is shown to compare its country's position against overall scores for the European Union. It allows analysis of the country's progress and can be used in strategic planning and decision-making aimed at improving prospects for a sustainable future. However, the question is whether a government with questionable sustainability can correct its policy and develop paths for maintained sustainability.

In other words, is a given society wise enough to create the right sustainability policy?

**From Sustainable to Wise Civilization**

Over the last 200 years, civilization practiced three socio-political systems: capitalism, socialism, and communism, as well as their mutations. None of these can control a Universal-Complementary Civilization.

Capitalism, in its present variety of turbo-capitalism, is subservient to global business and its bosses, is steered by lobbyists, and has lost its liberal and democratic nature. Its main objective is to provide excessive profits for the top one percent, the elite. Thus, Apple had $100 billion in liquid capital in 2012 and resolved to pay dividends to its shareholders for the first time in history: $2 for a share worth $600, which means a minimal profit for small capitalists – 0.003%. The bosses (big capitalists) pay themselves regular bonuses of tens of millions of dollars.

It is a strategy of global business to pursue a constant increase in productivity of resources through an ever more significant concentration of firms in a given industry. This leads to monopolizing the market and expanding the range of clients.

Socialism, even in its democratic variety, is too expensive to apply to a population of seven to nine billion people. Communism proved to be a dogmatic system, murderous even for its society and destroying the environment indiscriminately rather than caring for it.

Under these circumstances, a new socio-political system called 'Ecologism' needs to be developed; it is coined from the word “ecology” – the biosphere. The following Targets for the Century ought to be placed before it:

- **Mission**: implementation of the policy of sustainable growth of civilization.
- **Objective**: controlling the growth of the population and using up resources and the environment so that the next generation will have the same conditions for functioning as the one coming before them. This may be achieved by:
1. Reducing the population to five billion.
2. The dissemination of efficient birth control so that the mean average of births per mother would be below two.
3. Securing the indestructibility of the environment by making sure every state uses an acceptable footprint in the ecosystem.
4. Securing elementary education.
5. Doing away with extreme poverty.
6. Promoting the equality of sexes and reinforcing the position of women.
7. Reducing infant mortality.
8. Improving the health of mothers.
10. Developing the global partnership for sustainable development of civilization.

- Strategy: business fosters sufficiency versus efficiency, and society evolves towards a wise society.
- Main policies:
  1. People are more important than markets.
  2. Human health is more important than money.
  3. Sufficiency is more critical than productivity.
  4. Business serves the people and is efficiently controlled by the people.

This new socio-political system, Ecologism, is made up of the following sub-systems:

A. Eco-education – based on eco-knowledge and wisdom.
B. Wise society – trained and educated in eco-education and qualified to make wise decisions.
C. Eco-democracy — all are equal with one another but not with the environment, which is supreme.
D. Eco-justice – any offense against the law must also be evaluated against and possibly punished for the harm being done to the environment.
E. Eco-infrastructure shall function in harmony with nature and protect it from destruction.
F. Deep economy – besides business and administration costs, it includes the environmental and social costs to practical calculations.
G. Deep media shall comprehensively and objectively inform society on the state and progress made within sustainable civilization.

The architecture of the Wise civilization is presented in the model in Figure 8.
The Reality of Developing a Wise Civilization, Fully Eco-Driven

The world is not yet ready to develop an eco-driven Wise Civilization. This is because most politicians, particularly conservative ones, consider ecology a codeword for the political left or, worse, implicitly communism. At the same time, the ongoing efforts to meet ecological challenges have never been more critical than they are today. Because our generation's world is increasingly struggling with interrelated issues such as global climate change, industrial pollution, resource degradation, economic dispossession, and changing patterns of environmental health, one can recognize seven scary facts about climate change as follows:

- Climate change could be irreversible by 2030.
- Greenhouse gas levels are at an all-time high.
- More than one million species face extinction.
- Climate change is creating a refugee crisis.
- Our oceans are dying.
- We use more of the Earth's resources than it can renew.
- Four seasons are changing to two seasons.

However, the most critical bomb of all is the population's uncontrollable growth. This consumes ever more resources and destroys the environment.
Hence, one must tactfully abandon idealistic concepts and propose realistic solutions to move towards the development of not only sustainable but also Wise civilization.

The story of a Wise Civilization will not begin if it is left to the popular *laissez-faire* policy of today. The danger of the collapse of civilization indicates that applying a specific dose of social engineering is necessary. It would consist of a mixed approach, both bottom-up and top-down.

The role of organizations such as the United Nations and an array of governmental agencies is essential, as is the participation of NGOs. Even today, every school and college should seriously develop eco-knowledge and wisdom and train graduates. They will be the candidates for wise citizens, workers, or leaders who will apply wise solutions in their positions, expanding a Wise Society and Wise Civilization.

**From Intuition to Wisdom in Decision-Making**

The concept of wisdom in Western civilization,\(^2\) grouped under the general name philosophy (love of wisdom), was introduced by Thales around the sixth century BCE. Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato later perfected it. Aristotle, considered by many the greatest philosopher in history, recognized that people are not wise because they do not know the purpose of their lives. Subsequently, Western philosophers (following their great teacher) developed their views of the world, believing that wisdom is so trivial that it does not deserve deep study\(^3\).

The progress of information technology in the 21\(^{st}\) Century took over the considerations of what wisdom is, developing units of cognition such as data, information, concept, knowledge, and wisdom, as shown in the Semantic Ladder in Figure 9.

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\(^2\)In ancient Chinese Civilization (about VI century B.C.E., developed by Confucius) wisdom means not just having knowledge, but with that knowledge, also having the capacity to make correct judgments and decisions. If you have "wisdom" you also have reason. You have discretion regarding good and evil, right and wrong, what is acceptable or not acceptable to do. Knowing all of that could be called "wisdom".

\(^3\) Of course, the exceptions are philosophers such as Bernard Russell and Leo Tolstoy who dealt with the concept of wisdom, but in a rather eccentric way.
We will now turn to a definition of the individual units of human cognition, as illustrated by a decision-making situation in a securities investment portfolio of equities traded on the New York stock exchange.

- **Data.** The data could be the Dow Jones index of 10,000 points on a Monday of a given month and year.
- **Information.** The following Tuesday, the Dow Jones could have fallen to 8,000 points, which was 20% less than the day before. The public is informed of this decline. It is rather unpleasant information since it characterizes an index change of minus 20%. This information demands that the investor conceptualizes a new solution.

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4 This model in the literature is known as DIKW, it does not have the unit of concepts. If there is such a unit there is no need for wisdom, since there is nothing on the basis of which to choose which concept is right.
The concept may be about the choice of one of three options. Because the stocks have fallen in price and are cheap, a new package of shares can be bought (C₁); in other words, having slumped so much, they cannot keep falling. Another option (C₂) will be the sale of one's stocks to avoid more considerable losses. Finally, the third solution (C₃) will be to not sell or buy stocks. Now, having three concepts/options of a solution, a judgment needs to be made as to which solution is the best.

Knowledge is a set of principles, rules, and research data that the investor will use to assess each option. Basic knowledge indicates that one should buy shares when they are cheap and sell when they are expensive. Theoretical knowledge might suggest that a decline in the prices of stocks may result from the economy entering a recession. Global knowledge indicates that a war with state X is imminent, increasing needs for the sake of fighting. What universal knowledge implies is that when the economy enters a recession, profits from trading stocks dwindle, but money can be made on trading bills of exchange (bonds).

Wisdom. The investor has received an assessment of the situation in the four categories of knowledge and now must choose between three options/solutions. Since he would lose by selling the stocks, he rejects option C₁. As war is coming, and stocks might increase in value, he does not buy but, instead, decides to keep his shares and waits. So, option C₃ was selected, and time will tell whether this was a good, and hence wise, choice.

The Semantic Ladder Model explains that wisdom is not knowledge but information and data. It is judgment and the choice of concepts of thinking and action.

Moreover, in order for the idea to be correctly formulated, one needs to be well-informed; that is, one must have verifiable data. To make a wise assessment, one needs to have a good application of basic, reasoning, global, universal, digital, virtual, and cosmic knowledge-oriented minds. Not all have such skills and education; therefore, their judgments are not wise within the range of knowledge that a decision-making subject has to have.

This is not to say that if one has a wide range of knowledge-containing minds available, he or she has a guarantee of wise judgment. There are other factors, such as emotions, intuition, luck, the will to implement a wise action, and so forth. All that is circumscribed as the art of living. The word 'art' here refers to an intuitive and innovative approach to the available and suitable principles of judgment and the ability to create new regulations and break rules when they are outdated.

Based on the presented central cognition units, wisdom is defined as follows:
Human wisdom in daily conduct results from the proper judgment and from the choice of a solving concept using one or several minds, such as basic, reasoning, global, universal, digital, virtual, cosmic, and hybrid.

The quality of wisdom depends on the art of a given person, which results from their genetics, character, morality, education, practice, relationships, environment, and the ability to draw on the wisdom of family, profession, civilization, and other pearls of wisdom.

The wisdom of an individual (or the organization they create) must result from their responsibility for the favorable fate of the surrounding civilization. The effects of wisdom are survival, health, life, fulfillment of goals, cognition, solution, action, suggestion, advice, opinion, decision, and others.

In short, the definition of wisdom is as follows:

Wisdom is right judgment supported by knowledge and right choice in the context of the art of living.

This definition is illustrated in Figure 10 at right, the model of the universal wisdom cycle based on the “info-logical” and psychological information (knowledge and wisdom) approach, where the remaining approaches — philosophical (life goals) and anthropological and political (civilizations) — are recorded in Great Data, Great Knowledge, and Great Wisdom.

Figure 10: The Model of the Wisdom Cycle (without the updating of Big Data, Big Knowledge, and Big Wisdom) (Krawczyk and Targowski, 2019, p. 25)
Reviewing Attributes Suitable for the Ranking of Wise Civilization

A civilization is an info-material structure advanced by humans to cope with themselves, nature, and their creator successfully. It is a vibrant “interface,” one which differentiates humans from animals. The concept of “civilization” is applied to several aspects of civilization: to the scope of religious ideas, to the level of duties, to the platform of technology, to the extent of manners, to the level of knowledge, and so forth. It can refer to a type of city or a relationship between men and women in a family, tribe, or society. Distinct types of law and their applications also reflect civilization.

Perhaps it is the time to block out first and contemporary definitions of civilizations (Targowski 2009b) by emphasizing the following essential attributes:

1) Large society
   a. Specializing in labor.
   b. Self-differentiating.
   c. Sharing the same knowledge system.

2) Space and Time
   a. Autonomous fuzzy reification.
   b. Distinguishing an extended area or period.
   c. Reification is not part of a bigger entity.

3) Cultural system, values, and symbol-driven
   a. Communication-driven (e.g., literate and electronic media).
   b. Religion, wealth, and power-driven.

4) The infrastructural system is technology-oriented by, first, at least one of the following:
   a. Urban infrastructure.
   b. Agricultural Infrastructure.
   c. Other infrastructures (Industrial, Information, and so forth).

5) Cycle-driven
   a. Mounting, growing, declining, and falling over time.

Based on these attributes, a composite definition of civilization may be arrived at as follows:

Civilization is a large society living in an autonomous, fuzzy reification (invisible-visible), which is not part of a larger society, and which exists over an extended period.
It specializes in labor and is differentiated from other civilizations by the development of its advanced cultural system controlled by communication, religion, wealth, power, and the distribution of the same knowledge/wisdom system among complex urban and agricultural infrastructures as well as others, such as industrial and information infrastructures. It also advances in a cycle, rising, growing, declining, and falling.

A graphic model of civilization is shown in Figure 11.

![Figure 11: A Systemic Model of Civilization (Targowski 2015b:51)](image)

A short definition of a specific civilization is as follows:

A civilization is a complex organism of the compatible, interactive entities of society, culture (including religion), and infrastructure in a large frame of territory and time, frequently embracing several nations and spanning centuries/millennia. It has a past, present, and future state.

**Employing an Indicators Concept to Create The Wise Civilization Index**

It is possible to design an ideal indicator system of civilization, but its implementation would be challenging, if not impossible. Therefore, it is not feasible for now because it is necessary to consider almost 200 countries that should be included in the ranking. Therefore, a strategy will be used to use existing indexes, which should optimally characterize key indicators of the processes being implemented.

Hence, the following assumptions are made:
• The Sustainability Society Index is fully adopted and provided by the Sustainable Society Foundation.
• Wise Society Index will have its promoter soon. It will measure how wise a given society is in pursuing a sustainable society.

The Wise Society Index can be constructed within the following dimensions, all reflecting key elements of Civilization (Figure 12), indicating knowledge-supported choices (apparently wisdom) concerning the main components of a civilization:

• Large society:
  o The Life Expectancy Index indicates the end product of wise living.
  o The Global Knowledge Index is the container of scientific data, rules, procedures, and laws providing the instrument for evaluating viable solutions and choices while applying wisdom.

• Cultural system:
  o Digital Skills Gap Index shows how the application of computers can facilitate problem-solving.
  o The Number of Expats Index tells how many foreigners want to work in a given country for a better life.

• Infrastructural System:
  o Global Climate Risk Index indicates measures habitants choose to control climate deterioration.
  o The Sanitation & Drinking Water Index shows choices by habitants to secure a clean environment and drinking water.
  o The World Energy Twofold Index tells how to secure energy for living. It contains two rankings; energy security (the effectiveness of management of domestic and external energy sources, as well as the reliability and resilience of energy infrastructure) and energy equity (accessibility and affordability). These rankings are taken from the World Energy Trilemma Index.
The algorithmizing of the Wise Civilization Index (WCI) for selected countries

The conceptualization of WCI will be provided in the case of the United States, Poland, and Romania.

- Sustainable Society Index (SSI 2016)

Table 1. The conversion of selected countries' SSI into WCI (2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WCI</th>
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• Wise Society Index
  o Life Expectancy Index (LEXI)

Table 2. The conversion of selected countries' LEXI into WCI (2020)

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Source: [https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy](https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy) (4.18/2018)

• Global Knowledge Index (GKNI)

Table 3. The conversion of selected countries' GKNI into WCI (2021)

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Digital Skills Gap Index (DSGI)

Table 4. The conversion of selected countries' DSGI into WCI (2020)

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Number of Expats Index (NEXI)

Table 5. The conversion of selected countries' NEXI into WCI (2020)

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Source: https://www.william-russell.com/international-health-insurance/expat-index/(4.18/2018)
Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI)

Table 6. The conversion of selected countries' GCRI into WCI (2020)

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Source: Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_1.pdf (4.18/2018)

Sanitation & Drinking Water Index (SDWI)

Table 7. The conversion of selected countries' SDWI into WCI (2020)

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Source: https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/component/h2o (4.19.2023)

³ Assumed data of USA
World Energy Twofold Index (WETI)

Table 8. The conversion of selected countries' WETI into WCI (2022)

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Source: https://trilemma.worldenergy.org/ (4.19.2023)

The Wise Society Index (WSI)

The Wise Society Index (WSI) is calculated as follows (Table 9)

\[
WSI = LEXI + GKNI + DSGI + NEXI + GCRI + SDWI + WETI
\]

Table 9. The Wise Society Index (for selected countries)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>WSI</th>
<th>LEXI</th>
<th>GKNI</th>
<th>DSGI</th>
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The Wise Civilization Index (WCI)

The Wise Civilization Index (WCI) is calculated as follows (Table 10)

\[
WCI = (SSI \times WSI):100
\]
Table 10. The Wise Civilization Index (for selected countries)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIVILIZATION</th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>70</td>
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</table>

The interpretation of the WCI is such that every sixth decision regarding civilizational activities in China is wise (100:17.5=5.7). In Kenya, only every eight such choices are wise. While in Switzerland, every second decision concerning civilizational actions is wise. In Poland and Romania, only every 3rd decision is wise and civilization oriented. Needless to say, to live in a wise civilization, one needs to make almost every decision wise.

The WCI allows for distinct categories of orientation. It can be calculated at the level of an enterprise, a city, a region, a country, a continent, and the world. Furthermore, it can be analyzed at the level of different indicators to find out what should be improved to be on the right path to the development and operations of wise civilization.

Conclusion

1. Only a Wise Civilization can prolong the functioning of civilization into subsequent centuries and maybe even millennia.
2. The world is not yet ready to implement the Wise Civilization eco-driven since its concept is not widely known. Therefore, the first step in monitoring the security of the current civilization is to determine whether it practices wise sustainability in people's decision-making.
3. Only wise people can practice Wise Civilization. A few wise activists are not enough to develop and operate a Wise Civilization. More legal acts must be implemented at all levels of civilization.
4. The development (improvements like the assessment of available minds in a given area of interest) and the actualization of the WCI should be carried out by an NGO entity which can be independent or through a university center.
The latter should provide leadership in updating academic programs and publishing a journal (as a subset of the *Comparative Civilizations Review*), reference books, and textbooks.

5. The initial funding for this project should be provided by a given NGO or a university, which should later be funded by UNESCO or other centers of the UN.

Bibliography

Balacescu, A.; Zaharia, M.; Gogonea, R.-M.; Caruntu, G.A. The Image of Sustainability in European Regions Considering the Social Sustainability Index. *Sustainability* 2022, 14, 13433. https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013433


Comparative Civilizations Review

The Mything Link: Why Sacred Storytelling Is a Key Human Survival Strategy

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Independent Scholar

Abstract

For several decades, societies across the globe have faced a real existential threat with challenges such as global warming. Yet no one in the elite has been able to do anything to improve conditions. We seem to be trapped in the kind of situation that Einstein described when he discussed problems that can’t be solved with the logic that created them.

How can we find a new way of thinking that may allow us to address these challenges? This paper suggests a way of answering this question by exploring three others: Have other societies faced equally real existential threats? How did those that survived address them? And what does their survival mean for us today?

Drawing on work in cognitive neuroscience, the paper examines myth as a neurobiologically grounded process for addressing such problems, and notes that other societies facing existential challenges have been able to address them by changing the way their people think through reinventing their mythologies. It concludes with some ideas on the mythic reinvention that may be occurring today, which would make a more effective way of thinking available.

“What I say ought to be taken as ‘propositions,’ ‘game openings’ where those who may be interested are invited to join in – they are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc.” – Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” (2000: 224)

Introduction

From global warming to the possibility of nuclear war or another mass extinction, societies across the world face a real existential threat today. Equally upsetting, such threats have been discussed for decades; yet we have been able to do … nothing. So, we are all trapped in the situation that Einstein described – problems that can’t be solved with the logic that created them. We need a new way of thinking about the world, but what can we academics do about these threats to human survival? One line of action is to ask these three questions: Have other societies faced equally real existential threats? How did those that survived address them? What does their survival mean for us today?
In examining these questions, I reached some surprising conclusions. For instance, I realized that religion is far more than a means of worship or comforting those who suffer or even a way that the political elites manipulate those they govern.

History shows us that religion has been a process for understanding the world, a critical survival strategy that enables cultures to create a shared interpretation of the world, group identity, and behavioral norms. At the heart of its power, religion allows cultures to manage what sociologist Robert Bellah calls the “culturally, symbolically constructed world” of daily life (2011: xv). In this paper, we’ll focus on this symbolic management at times when societies faced existential challenges that demanded new ways of thinking about the world. Those societies that did survive moved toward those new ways by reinventing their myth (Baskin and Bondarenko 2019), changing the way their members experienced the world.

My purpose here is to explore one element of religion: How myth drives cultural evolution, as part of a creative feedback loop that enables societies to survive. This idea that religious myth has been a human survival strategy is not part of today’s mainstream narrative about religion. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, for example, tells us that religion has no “direct survival value of its own” (2006: 200). Much mainstream thought about religion suggests that myth is a superstitious, untrue way to explain what science explains more accurately. Anthropologist Scott Atran, for example, expresses this position when he characterizes myth as stories about the “counterfactual and counterintuitive world of supernatural agents,” who religion demands people in any community worship with “hard-to-fake commitment” (2002: 4, author’s italics). Atran’s position dominates the leading school of religious studies, the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), where one of the key issues, not surprisingly, is why rational human beings would choose to worship clearly fictional deities.

Despite my differences with much of what I’ve read of CSR, I want to acknowledge that I am following the path its scholars blazed, drawing deeply on both cognitive neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. In taking this path further, I want to travel through four topics:

1. An example of how mythic reinvention enabled one society to survive;
2. An examination of myth-making as behavior grounded in neurobiology;

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1 In fact, religion as worship actually seems to be mostly limited to Western monotheism, as anthropologist Marshall Sahlins points out in his last book (2022).
2 Perhaps the most interesting of the analyses of why so many people believe in gods is that of psychologist Ara Norenzayan in his book Big Gods (2015). For Norenzayan, the evolution of the big gods of world religions is explained by the power of great, punishing gods to minimize conflict. As he puts it, “Watched people are nice people.” This position has at least two problems: First, for the vast majority of human history, when most humans lived in hunter-gatherer bands, gods were not watching and punishing. Second, China, one of the two largest cultures in the world, maintains order, not through a punishing god, but through social control, discussed toward the end of this paper.
3. An explanation of myth-making as part of a feedback loop that drives cultural evolution;
4. And, finally, what all this suggests about addressing today’s existential problems.

I present these ideas in the spirit of Foucault’s comment in the epigraph. Many of the ideas I’m presenting here are still new and need to be further researched and developed. So I’m not claiming to have found the “truth” about religion and myth. Rather, I’m offering an alternative way to think about religion’s role in cultural evolution, at a time when we desperately need to think differently in order to evolve cultures that can help us survive.

Let me begin with an example of why I believe religion is such a powerful survival strategy.

The Redactor’s Mythic Twist

In 587 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon razed Jerusalem, capital of the Israelite Southern Kingdom, Judah, to the ground; destroyed the Temple of Solomon, where its God was believed to reside; and marched most of the remaining elite of Judah into captivity in Babylon, where they would remain for about a half century (Akenson, Surpassing Wonder, 1998). By all rights, Judah’s culture should have dissolved and its society should have disappeared, just as that of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, had in 727 BCE, when the Assyrians demolished its capital and led its elite into exile. The Northern Kingdom would disappear, leading to the legends of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Faced with this possibility, a member of Judah’s elite performed what could easily be mistaken for a miracle.

This “miracle-maker” was probably the son or daughter of one of the exiles Nebuchadnezzar abducted to Babylon. Sometime around 550 BCE, this person gathered the written versions of the mythologies of both Judah and Israel and began editing them into a single narrative. He or she is often called the “Redactor” – that is, the final editor. What the Redactor produced was much of the Hebrew Bible as we know it today, a history of the relationship between the people of Israel and their God, beginning with Genesis and the creation of the heavens and the earth, and ending in Kings II, when Cyrus the Great, the Persian King, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem from Babylon, about 560 BCE.

In editing the pre-exilic texts, the Redactor inserted a powerful mythic twist. Throughout the Middle East of this period, people believed that being conquered meant that your god had either abandoned you or was too weak to defend you (Walton, 2006). Had the people of Judah also thought this way, as the people of the Northern Kingdom apparently had, their culture probably would have disappeared.
But the Redactor turned all that around: *God had not abandoned Judah.* Rather, by continuing to worship Canaanite gods such as Ba‘al and Astarte, *the people of Judah had abandoned God,* and He had used the Babylonians to punish them for their disloyalty! Their God was not merely the god of the people of Judah. He was the One God; all other gods were false.

In this way, the Redactor’s myth seems to have transformed the Jewish people from victims of the Babylonians, into active agents who had brought catastrophe on themselves. Largely because of this mythic twist, the Romans could disperse the Jews from their homeland in 70 CE, driving them out of Israel, without destroying their culture. The catastrophes that would repeatedly dog them – being thrown out of England in 1290, for instance, or out of Spain in 1492 – would be transformed from meaningless acts of prejudice and greed by Others into punishment from God for acts which they themselves had committed.

The Redactor had rewritten the culture’s myth and given its people a new way to think about a world where they would be repeatedly “victimized.” Except that they no longer needed to think of themselves as victims. Partly as a result, Jewish culture is still vibrant today. Not only that. The Redactor’s work would create what we think of as Western monotheism and set the stage for Christianity and Islam. In turn Christianity would dominate life in Europe for more than a millennium and a half and, as we will see, provide the foundation for Western Science. The world we live in today is in many ways the result of this re-creation of the mythology of Judah and Israel in the middle of the sixth century BCE, allowing the Redactor’s culture to adapt and survive.

This kind of mythic reinvention has happened repeatedly, as societies developed new ways of dealing with rapidly changing worlds. But before we examine how myth enabled them to adapt, I want to make the case that we humans are neurobiologically born myth-makers.

**Myth-making as Sacred Storytelling**

What is myth? In casual conversation, people often use it to refer to false explanations, such as the Flat Earth Theory. They also use it to describe a fanciful story about gods or spirits, such as Leda and the Swan or Chinese stories of the Monkey King. In a variation of myth as this sort of story about the gods, some people think of their own stories of the gods as “true,” while the stories of people with different beliefs are “just myths.” Recently, I saw an Internet post asking why we talk about “Christian religion” but “Norse mythology.”

Beyond this casual use, myth is very much in the eyes of the beholder. We’ve already noted Atran’s conception of myth as counterfactual stories about supernatural beings. In other approaches:
• Sigmund Freud, with the Oedipus complex, and Carl Jung, with his “mythic archetypes,” treat myth as a matter of people’s psychological dynamics.
• Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1954) and sociologist Emile Durkheim (2008), focus on how myth validates a society’s structure and practices.
• Philosopher Mircea Eliade (1968) examines myth as a path toward a deeper spiritual life.
• Philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1955) describes it as “primitive” thought that preceded science.
• Anthropologist Clifford Geertz explains that myth is “a system of symbols … formulating conceptions of a general order of existence” (1973).

From my perspective, all of these are accurate but partial. For me, myth is the “stories” with which a community expresses its shared understanding of the often mysterious invisible forces that its members confront. As historian David Christian puts it, myth – he calls it “origin story” – presents “a shared map of understanding that shows members of the community their place in a rich, beautiful, and sometimes terrifying universe” (Christian 2018: 8). Before examining this definition, it’s worth explaining exactly what I mean in the overused word “story.” Any story includes important details taken from all possible details in a world, real or imagined, and orders them so that the story can be coherent and meaningful (Boje, 2001). This type of story is generally but not always narrative, as we’ll see in the many different kinds of mythic stories – from the spirit world of shamanism to the many gods of Ancient Egypt or Vedic India, the Redactor’s One True God to China’s Way of Heaven (the Tao), or Francis Bacon’s discussion of the scientist as torturing Nature to capture its secrets in order to enhance human life.

The power of myth arises from its many functions. Mythologist Joseph Campbell (2004) points to four – they help us make meaning in a sometimes horrible world; express a symbolic order for the cosmos; justify the community’s social system; and map life’s psychological transitions. We will focus on the first two of these functions. Before we go on to the neurobiological basis of myth, I want to emphasize one last thing: In expressing a community’s symbolic order, myth is not a “finished” story – a verbal “thing,” if you like. Rather, as in the Redactor’s reinvention, myth continually shifts as the world of its community changes. In fact, we’ll be better served thinking in terms of myth-making as an ongoing cultural process that reflects anthropologist J. Milton Yinger’s religious feedback loop. For Yinger, a group’s conditions shape its myth, and that myth drives group behavior, feeding back into shifts in the group’s conditions (1970: 89). In this way, myth-making allows communities to evolve.

3 For a strong, brief overview of many of these approaches to myth, see Segal (2015).
When those invisible forces that they face shift, myth-making allows them to adapt to those forces, reinventing their thinking and behavior as part of cultural evolution, a key survival strategy.

As noted, my approach follows that of scholars in CSR, but takes it several steps further. For instance, much work in CSR focuses on specific brain “modules” – networks in the brain dedicated to specific tasks – that these scholars believe shape myth-making. In this way, psychologist Justin Barrett argues that one such module, the hypersensitive agency detection device (HADD), evolved to search for agents (especially predators) that threatened us so that we can respond quickly to survive. The HADD will “identify things – objects, shadows, strange lights – as agents, even given only slight evidence” (2012: 40). As a result, when we see the work of invisible forces – causing, for example, the birth of a child or a flood – the HADD leads us to assume it’s the work of agents, the spirits, gods and goddesses of myth who, as Atran tells us, must be propitiated.

While the idea of such brain modules is controversial (“Modularity of Mind” 2017), it doesn’t contradict my model of myth. As I’ll explain, the human brain/mind does need to know why things happen, and thinking in terms of agency seems to be a key way to do that. What I’m trying to do is create an expanded model of myth – a model that applies a more global understanding of how cognitive neurobiology tells us our brain/minds work. I’ll focus on two key issues here. First, we’ll explore the process of perception, by which we transform the chaotic world around us into what neurobiologist Michael Gazzaniga (2011) calls “make-sense stories.” Then we’ll examine how this storytelling drives a feedback loop that enables human communities to adapt to their changing environments.

“Rube Goldberg” Perception

When I look around the office where I’m writing this essay, it feels as if my eyes are recording exactly what’s “out there,” like an organic HD video camera, passively receiving an imprint of the world as it is. Cognitive neuroscientists have found that perception is much more like a Rube Goldberg machine, which goes through more than 15 steps to crack a soft-boiled egg. The perceptual models we experience are like the maps on your GPS as you drive. They reduce all the details of the territory you’re driving through to what you need to get where you’re going. Cognitive neurobiologist Daniel Hofmann (2020), for instance, suggests that the purpose of perception is not to show us what is actually there; rather, perception hides vast amounts of information so that we see what we need to survive, a “tiny subset of the real patterns in [our] world” (Dennett 2017: 127).

I use the term “brain/mind” as a way of avoiding the controversy over whether the study of the brain (neuroscience) and mind (cognitive science) should be considered separately or together. From my point of view, either approach leads roughly to the same conclusions. So I discuss the brain/mind (cognitive neuroscience).
Consider vision. As light hits the eyes, it’s conducted to the retina at the back of each eye. Each retina has more than 100 million rod and cone cells, which turn the light into electric impulses that travel to the brain through the optic nerve. The millions of points of information that these impulses provide—a field of points of information—are evidence of what’s actually happening in the world out there. This field is routed through the thalamus, which acts as a sort of relay station, and then processed in about 30 areas of my brain’s cortex, each of which performs a specific function.

This field of information points is decoded into images, and this processed material then goes to what Gazzaniga calls the “interpreter” module of the brain’s left frontal cortex. There, it’s mixed with memories and filtered through the mental models. These mental models are networks of nerve cells that store what people have learned and, so, what they expect the world to be and not to be. Once the interpreter module has mixed sense information with memory, this combination is processed through the related mental models. If what a person senses doesn’t fit in with their mental models, the unconscious mind may filter the inconvenient information out of what the person will actually perceive. As professor of psychiatry Daniel Siegel puts it, mental models allow us to “filter our ongoing perceptions and prejudge our experiences” (2010: 152), shaping what we perceive by removing details that might make the world seem incoherent (or even meaningless).5

In this way, the brain/mind produces a series of possible scenarios. Because they exist so that we can make decisions that will enhance our survival, these scenarios have to be coherent—everything has to fit together to make sense. Coherence is so important that, when there’s an important part of these make-sense stories that we don’t know, the unconscious brain/mind makes up the elements and will present it to our perception as “true.” This process is called “confabulation,” and, while I was surprised to learn that the brain/mind does it, I also recognized that this fact explained far too many situations where I was sure I knew what was happening but was painfully wrong. In the last step of the process before the scenario becomes conscious, the subconscious settles on the scenario that seems most likely to ensure survival and delivers it to the conscious mind.

That, cognitive neurobiologists tell us, is how our organic GPS works. All this takes one or two seconds. In this process, the nervous system constructs the perceptual models that each of us use to make sense of the world so that we can survive. As a result, we “never, under any circumstances [perceive] ... the object ‘out there’” (Laughlin et al. 1990: 337; authors’ italics). That is, we live in a virtual reality, composed of symbols of an actual reality that we simply can’t experience directly.

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5 To get a feeling for how powerful this filtering is, see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJF698U2vo.
Yet, we’re so comfortable with the process – and so used to it helping us survive – that most people assume that we do perceive the world “out there”.

For any of us to survive, the story-like perceptual models our conscious minds receive have to answer three questions (Gazzaniga, 2011). The brain processes two of them in the amygdala in less than a second: 1) What’s happening? and 2) What should I do? Whether confronted with a lion on the savannas of Kenya or a yellow light turning red in London, our brain/minds immediately answer those two questions. The resulting conscious perceptions enable us to choose to fight or run from the lion and to stop for or speed up at the yellow light. People who can’t answer these questions in a way that lets them succeed in the world probably won’t survive.

The other perceptual question is: 3) Why did that happen? The brain/mind processes this question in the neo-cortex, a little after the first two questions. People who can answer accurately are much more likely to survive, because the answers can be integrated into their mental models. On the other hand, when events don’t conform to the expectations of our mental models, we can expect to feel disturbingly anxious. For instance, this clash between the expectations of our mental models and the facts we experience seems to have helped create the discomfort people around the globe have felt as we struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic during the early 2020s.

It’s through answering these three perceptual questions, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, that we are able to act and survive. As a result, we Homo sapiens are, neurobiologically, storytelling animals. When we experience an event, especially one that’s not familiar, our brain/minds create a story-like model of the world that explains what happened, what we should do, and why it happened. When those events are the result of the invisible, often mysterious forces that surround us – whether terrifying, like the death of a child, or wonderful, like the sense of being one with the universe – our brain/minds are inclined to create stories that can become myths, using symbols such as spirits or gods to represent those mysterious forces. That is, we are also neurobiologically myth-makers.

Part of what makes us myth-makers is that we often need to find ways of answering these perceptual questions for whole societies. Take the case of the Redactor. For him, and his society, the answer to the first question was obvious. What happened? Judah had been invaded, its Temple destroyed, and its elite marched to a far-off land. How should the people of Judah react? At first, the answer to this second question was unanswerable. But when the Redactor turned to the third question, an answer appeared to the second: Why had Judah been conquered?

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6 There are actually two routes to the choice of response to any event. Most of the time, the results of this process are sent to the neo-cortex where a decision is generally made on a subconscious level, taking between one and two seconds. However, if the amygdala recognizes the situation as threatening, a response may be sent to the body directly through the spinal chord. This takes less than a second.
The Redactor’s answer: Because its people had not worshipped only the One True God. At that point, the appropriate response – the one that would allow the society to survive – was clear: The people of Judah should stop worshipping other gods and live according to the laws of God.

The Myth-making Feedback Loop

From this perspective, then, myth-making is not merely the counterfactual storytelling that Atran identifies. Rather, it is the way human communities answer the three perceptual questions when they experience events that evoke awe or terror. In the face of a natural catastrophe or the healing of a valued member of the group, being attacked by another group or an abundant harvest, myth creates “sacred stories” to understand those events. That is, myth symbolizes the invisible forces, attributing agency to spirits, ancestors, or deities. Within any community, these stories would be “debated, disputed, filtered” in “narrative exchanges about reality” (Donald 1991: 258), eventually becoming myth. In smaller communities, such as hunter-gatherer bands, these myths are often put in final form by a trusted storyteller, perhaps an elder or the group’s shaman. In larger communities, these sacred stories are usually developed, if not created, by the group’s elite.7

The key issues here are that this myth-making is a biologically grounded process that fulfills several important tasks. Those tasks include creating a shared way to interpret the world and group identity and storing much of the group’s collective learning about how to respond to awe- and terror-evoking events.

The science of how myth affects human culture is the subject of an underappreciated book, Brain, Symbol and Experience (1990), written by a group of “biogenetic structuralists” – anthropologist Charles Laughlin, science writer John McManus, and professor of psychiatry Eugene d’Aquili. In the book, they draw mainly on cognitive neuroscience and anthropology to explore how we perceive, know, and respond to the world. For these co-authors, the critical function of myth is to express the shared way of interpreting the world that enables members of any society to cooperate. While Laughlin and his co-authors focus on the cognitive neurobiology of the resulting “cycle of meaning” and how it allows for deeply spiritual experience, their work also suggests how the cosmology expressed in myth seems to create the adaptive dynamic that drives cultural evolution.8

7 In The Power of Ritual in Prehistory (2018), Brian Hayden discusses the archaeological evidence that now suggests secret societies seem to have arisen among complex hunter-gatherer communities about the time of the end of the Ice Age. They were composed mostly of their society’s elite to create and manage the religious rituals that helped them maintain their power.

8 In the cycle of meaning, the biogenetic structuralists explain the way any society’s cosmology reflects its symbolic order and leads to its myth, which in turn leads to ritual. This combination of myth and
Here we come to a key distinction that scholars of CSR largely overlook. From the earliest myths that we know, the world is presented as both chaos – a frighteningly random series of things and events – and cosmos – a “systemic, multicameral, dynamic, and organic whole” (Laughlin, et al. 1990: 214). In some ways, myth is about living in a world that keeps moving between chaos and cosmos and often emphasizes what at least appears to be the ongoing battle between the two. While Western monotheism, emerging since the Axial Age, has characterized this battle as between the forces of “good” and “evil,” over human history, the battle has more often been between order and chaos.

Perhaps the most powerful myth examining order and chaos in pre-Modern times is the Ancient Egyptian story of the deities Isis and Osiris, Seth and Horus, which examines the cycle of birth, death and rebirth so important to Ancient Egyptian culture. In this myth, Isis represents fertility, and Osiris, the abundance produced by the Nile River. They rule Egypt as consorts, until Osiris’ brother Seth, representing chaos, becomes jealous and kills Osiris. Isis brings him back to life long enough for him to impregnate her with Horus, who comes to represent order. When Horus grows up, he begins an ongoing battle with Seth. In many versions of the myth, their battle is not won or lost; it is part of the process of life, so that the pharaoh represents the integration of order and chaos (Assmann 2002). In some ways, this struggle between order and chaos is the prototype of mythic conflict.

The ability to experience the world as ordered cosmos grows from what some scholars identify as the last evolutionary adaptation that allowed “archaic” Homo sapiens to become fully “modern,” enabling our ancestors to organize their experience around a symbolic order, such as Egypt’s cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Anthropologist Terrence Deacon describes this ability to “inhabit a world full of abstractions, impossibilities and paradoxes” as the “defining attribute of human beings” (1997: 21-22). Donald goes further. “[S]ymbols,” he notes, “‘define’ the world (rather than vice versa)” (1991: 219).

Developing this ability to organize their world symbolically marked the beginning of an adaptive cycle that continues today. Any society’s cosmology seems to reflect its members’ ongoing interactions with their environment. That is, the symbolic order that characterizes their cosmos is the product of their ongoing experiences in day-to-day life, especially their most critical challenges.

9 In The Matter with Things, vol. II (2022), Iain McGilchrist discusses the advantages of understanding opposites as complementary (as in the yin/yang), rather than mutually exclusive. He makes a strong case for evolution being the result of the interaction between such opposites as order and chaos.

10 For an overview of how this worked in several pre-Axial Age cultures, see Armstrong 2005: 45-57.
In this way, symbolic order of agricultural states, such as Ancient China or Egypt, will be very different from those that depend on herding, as with the Indo-European steppe dwellers in the Caucasus. The cosmology that forms then becomes manifested in the culture’s myth, ritual, and art. Group members learn their shared identity and way of interpreting the world as they participate in these activities, all of which shape their behavior (Laughlin, et al. 1990).

This behavior will, of course, affect the environment of any society’s members. If the results of their behavior are life-enhancing, this cycle can continue with only minor shifts. Over time, and especially in literate societies where myth is written (and therefore less flexible), changes in the environment can require new myths, resulting in cultural evolution. Sometimes, the need for those changes arises from the success produced by the society’s mythology; sometimes, outside forces make new ways of living in the world, and even a new cosmology, necessary, as with the Redactor’s mythic twist.

**Mythic Change and Cultural Evolution**

This theory of cultural change grew from the work I did with anthropologist Dmitri Bondarenko in *The Axial Ages of World History* (2014), where we identified three periods of mythic reinvention:¹¹

- The Neolithic Revolution (c. 9000 to 3000 BCE), as human communities grew to hundreds and thousands after the end of the Ice Age;
- The Axial Age (c. 800 to 200 BCE), during which dominant powers grew from relatively limited states to vast empires; and
- Modernity (c. 1500 CE to the present), as these empires became embedded in a world-system and both politics and economics became increasingly globalized.

In this socio-cultural feedback loop, the social structure of Eurasia’s dominant societies remained stable for relatively long periods – first, as hunter-gatherer bands, then as relatively limited agricultural states, finally as sprawling empires – until conditions within and outside changed so much that they faced challenges to their survival. In each of the cases listed above, the growth in size and heterogeneity of the population, as well as advances in technology, demanded new shared interpretations of the world and ways of creating group coherence. At that point, they reinvented their myths, which, in turn, began to change the ways they thought. And their new thinking helped them to adapt to challenges that had seemed insoluble, just as the Redactor would edit his myth to create the heart of the Hebrew Bible.

¹¹ Bondarenko and I first uncovered this dynamic in *The Axial Ages of World History* (2014), where we compared the transformations of the Axial Age with those of Modernity. We expanded it to include the Neolithic Revolution in “Is Modernity a Third Axial Age?” (2019).
In discussing how this feedback loop has shaped the evolution of human culture, it’s tempting to begin with hunter-gatherer bands and how their myth evolved into that of polities in Sumer (starting around 3000 BCE) or Xia China (c. 2070 to 1600 BCE). Bellah, in *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011), and archaeologist Brian Hayden, in *Shamans Sorcerers and Saints* (2003), provide first-class discussions of this sort. However, because sophisticated writing systems didn’t emerge until about 3000 BCE, examining such early myth requires a great deal of speculation. And because the purpose of this paper is to examine this cultural feedback loop for its practical application to our own problems, I want to begin my examination with the Axial Age, which, as Egyptologist Jan Assmann notes (2011), was when writing took its place as a key tool with which elites managed societies.

The Axial Age was first identified by Karl Jaspers (1953) as a transformation that was most complete in Greece, Israel, India, and China. He dated this period from c. 800 to 200 BCE. While I use this dating, it’s important to recognize that this transformational section of the socio-cultural feedback loop is not a set of discrete events perpetuating each other through cause-and-effect. Rather, the Axial Age seems more of a process, where many forces and events are interacting and new, unexpected events emerged. So, while most of the important events of this period occur by 200 BCE, later events seem to arise in ways that tie them to the period – the appearance of Christianity and Islam (Armstrong, 2006), for example, or Buddhism in China (Fairbank and Goldman 2006). All of which is to say that events both before and after Jaspers’ 800 to 200 BCE window are important to acknowledge.

Several developments, occurring at different times in different parts of Eurasia, would lead to the Axial Age transformations. For one thing, large-scale iron working began around 1200 BCE, making it possible to mass produce weapons for large armies and to travel far enough to create vast empires with multi-ethnic populations (Anthony 2007). That would enable a few Chinese states to battle for control of the empire with armies of several hundred thousands during the Warring States period (403 to 221 BCE). In addition, population had also grown so much – the largest cities grew from 40,000 in 3000 BCE to 150,000 in 1200 BCE – that new ways of governing society were needed (Modelski 2003). This population growth was complicated by increasing trade and the wealth it generated, starting around 1500 BCE, because there were now more people who wanted a share of that wealth. The result was the collapse or fragmentation of many of the dominant powers of the time (Baskin and Bondarenko 2014). The invasions of the Sea Peoples starting in the 13th Century seem to have overwhelmed polities around the Eastern Mediterranean, including Mycenae, the Hittites, and Ugarit (Sandars 1978).

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12 Roughly speaking, emergence is organic causality. Where machine action occurs as specific causes drive specific effects in deterministic chains, more complex systems unfold through emergence, where subsystems of the emerging system interact with each other and subsystems outside it to create results that may be unexpected. For a fuller discussion of my understanding of emergence, see Baskin 2022.
Similarly, in China the Zhou Dynasty, which had come to power sometime c. 1045 BCE, was driven from much of its territory in 771 BCE by an alliance of barbarians. China would fragment into more than 150 kingdoms, which would battle for supremacy until they became only seven during the Warring States period (403 to 221 BCE). These events all created existential challenges for the societies where they occurred, and, in the responses of those societies that survived, we can see the workings of the cultural feedback loop we’re examining. We’ve already seen how it worked in the Redactor’s editing the Hebrew Bible. Judah’s case is different from the other three Axial Age states, because it was a small state being overwhelmed, rather than a dominant state trying to survive. For all three dominant polities, we see the transformation from “feudal” kingdoms held together by the loyalty of the king’s inner circle to bureaucratic empires held together through a far more mechanical type of loyalty. We turn now to two very different Axial Age transformations and the mythic reinvention that helped them emerge, in Greece and China.

**Greek Rationalist Myth**

Greece’s political centers, especially Mycenae, flourished in the 14th and 13th centuries. But by 1200 BCE, several factors seemed to contribute to their collapse and the beginning of a “dark age” of political decentralization (see for example Dothan and Dothan 1992). That period ended c. 700, at about the time Hesiod’s poetry and Homer’s epics were written down, laying out the myths of Greece’s early Axial Age. Homer’s *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* bring up a fascinating issue when we ask how much myth can affect the people who accept it: The Greek alliance that invades Troy is a fractious collection of small, independent states that unify to fight an Eastern enemy. Once they succeed, however, they go back to their brotherly competition. This is precisely what happened with the Greek *poleis* – the relatively small “citizen-states,” as Bellah (2011) calls them – when Persia invaded Greece, first, around 490 and, then, around 480. In both cases, these polities united to defeat the invader. Once they had, they went back to their old ways, as Athens and Sparta vied for dominance. This would lead to the Peloponnesian Wars (431-404 BCE), which would severely reduce the power of Athens and undermine confidence in the myths of the gods of Olympus. I found it impossible not to wonder to what extent these similarities are coincidence.

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13 A wide range of scholars have written about the Axial Age since Jasper’s early work. In this essay, I can touch on it only lightly, because my focus is the power of reinvented myth to drive cultural transformation. For those readers who want to examine it more deeply, I would suggest beginning with Bellah’s *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011) or, for those who prefer a less scholarly approach, Armstrong’s *The Great Transformation* (2006).

14 One interesting discussion contrasts the idea that civilizations such as that at Mycenae “collapse” and fall into “dark ages” with a more adaptive approach. According to this alternative, see, for example, Scott (2017), the “dark age” interpretation assumes the Enlightenment position on progress, assuming that developing into a less complex society is abnormal. Scott argues, rather, that such phenomena are merely adaptations to specific conditions, another example of emergence.
In any case, the 5th Century BCE was clearly a time when Greece was repeatedly plunged into an intense consciousness of life as chaos. We can see the reaction to these chaotic events in the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, beginning with Aeschylus’s *The Persians* in 472 and lasting through Euripides’s *The Bacchae* in 408. Over and over, these tragedians rewrote the myths told in Hesiod and Homer, calling everything into question. The conclusion that Greek culture seemed to be approaching may come through most clearly in *The Bacchae*. Dionysus, after all, is the outsider god, who embodies the dark, chaotic elements of being human. In the play, he “comes into a city and turns it upside down, leading to the destruction of those who oppose him but to a new solidarity among those who accept him” (Bellah 2011: 351). From the viewpoint I’ve been developing, Greek tragedy is an attempt to answer the third perceptual question in a society that had been repeatedly plunged into chaos for a century.

As a result, we see essentially good people such as Orestes and Oedipus caught up in invisible forces that would cause them near-unbearable suffering. That suffering was the poetic expression of the suffering and anxiety the people of Athens, really of all Greece, experienced throughout the 5th Century. And their answer to this question seems to be, as one historian puts it, “that words, values, men themselves, are ambiguous, that the universe is one of conflict.” So, in the words of another, “only by surrendering control and embracing disorder in the service of Dionysus can men ultimately maintain order and avoid catastrophic loss of control” (Jean-Pierre Vernant; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, as quoted in Bellah 2011: 356). In the face of the mysterious invisible forces that I’ve suggested myth explores, we can maintain order in our lives only by acknowledging chaos.

At the same time, Greek scientists and philosophers were creating a different way to serve myth’s functions. In earlier societies, science had mostly been performed by priests, as with the astronomers of Ancient Egypt and Babylon. Now, thinkers such as Milesian physicist Thales (c. 625-547) and Pythagoras (c. 580-500) began separating science from religion, as a way of understanding the world. Their approach would become central to philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle who used a scientific form of myth, as with Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover. Curiously, while Plato denigrates traditional Greek myth, he draws on Odysseus’s visit to Hades in *The Odyssey*, as a model for much of *The Republic*, especially the parable of the cave (Bellah 2011).

As the Greek Axial Age came to a close, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle created what generalist Jeremy Lent calls the deification of reason. On one hand, Plato insisted that people trained in mathematics and philosophy should govern; on the other, he presents a god who imposed the cosmos of rational order, in Ideal Forms, for example, on what had been chaos (2017). Similarly, the great body of Aristotle’s writings are dedicated to examining the rational order that appears in fields ranging from tragedy to biology to physics.
Aristotle, remember, was the tutor of Alexander the Great, who spread Hellenism, and its deification of reason, throughout the known world. This rational mythic order was, however, balanced with a recognition of Dionysus, appearing in mystery cults. Even Pythagoras, who very nearly deified mathematics, was reported to have attended Egyptian mystery cults (Bellah 2011). Rational myth, mixed with mystery cults, would have been practiced by the elite, while, for most people in Greece, the gods of Olympus would remain at the heart of their myth.

This distinction between elite myth/religion and its popular form has probably existed since the time when power elites began managing myth and ritual, as community size increased (Hayden 2018). The elites that governed these communities during the Neolithic Revolution often created gods who ruled the cosmos, much as they ruled human society. Where religious ritual had previously been practiced by everyone in the community together, the elite now became the performers of ritual, for which other members of the community were, at best, observers. But the new “religions” that these members of the elite created, did not erase older practices, as many people, in many societies, held on to their old ways. It took, for instance, several generations after the Redactor introduced that mythic twist before all members of the society gave up worshipping Ba’al and Astarte, just as many people in the West still practice their Christianity, even though our dominant, elite myth has become scientific.

For anthropologist Carel van Schaik and historian Kai Michel, this distinction reflects three layers of “human nature”: First, the “innate feelings, reactions, and preferences” that our species evolved with; second, the “habits, conventions, and ways of thinking” we learn from the culture we grow up in; and third, the “new maxims, practices, and institutions” that develop in response to relatively recent events (2016: 22-23). They add that the third layer takes time to feel “natural,” a conclusion cognitive neuroscience supports. As Laughlin and his co-authors point out (1990), the mental models we form when we are young largely define the way we experience the world. Only a small percentage of any society’s members are able to even conceive of the alternative such third layers present. These newest ways of thinking about the world come to stand at the heart of any society’s elite religion, while a mixture of older myths come together in popular religion.

The reason for focusing on elite myth in this paper is that the elite, who conceive it, tend to shape society, so that people throughout society learn, over time, to think in terms of the new myth. Note, for instance, how the new religions that emerged during the Axial Age are universal, ethical religions that could unite the heterogeneous populations of the Roman or Chinese empires that were forming. At first, we should expect resistance to such religions, because they threaten the assumptions upon which so many people had built their lives. That’s probably a large part of the reason that the people of Judah took more than a hundred years to accept the Redactor’s strict monotheism (Akenson 2001).
The various elite mythic orders that emerged during the Axial Age – attempts to create order in a world where chaos remained a painful reality – would contribute to the shape of history for the next two millennia. Greek rationalism was at the heart of the Roman Empire; it also made a deep impression on Western Christianity and, eventually, Western science and social structure. As late Axial Age Greek myth suggested, throughout this period, chaos remained an underlying reality that even the rationalism of Descartes and the Enlightenment could never tame.

**Chinese Traditionalist Myth**

The distinction between elite and popular religion/myth was also important in Ancient China. During the Axial Age, popular religion/myth reflected the vast population of farmers and craftsmen needed to feed more than 40,000,000 subjects (“Population History of China” 2021) in the Warring States period. As a result, popular Chinese religion developed dozens of gods, representing the natural forces that these working people faced – a wind god, a river god, and a fire god, for example – as well as a high god, Shang Di. Its myth also recognizes a series of culture heroes, such as Fu Xi, who is supposed to have domesticated animals, or Shen Nong, celebrated for inventing the plow and hoe. All in all, it’s easy to see Chinese popular myth as fanciful, but it makes sense for the vast numbers of uneducated Chinese, especially for farmers tending the land (see, for example, Embry 1996).

For Western thinkers, accustomed to myth with divinities, the Chinese elite mythology of the Axial Age may seem alien, overly philosophical and abstract. During the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1045 to 771 BCE), elite religion had dropped its high god. In its place was the myth of Heaven and Earth: Heaven represented, much like a Platonic Ideal Form, the order and constancy that political rule and human behavior should exhibit, and Earth provided the constituents of life. It was the duty of humans to use those constituents according to the ideals of Heaven. At the heart of this mythology was the idea of the Tao, the Way, which humans should understand and follow. This shift in religious thinking appears to have occurred largely for political reasons – that is, the Zhou elite replaced Shang Di with Heaven largely to justify its overthrow of the previous dynasty, the Shang. The Zhou elite explained that the Shang elite behaved so badly that they had lost the “Mandate of Heaven”; the Zhou takeover of power, then, was a virtuous act. For about two centuries, the Zhou appear to have provided the order and constancy idealized in Heaven, so much so that it became the model that many Axial Age thinkers such as Confucius turned into the myth of a golden age (Schwartz 1985).

The increasing disorder of the Chinese Axial Age became clear when the Zhou were driven out of their western territories in 771 BCE. The resulting political disintegration would produce more than 150 kingdoms, fighting for more power. This warfare was, at first, ritualized conflict with extensive rules of combat among these entities’ aristocracies (Lewis 1990).
In the course of the Spring and Autumn period (c. 722 to 481 BCE), this warfare would become a “military free-for-all” in which states were absorbing each other (Fairbank and Goldman 2006). By the Warring States period, only seven of these states remained, and their conflicts became increasingly destructive; with the introduction of iron weapons, armies of hundreds of thousands became possible.

One side effect of these events was the rise of a new class, the shi, who had been the least powerful of the aristocratic elite. During the Spring and Autumn period, many of them had been reduced to low-ranking officials, and some became “freelance” thinkers and teachers. As the sense of being enveloped by chaos increased, they created a series of schools of philosophy, the “Hundred Schools,” each giving its own mythic twist to the ideal of following the Way of Heaven. Confucius (551 to 479 BCE) would become the best known member of this class, even though he never became a king’s advisor, as he at first hoped. Living at the end of the Spring and Autumn period, he was convinced that the “unbridled pursuit of wealth, power, fame, sensual passion, arrogance and pride” (Schwartz 1985: 83) was largely responsible for the chaos all around him. So he recommended a return to the virtuous traditions of the early Zhou kings, creating a “traditional” different way of thinking about the world.

At its heart is what philosopher Herbert Fingarette calls the “narrative of a mythic past in the service of a new ideal grounded in radically new insights into man’s essential nature and power” (as quoted in Bellah 2011: 415). To work this change, Confucius insisted that the elite would have to demonstrate ren, a deep concern for others, so deep that right action almost became automatic (Ebrey, 1996), thus setting an example for those they ruled. That would require a regimen of self-examination, so that people could recognize when they were being self-seeking, a conscious focus he taught his students. Moreover, Confucius recommended ritualizing a wide range of behaviors, including one-on-one relationships. Here, he pictured society as a network of dyads – one superior, the other inferior. Those dyads included king-advisor, husband-wife, father-son, first son-second son. The superior member had full authority, but also was responsible for both the welfare and behavior of the inferior. This schema became a powerful way to control people, enforcing “moral” behavior.15

Confucius’ thought would become central to the new mythic understanding of the world that would develop during the Chinese Axial Age. Perhaps it was because his mythic use of the Zhou Dynasty grounded his philosophy in tradition, in a society of farmers who appreciated the contributions of generations of ancestors.

15 This approach toward maintaining order could be taken to disturbing lengths. In this way, many Chinese emperors protected themselves by letting their subjects know that attempting to assassinate them would result, not just in the death of the assassin, but also all those in the assassin’s social network. It appears to have been brutally effective.
The success of his approach may also have rested on the way it balanced the authoritarian tendencies of the superior/inferior dyad with an idealized aspiration for kings to rule in the best interest of their subjects. In any case, from a historical perspective, Confucius may have been more successful than he could have imagined. A wide range of other schools of thought did emerge, however, and the most important of them was Taoism.\textsuperscript{16}

In many ways, the difference between Confucianism and Taoism is parallel to the distinction between Orthodox Christianity and Gnosticism in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Century CE. The first insists on conformity to a powerful leadership in all things, and the second recommends personal exploration leading to action grounded in direct experience. Taoism took many different forms. Some popular forms, for instance, emphasized the search for an elixir of immortality\textsuperscript{17} and a pantheon of deities. “Primitive” Taoism, on the other hand, was an elite form that saw Confucius’ emphasis on social conformity as part of the problems of the Chinese Axial Age. For many Taoists, the extreme ritualism of Confucianism could make the lives of those who practice it an ongoing performance that both protected them and alienated them from themselves, as they lived lives that become increasingly hypocritical.\textsuperscript{18}

The Taoist alternative was to treat the Way of Heaven as a matter of the underlying, mystic reality. So their model became the sage, the person who came to know how the world worked and used this knowledge to do what was best for the people. This interpretation of the Tao can be difficult for Westerners, because it begins with a very un-Western assumption: “Reversal is the movement of the Way” (Lao Tzu 1998: 8). Push too hard in one direction – as self-seeking kings or their advisors often do – and life will push back. True wisdom lies in understanding the world deeply enough to be able to cooperate with its ongoing dynamics – that is, follow the Way of Heaven – in order to accomplish one’s ends.\textsuperscript{19}

In a world experiencing so much chaos, it comes as no surprise that the resolution of the Chinese Axial Age would favor Confucianism, with its emphasis on authority. In the millennium and half following the Axial Age, kings would occasionally use Taoist advisors, during parts of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE), for instance.

\textsuperscript{16} For a full treatment of these other philosophical schools, the reader can check out Schwartz (1985) and Graham (1989).

\textsuperscript{17} This quest for immortality is believed to have been the source of the discovery of gunpowder in the 9\textsuperscript{th} Century CE (Temple 2007).

\textsuperscript{18} Readers interested in getting a deeper understanding of this problem may enjoy the film \textit{Curse of the Golden Flower} (2006), an almost-Shakespearean tragedy about a fictional emperor during the Tang Dynasty.

\textsuperscript{19} One of the great Taoist exemplars of Chinese literature is Kongming, a monk who serves as advisor to general Liu Bei in \textit{The Romance of the Three Kingdoms} (c. 1321). One cinematic treatment that makes his approach clear is \textit{Red Cliff} (2008). In this same work, we can see how the self-seeking of leaders such as Cao-Cao lead to their failures.
During this time, these two mythic ways of being in the world would interact, as their proponents responded to each other. Eventually, the ideal leader would be characterized as king (Confucian) on the outside and sage (Taoist) on the inside (Schwartz 1989). What may be most impressive about the Chinese Axial Age is how successful its myth proved to be, transforming the chaos of the Axial Age into long-term order that was also innovative.

In the period between the end of the Axial Age and the rise of the West (c. 1500), China would become one of the wealthiest, most powerful, and most technologically advanced polities in the world. Those technological advances include gunpowder, guns, and flame throwers; paper and printing; compasses, the rudder, and manned flight with kites; and machines for mass production (Temple 2007). And in the middle of the 15th Century, China would build the largest sailing ships and the greatest fleets before the First World War, sending emissaries all over Eurasia and, some thinkers insist, to the New World more than half a century before Columbus (Menzies 2002).

**Modernity’s Myth-making**

Starting c. 1500 CE, Western Modernity emerged from the same type of chaos that we saw during the Axial Age. Up through the High Middle Ages (c. 1000 to 1300), Western Europe was dominated by its land-owning aristocracy and the princes of the Church. This social structure would break down under the pressure of a series of events. In 1241, the Mongol invasion nearly conquered Vienna and did create the first economic world-system (c. 1250 to 1350) from Beijing to Brussels, accelerating the growth of a wealthy commercial class across Western Europe (Abu-Lughod 1989).

Then, the Black Plague (1347-1351) killed off something like a third of the population, indiscriminately taking peasants and Princes of the Church. This further damaged the power alliance of Church and aristocracy, first, by showing the Church impotent before the Plague and, second, by opening new positions of power for the commercial class. With Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s, and the growth in literacy it encouraged, Protestantism became possible, giving members of the commercial class a religious partner with which to engage the Church/aristocracy alliance.

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20 The economic structure of the West’s High Middle Ages was more complex than I can present it here. For example, as Jean Gimpel points out in The Medieval Machine (1976), an initial industrial revolution occurred, roughly between 900 and 1300, which would start building the manufacturing and commercial class that flourished at the end of this period.
The resulting religious wars, especially the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648) and the English Civil War (1642-1651), created a desire for order, which partly led to the scientific myth that became dominant in the 18th Century.

The mythic twist that would lead to Western science as the source of Europe’s symbolic order emerged, as the Axial Age transformations had, from the older order that it replaced. The Late Medieval (c. 1300 to 1500) Christian had reflected Thomas Aquinas’s (1225 to 1274) “Christianization” of Aristotle. For Aquinas, God and his creation were rational. Studying the natural world, then, could lead humans to understand Him better. The church would eventually accept this position, and in the next few centuries, many of the most important pre-scientific thinkers were either employed or supported by the Church, including Roger Bacon (1220-1292), William of Ockham (1287 to 1347), Nicolas Copernicus (1473 to 1543), and Johannes Kepler (1571 to 1630). We can also see how deeply pre-scientific Christianity was intertwined with the emergence of Western science in the work of Isaac Newton (1642 to 1726), who was deeply religious and wrote so much on topics like alchemy and Biblical interpretation that economist John Maynard Keynes called him “the last of the magicians.”

As that mythic twist developed, a new kind of thinker, the scientist, had been emerging along with these proto-scientists (Wootton 2015). These early scientists were mostly astronomers such as Nicolaus Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). They perfected the use of mathematics to interpret direct observation of phenomena that Aristotle had examined through philosophy. As a result, Kepler recognized a degree of precision in the movement of heavenly bodies that led him to write, “My aim is to show that the machine of the universe is not similar to a divine animated being, but similar to a clock” (as quoted in Dolnik 2011: 182).

This mythic twist culminated in the works of several 17th Century thinkers, especially Francis Bacon and Rene´ Descartes. In his Novum Organum (1620), Bacon (1561 to 1626) criticized the speculative methods of Medieval churchmen, calling for “a total reconstruction of science, the arts, and human knowledge” (Gillespie 2009: 37). To make that reconstruction, he proposed that the search for knowledge should be grounded in scientific research, rather than religious speculation. The scientist’s job would be to “torture” nature into giving up its secrets.

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21 The spectacle of Catholic and Protestant armies slaughtering each other to determine who most truly followed the Prince of Peace must have terrified the Western European elite. As Theodore Rabb puts it, the “specter of total anarchy raised by the new military tactics, the unprecedented slaughter, and the lawlessness of international relations seemed to have brought Europe to the edge of the abyss” (1975: 119).

22 For a full discussion of the socio-economic dynamics that led to the Thirty Years War, as well as the horrors it caused, see Wilson (2009).

23 For a full discussion of how deeply Western science was grounded in Late Medieval Christianity, see especially Gillespie (2009) and Freely (2012).
As a result of this knowability, Bacon predicted that scientific innovation would produce more and more devices, such as the printing press, which enhance human life, ultimately allowing us to create the “Empire of Man” – a society where we human beings could be far more safe and comfortable. This belief in the knowability of matter appears today in the writings of those scientists who look forward to the time when science will enable us to understand everything, and those things that now seem mysterious will prove to be transparent. As science writer Michael Shermer puts it, “I believe the truth is out there” (2011: 34). And the job of the scientist is to find that truth.

Descartes (1596 to 1650) would help complete Modernity’s symbolic order by integrating Bacon’s ideas about science with a linear model of a Clockwork Universe. Science, he believed, would “make man master and possessor of nature,” thereby providing security (Gillespie 2009: 190). For him, certainty was the key: Thus the scientist should examine only that which could be known with certainty. In addition, he explained that matter came in two forms. Most matter is res extensa, dead stuff that could only move when an outside cause impacted it; the only exception is the res cognitans of the human mind, which is how humans can learn about nature and transform society. Applied to human beings, this philosophy created the body/mind dualism that philosophers continue to argue today. It seems to have developed from the Late Medieval Christian belief that human beings are part animal (body) and part God (spirit). So we humans have the ability to initiate chains of cause and effect by exercising our God-like spirit/mind.

The formation of Modernity’s mechanical symbolic order is, of course, far more complex than I can describe in this essay. In addition, this mechanical order has repeatedly been challenged by the more processual model in the works of Gottfried Leibniz or Alfred North Whitehead.24 Like the ongoing challenge Taoism presented to Confucianism in the mythic order of Axial Age China, the West’s dominant mechanical paradigm continues to be challenged by a process-oriented model. I focus here on the mechanical order because it sits at the heart of Western culture and reflects the way of thinking that is making it so difficult to address our current existential challenges. And, like the mythic orders in Axial Age Greece and China, the West’s mechanical myth resulted from generations of chaos, which resulted in the mythic twist that would enable members of society to develop a new way of thinking.

The order of the Clockwork Universe was cemented in place with Newton’s publication of the *Principia Mathematica* in 1687. Here he articulated this order’s cosmology, written in the language of numbers to describe the ongoing movement of a world of distinct “things” driven, deterministically, by the law of cause-and-effect.

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24 Readers interested in a fuller examination of the rise and development of the West’s unique symbolic order can consult Stephen Gaukroger’s *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture* (2006).
The idea of science that Bacon and Descartes described now became the mythic order in which Western society would be grounded. It would be expanded by other thinkers. For instance, Thomas Hobbes (1588 to 1679) was so terrified by the religious passions the wars of religion had unleashed that he removed religion from the social realm, and, in *Leviathan*, published 1651, replaced the idea of the king as God’s representative with the idea that kings ruled as the result of a social contract between the governed and their leader. To make this switch, he insisted that without a powerful leader society would be reduced to the “state of nature,” that is, a “war of each against each.” Human beings in society, he argued, were, first, as separate as the parts of a clock and, second, motivated almost entirely by self-interest. Religion was not integral to governing society. It was an add-on that each king should decide for those he governed. This mechanical symbolic order would be further reinterpreted throughout the Enlightenment (late 17th to late 18th centuries), introducing the ideas that the deterministic law of cause-and-effect created Progress and that the West represented its vanguard.

In many ways, the mythic order provided by this mechanical notion of science was nearly as successful as Bacon thought it might be.²⁵ It did help create order from the chaos that the West had experienced. In spite of periodic warfare, the political order has remained relatively stable, interrupted by chaotic shocks such as the two world wars and the Cold War. Still, following each of these wars, order has reasserted itself. Moreover, the overall arc of history has reflected the Enlightenment belief in progress. In the 300 and some years since the *Principia Mathematica* appeared, life expectancy has increased dramatically; science has made jaw-dropping advances in our understanding of the world; technology has been equally astounding, connecting people all over the globe, for instance; and a majority of people have been lifted out of poverty.

Today, we can see this symbolic order in the widest variety of phenomena – from the way medical science treated the human body as a machine to the economics based on the Invisible Hand manifested in the computable balance between supply and demand or to the belief that industrial waste is an “externality” – an unwanted product of manufacturing that needs merely to be disposed of.

At the same time, this very success has created the existential problems noted at the beginning of this paper. And in spite of these issues being recognized and discussed for decades, these challenges have continued to intensify, a case of problems that can’t be solved with the mindset that created them.

What, then, are we to do?

²⁵ For a full discussion of how science unfolded, see Baskin 2020.
Conclusion: The Lesson of Mythic Reinvention

As we examined these transformations, Bondarenko and I (2014) noticed that they largely fell into a regular pattern: Initial chaos, followed by widespread experimentation, intensifying chaos, more experimentation, and, finally an often-chaotic period of consolidation, in which a new way of dealing with the world emerged.

This pattern suggested that we are now in the final stage of Modernity’s transformation. Just as the last century of the Axial Age was a period in which each of the Axial societies began acting on what they had learned, the 21st Century seems to be a time in which the lessons of Modernity must be compiled and implemented. Particularly striking is the parallel between China’s Warring States period and the World Wars of Modernity.

So the questions I want to conclude this essay with are: What are the lessons learned in Modernity, especially in the West? And how can we implement those lessons in a reinvented myth?

For one thing, Western Modernity illustrates the dynamics of the cultural feedback loop I’ve examined in this essay. It began with a growing sense of chaos as the old social order cannot adapt to events, both outside – the Mongol invasion and its results – and inside – the growing power of the commercial class. As this order broke down, members of the elite transformed the older myth, launching a period of experimentation, dominated in the West by the emergence of Western science and capitalism. These behaviors, in turn, transformed society in unexpected, sometimes chaos-producing ways. In the West, one of these surprises is the way practicing the linear science built on the work of Bacon and Descartes led, in the 20th Century, to the realization that the world is far more complex than their mechanical symbolic order would allow.

As the technology Bacon championed produced scientific instruments ranging from CAT scans to particle accelerators, it became clear that the world is a far more mysterious, deeply interconnected place, first emphasized in the physics of Einstein and quantum mechanics,26 than the mechanical symbolic order could have predicted. Today, faced with challenges that are largely products of the last 300 years of experimentation, we also face the need to reinvent our mythology to resolve the conflicts between these ways of seeing the world.

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26 The philosophical discussions about the implications of this “new” physics would become so confusing that some physicists were content to reply to questions about them with the comment, “Shut up and calculate.” On one hand, quantum mechanics has been so successful that extended philosophical speculation wastes time that could be used to make important contributions. On the other, some physicists are reluctant to entertain the implications these speculations have for reinventing the West’s symbolic order. For a good short discussion, see Baggott (2021).
As writers such as Nobel Prize winner in Physics Robert Laughlin (2005) and astrophysicist Lee Smolin (2013) suggest, one approach to reinventing Western myth is at hand – reinterpreting science through the process-oriented symbolic order of Leibniz and Whitehouse.

The workings of such a processual approach have become more and more central to work in many fields over the last 50 years. As we’ve seen, current cognitive neurobiology, thanks to tools such as CAT scans, has shown how complex and non-linear human perception is, to the point where Hoffman (2020) suggests that our perceptions are much like the Indian notion of maya – that the world we perceive is an illusion created by our sensory and cognitive limitations. Similarly, medical science learned that disease is not merely the breakdown of the body as an outside force bears down on it, as the mechanical model of the body suggests. In many cases, such as autoimmune diseases, disease reflects the body trying to adapt to conditions in both the body and the outside world. Nor is evolution the simple cause-and-effect process pictured by the Modern Synthesis, where random genetic mutation in the DNA changes body type and those changes are tested by Natural Selection. It can also reflect the effects of environmental conditions, chemical markers on the DNA passed from parent to child, and even a response to learning.27

This shift to a more complex way of thinking about the world has also resulted in the rise of new, multi-disciplinary fields of study, from complexity science to systems theory, both of which suggest that our world does not work by cause-and-effect, but, rather, through emergence.

Unfortunately, this essay isn’t long enough to include a detailed examination of this new way of thinking. There is however, a growing library of work extending the process orientation of Leibniz and Whitehead, which, like earlier myth, is being “debated, disputed, filtered” in “narrative exchanges about reality” (Donald 1991: 258). Among the most interesting of these discussions are those of Laughlin (2005), Smolin (2013), and psychiatrist Ian McGilchrist (2022). In the deeply interconnected, highly processual world they envision, industrial wastes are no longer mere “externalities” that need to be disposed of; economics is no longer a dance of precise equations; and we humans are no longer distinct individuals. Rather, we are all parts, not merely of our social networks, but of the network of life on this planet, where no network member can be truly healthy unless we also take care to ensure the health of our ecosystems and the social systems that are ultimately dependent on those ecosystems (see Latour 2017).

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27 This emerging understanding of evolution is often called the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis. One excellent book that examines it is Jablonka and Lamb’s *Evolution in Four Dimensions* (2014).
It’s my hope that by interpreting the findings of science through this processual symbolic order, we can transcend the West’s compulsive insistence on mechanical order, recognizing that order and chaos are not mutually exclusive states of being, but deeply interconnected states that, together, drive evolution. And, just perhaps, through this new scientific myth, we can begin to adapt to the existential threats that challenge us today.

As I noted in my introduction, I do not present these thoughts as the “truth.” At best, this essay may become part of the back-and-forth by which a new interpretation of our scientific myth emerges. The linear model, after all, has been unable to help our societies address challenges that have been clear for decades. So our survival may depend on our ability to reinterpret what we’ve learned from science in a way that makes it possible to address those challenges. It is, I am convinced, essential for us to develop a new symbolic order, and this paper is my contribution to that discussion.

References


Civilizational Security: Why the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Shows that ‘National Security’ is Not Enough to Understand Geopolitics

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Abstract

This paper argues that the idea of “national security” is sometimes overwritten by “civilizational security” in security-related considerations. Civilizational security, as understood in this paper, refers to a country's security stemming from its belonging to a cultural zone or a civilization. The author clarifies the terms “a civilization,” “civilizational identity,” and “civilizational security.” Citing the examples of Poland, Ukraine, and Russia when considering the parameter of civilizational security allows us to better analyze and predict some processes, including geopolitical dilemmas and civilizational trends. It is argued that prior to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia misunderstood its own civilizational security and that civilizational security perceived as an analytical lens could reveal new security dynamics.

Keywords: civilizational security, civilizational identity, civilizational state, 2022 Russian invasion on Ukraine, soft power

Civilization and Collective Identity

“There are signs today that ‘civilization’ is making something of a comeback both as a concept and mode of analysis” – Krishan Kumar, an American historian, wrote in 2014. According to Kumar, throughout the Twentieth Century one could observe a pattern of shifting scholarly interest in the idea of civilization. A general decline of interest became visible in the latter half of the century, but Samuel Huntington with his “Clash of Civilizations” in 1996 reversed the trend.

One of the claims of the book, typical of the field of the comparative research on civilizations, was that within a global civilization, one could also single out civilizations, which is to say – macro-cultural identities such as Western, Islamic, Eastern Orthodox, or Latin-American.

2 Samuel Huntington, The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order, Simon & Schuster 1996.
Subsequently, Huntington’s work was criticized and deemed controversial by some scholars who accused Huntington of having contributed to global cultural divisions with his civilizational mapping. For example, Peter Katzenstein in a paper entitled “Walls Between ‘Those People’?,” claimed that such concepts as Huntington’s contribute to harming international debate because civilizations in this view tend to be presented as internally coherent entities “equipped with state-like capacity to act,” whereas in reality civilizations are ever-changing, incoherent and complex.\(^3\)

I have discussed arguments for and against singling out civilizational identities and dividing the world into civilizations, together with the resulting problems, elsewhere.\(^4\)

A thing to note in this paper is that in spite of the ongoing debate and controversies related to the ideological and political abuses of “civilization,” the term and its synonyms seem to be functioning in both public and academic discourses.

In particular, we often see both the terms “the civilization,” which denotes a single, global, human civilization and “a civilization,” which denotes one among many civilizations based on diverse cultural, political and/or religious traditions. This is an important distinction. In fact, we could conceptualize a nation, a civilization, the civilization and three consecutive identity concepts linked by a relation of inclusion, as pictured on Fig.1.

Just as the global human civilization may contain many civilizations, a civilization (one in many) may contain many nations. Whereas national identities are being consciously reproduced by an institution of the state and are frequently referred to as “thick identities”, the levels of “a civilization and “the civilization” tend to be thinner; thus, belonging to them is more elusive and does not have to generate immediate citizen-like obligations.\(^5\) In the era of globalization, the debate whether national identities could get fuzzier and other identities could get thicker is ongoing.\(^6\)

In any case, both “the (human) civilization” – when understood as a humanity-encompassing term – and “a civilization” – when understood as a particular, “Huntingtonian” civilizational identity – seem to be functioning in the public and academic discourses.

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Thus, whereas “the civilization” seems to appear in discussions about global and collateral threats such as nuclear weapons, climate change or artificial intelligence, “a civilization” tends to be used in geopolitical contexts such as collective actions of some group of states against others or the discussion of cultural differences between distinct national cultures.

Among these two civilizational concepts, certainly “a civilization” is more controversial and fuzzier. This is because “the civilization” is as semantically broad and inclusive as it is simple: it denotes humanity in all its manifestations. “A civilization,” however, is narrower and refers to plethora of identity-related claims, which are complex, problematic, ideological, value-laden and prone to generating scholarly or even political discord.
The Narrative of “a Civilization”

In spite of calls to kill “civilization” as a concept\(^8\), the narrower civilizational term, “a civilization,” seems to be getting increasing, not decreasing attention in the scholarly and public discourses in the last years, just as Kumar claimed\(^9\). In terms of published works in English, according to Google Books NGram Viewer, which aggregates the annual uses of terms in the published literature, “civilizational identity” notes a rising scholarly interest from the last decade of previous century onward. A query conducted on 30.07.2023 with data available until 2019 shows the following figure (Fig.2).

![Fig.2. The rising popularity of “civilizational identity” as a term to be found in published works in the English language, according to Google NGram Viewer](image)

Describing the long-term vitality of “a civilization,” Christopher Coker has asserted that in spite of being elusive and problematic, the idea of “a civilization” has been shaping global affairs for decades and that this is unlikely to change. Recently, Coker argues, “a civilization” as an idea has reemerged in the form of a “civilizational state” – that is to say a concept of a single culture or state which wants to present itself as a main representative of a particular civilization.

According to Coker “the civilizational state is an eclectic concept: it is largely a device to legitimize the power of a particular regime and to help it shape the political landscape in its interests. Nevertheless, if it has one overarching theme, it is this: the total rejection of universalism, the great dream of Western writers”\(^10\).

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\(^9\) Krishan Kumar, op. cit.

\(^10\) Christopher Coker, *The Rise of Civilizational State*, op. cit., p.167
In line with Coker’s thesis, a Chinese scholar Wei-Wei Zhang earlier presented China as a civilizational state that is deeply unwilling to embrace Westernization, understood as influence of the West\textsuperscript{11}. He also claimed: “China’s rise is not the rise of an ordinary country, but the rise of a country \textit{sui generis}, a civilizational state, a new model of development and a new political discourse which questions many of the Western assumptions about democracy, good governance and human rights”\textsuperscript{12}. According to him, “the civilizational state has a strong capability to draw on the strengths of other nations while maintaining its own identity. As an endogenous civilization capable of generating its own standards and values, it makes unique contributions to the world civilizations”\textsuperscript{13}.

Of note is that “a civilization” is also inspiring the West. Western politicians have long been referring to their community of values and states as “a civilization.” In the United States both Republicans and Democrats have been mentioning the Western civilization when speaking of geopolitical, technological and cultural challenges to come. For example, in 2017 former President Donald Trump, during a speech in the easternmost Western state of Europe: Poland, referred to Western “civilization” ten times\textsuperscript{14}. In turn President Joe Biden referred to the Western civilization many times in recent years, in particular when responding to the threats generated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022\textsuperscript{15}. In addition, Russia presents itself as a separate civilization, as well\textsuperscript{16}.

The idea of civilization can be helpful in prognosticating the future of identity networks related to groups of cultures, institutions and religions\textsuperscript{17}. Partially this is because the term is permeating many current buzzwords related to geopolitics, such as “ally-shoring” or “friendshoring.”

\textsuperscript{12} Zhang Weiwei, op. cit., p. x.
\textsuperscript{13} Zhang Weiwei, op. cit., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{14} “Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland”, 5.07.2017, The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland https://www.president.pl/news/remarks-by-president-trump-to-the-people-of-poland,36457
\textsuperscript{16} Yuri Kadobnov, “Russia Is a ‘Distinct Civilization,’ Putin Says”, \textit{The Moscow Times} 18.05.2020 https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/05/18/russia-is-a-distinct-civilization-putin-says-a70295
These terms refer to relocating the production and value chains of one’s economy to a territory of an ally and predictable partner, as opposed to “offshoring,” understood as placing value chains only in accordance with the calculation as to where the economic gain is the greatest.\textsuperscript{18}

Instead for going for the greatest financial gains, allyshoring in some crucial segments of the economy would mean that countries such as the US or China could rely on a partner, a country whose civilization is predictable in the long run, and whose cultural scripts or policy principles will not generate challenges leading to strategic decoupling in the future.

Indeed, a global need for cultural stability in an era of unstable rivalries apparently contributes to the growing attention policymakers seem to pay to the indices of cultural distance. One such index is the World Values Survey (WVS), which measures cultural differences between the majority of cultures on the globe, based on large-scale and regularly held personal surveys\textsuperscript{19}. The authors of WVS single out distinct cultural zones, an approach which remains coherent with civilizational approach to studying cultures\textsuperscript{20} (Fig.3)

For example, “Catholic Europe,” “Protestant Europe,” and “English Speaking” groups on the WVS map together form a cluster of values that remains coherent with the perception of “the Western civilization,” traditionally linked to the geographical regions of North America, Europe and Australia.

Certainly, one may argue that “a civilization” or “a civilizational identity” must refer to more than just a macro-cultural identity to account for a civilization. For example, one could claim that for “a civilization” to be differentiated from a “macro-culture,” it should additionally include various dimensions of political or institutional organization that supplement the cultural dimension.


\textsuperscript{19} “WVS Cultural Map: 2023 Version Released”, World Values Survey 17.02.2023  
https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSNewsShow.jsp?ID=467

\textsuperscript{20} The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map - World Values Survey 7, 2023. Source:  
http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/
Some dimensions of civilizational identities could be extractable from the WVS map.

This is a valid claim, but its validity does not change the fact that the leading authors of the World Values Survey have successfully demonstrated that the reference to cultural zones and their evolution could generate new insights useful for geopolitics and security studies. For example, Akaliyski and Welzel demonstrated how a collective cultural identity of the West and East between the European and Eastern European Orthodox cultural zones has been changing in the last decades. In particular they have shown that the countries of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union have diverged culturally in the recent decades.

Could it be that such cultural divergence is non-trivial from the perspective of security studies, and it is related to the geopolitical rift that has led to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine? We will try to answer this question through the lens of an emerging concept – civilizational security.

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Civilizational Security and the Security of a Civilization

As discussed above, we could distinguish between a broad (the civilization) and a narrow (a civilization) understanding of the concept of civilization. This parallels a similar case in the field of security studies, when conceptualizing the idea of civilizational security. The concept appears in the “Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies” published in 2010, where Brett Bowden discusses civilizational security understood both as a security of a particular civilization and as a security of the global civilization, or humankind\textsuperscript{22}.

In this spirit we could add two types of security to the concept of national security: narrow civilizational (related to a single civilization) and broader civilizational (or global) security (Fig. 4).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{types_of_security.png}
\caption{Types of security. Broad civilizational (global), narrow civilizational and national.}
\end{figure}

For the sake of clarity, when referring to “civilizational security” in the remaining part of this paper I will be utilizing the narrower meaning of the term, i.e., a civilization. As I understand it, such a conceptualization of civilizational security refers to the security of specific civilizations grasped as regions or cultural zones of the world – not necessarily geographically close – with little cultural distance, i.e., sharing similar values and institution types.

In this framing, nations derive part of their security from belonging to a cultural zone or a civilization. This does not mean, of course, that cultures of the same civilizations do not clash. They do. It means, rather, that a layer of analysis that seeks to approximate the impact of global events on a nation’s civilizational security should be included into an analyst’s skillset to generate adequate insights and predictions. In other words, civilizational security analysis should complement national security analysis that typically considers economic, geopolitical, cultural and technological factors but rarely refers to macro-cultures and civilizations.

By referring to the civilizational identity, an analyst can try to recreate the broader, evolving network of collective identity as a separate factor that has an impact on other layers. Certainly, civilizations are fluid, ambiguous concepts and the current times would necessitate refining or even redefining of “a civilization” in order to make it non-controversial, future-proof, measurable and – in general – less elusive. In principle, however, in contrast to Kwame Appiah, who seems to be suggesting that because of the complexity of “a civilization” we should not refer to it at all,23 I believe we should use the term and let it satiate our understanding of ourselves – albeit with constant vigilance related to the potential abuse of the civilizational concept.

Below I will argue that looking at global politics through the lens of civilizational security could lead to conclusions that are non-trivial and useful for policymakers and analysts alike.

**Russia and Ukraine. Civilizational Security and Geopolitics**

When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, some analysts claimed it all should have not happened or that it was irrational24. However, something must have prompted Russia’s President Vladimir Putin to make such a decision.

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24 Jan Švec, “Russia’s Irrational War in Ukraine Should Be a Warning for Predicting China’s Behavior”, *The Diplomat* 19.01.2023 https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/russias-irrational-war-in-ukraine-should-be-a-warning-for-predicting-chinas-behavior/
As argued by Christopher Coker, Russia has long perceived itself as a civilizational state – a giver of values and a provider of order to an entire civilization, one that scholars have called “Eastern Orthodox,” “Slavic” or simply “Russian.” In accordance with this self-perception the Moscow-centered Russian Orthodox Church, a branch of Orthodox Christianity, has tried to present itself in the recent decades as a powerful center of doctrinal authority for the entire Orthodox world. In particular, it pictured itself as comparable or even more authoritative than the main, traditional center of Orthodox Christianity, namely the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople with headquarters in Istanbul, Turkey.

In recent decades, this religious friction was visible in Ukraine, where Constantinople-aligned and Moscow-aligned branches of Orthodox Christianity competed for the believers but – until recently – coexisted rather peacefully. This changed following 2014 Russia’s invasion of Ukraine which led to the annexation of the Donbas region and the Crimean peninsula.

The Moscow-aligned church has not condemned these steps and the Security Service of Ukraine accused the church structures, including the head of the church, Patriarch Kyrill, of collusion with Moscow. After Russia invaded Ukraine again, in 2022, Kyrill gained international attention again: not only because he blessed Russia’s invasion, one that left many Orthodox temples in Ukraine burnt to rubble, but also because in 2023 declassified Swiss archives revealed Kyrill to have been a Russian spy for decades; he conducted special missions for Moscow at least from the 1970s on, apparently. The process of exposing the Moscow-aligned branch of Orthodoxy in Ukraine as Russia’s spy network culminated in a symbolic event: the takeover of the golden-domed Pechersk Lavra in Kyiv, a marvel of architecture and the center of Orthodoxy, from the hands of its Moscow-aligned clergy in 2023.

Russian propaganda at that time could really not find a narrative to describe the event other than deeming Ukrainians evil and ungrateful. This is because in the Russian perception, Ukraine, home to many Russian-speaking Ukrainians, has always been “their” civilization. It has been home of “their” golden-domed Pechersk Lavra, it has been “their” Crimea peninsula that year after year hosted crowds of Russian tourists.

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29 Elena Davlikanova, Russia Evicted From the Heart of Ukraine, Center for European Policy Analysis 30.03.2023 https://cepa.org/article/russia-evicted-from-the-heart-of-ukraine/
It has been “their” Russkiy mir (Russian world) that suddenly ceased to be recognized as desirable by others.

Certainly, in the last decades Moscow has noticed the pro-Western sentiments in Ukraine and treated them with distrust, but the Ukraine’s change of civilizational identity seems to have gone largely unnoticed by Russian intelligence. For sure, they did not predict that Ukraine would vehemently fight back and intensify its escape from the gravitational field of the Russian civilizational state\(^{30}\). Nor did they predict that Poland would absorb millions of Ukrainian women and children fleeing war and give them shelter in the crisis. This is precisely what American President Biden hinted at when he said about President Putin’s perception of Ukraine: “I think he thought he was going to be welcomed with open arms. That this was the home of Mother Russia and Kyiv. I think he totally miscalculated”\(^{31}\).

Biden’s words could be translated into the language of comparative research on civilizations and civilizational security as follows: even though Putin perceived Russia as a civilizational state, he has neither understood nor secured Russia’s civilizational security during his rule. A probable genesis of this negligence may be linked to the analytical lens used by the Russian propaganda establishment called “Russian geopolitics.” It is a type of approach to geopolitics that treats geopolitical analysis as something much more far-reaching than just a prism – one among many – through which one analyzes global affairs.

Russian geopolitics (represented by ideologists such as Alexander Dugin\(^{32}\)) treats geopolitics as “a science” that allegedly uncovers objective, simple, cynical and iron laws that govern the world. In this simplistic, pseudoscientific approach popular in Russian military circles, the analytical focus is placed almost exclusively on hard power (meaning economic pressure and military threat potential) and sharp power (meaning special operations and the ability to distort or manipulate information flows)\(^{33}\).

If one views the world like this, one must conclude that the peoples and their societies constitute but a passive mass, that leaders are corrupt, and that the weaker collectives are always destined to be consumed by the physically stronger ones.


\(^{33}\) As to distinct types of power see for example: G. Lewicki, *China’s Belt and Road meets the Three Seas Initiative*, op. cit. p. 13
According to this worldview, cultural, social, civic and institutional dimensions – although recognized as components of a civilization – are treated as negligible byproducts of hard and sharp power.

It seems that President Putin and his advisors, influenced by such views, have been long neglecting their civilizational security – which means they have not included in their security calculations the need of “their” religion, culture and institutions to be attractive and voluntarily accepted by the societies onto which they wanted to project their civilizational influence. Why care about the perception of your institutions and culture abroad when societies are merely a passive mass, and their leaders can be effectively intimidated or bribed? Even today, when speaking about the roots of current Russian problems, many Russian analysts use mostly references to sharp and hard power: so allegedly the Ukrainians were bribed by the West, corrupted by its lies, the West wants to conquer Ukraine’s territories and its natural resources.

The problem with such reasoning is that Ukraine’s changing civilizational identity and the real reasons why Ukrainians are becoming increasingly pro-Western cannot even be voiced from within the vocabulary of “Russian geopolitics.” In this vocabulary there is no space for the tremendous impact of soft power (the power of culture, institutions and social imagination34). There is only space for societal top-down ideology, not down-to-top personal convictions.

Likewise, there is no space for the societal agency that comes from the sum of many individual preferences. In short: there is no space for the benchmarks of a civilizational identity as a causal force. This failure to appreciate emergent processes and the gravitational pull of cultural zones (or civilizations) has led to a process of civilizational weakening of Russia and the unnoticed decline of its civilizational security.

As a result, in the last decades Russia has been a powerful state (as shown, e.g., by the State Power Index35 I co-created), but Russia has also been a weakening civilization. Putin’s invasion in this context should be seen as a last resort: a last possible step to protect Russia’s civilizational security after decades of negligence and misunderstanding. Putin knows that losing civilizational influence in Ukraine could mean the collapse of Russia as a civilizational state. When this happens, Russia could still exist as a state, but without serious civilizational claims.

These will be the consequences of treating civilizational soft-power tools as secondary to the tools of hard and sharp power.

35 Piotr Arak, Grzegorz Lewicki, State Power Index, In.Europa Institute 2017
https://www.statepowerindex.com
Let us repeat what I said above: in the Russian playbook, any social change to occur must be secretly steered or engineered from above, top-down, by coercion; the inclinations of individuals – so to speak – interwoven in the social fabric do not matter much.

In reality, however, the Ukrainian pull towards the West is related mainly to soft power and the cultural gravitational field of Europe, one that started to pull Ukrainians within their reach after 1989 – and even more after their neighbors Romania, Poland, Slovakia and other Central-Eastern European countries joined the European Union.

Poland, for example, received more than one million economic migrants from Ukraine even before the invasion. They have been circling back and forth between Ukraine and Poland, experiencing low cultural distance in the country so they could cherish the perspective of “the European life.” This implies a life with functional institutions and without large-scale corruption or the domination of the most powerful over the weak that is characteristic of the Russian civilizational state. They have been finding European culture simply more attractive, stable and predictable, thus more fitting for their lifelong plans. Even many Ukrainian oligarchs have understood this, to the extent that when Russian troops came to Ukraine’s borders the majority of Ukrainians agreed to prioritize their civilizational security over their national security. They certainly bet on their civilizational security, not knowing if they could succeed.

In fact, there was a reluctance of France and Germany to support Ukraine in the first weeks of the invasion, suggesting their conclusion that Ukraine could lose. When Ukraine’s President Zelensky met Poland’s President Andrzej Duda shortly after the invasion, he told the Polish president: “It is possible we are seeing each other for the last time”\textsuperscript{36}.

A risk of assassination of Ukrainian elites was and still is very high. The toll in blood for Ukraine’s participation in the European Western dream is being paid even as this paper is being published. However, Ukrainians have placed their bet firmly: from the first day of invasion, they keep communicating their dedication towards Western identity, trying to fit into both left-wing and right-wing sensitivities of Western countries in narratives they tell the Western world\textsuperscript{37}.

Why did the Ukrainians choose to keep fighting and dying instead of accepting a gravitational pull toward the Russian civilizational state?


\textsuperscript{37} Grzegorz Lewicki, “Innovation and culture. How to make the Three Seas region a global hotspot of tech creativity,” a Vilnius lecture at the \textit{Stern Leadership Academy as part of Stanford University Graduate School of Business Executive Education program}, 13.01.2023
This is where the concept of civilizational security proves its explanatory potential: Ukrainians have calculated that raising their civilizational security in the long run necessitates short term radical lowering of their national security.

Certainly, achieving civilizational security and stabilizing it will raise Ukraine’s national security eventually. However, Ukraine’s choice between the West and the Russia at the outset of the invasion seemed to have been quite simple on a psychological level: you will not deem civilizationally attractive someone who is constantly bullying you and who will periodically come for a chunk of your country, as Russia kept doing.

Moreover, Ukrainians, having lived along the borderland of civilizations for centuries, have understood well that civilizational identity comes in a bundle – it offers a package of value types, institutions as well as technological and economic ties that are tangled together and interdependent once you choose a civilization. It has been not just about living on good terms with Russia; it has been about accepting the building blocks of their civilization in Ukraine.

Once the choice is made, some tenets come quickly at a “discount rate” – an independent judiciary system and the rule of law become easier to implement as institutions if you start to value the dignity of a single person as do the Roman law and the Christian tradition typical of the West. On the other hand, it is easier to implement and sustain a digital system of authoritarian control, if your society is only ruled by the law created to allow the stronger to subdue the weaker – like in the Russian civilizational state.

As argued above, Putin’s establishment has overlooked the fact that societal changes of values might facilitate civilizational shifts.

In this context let us look at the research by Akaliyski and Welzel in more detail38. In the years from 1990 to 2014, the majority of EU member states have noted an increase in the so-called “emancipative values” based on individual self-fulfillment, while Russia, the mayor player of the Eurasian Economic Union, has noted a decrease. However, some countries – including Russia’s neighbors Ukraine and Georgia – have not followed Russia’s pattern. Quite the contrary, they both noted an increase in the emancipative values typical of the West, albeit slower than in the case of the majority of the EU.

Of course, such a shift does not mean any change of civilizational allegiance, but it may facilitate it by making civilizational transition easier and more stable if it happens due to a conscious political decision.

38 Plamen Akaliyski, Christian Welzel, op. cit.
Of note is that in the times these value changes were recorded Russia invaded both Ukraine and Georgia, both invasions resulting in territorial loss – Georgia lost some regions in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.

**Poland’s Civilizational Security**

What about Poland’s civilizational security? Much like in the computer game “Civilization” where a player may achieve a cultural or institutional (economic) victory through peaceful soft-power influence, Poland could achieve cultural victory by further transmitting material support and the promise of the Western civilization to Ukraine together with other EU countries.

Poland, like Ukraine, has calculated that its civilizational security is of top priority even if its national security could suffer in the process. Thus, Polish elites have assumed that strengthening the Western identity of its neighboring countries would raise Poland’s civilizational security, a development that will also be beneficial for Poland’s national security overall. Poland’s general reluctance to embrace the Russian civilizational state with its values is evident to everyone who has studied Russia’s exploitation of Poland, not to mention nearly half century of communism in years from 1945 to 1989.

Further, Poland is also home to some civilizational thinkers that have imprinted civilizational thinking into intellectual traditions. One such individual was Feliks Koneczny who described Russia as a member of the Turanian (Eurasian) civilization based on militarism and Nomadic camp-life “ethics” with an idea of the state as a private property of a chieftain.

From the perspective of 2023, this Polish bet about Russia as a militant civilization was right even if many in the West did not want listen. The bet has currently led to the increase of Poland’s civilizational security: in the times of the current geopolitical struggle Poland’s logistic networks are crucial for the West. Poland has confirmed its role as an indispensable part of the West, both in terms of practical utility and international image.

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https://www.ign.com/wikis/civilization-6/Victories

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkSwXOTB7Q

If we were to define Poland’s civilizational security in the current century in general, it could be defined as follows: Poland's civilizational security is the security of Poland resulting from its belonging to Western civilization, as well as the security resulting from the perception of Poland as an indispensable element of the West. It is also the security resulting from a stable and predictable networking – cultural, political and economic – with other Western states and institutions. The greater the networking and predictability of relations with major actors of the Western civilization – such as the European Union and the United States – the greater Poland's civilizational security. This particular definition could be generalized to denote civilizational security of many different states.

Civilization as a Tangled Web: Dimensions of Civilizational Security

As I have demonstrated in this paper, the narrow understanding of civilizational security is a useful concept capable of supplementing and enriching other analytical layers when discussing geopolitics. It is especially useful in analyzing security of the countries located in civilizational borderlands or countries which experience the strong presence of two or more civilizations in or around them. As the Polish and Ukrainian cases suggest, a priority of ensuring civilizational security can overwrite national security in some policy considerations. In turn, the Russian case suggests that neglecting civilizational security or trying to exercise civilizational security by force – with hard power instead of soft power – runs the considerable risk of failure.

As long as civilizational identities are shaped by complex networks of interdependence and mutual influence that come at certain costs\(^\text{42}\), the main analytical dimensions that civilizational security analysts should weigh include:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(a)] values and culture, with the emphasis on the cultural distance towards the core of a civilization(s) with which a country wants to remain linked;
  \item[(b)] religion, with the emphasis on the networks of authority, ideology and financing of religions the country has on its territory;
  \item[(c)] geography, with the emphasis on physical proximity to members of particular civilization;
  \item[(d)] economy, with the emphasis on stable and predictable economic ties to the members of a desired civilization(s);
  \item[(e)] technology, with the emphasis on the safety of technological infrastructure provided by the members of desired civilization(s) and their control of crucial information flows;
\end{itemize}

(f) narratives, with the emphasis on an image of a country in the eyes of the members of desired civilization(s) as indispensable or at least as crucial for the civilization(s), and
(g) the power of civilizations with which a country wants to be associated.

Analyzing geopolitics in terms of civilizational security could help policymakers and analysts alike. Think of Poland, Ukraine and Russia and their civilizational security as a parameter to understand these countries’ decisions, failures and successes, dreams and imaginaries. Think of Mongolia that secured its civilizational stability by relying on Buddhism that differentiates their culture from Confucian and Russian-Orthodox neighbors. Think of Israel that secured its place as an enclave of Western thinking in the Middle East by creating unique links with the United States and convincing American Christians they should support Israel due to religious reasons43.

Think, too, of Taiwan which, by allowing for the Westernization of its Confucian civilizational identity, became a stable partner for the West and constructed its security based on its indispensability for the Western production chains (microchips). Think of many African countries that will be rethinking their civilizational security in the years to come to decide which bundles of civilizational identity they want to be linked to. The potential for studying civilizational security globally is vast.

Certainly, to understand civilizational security better we would have to refine or even redefine “a civilization” to make the concept more fluid and measurable. This, however, would necessitate a separate publication. In any case, civilizational identities should be seen as multi-layered networks, the layers of which include, among others, religion, economy, technology, politics and culture, all of which form a tangled, but not indiscernible web. Civilizational identities are neither set in stone, nor they are easy to be imposed on the people if their personal dreams and desires point elsewhere.

Hence, in the present century, whoever neglects civilizational security in analyzing global politics will learn a bitter lesson. At best he or she will make wrong predictions; at worst he or she will start the kinetic war that cannot be won. For you cannot conquer civilizational identities with tanks.

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Global Security in the Third Millennium of the Common Era

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The primary purpose of this short essay is to catalyze discussion among security professionals about how perspectives on ‘global security’ and ‘wise civilizations’ might affect military affairs during a time of great, interdisciplinary stresses that impact everyone on earth today.

Global civilization faces two main existential threats this century. The first is a quick death from general thermonuclear war or release of other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) like exotic, genetically engineered biological weapons. The second is a slow death from incremental destruction of the living system that supports all civilizations, wise or unwise, by mechanisms like deforestation, desertification, climate change, and general loss of biodiversity.¹

The first threat from WMD is relatively easy to deal with (in theory – setting aside obvious and profound political obstacles) because there is only one good reason to retain nuclear weapons from a global perspective. That is to protect earth-based civilizations from dangerous asteroids or other objects approaching from space. That mission would require 10-20 nuclear weapons and appropriate delivery systems retained by some global authority with the ‘protect earth from asteroids’ mission only. The current “MAD” doctrine that prevails among nuclear powers today (Mutual Assured Destruction) promises to protect world peace by threatening all of the children on earth with a nuclear holocaust if that fails. Forever, because MAD dares not fail even once.

This could be a special definition of terrorism, a ‘type case’ of security planning that completely ignores the interests of the “seventh generation” of descendants of leaders today. Advocates of MAD seldom write about seventh generation consequences, but often note that we have not seen nuclear weapons used in anger since Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945. True, but they conclude this means that MAD works well.

They typically do not note that MAD is critically undercut by something called the “rational actor assumption” which certainly does not apply to all world leaders all of the time. Furthermore, none of the ways that nuclear war could start have been reduced to zero (for example -- by accident, computer failures, irresponsible leadership, rogue commanders with control over WMD, or “terrorist” attempts to get nuclear powers to fight each other).
The second existential threat of incremental destruction of our living system is much more complicated, partly because it is not a traditional military threat, and most militaries are very poorly equipped to deal with environmental issues. But militaries still consume the lion’s share of resources devoted to security issues including fossil fuels, and they guard those ‘equities’ with great professional attention and skill. This is one reason the USA and Russia have essentially ignored climate change and its many, vast security consequences for about three decades.

The most important tap root of all environmental problems today is population growth and the relentless pressure of too many people trying to live modern lives on too little land to support that. But population issues are toxic to most practical politicians in democracies; they are always entangled with other issues like immigration, and there are many other factors that affect climate change, such as deforestation.

Corruption of governance constitutes the second most crucial factor in the incremental destruction of the living system that supports all civilizations. But that is also politically very difficult. So, practical politicians are often eager to expose corruption in other governments, but blind to corruption in their own. Therefore, we will focus here on global security consequences of continuing to ignore the developing global crisis in our environment.

The most important of these will likely be a relentless increase in migrations of millions of people fleeing desperate conditions in their home countries, and violent conflicts within them. One response is building walls or militarizing borders to keep out the unwanted poor. But no wall can stop the relentless increase in heat and ocean acidity that is killing corals in all of our oceans, fueling huge wildfires in many countries worldwide, causing deserts to spread, storms to metastasize, and increasing conditions that result in emergent diseases like the Covid-19 pandemic that has killed more Americans than all of the wars in our history combined.²

Nuclear weapons, like all other WMD, have zero utility against such problems. Yet every nuclear weapons power on earth is currently modernizing their nuclear arsenals and delivery systems, spending scarce financial and technical resources on echoes of World War II instead of on the emerging threats of the third millennium.³ While they build bigger and allegedly better bombs, the living system that supports us all is bleeding away every day.

The nation states of earth today are terrified by WMD, and even more so by the thought that “terrorists” might acquire some to lash out at established powers. It is easier for many people to believe that all of the desperate people fleeing failed and failing states are potential “terrorists” than to deal with the root causes of so much distress.
Of course, there are some genuine terrorists who have become remarkably dangerous (like ISIS or Daesh) and who are relentlessly opposed to all things modern, which they blame for their undoubtedly limited life opportunities.

Therefore, many militaries and internal security services in developed countries already consider “terrorism” to be among their top security concerns. OK – almost everyone supports spending serious resources to protect innocent people from random violence intended to terrorize them and their governments. But focusing on symptoms like terrorism has resulted in neglect of the causes of failed and failing states. And failure to distinguish very clearly between actual terrorists and millions of desperate people fleeing awful conditions in failing states has shown that modern militaries can create more new terrorists each year than they can ever kill. Meanwhile, the underlying causes of failing states, like population pressure and corruption, continue.

Furthermore, the most corrupt and authoritarian governments on earth often label mere political critics or opponents as criminals or even “terrorists.” The “terrorism” label has been so broadly misapplied to include scores of millions of people who are merely desperate for a chance at a meaningful life, that we suggest an adjustment of strategic thought worldwide.

In a world concerned about global security in the third millennium, it would be appropriate and helpful for professional security services to see themselves as guardians of civilization against barbarism.

If so, and if they are wise, they would have to acknowledge that barbarism occurs in every country and religion rather than suggesting some racist idea that only “others” are barbaric, while “we” are blessed with civilizational wisdom. That is simplistic, Darwinian thinking, which cannot solve the problems before us today. But it is also as common as dirt in populist politics.

People who study civilizations carefully have long been concerned about why some decay and die quickly, while others endure for extended periods of time, adjusting as conditions change and embracing encounters with other civilizations rather than clashing in conflicts that often result in genocides for the losing side.4,5

“Wisdom” is one of the ingredients that matters at times like that, but it is not possible to achieve any true consensus on what “wisdom” actually is. Working on cultivating “wisdom” and seeking clarity about what that means, is one key to survival.

All of the great problems mentioned in this short essay require wisdom to resolve peacefully, and the presence of WMD means that we cannot wait forever to get this right.6 Poisson statistics assure us that if the probability of general nuclear war is greater than zero, and prime parameters do not change, then it will eventually occur.
Therefore, we have been encouraging for many years the goal of zero, or nearly zero global nuclear weapons for maximum civilization security, as did eventually some of the prime architects of modern “MAD” nuclear arsenals. 

The history of nuclear weapons control is filled with wise steps forward and unwise steps back.

- For one example, the landmark nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970 promised help for smaller countries to develop nuclear power in return for strong pledges by those nations not to produce nuclear weapons and to allow very intrusive inspections by UN agencies to monitor and enforce that. That was wise.

- But Article 6 of this key treaty also pledged that then-nuclear weapons powers would eventually get rid of them, soon. The text of Article 6 is unambiguous. “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Ignoring this part of the NPT was not wise, in my opinion.

Article 6 has been violated by both the USA and Russia, who are both modernizing their nuclear arsenals as we write. So are all seven other nuclear weapons nations, in a mad race to mutual destruction. When the largest countries with the largest nuclear arsenals do not honor their own commitments to the international community, why should smaller nations? It is not wise to undercut this valuable tool for peaceful transition to a world committed to long-term survival.

We have already mentioned other profound problems that produce the developing global crisis, like population pressure, corruptions of governance, authoritarian police-state politics, climate change, and militant “religions” that violate teachings of founders about peaceful coexistence with the much larger world we all inhabit for our brief moments in time. All of these are very difficult problems even to discuss, much less to solve. Yet someone must, or the “half-life” of human civilization will be much shorter than any rational and humane person wants.

Therefore, we commend the scholars of the first World Congress of Civilizational Studies and especially security professionals among you to consider these thoughts on what might constitute “wise” security for the entire global community for the long term. And then, we pray that you improve upon these early, simplistic thoughts, while you extend this discussion to politicians and others who have some power to implement them.
All errors of any kind apply to the first draft author, who invites improvement by anyone.

Notes

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Covid Data Tracker” accessible at: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home. This showed US deaths from Covid 19 at 1,129,573 on 26 April 2023. That exceeds all US deaths in all of the wars we have fought over 240+ years.
6 See Andregg, Michael, “The Developing Global Crisis and Survival of Human Civilizations,” in *Comparative Civilizations Review*, No. 86, Spring 2022, pp. 40-65, available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol86/iss86/7. This shows in particular why Poisson statistics can estimate civilization half-lives assuming various probabilities of a general nuclear war occurring, and more generally why environmental destruction is the greater long-term threat.
The Applicability of Lessons from American Society for the European Union: Tolerance, Demographic Change, and Social Structure

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While Americans have long tended to see our society and civilization as exceptional, in fact the civilization is primarily based on European precedent. We see ourselves, in the words of one of our most significant poets, Emma Lazarus, as the new colossus, “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp cries she... I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”¹ We claim to be an exception; that means that we are unique, different, what many, alluding to the New Testament as viewed by the Pilgrim founding fathers, have called “a shining city upon a hill.”² And as “a beacon of hope.”

To be exceptional, however, one must be compared to others. In fact, there has been a long tradition of Europeans who have written meaningfully about America, the most significant of whom was Alexis de Tocqueville.

In his two volume masterpiece, entitled Democracy in America, the import of which can be grasped by reading the titles of his dozens of chapters, de Tocqueville first analyzed the anomalies which the laws and customs of the Anglo-Americans presented, and the unique aspects of the prevalent “equality of condition” which have shaped American democracy.³

This basis of equality led to the tendency toward almost universal suffrage; it undergirded the nature of American elections, the instability of the administration of the United States, the advantages to society of our democracy, our public spirit, the unlimited power of the majority, the checks on the tyranny of the majority (especially what we call today Madisonian federalism), and the nature of American trials by jury. He listed the factors that had led to the maintenance of the republic, and, of great interest today, the relations among what he called the three races of America.

Then, in his second volume, de Tocqueville moved on to consider the influence of democracy upon the action of intellect, including our tendencies in philosophy, our aptitude for general ideas, the importance of religion, our idea of the indefinite perfectibility of man, and our propensity to be more attuned to practical science than to theoretical science.
De Tocqueville noted that we lean more to equality than to liberty, that we tend to oppose individualism, that we are oriented toward physical wellbeing, and that we respect all types of work as honorable. He wrote about how democracy in America affects our relations with each other.

In sum, his pioneering work explored our American society and civilization better than almost all rivals. It laid the foundation for ideas which were strengthened and inculcated as a result of the civil war which followed his analysis by three decades, and his thought stands today as a great guidebook to the American people and our civilization.

To de Tocqueville, however, the purpose of this massive study of American democracy was to illuminate by contrast conditions in Europe; it was to serve as the backdrop for examining the French Revolution and the social and political changes in France wrought by the revolution. Although death cut short his plans, his incisive work, *The Ancient Regime and the French Revolution*, was intended as the beginning of an analysis of the French Revolution and its consequences for France and Europe.

Many others have followed de Tocqueville. They have come from Europe to explain American civilization to us and often to amplify and advance our ideas. These include writers of nonfiction as well as fiction.

To me, one of the most prescient of these works, from the social perspective, was written by Gunnar Myrdal of Sweden in 1944. This trenchant study was entitled *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*. It examined the hypocrisy, the unresolved tension, between the basic American creed resting on equality, one that de Tocqueville had so clearly outlined, and the existence of deep and persistent racism in the American society of the mid-Twentieth Century.

This, too, presaged what was to come, the American Civil Rights Movement, the greatest post-War social change in modern America. In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln saw the result of the Civil War as a new birth of freedom; some have seen in the Civil Rights Movement a third new American birth of freedom and democracy.

So, we cannot consider our understanding of the American civilization complete without knowing the great works by European analysts of our people. But here, I would like to propose that there are insights from our colossus, lying to the west of Europe, across the Atlantic Ocean, that would benefit this continent. There are lessons we have learned that would illuminate the way forward for the European Union.
To cite Windelband’s construction of Kant’s analytical approach, we should ask: is our social analysis simply ideographic – with reference to our situation alone – or may it be employed profitably and in a nomothetic way – generalizable and, in this case, applicable to the young, dynamic, powerhouse that is the European Union?  

Three such American practices which are generalizable for European adoption are our encounters with the idea of tolerance, huge demographic change, and continual social and political change.

But first, an objector might question whether the experiences of a single country and society can be valid when we project lessons from the United States onto the entire 27 member contemporary European Union. In the World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, entitled The New Enlightenment between Traditions and Challenges – Crossroads of Civilizations, we could begin by defining three central terms: state, nation, and civilization.

A “state” may be described according to contemporary political science as an entity that has people, territory, government and sovereignty. By this definition, strengthened by Westphalia, both the United States and the European Union would constitute states, although the definition of sovereignty is complex regarding both.

Next, does the United States consist of a “nation”? Every school child in America recites, generally on a daily basis, the Pledge of Allegiance, asserting that we are “one nation” and “indivisible” with “liberty and justice for all.”

But you can argue the issue either way – that we are or that we are not one nation. Similarly, we may ask: Is Europe becoming “one nation”? Well, that may depend on how we define a “nation.”

According to the American Political Dictionary, a nation is “any sizable group of people united by common bonds of geography, religion, language, race, custom and tradition, and through shared experiences and common aspirations.” Here the nation is related to the more easily understood term “nation state.”

The nation has provided in the modern era the unifying concept with which the individual can identify, the political dictionary states. In my footnotes below I list several definitions of this most powerful, yet debatable, concept, the analysts of which run, in the modern period, all the way from Abbé Sieyès, Rousseau and von Herder through to Michelet, Lord Acton, and the present-day Putin. So, let’s temporarily conclude here that it is debatable what a nation actually is.
Finally, are we both “civilizations” – or members of the same one? As the Editor-in-Chief of the *Comparative Civilizational Review* for 26 years, and as a board member of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations for many years, too, I can say without fear of contradiction that scholars disagree on what constitutes a civilization.

Famously, a founder of our society stated that civilizations are the largest units or “intelligible fields of historical study;” in my opinion the term is never fully defined in D.C. Somervell’s abridgement of Arnold Toynbee’s magisterial work on the subject, *A Study of History.*

Everyone prepares lists of civilizations, but the definition remains debatable; it’s like the famous statement of the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart about the subject of pornography: I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material, but I know it when I see it.


An excellent introduction is *The Boundaries of Civilizations in Space and Time*, edited by Matthew Melko and Leighton Scott, (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1987). In this work several authors define worldview, *weltanschauung*, as essential to the definition of what constitutes a civilization.

If we can agree that “civilization” means the “broadest cultural entity,” to employ the words of Huntington again, then to a greater or lesser extent, both the United States and the European Union are members of the Western Civilization. Perhaps this is especially important today, as the fight over Ukraine, just east of us here today in Bucharest, may be motivated, at least in part, by the struggle of the Orthodox Russian or Byzantine Civilization to maintain what it perceives as its borders against the Western Civilization.

The first lesson from American civilization deals with the idea of tolerance. This is the *sine qua non* of a modern representative democracy; it has marked our country’s political climate for many years, broken only by the Civil War period from 1860 to 1865, and then, again, perhaps, recently.

For students of world civilizations, an understanding of how the American democracy has continued to operate with only one internal rupture must rest on our valuation of tolerance.
In my opinion most foreigners think they understand American culture and politics but there is more complexity to it than meets the eye. The New York Times and other media report that immigrants and others from outside America often misunderstand our culture and practices of administration and politics.

Tolerance has an American application. We often cite a sentence from the French Enlightenment, misattributed to Voltaire: I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.\(^\text{13}\) We also frequently say: Let us agree to disagree. Or, you don’t have to be disagreeable to disagree. Except for one time, when a great Civil War divided the nation, we have always been able to tolerate wild swings in political leadership of the country.

Politically, the population is almost equally divided between two sides: the liberal or progressive side, led by the Democrats since, at the latest, 1932 and the conservative or right wing side, led by the Republicans, beginning with the McKinley administration, around 1896. Even during the recent 2000, 2004, and 2016 elections, and most notably during the 2020 national Presidential elections, when to some misinformed Americans the Presidency actually was stolen, there has not been a military coup or army intervention.

We don’t have the prevailing idea of a “loyal opposition” very much anymore, and tolerance is being stretched to new limits today. It still is present, though. Just a few weeks ago, at a conference in Savannah, Georgia, held in June, some right-winger objected to remarks I made about democracy and the expulsion of two African American members, both Democrats, from the Tennessee state legislature. She then basically forced me to shake her hand and to “agree to disagree.”

Tolerance is seen in the U.S. especially in the area of religion; we are a nation of many religions, yet these generally do not engage in physical or any other form of hostility with each other. Eisenhower said a month before his inauguration, “In other words, our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is.”\(^\text{14}\) This may be due, among other reasons, to the fact that the original colonies were all led by different faith groups: Congregational in New England; Dutch Reformed in New York; Episcopal in Virginia; Catholics in Maryland; and Quakers in Pennsylvania. Our Constitution mentions no deity at all, and the First Amendment outlaws “an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

This is also the case with our multicultural groups; tolerance increasingly dictates respecting every American’s national origins and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.
The changing nature of American demographics directly depends on this, as does our judgment of each other. Prejudice may exist in the breast of mankind; discrimination is not allowed.

President Trump’s views made matters worse over the last decade, when he attacked Mexicans the day of his announcement of candidacy and then as he ruled by division, even calling some neo-Nazis “good people” and purposely destroying the families of refugees. Of course, his facilitation of a possible coup d’état in January of 2021 ran against the tradition of tolerance most dramatically, but its lack of success, and the presiding role of Vice President Pence at the successful counting of the electoral votes, and subsequently on the platform for the inauguration, mitigated the damage and showed that this tradition prevails.

Further, until Trump we could say that every President since Andrew Johnson in 1869 has attended the inauguration of his successor as power transfers peacefully every four years on January 20 at high noon. Both individuals have stood on the ceremonial stage for the formal transfer of power. This has been so even in the case of open hostility between the two individuals; President Truman, whom I consider one of the greatest Presidents in our history, said of his successor, President Eisenhower, that “the General doesn’t know any more about politics than a pig knows about Sunday.” Yet, they rode together in the car to the inauguration of Ike, without talking, and they sat together on the ceremony’s stage.\(^\text{15}\)

I would add that tolerance of differences has affected every aspect of our life, especially public education. Educational leaders have to consider the differences of others and respect them. In the United States, there would simply be no way to operate K-12 and higher education institutions or systems without very wide consultation and continual, tolerance-based compromise.

Demography is destiny for the American people. American independence was declared in 1776 by our founding fathers, a group which perhaps represented a minority of Americans. But, after the War of Independence, the British government accepted separation, as contained in the Treaty of Paris, in 1783.

Immigration has been part of our national history from the beginning. The Declaration of Independence accused the British of endeavoring “to prevent the population of these states, for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners (and) refusing to pass other (laws) to encourage their migrations hither....”
Then, as noted by the official “Brief History of United States Immigration Policy”: The mass migration of the 19th century was the result of a near perfect match between the needs of a new country and Europe. Europe at this time was undergoing drastic social change and economic reorganization, compounded by overpopulation. America needed immigrants for settlement, defense and economic well-being. During the period 1820-1880, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland accounted for the largest numbers.\textsuperscript{16}

The official history also notes:

In the last two decades of the 19th century, the volume of immigration continued to increase, and the main sources shifted from Northern and Western to Southern and Eastern Europe. … While the United States remained willing and able to absorb the mass migration during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the country’s needs had changed.

The frontier had closed, and the “new” immigrants, as they were characterized by the Dillingham Commission, fueled the industrialization and urbanization of America. However, there was growing ambivalence toward the urban immigrants by a predominantly rural country.

Racist bigotry on the West Coast drove the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which remained in effect until its repeal in 1943. During World War I, legislation enacted new barriers to immigration. Thus, over the veto of President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, Congress in 1917 established the Asiatic Barred Zone.

Perhaps the lowest point was reached soon after the Republican Party won the election of 1920. It captured the presidency and both houses of Congress. The new Congress quickly declared, based on specious reasoning, an “immigration emergency.” This followed a decade of increasing xenophobia, mostly based on hostility to newly arriving Southern and Eastern Europeans.

The most famous book on the subject printed during this era was the 1916 volume entitled The Passing of the Great Race: Or The Racial Basis of European History. It was written by a proponent of the idea of eugenics, Madison Grant. Testimony before Congress claimed that the new immigrants, the Jews, the Slavs and the Italians, particularly, were incapable of being assimilated or contributing to the advancement of the country.

Congress enacted the Immigration Act of 1924, establishing quotas for immigration designed to preserve the national origins of the American people as they were in 1920. Those from the “barred zone” were inadmissible as immigrants and Africans were excluded (since African Americans were not counted in the quotas).
Hitler used this detestable National Origins Quota law as an excuse to commence the genocide of Jews in Europe and the mass murder of people deemed unfit, as Prof. Stefan Kühl has written in his work, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism.*

The *Brief History* quotes one of the prominent eugenicists:

> We in this country have been so imbued with the idea of democracy, or the equality of all men, that we have left out of consideration the matter of blood or natural born hereditary mental and moral differences. No man who breeds pedigreed plants and animals can afford to neglect this thing. …

> The National Origins provisions of the immigration control law of 1924 marked the actual turning point from immigration control based on the asylum idea … definitely in favor of the biological basis.

After the Second World War, the United States passed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 into law. This provided for more than 400,000 displaced persons through 1951. President Harry Truman, a Democrat whose veto of a restrictionist law was overridden by Congress, noted, among other points, that “In no other realm of our national life are we so hampered and stultified by the dead hand of the past, as we are in this field of immigration.”

In 1965, the Democrats held the Congress and the Presidency. Recalling the book by the late President John F. Kennedy entitled *A Nation of Immigrants*, President Johnson oversaw the enactment of a new immigration law. This finally abolished the disgraced National Origins Quota system and replaced it with a system based on two elements: reunification of families and needed skills.

As the *Brief History* notes:

> The circumstances which led to this major shift in policy in 1965 were a complex combination of changing public perceptions and values, politics, and legislative compromise. Public support for the repeal of the national origins quota system reflected changes in public attitudes toward race and national origins. It can be argued that the 1965 immigration legislation was as much as product of the mid-1960s and the heavily Democratic 89th Congress which also produced major civil rights legislation, as the 1952 Act had been a product of the Cold War period of the early 1950s.

Now, as a result of this act, the demography of the United States – untethered as it was from the racist and ethnocentric rules and constraints of the past – began a swift change.
Today, we see a new American people emerging.

According to the American Constitution, a population count, a census, must be held every ten years. The purpose of this decennial census is to discover what population changes have occurred and, thus, what changes must be made in the size of state delegations to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Here are some data drawn from the census and contained in the reports attached to these remarks:

- In the Year 2000 census, self-reported white people constituted 75.1% of the entire population. African Americans were at 12.3% and Asians were at 3.6%. Two or more races were at 2.4%, and other races, 5.5%. Native Americans, Hawaiians / Other Pacific Islanders were .1% and American Indians and Alaska Natives made up .9%.

- From the results of the Year 2010 census, the main news was that Asians had risen by 43.3% in ten years and Hispanics by 43%. That meant that as of 2010 Asians now constituted 4.8% and Hispanics (or Latinos), 16.3 %. Hispanics had by this point clearly become the largest minority ethnicity. Moreover, whites declined to 72.4%.

- Results from the recently completed Year 2020 census show that self-declared whites as of now have declined dramatically as a percent of the overall population. Non-Latino whites are presently only 57.8% of the American population.

At the same time, the multiracial population has jumped by 276% in ten years, and “Some Other Race” or “in combination” increased 129%, thus surpassing African Americans as the second largest minority.

Today, fully one in ten Americans identify as multiracial, according to the Washington Post. The largest minority ethnic group as of 2020 is Hispanics/Latinos, 18.7%. The most diverse jurisdictions now are, in decreasing order: Hawaii, California, Nevada, Maryland, D.C., Texas, New Jersey, New York, and Georgia.

- More startling yet are the projections for 2060, as produced by the Census Bureau back in 2015. By 2060, it reports, the share of the Non-Hispanic white alone population “is projected to be just 43.6%, as its population falls from 198 million in 2014 to 182 million in 2060.”
Hispanics will have grown by 114.8% and will constitute 28.6% of the overall population. African Americans will grow slightly, to 17.9%, and Asians, showing a whopping 143.1% growth, will make up fully 11.7% of the population. People reporting to be of two or more races will jump to 6.2% overall, a leap of 225.5% since 2014, the fastest growing category over the next half century.

The Census Bureau says now that we will arrive at a point at which the non-Hispanic white population will comprise less than 50 percent of the nation’s total population in the year 2044. Then, the country becomes a “majority minority” nation. After that point, no group will have a majority share of the total population and the United States will become a land with a plurality of racial and ethnic groups.

We see the results everywhere in the U.S. For example, in contemporary local school districts in America’s urban areas, it is found often that dozens of languages are being spoken by youngsters in elementary schools. These are the voters of tomorrow.

In response to this massive demographic change, it could have been predicted that someone like Trump would arise. A number of individuals began to protest violently against these trends, especially during the period of the Obama presidency, all screaming “I want my country back!” Fox News, a popular news channel, actually has campaigned relentlessly and xenophobically against a supposed plan by American elites to replace white people with immigrants from underdeveloped countries. This is the so-called White Replacement Theory.

Nonetheless, American demography is changing inevitably. It is soon no longer going to be a “white man’s country.” Regardless of the protests, and the tricks and stratagems of some, the data projected in the 2060 chart are likely to be borne out in political and social orientations – perhaps even earlier than was forecast in 2015.

Parallel developments are occurring in Europe, of course. By applying America’s experience to this region of the Western civilization, we can predict that, after rough patches, Europe will be emerging as a multicultural, more complex and variegated society ethnically. I urge Europeans to look at the American precedent and draw implications from it, accordingly, helping the EU to become a welcoming land of immigrants and moving away from the contemporary Hungarian model.

The third manifestation of these American challenges, and lessons, may be seen in a suite of social and political realities we have experienced. Among these are a dramatically evolving social structure, the persistence of federalism, and the role of checks and balances.

From de Toqueville on, we have realized that America, unlike Europe, has had no aristocracy ab initio.
Some regions perhaps had groups claiming such roles, for example, the Bourbon class of Virginia or the Southern white plantation owners, but these classes were mostly eliminated by the Civil War. In the North and the Midwest, a century ago, there were bourgeois, relatively wealthy and multi-generational upper social classes there, remnants of which remain.

We base our studies of American social structure on the six social class model presented in the mid-twentieth century by social anthropologist, W. Lloyd Warner. He laid out his analytical approach to class structure in his central work, *Social Class in America: The Evaluation of Status*. There were the upper upper; the lower upper; the upper middle; the lower middle; the upper lower and the lower lower social classes.

These were present even though Americans routinely, traditionally, and insistently have almost always denied the presence of any inequality or social classes in the land.

Digby Baltzell, in his book *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America*, explored the great leadership exhibited by America’s upper upper class in the past but showed how racism and antisemitism led to its functional demise by the mid-1900s, since merit was not rewarded socially. Another book of his, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* laid out much of the groundwork for a study of this class, both locally and nationally.

Today, we probably have a weakening five social class structure, made all the more universal by the continuing and powerful presence of a national media and the emerging social media. This has diminished many local deviations from the national social norms. The social integration of newcomers and of those who were previously prevented from entering the mainstream, African Americans, Asians, Native Americans and others, has reinforced the system, allowing for upward social mobility over the years. The better educated nationwide have tended to support Democrats while the lesser educated have tended to support Republicans.

Finally, as to fundamental governmental structures, I would point Europeans to two persistent and lasting American practices, both inherited from Europe and often seen in Europe but fundamental to the American culture.

The American political system since the 18th century has been built upon a version of the doctrine of federalism. Separate powers are allocated to the national government, the state government, and local governments, with room for argument as to the extent of powers of each level. The principle of federalism was expressed forcefully in *The Federalist Papers*, a series of essays by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay; these arguments convinced state legislatures to approve the Constitution.
Since then, our public discourse has been occupied by a great deal of argument over the allocation of proper powers awarded to each level. Elementary and secondary education, for example, remains a state and local function, not a federal function.

However, the role of the national government has increased gradually, starting with the passage of laws relating to the allocation of new land for public purposes in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation, our first Constitution. These laws required, for example, that public land must be used for education, among other functions. Also, we passed the State University and Land Grant legislation under Abraham Lincoln, again an educational thrust exerted by the federal government.

The powers of the federal government in national domestic programs were greatly expanded during the Roosevelt administration, from 1932 to 1945, and subsequently by most administrations. This has led to decreased differences between states in many ways, especially in terms of standards of living.

Nonetheless, today many right wing states and localities continue to put the tenets of federalism to the test. They often incorporate strong statutes at variance with national norms, facilitating, for example, anti-immigrant laws, or anti-abortion laws, or voter suppression laws, or anti-LGBTQ powers, denying many the right to vote, and fighting for the repression of a wide range of views in school textbooks. Nonetheless, the federal government has been working for the opposite.

A final significant feature of American political life is the fact that we, following Montesquieu, have built in political checks and balances to our system, leading to a spirit of forcing compromise, within each branch of our federal government. The Congress is divided into two houses, each of which must agree on legislation before it can be forwarded to the President. The Executive struggles with its powers against the Legislative Branch, that is, the Congress, and the Judicial Branch, that is the Supreme Court. And the Supreme Court is a politically charged body which checks the powers of both other branches via a finding that a law or act is or is not Constitutional.

As a result, through most periods of our history, this has meant that both stability and change can occur in a peaceful way, with the major exception being during the Civil War period. Then, there was so much conflict within each branch, between the branches of the national government, and among the various state and local levels, that violence could not be contained. Some speculate that such a situation might be returning now.

In spite of these controversies, checks and balances, meaning forced compromise, combined with federalism, and tolerance, have been the basic mechanisms by which America has been able to operate successfully as we move through major demographic changes.
In some countries the national government can decide to act, say to build a new road, on its own; in the U.S., the planning must involve many more partners, actors and interests. We are less efficient but more democratic than many other countries, as a result.

Nonetheless, from the New Deal on, change can occur in America, and these social and political changes reflect the ability of the population to adjust to new situations.

In this paper I have tried to argue that as Europeans have studied the American system, we Americans can study and then contribute to European ways. We have drawn much of our intellectual grounding from the great scholars of Europe but have developed a somewhat different society.

Three results that show it have been (1) the incorporation of tolerance in American social interaction, (2) cultural responses to demographic changes based on the continual revision of our laws, and (3) the maintenance of social and political changes such as the evolution and restructuring of our social class system amidst the continuing adaptation of federalism, and the enforcement of checks and balances in government.

Notes

1 For one of our greatest poems, see https://genius.com/Emma-lazarus-the-new-colossus-annotated. Or, just go to the Statue of Liberty, where it is emblazoned.
3 There are many printings of this wonderful work. See, for example, Democracy in America, by Alexis de Tocqueville, The Henry Reeve Text As Revised by Francis Bowen. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1945. Note, especially, the extensive historical essay which runs from Page 389 to Page 487 of the second volume. For a list of other works by foreign observers similar to de Tocqueville, see, footnote 6.
6 See: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heinrich-rickert/
None of these are adequate, to me, at least. For a better analysis of this term, see Volume III of the Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, Vol. III, Philip P. Wiener, Editor-in-Chief. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, Publishers, 1973. Especially relevant are “Medieval and Renaissance Ideas of Nation” and “Nationalism” from pages 318 to 339. Nationalism can be regarded as the first universal motivating force, one which acts to organize all peoples into nation-states, the authors state.


An excellent introduction is The Boundaries of Civilizations in Space and Time, Ed. by Matthew Melko and Leighton Scott,. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1987. In this work several authors define worldview, weltanschauung, as essential to the definition of what constitutes a civilization.


Brief History of United States Immigration Policy (Prepared by Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress; #91-141 EPW, January 25, 1991). This document runs from Pages 548 to 562 and is included in a committee print entitled “Immigration and National Act (Reflecting Laws Enacted As of April 1, 1992).” It is the 9th Edition, dated April 1992, and prepared for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives. It is also marked 102nd Congress, 2d session, Serial No. 6.


Brief History, page 557.

Ibid., Page 559.

“Multiracial Americans are Driving Change,” Washington Post, front page story, Saturday, October 9, 2021.


Buber the Radical Egalitarian and Buber and Psychology

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Preface

My first iteration for this paper was to present Martin Buber in the context of radical politics in Germany and to focus upon his relationship to the anarchist Gustav Landauer. After a brief search, I found too few sources that were easily accessible from here in the United States, so as part of this presentation I situate Buber in the radical politics extant mostly during his time in Germany and in Berlin. I focus here on Buber’s psychology but include several intellectual side trips visiting aspects of Buber’s philosophy and his politics. I cannot separate them in discussing Buber and psychology. In my research on Buber’s psychology, I also have become aware of aspects of Buber and Buberism that are not well known. This includes Buber’s aesthetics.

This presentation, thus, is fragmental and based essentially on a series of my notes derived from my readings. It also rests upon my attendance at a festschrift for Buber that was given at Temple Emmanuel in Kensington, Maryland. There was a presentation about Buber in Jerusalem at the time of the beginning of the first Arab Israeli war; there was a presentation by my deceased friend, the gifted Rabbi Harold White, on Buber’s ethics; and, finally, there was a magnificent discussion of the philosophy of Buber by Sarah Scott of Manhattan College. Sarah authored many articles and gave many presentations on Buber. I am basing this article on such scholars. Please consider it a draft.

Introduction

I was going to begin this presentation by providing the famous parable from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus: “A fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” In doing so I was going to classify Martin Buber as more of a hedgehog than a fox. The normative assumption is that Buber’s major theme was one of encounter between a person and another person and also the encounter between the person and his or her conception of God. There can be no doubt that this normative view has some validity. However, recently I had an insight as to how to classify the life and thought of Buber. The term that I wish to employ is that Buber was a Radical Egalitarian.

I believe that this can be discerned by differing aspects of his life, including his theory of translation and his translation of the Torah into German; his marriage to Paula Winkler, a Catholic who later converted to Judaism and whom Buber treated as an intellectual equal; his friendship with the anarchist Gustav Landauer, thus his socialism;
his translation of the Torah into German, as a result making it more accessible; his fascination with Hassidic life; his cultural Zionism drawn from Ahad Ha’am rather than the political Zionism of Herzl; his writings on Utopias; his life in Israel, and his support for a binational State. The normative view will be demonstrated by my presentation of Buber’s psychology.

A Short Biography of Martin Buber

It is almost a sacrilege to present a short biography of the life of this multifaceted man. So, I choose not to do so. There are many excellent biographies that one might find on Buber through a Google search. However, I do want to point out that all of them say that he was born into an observant Jewish home except the Encyclopedia Britannica, which reports that the home was one of an assimilated Jewish family. The Britannica is incorrect.

What I have chosen as a basis to acquaint you with Buber is his memoir which is a presentation from his point of few of the important “fragments” of his life. Presenting a summary of his memoir is more in line with Buber’s personal approach and the topic of Buber and Psychology.

Meetings: Autobiographical Fragments was first published in 1967. Some of the reflections were published at an earlier date. Maurice Friedman, his most prominent biographer, tried to get Buber to publish a fragment on his friend Gustav Landauer who had been shot and kicked to death following the fall of the socialist Räterepublik in Munich by the right-wing authoritarian forces. After 40 years Buber still found himself “too emotionally close” to Landauer to write about him. Thus, Fragments is an attempt by Buber to present what might be termed the events and our insights that best portrayed his life and thoughts. The book consists of eighteen short vignettes. I have chosen to present eight of them. They are the ones that I believe provide a fair picture of the man Buber and some of what were the greatest influences upon his life and thought.

MY MOTHER

“It cannot be a question here of recounting my personal life (I do not possess the kind of memory necessary for grasping great temporal continuities as such), but solely of rendering an account of some moments that my backward glance (highlights). Let’s rise to the surface moments that have exercised a decisive influence on the nature and direction of my thinking.”

Buber writes that “The earliest memory which has this character for me stems out of my fourth year of life. About a year before that, the separation of my parents broke up the home of my childhood in Vienna.”
This brought him to grandparents on his father’s side who lived near Lvov. Buber describes them as being noble people who did not openly discuss personal affairs between themselves, nor did they discuss with him the separation of Buber’s parents.

“Here I stood once in my fourth year with a girl several years older, the daughter of a neighbor, to whose care my grandmother had entrusted me. We both leaned on the railing. I cannot remember that I spoke of my mother to my older comrade. But I hear how the big girl said to me: ‘No, she will never come back.’

“I know that I remained silent, but I cherished no doubt of the truth of the spoken words. It remained fixed in me from year to year. It cleaved ever more to my heart, but after more than ten years, I had begun to perceive it as something that concerned not only me, but all men. Later I once made up the word “Verging”: “mis-meeting” or “mis-encounter” to designate the failure of a real meeting between men and men.”

We might ask: is this the urtext of the philosophy of Buber?

**MY GRANDMOTHER and GRANDFATHER**

I will summarize this vignette. First, Buber describes his grandmother. “My grandmother Adele was one of those Jewish women of a certain period who, in order to create freedom and leisure for their husbands to study the Torah, managed the business with circumspect. She was very competent.” Second, Buber describes his grandfather. He reported that this man was 1) an autodidact, 2) a genuine philologist, 3) an editor and collector of Midrashim, a unique mixture of interpretations of the Bible, wise sayings and rich interpretative stories, 4) a leading member of the Jewish community, 5) a large landowner, 6) a corn merchant, and 7) the owner of phosphorite mines.

Buber relates that he, himself, never made a major decision without consulting Adele. “As a fifteen year old she had set up for herself in the storehouse a hiding place in which stood volumes of Schiller’s periodical *Die Horen*, Jean Paul’s book on education, and other books in German.” He adds: “My grandfather was a true philologist, a ‘lover of words’ but my grandmother’s love for the genuine word affected me even more strongly than his because this love was so direct and so devoted.”

**MY FATHER**

Buber writes that “From about the ninth year on, I spent each summer on the estate of my father, and at fourteen I moved from my grandfather’s house to my father’s townhouse. The influence of my father on my intellectual development was of a different kind from that of my grandparents. It did not derive at all from the mind.
In his youth he had strong intellectual interests that had been raised by his reading of Darwin and Renan’s life of Jesus. But very early on devoted his life to agriculture. The relationship of my father to nature was connected with his relationship to the social world. He visited the peasants that farmed on his land and often engaged them in conversations about their family relations.” He concludes, “My father was an elemental storyteller of people he had known. What he reported of them was always the simple occurrences without any embroidery, nothing further than the existence of human creatures and what took place between them.”

MY SCHOOL

Buber writes that he attended the Franz Joseph Gymnasium. “The language of instruction was Polish, but the atmosphere was that, now appearing almost unhistorical to us, which prevailed or seemed to prevail among the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian empire: mutual tolerance without mutual understanding. The pupils were for the largest part Poles. In addition, there was a Jewish minority.”

He goes on: “At 8 o’clock in the morning all of the pupils were assembled. One of the teachers entered and mounted the professor’s lecturing desk, above which on the wall rose a large crucifix. The students stood up on the benches and crossed themselves and he recited the Trinity formula, and they prayed aloud together. Until one could sit down we Jews stood silent and unmoving, our eyes glued to the floor. There was not perceptible hatred of the Jews….But the obligatory daily standing in the room resounding with the strange service affected me worse than an act of intolerance could have affected me…..this for eight long years.

“No attempt was ever made to convert any of us Jewish pupils; yet my antipathy to all missionary activity is rooted in that time. Not merely against the Christian mission to the Jews, but against all missionary work among men who have a faith with roots of its own. In vain did Franz Rosenzweig try to win me for the idea of a Jewish mission among the non-Jews.” I think that these constituted the roots of Buber’s egalitarianism.

PHILOSOPHIES

Buber writes that philosophy twice, in the form of two books, “entrenched directly upon my existence, in my fifteenth and seventeenth year.” He read Plato thoroughly, as Greek was Buber’s favorite language. He also read Kant’s Prolegomena. Buber says that the latter work transported him into sublime intoxication imagining the edge of space, and time without a beginning. Buber was also bedazzled by his reading of Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra.
Buber did not believe that this book, particularly in the concept of eternal return, was primarily a philosophical book; yet it took possession of him, worked on him not in a manner of a gift but “in the manner of an invasion which deprived me of my freedom, and it was a long time until I could liberate myself from it.” In Buber’s reflections upon his early philosophical discussion of time, both Kant and Nietzsche led him to contemplate the nature of time and such questions as: “Are we living in eternity?” and “What is existence?”

VIENNA

In this fragment Buber presented aspects of his university education in both Art History and Psychology. His first year of university education was spent at the University of Vienna. “The lectures of those two semesters, even the significant scholarly ones, did not have a decisive effect on me;” he writes. Buber relates that it was the seminars, the free intercourse between the teacher and students, that most impressed him. “This disclosed to me, more intimately than anything that I had read in a book, the true actuality of the spirit, as a ‘Between.’” Buber was also attracted to the Viennese Burgtheater into which at times, day after day, he rushed up three flights of steps to the top gallery to watch the plays. He was fascinated by the dialogue of the actors.

A LECTURE

Buber spend his third semester at the University of Leipzig. He was twenty years old at this point. “What had the strongest effect on me was hearing Bach’s music, and in truth Bach’s music so sung and played as Bach himself wished it to be played…I cannot even make clear to myself in what way Bach influenced my thinking. The ground-tone of my life was obviously modified in some manner and through that my thinking as well.” Buber, in this fragment also reported about his interests in the socialist thinker Ferdinand Lassalle.

Buber belonged to a Socialist Club and was asked to give a lecture to the club. He gave the lecture, discussing the image of a hero after the model of Carlyle. The talk was well received and after the lecture an old man approached him, one who in his youth had belonged to Lassalle’s most intimate circle. He seized Buber’s hand and cried enthusiastically “Yes! Thus, thus he was!”

“An almost tender feeling came over me; ‘How good it is to be confirmed thus!’ But even at that moment a fright suddenly fell upon me and pierced through my thoughtless joy: ‘No, it is I who have been the confirmer, the confirmer of an idol but not of a man.’”
Gustav Landauer and Radical Politics

Gustav Landauer was a close friend and confidant of Martin Buber until his assassination by counter-revolutionary forces in Munich, on May 2, 1919. Landauer was so emotionally close to Buber that according to Maurice S. Friedman, his biographer, when he asked Buber to write a section about him in the *Fragments* in the mid-fifties, Buber responded that he was emotionally incapacitated to do so and was traumatized by the murder of Landauer. Landauer believed as he did. Buber believed that without a change in the social character of the individual a new type of society could not be created or maintained. Buber arranged for the publication of *Die Revolution*, which was described as a “seminal anarchist philosophy of history.”

Landauer and Erich Muhsam established the Socialist Bund in May 1908. Landauer and Muhsam hoped to inspire the creation of small independent cooperatives and communes as the basis of a new socialist society. Buber was a member of the Bund and participated in the forming of a small commune outside of Berlin which was quite short-lived. Buber’s notion of the kibbutz was modeled after Landauer’s utopian thinking and the direct participation of Buber with the Berlin commune and his early socialistic leanings. Buber, however, did not believe in the revolutionary activities of Landauer as expressed in Landauer's participation in the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919. He was not a proponent of the use of violence to bring about change.

Dialogical Psychotherapy

Dialogical Psychotherapy is mainly based on Buber’s philosophy of dialogue and his philosophical anthropology — the study of the wholeness and uniqueness of the human. His position on Dialogical Psychotherapy published in 1966 in his notes stated,

“Here another word about the problematic of the province of psychotherapy. The sicknesses of the soul are sicknesses of relationships. They can only be treated completely if I translate the realm of the patient and add to it the world as well. If the doctor possesses super-human power, he will have to try to heal the relationship itself, to heal in the “between.” The doctor must know that really he ought to do that and only his boundedness limits him to the one side.”

In his classic work *I and Thou*, Buber distinguishes between the “I-Thou” relationship that is direct, mutual, present and open, and the “I-It,” or subject-object relationship in which one relates to the other only indirectly, and non-mutually, knowing and using the other. Of course, one might ask: What about mutual use? What is essential, however, is not what goes on within the minds of the partners in a relationship but what happens between them (all, believes Buber, are functions of the mind!!).
For this reason, Buber was unalterably opposed to that psychologism that wishes to remove the reality of relationship into the separate psyches of the participants (in what space does it take place except in the individual minds...cyberspace?).

“The inmost growth of the self does not take place, as people like to suppose today, through our relationship to ourselves, but through the other and knowing that we are made present by him.” Being made present as a person is the heart of what Buber called confirmation. Confirmation is interhuman, but it is not simply social or interpersonal.

Unless. Since, according to Buber, one is confirmed in one’s uniqueness as the person one can become, one is only seemingly confirmed. The confirmation of the other must include an actual experiencing of the other side of the relationship so that one can imagine quite concretely what another is feeling, thinking, and knowing. This “inclusion” — “imagining the real” — does not abolish the basic distance between oneself and the other. It is rather a bold swinging over into the life of the person one confronts, through which alone I can make the person present in his or her wholeness, unity, and uniqueness.

It is an illusion to think that a genuine relationship can be achieved when two people or groups of people are focused on getting their needs met, even if in the interest of self-discovery, personal wholeness, or spiritual growth (meditation, group therapy, “T groups” are dismissed). Moreover, understanding of another person is extremely limited if the source of it is based upon tests of personality.

Dialogical psychotherapy is a form of therapy that is centered on the genuine meeting between the therapist and his or her client as the healing mode whatever analysis, role playing, or other therapeutic techniques may also enter into it. If the psychoanalyst is seen as an indispensable midwife in bringing up material from the unconscious to the conscious, this is not “healing through meaning.” Only when it is recognized that everything that takes place within therapy — free association, dreams, silence, pain, anguish — takes place within the context of the vital relationship between therapist and patient do we have dialogical psychotherapy. Healing through meeting is essentially a two-sided relationship. What is crucial is not the skill of the therapist per se but the genuineness of the relationship. In order to establish such genuineness, the therapist needs to affirm the uniqueness and holism of the client.

One of the elements in dialogical psychotherapy is that of liberating the unconscious state, the UCS. This UCS is not the UCS of Freud. Buber believed that there can be a direct meeting and communication between one unconscious and another. According to the Buberian viewpoint, the unconscious is a state out of which the physical and psychical have not yet evolved and in which the two cannot be distinguished from each other. The UCS is our being itself in its wholeness. Out of it the physical and psychic evolve repeatedly and at every moment.
Thus, the UCS is our primordial being itself out of which the physical and the psychical
have not yet evolved and in which the two cannot be distinguished from each other.
The UCS is not a phenomenon. It is a dynamic fact that makes itself felt by its effects,
effects the psychologists can explore. (Query: Is this viewpoint Kabbalistic?) What is
explored in psychiatry is not of the UCS itself but rather of the phenomena that have
been dissociated from it. We cannot say anything about the UCS itself; it is never given
to us.

We must therefore ask: How similar is this to the UCS of Freud?

According to Maurice Friedman, Buber’s biographer, the radical mistake that Freud
made was to think that he could posit a region of the mind as UCS and at the same
time deal with it as if its “contents” were simply repressed conscious material that could be
brought back, without any essential change, into the conscious state. If Buber believed
that the above was Freud’s position regarding the UCS, I am sure that there would be a
consensus of Freudian scholars that Buber was incorrect. I believe that Buber’s position
stems from his positions regarding the boundaries between humans and the external
world which includes “spiritual elements.” Buber’s “healing through meeting”
approach consistently points out the danger of the therapist imprinting his or her
viewpoint on the patient.

The Dialogical Approach to Family Therapy

Judith Brown, in an article in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family
Therapy, presented in a clear fashion the importance of the ideas of Martin Buber for
the practice of Family Therapy. The article focuses upon Buber’s ideas about what
she terms dialogical process and dialogical knowing. The dialogical process takes place
moment by moment between therapist and patient, pointing to dialogical knowledge as
a possible outcome. Both the patient and the therapist can comprehend this knowledge.
It is a knowledge that is produced by the “in-between” of the relationship.

The dialogical process seeks neither the surety of either/or absolutes nor the obliteration
of them. It acknowledges that human experience is characterized by co-existence of
multiple realities in dynamic tension. In Family Therapy this would involve a number
of relationships between the patient and his or her family and the therapist. Ideally, it
would create multiple affirmations in the matrix of the family.

In the practice of a Buberian-oriented Family Therapy, it does not place the dialogical
“I-It” in competition with the “I-Thou” relationship.
Buber and Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm was a political activist, psychologist, psychoanalyst, and highly recognized intellectual. His books, the most well-known being *Escape from Freedom*, sold millions of copies worldwide. Fromm in his doctoral dissertation recognized as Buber did the communitarian aspects of the movement. In 1919 Fromm was involved in the same Jewish educational movement for adults as Buber and Gershom Scholem, a major scholar of Jewish mysticism.

In 1923 Frieda Reichman, who later married and then was divorced from Fromm, opened a therapeutic facility in Heidelberg. The mission was utopian; to create what years later would be called a therapeutic community. Both Frieda and Erich were friends of Buber and as did Buber they conceived of therapy as a close “I and Thou” relationship.

In April 1948, there was a public letter signed by Martin Buber; Leo Baeck, a leader in Reformed Judaism; and Albert Einstein warning about the dangers of the outbreak of Jewish violence against Arabs in Israel. Both Fromm and Buber called for a binational state in Palestine.

Buber and J. L. Moreno

J. L. Moreno is the generally accepted founder of Psychodrama and Sociometrics. Born Jacob Levy in Bucharest, Romania, the son of Sephardic Jewish parents, he studied medicine, mathematics and philosophy at the University of Vienna, becoming an M.D. in 1917. In the early 1900’s he started an improvisational theatre in which the participants spontaneously acted out their conflicts. This early venture was the basis for his Group Psychotherapy approach termed Psychodrama. Moving to the United States, he went to New York; there, he promulgated his approach. From 1939 until 2004 he educated psychotherapists in Sociodrama and worked with patients at St. Elizabeth’s hospital in Washington, D.C.

In a paper titled *J. L. Moreno’s Influence on Martin Buber’s Dialogical Philosophy*, Robert Waldl lays out a case that Buber had read some writings (including Poetry) of Moreno which influenced his “I and Thou” philosophy — including taking over parts, including whole phrases, from Moreno’s early writings. Areas of duplication include such ideas as:

1) living encounter;
2) encounter is limited in time;
3) healing by encounter;
4) the here and now;
5) presence and past.
Moreno historically earlier than Buber is purported to have created, then written in one of his poems: “I am not unique: only by encounter / If I am a god or a fool / I am consecrated, healed, freed by encounter.”

Buber denied the influence of Moreno. He may have not been consciously aware of it. As is the case with any person who is an omnivorous reader, one’s ideas attributed to oneself are often the product of the plethora of readings of others.

**The Utopian Thinker**

In 1949 Buber, while living in Jerusalem, published *Paths in Utopia.* In this book Buber extends his primary theme of relationships into the political realm. The book provides a history of utopian thinking as seen in the thinking of such personages as Proudhon, Kropotkin, Landauer, Marx and Lenin. He attempts to show how all of the above thinkers and previous utopian communities fall short in their efforts because their political solutions did not primarily address the necessity of “I-Thou” relationships in a community but saw the possibility of creating them as a result of economic and political interventions. In 1949 he believed however, that the creation of a unique Jewish institution, the kibbutz, was the correct road to travel to reach a utopian ending and the establishment of a progeny of the “I and Thou” relationships. Buber’s relationship to the kibbutz movement will not be discussed here.

**Buber’s View of Freud and Jung**

I wish here to begin with Jung because I believe that Buber’s relationship was more substantial with him than it was with Freud. Buber’s connection to Jung was both intellectual and empathetic.

Without overemphasizing to the point of *reductio ad absurdum* in order to overexplain at a psychological level, it is relevant to note that both Buber and Jung had early traumatic experiences centered around mother abandonment. According to some viewpoints, theories are often built on autobiography. The central piece of Martin Buber’s philosophical belief that healing comes through “I-Thou” contact may be no exception to this. In an autobiographical fragment, as stated earlier he described the devastating effects of feeling abandoned by his mother at a very young age, and then being sent to Poland to stay with his grandparents who were loath to speak about their personal life to him and also about his mother. In Buber’s autobiography titled *Meetings: Autobiographical Fragments* he relates the trauma of his mother literally disappearing from his life and the comment at the age of four by a friend who was a few years older that his mother would never come back.

Buber’s emphases on relationships and the longing for relationships was the major leitmotif post 1923 when he published *I and Thou.*
One idea that he developed was the idea of ‘mis-meeting,’ something he ascribed to his relationship with his mother — the type of experience he understood as a traumatic one, leaving him with longing and a sense of unrequitedness.

Buber did not engage intellectually with Freud as he did with Jung. In 1908 he did visit Freud to ask him to author a book for a series he was editing, but Freud declined to do so. He opposed Freud not as purveyor of a psychological theory but in his role as a philosopher, including enunciating a philosophy of religion dismissing it as being mainly a projection of the father image in The Future of an Illusion. Buber did not take well to Freud’s thesis regarding the Mosaic myth in the Torah. Freud’s Moses and Monotheism contained two major ideas: that Moses was an Egyptian and that in prehistory males bonded together to kill the father figures of the small groups that they were living in to obtain equality in sexual access to the women in the band.

There is much literature on Freud’s first thesis; many rebuttals, however, make for interesting reading. The second thesis which came from the anthropologist Robertson-Smith is seen as being nonsense in the community of scholars. As for Buber, he said many times he was going to publish a book criticizing Freud, but he never did so.

Buber also felt that Jung went beyond the tenets of science in many of his writings and was not really the empirical scientist that he sometimes pretended to be. Buber and Jung may have crossed paths several times. Jung may have been present at Buber’s lecture to the Psychology Club of Zurich shortly after the publication of I and Thou. The title of his talk was “On the Psychologizing of the World.” It was an analysis of the different forms of psychological “isms.”

At this point in time, Buber considered Jung’s method to be one that was not without merit and apparently even preferable to the approach of Freud. In August of 1924 Buber was invited to lecture at the Jungian Eranos Conference in Ascona, Switzerland, and Emma Jung, Carl Jung’s wife, attended Buber’s Amersfoort lecture series in the summer of 1925. Jung attended the conference on education at Heidelberg where Buber delivered the keynote address. In these crossings there seemed to be only peripheral interactions between Buber and Jung. Buber wrote to Hans Trub as late as the 14th of August 1932 that in the past few years he had read a few essays of Jung, which had made a “nearer” impression on him. Buber intended to meet with Jung in the spring of 1933 but never did. The Buber-Jung personal relationship seems to have dissipated after this time. It is quite possible that Buber was becoming aware of Jung’s “volkish” psychology at this time, with its emphasis on the superiority of “Aryan” culture.

In spite of a lack of a personal relationship, however, Buber and Jung engaged intellectually in 1952. The engagement took place as a result of the publication of an essay by Buber in the German magazine Merkur on Religion and Modern Thinking, which was later published in the Eclipse of God.8
I do not know the communicative modality by which Jung read this piece by Buber. Buber’s criticism of Jung falls into a number of venues, principally his opposition to what he believed was Jung’s overemphasis in his writings on the magical and to what he believed Jung’s position was regarding Gnosticism. He believed that Jung put forth a Gnostic position.

According to Barbara D. Stephens, an open-minded Jungian analyst, the Buber-Jung disputation were more important than the Freud-Jung letters for the understanding of Jung’s position on the nature of spirituality and religion in relation to his psychology. The article is thirty-five pages in length and far too long for me to completely cover her many cogent arguments. In this presentation I will basically summarize Buber’s criticism of Jung and not Jung’s position. I plead here to my prejudice regarding Jung for his Lamarckian approach to human universals as exhibited in his belief in universal archetypes.

Martin Buber took Jung seriously. His disputation with Jung, in which Buber quoted Jung’s statements in full, indicated his deep familiarity with Jung’s writings. The Buber-Jung disputations take us more directly toward vertical and horizontal considerations of the sacred and the role of the psyche’s religious function. Vertical considerations of the sacred are those of transcendence, locating the human-divine relationship realm; the horizontal is those of immanence, locating the human-divine relationship in inter or intra-human connection.

According to Buber, Jung conceives of God as a function of the unconscious — not transcendent or external to the self. He calls out Jung for being pseudo-religious because he does not bear witness to an essential personal relation to the one who is experienced or believed in as being absolute. For Jung, Buber claimed that his notion of God “takes place in the darkness of the psychical hinterland of the individual’s unconscious, which includes the universal unconscious.” For Jung, individuals create their own individuation out of the interaction of the archetypes embedded in their unconscious.

According to Buber, Jung claimed that his statements were only psychological. Buber argued that this was not true and that they had a religious element to them. Buber considered the Jungian self a pure totality and as such indistinguishable from the divine image and therefore recasting the Jewish and Christian conception of God into being a psychic projection.

**Buber’s Aesthetics**

According to Sarah Scott, by examining the aestheticism in Buber one can show the connection between Buber’s aesthetic concerns and his moral concerns.
His aesthetic concerns with beauty, wholeness and uniqueness in experience and perception (the gestalt) also bear upon his connection to humanistic psychology and, specifically, to the psychotherapeutic work of Carl Rogers: they share similar principles. Buber’s fascination with mysticism may also be described as being at least partially an aesthetic one. Scott claims that Buber scholars often describe a shift in his thought from an early aesthetic or mystical stage to a later ethical stage in his writings.

She notes that Levinas writes that it is not because he is an animist with respect to our relations with the physical world, but because Buber is too much the artist in relations with man. “In calling Buber an artist, Levinas suggests that Buber’s dialogic philosophy would lead to mere aesthetic enjoyment of the other, not to moral responses. Leaving this criticism aside, Scott says: Another way of conceiving an aesthetic orientation is to focus on the unique ability of an aesthetic orientation to approach novel particulars and to use standards of taste to adjudicate disagreement. Scott believes that a certain aesthetic orientation may just what is needed for moral response. In his dialogue with his close friend Gustav Landauer over Buber’s support of the First World War, this is seen.

For Buber, the development of taste becomes a key to social renewal. In his university studies Buber initially focused upon the study of Art History. After submitting his thesis in philosophy on the Renaissance thinkers Nicholas of Causa and Jakob Bohme, Buber went to Florence with the intention of completing a habilitation in Art History. Around the same time he became a leader within the Zionist movement and about this time coined the term Jewish renaissance. Buber’s Zionism was close to that of Ahad Ha’am, the founder of Cultural Zionism. Buber hoped that Zionism would result in a renaissance that would usher in a new state of being, not merely another nation state. This type of genuine political change rested on cultural change, and cultural change depended on aesthetic development. Buber was interested in the way each person individuates herself as entirely unique by tapping into “genius,” such that self-actualization is analogous to the creation of a work of art. His notion of self-actualization was a historical glimmering of the ideas of the Humanistic Psychologists forty-to-sixty years later, thinkers such as Charlotte Buhler, Kurt Goldstein, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.

Zionism and a Zionistic state were necessary for Jewish culture to flourish because Buber argued that diaspora life had “robbed the Jewish people” of “the ability to behold a beautiful landscape and beautiful people.” Buber seems to focus on the lack of a nation state in explaining this phenomena rather than just the poverty, the insulation forced upon them, and the supposed prohibitions against art as interpreted by the rabbis. Buber says “Our art is the most beautiful path for our people to ourselves…Jewish art is for us a great educator.
It is a teacher for a long perception of nature and people, a teacher for a living feeling of all that is strong and beautiful...The deepest secrets of our national soul...will become evident in it and shine with the fire of life eternal. We will behold and recognize ourselves.”

Buber was proposing a Jewish Bildung to some extent conceived of as an offspring of the German ideal of self cultivation bringing about a harmony between the self and the culture in which it is embedded. Buber strongly believed that fostering creative powers by themselves can turn into human isolation without developing the capacity for communion.

Buber and Gestalt Psychology

Martin Buber was part of the cultural milieu of Berlin and Germany. This milieu consisted of many parts. It included the radical politics of Rosa Luxemburg.... and his close friend Gustav Landauer. It included the cultural avant garde of the world of the Expressionists and the Dada Movement and the creation of the Zionist movement, a Utopian community (Neue Gemeinschaft). Embedded in this milieu were the perceptual Gestalt thinkers such as Koffka and Kohler and the Gestalt of Fritz Perls, who founded Gestalt psychotherapy. Intellectual soirees were fashionable and in 1922 Buber most probably met Perls.

One can conceive of affinities between Buber’s dialogical philosophy and psychotherapy to both the perceptual gestalts of Koffka, Kohler, Wertheimer and others and to the Gestalt Psychotherapy of Fritz Perls.

In discussing Gestalt psychotherapy Heyner speaks of the similarity in the process of it and the “I-It” and “I-Thou” of Buber. “The dialogical encompasses both ‘I-Thou’ and ‘I-It’ moments. The ‘I-Thou’ meeting is not an absolute thing-like state or a goal in therapy. The dialogical is an approach of being open to otherness, the uniqueness of the other person, along with a desire to bring myself fully into meeting this other person. It is the willingness, after all my individual efforts, to submit to the between, to recognize that a genuine meeting can only occur through ‘grace.’” “As Martin Buber so poetically states it: The Thou meets me through grace. It is not found by seeking.” Finally, the notion of the here and now and being present in the present is commensurate for both Buber and Gestalt Psychotherapy.

Regarding the relationship between Buber and the perceptual school of Gestalt psychology, there are similarities. Some of the principles of Gestalt psychology are: The idea that the whole is more or different from the sum of its parts and the argument that nature of the part is dependent on the whole in which it is embedded. Translated to human relationships, the individual always needs to be understood in his relationship to others and cannot be understood by focusing on the person himself or herself.
Martin Buber, Carl Rogers, and Humanistic Psychology

As did Buber, Rogers wrote a memoir; Rogers’s work was titled *Becoming A Person*. Unlike the case of Buber, I will present a few straight biographical facts about his life mainly because I sense that readers perhaps are not as familiar with Rogers as they are with Buber.

Carl Rogers was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1902. His father was a civil engineer. His mother, Julia Cushing, was a devout Baptist. He was the fourth of six children. An intellectually gifted child, he was brought up in a strict and religious atmosphere. His childhood personality was that of a shy child.

He matriculated at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an agriculture major with minors in history and religion. At age 20, after an International Christian conference in China he began to adjust his religious inclinations to being more agnostic and liberal than fundamentalist. After graduating from Wisconsin in 1924, he enrolled at the Union Theological Seminary, which reflected a liberal-social action form of Protestant thought. He left Union in two years and enrolled at Teachers College, Columbia where he received an M.A. and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. After graduating from Columbia, he worked as a child psychologist in Rochester. During this period of time, he was influenced by Otto Rank, and the social work educator Jessie Taft. In 1940 he became Professor of Clinical Psychology at Ohio State. At Ohio State he developed many of his ideas regarding client-centered psychotherapy as outlined in his book *Counseling and Psychotherapy*.

In 1945 Rogers set up the Counseling Center at the University of Chicago. He left there to teach at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and to work with psychotic patients at Mendota State Hospital employing his non-directive approach to psychotherapy. Unfortunately, he was not particularly effective there and migrated to California to the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, and eventually he founded the Center for the Studies of the Person.

Rogers developed an extensive theory of the self and the relationship of the self to anxiety. He viewed the person in a phenomenological manner, through their “phenomenal field.” Thus, Rogers advocated for an empirical evaluation of psychotherapy. He and his followers have demonstrated that a humanistic approach to conducting therapy and a scientific approach to evaluating therapy need not be incompatible.

He was the leading pioneer in studying the effects of psychotherapy. Rogers was again a pioneer in abandoning the medical model of psychotherapy. He avoided diagnostic categories for his patients.
That implies the nature of the relationship between two people (healer and healer) to be that of a client with the rights and privileges of any client relationship.

I was a client at the Counseling Center in 1958. In order to evaluate the sessions, they were tape-recorded. Additionally, as a result of the client-centered approach, I felt empowered as being a change agent in the process of psychotherapy. The theme of power in a psychotherapeutic relationship turns out to highlight a key criticism of Rogers by Buber in the dialogue between them in 1958.

Rogers believed that the key elements for successful psychotherapy were congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. The similarities and differences between Rogers and Buber also are the centerpieces of the Buber-Rogers dialogue. What brought about the Buber-Rogers dialogue was the perception that there was a similarity in their thoughts, particularly the “I and Thou” concept of Buber and the Rogerian concept of unconditional positive regard. Other possible similarities were also discerned between Rogers’ Nineteen Propositions and many of Buber’s teachings. Among Rogers’ concepts I will select only a few that appear to be related to Buber’s positions. I will not specifically pinpoint these positions but will assume that anyone even with a brief acquaintance with Buber will recognize them.

The following propositions of Rogers intellectually troll the phenomenological position of Buber:

1) All individuals (organisms) exist in a continually changing world of experience (phenomenal field) of which they are the center (Buber tries to move the person into the in-between).

2) The organism reacts as an organized whole to this phenomenal field.

3) The organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field is “reality” for the individual.

The Dialogue

On the 13th of March 1956 Leslie Farber, the head of the William Alanson White Institute in Washington, D.C., invited Buber to the United States to give the annual lecture series presented in honor of the namesake of the institute. He asked Buber to give three or four lectures scattered over a three or four week period. In his letter to Buber, he described the approach of the Institute as being in the tradition of interpersonal psychiatry pioneered by Harry Stack Sullivan. This approach was appealing to Buber, and he agreed to give the lectures and several seminars.

On the surface Carl Rogers should have made an ideal dialogue partner for Martin Buber because Roger’s humanistic psychotherapy and Buber’s humanist anthropology converge, at least on paper.
The two trailblazers upheld that people are not learned about because of classroom experiences and their readings *per se* but in meeting with each other. These lectures are published in *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy*, edited by Judith Buber Agassi. The lecture delivered at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and Psychology, has the overriding theme of “What can Philosophical Anthropology Contribute to Psychiatry?” It included lectures on “Distance and Relation,” “Elements of the Interhuman,” “What is Common to All,” and “Guilt and Guilt Feelings.” Besides lecturing in D.C. Buber also met with more individuals in seminar form than in lecture form, with invited faculty from the Union Theological Seminary in New York. Paul Tillich was one of the invited guests.

Carl Rogers made an ideal dialogue partner for Martin Buber. The exchange took place on April 18, 1957 at the University of Michigan before four hundred people in a large auditorium. The dialogue was the climax of a three day conference on Buber.

The two trailblazers upheld that people are not primarily learned through books and classroom experience but by meetings constituting excitement, risks, and challenges. And it is in relationships they could possibly actualize human potentials.

With so many areas of agreement between the two, one would expect the dialogue to have proceeded smoothly. However, it took several letters between Buber, Leslie Farber, and Maurice Friedman, who became the moderator of the event and Reverend Dewitt Baldwin, the coordinator of Religious Affairs at Michigan, to finalize the event. The program was not set up to be a conversation between equals. It more resembled an interview by a junior faculty member with a senior faculty member.

Rogers entered the auditorium with a list of questions for Buber; Buber entered empty handed. Rogers began by a query as to how was it possible for Buber to know so much about psychology and human behavior without being formally educated in the field. To the surprise of Rogers, Buber told him that he had studied psychiatry for three semesters with several outstanding personages including Wilhelm Wundt, who is considered the father of scientific psychology, and Eugen Bleuler, the great clinician at the Burghölzli Psychiatric Clinic in Zurich.

Rogers proposed that in his work with patients there were times that an “I-Thou” relationship was established. Whether this was valid for Buber then became the major theme of the encounter. Buber responded to Rogers’ claim that it could not be the same: “He comes for help to you. You don’t come for help to him. You are able more or less to help him. You see him in a manner in which he cannot see you…You are not equals and cannot be.” Rogers responded as follows: “And I do feel that a real sense of equality is established between us.”
Buber responded: “No doubt about it but I am not speaking about your feeling but about a real situation.” Buber also says that “you give him something making him more equal to you but there is still an imbalance.” An example of the non-reciprocity of the relationship would be that the therapist could ask the client about her sex life, but the client could not ask the therapist about hers.

Buber in the debate believed that Rogers, unlike Freudian psychotherapy, came closer to the “I-Thou” relationship through the unconditional self-regard aspects of “It” but psychotherapy is still an “I-It” relationship. The essential asymmetrical power balance obviates an “I-Thou” relationship.

Coda

Upon reflection, it has become clear to me that what I have presented is a paper on Buber and Psychology and not one solely focused on Buber’s psychology. It is pastiche of the life of Buber, some of his ideas related to psychology, psychotherapy, and some selected psychologists. Perhaps, as a result, the reader might have a better understanding of the man, Buber, and at least at an elementary level, his relationships with psychologists and some of his ideas about psychology and psychotherapy.

In writing a check to an organization to combat hunger and in not writing a check for another charitable organization, I have observed that, in a small way, it is I who decides “who shall live and who shall die,” not the God of Jewish Yom Kippur services. I wonder to what degree Buber would agree with this position.

I wish all readers well, or as Buber might have said, Baruch Hashem, Thank God.

Notes

7 See Meetings, ibid.


The Economic Regions of Chinese Civilization: A GIS-Based Analysis of Grain Markets in China, 1736-1842

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Abstract

This study presents a new spatial analytic method for mapping regional marketing systems of an entire civilization by focusing on China's High Qing period based on monthly grain price time series for 235 prefectures from 1736-1842. Network analyses of prefectural grain price time series and their cross-correlations detected eleven or twelve primary macro-markets. These empirically derived regions generally align with the Late Qing urban systems nested within physiographic macroregions as posited by Skinner (1977), but with some notable differences, especially in North China. This delineation of the traditional marketing systems of agrarian China applicable to a 107-year time span provides a baseline for measuring the subsequent effects of mechanized transportation on Chinese Civilization’s further integration into the modern world-system.

NB: For your reference, a series of illustrative maps and charts are printed at the end of this article.

Spatial Analysis of Regional Grain Markets in China, 1736-1842

The potential for sophisticated spatial analyses of historical phenomena has long been constrained by the availability of digital data and tools, but both have become much more accessible in recent years. An infrastructure of digital humanities data producers, repositories, and statistical methods is emerging that allows researchers to revisit old questions and see historical patterns in a new light. In this study, we link digitized records from the Qing Dynasty Grain Price Database, as published online by Academia Sinica, with urban center locations in the China Historical Geographic Information System (CHGIS).
We compare the results of newer clustering methods to reexamine one of the most influential hypotheses in the study of Chinese civilization and history, the “macroregion” framework, which has attracted renewed attention in recent comparative studies of market integration.

Qing China, an empire of continental scale that endured over two and a half centuries (1644-1911), sustained some of the highest and densest human population levels of any preindustrial civilization with a complex web of governmental, economic, and societal institutions. The geographical structures of these institutions and their effects on helping or hindering economic development has been a matter of debate among China scholars. G. William Skinner (1977) postulated that, in late imperial China, hierarchical market networks were nested within physiographic macroregions, distinct from the administrative hierarchy of empire and provinces. Skinner’s spatial framework remains hugely influential and has been adapted in more recent comparative studies of historical market integration (e.g., J. Li 2014; Bernhofen et al. 2015; 2018), but critics have questioned the empirical support for that approach.

In this paper, we employ an empirical approach in mapping regional markets using long-term time series data of grain prices. We find evidence of regional market behavior for roughly the middle third of the Qing dynasty, prior to the foreign incursions and development of mechanized transport in the later years of the empire. Our analysis generally supports and refines Skinner’s spatial framework for this period but, moreover, provides a new evidence-based method for mapping China’s historical spatial structure even as markets (and regions) are reshaped by societal and technological changes.

**Fragmented Markets under a Unified Civilization**

How a populous and prosperous preindustrial civilization succumbed to internal fractures and outside pressures while the Industrial Revolution propelled Western powers to global dominance has been one of the major puzzles of modern world history (Pomeranz 2000). As economist Loren Brandt (1997, 282–83) summarized the “conventional wisdom” of a previous generation of scholars, late imperial China struggled to feed a growing population, with economic innovation constrained by tradition that was only broken by the Communist revolution of 1949; that view of stagnation and increasing inequality has given way to an understanding of spatially differentiated development processes and innovations that “frequently drew on — and were not impeded by — the strengths of China’s traditional economy.”
A Civilization of Macroregions?

Those strengths, argued anthropologist G. William Skinner, included the resilience of a national economy that “formed not a single integrated urban system but several regional systems, each only tenuously connected with its neighbors” (Skinner 1977, 211). Over a territory as vast and varied as China, periodic natural disasters or economic depressions in one region could be balanced by prosperous conditions in others, which in Skinner’s view were likely to be linked to climatic as well as social cycles.

Skinner argued against “the usual focus on the empire as a whole or on its component political divisions,” contending that the “macrocycles” of Chinese history are best understood in terms of “macregional economies — not of provinces and not of the Chinese empire per se” (Skinner 1985, 275).

Indeed, most academic studies of China, imperial or contemporary, are framed at the national or provincial level; as historian Paul Cohen (1984, 166) put it, most scholars as well as bureaucrats, “for reasons of both habit and convenience, find it hard to resist dividing China up into provinces.”

These political divisions, like states of the United States or nations of the world, come to feel “natural” in their ubiquity (Ludden 2003, 1058). That convenience could only be improved by reducing the number of units; thus, in the Qing dynasty, eight governors-general served to oversee and coordinate the administration of more manageable groupings of provinces (Barnett 1963; Qu 1962; Watt 1972). Skinner too had previously developed a system of eight provincial groupings for indexing field studies, clustering provinces that largely shared river basins and dominant cropping patterns, as well as linguistic and cultural affinities (Henderson 2004, 52; Skinner 1973, I:xxxii–xxxvii).

But putting provincial boundaries aside, Skinner introduced the concept of “physiographic macroregions” in an essay in his edited volume, The City in Late Imperial China, writing that “In tracing out the overlapping hinterlands of [China's major] cities … I came to the realization that they … coincided with minor exceptions to a physiographic unit.” (Skinner 1977, 211). His analysis of China circa 1893 identified eight such macroregions covering agrarian China (plus Manchuria, or Northeast China), highlighting the core zones of each of these macroregions and delineating boundaries among them based on “transport efficiency and trade flows as well as with physiography per se” (Skinner 1977, 212).
Scholars have subsequently pointed out that the physiographic macroregions and their core zones show “a large measure of agreement” with the marketing districts of the Qing salt monopoly and with Republican-era key economic development areas (Sun 1922; Whitney 1970, 34, 53–55; Cartier 2002, 127), lending support to the premise that “these regions were [at least] partially self-contained areas of social and economic development” (Blunden and Elvin 1998, 25). Historians as well as anthropologists largely embraced the concept of macroregions, hailing Skinner's framework as providing “a new conceptual vocabulary that enables us to look at old problems in new ways and to see connectedness where previously we had been blind to it” (Cohen 1984, 165; see also Crissman 2010). Historical studies that had focused on the social fault lines between central and local, urban and rural, or gentry and peasant could be recast in the language of urban hierarchies, cores, and peripheries.

While Skinner's spatial approach to Chinese civilization and history was informed by specific historical circumstances, he was clearly influenced by the language of systems theory. Skinner cited the central place theory of Walter Christaller in earlier works, then referenced regional systems models dating back to Johann Heinrich von Thünen and invoked Torsten Hägerstrand's spatial diffusion theory as he continued to elaborate the model he ultimately named Hierarchical Regional Space (Christaller 1966; Hagerstrand 1965; Skinner 1964; Skinner, Henderson, and Yuan 2000; Thünen 1966). At the widest scale, the notion of cores and peripheries is a pillar of world-systems theory, which focuses on the relative integration of regions into a global economy (Timberlake 1985; Wallerstein 1974).

Theorist Immanuel Wallerstein characterized entire nation-states as “core,” “semiperipheral,” or “peripheral” based on their functions in global networks of capital; in this view, peripheral states become trapped in an exploitative cycle of underdevelopment as their resources are exploited for the benefit of the core. Subsequent authors hypothesized that certain “world cities” were the critical nodes in these networks, suggesting a bridge to Skinner's mode of analysis of core cities and peripheral hinterlands within states (Friedmann 1986; Friedmann and Wolff 1982; Ryavec 2021; Simon 1995).

However, in contrast to the largely qualitative, Marxist approach of world-systems theory, Skinner is more closely aligned with the regional systems theorists who employ mostly quantitative land use, central place, and time geography approaches to map and measure trade and other social interactions in traditional and developing societies (Fujita, Krugman, and Mori 1999; Marshall 1989; Smith 1976). Regional systems theory highlights historical legacies of uneven development, due in part to the limitations of pre-mechanized transportation technologies, which have resulted in systematic geographical differences in culture and demography, from life expectancy and fertility rates to gender differences in educational access and occupations (Skinner 2003; Skinner, Henderson, and Yuan 2000).
Comparative Civilization Review

Skinner's formulation of the Hierarchical Regional Space model for China (he also proposed versions for nineteenth century Japan and France) attempts to trace economic activity through multiple nested levels, from metropolitan systems contained within macroregions down to local periodic markets of the type he studied for his doctoral fieldwork in 1949 (Skinner 2017; Skinner, Henderson, and Yuan 2000).

The advantage of this approach for world-systems theorists and historians lies in its ability to guide the construction of detailed Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS) models of societies, settlement systems, and economies so that a more detailed spatial history of changes wrought by increasing modes of capitalism in the Modern Period may be mapped and compared with earlier patterns. Subsequent research has probed the limits of Skinner's regional systems approach to Chinese history and, especially, the degree to which the macroregions he delineated coincide with observable social and economic behaviors (Henderson 2018). “While the macroregion model served to shift attention from the imperial to the local level and to regional history,” argued geographer Carolyn Cartier, “it does not aid in understanding human processes and their variation that underlie urbanization and regional formation, especially social and cultural practices, long-distance trade, and associated economic activities” (Cartier 2002, 81).

A key question for economists has been whether macroregions constituted discrete markets for goods and services or were linked to wider networks. Several studies have examined commodity prices in different urban markets, or other evidence of trade networks extending beyond the macroregional scale. For economists Barbara Sands and Ramon Myers (Sands and Myers 1986, 724), “examples of interregional trade . . . raise strong doubts about the historical independence of each macroregion” (p. 724). They maintain that markets, rather than macroregions, should be the basis for socioeconomic analysis: to understand complex, changing economic systems, the “concept of markets satisfies this need whereas macroregions do not” (Sands and Myers 1990, 346).

Responding with Empirical Data

Even researchers who appreciated the elegance of Skinner’s formulation acknowledged that his theory was difficult to test: as sociologist William Lavely put it in a response to Sands and Myers, “more data must be found and better tests devised” (Lavely 1989, 112; see also Little and Esherick 1989). Indeed, in the decades since the publication of The City in Late Imperial China, access to Chinese archives from the national to the local levels has expanded dramatically, helping fuel the rise of digital humanities platforms for displaying and querying digitized data sources.
Not long after Sands and Myers (1990) called for markets, not macroregions, to be the organizing principle for historical studies of the Chinese economy, contributors to the edited volume *Chinese History in Economic Perspective* showed what that could look like. Writing that “historians of China may be discouraged from pursuing economic topics because of the apparent lack of data” the volume's editors concluded that, broadly defined, there are “more data than meet the eye” (Rawski and Li 1992, 16). Several of the contributors gravitated toward analyses of grain prices, not only because detailed price data was becoming available from Qing archives, but because of the critical role of grain markets in the economy.

As economist Yeh-chien Wang (1992, 35) wrote, “a clear knowledge of the trends of grain prices will provide not only a key to understanding the state of economy and society but also a basis for further research in real wages, the standard of living, and many other areas.” This would have come as no surprise to Qing bureaucrats, who took a keen interest in recording grain prices as an indicator of social stability and to support the operation of grain reserves intended as a hedge against famine; by the start of the Qianlong period (1736), monthly reporting had become a regular practice (Will and Wong 1991; Yeh-chien Wang 1992; Roehner and Shiue 2000).

Historian Peter C. Perdue demonstrated what could be done with a time series of grain price data in his study of Gansu Province (and one neighboring prefecture), mapping the correlations in the grain price time series for 14 prefectures and finding that a majority of them were highly correlated ($r^2 > 0.8$), especially along major transport routes. This allowed Perdue to demonstrate a price gradient across the province, accounting for the transport cost of grain and the cyclical nature of cropping cycles. Though data on grain trade volumes *per se* was scant or unreliable, the correlated movement of prices is consistent with a market model: “correlation coefficients indicate ...a web of market relationships...and accurately define the boundaries of macroregions” (Perdue 1992, 123).

With the benefit of more comprehensive, digitized data and maps, our task is to expand on Perdue’s approach to map the correlations among reported grain prices for the prefectures in Qing China and using those results to delineate functional marketing regions. We will then be in a position to see how well those macro-markets align with physiographic macroregions. (Another line of inquiry compares the degree of market integration in China with Europe, typically using a priori regional definitions for markets, including Skinner’s; see e.g., Shiue and Keller 2007; Bernhofen et al. 2015; Keller, Shiue, and Wang 2021.)

The caveat, however, to all data-driven “bottom-up” studies is the variability of outcomes provided by different methods of detecting and generating relationships.
For example, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are not the only approach to measuring the strength of a relationship between price trends and not necessarily the best method given the constraints of that test which typically compares two different variables. We discuss our approach below.

Data, Methods and Analysis

Data sources and preparation

In this study we made use of a digitized version of the *shupi yuzhi* (Vermillion Endorsements and Palace Memorials) archive listing the market prices for various grains by lunar month starting in 1736, the first full year of the Qianlong Emperor's reign (D. Wang 1987; Yejian Wang 2014). These records were compiled from reports sent to the imperial capital from each prefecture (*fu*, an administrative region below the provincial level), and contain the highest and lowest prices, in taels of silver, of the grains among the counties (*xian*) in the prefecture.

Prior studies have examined these data for accuracy and consistency; while there are known cases of falsified data (Perdue 1992 points to a Gansu official who wrote fraudulent reports to abscond with grain relief funds) the importance to imperial officials of maintaining accurate data in a common currency makes these an unusually robust data source for this time period (Roehner and Shiue 2000; Shiue 2013; Bernhofen et al. 2015). The Qing Dynasty Grain Price Database published by Academia Sinica has made these invaluable data available to researchers in digital form (Yejian Wang 2014). Retrieving all available records for each province from the database, we found 260 *fu* with grain price data from the beginning of 1736 through the end of 1842 (see Figure 1).

Nonetheless, the dataset is far from complete: while half of the *fu* represented contained at least some monthly records for 100 or more of the 107 years, on average they reported complete 12-month runs of data for only 53 of those years. (Some of the “missing” years can be attributed to changes in the cities' status as *fu* during the mid-Qing.) The average year saw reports of data from 222 of the 260 *fu*. All but 12 years saw reports from over 200 *fu*; only the earliest years (1736-37) and a few years (1822-24) near the start of the Daoguang Emperor's reign saw reports from fewer than 100 *fu* included in the dataset (see Figure 2).

We matched the *fu* in this data source to the prefectural capitals of 1820 represented in the China Historical Geographic Information System (CHGIS) or, in a few cases, to cities at different administrative levels in 1820 that had served as *fu* seats at other times during the Qing dynasty (Bol et al. 2012).
Geographic matching entailed confirming the consistency of place names within each province in both CHGIS and the Qing Dynasty Grain Price Database (Yejian Wang 2014), correcting minor inconsistencies, and assigning a unique identifier from the ChinaW spatial data file (Skinner, Yue, and Henderson 2007) to each fu. Thus matched, grain price data could be mapped and the spatial relationships among fu could be returned for statistical analysis.

Grain price data availability proved to be unevenly distributed not only temporally but also spatially (Figure 3). We selected the prices for wheat in all prefectures except five southern provinces, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, where only rice price data are available. Cases could be made for analyzing sorghum or millet instead of wheat, or rice due to the extensive secondary trade in “tribute grain” brought to the imperial capital, but the price records for these are less complete in most provinces. In any case, as Li (1992) showed, various grain prices tended to rise and fall in tandem, and we argue that, as a relative luxury, wheat is more likely to be the subject of interregional trade.

We then constructed a monthly time series of mean grain prices (averaging the high and low prices reported for each fu) for each of the 260 fu with price data from the beginning of 1736 through the end of 1842. We selected 1842 as the end date for this analysis, as mentioned above, to focus on regional trading patterns prior to the widespread adoption of steamships and, later, railroad and telegraph lines that followed from foreign incursions under the so-called unequal treaties following the first Opium War (1839-42) and subsequent Treaty of Nanking (1842).

We do not mean to imply that trading patterns were static prior to that date — clearly, challenges like the shifting courses of the Yellow River, the varying states of repair of infrastructure like the Grand Canal, and the functioning of the Ming and Qing imperial courier networks have changed the costs and speed of transporting goods and market information throughout history (Mostern 2021; Skinner, Henderson, and Yue 2006; Hao, Li, and Nye 2020). Nor, for that matter, would markets remain static throughout the entire 107-year span of this study (see Bernhofen et al. 2018 on changes in regional market integration). Nonetheless, the conditions that prevailed during this time period can provide a baseline against which subsequent effects of mechanized transportation and foreign trade can be measured. Of the 260 fu with valid price data, we restricted this further to only time series with at least 20 percent or more data, resulting in a final collection of 235 viable series.

**Spatial Relationships**

In primarily terrestrial empires like Qing China, macro-markets are likely spatially dependent and contiguous. Traditional overland transportation restricted how much and how far grain could travel.
Therefore, any approach to delineating market regions requires spatial adjacency to be explicitly modeled to delimit which price time series could be plausibly related. Luc Anselin (2003) acknowledged that, within the field of econometrics, standard econometric techniques often fail in the presence of spatial autocorrelation, commonly found in geographic data sets, thus requiring explicit inclusion of spatial relationships within a model. Without spatial constraints, potentially spurious regressions could correlate distant locations based on statistical regularities and yield erroneous regions.

To display the correlations on maps, we constructed Thiessen polygons around the 260 fu points as mapped by CHGIS. Thiessen polygons are space-filling polygons with edges situated midway between neighboring points. We used Thiessen polygons rather than the prefectural boundaries of 1820 mapped by CHGIS to avoid gaps or inconsistencies with our 1736-1842 dataset. Additionally, Thiessen polygons allow a regional structure to emerge from disaggregated data points and the complex web of their interrelations without interference from pre-existing boundaries.

From the Thiessen polygons, we determined which pairs of fu were neighbors via a spatial weight matrix. We chose to apply a queen's case edge contiguity matrix where a fu is only considered connected to its immediate neighbors that share an edge (Figure 4). The weights were simply reported as a “1” if two polygons shared an edge or a “0” if they did not. Multiplying the spatial weights matrix by the correlation matrix (discussed below) yielded our final set of connections and thus our network model.

Edge contiguity is preferable here as we are investigating the relationship between polygons or an “area of influence” of each fu point rather than the non-hegemonic points themselves. A queen's case contiguity matrix yields a normal distribution of link frequency with a mean of 5.04 connections with few polygons having few or many neighbors. Isolates detected in the northeast and Taiwan (then a prefecture of Fujian province) were manually linked for the final analysis.

While other adjacency matrices such as K nearest neighbors or inverse distance might also be viable, a more complex theory of how prefectures were connected would be required to account for connections that might “leapfrog” over other prefectures given traditional transportation technology. River and coastal transport could possibly connect very distant prefectures though, even then, not without stops along the way.

**Time Series Correlation Analysis**

We generated a correlation matrix between each prefecture pair using the cross-correlation method to elucidate the strength of their market relationships. While prior studies of grain price relationships (e.g., Perdue 1992) have calculated Pearson product-moment correlations among prefectural average prices, that method may find spurious correlations between time series or, at the very least, inflate the resulting coefficients.
This is particularly concerning when the same variable is tested (see Yule 1926; Granger and Newbold 1974). By contrast, cross-correlations integrate the temporal dimension inherent in time series data and are more apt to find similarities and differences in price dynamics, especially lagged dynamics, rather than simply comparing distributions (see Shen and Zheng 2009 comparing contemporary Chinese stock market indices).

Standard Pearson correlations have three main disadvantages. First, auto-correlation and time-dependencies of times series are explicitly handled in time series analysis and cross-correlation tests. In contrast, the standard linear correlation tests do not adjust for internal dependencies since independence is assumed. These dependencies can inflate coefficients (0.9 and above) when the signals only share a fraction of parallel fluctuations. Second, standard Pearson tests can often mistake trends in absolute price with relationships. Two time series can exhibit almost identical dynamics, but changes in absolute prices over time (a trend) can yield a strong negative coefficient. In contrast, cross-correlations on detrended data reveal that these time series are highly correlated.

Third, even when using standard Pearson coefficients as edge weights in a network graph, we received a much lower modularity score (strength of cluster connections on a scale of −1 to 1) than when using cross-correlation coefficients. Especially without the application of a spatial weights matrix to constrain connections, the community detection algorithm reported a 0.38 modularity score for standard Pearson correlations while the cross-correlation coefficient network received a 0.63 modularity score. Thus, even without modeling the spatial relationships, clusters emerged from the cross-correlation edges in which the prefectures within them were more correlated to each other than other clusters. This indicates that spurious regressions and inaccurate correlations are more common when using standard Pearson tests.

Therefore, we elected to calculate cross-correlations, which are specifically designed to find correlations in time series such as stock prices or signals at different time lags. Before calculating the correlations, we detrended the time series via differencing \( t_x - t_{x-1} \) as advocated by Dean and Dunsmuir (2016). We took a first difference for each time series to make them stationary then found the cross-correlation coefficients for lags −1, 0, and 1, though we primarily looked at lag 0 as we are not investigating time lags in grain price changes here. Most lagged correlations of strength primarily exist between neighboring \( fu \) and are very scarce. However, these asynchronous correlations warrant a closer look in future research to determine the effect of time-lagged transportation.

Ultimately, we calculated the cross-correlations between the time series of every pair of neighboring \( fu \), excluding pairs that were not spatial neighbors by multiplying the spatial weights matrix to all possible connections without duplicate or self-connecting pairs (A-B=B-A) (\( n = 27469 \)) and excluding adjacent, negative correlations (\( n = 7050 \)).
All cross-correlations with p-values greater than 0.05 were removed as well, yielding a total of 498 spatially valid, positive connections among the 235 fu.

**Price Networks**

Visualizing and connecting these relationships was accomplished by constructing an undirected network graph. The network graph and subsequent network analysis was a necessary intermediate step before creating a legible map of macro-markets given reproducible induction is impossible when presented with so many heterogenous connections. Nodes in the graph represent the fu while edges represent the cross-correlation coefficient at lag 0 between them and thus the “weight” of each edge and the strength of each relationship.

Figure 5 shows the undirected network graph of price correlations among all 235 selected fu. The largest connecting lines indicate the strongest correlations between adjacent fu (nodes) while progressively thinner lines indicate medium to weak connections; five classes are produced using the “natural Jenks” method, which is intended to convey the maximum information about the distribution of data across a limited number of classes by maximizing the variance between classes and minimizing the variance between classes (Jenks and Caspall 1971).

At first glance, we can see clusters of strong positive correlations within provinces. For example, the twelve fu of Fujian province show strong correlations among its members with a mean correlation coefficient of 0.46, which is above the global mean. Although some Fujian fu have connections to neighboring provinces, these are much weaker than intra-cluster correlations, with a mean of 0.14 and with the strongest of those being 0.36.

However, not all strong price correlations are limited to provincial boundaries. The largest mass of strong correlations (the red and orange cluster at center-right) straddles Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces in the Lower Yangzi region, which refutes the hypothesis that fu are most strongly correlated with provincial neighbors. In fact, Skinner argued one reason the imperial Chinese field administration intentionally carved-up rich core regions such as the Lower Yangzi among different provincial units was to prevent collusion among rich merchants and powerful gentry in challenging imperial power (Skinner 1977, p.342-343).

**Community Detection and Finding Clusters**

With nodes connected via edge weights, we proceeded to apply a community detection algorithm to determine which groups of spatially adjacent nodes were closely related and thus belonging to a cluster or, by extension, a macro-market.
A common criticism of regions identified according to one specific clustering method is that other methods may show significantly different regional patterns (Yang, Algesheimer, and Tessone 2016). To test the sensitivity of our approach to changes in algorithm, we compared the outputs of two clustering algorithms — Louvain and Spinglass — that have become widely used in the past decade or so.

The Louvain algorithm, named for Louvain University, was proposed by Blondel et al. (2008) as an efficient method for maximizing the modularity of communities (clusters or macro-markets in this case) in a large network. In other words, the goal of this and any other community detection algorithm is to partition nodes into dense communities where their members are highly connected within their clusters and weakly connected to other clusters. The Louvain algorithm does this by first placing all nodes into their own arbitrary communities and then iteratively places each node into other communities and tests if there is an increase in modularity. If there is an increase, then that node changes communities and if it leads to no increase, then the node stays in its initial community.

Community detection and the resulting modularity scores are common in network research, but there is substantial evidence that modularity is not a completely “objective” measure and that algorithms that seek to find a global maximum module arrangement could potentially find “bad communities” (Kehagias and Pitsoulis 2013). In addition, missing data reduce the number of potential connections and thus potentially produce a different network structure. However, we found that the differences in the algorithms used, and even the use of K-nearest neighbor spatial adjacency matrix to increase the transitivity (the probability of a node to have connections to neighbors in a network graph), made only small differences to the cluster landscape. The same eleven clusters, or slight variations of them, emerged from many trials (Figure 6a). What is obscured in a cluster map produced by the Louvain algorithm, but evident in the network graph, is a certain amount of fuzziness around the borders of each cluster. If an edge's value changes as the result of a perturbation in the network, clusters may change the result.

The Spinglass algorithm (Reichardt and Bornholdt 2006) purposely introduces perturbations — stochastic noise — to the edge values to find, among many possible states, an optimal community structure with high modularity. The algorithm takes its name and logic from a spin glass which, in contrast to a crystal or ferromagnet, is very heterogenous which reflects the structures of many real-world complex systems. The algorithm simulates an annealing process of “heating” up or making many, large changes to the edge values, then “cooling” or settling them until “stronger” modularity results. Because the algorithm must simulate random noise and thus each run is likely to be at least slightly different, we ran this algorithm 100 times and took the most common number of clusters, which turned out to be 12 (Figure 6b).
Results suggest that there are relative “weak points” in the larger clusters and thus, given enough noise, they may split into two systems, perhaps, of the same larger macro-community. This implies that there is a hierarchical structure of communities. Whether the strong connections around, say, Xi’an or Kaifeng are identified as their own market clusters or are subsumed into a larger cluster may change with perturbations to the complex network. However, even given stochastic changes to the edge connections, the same general pattern emerges, and in multiple runs the same clusters are split or subsumed. Radically different arrangements are, at best, very unlikely in this robust model.

**Markets and Macroregions of a Civilization**

The eleven clusters — or macro-markets — that emerge in our analysis bear some striking similarities to Skinner's physiographic macroregions. Figure 7 superimposes these two sets of boundaries for systematic comparison. We will address each region in turn with reference to the results of the Louvain and Spinglass to describe the spatial extent of market clusters and the cross-correlation analyses to characterize the relative level of market integration within and across regional boundaries.

**North China: Beijing, Kaifeng and Taiyuan**

We find the greatest discrepancies from Skinner's physiographic regionalization in North China. Rather than one integrated system, we find three distinct market systems which roughly correspond to the hinterlands of (1) Beijing; (2) Kaifeng, encompassing parts of Henan and Shandong provinces; and (3) Taiyuan, in Shanxi province. The North China cluster around Beijing has strongly interconnecting nodes within its regional market with moderate cross-market connections to the Kaifeng cluster, but no direct relationship was found with the Taiyuan cluster (see Figure 5).

The cluster around Kaifeng appears to be moderately connected to the Beijing cluster and to the Lower Yangzi, but weakly connected to the Middle Yangzi and, again, unconnected to the Taiyuan cluster in Shanxi. Shanxi is almost an island, only weakly connected to the Middle Yangzi and Northwest China.

The spatial pattern of the strongest level of grain price correlation coefficients (r ≥ 0.8) extended from Beijing south along the route of the Grand Canal. It seems likely that this pattern stemmed from the trade in grain along this transportation corridor connecting the Lower Yangzi with Shandong and the imperial capital. Originally built to transport tribute tax grain from the Lower Yangzi to Beijing, the Grand Canal facilitated the movement of many goods while reducing transport costs between north and central China, supporting the growth of long-distance trade. In fact, nearly a third of China’s customs duties in 1753 derived from this canal trade (Cheung 2008, 6).
As imperial officials and soldiers in this region received some of their salary in tribute tax grain, a thriving secondary market in grain would have affected prices in the immediate vicinity. But the sharp discontinuity with grain prices in Henan suggests that market did not extend up the Yellow River to Kaifeng or over the mountains to Taiyuan, whether due to higher transportation costs or to policies restricting trade.

**Northwest China, the Middle Yangzi, and the Upper Yangzi**

The grain market in Northwest China, as seen from strong positive correlations around Xi'an, centered on the valley of the Wei River, a tributary of the Yellow River and the cradle of Chinese civilization. Distant markets across the Gobi in Ningxia and the oasis cities of the Gansu corridor to the west were moderately integrated into one regional market, consistent with Perdue's detailed study of Gansu province. The grain price time series of two prefectures in the Ordos Plateau are more highly correlated with Beijing than the rest of Northwest China, despite being separated from North China by the poorly integrated markets of Shanxi; this suggests either that prices in both areas were affected by similar weather patterns, or possibly by the existence of a frontier market in grain with largely pastoral Inner Mongolian areas not included in the Qing price data nor part of Chinese civilization traditionally.

Just southeast of Xi'an, the prefecture of Shang Zhou shows a moderate correlation with Xi'an, but even stronger correlations with two neighboring prefectures in the upper reaches of the Han River (a tributary of the Yangzi). This suggests some interregional trade across the divide between the Yangzi and Yellow River basins. But we find much less evidence for trade across the physiographic divide separating Northwest China and the Middle Yangzi macroregions from the Upper Yangzi (encompassing the Sichuan Basin around Chengdu). Correlations between neighboring prefectures across that divide are nonsignificant, weak, or negative, apart from the link along the Yangzi itself, bifurcated by the Three Gorges. While the Louvain algorithm keeps the Sichuan Basin prefectures together in a cluster around Chengdu, the Spinglass algorithm splits off a second cluster including Chongqing on the Yangzi River.

Within the Middle Yangzi macroregion, Changsha (see Map 5) and Nanchang emerge as hubs of integrated regional markets less strongly correlated with Hankou (now part of Wuhan) and other prefectures north of the Yangzi. The Louvain and Spinglass algorithms group the Hankou and Changsha networks together, separate from the Nanchang cluster. (Skinner alternately identified the Gan River basin, including Nanchang, as a separate macroregion or as a subsystem of the Middle Yangzi macroregion in later works: see Skinner 1985; Skinner, Henderson, and Berman 2013.)
The Lower Yangzi and Southeast Coast

In the Lower Yangzi, the most advanced economic region of the Qing dynasty, we see a network of strongly correlated neighboring prefectures, suggesting a well-integrated grain market centered on Suzhou. Those strongly correlated pairs extend to the northern boundaries of Anhui and Jiangsu provinces—further north than Skinner's physiographic macroregional boundary, which reflected the course of the Yellow River as it ran south of the Shandong peninsula until 1855. (This accords with Pomeranz 1993; as well as Skinner’s twentieth century analysis: see Skinner, Henderson, and Berman 2013.) We also find stronger pairwise correlations linking southern Zhejiang province with the Lower Yangzi (Skinner drew that area into the Southeast Coast); Chuzhou is equally strongly correlated with Fuzhou (on the Southeast Coast) and Nanjing (on the Yangzi), but with stronger northward correlations, our analysis places it in the Lower Yangzi.

For its part, Fuzhou is the hub of a strongly correlated network extending across Fujian province, including across the strait to Taiwan. The moderate to strong correlations with Fuzhou's time series seen from Guangzhou, northern Jiangsu province, and up the Yangzi to Wuhan suggests an active waterborne grain market extended along the coast and major waterways. But the mountains separating Fujian from Jiangxi provinces posed a barrier to that trade, with weak or negative correlations crossing that physiographic divide.

Lingnan and Southwest China

Almost all of the major prefectures of Skinner's Lingnan microregion — more or less conterminous with Guangdong and Guangxi provinces — showed moderate to strong correlations with the grain price time series for Guangzhou. An exception is Chaozhou, on the border with Fujian, which Skinner drew into the Southeast Coast macroregion; its correlation with Guangzhou is weak but its correlation with Fuzhou is nonsignificant, so our analysis places it in the Lingnan macro-market.

The neighboring prefectures of Lianshan Ting and Liao Zhou (present-day Lianzhou) make for another exception, displaying a nonsignificant correlation with Guangzhou: Lianshan shows strong correlations heading north into the Middle Yangzi, while Liao Zhou's stronger ties connect eastward toward the Southeast Coast.

Skinner grouped most of Guizhou and Yunnan provinces into what he called the Yungui macroregion, which others have variously described as a “nascent,” “remnant,” or “frontier” region (Blunden and Elvin 1998; Wright 2000).
We label this region “Southwest” China, though our dataset does not include sufficient grain prices from Yunnan to calculate correlations in this period, but the time series for prefectures in Guizhou, despite limited temporal coverage, display a regional market of strongly intercorrelated markets around Guiyang and sharp discontinuities across most of the physiographic divides surrounding the province. Consistent with economic historian Tim Wright's study of southwestern China in the early twentieth century, we find that Guizhou was perhaps the region least integrated into a national market for grain (Wright 2000).

The westernmost prefecture of Pu'an is strongly correlated with Guiyang but also shows a strong correlation down the Xi River towards Guangzhou, suggesting that it was a portal for interregional trade. Interestingly, the Spinglass algorithm (Figure 6b) places the Guizhou prefectures in a cluster with Guangxi, while the Louvain analysis (Figure 6a) paired Guangxi with Guangdong, as Skinner had it.

Along the provincial border with Sichuan, Skinner had included Renhuai prefecture in the Upper Yangzi macroregion, but in this analysis it shows a strong positive correlation with Guiyang and negative or nonsignificant correlations to the north. Songtao prefecture, along the Henan border, is the only Guizhou prefecture with a strong correlation with its neighbor in Sichuan, but it has stronger correlations with its immediate Guizhou neighbors. The band of western Hunan prefectures with insufficient data complicate the analysis, but skipping over those immediate neighbors, the prefectures on the eastern edge of Guizhou have very weak correlations with the next prefectures to the east, suggesting that the regional boundary in this area is not simply an artifact of imperfect data.

**Implications and Prospects**

While we have found some strong evidence of interregional trade — identifying prefectures with strong grain price correlations across physiographic boundaries — we depart from critics like Sands and Myers (1986) who aimed to refute Skinner’s macroregional model altogether. Rather, the prevalence of sharp discontinuities in grain prices along physiographic boundaries, with weak, nonsignificant, or even negative correlations, generally supports Skinner's theoretical framework. In addition, cross-correlations show that one-month lags do not exhibit strong relationships and only very few cross regional boundaries.

In short, there is little evidence that paying greater attention to long-distance trade would result in a dramatically different regionalization. Correlations along the Grand Canal, major rivers, and coastline indicate that interregional trade routes allowed market signals — and grain supplies, per se — to mediate prices in the most populous regions and helped account for some of the long-term social stability in the imperial period, as Skinner (1985) anticipated.
We differ from Skinner in finding that provincial boundaries are more salient in defining several regional markets. Shanxi and Guizhou provinces have weak external correlations and strong internal correlations, even across physiographic barriers identified by Skinner. So too we find the Southeast Coast macro-market to be conterminous with Fujian province, excluding the neighboring prefectures from Zhejiang and Guangdong that Skinner considered as part of the Southeast Coast macroregion.

It may be that provincial policies governing grain markets — or practices affecting how prices were reported at the prefectural level in this dataset — explain these spatial patterns. Alternatively, in cases where the delineation of macroregional boundaries was more of a judgement call — as in the Southeast Coast, which consists of multiple coastal river basins — Skinner may have avoided following provincial boundaries to emphasize his point about the difference between market and administrative geographies, but in our dataset the two turn out to be more closely aligned.

This analysis considers correlations among the 1736-1842 time series of prefectural grain prices and finds evidence for regional macro-markets — patterns in space — but does not attempt to examine diachronic change — patterns in time. This reflects a necessity of the mode of analysis: we need to assemble a fairly lengthy time series to detect significant correlations.

But, of course, the Chinese economy at the dawn of the Qianlong emperor’s reign differed in many respects from that of the era of the Opium Wars. Economist Daniel Bernhofen and colleagues suggest that regional markets in China were trending toward a lower degree of national integration by 1820 (Bernhofen et al. 2015). Economists Yanfeng Gu and James Kai-sing Kung argue that market integration followed a “U” shape: markets were more integrated in 1736, then population growth in grain-producing areas strained integration by consuming potential exports, and only after the Taiping Rebellion did market integration rebound (Gu and Kung 2021).

Further work will be needed to determine how the regional markets we identified here were in the process of evolving and how they changed with the advent of treaty ports and mechanized transportation later in the nineteenth century. Statistically, each decade is likely to have, even slightly, different correlation coefficients, connections, and thus regional structures.

The macro-markets that we have identified suggest that Chinese civilization during the Qing period indeed consisted of multiple regional markets, many of which were nested within physiographic macroregions and/or within provincial boundaries. Some were “tenuously connected with their neighbors” (Skinner 1977, 211), some more so, some hardly at all.
While further work will be needed to identify temporal trends, this analysis supports the conception of spatially differentiated markets undergoing uneven growth processes (Brandt 1997, 282–83), with regional, somewhat hierarchical markets shaped in part by interactions with the administrative state. Fortunately for this kind of analysis, that state kept rather good price records even if it did not survive the endogenous and exogenous shocks that were yet to come.

**Statements and Declarations**

The authors declare no competing financial or non-financial interests. Research for this paper did not involve humans or animals.

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Figure 1. Map of prefectures with Qing grain price data.
Figure 2. Bar chart of total number of reporting prefectures per year. Vertical lines show the beginning of the Daoguang Emperor's reign (1820) and the beginning of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64), potential causes of missing data.
Figure 3. Thiessen polygons of prefectures (fu) shaded by relative monthly grain price data availability.
Figure 4. Map of edge contiguity matrix applied to distinguish spatial neighbors using the “queen’s case” method.
Figure 5. Network mapping of adjacent nodes. Line size and shade indicate cross-correlation coefficient strength. Data categorized using the natural Jenks method.
Figure 6. Maps of a) 11 clusters produced by the Louvain algorithm and b) 12 clusters produced by typical run of the Spinglass algorithm.

(a)
Figure 7. Grain macro-markets of 1736-1842 and Skinner's physiographic macroregions.
Erich S. Gruen’s edited collection *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* first appeared in 2011. I feel the significance of this collection is that it teases out and asks us to assess unreflective assumptions that inform not only our vision of the past, but also our grasp of present-day collective identities. Early on Gruen reports that while moderns tend to focus on difference, dissimilarity, or contrast when distinguishing cultures, in the eight sections of this text scholars identify and investigate complex connections that resulted in the cultural identities we associate with the ancient Mediterranean world. The essence of Gruen’s argument is that “The fashioning of a collective self-consciousness in antiquity took shape in complex and diverse forms.” Ancient people defined themselves “by claiming links with other societies, by pointing to cross currents and overlapping that placed less emphasis on distinctiveness than on shared heritage within a broader Mediterranean setting.”

Part one of the text (*Myth and Identity*) includes articles by Professors Tanja S. Scheer, Pascale Linant de Bellefonds, and Tonio Holscher. These pieces go beyond myths of common descent, claims of shared history, and symbols of peoplehood as distinguishing characteristics of a culture. For example, in the article *Ways of Becoming Arcadian: Arcadian Foundation Myths in the Mediterranean*, Schreer observes that while common descent and common territory play a part in the creation of “being Arcadian” these are not isolated attributes and there is more to the story. Likewise, while Linant de Bellefonds in *Pictorial Foundations Myths in Roman Asia Minor* examines foundational legends of Asia Minor Greek cities under Roman rule she also emphasizes the role of local visual representations in the creation of common identities and Holscher in *Myths, Images, and the Typology of Identities in Early Greek Art* looks into the way “a collective entity creates identity using the memory of a mythical heroic past in early Greece.”

Part two of the text (*Perceptions and Constructions of Persia*) includes five separate articles that delve into, and question identity found via contrast – that is identity based solely on the assertion of dissimilarity from others or the assertion of self in relation to others. Eric Gruen, for example, in *Herodotus and Persia*, asks if we should buy the notion that the conflict between Greece and Persia “was a pivotal turning point in the conception of Greek identity.” In other words, was it solely the Persian wars that, “drove Greeks to distinguish their special selves from the characteristics of the despised ‘other’?”
Margret Cool Root in *Embracing Ambiguity in the World of Athens and Persia* “unpacks numerous tropes of modern (Western) scholarship that emphasize utter polarities between Greece and Persia – and examines how this modern intellectual tradition has inscribed its perspective upon the classical testimonia.”

Part three of the text (*Representation of the “ Barbarian”*) includes four articles that delve into the complexity of art. I.M. Ferris’ *The Pity of War: Representations of Gauls and Germans in Roman Art* asks us to see the images in Roman public art as more than realistic portrayals of war. Rather Ferris asks that we reflect on these images as “signifiers of various messages linked to Roman, and particularly Roman imperial rhetoric.” He suggests that the images often contain levels of meaning – or as he puts it “are often imbued with meaning inside meaning and so on, like nested Russian dolls.” In other words, Ferris suggests a complex framework for understanding the barbarian enemies of Rome.

Section four of the text (*Jewish Identity in Text and Image*) includes three articles that seek to expose the complexity of “conventional dichotomies such as self/other, Greek/barbarian, and Jew/gentile.” The initial article in this section, *Surviving the Book: The Language of the Greek Bible and Jewish Identity* by Tessa Rajak, works toward throwing new light on these dichotomies, examining the Jewish translation of the Bible into Greek. Tessa Rajak suggests that this first translation of the Bible into Greek, “encapsulates the paradox of its successive communities, poised between two worlds. It represents a resolution of two powerful drives: the pull of acculturation and the anxiety of cultural annihilation.” The second article in this section is Steven Fine’s *Jewish Identity at The Limus: The Earliest Reception of the Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings*. Fine takes up the issue: “Who is a Jew?” He concludes that “Jewish Identity in late antiquity was indeed a complex affair.” Karen Steven in *Keeping the Dead in their Place: Mortuary Practices and Jewish Cultural Identity in Roman North Africa* points out the importance of reexamining past conclusions about a significant ancient necropolis and considering changing priorities of interpretation.

In part five (*Egyptian Culture and Roman Identity*) Molly Swetnam-Burland and Penelope J.E. Davies delve into the importance of reinterrogating the shared or mutual impact that cultures can have on one-another. For example, Swetnam-Burland suggests that while Egyptian deities and cults were an established part of Italian communities “both literary and visual representations of priests depict a performative cultic role that does not completely describe the lives or identities of those who held the office, much less reflect any actual or ever perceived ethnicity.” On the other hand, Penelope Davies concludes that Rome enjoyed certain benefits “by appropriating the Egyptian legacy as part of its own identity.
Part six (*Construction of Identity in Phoenician Diaspora*) probes the ways in which a culture changes, is reshaped, and adapts by its dispersion among an “other.” Corinne Bonnet’s *On Gods and Earth: The Tophet and the Construction of a New Identity in Punic Carthage*, and Josephine Crawley Quinn’s *The Cultures of the Tophet: Identification and Identity in the Phoenician Diaspora* examine how the mingling of people results in complex transformations.

Section seven (*Composite Identities*) includes articles that emphasize “Composite identities were nowhere more evident than in the Roman world.” Selections in this section by Andrew Wallace-Hadill, Maria Cecilia D’Ercole and Kevin Butcher suggest that identities in the ancient world were composed of many elements. There is not just one affiliation that really matters.

Part eight (*Contested Identities*) includes articles by Ada Cohen *The Self as Other: Performing Humor in Ancient Greek Art* and Benjamin Isaac’s *Attitudes Toward Provincial Intellectuals in the Roman Empire*. This section grapples, with the complexities of art that “disparage non-Greek targets of Greek artists” as well as prejudicial stereotypes about non-Greeks or non-Romans. Cohen argues, “Because it can be directed toward both the self and its others, as well as addressing the interactions between self and other, humor affords great insight into the workings of ethnic, racial, and gender identities.” Benjamin Isaac observes that an investigation of the writings of provincial intellectuals could give us some idea of how well they integrated into the diverse society in Rome.

In conclusion, this edited collection is comprehensive. Its eight sections emphasize the importance of moving beyond myth, common descent, contrast, or conventional dichotomies to understand the cultural identities of the ancient Mediterranean. In addition, while one section observes that art has probative importance in investigating collective consciousness, another points out the value of interrogating the shared mutual impact that cultures can have on one another. Accordingly, each of the articles in the text supports Gruen’s thesis that cultural identities in the ancient Mediterranean “took shape in complex and diverse forms.”

In addition, this collection is important for moderns because each of its twenty-four articles challenge modern habits of thought. For example, presently, one easily forgets that collective identities are not simply given once and for all. In fact, cultures may identify themselves, but that never lasts because others get their say. Or again as Swetnam-Burland says in part five, there is a shared mutual impact that cultures can have on one another. Hence, just as the collective identities in the ancient Mediterranean were the product of complex interconnections, the elements that the makeup present day collective identities are both complex and mutable.
In other words, today, one can ask, what is it that we are really looking at when we focus on race, gender, or sexuality? And this question is not unlike that asked about cultural identity in the ancient Mediterranean by contributors to this collection.

Reviewed by Constance Wilkinson

*An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau* is a masterful melding of science and art created by British architect and cartographer Michael Farmer. Based on extensive contemporary data painstakingly woven from satellite imagery, the intrepid and apparently indefatigable Mr. Farmer has, over decades, produced a unique and indispensable reference work.

Mr. Farmer’s Atlas offers a panoramic Garuda’s-eye view of the vast Tibetan Plateau. The largest and highest plateau in the world, it is largely an inhospitable area inhabited by humans for 40,000+ years and is the birthplace of an ancient and unique civilization that has long magnetized the curiosity of outsiders. Through Farmer’s work, a detailed understanding of the characteristic geography of this remote region is available for the very first time, with a potential to enlighten and inspire a wide readership.

Indeed, a plethora of socio-political and scientific ramifications can be inferred from the information collected here that affects us all, due to glacial warming and desertification harming a complex system which affects billions of people in countries downstream of its water sources. Farmer’s Atlas belongs in the hands of cartographers, bibliophiles, librarians, comparative civilization-ists, policy wonks, international relations gurus, international-boundary negotiating diplomats, anthropologists, archaeologists, Tibetologists, Sinologists, revisionists, visionaries, climate change theorists, students, teachers, free-lance curmudgeons, and even adventurous CCP cadres on holiday in a mysterious, exotic tourist destination, a region recently re-named, “Shangri-La.”

*An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau* is a sustainably-produced object that is both beautiful and beautifully made. It was published as part of the remarkable series, *Brills Tibetan Studies Library*, edited by Henk Blezer, Alex McKay, and Charles Ramble. At 5.32 lbs. and 393 pages, it qualifies as a weighty tome, yet carries profound moral weight as well, insofar as it documents the deleterious effects that domination by its dominant neighbor have had on the unique civilization and culture of Tibet.

Almost impossible to put down, this Atlas turns out to be, well, not a pot-boiler but an actual page-turner, thus achieving a wondrous star quality this reviewer had not previously associated with atlas-reading.

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1 Garuda, a powerful bird-like creature important to both Hindu and Buddhist mythology
Yes, it’s true. Here I am, waxing lyrical about an atlas, shamelessly singing its praises. And by so doing, I do mean to praise not only what Mr. Farmer has done, but how he has done it.

To be continued ...
Over centuries scores of sinologists have sought to define the essence of China. Philip Ball addresses and goes well beyond the materialist paradigm of Karl Wittfogel’s hydraulic thesis, which described the role of water management in China as stimulating state development. In his theory, government emerged as the central institution to manage transportation, flood control and irrigation. Ball also sees water management as critical in Chinese civilization and injects his description with spiritual and moral content, drawing on poetry, art, biography and extensive reference to historical events. His book is an exploration of the role of water in China’s culture, history, state administration, and economy.

The book can be interpreted as an implicit critique or an expansion of Wittfogel’s hydraulic theory, though more sideways than direct, as the author lays out the multiple manifestations of water and describes “an intimate connection between hydraulic engineering, governance, moral rectitude and metaphysical speculation that has no parallel anywhere in the world.” (70) The author’s originality and sensitivity to a wide range of sources present a new and penetrating understanding of China as civilization and state.

The long tradition of Chinese brush painting provides a sense of his approach. Landscapes are shanshui, or “mountains and water,” and suffused with a feeling for nature and the smallness of man in its presence. Yet the artist, usually a scholar-official and rarely a professional artisan, tries to capture the essence of the land and water interaction, with minimal concern for realistic detail. A landscape painting is both an acceptance of human littleness in the cosmos and simultaneously a mortal domination of the scene by inscribing its elements with brush and ink. Earth and water are sources of life. Chinese landscape painting acknowledges the fact with feeling, skill and a sense of proportion placing man and his works as accidental details. The term “shanshui” (山 水) conveys the essence of human existence in monochromatic scenes repeated countless times. These paintless paintings express a feeling of awe in the presence of nature, and at the same time convey the sense of domination or at least struggle of man to comprehend some meaning of life in the cosmos.

Water has given life to China and has also taken it away by the millions. From earliest times through the present, hydraulic engineering and devices have sought to control the flow, benefits and devastation of the Yangzi and Yellow rivers and their tributaries. Controlled water has irrigated farms. Fertile loess sediment from the Yellow River enriched the North China Plain, like the Nile’s annual donation of fertile soil to Egyptian farmers.
Sampans and multi-storied boats plied the rivers and lakes for trade and for war. Periodic floods, some manmade, killed hundreds of thousands by drowning, famine or exposure. Water was a weapon of war and a double-edged sword inflicting slaughter on generals who failed to calculate flow and climate.

The author describes how water consciousness has permeated the metaphors of painting, poetry and religion. “According to Confucius: Water, which extends everywhere and gives everything life without acting, is like virtue. Its stream, which descends downward, twisting and turning but always following the same principle, is like rightness. Its bubbling up, never running dry, is like the dao.”(79) Ruling the state is like water management which requires “..discerning and respecting the dao of the rivers, so a wise ruler will identify and observe the natural tendencies of his people. Then all will be peaceful and orderly.” (65)

The role of water has been central in agriculture as a vital ingredient of farming and food production. Flooding of small and great rivers, especially the Yellow River, has made water management a top priority through history. Mythical and actual heroes were those who devised ways of reducing damage by raging torrents. Dikes, dams and canals have been the standard response to wayward rivers. Devices were invented to stir loess sediment so that it did not accumulate and raise the Yellow River level.

Rivers were harnessed and canals constructed to expedite trade and transport, bringing regions into mutual dependence and breaking down autonomy. When the Communists came to power, a major component of their economic agenda was water management, with a program of building dams. Modern China runs on electricity and hydropower became an additional reason to connect fluid flow to the power grid. Industrialization also brought population growth which has led to major pollution.

Water control has challenged the Chinese since ancient times, with land reclamation, canal construction and dike maintenance altering the landscape. Deforestation has quickened runoff into rivers with devastating effects. Ball tells the story of Chinese water with detailed scholarship. His telling also explains how the Chinese state evolved an institutional response to its challenges. The Chinese state can be seen as the painting metaphor writ large – recognition of nature’s power and at the same time attempting to channel water into productive and less destructive impact by understanding its essence. Under Maoist Communism the party dictatorship proclaimed that human will, inspired by ideology, could command nature and overcome hydraulic tragedy by building dams and canals, while reclaiming waste land for agriculture along the way. Some projects helped while others had an opposite effect.

The Three Gorges Dam has the earmarks of benefits and potential disaster. It is the most recent attempt to manage the Yangzi and make its western reaches more navigable.
It is also an enterprise to harness hydropower and lessen dependence on coal burning for electricity. According to Ball, “Around 1,000 megawatts are being added to China's coal-plant generating capacity every week, and the environmental consequences of mining and burning this dirty fossil fuel are onerous both for the local populations and for the world.” (252). The dam was primarily constructed to manage the river so that its upper course could be navigable to larger ships.

It was also touted as a monument to China’s international prestige and power. (As one who has cruised through the Gorges several times, I was struck by the beauty of the region, its history and the sheer will power of taming the river with dams and locks.)

The "Water Kingdom" has become the "Water Republic," and still confronts China’s rulers with floods and droughts, though with less destruction thanks to past and current projects. Water control in the form of flood and irrigation management was not only vital in maintaining agricultural production and life protection, but affected dynastic legitimacy and government credibility. Emperors, statesmen and engineers saw danger and opportunity in the great waterways which affected China’s self-image, affecting internal trade and human efforts at control. These were sources of unity as well as bringers of sorrow. Building bridges to bring north and south closer together had been a modernizing dream interrupted by civil war and invasion. In the first decade of the People’s Republic of China a double deck bridge was built at Wuhan to span the Yangzi and many others followed.

Waterways have been a major factor in China’s wars. Rivers served as routes for transport of men and weapons, and occasional battlefields. They have also served as frontiers between warring states. The Nationalists cut the dikes on the lower Yellow River in a vain attempt to slow the advance of Japanese forces. The net result was a major famine due to major loss of farmland.

Analyzing the role of water in its many manifestations, Ball identifies its key role in building and maintaining the state. Dynasties rose and fell on the basis of how well they managed water directly or indirectly as fortunes of the empire depended on the Will of Heaven. At lower levels local officials were in charge of waterworks and were blamed when things went wrong. Communists translated the Heaven metaphor into human-willed historical process. They espoused a martial approach to defeating nature as the intemperate rivers became symbols of oppression that had to be tamed. The Yellow River disasters were a type of reactionary crime to be eliminated under Maoist orthodoxy.

The book is an erudite and scholarly summary of the role that water has played in many aspects of Chinese history. Water became a metaphor for life and nature, finding expression in art, religion and philosophy. Ball presents its numerous manifestations and challenges with effectiveness.
The reader is likely to complete the book with a sense of wonder and a new perspective on the commonplace liquid vital to life and yet a destructive solvent when carried in great rivers straining their banks.
America and Russia are derivative civilizations from the same Greco-Roman source, with very different results. After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, Russia proclaimed itself to be the Third Rome as it lifted the Tatar yoke. Although the U.S. did not become a country for another three centuries, the colonial experience and culture remained closer to England’s – a nation proudly conscious of its lineage.

Both faced the challenge of expansion into their hinterlands and the problem of dealing with the native peoples already there. For the Americans settlers and pioneers, the mostly nomadic tribes were seen as uncivilized savages and taking their lands and hunting grounds was justified in the name of progress. To author and Professor Steven Sabol it was a form of colonization – that child of imperialism. Scholarship in recent decades has become more sympathetic to indigenous peoples as victims of racism and genocide – a term providing scholars with an interpretive framework. It included both cultural and physical genocide, and some claimed it started when the first Europeans landed. The framework echoes and possibly stimulated current Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Whether a great migration or raw colonization, the spread of settlers onto the plains of the American West displaced the tribes and detached them from their indigenous culture. Missionaries sought to convert them and government agents made treaties that usually cost them title to ancestral lands.

Sabol is even-handed in describing how European-claimed land came under American jurisdiction with slight concern about the then current inhabitants. The main value of his work is to demonstrate the similarity and differences between American and Russian “civilizing mission” as they moved respectively west or east. He specifically addresses the internal colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs and how this was not so different from European imperial conquests in Asia and Africa. Scholars such as Hobson have argued that the American empire did not begin until the Spanish-American War – distinct because it was fought overseas.

The American approach to indigenous peoples was more paternalistic than the Russian, or as he put it, “to guide the Sioux from dark barbarism to the enlightened path of civilization.” (24) Russian policy was more to exclude the Kazakhs from assimilation and to guide them away from their nomadic lifestyles in order to integrate them into civilized ways. In both cases the colonizers maintained a social and cultural distance from the natives.
The Sioux were hunting and herding nomads whose social structure changed as they moved further west from areas bordering the Great Lakes. Constantly on the move, there was little chance to form sedentary hierarchies. Similarly, the Kazakhs did not move as a single group and there was little collective consciousness that could be described as incipient nationalism. Their nomadism dictated movement which favored fragmentation over unity. The days when Attila or Genghis Khan or Tamerlane could unite nomadic tribes into an empire were long past, as guns and manufactured luxuries neutralized the warrior spirit and complex bows. Horses were a mainstay of the Kazakhs as a source of meat and kumis, the fermented mare’s milk.

Disease and military defeats decimated Indian populations, leading many to expect the ultimate extinction of the natives. With introduction of horses onto the Great Plains, the Sioux and the Comanche prospered as buffalo hunters. The herds provided meat and other necessities, becoming the basis of their livelihoods. When white men came and often wholesale slaughtered buffalo to near extinction, it inflicted a major disaster for the tribes.

In the matter of religion, the Sioux accommodated their beliefs to acceptance of nature and the world around them. Rituals such as the Sun Dance and Purification Lodge did not reflect any organized theology. Kazakhs, in contrast, were Sunni Moslems though their nomadic life was not conducive to an established church with mosques and mullahs. To the Russians, the Kazakhs were “people with a consecrated book” and had less need of Christianity through conversion than the Sioux, who were pagan and barbarous to Americans.

Americans in large numbers began moving into the interior after the Revolution, while Russians had crossed the Urals centuries earlier. After two and a half centuries of Tatar rule Ivan IV’s (“the Terrible”) victory over Kazan opened the eastern regions. After the Bolshevik Revolution the Kazakhs were reorganized into the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. A large influx of Slavs in the 1950s was one result of Khrushchev’s “Virgin Lands” project. By late 1989, the Republic had nearly the same number of Slavs and native Kazakhs.

Sabol’s *Touch of Civilization* is a well-documented and eminently readable comparison of American and Russian internal colonialism. It is balanced in both governments’ treatment of local populations. Nor does he adopt the “genocide” approach to his subject. Legal measures adopted to deal with and often treat the native populations fairly are described. American and Russian civilizations spread into sparsely settled lands and sought to establish an agricultural hegemony over what was considered a backward and disappearing nomadic way of life.

This comparison of two modes of colonialism has great merit in reducing American belief in uniqueness of dealing with indigenous people.
The major difference between the Kazakhs and Sioux themselves was that the former had been exposed to contacts, migrations and conquests from adjoining civilizations and so could be described as more cosmopolitan than the Sioux, who remained tribal and largely isolated from "civilization" until the nineteenth century. Despite some adaptation and assimilation, American Indians still suffer from double cultural shock of demised nomadism and the machine civilization of the surrounding world.
CCR Style Guide for Submitted Manuscripts

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Do NOT indent paragraphs. A line space should precede and follow each paragraph. Subheads are in bold, flush left, separated by a line space above and below. Long quotations should be placed in a separate paragraph with a .5-inch left indent, no quotation marks, and should be preceded and followed by one-line spaces.

Except for common non-standard English terminology, the use of non-standard English terms should be avoided. Authors should use proper, standard English grammar. Suggested guides include The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, and The Chicago Manual of Style, University of Chicago Press.

Underlining and bold-face type in the text are discouraged. Whenever possible use italics to indicate text that you wish to emphasize. Use italics for book titles, movie titles, and for foreign terms. Using colored text is prohibited. However, we encourage authors to take advantage of the ability to use color in the production of graphs, maps, and so forth.

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Exceedingly long footnotes are probably better handled as endnotes.

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The subhead References (denoting Bibliography, Works Cited, etc.) should appear right after the end of the document, beginning on the last page if possible. The references should be flush left, ragged right, with a .3-inch hanging indent. Use the format with which you are most comfortable, such as APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), or Chicago/Turabian.
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.

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; Bucharest, Romania; and Warsaw, Poland.

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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If you are not a member of the ISCSC please consider joining. The $70/year membership fee, plus $8/year postage for international shipping provides members with a one-year mailed paperback subscription to this journal, and the opportunity to be directly involved with the workings of the society. Membership is open to all interested in the comparative study of civilizations. Please visit www.iscsc.org for more information.

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