

Introduction

Are humans capable of preserving the present civilization? The historical record doesn't give us cause for optimism, given the demise of several dozen civilizations during the past 4000 years, with a median duration of about 5 centuries. Explanations usually invoke such factors for failure as over-use of resources, but they never fault any fundamental flaw in human nature. A new perspective on this phenomenon is overdue.

Ask any sociobiologist (or evolutionary psychologist), and they will say "Sure, we all know that our tribal inheritance is key to understanding terrorism" but there's a taboo about bringing this up on national television, or in an article for a national magazine. Criticizing human nature is politically incorrect, especially in an academic setting. This started in 1887 by Franz Boas who espoused "cultural relativism" (e.g., "no culture is superior to any other"). I suppose a cultural anthropologist would have to say that "Muslim extremists" have as legitimate a culture as modern Danes, for example. It's time to ignore the cowardly politically correct crowd, and bravely think new thoughts.

The Holocene Mandate

The Holocene Epoch refers to a global warming that started ~ 12,000 years ago (9600 BC). It's just one of many "interglacial" periods that occur at approximately 100,000 year intervals, and last ~ 10,000 years. The Holocene changed everything for humans!

After the glaciers retreated at mid-latitudes an acre of land was more fertile than before! Tribes could shrink their territorial range, and they could expand their population. But this brought larger tribes closer together. Tribal rivalries didn't abate, they just became potentially more catastrophic since larger numbers were involved. It became a good idea for two tribes to coalesce to defend themselves from a common enemy tribe. Those that didn't join were slated for losses and eventual extinction. A new force of evolution was at work: coalesce or disappear!

But coalescence required two things that didn't come easy: tribal size exceeded the Dunbar Number, ~ 150 people, so in the new tribe there were strangers who had to be cooperated with and fought beside during inter-tribal conflicts, and 2) some of these newcomers looked different, spoke differently and had slightly different customs. The first issue meant that blind trust instead of a history of previous relationships had to be relied upon, and the second issue meant that everyone had to become more tolerant.

Some individuals were more comfortable living under these new conditions than others. It suddenly became an asset to be trusting of strangers and tolerant of differences. Those who weren't comfortable with this new requirement could be disruptive of tribal harmony. This new force of evolution worked at both the individual level, and the tribal level. Tribal winners were those in which trust and tolerance could be maintained, at least at a level that didn't compromise individual performance and tribal strength. Psychologically, however, every individual must have harbored some discomfort and possible resentment about the new order.

This is the origin of "super-tribes" - which grew into city-states, and empires that dominated surrounding large regions. Rewards went to the tribes that exhibited sufficient trust and tolerance

to be more functional than other tribes. The Holocene Mandate to grow or be conquered led to a population dominated by rulers who were savvy enough to govern a society by creating what would eventually become a "civilization."

By now, dear reader, you know the direction of this essay and the argument I'm going to make. However, there are many interesting places along the path to civilization, and we are now witnessing some interesting things at the beginning of its unraveling. These are treated in the following sections, and near the end of this essay I will invoke all of them as part of my explanation for the rise of global terrorism.

Feudalism

Anthropologists tell us that hunter/gatherers, HG, were quite democratic because they wouldn't tolerate a strong leader. Even the best hunter shared meat among all tribesmen. Decisions affecting the whole tribe were arrived at after discussion and consensus. Only during inter-tribal conflicts would someone of competence exhibit leadership, but only while the need existed.

Holocene super-tribes required a more explicit leadership because the membership was so large that not everyone knew each other. These super-tribes were also transitioning away from HG, toward herding and farming. Whenever food is concentrated in one place, such as herds of domesticated animals and stored farm produce, marauding tribes will be nearby. Fighting off marauders requires social organization. Initially, this must have been an understanding among the farmers to come to each other's aid when one farmer was attacked. But as a super-tribe grew to include more than just farmers, such as traders, artisans who build tools, etc., an entire community would have been motivated to protect themselves from marauders. A new component to the growing number of specialties within the community was created: soldiers under the command of a chief.

Soldiers had to eat, so the chief arranged for a "tax" on the farmers in exchange for protection. This is the beginning of a form of governance called "feudalism." It eventually evolved into a form of governance involving land ownership by lords, farming by vassals and parasitism by a clergy, but that's another story.

The "lesson" for this section is that the transition from HG to farming required the creation of a new social structure involving a division of labor and "governance," and we should assume that the HG mind was uncomfortable with this new social structure.

The path to civilization has produced widespread resentment and discontent.

Artisans and Anti-Intellectualism

The Holocene was good for artisans. Before the warming, artisans existed in small numbers within each tribe. It was the artisan who made the warrior's weapons: the spear, hatchet, bow and arrow, etc. According to paleo-archeologists, starting ~ 70,000 years ago the design for arrow heads and cutting tools became standardized. The simplest explanation is a transition from each warrior making his own weapons to a specialist doing it for all warriors of the tribe. The specialist is the first artisan, and perhaps the first example of a division of labor. His role was so important that he was exempted from warrior duty. He learned from captured weapons what his counterpart artisans

in neighboring tribes were creating, and he copied improvements. This accounts for the observed standardization.

Tribes that didn't accommodate a small number of artisans couldn't compete, so every tribe eventually had this one division of labor. The making of weapons could easily expand to the making of tools since the hatchet that kills can also chop a tree. We can imagine many roles for the artisan, such as the construction of dwellings and the creation of better clothing.

How might warriors have viewed the few artisans in the tribe? Consider that when the warrior went off to battle, the artisan stayed behind with the women and children. The warrior's resentment had to be controlled because it was the artisan who made the warrior's superior weapons. This is the birth of "anti-intellectualism," and a model for the resentments of class warfare that would occur millennia later.

When the Holocene warming occurred, the roles for artisans exploded to such things as irrigation, crop and animal breeding, trading, record keeping, tax collection and even governance. The artisan may not have been cunning, or fierce, but he was needed for the opportunities of the Holocene. Whereas the pre-Holocene tribe may have had an artisan population of ~ 2 or 3%, their numbers would have increased during the Holocene, to something that is now ~ 10%. The archetype artisan of today is the scientist and engineer. Today's non-artisan may claim to admire the scientist and engineer, but at some level of consciousness there is a deep resentment, as epitomized by writings about the "two cultures."

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War of the Brain Halves

Neuropsychologists tell us that all animals have left and right brains that are essentially identical in their capabilities; they merely control opposite sides of the body. Human brain halves are significantly different. For example, our language abilities reside in the left brain while facial recognition is in the right (however, the right is good at reciting the alphabet, singing songs and swearing). Tests of split brain patients reveal that the two brains like different things: Gazzaniga's split-brain patient P.S. was asked about life goals, and his right laboriously answered "automobile race" while his left wanted to be a "draftsman." (Gazzaniga, 1978). One patient complained about the times when one hand was buttoning a shirt while the other was unbuttoning.

The evolution of different capabilities is presumed to have begun as language was evolving, possibly 1/2 million years ago. Today the left brain is responsibility for language production (in Broca's Area) and reception (in Wernicke's Area). This began a fast-paced evolution of the left for many other things; the right evolved more slowly. A slight push in the evolution of new capabilities must have occurred when artisans began to play an essential role in every tribe. But the big push happened when the Holocene began. This is when artisans used their reason (a left-brain capability) to invent farming, irrigation, data recording, large building construction, wagons, roads, etc. The epitome of a person who was left-brain dominant is Socrates! His approach to philosophy was to question the logic of others, and to ask logical questions that were difficult to answer by right-brain dominant people (because a right brain has no clue about logic).

The growth of civilization was led by the left-brain artisan! Only a left brain can understand the concept of laws, both natural and human. All of science and engineering is heavily dependent upon left brain capability. Lawyers and politicians involve forms of strategizing that only a left brain can do. Formulating a plan, whether it relates to farming, architecture or governance, requires a competent left brain.

What about those evolutionary "left behind" right-brain people, those who didn't have a well-endowed left brain? They must have resented the world that others were creating. It had opportunities for the left-brainers and unimportant work for right-brainers. These people must have resented the new world that they were being forced to live in, and the people who were creating it. I sometimes think that they secretly wished to dismantle civilization, and return to a simpler world where they would have a better chance to prosper. The two-cultures conflict has its roots in resentments of those with opposite brain half dominance. In this way the path to civilization has produced resentment and discontent among those belonging to one culture, since the civilized world favors those of the other culture who created that world.

Parochial Altruism

Sociobiologists have used "game theory" to explain things about the fickleness of human behavior. We're familiar with Longfellow's poem that starts: "There was a little girl, and she had a little curl, right in the middle of her forehead. When she was good, she was very, very good, and when she was bad, she was horrid." This is an apt description of human nature! As Herbert Spencer wrote in 1892, within each tribe are two codes of morality, one is meant for intra-tribal interactions (amity) and the other for extra-tribal interactions (enmity). The same person can be very, very good when interacting with fellow tribesmen, and he can be very, very horrid when fighting another tribe.

But there's a nuance about the "very, very good" behavior with fellow tribesmen. When a tribe has been at peace with neighboring tribes for a long time (such as when the home tribe is overwhelmingly strong, as occurs when an empire has been established), that good behavior begins to exhibit some variation. Specifically, some good behaviors are merely good in outward appearance, as they are actually deceptively selfish. Cheating, and even criminality, can become common in a society that has been peaceful for too long. In times of peace the fierce warrior, who helped establish the peace, may turn on his fellow man with criminal acts, and some of the less warlike person may discover that they have sociopathic talent.

This fickle aspect of human nature is referred to as "parochial altruism" by sociobiologists, and it may have been an evolutionary force throughout the Holocene. It suggests that an empire has within itself the seeds for its own eventual weakening and dissolution.

The path to civilization has produced widespread resentment and discontent.

The Genes

I want to talk about "religion" and its crucial role in promoting terrorism, but I first have to explain something about the genes.

One of the best kept secrets, and the most hated truth, is that humans are assembled by genes! From the moment of conception, the genes guide growth. Every body part, every organ, including the brain, is the product of genetic assembly. The genes that control this assembly have existed within the human gene pool for millions of years, typically. Some have been present for over a billion years, in fact, and a few are relative newcomers at a few thousand years. But all are long-lived compared with the individual humans they assemble.

What's the significance of this fact? Try thinking of the genes as "striving for immortality" as they compete for continued presence at a location in one of the chromosomes that hold instructions for assembling a human. Considering the totality of humans who exist at any moment, there are many dozens of locations on chromosomes where two or more gene alleles are competing. The genes don't know they're competing, of course, any more than a stone knows that its rolling down a hillside.

Analogies like this are needed to help our feeble brains understand something that they weren't meant to understand. After all, during the entirety of our ancestry the working out of evolution led to brains that appear to be designed by the genes to assist in the survival of the genes that assembled the brains. People too often make the mistake of assuming that brains evolved for understanding reality. Stated another way, the genes are selfish, for their paramount "concern" is for themselves, and their concern about the human who carries them into the future is limited to how that human's behavior affects the gene. This very anthropomorphic statement, which is also tautological, is the most efficient way to explain a fundamental truth: we individual humans are enslaved to selfish genes!

One reason there's a taboo about "the genes" is racism. For a while, it looked like Negroes were going to get away with the claim that races don't exist because the concept is just a "social construct." But when Negroes promoted affirmative action, and complained about white police harassment of blacks, this argument fell apart. Races do exist, and for millions of years anyone who looked different, or spoke different, or believed different things, thereby revealed that they belonged to another tribe, and this made them appropriate targets for horrible treatment. Yet, whenever there is racial conflict, regardless of the initiator's race, no commentator mentions that millions of years of evolution reinforced a version of tribalism that has racial bias "baked in." Expecting racial bias to go away by appealing to a person's better angel isn't going to work. I claim that everyone is racially biased to at least some degree, and for the next few centuries, or for however long recognizable races exist, racial bias will exist.

Religion

We are told that every society studied by anthropologists "has religion." Scholars also tell us that there are an estimated 700 religions. What can account for such widespread idiocy? It's the genes, stupid! Religion is the glue that keeps a tribe working together by keeping the individual enslaved to the goal of tribal survival (i.e., genetic survival). It's the genes that create minds with a "tribal mentality." The warrior who throws himself into battle is like the bee that stings someone who came too close to the hive. Each is willing to die for the group.

I'm not going to apologize for writing so bluntly, but I will apologize for stating things that are self-evident for anyone who knows how to think. These self-evident ideas are embraced by sociobiologists (and their timid brethren, evolutionary psychologists).

Religion can be thought of as having two components: the nature of the physical world and how people should behave. In the first category are such things as the world's origin in 4000 BC, and how the Earth is at the center of the universe. The second category includes such things as don't cheat your fellow tribesman and kill everyone in the neighboring tribe (i.e, kill unbelievers). It's fair to say that present scientific understandings show that everything in the first category for all religions is demonstrably wrong, and quite humorously so. Among the second category, admonitions, approximately half of everything is evil: being a good citizen with one's fellow tribesmen is good, but being bad with everyone else is bad. But that's just my opinion; there's no way for science to have an opinion about the second category, except to give an accounting for how it came about, and how it evolved. And that's what I want to discuss in this section: how the evil side of the second religious category promotes global terrorism.

The genes, in their infinite wisdom, want the home tribe to vanquish neighbor tribes. After all, individuals in the neighbor tribe are carriers of some competing alleles. Just imagine the fate of a gene that assembled brains with neuron connection circuits that promoted the belief: "love thy neighbor tribe." No wonder religion is found in every tribe, and everyone with an inclination for thinking is loathe to question the tribe's religion.

Getting the job done, vanquishing neighbor tribes, involves several specific ways of thought. "Conformance" is a desire to adopt the beliefs and behaviors of the home tribe. Intolerance is an instinctive hatred for anyone who is different from everyone in the home tribe (who are the same due to conformance). Each tribe evolves differences in dress, language, religious rituals and beliefs - and these are markers for tribal affiliation. Anyone who deviates from the home tribe's traits must be from another tribe, and he should not be tolerated. If the targeted person claims to be a fellow tribesman, he could be a spy. This is the simplest explanation for racial conflicts wherever they exist; nobody calls attention to this idea because it bodes bad for any resolution.

Sociopaths exist in every society (at ~ 4%), and I claim that their role is to help tribes compete with each other. During battle a sociopath will not hesitate to kill the enemy, or even to torture and spread fear among the enemy. Such behavior is helped by not having feelings for others. It is reasonable to fear any tribe known to have sociopaths. Placing severed heads upon stakes at a tribal border serves the genes of that tribe.

By the way, one of religion's jobs is to control sociopaths, and keep their hostilities directed outward. If a tribe is at peace for too long, the sociopaths have no extra-tribal outlet and they are at risk of undermining intra-tribal harmony. Criminality is largely the work of sociopaths. This is just another illustration of "parochial altruism" theory.

The Dilemma of Governance

Governance is meant to organize the activities of individuals in a way that promotes productivity, preserves harmony and strengthens the society. Good governance assures survival of the society as other societies test the resolve and ability of their neighbor societies to defend themselves. Societal

conflicts are equivalent to inter-tribal conflicts. The mental modules that are itching for inter-tribal conflict when the prospects for victory appear good are the same mental modules that urge a country to wage war upon another. Civilization merely raises the stakes by putting more lives at risk. The prehistoric record suggests that inter-tribal conflicts were usually limited to skirmishes along borders, as when a group of hunters from one territory encountered a smaller group from the neighboring territory, and a fight broke out. This is how chimpanzee troops interact, so there must be a long genetic heritage for humans having skirmishes. The entire tribe is usually not involved, but escalation over time can occur. World War I was prompted by an assassination, so one death led to 38 million others.

Good governance can create the impression of an unrealistic home-tribe strength. Even if the leadership understands the limits of their strength, the masses of men still think like tribesmen. Rabble-rousers, people like Adolf Hitler, can mobilize a society with dreams of conquering traditional rivals and delivering themselves to ever-lasting prosperity and peace. Deliberate calculation is not something the masses are known for, and this is a constant challenge for those in charge of governance. There's another aspect to the willingness of the masses of governed to wage war, and it can be used to advantage by those in governance. When war is underway, the masses forgive small grievance with their government and focus their hatred on the neighbor society. There is a temptation by those in government to respond to dissatisfaction among the governed by initiating war. The readiness of ordinary men to go to war is a real problem for any government, and succeeding in creating a strong society can bring this challenge to a crisis.

Good governance leads to a population increase. This may seem good, but big populations invite new problems. The first super-tribes must have discovered that when almost everyone in the tribe is a stranger, the requirement for automatic trust was seized upon by unscrupulous cheaters. Big cities are the same; someone who is discovered to be a cheater can simply move to another part of the city and remain undiscovered until after their next cheat. "Grifters" are swindlers who stay on the move; it's a lifestyle made possible by societies that are too large.

Civilization and its Discontents

My essay has a pattern: people today are adapted to an ancestral environment, not to the modern one. The brain is constructed (by the genes) to respond to situations as if living in a small hunter/gatherer tribe. Take almost anyone born today, and place them in one of the remaining HG tribes, and if the tribe would accept them the child would grow up feeling comfortable.

Freud understood this, at some level (shall I say a "subconscious level"). He traveled to foreign countries, and collected artifacts for his office. They were probably constant reminders that some primitive need was not being met by contemporary European society. He viewed the individual as being thwarted by powerful societal forces, and he took the side of the individual. Taking sides like this on tribal matters is dangerous. Imagine a bee thumbing its nose at the hive! Freud also acknowledged that the individual was not an innocent victim when he wrote: *"...men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked; but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment."* (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930).

I claim that almost everyone living today is forced into an experiment analogous in an opposite way to the imaginary child being adopted by a HG tribe: we are like a primitive HG child being forced to live in an alien social setting, called civilization. No wonder so many people are discontent! There's a silent "call of the wild" that feeds this discontent. Some people feel that call more compellingly than others. I, personally, would hate to be forced to live in a HG tribe; but most people, I claim, would be more comfortable in such a setting. They wouldn't admit it publicly, but they would instead say such things as "let's shrink government to the size that we can drown it in a bathtub" or "government isn't the solution, it's the problem." These unapologetic criticisms are just "giveaways" to what these people really want. Another giveaway is joining a terrorist group!

The Internet

There are many ways for someone to feel discontent with civilization. Some may bridle at the need for continuing to pretend that they are tolerant. Others may feel suckered into the social obligation to assume trust when relating to strangers. The person who has a strong need for religion may want to proselytize, to the annoyance of others. The person who lives by his emotions instead of reason may resent anyone who has achieved emotional maturity. A dumb person may resent smart people. The person who is poor due to bad luck may blame society. Someone of a minority race will feel the bias of many who are of the majority race. Anyone who was dealt with unfairly by someone employed by the government may blame the government. Corruption will find its way into any organization that isn't kept clean by old-fashioned, small-tribe practices, so any failures can be blamed on government for permitting these corruptions. The list of possible discontents is endless, as I tried to illustrate in the previous sections.

The internet is both wonderful, and horrible! It's the proverbial "double-edged sword." We are all familiar with the good that it can provide, and we are becoming familiar with the bad. First it was hackers, stealing our information and money, then it became teenage bullies smearing the reputations of fellow students. Someone with a specific grievance can easily find others with the same grievance. If you hate the concept of taxation you'll find others with the same hatred. If you think the government is trying to take your guns from you, others on the internet feel the same and want to share their feelings. The "bad apples" of society used to be loners before the internet, but now they can locate each other and feed each others paranoid feelings of being victimized. The dangerous part comes when feelings are so high that these malcontents arrange to get together to right wrongs. It used to be home-grown paranoid "militias" who were preparing for their defense from government attack. But the problem has become international, as when a terrorist group recruits new members for either going to a foreign land to wage war or waging a war on their home land.

Terrorism Roots

“Wahhabism” is a religious movement branching off of Sunni Islam that objects to the version of education that all civilized societies embrace. Yes, "education" is defined by what makes you useful to society, but when an educational regimen involves memorizing the Koran, and teaching of intolerance for non-believers, one must ask what society this is useful for. The answer is a society that wants to destroy civilization.

The true aim of terrorism is the destruction of civilization and a return to a small-tribe lifestyle. It isn't feasible to simply buy some land and start a small tribe; the genes don't create minds that think this way. Humans who don't like the tribe they're in can't simply walk away, they have to destroy their alien tribe in order to find their lost home tribe. That's the underlying thinking, or emotion, that drives terrorists.

So, who are the recruits to terrorism? They're not the unemployed and exploited poor, who may have a legitimate grievance against civilization. The best recruit has no legitimate grievance with civilization. Instead, they will be someone with overwhelming discontent with civilization, because they weren't meant to be born into a civilization. They were meant for the small-tribe setting, and they know this at some basic emotional level of their being. The education that they may have had merely opened their eyes to the many possible discontents that exist for someone with their bad luck, the bad luck for having been born after the Holocene Experiment was in full bloom.

Prospects for a Solution

The outcome of any experiment is inherently uncertain. The Holocene Experiment is no exception. There are no guarantees that it will succeed. The only honest answer is that we simply don't know the outcome.

However, in my most sober assessment of things, which I do at the midnight hour, I see no solution! The Holocene Experiment has created countless civilizations, and they have all ended the same way: in collapse. If five centuries is the median duration for a civilization in the historical record, then Global Civilization is overdue for an ending. This assessment saddens me, and I hope I'm wrong.

Maybe the midnight hour isn't the best time for pondering what the Force of Destiny has in store for Global Civilization. At the noon hour I would be in good company, for every public domain commentator assumes there's a solution, but just can't explain what it might be.

In my book, *Genetic Enslavement: A Call to Arms for Individual Liberation*, I survey the few ways a civilization can arise and the many ways it can decline. Perhaps the tenor of the book was taken from the midnight hour of its writing. I argue that the very first civilization was an accident, because it had never existed before and therefore human nature could never, by definition, have become adapted to sustaining this new thing. I give a fuller list of the many discontents that exist for people who stumble into a civilized state. I use an analogy of genetic entrenchment to argue that the culturgens that lead to a civilization are un-entrenched compared with all previous HG culturgens incorporated into the culture that creates a civilization, and that therefore it is easier to lose a civilization than to create one.

In that book I employ "sampling theory" to calculate the longevity of humanity, as we know it. The argument is too long for inclusion here, but the conclusion is that Humanity (as we know it) has a 50% probability of disappearing between the years 2100 and 2500. If the logic of that argument holds up, then the phrase "as we know it" could be key to understanding what civilization's ending will look like: those with discontents will end the Holocene Experiment and force a backwards evolution to a state resembling our prehistoric ancestor's multitude of small-tribe HG societies. Olaf

Stapledon wrote about dramatic evolutionary transformations of humanity in his science fiction book *Last and First Men* (1930).

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[Holocene Experiment](#) (understanding Global Terrorism)

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Epitaph

A million years from now, if a History of Humanity were to be written, it would say that during one of the interglacials, called the Holocene Epoch, humans experimented with "civilizations" for about 3000 years, and they failed every time to achieve stability. During a succession of these attempts the human population soared, and it strained Mother Earth in every way, causing the disappearance of most species and the depletion of what had been a plenitude of surface resources. The atmosphere was brought close to a global runaway greenhouse destabilization by CO₂ production, but this was insufficient to overcome the natural cycle of cooling that ends all interglacials. Due to internal social forces that kept extinguishing civilizations, combined with the natural end of the Holocene climate, the human population declined dramatically to pre-Holocene levels as they returned to their hunter/gatherer lifestyle. This outcome was inevitable because the evolution of human nature for millions of years had adapted their social nature to the small tribe social setting. Experiments with civilization were attempted during subsequent interglacials, but since they could never achieve enduring stability they ended with the same fate that befell those first attempts of the Holocene
Glory Days.

"All the noonday brightness of human genius is destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of Man's achievements must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins..."
Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," 1903