

## From Rube to Roob

Jose Ortega y Gasset wrote *Revolt of the Masses* in 1930. In it he described something that puzzled him: scholars were beginning to have trouble being heard above the noise of uninformed men who brazenly presented their opinions as if they were fact. Gasset struggled to explain this, speculating at length about the appeal for believing that Truth should come from within instead of from an objective, open-minded exploration of ideas based on observations of an external reality. The common man was searching for an explanation of the corruption of society that was ruled by educated people, and the commoner noticed that education involves observation of external reality followed by disciplined thinking. Gasset finally hinted at the possibility that commoners were getting "too smart for their britches" because they were becoming successful in earning a living, and in some instances becoming wealthier than educated noblemen and scholars. The commoner's new-found wealth emboldened him to believe that his opinions therefore deserved the same respect as that of generations of nobility. Opinions that command respect help define a society's culture, and this was the beginning of the commoner's takeover of culture.

Half a century later Roger Price wrote *The Great Roob Revolution* (1970), which finally gave this phenomenon a name. He invented the name Roob in order to make an important distinction: the country bumpkin was a "rube" out of innocent ignorance of good manners from lack of exposure to the customs of urban living, whereas the Roob was obnoxious for insisting that his stupid ideas should not be questioned. Both the rube and Roob were insufferable, but for different reasons. Price clarified the argument that it was the Roob's growing wealth that was the principal force that gave his opinions power. After all, he argued, the shopkeeper who wanted to sell was not going to question the taste of someone with money in his pocket. If the person who comes to town for a carnival has money in his pocket, and if he wants to hear a certain kind of music, then that's the music that the townspeople will perform. If he wants to see a certain kind of movie, then that's the movie that will be made. It's when a rube has money in his pocket that he becomes a Roob!

When scholars and noblemen became less numerous than Roobs, the new imbalance of buying power translated to an ascendance of the Roob. This, Price explained, was why culture was becoming Roobified. Ideas that came from within oneself, as Gasset had argued, were more valid to the Roob than ideas that others arrived at from disciplined argument based on observation. This would have predictable consequences on a society's culture.

Politicians took notice of the Roob, since his type was numerous and could vote. If the Roob distrusted "pointy-headed" intellectuals, then politicians would mock the puzzled scholars. Adlai Stevenson was the first politician to be mocked as an "egg-head" by a political opponent (in 1956). I remember this well, because I was in high school at the time, on a debate team arguing the merits of "free trade" - and I was puzzled by my analysis of the unsupported arguments used to attack Stevenson.

At the same time I noticed that classical music was much less popular than "rock music." One form spoke to the intellect of smart people and the other spoke to the heart of simple folk. Movies also celebrated the simple-minded "rebel" instead of the conscientious citizen. What happened, I wondered, to the patriot who saved civilization from tyrannical Nazi fascism just a couple decades earlier.

The cause for conscientiousness and civility wasn't helped by the growth of a war in Vietnam and mandatory military service if called upon to serve by a draft board. A generation of older men who could benefit financially by war was pitted against a less powerful younger generation who would have to fight it. The inevitable protests that erupted brought the concept of civility into question. Folk music became defiant, and it questioned the legitimacy of those who ruled. Hippies rejected their parent's culture, their materialism, and experimented with simpler lifestyles. It is ironic that the Hippy Generation was looking inward for a path away from materialism, while their parents continued to embrace a materialism that was created by inward-looking Roobs.

## **Civility**

Good manners is a simple concept. "How do you do, Mr. Smith; I'm glad to meet you." And saying "thank you" or "excuse me." Personal cleanliness, and dressing well reveal civility. When entering a building a man removes his hat, and holds the door open for his woman companion. In public people aren't loud (except at sporting events). Also in public there's no burping, or farting, or picking one's nose. In polite conversation there is no swearing, no vulgarity, and no surrender to emotional outbursts. The English have mastered the art of civil conversation. If in doubt, imagine how an English movie would portray a social interaction. If someone wants to put down another, it's not done with overt "name calling" and with a loud voice, but is handled with such subtlety that only a careful notice will register the insult.

Civility must be an important requirement for holding a society together, for it is found in every society. Primitive societies have rules governing social interactions. This would probably surprise most New Yorkers, for example.

Civil is the root word for "civilization." The implication is that a civilization requires civility!

## **The Loss of American Civility**

In retrospect, I now see why the Roobification phenomenon was more advanced in America than anywhere else in the world. It's because America led the world in the growth of wealth for the individual citizen. Because "no good deed goes unpunished" America is the first society that has to face the political victory of the Roobification phenomenon.

The first televised presidential debate was in 1960, when Jack Kennedy and Richard Nixon faced off. When snippets of that debate are shown on television today, it is jarring! Kennedy and Nixon were civil with each other in a way that would not be expected in a debate that included Donald Trump. What has happened during the intervening 56 years?

The transition was well underway when Price wrote his book *The Great Roob Revolution* in 1969 (published in 1970). There's something about "the 1960's" that defy complete understanding. It was a tumultuous time, or, to quote the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* (Dickens, 1859): "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, ..." I recall telling a friend at the time that the 1960's would be remembered for being the peak of Western Civilization. It was an awakening of many things: civil rights for blacks, women's rights, the folly of war, the corruptness of the military-industrial-congressional complex (Eisenhower's phrasing in an early draft of his presidential departing speech), the dangers of over-population, the dangers of global thermonuclear war, the opportunities

for space travel - but most important, it was the awakening to the idea that humans were enslaved to the genes that assembled us for engaging in tribal gene pool competition. This last awakening was occurring within a small academic discipline that would be known a few years later as "sociobiology." I won't claim that sociobiological thoughts were motivating the common man in any way, because they weren't. But the same audaciousness of thought that influenced those in academia was also influencing the common man, so there is a common-cause connection.

The 1960's was a time for unleashing high expectations for the future! This was a result of the fastest growth of personal wealth for Americans in living memory (starting after World War II). But in an open society, a democracy where public protest was possible, competing factions clashed and sparks sure did fly. Assassinations of public heroes, race riots, Vietnam war protests, student speeches and protests on college campuses - these social disruptions and threats to civility led eventually to a vote for "law and order" presidential candidate Nixon (in 1968). War protests continued in front of the White House, and Nixon's hatred for everyone unlike him, everyone from hippies to reporters, became obvious. This was the social climate when Price wrote his Roob book.

### **The Rise of Sociopathic Megalomaniacs**

As I wrote in my book *Genetic Enslavement* (2014) "A wealthy Roob is less of a threat to social stability than a recently impoverished Roob" (pg. 264). This observation was inspired by a reading of early 20th Century history. After The World War, as it was called at the time (since no one believed humans would be stupid enough to repeat such a calamity), the victorious Allies punished Germany with the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed harsh reparation costs on the German economy (mostly in response to the French, who wanted to dismember Germany so that it could never start another war). The Germans, who were the best-educated population in the world, and who enjoyed a relatively high standard of living before the war, became paupers in less than a decade. This sudden poverty created a situation ripe for revenge by those with a Roob mentality. Hitler was mocked as a clown during the 1920's, when he was an amateur activist trying to rouse the discontented rabble. But his psychopathic, conniving talents eventually prevailed in 1934, when he became Fuhrer. It has been said that Hitler was kind to his mother, and liked dogs (although his German Shepherd dogs acted wary of Hitler, as revealed in home movies). A more accurate description of Hitler is that he was a psychopath.

Benito Mussolini was more successful, for he became Italy's prime minister in 1922, which he maneuvered into a dictatorship in 1925. His goal was to re-create the Roman Empire through fascist rule. However, he suffered from "megalomania" and lacked an understanding of the use of power. Still, he hung onto his dictatorship rule until 1945, when he was hung to death. Mussolini's trademark posture and expression is irresistible for psychological analysis.

The following postures and expressions of Mussolini prompt many words: arrogance, contempt for others - but mostly (for me) psychopathy.



Approximately 4% of Americans meet the diagnostic requirements of "psychopathy" (also commonly referred to as "sociopathy"). Another several percent have "borderline personality disorder" (BPD); these people share many of the personality traits of sociopathy (that's my preferred terminology when murder is not involved). Only a tiny percentage of sociopaths are the serial killers that are commonly associated with the disorder. Instead, most sociopaths are highly successful businessmen (most CEOs, according to some accounts). Leadership qualities overlap amazingly well with sociopathy qualifiers. Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin come to mind as the most infamous sociopathic leaders of the 20th Century. Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan would be earlier examples.

I do very much want to talk about 21st Century sociopathic leadership, but before that I think it's important to provide some insight into why some people are attracted to sociopaths to be their leaders.

### **Feudalism and Sociopaths**

When the Earth's climate warmed 12,000 years ago, ushering in our present Holocene Epoch, the Middle East and Southern Europe turned into great places to live. Melting glaciers fed rushing rivers, and great green forests increased the population of animals for hunting. By 8000 BC herding sheep in green fields became feasible and farming was discovered. Irrigation followed, and settled lifestyles became common. Because an acre of land could support more people than before, a combination of tribal territory shrinkage and tribal size increase occurred. As tribes were forced together, and became larger, coalescence became an imperative because larger tribes were usually victorious over smaller ones. By the mid-Holocene large settlements that were sustained by farming and herding were common. Their need for storing and transporting food became a magnet for marauding nomadic tribes. The settlements responded by increasing the power of their rudimentary governments. Whereas the original form of protection from marauders was a banding together of neighboring farmers to defend themselves, it became clear that a more formal form of defense was needed. Feudalism was the answer: a wealthy landlord would allow a vassal to farm a portion of his land in exchange for defense from marauders by a "standing army."

Before the Holocene people lived as "hunter/gatherers" with an egalitarian social structure. During the Holocene the HG structure was transformed into a hierarchical social structure with a strong man in a leadership role at the top and levels of designated powerful people loyal to the top man who administered the leader's commands. Of course, the "man with the hoe" resented this, but he had no choice!

The new structure for governance created opportunities for people with a genetic disposition for leadership. It doesn't take many generations for evolution to reward a coveted niche, especially considering that the leader will have many more offspring than the farmer. Any young man who is inclined to achieve the rewards of status, acclaim, and an informal "harem," who is also willing to accept responsibility for giving commands that appear to make sense, will be favored when he is successful. Climbing to the top of such a social pyramid is, however, no easy task. It requires a willingness to "use" people, to manipulate them, to create an illusion that the used person will share in the winnings, and then to trample them when they are no longer useful. This, I claim, is the origin of the sociopath!

During the past 8000 years there have been ~ 270 generations. Surely, during that time, the first few men who were both charismatic and lacked empathy, would have prospered to the level of reaching 4% of today's population.

## **21st Century Sociopathic Leadership**

The most commonly used test for identifying sociopaths is the Hare Psychopathy Checklist. (Again, I'm intentionally equating sociopaths with psychopaths for the limited purposes of this essay.) The checklist consists of 20 items, that can be scored as either 0, 1 or 2. The range of scores for any person is therefore from zero to 40. A score of 30 or more is accepted as "psychopathic."

Keith Olbermann has subjected presidential candidate for the Republican Party, Donald Trump, to the Hare Psychopathy Checklist. His results are available in an article for *Vanity Fair*, and also at a web site: [link](#). Here's how the scoring went, with score preceding the trait (details of the reasons for the scores is given in the article and web page).

2 = glibness and superficial charm

2 = grandiose sense of self-worth

2 = need for stimulation/proneness to boredom (e.g., short attention span)

2 = pathological lying

2 = cunning/manipulative

2 = lack of remorse or guilt

2 = shallow affect (not understanding of human relationships)

2 = callous lack of empathy

2 = parasitic lifestyle (e.g., taking credit for work done by others)

2 = poor behavioral control (as in tweeting before thinking)

2 = promiscuous sexual behavior (e.g., boasting about it)

2 = early behavioral problems ("I punched my music teacher because I didn't think he knew anything about music...")

1 = lack of realistic long-term goals

2 = impulsivity

1 = irresponsibility

2 = failure to accept responsibility for one's own actions

0 = many short-term marital relationships (3 marriages lasting 14, 6 & 11 years doesn't qualify)

2 = juvenile delinquency (father says "He was a pretty rough fellow when he was small." and more)

0 = revocation of "conditional release" (by a parole officer)

0 = criminal versatility

Total points = 32. Donald Trump, by this scoring, is a candidate for being considered a psychopath.

An even scarier article was recently published in the *New Yorker*, 2016 Jul 25 issue, by Jane Mayer, based mostly on an interview with the person who wrote *The Art of the Deal*, Tony Schwartz (hereafter, TS). For the record, in spite of repeated claims by Donald Trump (hereafter, DT) that he wrote the book, TS insists that DT didn't write any of the book, but merely made a few red marks for changes, to make him look better, and TS made the changes. TS thinks that DT may not have read the entire book, since there's no evidence that DT has ever read any book. The article can be viewed here: [link](#).

Some highlights from the article are that TS spent 18 months trying to get DT to provide interviews, but DT had such a short attention span that all interviews were cut short with almost nothing to show for them. After deciding to give up on getting enough material for the book, and on a flight home, he had the idea of listening in on DT's phone conversations. DT loved that idea, and so the book project resumed. Unbeknownst to the callers DT was talking with, TS finally was able to obtain enough information to write the book. The TS interview for the *New Yorker* includes the following.

DT is pathologically impulsive and self-centered. If TS were to write the book today he would title it "The Sociopath." "I genuinely believe that if DT wins and gets the nuclear codes there is an excellent possibility it will lead to the end of civilization." "Trump's first wife, Ivana, famously claimed that DT kept a copy of Adolf Hitler's collected speeches, *My New Order*, in a cabinet beside his bed." "Lying is second nature to him." "He lied strategically. He had a complete lack of

conscience about it. DT's indifference to it gave him a strange advantage." "Trump stands for many of the things I abhor: his willingness to run over people, the gaudy, tacky, gigantic obsessions, the absolute lack of interest in anything beyond power and money." DT has an insatiable hunger for "money, praise and celebrity." "He's a transactional man - it was all about what you could do for him." In a TV interview (Lawrence O'Donnell's "The Last Word," TS said that that DT has a black hole at his center, that needs to be filled with attention from others ("all publicity is good publicity"), and that he has no capacity for empathy. This was brave because TS was inviting a lawsuit by Trump for violating a non-disclosure agreement, but TS said he has kept quiet until now because DT's mischief until now was mostly limited to failed building ventures, but now TS felt a moral obligation to warn the nation about someone with a serious possibility of winning an election for president of America.



I'm not trying to pick on Trump. He's just the easiest "leader" to study because so much is known about him. Other 21st Century leaders that appear to be sociopaths include Dick Cheney (Bush's VP), Vladimir Putin (Russia), Tayyip Erdogan (Turkey) and many in Africa. The 20th Century has many dozens of examples.

The question that interests me more is "Why are so many people attracted to sociopathic leaders?"

### **What's Wrong With Voters?**

Anybody can blame the victim of a crime on the criminal, but when victims are so willing and clueless, that other question has to be asked: Why do so many people fall victim to sociopaths?

The Donald Trump type was just waiting for America to evolve a readiness for his pitch! Recall what I wrote in my 2014 *Genetic Enslavement* book, in the chapter about Roobs: "A wealthy Roob is less of a threat to social stability than a recently impoverished Roob" (pg. 264). Before the 2008 global financial collapse, that started in America because of greedy and illegal behavior by unregulated investment bankers, America wasn't quite "ready" for a full-blown sociopath leader. The prerequisites for that readiness had been building slowly for 30 years, ever since the Ronald Reagan presidency. During that time wages had stagnated and large corporations had become international, and had begun to move manufacturing jobs overseas. Workers without a college education couldn't adapt to such a change; they couldn't learn MS Word or Excel, for example, and their options were thus limited. With an oversupply of less educated workers they couldn't demand raises if they had a job, and if they didn't have a job they had to accept a lower-paying job to remain employed. Household income had been increasing during most of the second half of the 20th

Century due to women entering the labor force. But by century's end most households had already made that transition. Early in the 21st Century household income for the Middle Class began to shrink. But how many of these financially desperate people in America are Roobs?

Recall the definition of a Roob. He's someone who doesn't trust what educated people have learned through centuries of inquiry, by observing the way the world is and using disciplined thinking to figure things out. The Roob prefers to search inside himself for an inner truth. And if he has achieved wealth sometime during his life, his inner truth will have been vindicated, and no other person, regardless of his learnedness, and in spite of his learnedness, can change his mind. How many Americans are Roobs? Our best guide on that comes from polls on what people believe, or know. Here are some data on that: 1) 60% of Americans know that Superman comes from Krypton, but only 37% know that Mercury is the planet closest to the sun (Zogby poll). 2) 74% know the names of The Three Stooges (Larry, Curly and Moe) while only 42% can identify the three branches of government (Zogby poll). 3) 41% of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein had strong links to Al Queda, and 22% believe he helped plan the 9/11 attacks (Harris poll). 4) 20% of Americans think the sun revolves around the Earth. 7) 29% of Americans can't name the vice-president (Newsweek, 2011 Mar 28). Considering these statistics, it is fair to imagine that something short of half of Americans are uneducated, uninformed and unconcerned about the matter - in other words, a self-satisfied Roob!

Trump does a masterful job of mimicking the uninformed voter who he hopes to win over. A little-known discipline, called Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), urges salesmen, or anyone trying to influence a target person, to observe closely the target's mannerisms, such as their speech patterns, and to then mimic them. The NLP user will note which of three word categories is most used by the target (seeing, hearing and feeling - corresponding to the three posterior lobes of the brain), and to intentionally engage that person with an emphasis on the same word categories. In a similar manner the target's posture is to be observed, and mimicked (arm folding, etc). I doubt that Trump has studied NLP, but he seems to practice it well. When the voter sees Trump, he sees himself. For example, Trump proudly proclaims that he gets his information from TV, not books or newspapers (and certainly not from experts). Trump's language and demeanor is unsophisticated, low-brow. His words are simple, and often vulgar, like the voter he's trying to mimic. He makes fun of people who are threatening to the uninformed voter, such as intellectuals. Trump's disdain for intellectuals, and those people in government who are blocking the average man from succeeding, is reassuring to the low-information voter. The regular guy believes that Trump is like him, but just brave enough, due to his business success, to speak the truth without regard to "political correctness." When interviewed, Trump supporters often say that "he's like me; just more successful." It's a clever trick, persuading the average guy who's temporarily down on his luck that he could some day become successful, like Trump, if only those educated people would stop blocking the little guy's path to success.

Once a Roob is created, he cannot be uncreated. The Roob who saw his prospects for prosperity fade after the 2008 recession didn't question his ideas and beliefs; by then he was confirmed in his rightness on all fundamental matters. He knew at some unconscious level that people in government couldn't be trusted. Of course there was some truth to this, because humans in general can't be trusted; but there's a nuance to this problem, and Roobs don't understand nuance. There was a



growing segment of the American population who didn't know who specifically to blame, but they knew it couldn't be themselves.

I experienced this first-hand when I was credited with making the first recovery image of Comet ISON, ahead of NASA, and this notoriety produced a "fan club" who celebrated my revelation that NASA was hyping the comet to get more money; and NASA knew things about the comet's danger to humanity but wasn't telling the public, because the public couldn't handle the truth. I tried to explain to my cynical fans that NASA was a reputable organization, in spite of being part of the government, and they were only guilty of hyping the comet to get publicity. I also saw how news organizations exploited opportunities for improving their ratings by reporting my updates on comet activity with completely fabricated stories that they bought from unscrupulous freelance "journalists." Everyone behaved badly: the news media, bloggers trying to get attention, the readers who were clueless about comets, and to some extent NASA for hyping the comet more than was warranted. My "takeaway message" from that experience was that very few humans are capable of good judgement and good behavior.

The point I'm driving at is that today, in 2016, most Americans are incapable of understanding why the economy is unfair to them, because they're incapable of questioning their beliefs and seeing the connections between their past voting behavior and the forces that shape our evolving economy to their disadvantage. The Republican Party has snookered them into voting against their best interests. Most voters are unaware of the gerrymandering of district lines by Republican state governments in a way that promotes conservative extremism and a disregard for the middle class worker.

Most American voters remind me of the early Holocene farmers who feared the next wave of marauders, and are therefore looking for that "strong leader" who will protect them. DT is merely an opportunist, seizing the moment by inflaming fear about those marauders, who come from Mexico and the Middle East. The Roob voter hates intellectuals, so DT mocks the educated people, the government, newspaper and TV reporters and everyone else in the media who asks difficult questions of him. The Roob is tribal, and is ready to wage war upon that neighbor tribe, whoever they are.

## Summary

I have described Jose Ortega y Gasset's puzzlement over people's preference for ideas that come from within themselves than those presented to them by others with academic expertise on the matter in question. In his book on this, *Revolt of the Masses* (1930), Gasset asserts that this preference was a new and troubling trend. Four decades later Roger Price published *The Great Roob Revolution* (1970), which updated the trend with an extra dimension of explanation: people who have achieved some measure of wealth place greater reliance upon their beliefs than the beliefs of others. He coined the term Roob for referring to an unsophisticated rube who has undergone this change. Price also expressed concern that because of the Roob's buying power he was having too much influence over culture. Another four decades later I published *Genetic Enslavement* (2014) with a chapter updating the Roob's influence on American culture. I suggested that the downside to America's success was a triumph of Roob culture in so many aspects that the foundations of America's greatness was undermined. Vulgarity of taste in every aspect of culture, and a disdain for objective information, threatened to unravel the fabric that kept America alive.

In this essay I have described sociopaths as opportunists who will seize upon weakness in others in order to feed their own growth. The leadership of a society is the grandest example of a sociopath's pernicious destructive power. But a sociopath's success requires certain conditions, namely, that his victims become ready for unthinking surrender. The rise to leadership by sociopaths had its origins during the mid-Holocene Epoch, when the hunter/gatherer lifestyle was replaced by a settled farming lifestyle, because these settlements were besieged by nomadic marauding invaders that required strong leadership for protection.

Now, late in the Holocene, conditions are again becoming especially favorable for sociopathic exploitation. The rise of wealth, combined with democracy, gives undue influence to Roobs over a society's culture. The Roob has disdain for enlightened governance, for he trusts only those things that seem true to him that come from within himself (the reason for this is another story, related to millions of years of tribal gene pool competition, which hasn't been addressed here). The Roob now dominates not only American culture, but also American politics; he is a willing victim of the opportunistic sociopath who comes seeking leadership of America. My fear is that the Roob will deliver America to sociopathic rule, called fascism - a 20th Century form of dictatorship. If this happens, America will slide into irrelevance, and could take down the rest of Western Civilization with it.

We live in interesting times!

### **Closing Thought**

I've had a lifelong fascination with the matter of how societies unravel, and how civilizations collapse. During the Holocene Epoch hundreds of civilizations have arisen and fallen; their median lifetime seems to be about 5 centuries. Following the Dark Ages was the birth of our present civilization, defined by the beginning of the Renaissance in 1453. We're approaching the 6 century mark, and I feel like the unraveling is underway. I have a ring-side seat for observing and studying the process. What a sad time to be alive, if aware.

### **References**

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Price, Roger, 1970, *The Great Roob Revolution*, New York: Random House

### **Related Links**

[Futility](#) (on the futility of trying to make things better)

[The Mis-Measure of Men](#) (an illustration of how humanity today is a product of the mis-measure of men)

[Roobification of America](#) (more about Gasset, Price and my follow-up)

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

[Fragility of Democracy](#) (earlier version of this essay)

LA Times Series "[Our Dishonest President: #1](#)"

Roy Cohen & Trump, partners in psychopathology [link](#)

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*Although I dislike stupidity, I have a greater dislike for intelligence coupled with sociopathy.*

*"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*