

The Insights that Evolved With and From the Work of Jeffrey Rubinoff

Jeffrey Rubinoff 2011

Tribalism:¹

Tribal behavior is an ancient evolutionary trait. By definition, a human tribe recognizes descent from a common ancestor. From this recognition, rules of membership are created. As populations grow and genetic distance evolves, the tribe becomes wholly metaphorical.

At the metaphorical level, tribalism is realized in religion, nationalism, and racism.

Tribal myths of origins are distributive memories of existence that substantiate the rules that separate tribes.

The End of the Age of Agriculture:

The domestication of animals is believed to have begun 13,000 years ago. However, with crop cultivation 9,000-10,000 years ago, a large majority of the population was required to be bound to the land. Cultivation leads to the first continuously settled villages and to civilization itself.

Security and continuity, rationalized by predictable food production, originated specialized political, civil, religious, and military institutions. Institutionalizing a warrior class was the most dangerous necessity of this social sea change. If the military were not directed outward, it would threaten the stability of the non-military institutions. Thus, a constant state of war became inevitable, and indeed the history of city-states and empires appears to confirm perpetual states of war.

The feasibility of escalating war has become absurd with the advent of strategic bombing and nuclear weapons. No military institutions can claim to guarantee security of territory.

Moreover, at the end of the age of agriculture only a minute fraction of the population is required to produce the current surpluses of food and thus the fundamental assumptions of the age of agriculture, security of territory as the means to secure food production, must be revised to the era of global vulnerability.

¹ All following insights first published in 2008 by Jeffrey Rubinoff, unless otherwise noted

Resurgent Tribalism:

Agriculture not only failed to supplant tribalism, it extended tribalism through periods of technological development. As agricultural and civil practices advanced, continuously larger populations could be supported and larger armies with more sophisticated weapons deployed.

From the Renaissance through the mid-twentieth century, Europe led the world to modernity, scientifically and technologically, warring endlessly in ancient and re-invented tribal rivalries. Finally, much of Europe lay in smoldering ruins bearing the moral degradation of the Holocaust: mass theft and murder precisely organized and recorded by collaborating modern states.

The culmination of World War II was the profoundly ironic gift of nuclear weapons, given to us by science. With the reality of mutually assured destruction (MAD) becoming the ongoing policy of the nuclear-armed nations, modernity would have to adapt to a balance of terror if the human experiment were to survive.

As nation-states recognize the potential suicide of all-out war, the danger is that extant tribalism can continue to trigger genocide and continue the attempt to draw modernist nations into apocalyptic confrontation.

The Importance of the History of Science:

The history of the universe is the collective memory of the universe. The science of cosmology probes the limits of what we can know of the collective memory. At the root of science is the simple idea that there can be a methodology by which intelligent people can agree on what they observe and, as a corollary, agree to disagree without murdering each other. Science itself evolved in the West as a necessity for stopping the ongoing murderous tribal wars lodged in separate arguments about divine truth and divine favor. Science is a process that creates conventions of truth. It is the process that itself must be either accepted or denied. Necessarily, to accept science is to accept the process that has led to the scientific concept of evolution. The evolution of life is the collective memory of life on our planet, and it determines what, at any point in history, we are capable of knowing of the collective memory of the universe.

Evolution:

Evolution is directional and progresses to ever more complex and adapted orders of organization.

Quite elegantly, the concept is constantly evolving rigorously validated evidence of itself. As rigorously validated evidence expands the idea of evolution, the human mind itself can evolve, thereby contributing to the collective memory of life itself. Arguably, the theory of evolution supports the concept of the potential value of all humanity, as opposed to theistic or other rationalizations for the ascendancy of specific tribes.

Importance of the History of Art:

Art is the map of the human soul; each original piece is proof of the journey. As the artist navigates the unknown, his art adds to the collective memory.

The artist's journey on the path of art history takes him to the farthest reaches of his predecessor as his point of departure. The artist who follows that history then possesses the chart for evolution, which he in his turn is obliged to extend to his successors.

In its turn, art history is one strand wrapped around the historic cable of Modernism.

Carryovers from Modernism to the Post-agricultural Age:²

There are important carryovers from modernism to the articulation of human values for a post-agricultural age.

Modernism addressed the entire social spectrum implied by the evolving history of science, including natural history, which continues to yield evidence of important biological drivers of human behaviour.

However, the acceptance of the history of science by Modernism doesn't imply acceptance of blind biological determinism. Indeed, that conscience is manifest in all societies points to the likelihood that it is genetic in origin. Conscience, as well as violent upheaval can be a prime mover of cultural evolution. Modernism was by its nature progressive, valuing the ability and effort to envision and effect a conscionable future.

Humanism and Integration:

In a post-agricultural age, political territories can no longer promise security. Globalization demands a common basis of understanding and action over both geographic and ideational space. Humanism is the conceptual thread with which to weave this common understanding.

Cultivated Ignorance:

The easy view that truth is only subjective leads to cultural lethargy. This view of reality does not represent ideas but opinions. These opinions are merely a means to intellectual and moral conformity and to the avoidance of the effort required by independent thought. For some, there is just a cessation of growth, for others a deliberate security of stasis.

² Revised by Jeffrey Rubinoff in December, 2011

Leadership:

The highly successful in any field are the masters of convention. In marketing, they are also the masters of the conventional. Learning from original art, true leadership is the quality to navigate beyond the boundaries of convention and to return with the charts of the newly explored. Leaders as navigators continually return to a vision beyond the horizon of convention. Like original art, the highest purpose of leadership is to serve the evolution of human consciousness.

Evolution of Mind:

Evolution of mind results from the dynamic engagement of truth with both analogy and metaphor.

Science has created conventions for truth by using analogies to model material reality. For much of their history, artists have been bound by their innate analogical ability to portray external reality. By science externalizing models of underlying structures of material reality and photography replacing the demand for illustration, art has been liberated to address the internal, intuitive reality of the collective human memory.

Analogies are tools, and as such they are accepted conventions; they are by their nature repeatable, measurable, and predictable. Metaphors exist beyond logic in the realm of intuition; they are the basis for truly original thought and are by their nature unique. Metaphors are self-contained truth, and they cannot be used as analogies.

A New Humanism Beyond Prescriptive Narrative³:

The social relationships necessitated and maintained by the advent of agriculture have been a central component of structuring human society for over 10,000 years. Seriously considered, the concept of the End of the Age of Agriculture is highly consequential and requires a deeply thoughtful and thorough re-examination of the essential assumptions of our institutions and their evolutionary direction.

A philosophy based on our evidentiary knowledge of evolution and our consequential place in nature can provide a basis for the development of the order of consciousness necessary to overcome the virulent metaphorical forms of tribalism such as racism, nationalism and religion. Overcoming this socially atavistic, dangerous reliance is exigent given the advent of nuclear weapons.

Modern humans have evidently demonstrated a deep historical sense of awe manifested in perception of the sublime and the sacred.

Tribalism—metaphorically transformed and self-inflated by myths of monopolized divine favour—thrived through the Age of Agriculture by prescriptive narrative. Prescriptive narrative, so used, perpetuated the rule and continuous reward system of the warrior class. In spite of the Enlightenment in the West, this system remained extant through the terrible resurgence in the 20th century until it was finally and abruptly ended among technologically advanced nations by the deterrence of nuclear war.

Art provides a means to experience the sacred beyond prescriptive narrative.

Prescriptive narrative will continue to yield ethical as well as analogical solutions for specifically identified localized systems.

However, a new philosophy for the End of the Age of Agriculture cannot overcome tribalism if it attempts to become universal prescriptive narrative.

Judgments made with the weight of individual conscience encourage the evolution of consciousness and reduce our atavistic dependence on ideologies and other dogma. We have learned in our recent history that there are times when individual conscience must overwhelm group moral certainty.

³ Added by Jeffrey Rubinoff in 2009, revised in 2011