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How Humans Became Citizens

by Gwydion M Williams

The past is never the dead past. It lives on in habits that make us human

The 'Neolithic Revolution' happened bit by bit across 3000 years

The famous Catalhoeyuek was a dead end, with oddities like not keeping cats to deal with the mice that plagued them

The chariot and a class structure that included born warriors caused a vast expansion of speakers of Indo-European languages. Who probably began in what is now South Russia

The historic Troy was a minor place. A hybrid of Greek and Hittite culture. Prince Paris was also known by the Greek name Alexander

The original legend was probably 'The Tragedy of Priam' – Greek legends have him survive an earlier sack as a young man

Even that was not history. Troy was a small place. Its main decline was due to an earthquake. Its people were weak ruin-dwellers when it was later sacked.

How Humans Became Citizens

by Gwydion M Williams

The past is never the *dead* past. It lives on in the things that we believe, without knowing *why* we believe them. Things we may not even recognise as *beliefs*, rather than Laws of Nature. Habits that make us human.

One instance: anyone who grows up speaking English would always talk of '*a large blue box*' and never '*a blue large box*'. Very few could explain why the second variant was wrong. Nor could they set out formally the rules of grammar they were applying.[1] And there is nothing inevitable about such rules: other languages do it differently. Some have no preferences for which adjectives come first. A few don't even have adjectives.

An example of muddle: "*nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes*".[2] Tribal societies don't have taxes, though they mostly have social obligations that play the same role. Aristocrats paid no taxes in pre-revolutionary France. The rich regularly avoid or evade tax, and legal avoidance has been made much easier since the 1980s. But death comes to us all: it really is a Law of Nature. 'Death avoidance' is mostly phony when it goes beyond standard notions of healthy living and sensible exercise.

Social habits make human life possible. They also get in the way of fully understanding it. One instance is multi-party democracy – in Britain it was multi-party for a couple of centuries before it became even loosely democratic. The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 established that no monarch could rule without Parliament, but until the 1832 the House of Commons was dominated by a couple of hundred rich families. Elections from 1832 gave power to about one-seventh of the male population: a prosperous middle class. The same sort of people who had created chaos when given power in the early stages of the French Revolution. But the French bourgeois and peasants had no existing framework in which to slot their various hopes, fears, and desires. They ended up settling for Napoleon's popular military autocracy.

Partly in reaction to challenging radical politics, there was a mild democratisation of existing politics in Britain. The ruling class remembered their 17th century Civil War and avoided extremes. This went ahead slowly, with a majority of adult males getting the vote in the 1880s.[3]

Understanding this process of *creating habits* would have avoided the frequent failures of Western interventions in societies with alien traditions, as in Iraq. The foolishness of attempts to dump a complex political system on people without the relevant habits created by their own history.

In this article, I will be going much deeper into history than 19th century parliamentarianism. Touching surprising aspects of civilised life that we wrongly see as natural. City life has become the norm for a majority of the human race – but for humans to discover or create that norm was a long process.

Our present norms are an inheritance, not the

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[1] See https://gwydionmadawc.com/030-human-dynamics/dont-speak-of-cold-misty-mountains/ for more on this. Or much more extensively at https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/in-a-hole-in-a-hole-dwelt-a-nothingness/.

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_and_taxes_(idiom)

[3] https://gwydionwilliams.com/40-britain/665-2/

only possible system. They could be changed and probably should be changed. The current British way of life would not be economically or ecologically sustainable if the whole planet had it. The much more wasteful US way of life would be very much less so.

A modern city is also something very different from what cities were for most of history. Historically, they were walled-off accumulators of wealth. Centers of concentrated life where some were very poor, but everyone had a life very different from the rural population.

This rural population were themselves living very differently from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle that modern humans evolved within.

Knowing that humans had an immensely long existence before farming casts doubt on the popular view of a 'natural' rural life superior to the 'unnatural' cities.

A good way to get to understand this is to look at myths. And to study the important ways in which they differ from real history.

The fate of Troy as told by Homer is a perfect example of the tragedy of a pre-industrial society. Only by building cities could humans raise themselves above an animal level of existence. But cities were also selfish accumulators of wealth. The peasants who'd created most of that wealth occasionally overthrew them. Much more often, city walls kept out all enemies except professional armies. Armies sent by rival cities, or else destructive nomads with formidable military skills.

Cities rose, squeezed wealth out of the countryside, and then fell again. Mostly replaced by other cities, or a new city on the same site, but sometimes the entire civilisation fell. A fall that was generally part of a population crash that hurt the countryside as well.

Cities losing power mostly caused a breakdown of complex social networks that peasants could seldom maintain for themselves. The *other* tragedy of pre-industrial society is that peasants generally deserved Marx's scornful description of them as 'potatoes in a sack', at least for power-politics. A numerical majority almost everywhere before the 20th century, they functioned as a collection of tiny self-willed minorities. They were normally under the thumbs of the much larger social organisms build around cities.

Peasants almost always did not see a common interest with similar people they did not personally know. The British Empire was repeating a very old pattern when it used its earlier victims to conquer India and oppress China. Much of the fighting was done by downtrodden Scottish clansmen, and by Irish peasants whom the British ruling class had let

starve in millions.[4] In India, most of the troops were Indians, but only slowly developed any notion of a shared Indian identity separate from the British Empire. Meantime Chinese warlords were mostly a 'franchise' for global imperialism: the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek degenerated into that.[5]

The *Fall of Troy* was a myth that summarised the tragedies of urban life for the Ancient Greeks, and later for all Europe. More acceptable because it was a Greek victory over non-Greeks – and later the Romans claimed Trojan origin. But though it summarises a very real social problem, I'm sure also that it was an accumulation of good stories from many separate times and places. That it's not only meddlesome gods and goddesses who are inventions: so too are many small tales told realistically.

If Queen Helen of Sparta ever existed, I doubt she was ever at Troy. Doubt that she knew Paris or any other Trojan prince. Doubt because of a lesser-known but equally valid Greek myth: her earlier abduction by Theseus.

To be abducted once could be a misfortune. *Two* legendary abductions look remarkably like fiction. Probably an existing Theseus story was borrowed for the expanding Trojan legend by some enterprising bard singing for people who didn't know Theseus, originally a purely Athenian hero. Possible, but much less likely, that it was the other way around.

But if Troy was mostly myth, what was the reality?

Humans Ascending

"Proto-city is a term usually used to describe large villages or towns of the Neolithic such as Jericho and [Catalhoeyuek], but also any prehistoric settlement which has both rural and urban features, in an attempt to distinguish them from cities in later periods. Prehistoric Egypt and the Ubaid period of Sumer featured what some call proto-cities. The break from these later mentioned settlements and urban settlements is the emergence of Eridu, the first Sumerian city, in the Uruk period around 4000 BC."[6][7]

Plato in his Atlantis myth was willing to believe

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[4] https://gwydionwilliams.com/50-new-right-ideas/430-2/

[5] https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/why-chinas-blue-republic-achived-nothing/

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-city

[7] Reference works normally show Catalhoeyuek as Çatalhöyük. But bitter experience has taught me to avoid diacritical marks. Computers and internet websites often make a hash of these. They mostly replace the accented character with a little square indicating 'unprintable character'. See https://gwydionmadawc.com/030-human-dynamics/ascii-an-unhappy-legacy-for-computers/ for more on this.

that cities like Athens existed 9000 years before his time. Probably he imagined cities as having always existed, as they do in Hindu myths. No one then had much idea of the complex and painful evolution of the city as a viable social organism: it had happened thousands of years before Plato's era. An evolution that began in the New Stone Age. A rise which included many setbacks, notably the violent break-up of Late Bronze Age civilisation around the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

The Late Bronze Age Collapse is dated to the years 1200-1150 BC. The myths of Troy may be a romanticised echo of it.

It was not a *global* disaster. In China, the Shang Dynasty ruled until 1046 BC. Their civilisation continued without exceptional problems under the Zhou Dynasty. The Indus Valley Civilisation had declined from 1900 BC, with most of the cities had been abandoned by 1700, but with regional cultures carrying on into the Iron Age. The patterns of culture in these and many other different civilisations did not change radically during the gradual spread of iron as the main metal for tools and weapons.

Societies usually bounce back from a collapse with little notion that a slow historical evolution has been taking place. The *Book of Genesis* assumes that cities and agriculture begin right after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The entire biblical history has no notion of the discovery of metals or the shift from bronze to iron, apart from a passing reference to the sophisticated Philistines preventing the Israelites under Saul from doing their own smith-work:

"Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, 'Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!' So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plow points, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened.

"The price was two-thirds of a shekel[g] for sharpening plow points and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads.

"So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them".[8]

The Bible also assumes that a few clever people could always write. It doesn't say what script Moses used for the Tablets of the Law. Later Hebrews used a version of an early alphabet that is first known from Canaanites writing prayers the Egyptian goddess Hathor. A modified version, used by Phoenicians, was taken up by the Greeks. It was further modified by the Romans. It gained

extra letters in Latin-Christian Europe to become Western Europe's current alphabet. But none of the writing systems that once existed are specifically mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Greek legend credited their alphabet to Cadmus, a Phoenician prince claimed as the founder of the famous Greek city of Thebes.

China's ideograms are an independent invention, and quite unlike anything else. Not necessarily without outside inspiration: perhaps contacts with nomadic peoples who had by stages acquired the idea from Mesopotamia. Nomads might plausibly have had 'proto-writing',[9] meaningful symbols that stop short of being able to write everything that can be said. (Modern people sometimes use this as a joke or riddle: the Rebus principle, a sentence based on traffic signs, for instance.) It's plausible that officials within China's complex urban culture saw these and understood the usefulness of developing them into a system that could indeed record everything. Regardless, it became a set of legends:

"Cangjie … is a legendary figure in ancient China (c. 2650 BC), claimed to be an official historian of the Yellow Emperor and the inventor of Chinese characters. Legend has it that he had four eyes and four pupils, and that when he invented the characters, the deities and ghosts cried and the sky rained millet. He is considered a legendary rather than historical figure, or at least, not considered to be sole inventor of Chinese characters…

"There are several versions of the legend. One tells that shortly after unifying China, the Yellow Emperor, being dissatisfied with his 'rope knot tying' method (e.g., Quipu) of recording information, charged Cangjie with the task of creating characters for writing…

"Another version of the legend tells that Cangjie was inspired by observing the network of veins on a turtle. This version is particularly interesting relative to archaeology because turtle shells are one of the most common media on which the earliest known Chinese inscriptions are found"[10]

The 'rope knot tying method' was also used by the Inca Empire. They had no written language, though they may have used symbols consistently in a form of proto-writing. They had no known contact with the Aztecs or the other civilisations of Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica is one the three known places in the world where writing developed independently – the others being Mesopotamia and China.[11] At least most experts think this, though there are many fringe claims. It is possible that

8 https://www.quora.com/Do-the-Hebrew-Scriptures-show-any-awareness-of-bronze-being-replaced-by-iron-as-the-main-metal-for-tools-and-weapons

9 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-writing

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cangjie

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerican_writing_systems

there was only the one entirely original invention, with fishermen blown across the Pacific bringing new ideas to the New World.

The Chinese account has Cangjie making the ideograms as pictures of real things. Many ideograms certainly began as pictograms.[12] The original Canaanite alphabet was different: in its first form it was pictures that indicated *sounds* rather than objects. A was aleph, an ox, shown as an ox head but standing for a glottal consonant. (This sound was not used by the Greeks, so it became the vowel-sound 'a'.) B was *bet*, the West Semitic word for house. But if you wrote the Canaanite equivalent 'ba', this meant 'the sound *ba*' rather than 'house-ox'.

Earlier West Asian scripts sometimes used their symbols to indicate sounds, and it also happened with Egyptian hieroglyphs. But the alphabet had a smaller number of symbols, making it easy to adapt to almost any language. Something a merchant or wandering scholar could learn for a foreign language and then start using for their own language. And there will always be people fluent in two or more languages: a few of them would also be literate. All this must have helped it spread.

An outlier in this spread was the Germanic and Scandinavian Rune Alphabet, clearly borrowed from an Italian alphabet, though not necessarily the Roman one. It was used for many different things: the mysterious Runestones were most likely used to record a death overseas. A fixed and obvious record would avoid later disputes if someone came back and tried to claim the dead man's inheritance. Or a Runestone might be used to swindle a relative who was not there to protest: but quite mundane, regardless. But like most writing systems, it came to be seen as useful for magic. And a legend developed that the god Odin / Wotan had hung himself from the world-tree and got the runes that way: one of many oddities for a doubtful god. (If you only know him from Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, you've got a whitewashed version of Norse myth, violent though Wagner is by modern standards.)

Norse mythology also includes a strange poem called the '*Deeds of the god Rig*',[13] which is worth mentioning because it is surprisingly similar to what we now believe about human social development. It comes from collections of Norse myths and poems that were written down after their conversion to Christianity. A god called Rig, identified by the collection's compiler as being Heimdall, visits three existing human couples and fathers three types of humans. First 'thralls', serfs, crude agricultural workers. Then farmers and others with middle-class skills. Lastly the gentry. You could class this the origin of the classes as they existed, or as the poet would have wished them to be. But similar accounts in other people's myths normally have them all made together. This poem has it happen step by step, and with long gaps implied between each stage.

The poem shows a strong bias against the lower classes, who have names like Sluggard, Lewd, Brawler, Swarthy, Lout and Cowherd for the men: Lumpy-Leggy, Whiner and Tatter-Coat for the women.[14] The middle-class include Youth, Hero, Smith and Yeomen, Dame, Bride, Lady, Bashful, and Slender. Among the gentry are Earl, King, and their relatives, described doing sports, hunting and preparation for war. Also becoming learned in things with no obvious practical use, which for a long time was only possible for the rich and for temple priests.

Allowing for bias caused by the poet being part of or dependent on the ruling class, it is a passable description about how a society of equal farmers gradually became unequal. How they generate first rich families and then a warrior ruling class. It is certainly a much better historic narrative than the Old Testament, or any other religious scripture I know of. Most of them suppose that humans had always lived much as their intended audience had lived, apart from Original Sins like the loss of Eden in the Jewish scriptures.

Another poem with some historic evolution is *Hesiod's Five Ages*: Golden, Silver, Bronze, Heroic and Iron.[15] The first lacks farming and loosely matches hunter-gatherer societies. Silver matches Neolithic agriculture. Homer knew warriors once fought in bronze: Hesiod is mostly dated to the same era, when the introduction of iron on a large scale would have been remembered.

Metals and Marxists

The history of metals is an interesting one. Tiny amounts of both copper and gold as pure metals are sometime found in rocks. Humans certainly collected and prized them.[16] Smelting metal out of particular ore-bearing rocks would not have been an obvious step on from this. It may have happened accidentally in stone ovens used for firing pots, perhaps with stones placed to stop a pot from toppling. And then someone would have had to have notice that this was useful: Neolithic peoples made pots for centuries before copper became widespread. Lead-smelting may have been

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[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_characters#Principles_of_formation

[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%ADgs%C3%BEula. The Wiki calls it the 'Lay of Rig'.

[14] See https://archive.org/stream/elderorpoeticedd01brayuoft#page/202/mode/2up for the text and translation

[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ages_of_Man

[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_copper

discovered before copper:[17] But once the trick was known, the more advanced Neolithic societies should logically have experimented.

From surviving artefacts, we know that often they got a mix: gold with a little platinum, or copper with arsenic. This was the Chalcolithic age / Copper Age / Eneolithic, an Age of Transition. Otzi the Iceman had a copper axe, and also had elevated levels of arsenic in his hair.[18] Arsenic is a metalloid, brittle and not usable on its own. Copper-arsenic alloys are harder than pure copper. But arsenic is poisonous, though also useful in controlled doses as a medicine. Pure arsenic is not immediately deadly, but smelting with it would be unhealthy. The much later legend of lame smiths may reflect this.[19]

Someone somewhere discovered that a soft and rare metal, tin, made copper much harder when the two were mixed. (Commonly with one part tin to eight or ten parts of copper.) They discovered bronze, and perhaps it happened several times in separate places. Tin is rare: long-distance trading began, with Cornwall a major source. This led on to the actual Bronze Age, with metal used on a much larger scale.

Iron was another matter. Both copper and gold have a melting point slightly above a thousand degrees Centigrade. Such heat needs a lot of apparently pointless effort to achieve – Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings* is quite right when he explains to Frodo that his little domestic fire would not melt even ordinary gold. Humans had been making fire for thousands of years before they learned how to smelt metal, with the very high temperatures needed to make good pottery a probable path to this discovery. But iron, which only melts at more than fifteen hundred degrees, was much trickier to smelt. Tiny amounts of meteoric iron had always been available: actually iron-nickel meteorites. The treasures found in the tomb of Tutankhamen include a small iron-nickel dagger. But in West Asia and Egypt, it took about 2000 years from the smelting of copper before iron smelting was finally mastered. And it took yet more time to make it cheap and useful:

> "The development of iron smelting was once attributed to the Hittites of Anatolia during the Late Bronze Age. It was believed that they maintained a monopoly on ironworking, and that their empire had been based on that advantage. Accordingly, the invading Sea Peoples were responsible for spreading the knowledge through that region. This theory is no longer held in the common current thought of the majority of scholarship, since there is no archaeological evidence of the alleged Hittite monopoly. While there are some iron objects from Bronze Age Anatolia, the number is comparable to iron objects found in Egypt and other places of the same time period; and only a small number of these objects are weapons. As part of the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age, the Bronze Age collapse saw the slow, comparatively continuous spread of iron-working technology in the region."[20]

Incidentally, the delay in using iron should dispose of the already-doubtful notion of aliens creating human civilisation. (An idea explored entertainingly but improbably in the *Stargate* movie and television series.) Humans had basic civilisation even before bronze, but were very slow to master iron. Slow even though it is not particularly tricky once you know that unusually hot fires are needed.

Civilisation is a complex process. Also costly, since it binds people to radically new ways of life.

The entire process of becoming civilised could be seen as a mistake. Even taking up farming might have been a mistake. A lot of ancient religion seems to have seen it so: yet they could not get off what's often seen as the *treadmill* of civilisation. Either you were tied to hard labour growing crops or tending beasts: or you had an uncertain existence as part of a privileged class living off of the labour of such people. If you were privileged, you almost always had to fight to keep what you had, or perhaps gain more. You would usually have a walled city to shelter in, but cities could be taken, and the sack of cities was horrific. The elite lived better than the commons, but always had to fear that it would end with the men killed or enslaved, the woman raped and enslaved and the children mostly slaughtered. The men were also often castrated, which both hormonally and psychologically discouraged further resistance. The blinding of men and occasionally also of women was another method for successful conquest and subjugation. All this was done by people who knew that they might be next. Might have been previous victims, or at least have known victims. This mostly made them cruel or callous: similar things happen to soldiers who go from peaceful countries into modern wars.

It was tragic, but I also see it as unavoidable. Wise aliens could have taught us the arts, including controls on population: they either do not exist or else thought it best we do it all by ourselves. Humans, unguided, made many errors. Each new advance let us feed more people on the same land, but families reacted by having more children. The problem of overpopulation was soon back again. A

[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcolithic#Regions

[18] http://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2017/11/5-surprising-facts-about-otzi-iceman

[19] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hephaestus#Symbolism

[20] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age#Near_East

society that imposed sensible limits might get overrun by more foolish and more numerous neighbours. And even hunter-gatherers could suffer and starve.

Humans without a regular food-source like grain or potatoes were no more than clever animals. For the bulk of human history, we lived as hunter-gatherers, and were mostly very happy to live so. But the skeletons they left behind shows that their lives were generally short and violent. And a lot of the deaths were humans killing other humans, much as modern hunter-gatherers do when there is something worth fighting for.

The ancient hunter-gatherers were mostly healthier and lived longer than the later farmers. But both were short-lived and sickly compared even to poor people in an industrialised society.

Steven Pinker gives detailed evidence of all this in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. Likewise, Jared Diamond in *The World Until Yesterday* makes it clear that traditional societies had a major problem with violence, to be set against the things they got right.

That was human evolution – a tragic business, but now reaching a stage where hope is sensible. But it took time. The oldest civilisations we know of were more likely to regard war and plunder as virtues than vices. Admirable for as long as the plunder was practiced successfully against foreigners. You find this in the Greek myths, with the gods as thieves and rapists. You find 'ethnic cleansing' presented as the Will of God in the early books of the Hebrew Scriptures. And if you read the Icelandic Sagas, available in good English translations but also 'heavy' reading, you find a baffling mix of the familiar and the alien. They were close to modern thinking in believing in Fate, but not in the routinely meddlesome gods of Greek heroic stories. They have strong personal feelings, but were also emmeshed in a network of family ties that they could not ignore. They were never individualists in the modern sense. And they could be amazingly brutal and callous to outsiders.

In *Njal's saga*, killing neighbours in blood-feuds is seen as sad but understandable. A hero called Gunnar Hamundarson is seen as admirable even though he spends some time as a Viking, raider. He also kills a man who is fighting on even terms with his younger brother in what one might expect to have been a fair one-to-one.

In *Laxdaela saga*, one man who's by no means seen as bad, buys a slave-woman who does not speak. He uses her without regard for her feelings, fathers a child and then takes her home with him, though apparently no longer sleeping with her. This last was likely due to his wife's view of the matter, and the slave-woman gets on fine until she is caught talking to her child, and must admit she is actually a captured Irish princess. That leads on to the main action of the saga, but what is remarkable is the casual attitude to slavery and a disregard of slave rights. The society was 'freedom-loving' only for a middle and upper class that was legally free. But note also that slaves were mostly racially identical to their owners: race-based slavery was a very late development. An aberration that grew and flourished after some notion of a Universal Citizenship had developed.

The Icelandic Sagas are a fascinating alien world, but there have been remarkably few popularisations of them. Tolkien of course borrowed a lot, but also applied his own views of proper moral conduct and of our world as Fallen from something closers to God's Design. Only outright villains own slaves, which also applies to most of the pre-industrial or post-industrial peoples in the sentimental anarchist novels of Ursula Le Guin. (A notable exception is *The Birthday of the World*, where she invents a society with most of the vices of actual pre-industrial societies.)

Most other historic novels and fantasy fiction are like that – the notion of fairly decent people who are also slave-owners is missing, even though we have it as recently as the US South before Abolition. Not many exceptions exist. Poul Anderson was more realistic in a few novels set within European paganism, notably the harsh, brilliant, and mythological *The Broken Sword*. Also an entertaining retelling of a semi-legendary tale in *Hrolf Kraki's Saga*, and some more I liked less. There is a lot more real history out there for a writer who has trouble devising their own plots.

The problem for the current 'Coolheart' generation may be the awkward fact that authentic myths and historic records teach you that 'human nature' can be something half familiar and half alien. The Coolheart generation have a way of ignoring 'off-message facts': even a notion that perhaps facts are not facts if you disbelieve them.[21]

The habit has been to make both space aliens and mythological beings very similar to the conventional range of good and bad characters found in Broad-Anglo society. Or as found in the decade the author is writing in. Real human nature ranges much more widely than that.

Real human nature can also be messed up by ideology. 'Ethnic Cleansing' is presented as the Will of God in the early books of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is still a problem in the modern world. It led to some very harsh attitudes among some Protestant sects who decided that they were

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[21] I show why this is not plausible in
https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/in-a-hole-in-a-hole-dwelt-a-nothingness/

the 'Chosen People', despite an awkward lack of relatedness to the original Hebrews. Which also led some fringe groups to develop 'British Israelism', a movement which seriously claims that the English are the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel. Such claims were mostly seen as a bad joke, but there was mass extermination of unwanted native inhabitants in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Also mass repression in Southern Africa, but the natives were too numerous for the Boers to think of wiping them out. The English settler population there took a milder view, preferring to live as a colonial elite. There was also some settlement using cheap non-white labour and with the intention of staying, which also applied in the short-lived colony of Rhodesia and parts of Kenya.

The British Empire had no problems applying similar methods to the Boers when they resisted conquest of land where immense gold reserves had been found. The original British-Empire Concentration Camps were intended to subordinate a population judged very useful if it would be obedient. This was largely achieved, but with little concern for high death-rates among the imprisoned Boers. The Nazis very intentionally used the same name for their own repression, mostly intended to subordinate, but also aimed at driving out Jews if they could find anywhere to take them. (High death rates did not bother them: but Death Camps, specifically intended to kill everyone, were a late development.)

This same Ethnic Cleansing tradition has also contaminated Zionism. It started out with fine ideals, and has mostly lost them under pressure of war. It cannot help that Ethnic Cleansing was sanctified at the start of their tradition.

This problem does not apply within Islam, where the Koran lacks the tensions in the Hebrew Scriptures. For Muslims, this is the accurate account given by God: for the rest of us this is because it was one man's vision, though no doubt believed by him to have been inspired by God.

(Lots of creative artists have thought they were getting messages from God, and obviously not all of them can be right. There have been other rewrites of or extensions to the Bible. The founder of Mormonism did one, and there was a now-neglected rewrite by the founder of the Taiping. There seem to be no modern Taiping believers, but had they won their Chinese civil war they could have been one of the world's biggest religions.)

Outside of the USA, exterminating branches of Christianity now have little weight. And with nuclear weapons, the idea of a war against another nuclear power becomes very unattractive. People spend vast amounts making sure such a war cannot be lost, if the other side went mad, but stop short of

really considering it. I was all along certain that the supposed crisis over North Korea would end peacefully, as now seems to be happening.

War among the major powers is perhaps outdated. But it was thinkable once, and groups of early humans undoubtedly fought on occasions, as do other primates that live in groups. Fortifications, weapons, and armies all increased as societies got bigger and technology more skilled.

The transition from hunter-gatherer to farmer was tricky, and took time. Must have been felt as oppression by many. My own Welsh and Devonshire heritage points to remote ancestors who would have been some of Europe's last hold-outs: DNA testing makes me 46% descended from Europe's last hunter-gatherers and only 43% from the later wave of farmers.[22] (Farmers from West Asia who spread gradually across Europe and absorbed the older populations.) The remaining 12% of my heritage is from the later metal-age invaders, whom I discuss later. And whether or not it is inheritance, my *feelings* are often for anarchic solutions. Yet my analytical powers tell me that the broad Marxist notion of unavoidable stages of human history is correct. (The details as described by Marx and Engels are sometimes wrong.)

Since the 1960s, useful analysis of the human past has been largely separated from Marxist theory. Before that, Marxists and those they influenced had been making most of the running. Communist sympathiser Joseph Needham unearthed the vast Chinese contribution to science and technology, which had been obscure before that. But as I've detailed elsewhere, there was a wrong turning after Stalin. Global Communism should have accepted Stalin as part of the dirty business of actual history, much as the highly successful Chinese Communists continue to respect Mao but agree he made errors. Instead, those who followed Moscow had to accept the improbable claim that there was an ideal Leninist beginning that Stalin wickedly subverted. This was very similar to the Trotskyist claims, and Khrushchev had flirted with Trotskyism in his early career.[23] It was basically untrue, and trying to believe it was intellectual poison. It gradually blighted everyone who failed to challenge it.

We could also talk briefly about Trotskyist achievements. Very briefly – if you define it as the distinct spin-off from Leninism that happened in the 1920s, then those people have *no positive achievements whatsoever*. A complete lack of anything useful from a huge swarm of sects that included some very talented people. The creed

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[22] https://gwydionmadawc.com/about/my-dna-results/

[23] https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/khrushchev-influenced-by-trotskyism/

rested on Trotsky's achievements when Lenin was boss. But what Trotsky *did* in his few successful years was very different from what he *said* for the rest of his career.[24]

Lenin and the other Bolsheviks had started out with Revolutionary Democracy – the Constituent Assembly was 78% socialist and only 7.5% liberal, though without a Bolshevik majority.[25] The Bolsheviks also had an absolute majority in the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which was arguably a more democratic assembly.[26] The later suppression of opposition parties is regrettable, but may have been unavoidable, given foreign intervention and White forces dominated by the Far Right. Multi-party systems depend on the government and the major opposition parties having no differences that are seen as worth dying for or worth killing for. Britain's well-established system broke down in Ireland, where rival parties felt that winning Irish Independence or even Irish Home Rule was worth dying for, or worth dying to prevent. It has been seriously suggested that Britain would have had a Civil War between Liberal and Tory, had not the First World War come along and changed everything. It certainly caused multiple conflicts in Ireland.

Liberals get baffled by talk of a Democratic Dictatorship. That's because they can't imagine anything outside of the systems they know, imperfect though they these are. If you know the wider history, you'd know that England's Parliamentary system was **never intended to be a democracy**. That though parties existed, there and in many other parliaments that existed in Western Europe, parties were seen as undesirable. Until their 19th century democratisation, Parliaments were a way of getting upper-class consent for important matters. For negotiating extra taxes, when the need was urgent. The 'Commons' were there to give a voice to those not rich enough or powerful enough to be in the House of Lords. Members of the House of Commons were originally selected by just a small minority. And until the 1870s, voting was public, meaning that ordinary people were under pressure to vote as their landlord or employer wished them to.

The system was expanded in the 1880s to have MPs chosen by 60% of men, and then from 1918 by all men, and women over 30. Which does not make it that great a system. Electors can choose freely between candidates from several rival parties: but parties need not deliver anything like what those voters actually wanted. They often product weak governments that please no one, which helped the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. Also governments resembling fascism in Poland, Japan, and several other countries.

Multi-party politics can also generate bitter conflicts that lead on to Civil War, as happened in 1930s Spain. As has since happened in places as different as Nigeria, Former Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka (Ceylon). An indecisive election also generated a non-violent split between Czechs and Slovaks. The Republic of India is hopefully too diverse to split upon the clean lines needed for a civil war: this remains a hope rather than a definite fact.

It is however regrettable that Leninism made it a matter of doctrine that rival political parties stand for rival classes. This implied that everyone except themselves should really be viewed as traitors to the working class. They got locked into a simplistic vision of history.

Marx and Engels's rough sketch in the *Communist Manifesto* is an aid to understanding: a lot better than the Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age schema that cuts across many different forms of social organisation. It becomes a hinderance when it gets elaborated into a fancy metaphysics. An enemy of thought when people are convinced that the Soviet Union would have been vastly superior had there been a more rigorous and dogmatic application of guesses that Marx had made decades earlier.

Marx and Engels began with a simple schema:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."[27]

They later added 'Primitive Communism', based on a mostly-correct recognition of an earlier stage of much more collectivised property. And an 'Asiatic Mode of Production', based on collectivist elements in Hindu villages and completely ignoring the individualist peasantry of China, who were highly commercial. Real human history was much more complex than they allowed for – but they were breaking new ground.

It was also hopeful to suppose that workers whose lives were disrupted by the Industrial

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[24] https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/why-trotskys-politics-achieved-nothing-solid/

[25] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Constituent_Assembly#Election_Results_(12/25_November_1917)

[26] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russian_Congress_of_Soviets#Second_Congress

[27] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm

Revolution would overthrow that system and run it themselves. Some workers did feel just that, but many more hankered after the old order or else settle for reforms that gave them a decent cut of the new wealth. Still, hardly anyone in the 1840s imagined the rise of a self-conscious working class. Radicals mostly hoped to restore small well-divided property: they saw large-scale industrialisation as an aberration.

Marxism is imperfect, but remains much closer to the truth than its rivals.

Traditional pre-Leninist Marxism could not cope with the vast self-wounding of Western civilisation in the First World War, which some of them and many other socialists got dragged into. Leninism correctly took a strong stand against nationalism, asserting the inherent equality of all races and nations. In its heyday, it had much success in damping down antagonisms and persuading people that their main identity was *human*.

Rather more doubtfully, Lenin claimed that the profits of Imperialism had bribed a section of the working class into disloyalty. European nations without colonies like Switzerland and Sweden had shared in the general rise, as had Denmark and Germany with very few. It is moot if any part of Europe was a net gainer from the various overseas empires, though they certainly offered nice careers for many of the ruling classes. Colonies were also an outlet for adventurous characters from all backgrounds. But though it could be simplistic, Leninism was a creed that could win over large numbers of discontented workers who might otherwise have opted for fascism. Who often became contented citizens of fascist or near-fascist states where these were created, with pro-Moscow Communists the main hold-out.

The history schema of Marxism-Leninism was simplistic. Lenin himself might have revised it, had he lived longer. Trotsky boldly hung onto all of Lenin's errors in the face of unfavourable realities. Stalin successfully navigated some very tricky politics and allowed the Soviet Union to emerge from World War Two vastly stronger than before. Inspired the Chinese Communists to win by basing themselves on the peasantry, which Trotsky had warned against as a drastic error.

Trotsky's most significant Chinese follower was Chen Duxiu, a nice and extremely gifted man who was utterly unfit to lead anything harsher than a polite little discussion-group. When the little discussion-groups he'd founded grew into an immense force with a dangerous minority share in the Kuomintang revolution, he had no idea what to do next. He helped create Chinese Communism, but could not usefully guide it once it became powerful. Nor was any very useful replacement found, until the rise of Mao. (Covertly aided by the widow of Kuomintang founder Sun Yat-sen, a point most people overlook.[28]) Mao was not exactly a nice fellow: he was the tough fellow that China needed to put itself together and perhaps also impose some social justice.[29] His harsh attitudes must have been helped by having had his first wife and his sister executed by the Kuomintang.[30] Also by seeing many former Communist comrades become open enemies and sometimes traitors in the difficult years before 1949.

Leninism peaked under Stalin, and declined thereafter. It might have created a decent human future, but history has now moved on. My own outlook is 'Post-Leninist' – it was necessary but is no longer relevant in most of the world.

Khrushchev, who had briefly been close to Trotskyism at the start of his grand career,[31] also hung onto old errors. He claimed that every problem was due to deviations from Lenin by Stalin, and later by 'Stalinists' negative about his policies. Brezhnev, after leading the ouster of Khrushchev, had little idea what to do next. He let things drift, apart from viciously cracking down on those who might have healed the system. Most notably he sent in tanks to curb the radical Slovaks dominating Czechoslovakia in 1968. And in the last days of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev boldly set off in totally the wrong direction, and killed the system.

In the West, the Trotsky / Khrushchev joint influence has been far too influential. Left-wing writers who can be excellent at describing things are mostly completely hopeless at working out what should be done. The various left-wing movements in the Third World that they advised have mostly withered and perished: only those who regarded Stalin as part of their heritage have had any success. (Che in Cuba was always pro-Stalin,[32] though this has somehow been lost from his public image.) China meantime relied on its own wisdom, never apologised for Stalin or Mao, and has found a socialist path forward.

(Do not believe those who claim China is now capitalist. If you read *The Economist*, written

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[28] https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/china-nurturing-red-stars/

[29] https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/how-chinese-communism-fixed-a-broken-society/

[30] I ignore a supposed First Marriage, which was never consummated. Had Mao become a Roman Catholic rather than a Leninist, they would have viewed this marriage as null and void, leaving both parties free to contract valid marriages.

[31] https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/khrushchev-influenced-by-trotskyism/

[32] https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/why-che-guavara-approved-of-stalin/

mostly for the people managing real-life capitalism, you will find frequent complaints about President Xi increasing doing the opposite of New Right 'reform' notions. I differ from them only is assessing whether this is a good idea. Quite apart from the minor matter of proclaiming the End of History in the early 1990s, I find the New Right vision of history a lot further from reality than dogmatic Marxism.)

All this is to explain why I am definitely not writing this as a *Marxist* history of civilisation.

A reintegration of the various socialist ideas of history would be highly productive. My father Raymond Williams made a very good beginning with *Peoples of the Black Mountains*, which imagines history as a series of small stories involving people in a small border region of Wales. It starts with the first humans in Britain. It would have come right up to the present, had he not died at age 66. He got as far as early mediaeval times, with England's Lollards foreshadowing later Protestant developments. With Sir John Oldcastle, whose character and beliefs Shakespeare utterly distorted as Falstaff. And with the interesting suggestion that the former rebel Owain Glendower[33] might have been living quietly in his daughter's household nearby.

I'm taking a few more preliminary steps here: there is much more to do. But I must reject those who are now saying that cities and even agriculture were an historic error. A recent example is Richard Manning's *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization*, which I plan to review and debunk sometime. This concentrates on the probable steps downward from hunter-gatherer to farmer for most people. Maintains a deafening silence on the awkward matter of life having been short and violent even for those hunter-gatherers. With grain or potatoes, most humans become trapped animals, but a few can rise to something closer to the modern human condition. Did in the long run make a much superior modern human condition possible for most of the human race.

The best defence against tyranny is poverty and violence. The cure is mostly worse than the disease. We must stop looking backwards and look to a better future.

Catalhoeyuek – a Dead End Without Streets

Imagine a small town where you walk over other people's roofs to get to your house. Where the dead are mostly buried under the floors, but some people have their skulls dug up and covered in plaster to give the appearance of life. Where everyone's house is about the same size, and each house is rebuilt on exactly the same lines when it needs to be replaced. Where dogs are not pets but tolerated just as outlying scavengers. Where mice are a plague, but the ancestors of house-cats are not wanted – though leopards are hyped in religious imagery. A place where cats are no more than a handy meat-treat, so they naturally avoid this concentration of highly dangerous humans.

I can't think of any science fiction or fantasy that has had an alien culture as strange as that. (The closest is a

much-praised short story called *The Dance of the Changer and the Three*,[34] which however relies on aliens doing things for no known reason.) Yet the human society I just described existed once as a real place. A place that lived and died long before the Sumerians invented writing, so we have no idea what its inhabitants called it. The local Turkish-speakers call it Fork-Mound, *Catalhoeyuek*.[35]

> "[Catalhoeyuek] is a 21m high mound containing traces of habitation in central Turkey between 7400 and 6000 BC, although an adjacent mound … continued into the mid 6th millennium… Throughout the sequence houses are built up against each other so that there are no streets and people moved around the settlement on the rooftops. Humans were buried between the floors of houses, and the insides of houses were furnished with paintings, relief sculptures and installations of bull horns, bear teeth and pig jaws. While there is some variation between more elaborate houses that have more burials and are rebuilt more times … there are no distinct ceremonial or chiefly centres or public or administrative buildings that have so far been found (despite intensive survey and sampling). [Catalhoeyuek] consists simply of houses and areas of refuse and midden between them.
>
> "While there is much stability and continuity … there are also gradual changes through time. In the earliest levels there is little if any use of pottery which appears in Levels XII to X. Cooking pottery emerges in Level VII and there is at the same time a shift to sandier mud bricks."[36]

Note that in archaeology, levels are numbered upwards from the oldest. Level VII existed before Level XII.

> "[Catalhoeyuek] was composed entirely of domestic buildings, with no obvious public buildings. While some of the larger ones have rather ornate murals, the purpose of some rooms remains unclear…
>
> "The inhabitants lived in mudbrick houses that were crammed together in an aggregate structure. No footpaths or streets were used between the dwellings, which were clustered in a honeycomb-like maze. Most were accessed by holes in the ceiling, with doors reached by ladders and stairs. The rooftops were effectively streets. The ceiling openings also served as the only source of ventilation, allowing smoke from the houses' open hearths and ovens to escape."[37]

Catalhoeyuek is one of several places normally classed as proto-cities. Jericho is another. Found later, they might be seen just as towns. But at least some of them were the first forms from which the idea of a city was developed.[38]

Catalhoeyuek was a place that prized equality. It

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[33] More properly Glyndŵr, but I explained earlier why I avoid diacritical marks.

[34] Available, perhaps illegally, at https://wenku.baidu.com/view/e8f24612a2161479171128c9.html

[35] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%87atalh%C3%B6y%C3%BCk. I explained in a note on page 3 why I have not used diacritical marks (accents) for the name

[36] *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*, by Ian Hodder. Wiley-Blackwell 2012. Page 60

[37] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%87atalh%C3%B6y%C3%BCk

[38] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-city

was a very unified community:

> "Individuals buried beneath the floors of houses do not seem more closely related to each other than individuals in the population as a whole. And those buried beneath the floors of the long-lived houses do not seem to have been better off in terms of health either."[39]

A valuable book called *After the Ice* discusses various cultures known from archaeology in West Asia, the region where humans first moved from being hunter-gatherers to farmers.[40] It notes that some of these were communities of healthy happy people, though there was indeed a general decline in health. And that the process happened by stages. Hunter-gatherers would usually come together for part of the year in larger groups, exchanging members and sometime making marriages. By stages, people might have made these gatherings more regular, which in turn meant that crops that had previously been casually gathered must now be cultivated to feed a growing population. (A population

mostly controlled among hunter-gatherers by infanticide, something the fans of that life-style mostly avoid mentioning.)

The shift in life-style obviously had its cultural aspects. We know that when pre-humans crossed the uncertain line into modern humanity, they began making things like the overweight 'Venus' figures from 35,000 years ago. Also the famous lion-man, the first of many human-animal hybrids imagined by us. Objects in the uncertain area of religion, superstition, and art, which were probably not yet separate concepts. We have of course only those that survive, mostly stone and a little cave-art. There must have been a lot more, probably

including the complex garments, body-paint, and tattoos favoured by surviving hunter-gatherers. But when you cease to be a wanderer, you can accumulate a lot more of them.

A lot of distinct cultures appeared. *After the Ice* discusses them, and rates Catalhoeyuek as one of the failures. It was certainly different both from hunter-gatherer camps and from later towns and cities. The

book imagines how a visitor might see it:

> "It is 7000 BC, and [Catalhoeyuek] is at its peak... a heavily cultivated landscape. Signs of tree-felling are common... Small fields appear in which women and children are completing the day's work while young boys steer flocks of sheep and goats back to the night-time safely of the town...
>
> "It appears to have a continuous perimeter wall, one that has no entrance and no desire to welcome uninvited guests. Looking more closely... it is not a single wall at all, but the outcome of many abutting walls from individual buildings that cling tightly together as if in fear of what lies beyond."[41]

I find this too negative. Another expert says, "The skeletal data from the site have shown remarkably good health of the population."[42] There are no signs of war, nor a defensive wall of the sort that later settlements needed. The total population was between 5,000 and 7,000. The men still hunted, including the enormously dangerous wild cattle. About as dangerous as being a matador in a modern bull-fight, so these were not people to lightly mess with. In 7000 BC, there were no armies or raiders up to tackling something than big, particularly in the isolated part of Anatolia where Catalhoeyuek was. Most of Anatolia kept cultural diversity up until Alexander's conquest, whereafter they were gradually assimilated to Greek-Macedonian culture, with a Roman layer later added. (The core of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, until Turkish warriors got a foothold and gradually assimilated most of the older populations.)

Anyone who disliked the life at Catalhoeyuek could have walked away from it. No doubt some did. But the population remained high. Odd though their way of life seems to us, it must have suited them very nicely.

My own belief is that Catalhoeyuek disliked the outside world rather than fearing it. Disliked the growing inequality among households as early civilisations developed. *Perhaps* also disliked the growing inequality between men and woman, though that is much more open to debate. The sexes had separate roles, but there are few signs anywhere of sexual inequality until many centuries later.

Of course there's a lot you'd never guess. There' a remarkable book called *Don't Sleep, There are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle*, written by a man who went as a missionary to convert an isolated

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[39] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 151

[40] *After the Ice: A Global Human History, 20,000 - 5000 BC* by Steven Mithen. Phoenix 2003.

[41] After the Ice, page 92.

[42] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 203.

tribe. Who ended up at least partly converted to their very surprising life-style: happy and equal, though with separate roles for the sexes. They also resisted the outside world, even to the extent of refusing to make dug-out canoes even when they were shown how. And if we only had their archaeological remains, we would miss most of what was interesting, including their lack of a Creation Myth. But that really belongs with a view of the ancient Hebrews, the main source of the values the missionary's values. That will be the next article: *Discontented on the Edges of Civilisation*.

I also noticed an interesting similarity between Catalhoeyuek and the much later Indus Valley Civilisation. This flourished in the Bronze Age for some 2000 years from 3300 BC. Much too distant in time and place to have been directly influenced: but memories of the equality and solidarity of hunter-gatherer life must have been general. But the Indus culture was cities set in a vast agricultural hinterland, so there was probably inequality there. Within the cities, sizes of houses varied. But they lacked the temples and palaces that became normal elsewhere.

This might also have meant no slavery, something that has always bothered people, and yet flourished anyway. The main final flourish was the race-based slavery imposed by Europeans in the New World. This peaked in the US Civil War, with the US South suffering maybe 290,000 dead before it would accept a Federal Government unsympathetic to slavery. This even though for the first year of the war, and even into 1862, slavery was upheld as legal even in seceding states.[43]

Catalhoeyuek and the Indus Valley Civilisation were two exceptional human cultures. But if either or both of them tried doing without slavery, they failed in the long run. Catalhoeyuek faded into insignificance, with cultural shifts in its final stage.[44] Much of the Indus Valley culture passed into later Hinduism, but Hindu society became by far the most unequal and discriminatory of all the major civilisations.

(Hindu nationalists like to claim the Indus Valley Civilisation as their own. But Sanskrit fits neatly within the Indo-Iranian branch of an Indo-European language family that is generally believed to have begun in what is now South Russia. These were warriors and chariot-masters who conquered east and west and had a basic caste system, as I detail later.

(Why this faded elsewhere but became enormously elaborated in the Indian Subcontinent is uncertain. Maybe because India was hotter and the population more vulnerable to diseases. Many of the caste rules make sense as protection against passing on sicknesses. The lowest cast handle the dirtiest materials. They are fragmented into tiny communities shunned by their neighbours. The highest and cleanest are the Brahmin, and anyone can accept food from them. And before modern science, no one could tell which parts of an ancient cultural system or system of superstitions were really necessary.)

No Cats At Catalhoeyuek

Even if it were an heroic hold-out against inequality, Catalhoeyuek had some of the wrong superstitions. They tolerated dogs as scavengers in their middens: garbage areas between their houses.[45] But they did not keep cats, unlike some of the peoples of their era and earlier:

> "Traditionally, historians tended to think ancient Egypt was the site of cat domestication, owing to the clear depictions of house cats in Egyptian paintings about 3,600 years old. However, in 2004, a Neolithic grave excavated in Shillourokambos, Cyprus, contained the skeletons, laid close to one another, of both a human and a cat. The grave is estimated to be 9,500 years old, pushing back the earliest known feline–human association significantly. The cat specimen is large and closely resembles the African wildcat, rather than present-day domestic cats. This discovery, combined with genetic studies, suggests cats were probably domesticated in the Middle East, in the Fertile Crescent around the time of the development of agriculture, and then were brought to Cyprus and Egypt.

> "Direct evidence for the domestication of cats 5,300 years ago in Quanhucun, China has been published by archaeologists and paleontologists from the University of Washington and Chinese Academy of Sciences. The cats are believed to have been attracted to the village by rodents, which in turn were attracted by grain cultivated and stored by humans…

> "Housecats seem to have been extremely rare among the ancient Greeks and Romans; Herodotus expressed astonishment at the domestic cats in Egypt, because he had only ever seen wildcats. Even during later times, weasels were far more commonly kept as pets and weasels, not cats, were seen as the ideal rodent-killers. The usual ancient Greek word for 'cat' was ailouros, meaning 'thing with the waving tail', but this word could also be applied to any of the 'various long-tailed carnivores kept for catching mice'. Cats are rarely mentioned in ancient Greek literature, but Aristotle does remark in his *History of Animals* that 'female cats are naturally lecherous.'…

> "Domestic cats were probably first introduced to Greece and southern Italy in the fifth century BC by the Phoenicians…

> "Domestic cats were spread throughout much of the rest of the world during the [15th century European] Age of Discovery, as ships' cats were carried on sailing ships to control shipboard rodents and as good-luck charms."[46]

> "While the exact history of human interaction with cats is still somewhat vague, a shallow grave site discovered in 1983 in Cyprus, dating to 7500 BCE, during the Neolithic period, contains the skeleton of a human, buried ceremonially with stone tools, a lump of iron oxide, and a handful of seashells. In its own tiny grave 40 centimeters (18 inches) from the human grave was an eight-month-old cat, its body oriented in the same westward direction as the human skeleton. Cats are not native to Cyprus. This is evidence that cats were being tamed just as humankind was establishing the first settlements in the part of the

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[43] I am aware of the complexities of why the war was fought, see https://gwydionwilliams.com/52-usa/both-sides-were-racist-in-the-us-civil-war/

[44] Detailed below

[45] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 182

[46] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat#History_and_mythology

Accepting cats may have happened accidentally. Perhaps more than once, since they are found in China long before there was much east-west connection. It is not hard to see how it might happen. Hunters often find the helpless little offspring of animals they kill, and occasionally choose to raise them. It would not be odd for a part-time hunter in an early agricultural settlement to raise kittens for the amusement of himself or his children. For someone (perhaps a woman) to then notice that these strange little animals killed those pesky little mice. That the presence and smell of a cat frightens off mice. Wild cats had been hunting wild mice long before humans appeared, so the fear would have been there already.

A very interesting and entertaining book called *My European Family: The First 54,000 Years* alerted me to the oddity of 'no cats at Catalhoeyuek'. But the author had a different explanation. Unlike the author of *After the Ice*, she does not find the place repellent:

> "About once every hundred years, families built new house on top of the old ones. The new house was nearly always identical to the old... This could continue for 1000 years – more than 30 generations.
>
> "Society thus seems to have been very conservative, with the ancestor cult playing a central role. However, life in [Catalhoeyuek] was also very egalitarian as regards both social status and relations between the sexes. The homes of different families do not reflect any obvious difference in wealth. Analysis of skeletons and graves show that men and women ate food of the same quality and had equal status.
>
> "There have even been theories suggesting that [Catalhoeyuek] may have been a matriarchy... numerous finds of terracotta figurines ... very like those made by groups of European hunters all the way back to the Venus of Hohle Fels, nearly 40,000 years ago.
>
> "Such theories have encouraged contemporary followers of goddess cults to make pilgrimages to the site. Not infrequently, there have been cultural clashes between goddess-worshipers from elsewhere and people from farming villages near the excavations, who often have traditional Muslim values."[48]

Being female, she may have been more sensitive to what was missing: no cats:

"The staple foods in [Catalhoeyuek] were cultivated grain and lentils. There seems to have been a veritable plague of mice... Yet there are no signs of any cats. On reflection, I can well imagine that cats would have stayed at home in the regions where agriculture first emerged. Cattle, sheep and goats can be driven long distances, while dogs follow of their own accord. But cats do as they please."[49]

Actually, cats don't. They wander, but are centred on a definite home. Cats with familiar people can be moved to a new place and mostly stay there, so long as they are confined for the actual journey. As a teenager, I successfully moved the family cat from Cambridge to the Welsh Border and back again. He adapted well, apart from being chased up a tree by an aggressive dog. I roared at the animal, chased it off and then with difficulty coxed the cat back down.

Anyone given a new kitten should keep it shut up for a few days, after which it will accept the new place as home. But cats at Catalhoeyuek were seen only as little meat-treats and useful hides:

> "Wild animals were also the main source of fur and feathers. Only the heads and feet of boar, deer, bears, and wild cat have been discovered at the site, indicating that these animals were mainly eaten far from the site, and only the hides (with attached head and feet) were brought home."[50]

Catalhoeyuek from a cat's viewpoint was a concentration of dangerous cat-eaters. The large supply of food (mice) did not balance that.

Weirdly, those people also imagined and reverenced a supernatural woman flanked by a pair of leopards.[51] An early example of an image that probably lasted for millennia as the mysterious Cybele, identified by the Greeks with Artemis. It is fiction: leopards are always semi-wild, though the general public mostly don't realise this. Hollywood went to great trouble to fake a safe leopard in the 1938 film *Bringing Up Baby*, but found no one was impressed:

> "The tame leopard Baby and the escaped circus leopard were both played by a trained leopard, Nissa. The big cat was supervised by its trainer, Olga Celeste, who stood by with a whip during shooting."[52]

Even in Hollywood, it is not needful to do this for the actors. Nor for dogs, horses, or elephants. Chimps too are mostly safe, but usually sleep in a cage and sometimes run wild.[53] And with this 'tame' leopard, things nearly went wrong:

> "At one point, when Hepburn spun around (causing her skirt to twirl) Nissa lunged at her and was subdued when Celeste cracked her whip. Hepburn wore heavy perfume to keep Nissa calm and was unafraid of the leopard, but Grant was terrified; most scenes of the two interacting are

[47] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_depictions_of_cats#Earliest_history

[48] *My European Family: The First 54,000 Years*, by Karin Bojs. Page 183-4. Bloomsbury Sigma 2017.

[49] *My European Family,* Page 184

[50] http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1405.pdf, *The Neolithic Site of Çatalhöyük*

[51] After the Ice, page 93

[52] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bringing_Up_Baby

[53] https://gwydionmadawc.com/70-human-biological-history-nature/chimps-are-never-tame/

done in close-up with a stand-in."[54]

"Katharine Hepburn had one very close call with the leopard. She was wearing a skirt that was lined with little metal pieces to make the skirt swing prettily. When Hepburn turned around abruptly, the leopard made a lunge for her back. Only the intervention of the trainer's whip saved Hepburn. The leopard was not allowed to roam around freely after that, and Hepburn was more careful around it from then on.

"The scenes which involved Baby roaming around freely, notably in Susan's apartment, had to be done in a cage, with the camera and sound picked up through holes in the fencing. In fact, when Cary Grant steps into the bathroom to have a look at 'Baby', there are subtle but visible reflections on the transparent wall between the actor and the leopard."

"[Katheryn] Hepburn is sometimes shown petting and handling Baby. The leopard's trainer praised Hepburn, stating that Kate was fearless and could become an animal trainer if she so desired… A puppet leopard was also used in some shots."[55]

Hepburn must have been toughened up by having to fend off some of the worse Hollywood males. Semi-wild in those days, and not entirely tame even now.

Pop star Madonna Ciccone made a similar film with a cougar: another flop. I found no details on how hard it was to control the animal. Her character's name, Nikki, was similar to Nissa, the real name of the leopard in the 1938 film.

At Catalhoeyuek, they *imagined* a leopard-taming goddess, perhaps an inheritance from the wider ritualistic and farming culture they emerged from. A woman in clear control of wild beasts large enough to menace a human is a glamourous image, then and now. But the idea of tolerating small mouse-hunting wildcats was alien to them. Though they might have seen how well it worked elsewhere, they preferred to live with the pesky mice.

Karin Bois, author of *My European Family*, is puzzled that Catalhoeyuek could have been both very conservative and very egalitarian. Her book does an excellent job of seeing life as earlier generations might have seen it, but here she fails. Like most modern thinkers, she does not realise that a link between progress and equality or democracy is quite new. That it was not a major force until the two concepts hybridised in Western Europe and Britain's North American colonies in the 18th century. The thinkers of the European Enlightenment mostly favoured Enlightened Despots. They were comfortable with a brutal race-based slavery that brought Black Africans to the New World to grow new crops, and mostly killed them off with overwork. Those who favoured equality often looked to the past. The simple collective life of the first followers of Jesus: and in England, a largely imaginary equality before the Norman Conquest.

Hybridisation of hostile cultures is always tricky. The Founding Fathers of the new USA did not intend their Republic to be a democracy. But property

qualifications inherited from England gave a vote to lots of ordinary people, since there was plenty of cheap land taken from Native Americans. And they blundered in having the President chosen by an Electoral College independent of Congress. It was meant to avoid corrupt influences. But since the Electoral College had no other function, it was soon made an instrument of Direct Democracy, with candidates pledged to a particular candidate. This remains an oddity: what would happen if large numbers of pledged electors defected? It could easily become a key decision for their Supreme Court.

Things were tougher in the French Revolution. The American Revolution had succeeded, in part because the British High Command was slow to develop ruthless methods. The British Army's withdrawal from Boston was a triumph for the American cause: had Boston first been burnt to the ground it would have been seen otherwise. Most of Europe's Absolute Monarchs would have been that ruthless, but also liked and helped the American cause. It weakened the British hegemony that had been established in the Seven Years War. And they saw it as unthreatening: dominated by gentry with progressive ideas.[56] They had lived for centuries with the Swiss and Venetian Republics without much difficulty.

It was otherwise when the French Revolution failed to stabilise.

French revolutionary extremism began with aristocrats plotting to bring in foreign armies to reverse the early moderate reforms. King Louis 16th eventually agreed, and made a failed bid to flee to these friendly foreigners. When the middle ground collapsed, politics appeared that was extreme by the standards of the time, and not very competent in making the compromises necessary to hold power.

Jacobin 'extremism' included wanting to abolish slavery in the French colonies. It included giving the vote to all men regardless of property. (Only a few individuals scattered across the factions wanted to give votes or political rights to any women.) The fall of Robespierre ensured another 50 years of legalised slavery in the French Empire. Oddly, it was Britain that abolished and criminalised the slave trade, in 1807. As I mentioned earlier, the southern half of the USA got so attached to it that they endured enormous suffering in their Civil War rather than tolerate a President who hoped to see it gradually and peacefully abolished.

For most of human history, it was a Radical Rich who made breakthroughs into new ways of life. Sometimes but not always involving gross exploitation of those weaker than themselves.

Catalhoeyuek itself seems to have faded away, with its people maybe losing faith in a way of life that had included many bad ideas:

"In the uppermost levels … the excavations … have found a tomb rather than an in-house burial … and by the Chalcolithic West Mound (6000-5500 BC) there is no evidence of adult burial beneath platform floors. In the latest levels at [Catalhoeyuek] and on the later West

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[54] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bringing_Up_Baby

[55] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029947/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv

[56] Jay Winik's *The Great Upheaval* illustrates this, showing parallels and then divergences in America, France and the Russia of Catherine the Great.

Mound the houses change in character, with more rooms, and with more storage and productive space. The hearth moves into the centre of the main room and pottery is used for both cooking and for serving and consumption."[57]

A stateless society without a ruling class normally survives only by sticking rigidly to a set of customs, some of which will be foolish. When this breaks down, people may accept a new privileged and dominant group that solves some of the problems:

"[Researchers] used an abstract evolutionary public goods game to model the rise of leadership... Households would prefer to live in a hierarchical rather than egalitarian society if leaders can reduce the likelihood of failures in cooperation due to free-riding or lack of cooperation. Such a shift is seen as optimal when cooperation as a group is needed but group size exceeds that in which leaderless cooperation is viable."[58]

Catalhoeyuek probably lasted as long as it did as a very large community by refusing to change much. Where its people went after 5500 BC is unknown. Maybe to some other site not yet found, or perhaps with no distinctive remains.

Walking Birds and Headless Humans

Talking about cultural artefacts earlier on, I said '*when you cease to be a wanderer, you can accumulate a lot more of them*'. But you can also make them suitable to visit from time to time. Generally making them too big for some stranger to walk off with if they fancy them.

Gobekli Tepe.

A remarkable pre-agricultural temple-complex. A place known as 'Potbelly Hill' to the local Turkish-speakers. These almost certainly have remote descent from the builders, but have long since lost the language or languages. Turkic languages originated in what is now Mongolia, though an older belief in an Altaic language family that might include Korean and Japanese is now doubted.[59] Like most major modern languages, it spread by conquest, but soon became natural to its users.

No one is sure what was *natural* to the peoples who built Gobekli Tepe. But they must have been impressed by just what could be done by people working together. Begun maybe 11,000 years ago, it's a lot more impressive than the much more recent Stonehenge. Stonehenge uses the simple trick of making it look baffling how the top stone of a trilithon could have ever got there. It still confuses modern people, even though plausible methods using rollers and earth ramps have been worked out.[60]

Edmund Burke in his essay *On the Sublime and Beautiful* notes that Stonehenge is *designed* to draw attention to the immense difficulty of placing stones like that. But more than 8000 years earlier, when Gobekli Tepe's stones were raised, just working in stone on that scale would have been astonishing.

Gobekli Tepe and Catalhoeyuek were centres within a wider culture, seen at many other nearby sites:

"At [Catalhoeyuek] wall paintings show headless bodies with vultures. At [Gobekli] a pillar is engraved with a headless body associated with a bird...

"So practices and ideas about head removal, plastering of human skulls and an association between head removal and birds were widespread throughout the Neolithic of the Middle East and Turkey over millennia."[61]

You find similar cultural themes at various sites across several thousand years. Nevalı Cori, from 8400 BC, is much more like a modern town, with gaps between buildings. It includes a temple, apparently aligned to the bright star Deneb and to the constellation we call Cygnus, the swan. But the name is Greek, and the star-pattern could easily be seen as a cross. It is occasionally seen as the Northern Cross, rather better than the official Southern Cross. Or it could be seen as a human figure, with Deneb as the head. And it sits very nicely along the bright Milky Way. Most human cultures see the Milky Way as something special, though modern street-lights mostly drown it out nowadays.

Whether or not the temple had a roof is disputed. A light roof resting on the high pillars is possible, but they might have preferred to be under the stars. They did go to a lot of trouble to get a wonderfully smooth floor.[62] It occurred to me that if it were roofless and if water had been occasionally poured onto that smooth floor, then on a clear night people would have seen the stars above mirrored in that water.[63] But that's only a guess: it could well have been something quite different.

I doubt we will ever fully understand the mentality of those ancient peoples. Just imagine some future archaeologists after a cultural breakdown looking at our own age. Confusing Father Christmas and other red-coated figures with Global Leninism. Or trying to reconcile the Easter Bunnies and eggs with religious imagery of the crucifixion.

(I'd see Easter as a Christian layer put on top of a much older pagan celebration of fertility, linked by a Jewish association of the lamb provided for a nice feast with a human as lamb offered to God and then returning in glory. Regardless, it might baffle the future. I myself was a prisoner of habits and did not notice the contradiction until I saw some satirical cartoon merging the two sets of imagery.)

Even for our own era, it is not easy. People can blunder in putting together elements in an unfamiliar culture. I imagined some clever foreigner with a jumble of impressions imagining a scene in which men in bowler hats, black leather jackets, and tartan kilt worn over golfing plus-fours are doing a clog-dance at the centre of Lords Cricket Ground, while the London Symphony Orchestra plays *Pop Goes the Weasel*. Each element is authentically British, but not belonging together.

Some teacher with lots of foreign students could test how far they could see the errors in such assemblies, and

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[57] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Pages 155-6

[58] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 164

[59] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic_languages#Pre-history

[60] See for instance http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/stonehenge/construction.php

[61] *Entangled*, by Ian Hodder. Page 133.

[62] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q0dRicL5eY. One of many details in a filmed scholarly lecture.

[63] For modern examples, google *reflect water stars*.

include some that seem odd but are real. Get equivalents from their cultures to test on Britons, if possible. Ghost marriages would sound ridiculous, but are real.[64]

To get back to ancient times: Gobekli Tepe is unusual in being dominated by male imagery:

"*Have you found any female figures or depictions in Gobekli Tepe? Does this tell us anything concerning a male dominated society, possibly?*

"So far, every known depiction – as long as their sex is clearly recognizable – seems to be male, be it animals or humans. The only exception is a later added graffito of a single woman on a stone slab in one of the later PPN B buildings.

"While this may somehow denote the site of Gobekli Tepe as a refuge of male hunters, it does of course not at all mean that women did not play a role in PPN [*Pre-Pottery Neolithic*] society. There is a wide range of finds clearly connected to women in the contemporary settlements for instance – however, at Gobekli Tepe they (respectively their activity) remain invisible as of yet."[65]

This is thousands of years too early for true male dominance, which anyway normally included a lot images of females, mostly sexy but sometimes honouring motherhood. But it may be that Gobekli Tepe was dedicated to one particular concern where female imagery would have been out of place. Probably there were also female equivalents, but I doubt that such sacred places would include huge functionless stones that had cost enormous effort to make and raise.

Catalhoeyuek was a settled community who farmed. Gobekli Tepe was built by wandering hunter-gatherers. But perhaps they no longer wandered very far:

"Ethnographic studies have shown that communal projects and feasts are an important factor to strengthen group cohesion. Particularly rather small hunter-gatherer bands are essentially reliant on regular meetings to exchange information, goods, and marriage partner for instance to keep the gene pool fresh. It surely is no coincidence that the site of Gobekli Tepe was created where it is – on the highest point of the mountain ridge, a landmark widely visible… Large amounts of animal bones, hunted game strictly, speak in favour of huge feasts hold here and residue in stone vessels with a capacity of up to 160 litres may even hint at the consumption of alcoholic beverages. So-called workforce feasts like these (this is another insight from social anthropology) are a great means to attract the manpower necessary to carry out large communal projects like the constructions at Gobekli Tepe undoubtedly must have been…

"Traces of typical domestic activities are missing so far at Gobekli Tepe, as are any traces of Prehistoric agriculture or husbandry – any remains of plants and animals discovered as of yet hint at the respective wild forms only.

"However, numerous flint tools and flint flakes clearly hint at flint knapping on a grand scale taking place at and around Göbekli Tepe."[66]

Some people see this as very significant:

"Recent archaeological discoveries have upturned our theories about the origins of agriculture and the dawn of settled life. While climate change and economic adaptation have long been seen as prime causes, recent work at Gobekli and Catalhoeyuek in Turkey has shown that social gatherings at ritual centers played a key role. The remarkable finds at Göbekli include 6 meter stone monoliths carved with images of animals and birds and forming ritual enclosures. Recent research at Catalhoeyuek shows a fully fledged town in which wild bulls, leopards and the severed heads of ancestors were important social foci."[67]

Or you might see it more broadly:

"Human history began in 50,000 BC. Or thereabouts. Perhaps 100,000 BC, but certainly not before… Little of significance happened until 20,000 BC. – people simply continued living as hunter-gatherers, just as their ancestors had been doing for millions of years…

"Then came an astonishing 15,0000 years that saw the origin of farming, towns and civilisations. By 5000 BC the foundations of the modern world had been laid."[68]

50,000 to 100,000 years ago, people existed who would not look out of place if you could fish them up with a time machine and dressed them in modern clothing. They developed in Africa and spread across Eurasia 50,000 years ago, but interbred a little with Neanderthals and other archaic relatives. They could think in a new way, inventing the obvious-seeming trick of making tools out of bones, unknown among older varieties of human. A few of the last Neanderthals also did this, where they had contact with modern humans. [69] There is one exception, but it would be natural enough for a Neanderthal to copy another Neanderthal.

The bow-and-arrow has been confirmed from 8000 years ago, but might be much older.[70] No evidence that Neanderthals ever used it.

Humans expanded as the ice retreated, though they were hit by sudden worsenings, notably the Older Dryas (about 14000 years ago) and the succeeding Younger Dryas (12,900 to 11,700 years ago.) The Natufian culture existed from around 12,500 to 9,500 BC in the Levant. They founded Jericho some 11,000 years ago. If the Bible story of Joshua bringing down the walls is historic – it probably isn't – Jericho by then had already been though a full seven-tenths of its history.

Jericho is rated the oldest city to have had a fairly continuous existence, but it's moot if it was more than a town in its early days. It did have the first known city wall, about 8000 years old and probably a defence against floods. The Natufian culture was peaceful and seems to have had no enemies.[71] They were probably a hunter-gatherer culture that had regular social gathering

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[64] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_marriage_(Chinese)

[65] https://tepetelegrams.wordpress.com/2016/10/06/current-state-of-research-at-gobekli-tepe-interviewed-by-arkeofili-com/ (News & Notes from the Gobekli Tepe Research Staff.)
I omit diacritical marks, as explained in a note on Page 3.

[66] Ibid.

[67] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwSg7OyvoE

[68] *After the Ice: A Global Human History, 20,000 - 5000 BC*, page 3.

[69] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bone_tool

[70] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_archery

[71] After the Ice, page 43.

and stayed in their gathering-places when there was enough food to feed them there. They harvested wild grains, but did not cultivate crops that needed humans to plant them.

The so-called Neolithic Revolution was a slow and messy process:

> "Things started well as Natufian culture emerged in the southern Levant around 14,600 years ago. Population increased and there was some degree of sedentism [living in one place for a long time]. The site of 'Ain Mallaha contained animals and birds from all seasons…
>
> "The later Natufian, however, appear to have suffered a set-back during the climatic deterioration of the Younger Dryas (12,900-11,600 years ago). In the Levant many but not all hamlets dispersed and became more mobile… But there was no returning back to earlier times. Even though settlements had become more dispersed, small-scale and short-term in the later Natufian, people used abandoned Natufian base camps as cemetery sites…. They continued their intensive use of cereals and pulses [lentils and peas.] … When better climatic conditions emerged after the Younger Dryas the stage was set for a return to sedentism and increases in site size, population and intensification of resource use [in the early Neolithic]."[72]

The decisive shift to regular farming almost certainly happened further north, near the Cultural Centre / Temple of Gobekli Tepe. DNA studies show that later cultivated wheat was a relative of wild varieties found near there. Maybe people put extra efforts into stands of wild wheat within their regular wanderings if they were close to a place where everyone would gather for their yearly festival. Exchange good varieties, and one bright spark would have realised that wheat with an 'ear' that would not shatter had advantages. Better even though you had to do extra work threshing the grain and then planting some of it for the next crop. The greater ease of gathering would have made it worth it once you were partly settled and fairly sure of eating the next crop:

> "With the hindsight of history we know that wild cereals were the most important plants growing within the forest steppe. The key difference between the wild and domestic varieties lies within the ears of grain. In the wild form these are very brittle, so that when ripe they spontaneously shatter and the grains are scattered on the ground. Domesticated forms do not do this; their ears remain intact and the grain needs to be removed by threshing. So without human management the domesticated forms cannot survive, as they are unable to reseed themselves.
>
> "It is the same with peas, lentils, bitter vetch and chickpeas – the other early domesticates…
>
> "Another consequence is a change in the pattern of germination. Different individuals within a stand of wild plants will germinate and ripen and slightly different times – this ensures that some of them at least will mature and provide seed for the next year in conditions of unpredictable rainfall. Domesticated varieties, however, will germinate and ripen at the same time; they not only wait for the harvester, but also make his – or more probably her – life very much easier."[73]

Someone among the ancient people might have been clever enough to see the merits of the occasional ripe but un-shattered ear of wheat. They might select and plant it separately. Or it could have happened accidentally, with wild grain cut with sickles and more of the non-shattering variety being successfully collected. It's been estimated that over 200 to 250 years, the crop might transform without anyone intending it.[74]

One extra complication – you could choose to harvest cereals that are not quite ripe, and so not ready to shatter. The work is easier, but does not select for what would have been non-shattering ripe ears of wheat. *After the Ice* suggests that the Natufian culture that built Jericho got caught in just that cultural trap.[75]

Once one area had a better crop, by accident or planning, their neighbours would have noticed. An increasing number might conclude that *'this is a far far better crop than I have ever sewn before'*. Maybe only the young liked the new ways, but eventually they would be the Elders and the obstructive elders would have died of natural causes. The new ways could begin. They could settle down somewhere they liked, while still making the annual trip to Gobekli Tepe for whatever they did there.
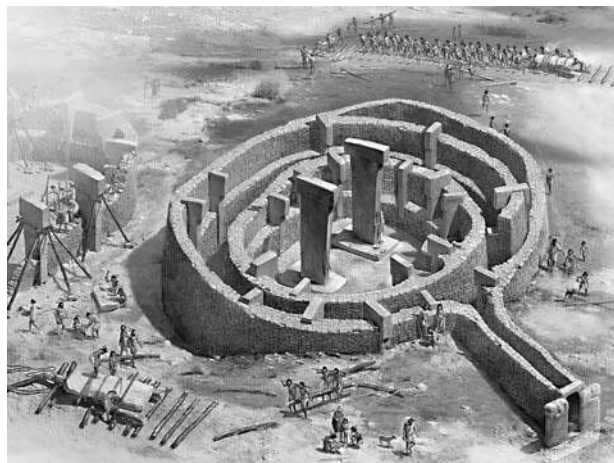
What was it for?

It may have been mostly a fun time, and a chance to fix marriages. Avoid inbreeding. Help keep the peace between neighbours.

It has also been suggested is that it was a site where teenager males could go through a secret Initiation Ritual and be accepted as Young Adults.

Looking at the expert vision of what one section of it was like, it seems ideal for being secretive and for giving an air of awe and mystery to young minds – belief largely shared by their elders, who might however have stage-managed some of it. Might also notice those who were using their brains and might be Elders in due course. Certainly, the weird carvings would have been very impressive to people not used to such things.

Something similar but separate presumably occurred for young women, in other places that probably left no recognisable traces. Society then and for long afterwards had a strict separation between male and female roles, though these were approximately equal. Some also allowed a few determined individuals to take

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[72] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 171-2

[73] After the Ice, pages 23-4

[74] After the Ice, pages 37-8

[75] After the Ice, page 39

a social role that contradicted their biological sex: I have no idea if that applied to the people of Gobekli Tepe. But in all known human societies, girls are much easier to socialise. The few who run wild are much less dangerous. It is *extremely* rare for women to get violent with anyone they don't know, unless seriously provoked or unless it is theft. Whereas many young males allowed to run wild can become the most dangerous wild animals on Earth.

When there was a state enforcing peace, 'rites of passage' tended to be hived off to various religions, when the state allowed several. With the decline of religion, this has faded in the West. Leninist states mostly had their own version: Young Pioneers in the Soviet Union. This was abolished in 1991, but a similar organisation still flourishes in China,[76] and may contribute to the low levels of violent crime there. Formal initiations and membership of organisations dedicated to good social habits certainly reduce the number of criminals: in my view the West needs to recreate them as something free and generalised.

Cities, States, and Leninists as Criminals

If Gobekli Tepe was the place where Neolithic farming condensed into reality, this was happening amidst human cultures that were already nearly there. There were at least two other centres where farming happened independently – rice growing in South China long before contact with the west was likely, and one or more probably two inventions of agriculture in the New World. There were also thousands of years of a 'Pre-Pottery Neolithic', usually divided into periods A and B. Making pots is a tricky technology, and there were intermediates of baked clay that lacked the little extras that make a good pot.[77]

And it led on to the first city-states, in which powerful governments played a significant role. Not an ideal system, but probably the only way for humans to become more than they had been.

There's a polemical book called *From Under the Rubble* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and six other Soviet dissidents. Written in 1975 by people who conspicuously lacked coherent ideas when the object of their hatred collapsed. Solzhenitsyn stayed in the west completing his long polemic against Bolshevism, at a time when there were few Bolshevik admirers left. At a time when post-Bolshevik society was open to remoulding. The man was irrelevant while Russia was being thoroughly messed up by incompetents guided by the West's New Right. He seemed at a loss what to do when he finally went home. In his last years, he supported Putin as the best available man for a wounded society. (As do I, though from a very different outlook.)

I'd long since decided that none of the Soviet dissidents had any understanding of history. Solzhenitsyn apparently thought that the Tsarist Empire would have had a wonderful future if those nasty Bolsheviks had not messed it up. He overlooks that this does not match what happened elsewhere where left-wing revolts failed. Similar autocratic countries with no

tradition of a ruling parliament all ended up with a right-wing dictatorship, as indeed did some that for a time had parliaments, including Japan, Portugal, and Greece. Many of those 1920s and 1930s regimes are now called fascist or semi-fascist. Poland is the grand exception, because the raw facts would cast a slur on the British choice to go to war in defence of Poland. Strong Polish hostility to Jews is an off-message fact that is mostly not integrated into the overall view of history.

If there was a 20th century historic error, it was the Popular Militarism that led to World War One. That led countries to carry on until the war had destroyed four of the six major states that began it. That inflicted vast damage and occupation by foreign armies on parts of France, most of Belgium and all of Serbia. Italy was humiliated by a massive defeat near the end of the war, and Greece by a massive defeat by a revived Turkey.

World War One was vastly more damaging than any previous European war since the Thirty Years War in the first half of the 17th century (which damaged Germany but left most of Europe still fairly healthy). And the Bolsheviks were the only 'Armed Prophets' who rejected the whole pattern of Popular Militarism and Imperialism that had led to the war. They had to copy aspects of the system they opposed in order to survive against it, but in principle they were against it. Their dreams had many points in common with the vastly more peaceful and equal world that emerged after 1945.

What were the alternatives? There were also pacifists, but they counted for little in the face of fascist movements that glorified Popular Militarism and Imperialism and felt only that the last World War had ended badly because their political enemies had been traitors. Crazy though it was, given that most German Jews were patriots and many gained medals and distinctions fighting as part of the German Army, Hitler was undoubtedly sincere in thinking they were to blame for Germany's defeat. Thinking that another war would be won if Jews were excluded.

Similar things happened in other fascist countries. In Italy, a corrupt and inefficient ruling class performed badly in World War One. Mussolini rose to power by glorifying them and blaming the left. The same people were left in place to performed even worse in World War Two. And yet many in the 1920s and 1930s saw fascism as the 'wave of the future'. This included a majority in Britain and the USA until fascism foolishly waged war on them.

Assuming Solzhenitsyn did not want such an outcome, what did he want that might plausibly have happened? If anyone knows, please tell me.

I mention this here because it all fits. Solzhenitsyn and the 'Rubblists' complain that the wonderful Neolithic Revolution got crushed by the Big Bad State. I wrote about it at the time, pointing out what a long transition it was and how most societies did not have anything like the modern state. That where the state was weak or absent, nothing much happened apart from people living familiar lives.

Even the idea of a Neolithic Revolution came from a life-long left-winger, V. Gordon Childe:

"Returning to Australia in 1917, he was prevented from working in academia because of his socialist activism,

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[76] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Pioneers_of_China

[77] After the Ice, page 60

instead working for the Australian Labor Party as the private secretary of politician John Storey. Growing critical of Labor, he authored an analysis of their policies and joined the far-left Industrial Workers of the World. Emigrating to London in 1921, he became librarian of the Royal Anthropological Institute and continued his research into European prehistory through various journeys across the continent, publishing his findings in academic papers and books. In doing so he introduced the continental European concept of an archaeological culture to the British archaeological community…

"Remaining a committed socialist, he embraced Marxism, and—rejecting culture-historical approaches— used Marxist ideas as an interpretative framework for archaeological data. He also became a noted sympathiser with the Soviet Union and visited the country on a number of occasions, although grew sceptical of Soviet foreign policy following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. His beliefs resulted in him being legally barred from entering the United States, despite being repeatedly invited to lecture there. Upon retirement, he returned to Australia's Blue Mountains, there committing suicide.

"Widely regarded as one of the most important archaeologists and prehistorians of his generation, he became known as the 'great synthesizer' for his work in synthesizing regional research into a broader picture of Near Eastern and European prehistory. He was also renowned for his emphasis on the role of revolutionary technological and economic developments in human society, such as the Neolithic Revolution and the Urban Revolution, in this manner being influenced by Marxist ideas on societal development."[78]

Childe's work was a vast step in the right direction. But until *Radiocarbon Dating* was developed in the late 1940s, it was very hard to say how old the various archaeological sites were, or which innovation came first. We also now know a lot more about climate – that there were 'blips' in the ending of the last ice-age. It now looks as if a few hunter-gatherers did become sedentary where the local food-sources would allow this. This included the harvesting of wild grains, and became easier as the climate improved after the massive 'cold snap' of the Younger Dryas.

Correctly dated, the elements of the invention of the Neolithic way of life in West Asia turn out to have happened by small steps across several thousand years.

"Zeder (2009) has recently documented the timing of the introduction of the 10 elements of Childe's Neolithic package. It is now clear that the 10 elements were introduced at very different times (see Figure 9.9)."[79]

Figure 9.9 shows ground stone implements way back at 22,000 years ago, and sedentary settlements from 15,000. Plant domestication came *after* people began thinking of themselves as a wider community with places like Gobekli Tepe. Animal domestication came later and involved controlling their feeding and giving them shelter rather than hunting them. (It can also involve following a semi-wild herd, as is done with reindeer, but humans in West Asia were already settled.) Controlling the reproduction of animals was probably done later, by killing or castrating the less favoured males.

It wasn't quite a revolution, but most of the key changes happened across 3000 years. This was a sharp break from the enormously long Paleolithic, dated to 2,100,000 years ago. Considered to have started with the probable invention of stone tools by *Homo habilis*, the skilled-handed people who still looked much more like chimps, or the presumed chimp-human ancestor. It has been suggested that even early australopithecines like Lucy would use stones as tools, as modern chimps do. But the key step was shaping a stone to be a useful tool rather than using whatever stones happened to be lying around. This has not been found before 2.1 million years ago

Even set within the 50,000 to 100,000 years of fully modern humans, inventing the Neolithic was sudden and a 'great leap forward'. And tricky and with set-backs, which is normal for radical changes.

One extra oddity. Pottery was added to the new West Asian way of life rather gradually from 10,000 years ago. But in Europe, 'Venus' figures in ceramics had been made from at least 27,000 years ago,[80] though by just one culture and with no signs of a wider impact. Just possibly this was a rare art practiced occasionally across a vast cultural network stretching across Europe and North Asia. Certainly, the next known instance is at the other end of Eurasia:

"Although pottery figurines are found from earlier periods in Europe, the oldest pottery vessels come from East Asia, with finds in China and Japan, then still linked by a land bridge, and some in what is now the Russian Far East, providing several from 20,000–10,000 BCE, although the vessels were simple utilitarian objects."[81]

One could imagine some wanderer bringing the trick to West Asia, where it was much more useful. But clever ideas keep getting re-invented, so who knows? Pottery is heavy and fragile. Unless you have a fixed home, it might seem more trouble than it was worth.

"In the Holocene [the period after the last Ice Age], hunter-gatherers developed sedentary village life with increased population densities, complex material culture, and in some cases pottery and ranked societies in several areas such as Mesolithic Europe, Japan and maritime Far East Asia, the North American High Arctic, the Pacific coast of northwest North America, interior California's oak woodlands, the Californian Channel Islands, the Calusa of Florida, the coast of Ecuador, and the Murray-Daring Basin of southeast Australia. There is a broad social process which happens to involve early agriculture in some areas."[82]

Europe had a prolonged Mesolithic, in which only some elements of the new culture were accepted until a gradual drift westward by farmers from West Asia. DNA studies show that 'Aboriginal Europeans', the European known from the oldest written history, were already a mix. The oldest element were the hunter-gatherers who'd replaced the Neanderthals. They were

[78] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._Gordon_Childe

[79] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Pages 195-6

[80] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottery#History

[81] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramic_art#History

[82] Entangled, by Ian Hodder. Page 201

blue-eyed and dark-skin, something we'd now think of as Mixed Race, but those were the very first 'Aboriginal Europeans'. It also seems that interbreeding with Neanderthals took place *only* in West Asia, among the ancestors of all humans outside of Africa. Some Neanderthal features, including red hair, look suspiciously similar to later Europeans. But they are more likely parallel developments caused by colder weather and weaker sunshine. Now that we have detailed DNA analysis, it was learned that red hair among Neanderthals was caused by a mutation not found in any modern human.[83] The drift to lighter skin is assumed to be due to a diet with less fresh meat, making synthesis of Vitamin D caused by sunlight on the skin more useful. That change was caused by a wave of farmers from West Asia who merged with the older populations with little sign of violence.

(A recent study suggests that the Beaker People swamped some older inhabitants in parts of Europe. That they provided 90% of later British ancestry, with the older farmers who built Stonehenge supplying only 10%. But also that Britain then had been in decline, and here again there were few signs of violence.[84])

In West Asia, new tricks were learned gradually. A West Asian settlement called Valley of the Ravens from 8000 BC shows signs of domestic animals. Goat bones replacing the bones of gazelle, which were never tamed. Goat, awkward though they are, naturally form herds and stay in one place.[85] Sheep mostly came later, and were bred for wool very much later. But the people had tunics and skirts made from early linen, died green and preserved by the very dry soil of later times.[86]

The various communities also exchanged useful goods. This is usually described as 'trading', but more likely it was gift-exchange. The key difference is that you *give* a gift, though expecting something in return. It might not be something you even need. The main point is usually the social relationship: *it's the thought that counts*. With trade, each side has to agree on exactly what gets exchanged before anything happens, and self-interest dominates. If the goods or cash are not there at once, there is a legal obligation to fix that in due time. Of course, trading typically involves some sort of social relationship, and at least the pretence of friendship: a fact known to everyone except 'Rational Economists'. But while trading has always needed ideological defenders, gift-exchange comes so naturally to us that I've never seen anyone bother to argue why it is a good thing. (If anyone knows of a book doing so, please let me know.) Few even wonder why we do this, and most socialists unfortunately do not remind them.

A major item of exchange in the Neolithic was the volcanic glass obsidian, which was plentiful in the part of Anatolia later known as Cappadocia. It was useful for tools and ornaments. Obsidian found its way to most places, including Jericho and Catalhoeyuek.

Wheels On Fire

Wheels enter history quite gradually. The *concept* is perhaps not so hard: people living in what is now Mexico had small wheeled objects, mostly seen as toys but perhaps with a religious function.[87] But useful wagons are another matter. Sledges were preferred for some time, even where there was no snow.

"Wheels are the archetype of a primitive, caveman-level technology. But in fact, they're so ingenious that it took until 3500 B.C. for someone to invent them. By that time — it was the Bronze Age — humans were already casting metal alloys, constructing canals and sailboats, and even designing complex musical instruments such as harps.

"The tricky thing about the wheel is not conceiving of a cylinder rolling on its edge. It's figuring out how to connect a stable, stationary platform to that cylinder.

"'The stroke of brilliance was the wheel-and-axle concept,' said David Anthony, a professor of anthropology at Hartwick College and author of '*The Horse, the Wheel, and Language*'… 'But then making it was also difficult'…

"The success of the whole structure was extremely sensitive to the size of the axle. A thick axle would generate too much friction, while narrow one would reduce friction but would also be too weak to support a load. 'They solved this problem by making the earliest wagons quite narrow, so they could have short axles, which made it possible to have an axle that wasn't very thick,' Anthony told *Life's Little Mysteries*.

"The sensitivity of the wheel-and-axle system to all these factors meant that it could not have been developed in phases, he said. It was an all-or-nothing structure.

"Whoever invented it must have had access to wide slabs of wood from thick-trunked trees in order to carve large, round wheels. They also needed metal tools to chisel fine-fitted holes and axles. And they must have had a need for hauling heavy burdens over land. According to Anthony, 'It was the carpentry that probably delayed the invention until 3500 B.C. or so, because it was only after about 4000 B.C. that cast copper chisels and gouges became common in the Near East.'

"The invention of the wheel was so challenging that it probably happened only once, in one place. However, from that place, it seems to have spread so rapidly across Eurasia and the Middle East that experts cannot say for sure where it originated. The earliest images of wheeled carts have been excavated in Poland and elsewhere in the Eurasian steppes, and this region is overtaking Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) as the wheel's most likely birthplace. According to Asko Parpola, an Indologist at the University of Helsinki in Finland, there are linguistic reasons to believe the wheel originated with the Tripolye people of modern-day Ukraine. That is, the words associated with wheels and wagons derive from the language of that culture."[88]

To me, it is remarkable that wheels for wagons appear simultaneously with the potters' wheel.[89] My parents took an interest in arts and crafts, so as a child I saw actual traditional potters in action. A lump of wet

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83 http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20151116-what-did-the-neanderthals-do-for-us

84 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43115485

85 After the Ice, page 77

86 After the Ice, pages 74-5

87 https://uncoveredhistory.com/mesoamerica/wheeled-toys/

88 https://www.livescience.com/18808-invention-wheel.html

89 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheel#History

clay placed at the centre of a heavy horizonal wheel will rise and be easily formed into a pot-shape with gentle finger pressure.[90] It looks magical. And a lot less work than shaping a pot by hand, as people had been doing for millennia. The result is much more symmetrical, and fancy markings are possible.

This useful device could have emerged accidentally from simple turntables that made it easier to make pots by traditional methods:

> "Much early ceramic ware was hand-built using a simple coiling technique in which clay was rolled into long threads that were then pinched and beaten together to form the body of a vessel. In the coiling method of construction, all the energy required to form the main part of a piece is supplied indirectly by the hands of the potter. Early ceramics built by coiling were often placed on mats or large leaves to allow them to be worked more conveniently. The evidence of this lies in mat or leaf impressions left in the clay of the base of the pot. This arrangement allowed the potter to rotate the vessel during construction, rather than walk around it to add coils of clay.

> "The earliest forms of the potter's wheel (called tourneys or slow wheels) were probably developed as an extension to this procedure. Tournettes, in use around 4500 BC in the Near East, were turned slowly by hand or by foot while coiling a pot. Only a small range of vessels were fashioned on the tournette, suggesting that it was used by a limited number of potters. The introduction of the slow wheel increased the efficiency of hand-powered pottery production.

> "In the mid to late 3rd millennium BCE the fast wheel was developed, which operated on the flywheel principle. It utilised energy stored in the rotating mass of the heavy stone wheel itself to speed the process. This wheel was wound up and charged with energy by kicking, or pushing it around with a stick, providing a centrifugal force. The fast wheel enabled a new process of pottery-making to develop, called throwing, in which a lump of clay was placed centrally on the wheel and then squeezed, lifted and shaped as the wheel turned."[91]

You can imagine how it might have happened. As wonderful new copper tools become available, people use them to produce tourneys (slow wheels) that turn smoothly and with little effort. On day, a child or perhaps a teenager messes around with one of them and makes it spin fast. They then drop on a lump of wet clay and discover that the wheel does something magical and useful. They show off this brilliant new invention, and it spreads rapidly.

(Someone with funding should make a documentary called *The Roll of Pots in Building Human Civilisation*. Get craftspeople to try re-creating the possible discovery of smelting in pot kilns, and the evolution of the potter's wheel.)

Wheels fitting smoothly to axels for the new potter's wheels make it a small step to think of making wheeled carts as well. Maybe the first examples are toy-sized, but probably displayed as magical things for adults rather than for children. The larger they get, the trickier

it is to make a wooden wheel-system that will run smoothly with large loads. But even a small wagon has some uses, so there was a smooth path upwards. And as I said, people went on using sledges for some time, while wagons gradually improved.

Here you have a 'chariot of the gods' without the need for gods: just playful humans who spot a new opportunity. And surprisingly, the wheel had been around, and horses had been tamed to pull them, for about two thousand years before actual chariots appear. They may have been invented by a people known to us as Aryans or proto-Indo-Europeans. These certainly became the most efficient and successful users. No better than the professional armies of Mesopotamia, who soon learned the art even if they were not the original inventors. But much more formidable pushing westward into Anatolia and Europe and eastward through Iran down to the Indian Subcontinent.

Majority opinion puts the origin of this people at about 4000 BC, and they only became formidable with the development of chariots from about 2000 BC. An alternative minority view is that they existed long before that in Anatolia and were the first farmers there. But with certainty, no one wrote a language recognisable as Indo-European until long after writing had been invented by the Sumerians. It was absent when the Sumerian system was adapted by various speakers of ancient extinct Semitic languages, and other lost languages that mostly have no known relatives.

19th century European racists liked to associate the rise of industrialisation in Western Europe with the much older venture of the Indo-Europeans. But those original tribalists were almost certainly not the main ancestors of West Europeans. Such notions were nonsense, useful to justify Empires in which one racial group dominated many others.

> "There actually were Aryans in history … but they were Bronze Age tribal people who lived in Iran, Afghanistan, and the norther Indian subcontinent. It is highly doubtful that they were blond or blue-eyed…

> "And how did the Aryans themselves define 'Aryan'? According to their own texts, they conceived of 'Aryan-ness' as a *religious-linguistic* category. Some Sanskrit-speaking chiefs, and even poets in the *Rig-Veda* [the oldest and most sacred Hindu scripture], had names such as Balbutha and Brbu that were foreign to the Sanskrit ones. These people were of non-Aryan origin and yet were leaders among the Aryans… The *Rig-Veda* made the *ritual* and *linguistic* barrier clear, but it did not require or even contemplate racial purity."[92]

Of course, names do not reliably indicate racial origin. Consider Martin Luther King, Leon Trotsky, Nelson Mandela etc. Or all the West Europeans with first names of remote Hebrew origin. But I'm sure he is right that definitions were cultural. A concept as broad as the 'White Race' only really emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In what's otherwise a clever work, Gore Vidal in a novel called *Creation* has a dark-skinned Indra and has

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[90] See for instance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu6UHBc72pc – one of many demonstrations.

[91] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potter%27s_wheel#History

[92] *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-age Riders From the Eurasian Steppes shaped the Modern World.* David W. Anthony, Princeton, 2007. Pages 10-11.

the narrator suppose that this is from 'going native' while in India. In fact, traditions vary a lot – but the even more significant Krishna has a name that means meaning 'black', 'dark', or 'dark blue'.[93] We can safely assume that blue-skinned people never existed outside of Hindu religious art. Indo-Europeans were a culture that began in a region where the people probably looked much like modern South Russians. But all sorts of people would have later picked up the culture, just as a majority of modern English-speakers look nothing like most people who identify themselves as English.

The term 'Aryan' was unknown outside of speakers of Indo-Iranian languages, though it is thought to be related to 'artistic' and also 'aristocratic'. Genetic evidence suggests that the first Indo-Europeans came from what is now South Russia. And that their spread was more cultural than genetic, with older populations assimilated to the new culture. Thinking of it as an ancient Great Race is discredited mainstream scholarship. Stuff now upheld as true only by the Far Right, who are slow learners.

(They also suppose that they are Caucasians, even though only those living in or near the Caucasus Mountains would have had ancestors who ever lived there. DNA shows very different paths of human migration.)

India was the far south-eastern end of the Indo-European expansion. It included many other elements:

"The language of the *Rig-Veda* contained many traces of its syncretic origins. The deity name *Indra* and the drug-deity name *Soma*, the two central elements of the religion of the *Rig-Veda*, were non-Indo-Iranian words borrowed in the contact zone... Indra was regarded in later Avestan Iranian texts as a minor demon"[94]

For later Hindus, Devas were gods and Asuras were demons. For Iranian religion as reformed by Zoroaster, Ahura Mazda was the supreme good god and Daeva are demons. In some long-forgotten dispute between rival priests, older deities were either assimilated or turned into evil enemies.

Meantime in Europe, the quintessentially Greek God Apollo probably came from Anatolia. The oldest Greeks had a god called Paean, assimilated by Apollo. He may have begun as a Hittite god of plagues.[95] That's how impure and complex the 'classical' legacies actually are.

"Now it is a remarkable fact that in Homer Apollo is not the god of the Greeks, but the chief deity of the Trojans with his temple in their citadel"[96]

"The cult of Apollo is thought not to be Greek but Anatolian or Cypriot in origin (Homer calls him 'Lycian-born'). Interestingly enough his name does not appear in the Linear B tablets so far unearthed."[97]

Much of Europe's culture came from West Asia, including deities like Cybele and Mithras. And of course Jesus, and his mother Mary. Mary (originally Mariam) is barely mentioned in the Gospels, but took over the ancient Mother-Goddess role.

Transfers between peoples living in Anatolia and Greece would have been easy, because there was a common culture behind all of the branches:

"Scholars noticed more than a hundred years ago that the oldest well-documented Indo-European languages – Imperial Hittite, Mycenaean Greek, and the most ancient form of Sanskrit ... were spoken by militaristic societies that seemed to erupt into the ancient world driving chariots pulled by swift horses... For about a thousand years, between 1700 and 700 BCD, chariots were the favoured weapons of pharaohs and kings throughout the ancient world... After 800 BCE chariots were gradually abandoned as they became vulnerable to a new kind of warfare conducted by disciplined troops of mounted archers."[98]

The Horse, the Wheel, and Language suggests that the early Indo-European invented the chariot, perhaps originally developed for racing at funeral games. For certain, they were the main chariot-users who were also nomadic tribalists. Existing states used chariots, but this gave them no clear advantage. The technology proved easy to copy by states that already had professional armies. But a warrior class among nomadic tribalist could push into the territory of other people who lacked chariots. These would either be conquered and assimilate, or else fight back and copy a lot of the enemy's methods.

What was so great about the chariot? First, it was fast, whereas a conventional wagon would have been too slow to be decisive in battle. This speed was helped by having spoked wheels rather than the older solid-wood wheels. But a warrior standing on a mobile platform was also deadlier than a warrior on horseback:

"From a standing position in a chariot, a driver-warrior could use his entire body to throw, whereas a man on horseback without stirrups (invented after 300 CE) could use only his arm and shoulder. A javelin-hurling charioteer could strike a man on horseback before the rider could strike him. Unlike a charioteer, a man on horseback could not carry a large sheath full of javelins and so would be at a double disadvantage if his first cast missed."[99]

And could attack several foes in turn. Charioteers more often fired arrows, and could use long powerful bows, very tricky for a horseman. The decline of chariots began when people learned how to make short enormously powerful bows carefully constructed from wood, horn, sinew etc. The bows used in mediaeval times by the Mongols had a longer range than the famous 'English' longbows (which were anyway a Welsh invention).

The singular Indo-European class structure must have proved efficient for conquering societies without a professional army. The basic order was of priest / scholars, warriors, merchants, and commoners. Best known from Hindu society, where it hardened into caste lines and then elaborated into the modern system, which is much more complex. But it is found elsewhere among societies with Indo-European languages. Perhaps it had

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[93] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krishna#Names_and_epithets

[94] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 454.

[95] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo#Etymology

[96] Wood, Michael. *In Search of the Trojan War*, BBC Books 2005. First published 1985. Page 299

[97] In Search of the Trojan War, page 300

[98] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 18.

[99] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 400.

existed for a long time among the original Indo-Europeans, and suddenly blossomed with the invention of the chariot.

A chariot is a luxury for anything except war and chariot-races. It is also tricky to learn. And a war-chariot becomes much more effective when the driver is skilled and experienced.

One way to have large numbers of skilled charioteers is a professional army funded by taxes.

The other is a class of warriors fed by the commoners, either as a tribal elite or as owners of herds or land. These have a vast advantage over non-militarised tribalists. Warriors will travel vast distances to find a good war, sometimes following existing social ties but often without. Non-militarised tribalist would be much less likely to do this. Warriors might originally have been brought in as allies for some local quarrel between tribes with the older pattern.

I see an analogy with the way that West European Imperialism imposed its cultural pattern on the rest of the world. Sometimes the original peoples were reduced to a tiny minority, as in the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Sometimes the newcomers became a dominant elite, as in Latin America. Or the original inhabitants produced their own elites who took over, as in Africa and much of Asia. Imperial Japan, the Soviet Union, Communist Vietnam, and Communist China become formidable enemies of European Imperialism, while also assimilating many of its values.

Whether the language gets replaced depends on whether there was an existing language strong enough to become the main medium for the new thinking, or else the language of state power. Conqueror languages dominate in Latin America and most of Black Africa. Asia kept its traditions, but the Republic of India has both English and Hindi as official languages. Singapore has English as one of four. Vast numbers of Chinese, Japanese and other Asians learn English as the language they need for the wider world.

Stepping back to the original expansionist Indo-Europeans, it seems likely that Europe and what became Iran were a diversity of languages and language-families, all too small to resist. In all Europe, only Basque may be a survival of what the older inhabitants spoke. Also perhaps not: we know that the Celtic languages of Britain were brought by conquerors and are extinct in their original central-European heartland.

As for the Indian subcontinent, the Dravidian languages of South India may be the survival of the language of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Or they may be a wholly separate South Indian development: another language of conquest. Occurrences in the north are generally believed to be later migrations.

Indo-European spread by successful conquest and assimilation, like almost all other major languages. But perhaps Indo-European languages forced a more analytical mode of thinking:

"Many other language families became extinct as Indo-European languages spread. It is possible that the resultant loss of linguistic diversity has narrowed and channelled habits of perception in the modern world. For example, all Indo-European languages force the speaker to pay attention to tense and number when talking about an action: you *must* specify whether the action is past, present, or future, and you *must* specify whether the actor is singular or plural."[100]

Hinduism successfully sterilised any progressive aspects the language may have had: it became bound up with a ritual and mystical culture. By contrast, the culture of Imperial China was so close to modern thinking that it remains puzzling it got no further. But Chinese does not *force* you to 'pay attention to tense and number', though it does of course allow it. One of several possible explanations for why China did not invent modern society.[101]

The process continued throughout history:

"The pre-Indo-European languages of Europe were abandoned because they were linked to membership of social groups that became stigmatized… the possibilities are much more varied than just invasion and conquest… The Gaelic spoken by Scottish 'fisher' folk was abandoned after World War II, when increased mobility and new economic opportunities led to out-marriage between Gaelic 'fishers' and the surrounding English-speaking population, and the formerly tightly closed and egalitarian 'fisher' community became intensely aware both of its low ranking in the larger world and of alternative economic opportunities. Gaelic rapidly disappeared, although only a few people – soldiers, professionals, teachers – moved very far."[102]

Indo-Europeans were tribalists, as likely to fight each other as people with other languages or cultures. The language split into many different branches:

"The oldest written Indo-European languages belong to the Anatolian branch… three early stems, Hittite, Luwian, and Palaic. All three languages are extinct, but once were spoken over large parts of ancient Anatolia… Hittite is by far the best known of the three, as it was the palace and administrative language of the Hittite Empire…

"The name *Hittite* was given to them by Egyptian and Syrian scribes who failed to distinguish the Hittite kings from the Hattic kings they had conquered… Hattic was a non-Indo-European language, probably linked distantly to the Caucasian languages. The Hittites borrowed Hattic words for throne, lord, king, queen, queen mother, heir apparent, priest, and a long list of palace officials and cult leaders… The early speakers of Hittite or Palaic were intruders in a non-Indo-European central Anatolian landscape dominated by Hattic speakers who had already founded cities, acquired literate bureaucracies, and established kingdoms and palace cults…

"The Hittites looted Babylon, took other cities from the Assyrians, and fought the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II to a standstill at the greatest chariot battle of ancient times, at Kadesh, on the banks of the Orontes River in Syria."[103]

The Hittites replaced the Hattics in 1650 BC. They fell in the Late Bronze Age Crisis, having their capital burned in 1180 BC. They were also tied somehow to the

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[100] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 19
[101] https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/traditional-china-resisted-modernisation/
[102] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 340
[103] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, pages 44-5.

Trojans who were the historic basis of Homer's *Iliad*:

> "The third early Anatolian language, Luwian, was spoken by more people over a larger area, and it continued to be spoken after the end of the [Hittite] empire. During the later Hittite empire Luwian was the dominant language even in the Hittite royal court. Luwian did not borrow from Hattic core region and so might have been spoken originally in western Anatolia outside the Hattic core region – perhaps even in Troy, where a Luwian inscription was found on a seal in Troy level VI – the Troy of the Trojan War. On the other hand Luwian did borrow from other, unknown, non-Indo-European language(s)."[104]

Meantime another branch of the expanding Indo-Europeans created Mycenaean Greece. They too took over from older city-dwellers. Athens and many other famous cities have names believed to be pre-Greek.

There was also another unrelated Indo-European intrusion: the Mitanni Empire had royal names and names for gods clearly related to those of the Indo-Iranians. Yet this must have been a small military elite, since the language was Hurrian, from yet another language family.[105] The politics of the era were very complex, and we have only stray records.

What we do know suggests a diversity of small Indo-European expansions with no overall plan. Where a city-based literate state existed, they might take it over. Where society was tribal, as it was in most of Europe, they remained tribalists with a gift for warfare in the Eneolithic, the Copper-Age transition between the Neolithic and the later Bronze Age:

> "Eneolithic warfare was tribal warfare, so there were no armies, just the young men of this clan fighting the young men of that clan. And early Indo-European warfare seems from the earliest myths and poetic traditions to have been conducted principally to gain glory… Eneolithic warfare probably was a strictly seasonal activity conducted by groups organised more like modern neighbourhood gangs than modern armies."[106]

When Homer told of the Trojan War, he understood it in just that spirit. But this may have been him falsely understanding a well-ordered Mycenaean society in terms of the much more disorderly society of his own time. He might well have merged many different events, some of them from a wider war by the High King of the Mycenaean Greeks against the outskirts of the Hittite Empire.

Priam's Tragedy – the Original Trojan Legend?

> "It may be a surprise to learn of an earlier sack of Troy, but Greek legend is insistent on it… In the sack Laomedon and his sons were killed; only the youngest, Podarces, survived, for he alone had maintained that Herakles should be given his rightful reward. Podarces was released and took a new name, Priam, meaning 'redeemed': a fateful name indeed. Herakles left Priam as a young king, and Troy was restored within the same walls.

> "Over a very long and successful reign, spanning three generations, Priam restored Troy to the height of its former power. He himself had fifty sons and twelve daughters; his eldest son was the great warrior Hector, the next Paris, whose other name was Alexandros – and Paris was to be the instrument of destiny in the events that followed."[107]

Being aware of this from many sources, I wondered if Priam's rise and fall might not have been the original story – a grand tragedy. From this, I wrote a short story which imagined a Greek bard who knew it and was complaining about how his pupil, 'Young Homer', was now changing everything.[108]

Thinking about what archaeology was found at the traditional site of Troy, I decided that if there was an original '*Tragedy of Priam*', it too would not have been real history.[109] Already knowing quite a lot about the wider evolution of cities, I came to write the present work, ranging well beyond Troy.

Homer wrote within a well-established tradition:

> ""The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are by common consent the beginnings of European literature… We can safely assume that there had been earlier and cruder Greek epic poetry before Homer, but we know nothing of it."[110]

> "Homer lived perhaps in the eighth century BC, by which time the tale of Troy was evidently widely told in Aegean courts, for we find potentates naming themselves after its heroes."[111]

> "The tower-shaped body shield usually associated with Ajax … was already obsolete by the thirteenth century BC… Homer is preserving descriptions from long before his time."[112]

The epic may have been continuously shaped and re-shaped to fit later politics:

> "During the expansion of sixth-century Athens, a tyrant with political ambitions wished to turn the local festival to the goddess Athena into one with a more 'national' appeal… At this time, as he sought the leadership of Greece for Athens, he conceived of securing for Athens what were unanimously viewed as the most magnificent of the traditional Greek epics, especially the *Iliad*, which told of the first undertaking by a united Hellas. He therefore paid for the best of the Homeridae to come to Athens to dictate Homer as 'truly' and fully and beautifully as possible to an Athenian scribe."[113]

Greek identity was complex:

> "The earliest Greek literature, which is attributed to Homer and is dated to the 8th or 7th centuries BC, is written in 'Old Ionic' rather than Attic. Athens and its dialect remained relatively obscure until the establishment of its democracy following the reforms of Solon in the 6th century BC: so began the classical period, one of great Athenian influence both in Greece and throughout the

[104] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 45

[105] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 49

[106] The Horse, the Wheel, and Language, page 237

[107] Wood, Michael. *In Search of the Trojan War*, BBC Books 2005. First published 1985. Page 24.

[108] https://gwydionmadawc.com/060-my-own-science-fiction/troy-before-homer/

[109] https://gwydionmadawc.com/050-about-science-fiction/priams-tragedy-and-the-wrath-of-achilles/

[110] In Search of the Trojan War, page 135

[111] In Search of the Trojan War, page 142

[112] In Search of the Trojan War, page 145

[113] In Search of the Trojan War, page 142

Mediterranean.

"The first extensive works of literature in Attic are the plays of the dramatists Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes dating from the 5th century BC."[114]

Athens may have shaped the official version: written down from an ancient oral tradition which might otherwise have vanished without trace. What we have comes to us through many copies of copies. In the version we have, leadership goes to extinct Mycenae. Menelaus of Sparta is a fool dependent on his powerful brother. The other main heroes are Achilles, Odysseus, and Great Ajax, all from small places. Menestheus, an Athenian king, brings 50 ships and is described as a brilliant leader, but does nothing notable.

Writers of historic fiction mostly choose a de-mythologised version of the story. Snip out the gods and goddesses and impossible heroic feat. Make a story that *might* have happened, from a modern viewpoint. Colleen McCullough in *The Song of Troy* even includes some little-known and improbable incidents from after the death of Hector, spoiling in my view what was quite a good novel. (Her *Masters of Rome* series is much better.)

That's one option – throw out things you don't believe possible, but treat the naturalistic incidents as broadly true. Other writers looked at the whole and decided it was assembled from things that happened at many different times and places, or were invented for a popular character:

"[Homer] was drawing on a vast cycle of stories which dealt with the Trojan War. The *Iliad* in fact deals with only one episode covering a few weeks in the tenth year of the war. In classical times a great series of epics, now lost or in fragments, told those parts of the stories ignored by the earlier Homeric poems, and some of these like, like the epics known as *Kypria* and *Sack of Ilios*, were evidently of great scope and power… They, like Homer, were drawing heavily on a long oral tradition."[115]

"Other accounts say with some probability that originally Troy and Ilios were two separate places (and indeed Homer's insistence on using the two names for Troy has never otherwise been satisfactorily explained)."[116]

In our own time we see similar combinations and changes. The original Dracula was the historic Vlad the Impaler, viewed as a hero by some Romanians. Others saw him as a tyrant, but it was Bram Stoker who reinvented him as a vampire, drawing on separate legends of such beings. He is nowadays out of copyright and included in all sorts of stories. His victim Mina Harker, whom Stoker had cured of her curse, becomes a heroic vampire lady in the comic book series and film *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. She appears along with characters from a number of other works of fiction: Allan Quatermain, Captain Nemo, Tom Sawyer, Dorian Gray, Professor James Moriarty, Dr. Henry Jekyll / Edward Hyde and a successor to Wells's Invisible Man.[117] It also changes the original fictions: it

is set in 1899, so the youthful Tom Sawyer should be at least 50. Verne originally imagined Captain Nemo as a Pole feuding with Tsarist Russia,[118] but then revised him as a Hindu for a later and deservedly obscure return.

In Homer's day, the audience expected stories about real people, though they were also believers in magic and gods. But a character might be invented as a friend or foe of an existing character and then become popular in their own right. Moriarty was barely more than a plot device to let Conan Doyle kill off Sherlock Holmes when he tired of writing the stories. He has become much the most popular figure from the series, with independent adventures made for him.

So what was the reality behind the legends of Troy?

It was not the vast city that most people imagine:

"The first thing to remember is that Troy (if indeed it ever bore that name before the legend named it) itself was only ever a royal citadel, home of a few dozen families and their retainers; it was a royal citadel on a little hill, sheltering a few hundred people with perhaps 1000 or so living around it. In its heyday, this tiny hill was still only the equivalent of a walled palace."[119]

I also doubt the notion that it was rich and powerful because it controlled entrance to the Black Sea. First, it is not that close. Second, that was never a major trade route: much smaller than those to the south.
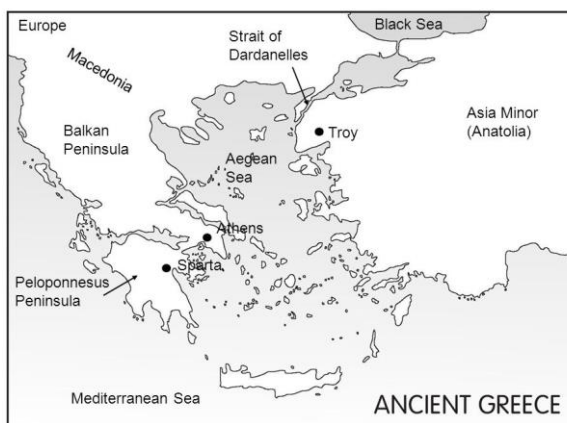
If it were not for the legends, we would treat it as just one city among many, though one with a long history:

"The layers of ruins in the citadel at Hisarlik are numbered Troy I – Troy IX, with various subdivisions:

Troy I 3000–2600 BC …
Troy II 2600–2250 BC …
Troy III 2250–2100 BC …
Troy IV 2100–1950 BC …
Troy V: 20th–18th centuries BC …
Troy VI: 17th–15th centuries BC
Troy VIh: late Bronze Age, 14th century BC
Troy VIIa: c. 1300–1190 BC, …
Troy VIIb1: 12th century BC
Troy VIIb2: 11th century BC
Troy VIIb3: until c. 950 BC
Troy VIII: c. 700–85 BC
Troy IX: 85 BC–c. AD 500"[120]

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[114] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attic_Greek

[115] In Search of the Trojan War, page 23

[116] In Search of the Trojan War, page 24

[117] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_League_of_Extraordinary_Gentlemen_(film)

[118] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_Nemo#Origin

[119] In Search of the Trojan War, page 19

[120] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troy#Historical_Troy_uncovered

The Wiki called Troy VIIa the 'most likely setting for Homer's story', but that's disputed. 'Troy VIh' – let's call it Troy Six – was prosperous, but was destroyed by an earthquake. Troy VIIa – call it Troy Seven – was sacked, but had been a settlement of impoverished ruin-dwellers. It would not have needed a major war to take it.

"The inhabitants of this city [Troy VIIA] simply took the remnants of Troy VIh, which was probably destroyed by an earthquake perhaps as early as 1300 BC ... and rebuilt the city. Thus, the large houses originally build during Troy VI now had partitioning walls installed and several families living where there had been only one before."

"Both excavators found bodies in the streets of Troy VIIA and arrowheads embedded in the walls, and both were convinced it was destroyed in warfare... 'There are skeletons; we found, for example, a girl, I think sixteen, seventeen years old, half buried, the feet were burned by fire.'

"However, the date of this destruction might make it difficult to argue that the Mycenaeans were responsible, as in Homer's story of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, unless the Mycenaean palaces back on the Greek mainland were being attacked and destroyed precisely because all their warriors were away fighting at Troy. In fact, Mountjoy suggests that the Sea Peoples, rather than the Mycenaeans, destroyed Troy VIIA. This would fit well with the mention of the former by Ramses III just three years later, but she presents no substantial evidence to support her hypothesis, which remains speculative.

"If the Mycenaeans were not involved in the destruction of Troy VIIA, it may have been because they were also under attack at approximately the same time. It is universally accepted by scholars that Mycenae Tirens, Midea, Pylos, Thebes, and many other Mycenaean sites on the Greek mainland suffered destruction at this same approximate time.[121]

The successive fates of Troy Six and Troy Seven make an interesting fit to the standard Greek account of Priam –he restored the city after it was sacked by Hercules. Made it rich again, only to see it wrecked in his old age.

Let's suppose that Podarces / Priam really existed. He restored the city after the earthquake that destroyed Troy Six; but was a minor ruler. The war that destroyed him would have been a small raid, not needing the High King of Mycenae with a host of allies. Perhaps a small incident in a major siege of a neighbouring city called Ilium.

One could construct a plausible scenario:

- Event One. Troy Six is destroyed by an earthquake. It never properly recovers.

- The same earthquake in a region prone to them damages an unknown city called Ilios. It gets sacked, but recovers.
- Event Two. A major war by Greeks is directed mostly against a restored Ilios. But it includes the sack of the weakly restored Troy Seven.
- Greeks later take over the ruined Troy. Ilios is abandoned.
- The inhabitants of Greek Troy rewrite history to glorify their city. Call this the *Tragedy of Priam*:
  - Event One becomes the sack of Troy by Hercules.
  - Event Two becomes the sack of Troy by Agamemnon.
- The *Tragedy of Priam* becomes popular. Unrelated legends are absorbed into it, with other Greek heroes who lived earlier or later.
- Homer writes the *Iliad*, an outstanding work within this tradition.
- Homer or someone using his name writes the *Odyssey*, glorifying the trickster Odysseus (Ulysses), who is popular with the audience.
- This version passes into later Greek and Roman tradition. It inspires fresh works, some drawing on traditions older than Homer. Others reinventing the story, just as modern film-makers do nowadays.

Anyone who likes could make an historic novel from this: I don't plan to, having other story ideas I like better.

A curious feature of the *Iliad* is that the Greek victors also fall into ruin. This may be an echo of the Late Bronze Age collapse. Greek culture bounced back in the later Dark Age, but many Mycenaean values were lost: Troy became a small Greek city that preserved legends of the earlier Greek defeat of Trojans:

"What we call Troy VIIb 1 was still the home of descendants of the founders of Troy VI... Evidently the fortification wall still stood high enough to offer protection ... After half a century or so newcomers came to live on the hill of Kisarlik: their arrival left no marks of violence, so perhaps the impoverished inhabitant of VIIb 1 offered no resistance"[122]

Good stories also travel well. Bits and pieces of the Trojan legend perhaps got exchanged Hindu culture and became part of the *Mahabharata*. The main themes are different, and it centres on a battle rather than a siege. But both have a king with an improbably large number of sons, most of whom

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[121] Cline, Eric H. *1177 B.C. – The Year Civilisation Collapsed.* Princeton University Press 2014. Pages 127-8

[122] In Search of the Trojan War, page 285

do little and may be late additions. Krishna the Trickster perhaps gets promoted, just as Odysseus was. But it goes much further to make him a projection of God Almighty.

In real history, Troy's disasters came when many cities were destroyed in the Late Bronze Age collapse. In Greece, both Mycenae and Nestor's city of Pylos were abandoned. There would be nothing odd about the real Ilium / Ilios becoming a ruin. A place whose story got absorbed by Troy, which lived on as a minor Greek-speaking city.

Troy's Non-Greek Alexander

In Homer's Iliad, Prince Paris is also known as Alexandros. A name more familiar from Alexandros III of Macedon, Alexander the Great.

Hittite records speak of a King Alexandros of Troy. Royal names get re-used, so perhaps there was a real Prince Paris / Alexandros. More probably, two separate legends were merged.

Alexandros could be translated as 'helper of men, but more sensibly as Defender. It had been in use for a long time:

> "The earliest attested form of the name is the Mycenaean Greek feminine anthroponym, a-re-ka-sa-da-ra (transcribed as Alexandra), written in the Linear B syllabic script.
>
> "The name was one of the titles ('epithets') given to the Greek goddess Hera and as such is usually taken to mean 'one who comes to save warriors'."[123]

Both 'hero' and Hercules / Heracles are also linked to the goddess Hera – but she is the enemy of the main Hercules of legend.[124] At least one other is known, Herakles the Dactyl, credited with originating the Olympic Games. The Dactyl were an archaic mythical race of male beings associated with the Great Mother.[125] I'm sceptical of the whole fancy notion of a Great Mother as invented in modern times by Robert Graves and Laura Riding: but there is solid evidence of a gradual lowering of the status of women and of goddesses. Titles originally used for defenders of women may have been taken over by their oppressors. But going beyond such generalities is foolish.

The *Iliad* has Paris lay the basis for the war by antagonising Hera and Athena by choosing Aphrodite as 'the fairest'. There is an apparent antagonism between Aphrodite and Helen asserting a woman's right to choose against Hera upholding the binding nature of marriage. Also the Trojans seem to be upholding older and more decent values, which however perish. That makes it a powerful myth.

As for why a Trojan king had a Greek name, there might have been a complex intermingling of cultures:

> "Greek-speaking peoples are thought to have entered what is now Greece soon after 1900 BC, though some scholars think they may have been present since Neolithic times… At this time the great age of the Cretan palaces was beginning, a civilisation modelled of the Egyptian-Syrian…
>
> "Ancient tradition said that Mycenae was founded by the Perseid dynasty and that the Atreids (Pelops, Atreus, Agamemnon) were outsiders… said to have been Anatolian, Lydian, where we know that there was a Greek presence from the fifteenth century BC."[126]

Lydia includes Troy. Homer has the Greek and Trojan heroes speaking the same language, and some are related. The real Troy may have had a mixed culture:

> "Of the names in the Linear B tablets which are found in Homer, twenty of them (one-third) applied to Trojans: in other words, Greek names have been invented for Trojan heroes, Hector among them. But two names may not fit with this, and they are significant ones: Priam's name looks like the Anatolian name Pariamu, found in Hittite texts, and Alexandros of Wilios does seen to have a connection with the Alaksandus of Wilusa named in the Hittite tablets of the early thirteenth century and his alternative name Paris is very likely the Anatolian Pariya."[127]

Names easily get transferred from one culture to another. 'English' names like Tom, David, Sammy, Mary and Elizabeth are Hebrew via Greek and Latin versions of the Bible, while Helen, Alexander etc. are Greek.

Homer is certainly not dealing with real history:

> "Homer has no idea of the complex bureaucratic world of the palaces with their accounting and rationings, their penny-pinching control over every sheep: evidently this world passed right out of the tradition."[128]

Or else later audiences didn't wish to see their heroic ancestors presented with alien values. Time had certainly dimmed many memories:

> "An interesting sidelight on this is Homer's idea of the use of chariots. In the Bronze Age they were actually used for fighting – at least they were among the Hittites and Egyptians, and both Linear B and Hittite tablets suggest that the Greeks used them this way too. In the *Iliad*, however, chariots are only used for transport, apart from odd phrases which suggest a

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[123] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander#Etymology

[124] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heracles#Birth_and_childhood

[125] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dactyl_(mythology)

[126] In Search of the Trojan War, pages 177-8

[127] In Search of the Trojan War, page 281

[128] In Search of the Trojan War, page 146

dim memory of the real state of affairs."[129]

"The places mentioned by Homer as having been the chief centre of his story were indeed the chief places of Mycenaean Greece."[130]

"In the Second Book of the *Iliad* there is a remarkable list of 164 places said to have sent troops to Troy, the so-called catalogue of ships…

"The catalogue was originally constructed independently of the *Iliad*; indeed it is generally accepted that it is earlier than the *Iliad*… differences and discrepancies between it and the *Iliad* proper."[131]

"Estimates for the populations of Mycenaean kingdoms are only approximate, but that of Pylos can hardly have been less than 50,000… 180,000 for Mycenae… A Greek marauder in Lycia in around 1420 BC presented a threat to a Hittite army with a force of 100 chariots and perhaps 1000 troops; a rich city like Ugarit could man 150 ships … 7000 fighting men. This last figure is of the order we would expect for a Mycenaean campaign against Troy, if it took place… This is the scale of Bronze-Age warfare – comparable, say, to the warfare of the Viking Age in Europe where, for instance, the garrisons of thirty fortified centres in Wessex totalled 26,671 men, with the mobile royal army probably numbering a few thousand at most… The citadel on Hisarlik – if it was Troy – can hardly have raised more than a few hundred warriors on its own."[132]

"Six vessels sack Laomedon's Troy in the Herakles legend."[133]

"Let us remember the Homeric tradition: the epic says there were *two* sacks of Troy in the Heroic Age, the first the sack of the city of Laomedon by Herakles, the second the expedition of Agamemnon against Priam. Carl Blegen's dig in the 1930s established two destructions of Hisarlik in the Late Bronze Age: the beautiful walled city of Troy VI we now know fell in around 1300 BC, apparently to an earthquake; its successor, Troy VIIa, the city of shanties … around 1200 BC.[134]

"We must remember that Hisarlik is still the only site in north-west Anatolia which has been thoroughly excavated … but the quantities of Mycenaean pottery were sufficiently large and of such quality as to suggest to Blegen direct relations between Troy and Mycenae… surviving sherds from c.1400-1250 added up to about 700-800 pots, nearly three quarters of all Mycenaean pottery imports to Troy… Mycenaean wares account for only 1 or 2 per cent of the entire pottery of Troy VI: it is tiny proportion when

set against the local wares, and presumably represents the import of luxury produce (perfumed oil?) or simply exotic pottery desired for its intrinsic snob value…

"What did the Trojans give in return? The presence of many spindle whorls … suggests that they may have specialised in wool, spun yarn and textiles…

"Homer singles out Troy for its fine horses, and its citizens as horse breeders. The archaeologists found that Troy VI was distinguished by the presence of quantities of horse bones, and we can also point to horse breeding in the Troad in classical times (in fact there was an Ottoman Turkish stud farm near Troy as late as the First World War)."[135]

"Though the site of Hisarlik was inhabited from around 3600 BC, it is generally agreed that Troy VI was built by newcomers who brought with them, among other things, the horse… Blegen and others were tempted, because of the pottery, to think that originally the Greeks and Trojans were of the same stock…

"The language and identity of the Trojans remains a mystery."[136]

Greece Without Greeks

Greeks invented the names Europe, Asia, and Africa, but lived on the coasts and islands of all of them. South Europe, West Asia and North Africa were a common geographical area liked by the Mediterranean, in which many diverse cultures competed. And into which outsiders barged and then assimilated some of the culture:

"During the third millennium BC there were people in Greece who did not speak Greek, or any language related to it. An echo of their language survives in Greek place-names … such as Corinthos, Parnassos, Lykabettos. But in about 2000-1990 BC – middle Bronze Age – invaders, speaking a version of what later became Greek, came in from the north, and devastated most of the previous habitation centres.

"During the centuries that followed and particularly after C.1600, Greece clearly came under the influence of the 'Minoan'' civilisation … based on Crete… But the brilliant fluidities of Minoan art were given a stiffer, grander and more heratic appearance by the culture of the mainland, which took its modern name 'Mycenaean' from its imposing centre Mycenae…

"The princes who ruled these elaborate fortress-palaces, around which humbler settlements clustered, maintained a luxurious way of life… the syllabi script ('Linear B') which they utilised to keep

[129] In Search of the Trojan War, page 146
[130] In Search of the Trojan War, page 147
[131] In Search of the Trojan War, pages 147-8
[132] In Search of the Trojan War, page 181
[133] In Search of the Trojan War, page 183
[134] In Search of the Trojan War, page 189

[135] In Search of the Trojan War, pages 188-190
[136] In Search of the Trojan War, page 191

record of their extensive possessions."[137]

"Within a couple of generations the whole Mycenaean civilisation was destroyed, with the help, probably, of internal feuds and disunities, and the palaces and bureaucracies which had exercised general control seem to have been the first to go…

"Populations sharply declined, reverting to pastoralism. The art of writing was lost for several centuries to come … Greece became a country of villages…

"A new wave of Greeks (or at least the heads of royal or noble families and their followers) known as the Dorians… Later legend maintained that they were led by the Heraclids, descendants of the hero Heracles [Hercules]…

"This supposition, however, of an earlier arrival but the Dorians was a fictitious antedating, designed subsequently in order to make their presence look more venerably antique, and to assert a claim to descent from Heracles. The story also served to legitimize the seizure by these Dorians – who were unknown, in this area, to heroic, Homeric legends – of territories that had figured prominently in those legends."[138]

"The civilisation of Mycenae is fundamentally different from that of later Greece. It is an example of a phenomenon found elsewhere, where a warrior people falls under the influence of a more advanced civilisation…. The world which influenced Mycenae was the world of Knossos [Crete], itself on the fringes of an area where the centralised palace economy and the oriental despotisms of Mesopotamia and Egypt had already flourished for some two thousand years. Mycenaean civilisation is linked far more to those cultures than to later developments in Greece."[139]

"Though the poems show a number of Mycenaean survivals, the Linear B tablets have revealed a society wholly different from that portrayed in Homer; equally the scanty evidence from the early Dark Age is incompatible with the material culture of the Homeric poems. Only in the later Dark Age do the archaeological and literary evidence begin to coincide over a wide range of phenomena… The emphasis on Phoenicians as traders points probably to a period between 900 and 700, as does the typical display of wealth through the storage and giving away of bronze cauldrons and tripods… Homeric burials are by cremation, which points away from the Mycenaean inhumation to the later Dark Age and onwards.

"The chariot, which disappeared as a weapon of war at the end of the Mycenaean period, is still an essential item of the aristocrat's equipment; but the epic tradition no longer understood its military use. Instead it has become a transport vehicle taking the heroes from place to place on the battlefield, and standing idly by as they dismount and fight on foot: occasionally it even takes on the attributes of a horse and performs feats such as jumping ditches. This seems to be a combination of a Mycenaean weapon with the tactics of the aristocratic mounted infantry of the late Dark Ages. Again the Homeric warrior fights with a jumble of weapons from different periods: he can even start off to battle with a pair of throwing spears and end up fighting with a single thrusting one. The metal used for weapons is almost invariably bronze, but for agricultural and industrial tools it is iron – a combination unknown in the real world, where the replacement of bronze by iron came first in the military sphere… When the different elements can be dated, they show a tendency to fall into two categories, dim reflections of Mycenaean practices and a clearer portrayal of the late Dark Age world."[140]

"The word basileus, which is the normal title of the Homeric hero, in later Greek came to mean king; but in the Linear B tablets the king himself is called by a title which survives in certain passages of Homer, wanax: somewhere much lower in the hierarchy is a group of people called by a name which is clearly the later Greek basileus; presumably when the palace economy disappeared, it was these men who were left as the leaders in the communities. In Homer and Hesiod the world basileus is in fact often used in a way which is much closer to the idea of a nobility, a class of aristocrats, one of whom may of course hold an ill-defined and perhaps uneasy position of supremacy within the community. Agamemnon at Troy is the highest basileus among a group of equals whose power and attributes are not essentially different from his."[141]

"Debate within the council or before the people was the basis of decision-making, though there was no formal voting procedure. The traditional pair of activities of the basileus is warfare and debate, which are of equal importance. Odysseus is 'the best in good counsel and mighty in war'… Achilles claims, 'I am the best of all the bronze-clad Achaeans in war, even though others are better in Assembly'."[142]

The notion that anything could be debated among the qualified experts was the key to later Greek success. For science it is essential. Politically, the best system was some form of Representative Democracy: you have a competitive vote and the winner has strong powers, though not unlimited powers. That was the problem with the

[137]. *The Rise of the Greeks*, by Michael Grant. Phoenix 1997. Page 1

[138] The Rise of the Greeks, page 2.

[139] Murray, Oswyn. Early Greece. Stanford University Press 1980. Page 15

[140] Early Greece, pages 38-9

[141] Early Greece, pages 40-1

[142] Early Greece, page 58

later Greek Tyrants: they were often popular and successful, but there was no legal way to remove them.

The Greeks learned a lot from contact with more complex and sophisticated societies further east:

"Contact with the near east brought many changes to Greek society in the century from 70 to 650. Some of these were purely practical, such as the introduction of the domestic chicken: absent from Homer and Hesiod, as from the Old Testament... The cock was known as 'the Persian bird' from its supposed country of origin (which in fact was ultimately India)."[143]

"Homer describes a society without writing: it is referred to obscurely and only once, when Protetus sent Bellerophon to the king of Lycia, 'with bitter tokens, scratched in a folded tablet many deadly things; ... when he received this evil token', the king sought to kill Bellerophon (Iliad 6.166ff). The poet's use here of various words which were later connected with writing suggests may well have known the technique himself, but regarded it as 'unheroic'. The Greeks were clear that their own system in fact derived from Phoenicia: the old word for letters was 'Phoenician objects'."[144]

"The Phoenician alphabet has 22 letters, whereas the Accadian syllabary for instance used 285 signs, Mycenaean Linear B over eighty... The elimination of vowels is not in fact a serious drawback in Semitic language, where they serve mainly to modify consonantal stems ... enormous gain in simplicity...

"The names of most of the Greek letters, which have no significance beyond their initial sound (alpha, beth, gamma ...), are taken from Phoenician world which have meanings in themselves: alpha means 'ox', beth means 'house', gimel 'throwing stick', and so on."[145]

A syllabary usually has a distinct sign for each consonant-vowel combination. But Greek, a typical Indo-European language, often has two or more vowels or two or more consonants following each other. This potential problem was avoided, by design or by accident:

"The adaptation of Phoenician to Greek is almost mechanical, except in one essential respect: the invention of vowels transformed what can in a certain sense be seen as a simplified syllabic script, into a genuinely alphabetic script, in which all of the main speech sounds (vowels and consonants) were for the first time isolated and represented individually. The resultant system has proved so flexible that it is still in use for most modern languages...

"The forms of most of the Greek vowels are derived from Phoenician consonantal or semi-consonantal letters for which the Greeks had no use, and even their position within the Greek alphabet is the same as in Phoenician... vowels were arrived at by 'creative misunderstanding' of their prototypes: the aspirate he in Phoenician becomes short 'e' in Greek ... the second aspirate het becomes in some dialects 'h', but in others the long 'e' or eta."[146]

The loss of Linear B was probably fortunate:

"Linear B was not flexible enough for the Greek language; it was a highly conventionalised and purely syllabic system of writing which could cope with administrative notations but not with complicated historical and literary composition."[147]

The *Iliad* etc. were an oral tradition, sung and changed and improved by a long succession of bards. Perhaps if there had not been the cultural breakdown, an improved 'Linear C' would have emerged, better suited for Greek. (Linear B itself was an adaptation for Greek of Crete's mysterious Linear A, assumed to be in some unknown language spoken on Crete before a Greek conquest.) But the whole Mycenaean tradition became hazy:

"When Homer described a letter entrusted to a traveller – it was, ironically, a request for the bearer to be quietly liquidated – Homer described it as something exotic and almost magical: writing was no more than a dim memory."[148]

But many elements survived besides memories of the Mycenaean war against Troy, if indeed it ever happened. We learn much from the archaic Greek of tablets written in Linear B:

"The tablets capture a theology in transition. On the one hand, ... they offer striking proof of a high degree of continuity between Mycenaean and Classical Greek religion: God's names listed there include ... Dionysus (long thought by scholars not to have appeared till the first millennium B.C.), Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, and Artemis.

"But these names appear side by side with more curious ones, many of them pre-Greek, long forgotten by Classical times. Among them are various female names – most likely those of local deities – beginning with the word potnia, 'mistress': Mistress of Wild Beasts, Mistress of Horses, Mistress of Grain, Mistress of Asia, Mistress of the Labyrinth. The tablets also mention a few goddesses who were early female counterparts of the male Olympians. They include Posidaeia, the opposite number of Poseidon, and Diwja, that to Zeus. They, too, were gone by the

[143] Early Greece, page 80
[144] Early Greece, page 91
[145] Early Greece, pages 92-3
[146] Early Greece, page 93
[147] In Search of the Trojan War, page 149
[148] Fox, Margalit. *The Riddle of the Labyrinth.* Profile Books 2013. Page 22.

Classical Age."[149]

We also have insights from Egyptian records. Sadly, these have little interest in events beyond Egypt. But they did record success (or claimed success) in fighting off a coalition of mysterious warriors whom they called Sea Peoples:

"The term 'Sea Peoples' is given today to various seaborne raiders and invaders from a loose confederation of clans who troubled the Aegean, the Near East and Egypt during the final period of the Bronze Age in the second half of the 2nd millennium BC.

"Though the Egyptians presumably knew the homelands of the Sea Peoples, that information has since been lost."[150]

What's recorded is that Pharaoh Ramses III fought two big battles against them.[151] Claimed victory, but it is notable that some of the 'defeated' got places to settle, so it may have been indecisive.

Sea-Peoples were probably relevant to the emergence of the ancient Israelites. The use of the name 'Ramses' in *Exodus* led to the popular notion that Ramses II of the Nineteenth Dynasty was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

A monument erected by Merneptah, son of Ramses II, includes a claim to have destroyed 'Israel'. This happens in the context of a campaign against Libyans west of Egypt and various people in Canaan to the west.[152]

I'll be saying much more about the interesting origins of Ancient Israel in the next issue of *Problems*. For now, I note that the powerful conquering Israel described in the *Book of Joshua* would not have been possible under Ramses II, who controlled Canaan and part of Syria. That Israel began as a minor part of an anti-Egyptian alliance, very different from the Bible account.

There might also have been a series of departures. A successful Exodus would have been much more plausible under Ramses III, who was struggling for survival and who was eventually murdered in a palace conspiracy. His father Setnakhte had replaced the heirs of Ramses II: he might have been a minor relative but more likely was a simple usurper. Probably he gave his son the name of a famous earlier ruler to give legitimacy. Ramses III at least partly lived up to it: the remaining eight rulers of his dynasty took the same name, ending with Ramses XI, but were not strong Pharaohs.

It is also likely that Sea Peoples were the historic basis of the Trojan War:

"One possible hypothesis for the destruction of Troy is that the city was besieged and sacked in around 1180 BC by a coalition of Sea Peoples mainly formed by Aegean Greeks. The possible siege tactics can be partly deduced from the Homeric poems, which clearly describe the techniques typical of the Late Bronze Age.

"The attackers arrived in their ships and established a base camp protected by a fortification; they knew a siege might be prolonged, and that they must defend themselves and their beached ships from counter-attacks. Unlike armies of later ages they did not have the numbers or the means to completely cut off the defenders from resupply or movement… The attackers conducted a series of raids against neighbouring towns. Neither did they have sophisticated siege engines, and when groups of warriors attempted to cline the walls they did so with bare hands or simple ladders, while the defenders shot arrows and dropped stone…

"From Cypriot, Hittite and Egyptian documents we learn of the methods employed by the Sea Peoples during naval raids. They seem to have avoided direct confrontation at sea when possible. When they were forced to fight a sea battle they fared poorly."[153]

This would fit the odd pattern of warfare described in Homer. It is not a proper siege: the Trojans are not cut off and they regularly venture out to fight the Greeks, hoping to burn the ships. Probably much what happened in the destruction of Ilium and the small raid on Troy Seven, if that was how it happened. And if the romantic story of Helen ever happened, it happened somewhere else.

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[149] The Riddle of the Labyrinth, pages 282-3

[150] D'Amato & Salimbeti, *Sea Peoples of the Bronze Age Mediterranean*, C. 1400 BC – 1000 BC. Osprey Publishing 2015. Page 4

[151] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesses_III

[152] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele

[153] Sea Peoples of the Bronze Age Mediterranean, Page 45-6