

The Inevitable, Fatal End of Globalization - Centuries of Obscene Entitlement Morphing into Unavoidable, Horrendous Consequences; New Beginnings?

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Theme: [History](#)

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As the world is understandably distracted by the threat of the pathogenic actions of an entity 10,000 times smaller than a grain of salt, we spend a huge amount of time arguing over its origins and nature, or whether it is real or a concocted plan to control human population, while saturating social media with voluminous conspiracy theories. Concerns about absence of a national public health care system sometimes seems less important than debating conspiracy theories.

Meanwhile human civilization for several centuries has been arrogantly and savagely ransacking the ecosystem with industrial entrancement, exploiting human cultures, dominating wild spaces “out there”, while substantially altering our inner minds and souls. Global warming interconnected with insatiable consumption, economic dysfunction, microwaving the planet, corporate oligarchy and neo-fascism, wealth accumulation, and denigrating nonwhite people, have overwhelmed our natural human rhythms, our thought structures, our evolutionary empathy, and our original identities.

I grew up in Western New York State near several Amish communities. I will always remember an Amish blacksmith asking me, “What are you moderns going to do when the electrons stop”? I chuckled at the impossibility of such. However, over the years I think of that question as prophetic. We have been overtaken by the cult of technology considered identical with progress that we believe will last into infinity on a finite Planet.

Historian **Lewis Mumford** has argued that we may be nearing the end of a long epoch of several thousand years of living in what we call “civilization.” After centuries of forcefully taking power from individuals in small groups and centralizing it in an ever smaller class of elite people, we ended up with societies gone mad, nation-states convinced that its own continued power is the sole purpose of existence.[1]

Mumford described that “civilization” was constructed on a new organizational idea - a “megamachine” comprised totally of human parts to perform tasks on a colossal scale never before imagined.[2] Civilization saw the creation of a bureaucracy directed by a power complex of an authority figure (a king) with scribes and speedy messengers, which organized labor machines (masses of workers) to construct pyramids, irrigation systems, and huge grain storage systems among other structures, all enforced by a military. Its features were centralization of power, separation of people into classes and lifetime division of labor, slavery and forced labor, arbitrary inequality of wealth and privilege, and military power and war.[3] This has been the theme of Western society in which we have lost our

ancient redeeming qualities of human scale, autonomy, diversity, and local participant community.

Mumford makes clear his bias that autonomy in small groups is a human *archetype* that has become repressed in deference to obedience to technology and bureaucracy. The creation of human urban civilization has brought about patterns of systematic violence and warfare previously unknown,[4] what Andrew Schmookler calls the “original sin” of civilization.[5] Joseph Conrad, in his 1899 novel *Heart of Darkness*, captured this ugly side of humans, depicting how “civilization” covers over the harsh realities of the cruel exploitation upon which it is built.[6]

Mumford described how unchecked “power punctuates the entire history of mankind with outbursts of collective paranoia and tribal delusions of grandeur mingled with malevolent suspicions, murderous hatreds, and atrociously inhumane acts”.[7] Mumford again: A personal over-concentration of power as an end in itself is suspect to the psychologist as an attempt to conceal inferiority, impotence, and anxiety. When this inferiority is combined with defensive inordinate ambitions, uncontrolled hostility and suspicion, and a loss of any sense of the subject’s own limitation, “delusions of grandeur” result, which is the typical syndrome of paranoia, one of the most difficult psychological states to exorcise.[8]

One of the twentieth century’s greatest physicists, David Bohm, has remarked that what relativity and quantum theory have in common is their understanding of the undivided wholeness of everything and every particle in the universe. This knowledge requires breaking our cognitive thought structure, which historically is based on a *mechanistic* order commonly expressed through what Bohm calls the (Rene) Cartesian grid or reductionism. As Bohm says, it is not easy to change this because our notions of order are so pervasive, they affect not only our thought processes, but our sense of ourselves, our feelings, our intuitions, our physical movement, and our relations with others and society, in fact with everything. Our problems originate in our *thought*, and as our thinking structures are rooted in mechanistic reduction and separation rather than the undivided whole, it is *thought* that is the problem.[9]

This is an astounding conclusion in our age of “reason.” Yet, we know the enlightenment period was lead by thinkers such as David Hume, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant, all of whom explicitly believed and taught that perfection was reserved for the “White Race”. [10] The same can be said for the constantly referred to US “Founding Fathers”.

The six primary European White imperialist powers in 1500 (France, Spain, Italy, British Isles, Portugal, and Netherlands), comprised less than 8 percent (about 40 million people) of the estimated world population. But they, in effect, launched a GLOBAL TERROR campaign through gruesome colonization, racism, brutal enslavement of human beings, and forcefully stealing Indigenous lands. This violent colonization nearly destroyed the ancient “Red” Indigenous cultures in the Western Hemisphere, and the Black Indigenous cultures of Africa, who together possessed a combined 25-40 percent (175-200 million) of the world’s population.[11]

From the beginning, European settlers of the New World organized irregular armed units to viciously attack and murder unarmed innocents (a.k.a. civilians)—Indigenous women, children, and elderly—using unlimited violent means, including outright massacres and the burning of towns and food stocks. The first two centuries of British colonization, the 1600s to 1800s, produced several generations of experienced “Indian fighters” (early version of

“rangers”). Settlers, mostly farmers by trade, they waged battles totally independent of any formal military organization.[12]

The English knew that the slave trade was indispensable to “healthy” British economics. Because it was so essential for the success of capitalist enterprises, and the risks in the trade were large, investors in the slave trade insisted that each “legal” slave merchant be covered by underwriters who would make good for any “property” lost during the voyage.[13] Thus, millions of African people suffered the most unspeakable barbarities in ways that no White person can imagine, even to this day, committed by the hands of privileged European men who enjoyed the impunity that comes with elevated social status. This enforced savagery enabled White “development” (profits) of the lands violently stolen from the Indigenous.

This kind of beastly behavior, sooner or later, has inevitable blowback, despite the cocky arrogance and ignorance of its perpetrators. One might call this Karma, or morphing from a long era of entitlement to an era of inevitable consequences. As an evolutionary species we may be on the verge of an epistemic break, leading to a radical rupture, or a punctuation of our long period of globalized (apparent) equilibrium, enforced by horrible exploitation of the many by a few. The 8 minute, 46 second video of Black citizen George Floyd’s torture/murder by White Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin and his three accomplices that went viral around the US and the world. It revealed, viscerally, like no other, the painful and unspeakable history of 400 years of White supremacy inflicting degradation, deracination and invalidation of Indigenous and African Americans.

In February 29, 1968, President Johnson’s Kerner Report investigating the horrific Detroit riots of 1967, concluded that the US was “moving towards two societies, one Black, one White, separate and unequal. . . .” White racism and limited opportunities for black people were identified as major causes of the strife and rioting in urban ghettos. It spoke of the danger of large-scale violence, white retaliation, and ultimately of “the separation of the two communities in a garrison state,” if drastic steps were not taken to improve employment, housing, education, and welfare—steps that would require greatly increased taxes and expenditures.[14]

One of the first witnesses invited to appear before the Kerner Commission was Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, a distinguished and perceptive African-American scholar. Referring to the reports of earlier riot commissions, he said: “I read that report . . . of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee of the Harlem riot of ’35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of ’43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this commission—it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland—with the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction”.[15]

Cultural historians, philosophers, psychologists, essayists, and scientists caution us to seriously understand the past and its patterns. Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytic scholars have concluded that in psychic life, nothing of what has been formed in the past ever disappears. Everything that has occurred is preserved in one way or another and, in fact, reappears under either favorable or unfavorable circumstances.[16] When impunity dominates history, justice as a permanent value in the history of humans ceases to exist. This psychopathology produces a sickness in the soul—of the individual, as well as of a nation—where nothing is real. Severe disturbances within the individual and collective

psyche manifest in behavioral psychopathologies of huge magnitude. Everything becomes pretend, the lies told over and over in many different forms throughout time.[17]

Think of a spoiled child who has never been taught boundaries or been held to account for harmful behavior. Collective as well as individual narcissism can lead to extreme antisocial conduct. Security is experienced through individuality, and rigid adherence to individual and national economic, selfish privatization, but not social justice. The acquisitive habit settles into the inner life, preempting an authentic inquisitive and social mind. A social compact is destroyed in deference to privatization, creating anomie. Life is commodified. Disparity between the Haves and Have-Nots becomes extreme; today this is called neoliberal economics. History is negated, successfully concealing past traumas such as unspeakable genocides and deceitfully based wars.

While performing auxiliary duty as a USAF Combat Security officer, I documented the immediate aftermath of atrocities committed from the air that annihilated inhabited, undefended villages. I was shocked and sickened from the sight of hundreds of villagers lying dead and suffering horribly in *their* villages. I wondered who the fuck am I, a 6' 3" White man, 9,000 miles from my rural farming village in New York State? These Vietnamese were in *their home* villages. Village life was the essence of Vietnamese culture and we were systematically destroying it. I felt depressingly *unauthentic*, with an artificial identity, protected by fake US American "exceptionalism". Like a dumb ideological robot, I began to entertain the idea that being a privileged White man was in fact an emotional and intellectual disability. White male supremacy is a powerful force, as it enables a kind of mindless "sliding" through life, pre-empting the need to ask serious questions. I began to feel *shame*. I wondered whether our entire society had ever faced the important social feeling of shame that might have matured and enabled a more honest culture. My discovery of empathy began to radicalize me. I wondered whether we had become sadistic criminal *psychopaths*? Or have we always been? Of course, later I discovered, to my naive dismay, that no, the US has never acknowledged shame for its foundation on two gruesome genocides, killing millions with impunity.

How many US citizens know of the crimes our country systematically commits throughout the world, crimes that are constant, remorseless, and fully documented? British playwright and Nobel Prize recipient Harold Pinter sadly commented: "Nobody talks about them. . . . It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest".[18] Without historical context, there is little capacity to critique the veracity of contemporary policies and rhetoric. So, it is believed, the US just couldn't be involved in patterns of criminal interventions; our origins just couldn't be built on forceful dispossession and genocides. "That is not the American way", people insist. But the fact is that it is the American way. We simply don't know about it and don't want to know about it. Impunity has erased memory.

The current pandemic may be one of the nails in our heretofore illusory comfortable paradigm of enjoying White privilege at the expense of the vast majority of human beings in the world. It is now in confluence with a severe capitalist economic crisis, George Floyd's viscerally provocative torture murder, the impending climate catastrophe, and revelation of our true cultural White supremacist character with the emergence of US **President Donald Trump**.

Something has to give, sooner rather than later. It will be our illusory exceptionalism, that has made us de facto stupid and obnoxiously arrogant. Centuries of unspeakable cultural

behavior shielded by a fake identity has created eyes of wool. Are the wool eyes finally gone, now? That White knee of Derek Chauvin is on *all* of our necks now.

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Brian Willson is a Viet Nam veteran and trained lawyer. He has visited a number of countries examining the effects of US policy. He wrote a psychohistorical memoir, *Blood on the Tracks: The Life and Times of S. Brian Willson* (PM Press, 2011), and in 2018 wrote *Don't Thank Me for my Service: My Viet Nam Awakening to the Long History of US Lies* (Clarity Press). He is featured in a 2016 documentary, *Paying the Price for Peace: The Story of S. Brian Willson, and others in the Peace Movement*, (Bo Boudart Productions). His web essays: brianwillson.com. He can be reached at bw@brianwillson.com. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).

Notes

[1] Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (1966; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 186.

[2] I learned about the “megamachine” when exposed to the ideas of cultural historian Lewis Mumford, who started critiquing civilization in the early 1920s. Among his works are two complementary books: *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power* (1964; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970) and *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967). Mumford, born in 1895 in urban Flushing, New York, was a brilliant observer of the traumatic effects to humans and the earth of so-called civilization, and his thinking on the long view remains extremely illuminating.

[3] Mumford, *Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*, 186.

[4] Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 43–53, 59–60; Ashley Montagu, ed., *Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Jean Guilaine and Jean Zammit, *The Origin of War: Violence in Prehistory*, trans. Melanie Hersey (2001; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

[5] Andrew B. Schmookler, *Out of Weakness: Healing the Wounds That Drive Us to War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 303.

[6] *Heart of Darkness*, written by Polish-born English novelist Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), was originally published in 1899 as a three-part series in *Blackwood's Magazine* (U.K.). It is considered one of the most-read works of the last hundred years, largely an autobiographical description of Conrad's six-month journey in 1890 into the “Congo Free State”, at the time being plundered by Belgium. In fact, the story could apply to almost anyplace in the world where European nations, later the United States, plundered peoples for profits and material privileges without acknowledging the terrible, ugly consequences. Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 movie *Apocalypse Now* translates the “Heart of Darkness” to Viet Nam and Cambodia. Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: A Mariner Book, 1999) describes the diabolical exploitation of the Congo Free State by King Leopold II of Belgium between 1885 and 1908. Estimates of murdered Congolese in this period run as high as 13 million. Please don't read this as if this is something that the United States or other European nations would not do, or have not done. Indeed, the U.S. and Europe are founded on these practices, all under the cover of “civilization.”

[7] Mumford, 1967, 204.

[8] Mumford, 1967, 218.

[9] Lee Nichol, ed., *The Essential David Bohm*(London: Routledge, 2003), 83-84, 306.

[10] Jmelle Bouie, "The Enlightenment's Dark Side: How the Enlightenment created modern race thinking, and why we should confront it", *Slate*, June 5, 2018;
<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/06/taking-the-enlightenment-seriously-requires-talking-about-race.html>

[11] D.E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11; John D. Durland, "Historical Estimates of World Population: An Evaluation", *Population and Development Review*, 3:253-296, 259, 1977; C. Clark, *Population Growth and Land Use*, 2ndEd (New York: MacMillan Press, 1977), 82-89; Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*(New York: Facts on File, 1978), 49, 57, 101, and 103.

[12] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*(Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 58-60.

[13] George Francis Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving*(New York: Dover Publications, 1970), xxxv.

[14] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*(New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

[15] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Clark Testimony, 1-29.

[16] Jon Mills, *Origins: On the Genesis of Psychic Reality*(Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2010), 246.

[17] S. Brian Willson, "The Pretend Society," <http://www.brianwillson.com/the-pretend-society/>; B. Paz Rojas, "Impunity and the Inner History of Life", *Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order*,26(4), 1999.

[18] Harold Pinter, *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics, 1948-1998* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 237.

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