

The City in History and the History of Conscious-Cultural (D)evolution

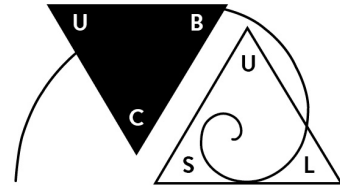
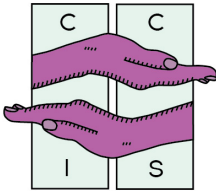
“When we finally reach our own age, we shall find that urban society has come to a parting of the ways. Here, with a heightened consciousness of our past and a clearer insight into decisions made long ago, which often still control us, we shall be able to face the immediate decision that now confronts man and will, one way or another, ultimately transform him: namely, whether he shall devote himself to the development of his own deepest humanity, or whether he shall surrender himself to the now almost automatic forces he himself has set in motion and yield place to his dehumanized alter ego, ‘Post-historic Man.’ That second choice will bring with it a progressive loss of feeling, emotion, creative audacity, and finally consciousness.” (Mumford 1961, p. 4)

The question Mumford poses, then, is whether humanity will take up the duty and responsibility that rises with the power of conscious-cultural evolution to direct will towards actualization and cultivation of ‘inner qualities’ (Ouspensky 1951) like reason, intuition, wisdom, virtue and love so as to emerge as ‘One World man’ (whose characteristics are akin to those associated with enlightenment of the sort described by the term Satori [Cleary 1990]) or renege on the duty and responsibility that comes with the power of conscious-cultural evolution and be doomed to the conscious-cultural devolution that accompanies failure to direct will towards actualization and cultivate of such ‘inner qualities’ to emerge as ‘Post-historic Man’ and return to the cycles of the bio-mechanical evolutionary process (Barnesmoore 2016; Barnesmoore 2017) by which humanity first attained the capacity for conscious-cultural evolution. Will our will, guided by utopian ideals, carry us along the path of conscious-cultural evolution and beyond the constraints of our seemingly 4th dimensionally limited existence in passing time and physical space, or will we—in ceding our will to the machine—squander the gift of conscious-cultural evolution and devolve to the point where conscious-cultural evolution is no longer possible.

Mumford—viewing the past few thousand years of human history by which western civilization was begotten—argues that this decision will be made in our age, but from the perspective that has been developed through this nomadic exploration it might be better to say that we made the wrong decision ages ago and that our age marks the last chance to change that decision and return to the path of conscious-cultural evolution we lost so long ago if we are to avoid total destruction (i.e. the 6th mass extinction). Even if ‘total destruction’ proves to be ‘the only solution’, (Marley 1980) humanity will rise up again (though some Indigenous prophecies seem to indicate that we have but one more chance if we fail yet again to fructify the gift of conscious-cultural evolution), but we will have to wait another few thousand years before the cycle renews itself and we return to this juncture. Mumford may not have been sensitive to the fact that we made the wrong decision long ago (perhaps in the agricultural devolution that for many marks the origins of western civilization¹ or in the ‘permanent settlements’² that accompanied the agricultural devolution

¹ Mumford (1923; 1970) frequently refers to ‘agriculture’ as it rose in Mesopotamia, Babylon, Egypt following the Babylonian conquest, Greece, etc. as an unproblematic expression of the natural order from which the City emerged.

² “Cities are emblems of that settled life which began with permanent agriculture: a life conducted with the aid of permanent shelters, permanent utilities like orchards, vineyards, and irrigation works, and permanent buildings for protection and storage.” (Mumford 1970, p. 3)



This stands in stark contrast to the views expressed in a note that was left on my academia.edu page by an Indigenous scholar from Australia:

“As a First Nation Aboriginal Australian I consider agriculture not the beginning of civilization but instead the beginning of the end of civilization... one of the many great myths of white fragility.” (Waters 2017)

From Waters perspective, then, the beginning of fearful attempts to impose the unity and regularity of the Eternal upon manifestation is not, as Mumford (1923) argues, to be found in the bells of the twelfth century but in the Agricultural Devolution (c. 10,000 BC) from which Mesopotamian, Babylonian, etc. civilization emerged. Rather than the origin of a civilization that facilitates conscious-cultural evolution, this period, the fallen empires that emerged from this period and their colonial ‘civilizing processes’ represent the beginning of the conscious-cultural devolution that has found its zenith in Modernity, of our separation from the natural order and, thus, from Eternal Form (for it is through intimacy with the natural order that we attain intimacy with the Eternal Forms whose reflection into manifestation begets the natural order). The cosmology of humanity (our origin story), in short, articulates our potential for conceptualization of ontology—were the cosmology of the Artificial Worldview leads us to view agriculture as bringing order to the presumed chaos of nature, the cosmology of the Natural Worldview leads us to view agriculture as portending the death and decay of nature’s order of difference and irregularity.

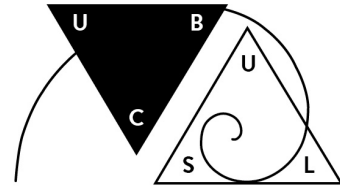
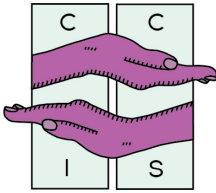
“The beginnings of organized morality, government, law, and justice existed in the village Council of Elders. ...This representative group, the repository of tradition, the censor of morals, the judges of right and wrong, was already discernible in the fourth millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia, though its origins must pre-date any record. This rudimentary organ of government seems to characterize village communities at all periods. So important was this institution, that it left its mark on both religious myth and the actual functioning of the Mesopotamian city state; for thousands of years later a Babylonian Council of the Gods still followed the archaic village pattern.” (Mumford 1961, p. 19)

“The ancient Greeks thought that their own respect for custom and common law, as against tyrannous caprice, was a unique product of their culture. But actually it was a witness to their continuity with an older village democracy we first meet in Mesopotamia: an institution that seems to precede all more sophisticated exercise of control by a dominant minority, imposing their alien traditions or their equally alien upper-class innovations upon a subjugated if acquiescent population.” (Mumford 1961, p. 20)

“Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire...” (Marley 1979)

Babylon and Mesopotamia, the ‘falling empires’ (i.e. an empire that causes humanity’s fall from the path of natural conscious-cultural evolution and into the quest to impose unity and regularity upon the natural order through hierarchical domination of the difference and irregularity in reflection of the eternal that typifies the natural order). As usual Bob captured the truth with simplistic elegance. The essential cultural artifact of Mesopotamia and Babylon is the Artificial Worldview. These falling empires and the ‘civilizing’ attempts by the elite class (the Archons of Society) to impose the unity and regularity of the eternal upon manifestation through domination of difference (in this case domination through punishment and fear of punishment of those who are different and irregular in relationship to the artificially unitary and regular legal codes of the falling empire) that typify falling empires begot the fall of humanity from the natural order and into the artificial privations that rise from the death of human nature (of our sprouts of reason, intuition, wisdom, virtue and love). Pulling on the sprouts in a *purported* attempt to ‘help them grow’, the Archons of Society kill the sprouts and negate the potential for conscious-cultural evolution. Mesopotamia and Babylon are not the only civilizations from which humanity emerged (though it has often been the wont of western historians to frame the story of humanity as such), and it is clear that ‘falling empires’ were established in other places like China (see, for example, the relationship between Xun Zi’s argument that human nature is evil, Han Fei Zi’s Legalism—which argues that the evils of human nature can only be overcome through punishment and fear of punishment—and the rise of the Qin Empire in 221 B.C. under the direction of Chancellor Li Si who, like Han Fei Zi, was a student of Xun Zi [Van Norden 2011]), but let us not forget that there were other cultures and civilizations (like those to be found on Turtle Island) that emerged without subjugation to the dogmas of the Artificial Worldview and its quest to conquer and colonize the natural order. The dominant, domineering world order and its ‘global cities’ surely rose up out of the falling empires, but that does not mean that a world order and global cities must rise from the Artificial Worldview of these falling empires... Falling empires and their Artificial Worldview have been essential in the manufacturing of historical subjectivities (historical subjectivities that divide us from our transcendental subjectivity and thus portend a ‘fall from grace’) through the historical trajectory that produced the dominant, domineering world culture and its global cities, but we need not continue to be lead upon this suicidal historical trajectory (and must not continue upon this historical trajectory if we wish to return to the path of natural conscious-cultural evolution and thus attain a sustainable, harmonious, reciprocal, regenerative, creative, just, healthy, happy, loving, beautiful, truthful, real, etc. global society and develop cities whose forms reflect this sustainable, harmonious, reciprocal, regenerative, creative, just, healthy, happy, loving, beautiful, truthful, real, etc. order). “We need a new image of order’... Only if we can project that image shall we be able to find a new form for the city.” (Mumford 1961, p. 4)

² This is of course a misnomer as no manifest thing is passing time and physical space is permanent. All things that have a beginning also have an end... But this confused notion of a ‘permanent settlement’ clearly reflects the dogmas of the Artificial Worldview and its attempts to impose the unitary, regular, changeless, motionless order of the Eternal (which has neither beginning nor end) upon manifestation’s natural order of motion, change, difference and irregularity.



[Mumford 1961³⁾], but he seems to have been right in asserting that our age is the one in which have to make a final decision—conscious-cultural evolution of inner qualities like reason, intuition, virtue, wisdom and love, or total destruction of human society in our fall towards ‘Post-historic Man’.

The twin motifs of western civilization, when juxtaposed with Indigenous twin myths from the Americas, illustrate that we have long been on the path towards the loss of feeling, emotion, creative audacity and consciousness that Mumford attributes to ‘Post-historic Man’:

“...Consider the phenomenon of twin motifs throughout mythology. Every culture has stories of twin heroes, with the twins reflecting the complementarity of body and spirit; of solar and lunar; of male and female principles. For example, the Navajo stories about the twins Monster Slayer and Child Born of the Water show how important it is for these opposing energies to work together in harmony. In fact, most American Indian cultures have similar stories about twins; one is direct and ‘solar’ and the other is indirect and ‘lunar’, and they work together to fight the monsters that reside within. However, many of the twin stories from Western cultural myths have evolved in such a way as to have the twins fighting one another with the solar twin dominating. For example, Cain slew Abel, Romulus overshadowed Remus; Hercules became more honored than his half brother, Iphicles.

Thus, playing out the myths of the separated twins, Christianity has emerged primarily as the ‘solar’ twin: active, heroic, intent on mastery. Adherents must believe in the *physical* resurrection; only Jesus and belief in his physical reality can bring eternal salvation. This ‘religion of the sun’ prevails over Gnostic Christianity—the spiritual ‘twin’ that reveals ‘God’ in all things and accepts the spiritual mastery at the heart of creation. Native spirituality may be the force that can reunite these twins!” (Four Arrows 2010)

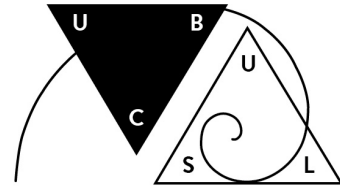
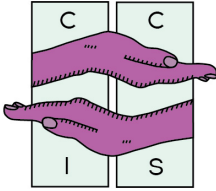
“In essence, I offer that Western myths have split the metaphorical twins, making dominant the solar one who either kills or diminishes the lunar twin. In Indigenous twin hero stories, the two work in complementary harmony. I suggest that Christianity has emerged as the “solar” twin- active, heroic, intent on mastery and physical, materialistic outcomes.” (Four Arrows 2014, p. 5)

Though symbolic associations are often contested, it seems that we can safely assert that western twin myths associate the sun with mind-reason and the moon with emotion-intuition. We are to attain the heights of human potential through conquest and colonization of the heart by the mind. Reason (spirit + mind) is, as in Plato’s (1804) Republic, to rule over the Spirited (emotional) and Appetitive (physical) dimensions of self. Rather than reciprocal cooperation that leads to ‘power with’ (where ascendancy is attained through synergistic relations between sun and moon), hierarchical domination of moon by sun is to lead towards ‘power over’ (where ascendancy is attained through subjugation of the slave-heart to the master-mind).

Abrahamic myths help to better understand the notion that order in the relationship between the solar and lunar principles is to be attained through conquest and colonization of the solar by the lunar.

“Israel’s new dream became the land of Canaan. And Yahweh was still with them: Yahweh promised to go before the people and given them Canaan, with its flowing milk and honey. The land, Yahweh decided,

³⁾ Mumford (1961) lucidly links the desire for permanent habitation with the fear of death (i.e. the fear of ceasing to be, from which the fear of want and the will-to-domination and will-to-greed arise). We seek to arrest the natural order, to create an artificial fabrication of the Eternal, because the illusion of discrete individuality—caused by disconnection from the Eternal aspect of self that negates the potential for discrete individuality and ceasing to be—leads us into fear of ceasing to be.



belonged to these former slaves from Egypt and Yahweh planned on giving it to them—using the same power used against the enslaving Egyptians to defeat the indigenous inhabitants of Canaan. Yahweh the deliverer became Yahweh the conqueror.

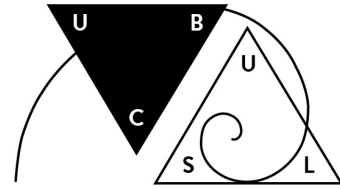
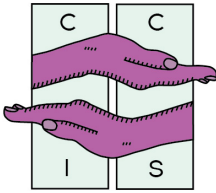
The obvious characters in the story for Native Americans to identify with are the Canaanites, the people who already lived in the promised land. As a member of the Osage Nation of American Indians who stands in solidarity with other tribal people around the world, I read the Exodus stories with Canaanite eyes. And, it is the Canaanite side of the story that has been overlooked by those seeking to articulate theologies of liberation. Especially ignored are those parts of the story that describe Yahweh’s command to mercilessly annihilate the indigenous population.” (Warrior 1989, p. 262)

“The covenant... has two parts: deliverance and conquest.” (Warrior 1989, p. 262)

“No matter what we do, the conquest narratives will remain. As long as people believe in the Yahweh of deliverance, the world will not be safe from Yahweh the conqueror.” (Warrior 1989, p. 264)

Deliverance into the heights of human potential, like deliverance of the Jews, is to be attained through conquest and colonization. Where the Jews conquered and colonized the Canaanites to be delivered into the Promised Land, and where men colonize and conquer women to attain social order in such traditions, mind-reason is to conquer and colonize the heart-intuition to attain a ‘the good order’ of human being.

In the twin myths Greco-Roman cultural seed of western civilization that Mumford so valorizes, as in the seed of western civilization that is to be the Fertile Crescent’s agricultural devolution (which in this context ought to be described as the first in a string of attempts to impose the unity and regularity of the eternal upon the natural order of difference and irregularity in manifestation of the eternal) and in the Abrahamic tradition’s seed-myths of deliverance through conquest and colonization, we can clearly see that western civilization has from its origins been plagued by the folly of the simple farmer from Song (Meng Zi 2016, 2A2)—who pulled on the sprouts in his field to help them grow and only succeeded in killing them—and has thus been on the path towards producing ‘Post-historic Man’ since the fatal decision to allow dystopian ideals (1. order through domination, 2. imposition of unity and regularity upon the natural order of difference and irregularity and 3. valorization of cultivating mind’s power over, rather than power with, heart) to guide the civilizing process (which was thus rendered as a process of conscious-cultural devolution...) to guide humanity’s evolution. Our attempts to help the sprouts grow by pulling on them, embodied in the order of things that formed the seed of western civilization, leads directly to ‘Post-historic Man’ and his loss of feeling, emotion, creativity and consciousness. Cities are, as Geddes (1915) so aptly theorized, embodiments of our conscious-cultural evolution, and the Modern city surely embodies the decision to renege on the duties and responsibilities of conscious-cultural evolution in favor of our perverse attempts to form the manifest world as an artificial replica of the Eternal through imposition of unity and regularity through domination of the natural order of difference and irregularity. Cities, like the human cultures they embody, have been leading us towards ‘Post-historic Man’ since day one, and the decision of our age is whether we will recognize that the wrong decision was made long ago and return to the natural path of conscious-cultural evolution through intimacy with (rather than domination of) the natural order (wherein the eternal is reflected differently and irregularly based on environmental



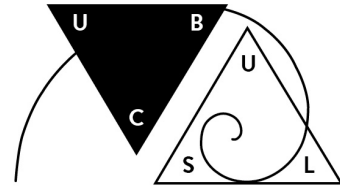
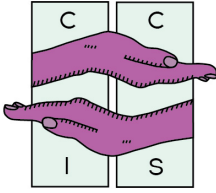
contexts and the culture [Worldview] from which we engage with our environmental contexts). “We need a new image of order... Only if we can project that image shall we be able to find a new form for the city.” (Mumford 1961, p. 4)

For those who appreciate ‘grounding’ (I often like to remain abstract as a raincloud so that my waters may fall upon the many and varied grounds they encounter...), Mumford’s conflation of our beaver kin’s relationship with nature with colonialism is more than demonstrative.

“Even the technological complexity of the human town does not lack animal precedent. With certain species, notably the beavers, colonization brings a deliberate remolding of the environment: tree-felling, dam-raising, lodge-building.” (Mumford 1961, p. 6)

The beavers do not fell so many trees that the forest dies. The beavers do not build dams that prevent their salmon kin from swimming upstream. The beavers’ lodge has never been a treasure hoard... The beavers do not seek power over the forest but power with the forest. The beavers do not seek power over the river but power with the river. It has never been the intent of our beaver kin to conquer, colonize, dominate and thus destroy the natural order. Our beaver kin do not seek to impose the unity and regularity of the eternal upon the natural order through domination of difference and irregularity. In this statement we come face to face with the depth of the depravity of Mumford’s work. Conquest, colonization and domination are viewed as natural reflections of the eternal and not, as they ought, as artificial privations of the eternal. Conquest, colonization, domination and the subsequent death and decay of natural order (which is to say the death and decay of the sprouts of human nature from which inner qualities like reason, intuition, wisdom, virtue and love that mark the attainment of conscious-cultural evolution emerge) are accepted as a part of the process of conscious-cultural evolution rather than the cause of our having strayed from the path of conscious-cultural evolution onto the path of devolution. The Artificial Worldview and its associated norms of thought, feeling, behavior and conception of being are not recognized as the barrier to conscious-cultural evolution that they truly are.

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