

A Cyclical Model of Human History as the Result of Gene Pool Forces Shaping Societies to Ensure Variation.

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A short essay proposing that Nature (gene pools) utilize various human psychological types from psychopaths to altruistic martyrs as tools or mechanisms to ensure genetic variation in human gene pools. Variation, that is required once stagnation occurs, from a cyclical model of competition for scarce resources (inequality) involving tribes and societies in an eternal movement from balance, to segmentation, competition, imbalance, stagnation, teamwork, war, and repeating back to balance.

A major question or challenge to the proponents of evolution is, why does a psychopath exist? It would appear that a psychopath has no place in a tribe or a society especially if a given society survives for many generations (i.e. psychopathy is considered a genetic error or accident, or caused by a disease). But there are simply too many examples in too many various societies and environments to fit this interpretation and it is a trait that, over eons, has not been “bred out” as a “less fit” characteristic or adaptation. The interpretation of low-empathy, selfish, and/or psychopathic individuals as “accidents of evolution” does not appear to be the case at all in our historical human reality.

Thus, perhaps due to our human flaw of analyzing reality with our all too common anthropomorphic bias (i.e., human kindness as an intrinsic optimal attribute etc.), maybe our interpretation is fundamentally wrong? Perhaps selfish, power driven, and even psychopathic individuals are just another “tool” for the ever present “selfish gene”? Perhaps there is a large percentage of the population that is maybe not just psychopathic, in the sense of want and greed for self, but yet brutally competitive and driven and that this has always been the case now and deep into our ancient origins. Consider the behavior of lions in the savannah toward youth from another sire.

So let us imagine a high-level split or segmentation of a society into three groups: psychopathic or driven individuals, a “middle of the road” majority of the population, and then a high-empathy, teamwork, and altruistic segment of a population.

If we use a square shape to represent the total resources of a given tribe or society, then in this diagrammed model (Figure 1), we can see that it is possible that the trends we see over and over again in capitalistic and feudal societies, and actually in all societies, may simply be representative of a cyclical result that is inescapable and that societies, likely driven by “invisible” genetic forces, always lead to income or wealth inequality. Note that the amount of resources owned by a segment may be large, versus the size of the square in the diagram, but the actual size of that population group might be very small as we see today and throughout history with those on the top of the wealth and power scale.

Now, logically we can argue that the result of a society with such resource inequality is both ethically and logistically suboptimal for any gene pool or society in terms of productivity, happiness, or the net health of the overall gene pool. We have an excess amount of resources owned and available to only the selfish, powerful, and potentially even psychopathic class. A gene pool would, in theory, “despise” this situation as it leads to limited options for “survival from variation” of the aggregate gene pool (e.g., human royalty inbreeding). Thus, what is the evolutionary “circuit breaker” that upends this literally stale system or society? It appears to be conflict or war in the form of competition or aggression from an external tribe or society. Ultimately, this is the inevitable outcome in a Universe of scarcity where successful populations, by definition, continue to grow, expand, and thus require additional resources: land, water, food, etc.

Now, one can argue that this never-ending appetite for resources, in theory, might actually promote survival-of-the-fittest evolution (i.e., only the strongest or best survive into the future) and if a society, for good or bad, lets itself become so unequal, then another more efficient society may justifiably destroy it or assimilate it, again, for good or bad. Our example unequal society may also, in theory, be destroyed internally from internal revolution or conflict after which we will likely then again simply see a restart of the same internal competition for available resources.

But how much pain, death, and suffering must occur to “feed” this sort of Sisyphean or eternally repeating cycle that becomes akin to using lives simply for a large-scale sport, competition, or “machine” for the “selfish gene” paradigm to optimize its long term survivability, fecundity, variation of fittest species?

Now, one can argue that this never-ending appetite for resources, in theory, might actually promote optimal survival-of-the-fittest evolution (i.e., only the strongest survive into the future) and if a society, for good or bad, lets itself become so unequal, then another more efficient society may (by this logic justifiably) destroy it or assimilate it. Our example unequal society may also, in theory, be destroyed or recalibrated internally from revolution or civil war or class conflict after which we will likely again simply see a restart of the same internal competition for available resources between classes or segments of society as they slowly diversify.

But, subjectively speaking, how much pain, death, and suffering must occur to “feed” this sort of Sisyphean or eternally repeating cycle that becomes akin to our gene pool controlling mechanism “using” individuals or lives simply for a large-scale sport, competition or “machine” for the “selfish gene” paradigm to optimize its long term survivability via optimal fecundity and gene variation that leads to the fittest species? Are we trapped here letting human emotions get in the way of Nature’s harsh and competitive reality that already has produced viruses, parasites, starvation, plagues, carnivores, and humans if we attempt to promulgate the removal of cruelty as a metric relevant to any consideration in the mechanisms in Nature.

In this context, is it possible that the historical dreams of mankind, to either realize the dream of a utopian society (with total cooperation and sharing) or to eliminate (e.g., maybe via genetic manipulation with tools like CRISPR) the very genes that lead to psychopathy, sadism, aggressiveness, etc. (a la an extreme version of Clockwork Orange eugenics), might, thus, never work in practice or theory. Perhaps under this new model such efforts could be viewed as even slowing down progress or the very mechanism of Nature to promote long-term survival. On the opposite side, have we simply now codified the challenge of human existence where every move forward in science, technology, thought, etc. is a literal “unit” of energy, suffering, potential assistance, which is thus not being used to lift the poor or needy required to make a less cruel and more equal or just society? Is humanity forever trapped in this painful cycle where no matter what advancements in intellect or political science occurs, the only mechanisms possible to “shake up” human gene pools (especially as globalization leads to the creation of individuals, families, and small pools of society of nation-less rich accountable to not even nation-states and with resources larger than nation-states), are the horrible scourges of large-scale war and/or social revolution?

Examining human history at this scale over generations and eons, it becomes difficult to not compare our daily lives to those of chess pawns – foolish, disposable, and weak - in a game or system that, while we think we are in control of our lives and societies with structures and labels (e.g., capitalism, socialism, democracies, etc.), in reality, geological scale genetic forces in Nature demand this cycle? Have we perhaps discovered the ultimate “rat race” of balance, segmentation, competition, imbalance, stagnation, teamwork, war, balance, segmentation, competition, imbalance, stagnation, teamwork, war, balance, and over and over again? Sadly, it is difficult to find counter-examples to this model when human history is examined on such a large scale.

So, as the answer to the original question, it appears Nature may actually desire a subset of hyper-driven, selfish, even psychopathic individuals in the human gene pool as the very “tool” it needs to create segmentation, akin to stirring the pool where, if the number of tribes (pools) ever gets too small or too cooperative, Nature has a “tool” to always shake-up the gene pool. Sadly, this implies that unless a tribe is completely isolated and does not grow large enough to fracture or segment into internal groups (likely a very small tribe indeed), the dream of a large scale or nation-sized kibbutz-like utopian paradise on earth may be forever impossible, by definition. The forces of Nature appear to detest it and, thus, perhaps basically forbid it.

The obvious science fiction scenario then comes to mind i.e., might the only possible mechanism that could lead to global human harmony by a real exogenous shock of a threat from another population literally from another planet? Or, even then, based on this model, would such harmony never last as, beyond the length of this stellar conflict, the innate survival drive, to obtain and control scarce resources ever present at every scale of interpersonal relationships, simply always kicks in. One can imagine a world at least somewhat more peaceful with a natural world of bears, dolphins, birds, etc. finding competitive equilibrium with their environment where, after eons, a “plotting and ever efficient” Nature “lusts” to forge an intelligent pool of genes and for the creation of a human being style organism, i.e. a vessel with intelligence, that can create the alpha male, the psychopath, the altruistic martyr, the sacrificing soldier, etc. all perhaps cast into their very existence as caricature-like tools to simply shake-up stagnate gene pools to ensure genetic variation by Nature itself.

As an example of a possible periodic cycle of peace and violence, we can examine the history of the United States noting the dramatic changes that occur every forty years starting at 1864 with the immense violence of the Civil War. Then forty years later we have 1904. The year 1904 is a year of peace right in the middle of the “first globalization” period. As noted in Wikipedia:

“The period from 1870 to 1914 represents the peak of 19th-century globalization. First globalization is known for increasing transfers of commodities, people, capital and labour between and within continents. However, it is not only about the movement of goods or factors of production. First globalization also includes technological transfers and the rise of international cultural and scientific cooperation.”

Forty years later, we have 1944 with the unimaginable amount of global death and violence in World War II culminating in deaths from attacks using atomic weapons in 1945. Forty years later in 1984, we have a variety of musical styles and genres peaking with the unifying anthems of peace and compassion of the European song “Do They Know It’s Christmas” in 1984 and “We Are The World” in 1985. Forty years later in 2024, we have a world of immense inequality, war again in Europe in Ukraine, and political polarization not seen since the Civil War. At least, if this pattern holds true, then we might hope to see a time of unity and peace in the year 2064.

Figure 1.

A diagram showing eight time frames where society, represented as a square, is shown to follow a cyclical pattern flowing from a state of balance to segmentation, competition, imbalance, stagnation, teamwork, war, and then back to balance.

