

The Underlying Reason Why Western Civilization Is at Risk 2021

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Over the last 400+ years, Western Civilization [WC] has provided a spectacular ride for those lucky enough to be included in it. And since the influence of WC has spread dramatically across most of the world – especially in the last 200 years, its worldview has come both to dominate and to define the aspirations of the great majority of humans on the planet. Consider simply four indicators of why the WC ride has been such a success – without citing all the rest: 1) the extraordinary increase in the average citizen’s standard of living, 2) the explosive increase in human population promoted by conditions of improved health and longevity, 3) the advances provided by science in human knowledge from the most micro to the most macro levels – particles to multiverses, and 4) the capacity to “manage” all aspects of the environment as a result of the development and implementation of a vast array of technological applications.

Only in the last thirty years have the wheels on the WC wagon begun to wobble noticeably. A spectacular ride, absolutely! But in retrospect, an irresponsible and magnificently self-centered ride. Why? Put most simply – Because for all its “glory,” WC never maintained a balanced perspective on reality which is necessary to recognize and pursue the appropriate place for humans on Earth for the long term.

Let’s explore this thesis.

I suggest that broadly speaking humans are endowed with the capacity to understand themselves and to engage the world from two different perspectives. In the smaller human societies of bands and tribes in the 250,000 years of modern humanity’s existence, these two perspectives came to be more or less balanced in their influence. Indeed, this period of time was sufficient to test the relative input of these two perspectives for the long term. These two perspectives are not exclusive and in operation they usually intermix, but for heuristic purposes, we can consider them separately.

The first of these perspectives is the rational, material, objective point of view. This is the perspective that has enjoyed a decidedly dominant position within WC – especially within the last 200 most explosive years of nations built on the institutions of representative democracy, independent judiciary, and “regulated” capitalism. Science has found this rationally, objectively, and materially focused orientation to be especially fertile, and its technological applications have flourished as expressed through an economy that is designed to be ever

expanding as it is ever more demanding of natural resources. In WC, reason is held to be the more or less exclusive basis for assessment and decision making in nearly all areas of life, and reality is defined in terms of its material components and their systematic relationships. Humans exist as separate individuals and relate to one another in terms of their self interests and in accordance with the societal dictates of what constitutes appropriate behavior in the social and environmental domains. Many citizens in modern WC consciously recognize no other perspective, though they will be at least unconsciously employing the following one to least some extent!

The second perspective is the intuitive, subjective, unification point of view. This perspective relies on the human intuitive faculty of mind and conceives all of reality as infused with a sacred or spiritual principle. It recognizes the underlying and fundamental connection of all “things” to the point where all of the components of nature/reality share in a common or universal identity. When the self and the rest of reality is conceived as One, the result is referred to as the unification perspective. When the self and the rest of reality is experienced as One, the result is referred to as the unification experience. Importantly, both this form of conceptualization and experience are expected to be incorporated at the primary or “gut level,” and realizing this condition is a key goal of most initiation rituals [e.g. vision quest] in the bands and tribes that prevailed for 96% of human history. Once in place, unification awareness produces the understanding of the self as connected to, part of, and belonging to all other aspects of the natural world – from rocks, to trees, to bears, to hawks, to humans. And the follow-on consequence is the commitment to respect all others because they are you and you are them. Human ethics and environmental ethics are not merely social dictates as is the case in the rational, material, objective perspective. They follow directly from an understanding of the fundamental unified state of all existence.

Of course, humans have always utilized their rational capabilities to plan, prepare, and execute the social and technical activities necessary to supply their needs. But for most of human history, humans balanced satisfying these supply needs with the restraint that arises from an active, rooted, and responsible unification perspective. The rise of complex societies in the last 5-10,000 years saw the sacred or spiritual principle transformed into elaborate religions with extensive mythologies, rituals, and priesthoods. The result was that the core unification principle was often virtually buried – opening the way for the rational, material perspective to assume dominance, especially when religions lost their strangle hold with the rise of modern WC.

So, ever since WC lost significant input from the intuitive, subjective, unification perspective and experienced the rise in influence of the rational, material, objective perspective, the condition of perspective imbalance has existed in WC. And paradoxically, this condition of imbalance accounts for the spectacular worldwide success of WC at the same time it is the key source of most of the significant global scale problems which now confront WC. Whether the successes or the problems of WC are focal just depends on when we begin to observe the negative impacts of WC as it has proceeded to fulfill its impressive unrestrained destiny. With the rise in the last 30 years of humanity's awareness a) of global scale economic inequity, b) of global scale political turmoil, c) of global scale pandemics, d) of global scale climate change, e) of global scale pollution, and f) of global scale species extinction, the negatives have accumulated and come into sharp focus. This is the case, in spite of WC continuing to star with respect to its scientific discoveries and its technological innovations.

What can be done to address this current condition of WC perspective imbalance which is mostly shared across the world? First, humanity must recognize that the imbalance exists and that this imbalance underlies all of the major global scale social and ecological problems that complex societies are currently confronting. Second, humanity must realize that while the rational, material, objective perspective can contribute substantially to the solution of this imbalance, it can only do so by looking outside itself. To rely on science and reason alone is to confront the grave struggle that civilized humanity now faces with one arm tied behind our back. Third, humanity has to retrieve from the subjective, unification perspective the input into our understanding and orientation to reality of essential restraint, respect, and responsibility. Humanity must do this in order to address and eliminate on a permanent basis a) our flagrant WC egotism as we relate to the other "participants" in our reality, b) our excessive social competitiveness and divisiveness, and c) our unsustainable WC resource use and outrageous resource abuse. Fourth, to retrieve the unification perspective we need to recognize that intuitive competence and mindfulness skills – upon which the unification perspective rests – can be developed in humans just as rational competence and critical thinking skills can be developed. Without the need for even a particle of religious belief, humanity can and must dedicate itself to developing and implementing education curricula that produce global citizens who are highly skilled both rationally and intuitively.

WC and the world of nations must either get our foundational perspectives balanced or we will chase every problem separately with superb rational arguments and plans while the enormous economic and political forces that are invested in the status quo undercut our ability to act – until WC goes extinct.