

# *Rationality and Western Culture*

C. L. Corey

AMERICAN SOCIETY and culture have been under heavy attack for more than a century. Fear has been expressed that the struggle against its destroyers has already been lost, though it seems that no one dares even to identify them. There is not an evil today, be it poverty or violence, incompetency or indecency, which is not the direct result of a renegade effort to destroy humane civilization. It is said that people are "indifferent" to freedom and humanness and will be happier as clients to the State. One can test that contention by telling blacks that their ancestors were happier as slaves.

The truth is that there is no one, no organized effort openly dedicated to saving freedom or humanness, or Western civilization. Yet vast amounts of tax money are fed into a whole array of efforts to destroy them. A highly paid "Professor" at a leading university recently wrote that "the image of the family is especially unrealistic...marriage, or any social policy that relies on private responsibility will fail." This is not an instance of ignorance on the part of the writer, but of an assumed stupidity of the reader. It is a further denigration of human society and, in effect, of freedom

and self-government, which must have a solid basis in strong families, teaching "private responsibility."

In government today the principal intent in social and economic policy is to subvert and replace society and self-government with statism. In education, in morals, and in literacy, the purpose is to change young people from social beings to indoctrinated clients of the State. And in the media and entertainment world the effort is to spread an attitude of irresponsibility and to demonstrate the "happiness" this sub-humanness brings.

Discussion, the life-blood of society, has been driven out of the "mainstream," replaced by imposed attitudes and perceptions. Surely a new movement must begin to bring back dialogue, with a measure of truth and reason. People who no longer know must be informed as to what human society is, what culture and morality are, where they came from and what is their enduring meaning. Truth must provide the basic motivation for a renewal of humanness.

Societies evolved aeons ago as a strategy for cooperative survival. Most of what people perceive as the qualities characterizing humanness are qualities that evolved as phylogenetic adaptations to society. From parental tenderness "springs generosity, gratitude, pity, love, and altruistic behavior of many kinds." In

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C. L. COREY was a professor at Wayne State University for 32 years, teaching metallurgy and Material Science.

alliance with the anger evoked by harm to offspring, comes all moral indignation, as evidenced in the leonine courage of a mother hen protecting her chicks. Non-aggression and altruism, within society, were necessary adaptations for social stability, and became the ground of morality and charity.

Society has been the institution within which families have evolved and people have been trained in the responsibility and knowledge, or culture, for living together amicably and productively. Society is innately, and necessarily, a hierarchical organization, for it seeks to survive and also to develop. This is precisely the organization that is required for self-government.

Most essential to an elementary understanding of society and culture is the truth about reason. Reason must be viewed as a tool, potentially more dangerous than nuclear power, but often used by man for evil rather than for good, as the twentieth century abundantly demonstrates. What Scotus likened to God himself was purpose, which stands united with truth and rationality; one cannot be had without all three. Irrationality means what is without purpose; rationality requires congruity, like that of a well-running machine with no clashing of gears.

Life began, whether by God or by Nature's chance, with an implacable purpose not only to survive but also to rise up. Survival gave direction to all life, in all behavior, for countless years. Survival found use for reason, empowered it until our forebears, with an innate intuition that combined with some reasoned culture, found it necessary to yoke and to control reason. Three advances in restraining reason should be noted.

First, evidence indicates that over three million years ago monogamous couples became responsible for the nurturing of their own children, as families, which greatly reduced social disruptions and infanticide caused by male aggres-

sion. Male reasoning became attached to the new purpose of protecting a family, rather than seeking pack dominance. Families also improved survival of the young by providing extra years of protection, particularly for young males, for absorption of an expanding body of culture. Second, ethical education was introduced in the form of lengthy and arduous, primitive "initiation rites," for young males entering manhood. A new purpose, to protect the sacredness of the tribe, its people and its customs, replaced reason's imaginings. The third was the opening up of conscious reason, and the subsequent development of a syntactic language, essential for a cultural purpose to supplement or to replace survival for social guidance.

Innate behavior patterns, activated unconsciously, facilitated survival. With increasing cortex, "feelings" associated with particular patterns began to affect conscious reason and to influence guidance. Durkheim called them "forces," "commanding yet kindred and coming from the outside." There were urges to belong, to obey conscience, and, deepest of all, to seek to rise up, opening up a new world to early man. Fascination with these "feelings" induced discussion and celebration. A great turning inward followed. Study and analysis of these invisible connections, or spiritual forces, led to religion, science, and philosophy as the "way things really are," when they were still one.

It is essential that we recognize the centrality of communication and discussion in comprehending the supreme human institutions of society and culture. Purpose-guided truth and rationality, necessary for a self-governing society, must evolve from discussion. Anyone familiar with any society—of bees, of birds, of dogs, or of primates—is aware of a considerable amount of "discussions."

Communication between conspecifics became significant hundreds of millions

of years ago when mobile species (arthropods) interacted in order to reproduce themselves. Such an "interaction" might be encoded into a message solely by enactments and rituals. These could attract a possible mate or erupt as "aggressive displays" against a competitor. The interaction itself was actualized by a *cognitive program* synthesizing an awareness of patterns in the surroundings (consciousness), a storage of standard patterns (memory), and a facility for detecting a match between an incident and a standard or known pattern (reason). Discovery of such a reasoned match, absorbed as information, could be acted upon immediately if one was, say, threatened by predators. Or it could evolve into a message.

Culture has been defined by scientists as knowledge acquired from reasoned experiences for survival. A type of "reason" is essential to the cognitive program, for recognizing a pattern that matches another. Some form of "reason" is even more evident when competing conspecifics engage in "aggressive displays." Eventually one of the competitors must recognize that he has lost and must reason his future accordingly.

Such "reasoning" could incorporate gestures and expressions into the existing ritual. Later sounds could be added, such as growls, squeaks, purrs. Then verbs could easily evolve from the squeaks and growls and produce a symbolic encoding—a syntactic language. A baby can learn and use the encoding for Chinese as readily as for English. Even now, basic rituals are still the common encoding for our most profound social messages, while gestures and facial expressions are preferred for our deepest messages of passion and compassion.

Syntactic language was developed for communications regarding the new "forces," as culture. Note, then, a very significant ethnological principle: cultural developments are commonly resulting

in adaptations to innate programs, so interwoven as to be inseparable. The important cases of morality, of family, and of language have been presented; it can be shown to be a very general rule.

Social living produced powerful incentives for mental development leading to an awareness of man's society and the powerful "forces" generated by it. This led to a turning inward, to an examination of these "feelings," and to the discovery of the hierarchy of human society. Symbols joined with rituals and gestures to enunciate the felt but often the inexpressible experience. What was this thing urging one to belong to a collective, to be obedient to conscience, and deepest, to rise up—most precious, thus sacred? Certainly it was the vitality of this force which generated the first symbol, the first written word, the totem: "US." Then it came to represent the Great Spirit of the tribe. Such feelings are not superstitions, they are man's closest approach to his reality. These natural societies were not Hobbesian, "poor, nasty and brutish." Consider the early tribal Greeks, or the Indians of the plains; or imagine the creator of the 15,000 year-old "Wild Horse of Montespan," of Paleolithic cave art. These people were exuberant, free, active. (A university professor today is much more cloyed with superstition, repressed, bound by dogma, taboos, and priestly inquisitors.)

But when agriculture produced plenty and populations especially intensive in great river valleys, the resulting security and "affluence" deprived the old tribal council of force for authority. An intellectual elite grabbed control, monopolized knowledge, and terrorized people into sub-human servitude with threats of "angry gods." Bureaucratic statism originated some 10,000 years ago with these god-king empires. Rather improperly credited as "civilizations," they made little progress, considering the time and facilities available. Fear that innovations

would get out of hand produced the first Lysenkoism. The frozen nature of Egyptian art was noted by Plato; it is vastly inferior to Paleolithic art.

It was by intellectuals that man's spiritual world was transformed from a great promise to the chains of superstition and dogma; and it was statism that engendered kings and courts, royalty and social classes, as well as a priesthood, slavery, superstitions, and bureaucracy. Tribal societies of natural men possessed none of these evils. They were the invention of intellectuals, whom the Greeks came to fear as "Seers who bring terror to keep men afraid," long before Socrates and Plato.

Perhaps as an intuitive response to this fear, or because of a greater awareness of a need for some purpose that would help them escape the abyss, the Greeks consciously taught and held up for society the need to seek that which is "proper to man." They were clearly not aware of the great influence of this purpose in monopolizing reason and its imagination to the service of that purpose. But it guided and focused their efforts, permitting them to create perhaps the greatest of human cultures. "Proper to man" was changed to the proximate "will of God" as purpose in the subsequent Christian world.

"Culture" became something entirely new, an explication, an exemplification, and a celebration of a great human purpose, to seek that which is proper to man according to God and Nature. Culture for scientists, humanists, even sociologists up to the 1960s was knowledge acquired from reasoned experience, for survival. John Stuart Mill defined it as "knowledge which one generation gives to its successors for at least keeping up, if not rising." Truth had hitherto never been taken to encompass untruth, or morality, immorality, or science, the ever-present errors. So, too, with culture; it was always knowledge leading to a positive emergence in human behavior. But during the

1960s intellectuals were able to force the perception that culture also included the negative: knowledge for socially destructive or inhuman behavior, in the forms of adversary culture, drugs, homosexuality, and multi-culture. As a result the very concept of culture as knowledge for positive human behavior was subverted and abandoned for a "culture" as mere behavior, often most heinous.

The scholar Max Weber introduced his most famous work with the question: What accounts for the fact that "only" Western culture (civilization is culture, people, places, and institutions) has "universal significance and value." His answer, "Only in the West" was culture rational (with purpose): a rational science, theology, art, and music with rational concepts. But he remains obscure on why it was rational or even what was involved.

The greatest gift of the Greeks was their somewhat unwitting demonstration of the profound importance of purpose to cultural rationality, social guidance, and truth. But the reasoners abandoned God as superstition, and, in doing so, they unwittingly abandoned purpose, and, thus, rationality. It ceased to be unwitting when the Comte de Sade presented his rollicking discovery that without purpose "nothing can be prohibited."

When the professor from Columbia University, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, pronounced "private responsibility" unqualified in social affairs, she was speaking for the renegade establishment that has been seeking to destroy education (Dewey), rule of law (Morris Cohen), and Western culture (Franz Boas, et al.). Today, families and self-government, and hence all humanness, are rejected for a national or a global statism that shows all the signs of totalitarianism. This is a verifiable truth that must be spread by all. Those who refuse to help, or, even to be saved from this madness, must be seen as our destroyers.