



Civilization as the Survival of the Weak: Rethinking Evolutionary Theory in Civilizational Context

Constantinos Maritsas*

Independent Scholar, Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract

Till now all definitions of civilization which we have are anthropocentric and they, as a rule, are considered as well confirmed stereotypes in different fields of science and humanities. I will try to offer the definition which isn't anthropocentric and will help to answer some important questions concerning the universal phenomena of human being in the past and present. My concept is largely influenced by Darwin's principle of natural selection, which is to be reconsidered and rethought and which operates always and everywhere, if we only determine its criteria and scope. In my paper I also use some present-day achievements of semiotics, phenomenology and hermeneutics as methodological principles for the reconstruction of the human cultural and social identity, including its gender aspect. Man (referring primarily to male), the weak and helpless against natural forces, was subject to destruction for two reasons: he was an easy prey to predators, and males died in the inner species battle. Consequently, male was doomed to extinction. The only solution was to end the violent inner species struggle for supremacy and replace it with other selection criteria. The first selection criteria were found in the nature. We suppose that they have been: song, beauty and gifts. Man had to adapt to the new "civilizational" criteria. My hypothesis is based on two facts. First, even today "song, beauty and gifts" are expressions of love or preference of men (males) regardless of the level of civilization, and second, it is the same with animals. We have already arrived at the first definition of civilization as the replacement of the coercive intraspecific competition with non-violent fights. But abolishing the intraspecific competition, male got biologically weak and he became an easier prey for animals. Then he made the second step. He terminated the coercive fighting with animals having replaced it with dance. After totally eliminating violence as a criterion, the woman began to select on the grounds of language (music, word), beauty (decoration, fashion, art) and gifts (wealth, property). Man has gone from the natural (subconscious) selection to the acquired (conscious) selection, that is, man is not a result of natural selection! So we have the final no anthropocentric definition of civilization: Civilization is the survival of the weak.

Key words: *Civilization, Art, Evolution Theory, Natural Selection.*

Introduction

"Given the current level of our knowledge, I do not think that the question of the origin of language may find an answer" (McMahon, 2001, p. 440). We can say the same for all the civilization meanings, even for the civilization: "Given the current level of our knowledge, I do not think that the question of the origin of civilization may find an answer".

All definitions of civilization we have are anthropocentric: civilization and human activity are identified in them. So we have a vicious circle: civilization=>man, man=>civilization!

*Corresponding address. Email: kmar@abv.bg

How did man progress from natural selection to civilization? Why other animals or plants did not follow suit and didn't create civilizations? Or they did?

Till now all definitions of civilization which we have are anthropocentric and they, as a rule, are considered as well confirmed stereotypes in different fields of science and humanities. I will try to offer the definition which isn't anthropocentric and will help to answer some important questions concerning the universal phenomena of human being in the past and present. My concept is largely influenced by Darwin's principle of natural selection, which is to be reconsidered and rethought and which operates always and everywhere, if we only determine its criteria and scope. Darwin wrote: "Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however light and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. We have seen that man by selection can certainly produce great results, and can adapt organic beings to his own uses, through the accumulation of slight but useful variations, given to him by the hand of Nature. But Natural Selection, as we shall here after see, is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art." (Darwin, 1997: 86).

The idea is that the powerful enjoy the privileges they do because they are more fit in terms of the traits favored by natural selection. The powerless have less fit traits. So avoid the vicious cycle: the fittest survives, the survivor is fittest.

Definition of civilization

According to Darwin, "struggle for life is most severe between individuals and varieties of the same species" (Darwin, 1997: 99). Man (referring primarily to male), weak and helpless against the natural forces, was subject to destruction for two reasons: he was an easy prey to predators, and males died in the inner species battle. Consequently, male was doomed to extinction. The only solution was to end the violent inner species struggle for supremacy and replace it with other selection criteria.

The selection criteria were found in the nature. We suppose that they have been: sound (song), vision (beauty) and thinks (gifts). Man had to adapt to the new "civilizational" criteria. My hypothesis is based on two facts. First, even today "song, beauty and gifts" are expressions of love or preference of men (males) regardless of the level of civilization, and second, it is the same with the animals.

We have already arrived at the first definition of civilization as the replacement of the coercive intraspecific competition with non-violent fights. But abolishing the intraspecific competition, male got biologically weak and he became an easier prey for

animals. Then he made the second step. He terminated the coercive fighting with animals having replaced it with dance. According to Desmond Morris: "most of our dance moves come from the same source, but in our case they have not developed into a static ritual kind" They have developed into a human way, i.e., into a civilized way."(Morris, 1970: 226). The first generations imitated the nature. But the next ones, instead of imitating nature, began to imitate previous generations, losing the connecting link with the nature. By imitating, they lost the main purpose and imitation itself became the main purpose, it became unnatural ("ritual", "magic" and "religion") actions (See Maritsas, 2011).

After totally eliminating violence as a criterion, the woman (female) began to select on the grounds of language (music, word), beauty (decoration, fashion, art) and gifts (wealth, property). Man (male) has gone from the natural (subconscious) selection to the acquired (conscious) selection, that is, man is not a result of natural selection!

Finally I propose definition of civilization which I treat as non-anthropocentric:

"Civilization is the survival of the weak". This definition can be applied to man, animal and every living being.

In order for the weak to survive, someone should protect him. This is the Law. Laws are a result of the civilization, which is supposed to protect and ensure the survival of the weak members of society. The term "human rights protection" is, by its nature, the other type of the legal action of an interpersonal relation: if I respect the rights of another man, I also require respecting of my rights. Rights and obligations in a sincere human and interpersonal relationship create a mutual communication of respect and understanding. The term "human rights protection" is opposite to "natural selection"; it contradicts to the competition between species. Respect protects the weak, who unable to defend himself.

1. Definition of lie, lying and art

Now let us consider definition of art. All definitions of art (as well as civilization) we have are anthropocentric: art and human activity are identified in them. And we have one more vicious circle: art=>man, man=>art! I will try to offer the definition which isn't anthropocentric.

The author guesses the process of language and art development is as follows: The first weak man had to illustrate the false fact with the phrase-lie, "I killed the bear". The man had gestures, yelling, masking, and natural materials at his disposal. The weak man must pretend to be the strong one, the one that really killed the bear. A generation comes, however, where the weak imitate the previous generation, not the powerful. Thus, the principle according which the weak man imitated the powerful one disappeared. The weak men prevailed, and the phrase "I killed the" has lost its necessity. Thus, gestures, shouts and masking became a dance, a song and clothes.

If we consider here the H. Taine's words: "With time they [men – C.M.] actually make copies of the copies ..." we could define art as the process of the creation of "copies of the copies of nature", made by males to be chosen by females for

reproduction. In this case I use “male” (not “man”) and “female” (not “woman”) intentionally for obtaining not anthropocentric definition. The necessity of art induced appearance of male’s fantasy.

The definition of art given above contains two preconditions for the piece of art. The first one requires the original type to be natural. Art requires copying of nature. The second prerequisite is the goal of art. The goal of art is the survival of the every next generation: “However, as you already know, the artist (the male – C.M.) creates in order to be valued and adored (by the female – C.M.). This is the passion dominating in him” (Taine, 1998: 52). The “passion” in this case is his “instinct of reproduction”.

As we have already said, the first human lie is: “I killed the bear”, illustrated by a weak man in order to embezzle the heroism of the strong man. In other words, the lie of the weak man is the truth of the strong one. Following the need to create it, we can already give the definitions of lie and lying:

The lie is the someone else’s truth; and the lying is the usurpation of someone else’s truth.

For the animal is the same: “Messrs. Wallace and Trimen have likewise described several equally striking cases of imitation in the Lepidoptera of the Malay Archipelago and Africa, and with some other insects. Mr. Wallace has also detected one such case with birds, but we have none with the larger quadrupeds. The much greater frequency of imitation with insects than with other animals, is probably the consequence of their small size; insects cannot defend themselves, excepting indeed the kinds furnished with a sting, and I have never heard of an instance of such kinds mocking other insects, though they are mocked; insects cannot easily escape by flight from the larger animals which prey on them; therefore, speaking metaphorically, they are reduced, like most weak creatures, to trickery and dissimulation.” (Darwin, 1997, chapter XIV).

American ethologists Rowell, Ellner, and Reeve (2006) showed that lie and dishonesty are widespread among the animals: “In green tree frogs *Rana clamitans* some small males exaggerate their quality by lowering their acoustic pitch to resemble that of larger males (Bee et al., 2000). False alarm signals may be given to divert rivals from food sources or mating opportunities, as in the shrikes *Lanius versicolor* and *Thamnomanes schistogynus* (Munn, 1986). Deception has been observed in all primate groups, and differences in deception rate among primate species correlate with neocortex size, suggesting that benefits from deception may have been a driver of neocortex expansion.” (p. E 180)

The better a creature is at lying, bluffing and deceiving, the more likely it is to survive in this world. Lying is all about deceiving predators and surviving—whether it is an insect changing its colors or a human lying to a boss who might fire him and take away his income and means of survival.

Could one reason that humans have evolved as much as we have be precisely this—that we are the world’s best tricksters and liars? Does mastering the art of deceit mean mastering the world?

Finally, the definition of art for every living being is: Usurping the truth by the weak male from the strong male with the purpose of being selected by the females for reproduction using the nature materials as instruments.

Here art is the painting, the sculpture, etc.. This definition is for every living being, animal or human.

One of the first confirmations of the definition of art is: “Labour does not create, of course, pieces of art, even when the product of physical work can distinguish itself from the industrial product” (Heidegger, 1986: 96). Apparently labour is a copy of copies from nature, but the goal is not the survival of the species. The goal of hand-labour is the survival of the male as an individual. And here two goals of each living being could be spotted: the survival of the species (in the case of art) and that of the individual (in the case of labour). Work clothes are a product of labour (manual labour), the evening outfit or the suit, however, are pieces of art.

2. Piece of art and its copies

The authenticity of a piece of art is the most significant problem. Women want to reproduce with a creator but not with an imitator who copies. (I would like to remind that the aim of the piece of art is to bring forward the author and not the piece itself). The ownership of a piece of art is also in the sense of my conception art because it provides the selection by women. The first question arising in front of a piece of art is: “who is the artist?” The possession of a piece of art is an evidence of wealth which is a selection criterion. If the pictures of the painter X are expensive then their owner could be selected by the woman like a rich man.

Trough art, the “weak” man tried to attract the woman to copulate with her. So to be personal the “artwork” had to bear a “signature”. The woman would recognize the man by the project and pick him. Signatures such as the ones of Van Gogh, Picasso and Dali are sought after in our time. The primitive man, however, did not possess a recognizable signature. That is why he created an art such as cave-painting in inaccessible places, which only he knew. Thereby he tried to enchant the woman there (in his love nest). If he had painted at the cave entrance, the woman wouldn’t have recognized the artist and that meant the goal of art wouldn’t have been achieved. Concerning the paintings in the caves, Dr. Jacob Bronowski wrote: “The only thing we can say seeing the faces of the animals on the walls of the caves is that it is a magic performance” (Bronowski, 1987: 42). Without explaining what he meant by “magic”, he concluded: “The most important painting of the caves is the imprint of a hand. And the stamp says: This is my sign. I am the Man!” (Bronowski, 1987: 44).

If Dr. J. Bronowski was exempt from the vague sense of “magic”, he would correctly read the imprint of the hand: “This is my sign. I am the weak man. I’m looking for a woman”.

3. Some analogies between homo and animals

In my concept, I proceed from the fact that there is no fundamental difference between a man and an male animal and definitions of civilization and art can be also applied to animals. Man, due to the peculiarities of his brain, moved first from the nature to the civilization, replacing the criteria of natural selection by civilizational criteria. This prompted him to create a new visual reality, imitating nature for women with the purpose of reproduction. Many animals and birds also followed the same line. Darwin, using theory of sexual selection ("Sexual Selection. -- Inasmuch as peculiarities often appear under domestication in one sex and become hereditarily attached to that sex, the same fact probably occurs under nature, and if so, natural selection will be able to modify one sex in its functional relations to the other sex, or in relation to wholly different habits of life in the two sexes, as is sometimes the case with insects." (Darwin, 1997, chapter IV), explained the fact that with many species of birds males severely compete with each other, attracting females with their singing. Males and females congregate in one place, where the males take turns to spread their brightly coloured feathers, making strange movements and showing off to the females, who act as spectators until they select the most attractive partner. In my opinion, in this case we should not talk about sexual selection, but about the above mentioned civilization criteria.

I will make some analogies with the animal world. In the dance-fight as in nature, in Darwin's words, "the result should not be the death of the unfortunate rival, but the reduction of his offspring, or the suppression of the possibility there off" (Darwin, 1997: 114). Thus, the goal is not the death of the rival, but the right to one's own reproduction. After a series of studies in Serengeti, some American and British scientists have proved that the roar of the king of animals – the lion – carries the necessary information, which aims to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. The lion family is composed of approximately 20 members, mostly females and cubs. The purpose of the females is to bring up and feed the next generation. The presence in the family of one or two males provides the security and reliability of reproduction. Scientists incorporated a recording of another lion's roars which had to be heard by the female. When females made sure that the alien group was weaker, they reported to their male, who started searching for the invaders' territory. Studies show that if a family has more than three males, the dispute does not lead to bloodshed.

Perhaps all animals have within them the tendency to deceive, but only with language is that tendency able to fully blossom. Still, it does not mean that animals without complex language abilities do not bluff or lie. In a 1995 issue of the *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, a University of Rochester biologist Eldridge Adams published the results of research that show that animals of the same species bluff to get what they want. Specifically, he showed that a species of crustacean called *Gonodactylus bredini* have the ability to bluff stronger opponents into giving up a fight. Many animals and insects have an inborn ability to camouflage themselves in order to hide from prey. Camouflage is a form of deception. It is not in an animal's best interest to draw attention to itself. The more it blends, the longer it lives. Is it possible that deception is

not only a natural instinct of all living creatures, but that it is absolutely essential to survival? After all, those who lie (whether they be human or otherwise), often do so for their own gain—to avoid punishment, embarrassment or harm. The better a creature is at lying, bluffing and deceiving, the more likely it is to survive in this world. Lying is all about deceiving predators and surviving—whether it is an insect changing its colors or a human lying to a boss who might fire him and take away his income and means of survival. Could one reason that humans have evolved as much as we have be precisely this—that we are the world’s best tricksters and liars? Does mastering the art of deceit mean mastering the world?

How and why do frogs lie? Since a croak is the auditory condition for green frogs to decide their correspondent size, some small male frogs, and toads as well, whose odds of finding a mate and passing on their genes are critically against them, may “lower their voices to make themselves sound bigger” and the misleading big-bodied croaks should “intimidate frogs that would beat them in a fair fight”. “Females, which in most frogs, are mute” (Lorenz, 2008, p. 121).

One more interesting analogy can be made here. As M. Marshall noticed, an Australian bird, the tooth-billed bowerbird (*Scenopoeetes dentirostris*) “every morning knocks specially cut leaves from the tree, turns them so that their pale inner side is in contrast with the ground and thus constructs itself a stage and sings exactly on this stage, perched on a liana or a tree branch” (apud: Deleuze, Guattari, 1998: 236). G. Deleuze and F. Guattari assume, that “the total work of art is created... by blocks of sensations on the territory – paints, postures and sounds ... In this respect, art will always be obsessed with the animal beginning”.

Initially, man was forced to imitate nature because of the inevitable comparison with natural data – sounds, colors and objects. And the better he did that, the greater was the probability for his being selected for reproduction. Generation after generation of men copied nature, imitated it and unconsciously and inevitably moved away from it. This reflects what Heidegger wrote, “... art is an imitation and representation of reality” (Heidegger, 1986: 61).

4. Civilization and natural selection

Basically in nature the female (woman) chooses the male (man) on the basis of the natural selection principle. As I have already shown, civilization imposes the criteria of song, beauty and property on the female. Initially the male was forced to imitate nature, as the comparison with the natural evidence of sounds, colors and objects was inevitable. The more natural he was, the more likely the opportunity for his reproduction. Generations (male generations) spontaneously copied nature.

However, with life expectancy going up generations started to cover themselves and the impact of their ancestors increased, so gradually, instead of the direct copy of nature, they started to copy indirectly, through the previous generations. “The real” from “natural” became “traditional”. All the previous generations did was more natural than nature itself. It has always been valid, however, as M. Har wrote that,

"...the very final goal of art, is probably nothing but revealing the truth" (Har, 1998: 37). And here "the truth" has the meaning of "the real", which from natural became "traditional". The influence of the ancestors was so powerful that there came a moment when, "step by step the knowledge of the live model became forbidden. Actually it was not seen any longer and all they knew were the works of the old teachers, they obediently copied. With time they actually make copies of the copies and so on. Each generation drifts away with one degree from the original. Man of art does not have individual inspirations anymore; he feels he has simply turned into a copy machine" (Taine, 1998: 20).

There is a link between the three criteria of civilization, that is, between song, beauty and property. The key-words of any language are the verbs "to be" and "to have". The verb "to be" relates to the selection of males by females on the ground of beauty: "I am handsome." The verb "to have" relates to the selection on the ground of property: "I have property." If civilization was based on other selection criteria, for example, running or fishing, the key-words would have been "to run" and "to fish": "I run fast", "I fish successfully" (Maritsas, 2007: 128).

5. The principle of natural selection in nature and civilization

The natural selection principle, as formulated by Charles Darwin, applies always and to everything, should the selection criteria and environment be determined. In nature the stronger one survives, in civilization the more communicative, more handsome and richer one survives. The only difference between civilization and natural selection is in the criteria for selecting a man by a woman for reproduction.

Still, what does a selection criterion mean? Why does it exist? In my books Life is defined as a reduction in Entropy. Logically, the living and the more living are supposed to survive. Living is the thing, which reduces entropy. The stronger, the smarter or, in terms of entropy, the better organized one! In nature, the stronger one, the one that which reduces its entropy, increasing that of its victims is better organized. In civilization, the creature that speaks and is rich and beautiful is better organized. This creature, this man reduces his entropy at the expense of the increase in the entropy of his victims: the uncommunicative fellows fall victims to the silver-tongued, the poor fall victims to the rich man, the ugly – to the handsome. Selection criterion is the process of reduction in the process of growth of a creature at the expense of an increase in the entropy of another creature.

Hence: The natural selection principle is nothing but reduction in entropy or, in fact, Life.

Conclusions

The natural selection principle, as formulated by Charles Darwin, applies always and to everything, but it demands the choose of the environment and selection criteria:

A) Environment – Nature, Criterion – Power.

B) Environment – Civilization, Criterion – Song, Beauty and Property.

In the nature the stronger one survives, in the civilization the more communicative one, more handsome and richer one survives. The only difference between Civilization and Natural selection is in the Criteria for selecting a man by a woman for reproduction.

Still, what does a selection criterion mean? In my book “Civilization and Natural Selection” (Maritsas, 2007) I define Life as a decrease of Entropy. Every live being decreases entropy. In other words, the stronger, the smarter or the better organized one decreases his entropy! In civilization, the creature that speaks and is rich and handsome is better organized. This creature, this man decreases his entropy at the expense of the increase in the entropy of his victims: the uncommunicative males became the victims of the silver-tongued, the poor – of the rich males, the ugly – of the handsome ones (Maritsas, 2007: 45). Live beings, according the above definition, are the Empire and the Language. Over time, the empire or the language are moving away from death. The empire or the language may not increase forever (reduced entropy). At some point they will reach the minimum relative entropy and there after the entropy will increase until it passes a certain value, after which death awaits, the end. At the time of minimum entropy, the empire will collapse and new countries will be formed, the language will disappear and new languages will be created, so the circle goes on. The same applies to any living phenomenon. Any living phenomenon plunges into the entropy, reducing its own entropy. These dives represent the evolution (Maritsas, 2007: 321).

References

- Adams, E. (1995). The cost of threat displays and the stability of deceptive communication. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 175, 405-421.
- Bronowski, J. (1987), *The evolution of human*, Athens: Orora.
- Darwin, Ch. (1997). *The origin of the species* (Η καταγωγή των ειδών). Patra Greece: Patra University Press.
- Deleuze, Guattari, Делез Ж. / Гваттари Ф. (1998), *Что такое философия?* Спб. Алетея.
- Har, M. (1998), *The work of art*, Athens: Scriptra.
- Heidegger, M. (1986), *The origin of the work of art*, Athens: Dodoni.
- Lorenz, K. (2008). *On aggression* (Так называемое зло). Moskow: *Culturaia Revoljutsia* (Культурная Революция).
- McMahon, A. (2001). *Understanding language change* (Ιστορική γλωσσολογία). Athens: Metechmio.
- Maritsas C. (2007), *Civilization and natural selection 2*, Sofia: Univ. Press «Sv. Kliment Ohridski».
- Morris D. J. (1970), *The Naked Ape*, Athens: Kedros.
- Rowell, J., Ellner, S., & Reeve, H. (2006). Why animals lie: How dishonesty and belief can coexist in a signaling system. *The American Naturalist*, 168(6).E 180-E 204.
- Taine, H. (1998), *Philosophy of art*, Athens: Govostis.