An Analogy Of Civilized Man To Primitive Man Essay, Research Paper

Primitive Man and Civilized Man are Alike in Many Areas

An Analogy

Early civilizations are credited with introducing government, art, and religion,

among other things to the modern world. Does the credit actually belong to the people

who created these early civilizations or to those that came before? The final product may

be considered greater and certainly more polished than the product created by early man.

All things found in an ancient civilization were actually brought to them by the collective

memories of the people that came before.

Little is known about human life during the Paleolithic Period, 35,000 to 10,000

BC. Cave paintings and a few clay statuettes are the sum total of what has survived the

years for modern archeologists to study. (Arts and Culture, An Introduction to the

Humanities, p. 14,15 ) Anything made of wood or bone has long since turned to dust.

( Everyday Life Through The Ages, p 13 ) Other evidence has come to light in recent

times. Burial sites that have been discovered allow us to peek into the remote past. These

discoveries support the idea of an awareness of and homage paid to the spirits and natural

forces that shaped the world that these prehistoric people lived in. Several remote tribes

have been discovered this century . Prior to their discovery, these remote tribes, some

numbering in the many thousands, believed that they were the only people on the earth.

( The Third Chimpanzee, p 223 ) We can relate the life styles of these remote people, who

have lived many thousands of years cut off from the rest of civilization, to our ancestors

who lived in prehistoric times.

Humans all over the world, since the beginning of recorded times have followed

along the same path. That is the path of creativity, worship, and organization. Many of

the things we attribute to early civilizations had its beginnings in our common prehistoric

past. Ancient civilizations and early man are alike in many ways, some of them being,

religion, government and organization.

God-kings, that is kings who took on the mantle of a God, ruled early civilizations.

They were worshipped by the masses, and acted as intermediary between the forces that

controlled nature and the human subjects that lived on earth. Early man also had an

intermediary to act as go-between on behalf of the people. He or she would have been a

shaman, or priest. This person would have been someone who would be counted on to

advise the chief of the tribe or community on matters relating to the ?Gods.? ( The Third

Chimpanzee, p 287 )

Every force of nature was a mystery to early man, as it was to those that lived in

the first, early civilizations, and therefore a belief developed that those forces needed to be

controlled. These questions that have troubled mankind from its earliest days: Who are

we? Where are we? How did we get here? They have all been answered through the

ages in one way or another. ( The Book Of The Ancient World, p 8 )

Cave paintings in Lascaux, France that date to 17,000 BC, have been found that

show graphic presentations of animals. Spearheads have been driven into some of these

animal representations. These rites by early man were held to either bring success to the

hunt, or to thank the Gods for their success at a recent hunt. We see that animal worship

made its way into early civilizations also. Animal representations have been found in

tombs from the earliest days of civilized Mesopotamia. Animal representations are present

also in religious symbols from the earliest civilizations. Early man would have had to live

in harmony with nature. Civilized man, took this harmonious coexistence one step further,

and incorporated animals into their worship of Gods. An early example of this is

demonstrated on the Palette of Narmer, the Egyptian king who is credited with beginning

Egyptian history. On it, Hathor, the cow-headed goddess who protects the city of the

dead is present. Also present is a hawk or falcon, symbol of the god Horus. Another

example of animal worship in ancient Egypt was the ?family God,? Bes. This was a

grotesque creature, part dwarf and part lion. His job was to protect the family, and was

found in many homes. On judgment day, an Egyptian believed he would face the Jackal

Judge. A heart heavy with sin would tip the scales and a terrible monster would devour

the sinner. If someone lived a virtuous life, the scales would balance, and the person

would have eternal bliss. ( Arts and Culture, An Introduction to The Humanities, p 8

Fertility and a renewal of things, birth of people and animals, the seasons, and of

vegetation used for food sources were also very important to early man, as it was to

early-civilized man. What is believed to be a fertility figure, the Venus of Willendorf, was

found that dates to 30,000 years ago. (Quest For The Past, p 12 ) Also, the cave paintings

represent what is thought to be a ?mother earth? theory. That is, by painting the animals

so close to the center, or womb of the earth, more animals would be born. ( Everyday Life

Through The Ages, p 17 ) Early civilizations also focused on fertility, and created Gods to

ensure continued fertility of the population. In early Mesopotamia, the Sumarians

worshipped Ninhursag, or Mother Earth. She was the source of all life, and from her

came the birth of plants. Daily sacrifices were also made to the Gods in temples in every

major city in Mesopotamia. The most important of these was a spring ritual called the

New Year Holiday. After several days of ceremony, a ?Sacred Marriage? took place

between the King, who took the role of Dumuzi, an early ruler of the town Erech. A high

priestess would take the roll of Inanna, who was the principle deity of Erech. This ritual

re-enactment of the original ceremony, according to legend, would ensure the fertility of

the land, and the king?s long life. ( Cradle Of Civilization, p 106 ) Gods of fertility are

seen throughout the early civilizations. Eros, the God of love and Aphrodite, the

Goddess of love, were worshipped by the Greeks, the Snake Goddess by the Minoan?s,

and Cupid and Venus, by the Romans.

The concept of a life after death has been with mankind at least since we dwelled

in caves. Archeologist?s have uncovered evidence in cave dwellings that support this

theory. Stone Age graves have been found that contain not only the remains of a person,

but pollen evidence that a ceremony followed the persons death. Axes, spears, and

?throwing sticks? have been found in many graves. These are items that would be needed

by the person in the afterlife. The graves were often located under the fire pit, which

would have been considered a sacred place by early man. ( Everyday Life Through The

Ages, p 17 ) Fire, among other ?magical? things, would have been worshipped by a cave

dwelling people. ( The Book Of The Ancient World, p 6 ) We find that the Romans had a

strong belief in an afterlife also. Pharaoh would be entombed with riches, food, and

servants to provide for him in the afterlife. ( The Book Of The Ancient World, p 25 )

The word government comes from the Latin word, gubernare, which means, ?to

steer a ship.? Among primitive people that live today, the leader may be only the oldest

person in the tribe, and therefore respected. People tend to follow those that are

respected. ( The Third Chimpanzee, p 220 ) It might be that the leader of an early culture

might well have been the best hunter, organizer and the strongest man in the village. In

ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, just to name a few, the kings or rulers were

anointed as God-Kings. It is not unthinkable to consider that somewhere in early human

development, the duties and responsibilities of the shaman might have become joined with

those of the tribal leader. This would have allowed a tribal leader to, ?steer the ship?

while at the same time provide answers to the multitude of questions about the mysterious

world these stone age people lived in. It has been thought that stone age man relied

totally upon storytelling to pass needed information from one generation to another. This

has theory has recently been found to be inaccurate. Ice age relics now support the view

that stone age man was more sophisticated that previously thought. Rock are and tools

have been discovered in Australia which date to 100,000 years ago. (The Way Of The

World, p 19, 20)

Pebbles and other stone surfaces have been found with markings engraved

on them, that date to the time of the last Ice Age. Alexander Marshack, of the Harvard

University was able to decode these engraved markings. Dr. Marshack discovered that

the markings were notations that, kept track of sequences of events that recur: the regular

patterns of animal, bird, and fish behavior tied to the seasons, for example, that are to be

seen on the earth and in the heavens. ( The Way Of The World, p 19, 20 ) This would be

the type of information that would be observed and shared with others over a long period

of time, generations even.

This new evidence puts doubt to the previous theory that writing first developed in

ancient Mesopotamia. While it may be true that writing may have been more thoroughly

developed there, writing in some form has existed since at least the Ice Age. A culture

that has developed some form of writing, would certainly be advanced enough to have

established some form of government, even if it were rudimentary. (National Geographic,

page 126)

Strong evidence exists that prehistoric man possessed the organizational skill

necessary to hunt as a group. Fossil evidence of mass killings of large animals lend credit

to the theory that early man had an established language by the end of the last Ice Age.

While a group of hunter-gatherer people would not need established roads, permanent

homes, and decorative items such as large pottery and artistic sculpture, they would

possess the skills that would be necessary should that lifestyle change. Cave dwellings

have been found that have roof structures added to prevent wind and the elements from

entering the cave. (The Cambridge Ancient History, page 79-80) Several primitive

cultures have been found in the past century. These cultures developed separate from

modern civilization since the dawn of their culture. Most possess the ability to build

rudimentary structures, have a language that is their own, unique language, and to

manufacture what is needed for survival. (The Third Chimpanzee, page 51) Experiments

have been conducted as far back as the Pharaoh, Psammeticus. In this experiment,

documented by Herodotus, the ancient historian, Psammeticus ordered a shepherd to raise

two boys in total silence. He estimated that the first words the boys spoke would be the

oldest language known. After years of nothing but meaningless babble, the shepherd

reported to the Pharaoh that one of the boys had said the word, ?becos,? which meant

bread in the Phrygian language spoken in Turkey. While some doubt is cast on the validity

of this experiment, the fact remains that people raised in total social isolation, like the wolf

boy of Aveyron, remain virtually speechless and won?t invent or discover a language.

However, in a community or tribe, where survival depends upon communication and

exchange of ideas, language would develop early if the people who lived in that

community or tribe expected to live and thrive. Scientists have discovered that vervets, a

type of monkey, have at least ten putative ?words,? that the troop use and understand.

(The Third Chimpanzee, page 155) If members of the animal kingdom rely on ?words?

for survival, it would not be surprising to find that early cave dwellers would have

developed a complex language to help ensure their survival.

At the dawn of civilization, these skills that, while rudimentary, would have already

been known by man. As farming and domestication of animals began to replace the

hunter-gatherer lifestyle, improvements in building techniques, manufacture of needed

goods, and established roads would have taken on more importance than ever before. By

the time of the first civilization, these techniques would have been well known and fairly

well refined. What was needed was better organization and better communication to bring

all of the already established processes together.

While it is clear that the early civilizations took the processes that were already in

place and built upon them, every ?piece of the puzzle? was already available to them.

Established government hierarchy, religious beliefs, and an organizational structure would

have already been established. It seems incredulous that any civilization could come into

being without a culture or cultures already being advanced to the point where the roots of

a civilization could take hold. Working backwards, an advanced culture could not come

into existence without the sophisticated framework that an early culture would grow into.

The knowledge and experience of a fairly advanced tribal culture would set the stage for

an early township or community, and organizational skills, establishment of religion, and a

working form of government was already necessary for a tribal culture whether

considered sophisticated or not, to survive.

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