

Prof. Rex Li's Writings

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Title: History, Humanity and Evolution

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Summary/ Abstract: What we are (cognitive structure) and who we are (culture) make up our evolutionary history. This thesis needs tons of elaboration!

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History, Humanity and Evolution

The following are my thoughts triggered by reading Durant's *The Lessons of History*.

(A) Humanity / History

- (1) Globalization changes history – the world becomes flat and fluid.
- (2) Technology breaks constraints – space, time, resources – and creates new competition and new history.
- (3) Beware of historians' spectacles and perceptions in selecting / choosing the storyline.
- (4) Science / logic limits itself; first, it has limits in explanation and application. Second it excludes feelings in human understanding and endeavor.
- (5) What we see reflects what we are and who we are (see elaboration below)

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(Cognitive structure)	(Culture)

(B) Cognitive Structure and Culture

What we are (cognitive structure)

We are humans with cognitive structure. Thus all we see things in time and space with continuity and discreteness. We must make use of concepts to operate thoughts; it works in a sequential one-dimensional way, one at a time. Things / ideas must be in order (not chaos) before we can see / understand it. We pick only regularity and patterns. We can't handle too many dimensions, simultaneously etc.

Who we are (culture)

A Chinese is imbued in a culture much different from an American. In general one is collectivist while the other is individualist. Think of a culture in constant threat and minimal subsistence. There is no concept nor experience of joy or peace. Similarly, Chinese have a sense of filial piety (孝道) unknown to Americans. Even today's Chinese may not have a sense of brotherhood (悌) known to traditional Chinese a century ago. Historically Chinese have no concept of democracy, thus creating a problem of translation in early 20th century.

(C) Human Evolution: Social or Biological

(1) Aggression and co-operation

Hunters-gathers are more aggressive and greedy than farmers, not because of genetic endowment, but because of social structure and demands. Genetic endowment can work both ways: aggressive and co-operative.

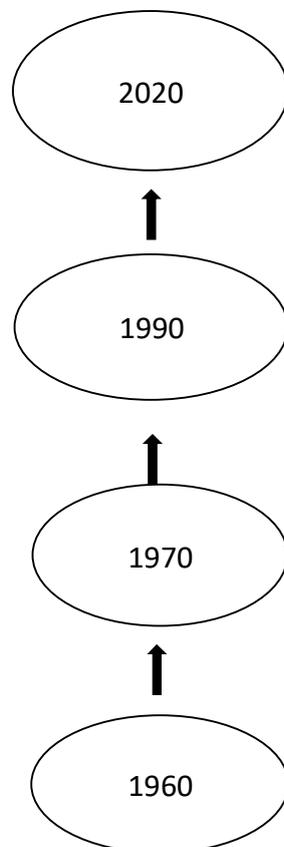
(2) Genesis of ethics and value:

Is it related to survival value or organization structure? Why do we defend / take values so strongly?

(3) Going beyond evolutionary explanation

Can our explanatory schema go beyond evolution? Some values / culture are in fact reflecting cognitive structure or organization structure, such as cognitive stickiness or organization inertia (what is is).

(D) My Idea Growth Path



Pick ideas from society and wiki, related to research interest (Dewey, psychology world education, history, philosophy, Marx, Piaget) with selection of past accumulation

Pick ideas from psychology and gifted education with selection from existing academic idea career and past interest

Pick ideas from society, peers and Chinese culture (democracy, Chinese classics, Marx, sociology, political science)

Pick ideas from parents (Chinese culture Cantonese folklore)

I'm a mixed up growing individual!