Civilization Seen Through an Addiction Model Lens: Collective Dependency and Societal Addict Behavior

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The fundamental premise of this paper is that collectively, people of a given civilization can function as a single corporate body, and the collective body is vulnerable to taking on the characteristics of addiction—our lives become entrapped in a dependency relationship with the very things that support our way of life.

In this essay, we look at this problem through an addiction model lens for insights.

Introduction

This is an essay about our modern culture’s addiction-like dependency upon the benefits of civilization. A benefit of civilization (or BOC) refers to technological necessities and conveniences that run the modern industrial age in which we live. Importantly, our modern-day system of BOC’s is totally dependent upon a highly evolved and complex infrastructure composed of industrial systems such as power grids, cellular towers, highway systems, railways, and water and sewer lines, etc., (not to mention the skilled people who keep it all working). A complex web of energy-burning, resource-draining industries is needed to keep it all running.

So, what are the parallels between addiction, as we normally think of it, and our modern-day collective dependencies? If we think of a single individual as only one “cell” in a larger social body, a picture emerges of a collective body, made of us, all living an interlinked life. This is the body subject to BOC addiction.

We typically think of alcohol and other drugs when we list substances of abuse. We’re expanding on that here. We are framing BOC’s, when not used wisely and in moderation, as a potentially addictive substance of abuse used by the collective body.

Addiction affects the whole person, right down to a cellular, neuro-biological level. Cells in the body change the way they function. This essay looks for ways in which an addicted collective compares to an addicted human body, with its addiction effected cells. When you make that comparison, a picture of tolerance, dependency, and the progression of disease all take shape in a collective dependency upon BOC abuse, just as it does with chemical abuse for an individual.

Here is a list of symptoms operating at the collective, societal level which constitutes the classic profile of addiction. The (1) tolerance of negative effects that accompany industrialization, (2) dependency upon civilization’s benefits (rooted in denial), (3) progression (increased need for BOCs despite increasingly damaging environmental and social results), and (4) continued inappropriate use of BOCs in spite of the lethal long-term consequences (i.e., loss of control). In summary, the picture that emerges is tolerance, dependency, progression, and continued lethal use—the cardinal earmarks of addiction.

It must be noted that addiction impairs normal human growth and development, making addiction a serious developmental problem. Nationally, in the developmental life of our young nation we hope to see ongoing social growth and maturation. We hope to see social and environmental justice become core national values, a
developmental victory in the growth of any new nation. It follows then that justice issues can be used as indicators and measurements of the maturation of our society. But as we mentioned, addiction impedes healthy human growth and development. Addiction tends to arrest development at the age of onset of the addiction. Extending this understanding to the collective, if we see stunted or missing signs of social maturity we can logically wonder, is there an untreated collective addiction going on that has impaired our development as a nation?

Indicators of an addicted collective

What are reasonable markers of social growth and maturity? By using the unsustainability of social practices (the out of control use of economic, natural, and human resources) as one measure to assess for societal addiction, what do we see? Do we see significant levels of unmanageable social consequences? Is there a harmful loss of control over national economic, business, and social justice practices? These outcomes (unmanageability and loss of control) are the diagnostic markers used when assessing an individual for addiction. They will be used here to assess for a society suffering from a collective addiction. Additionally, a society’s tolerance for social injustice (the tolerance of a toxin within the body politic) is used as another metric for spotting a collective addiction. (Why injustice? As any adult child of an alcoholic can tell you, growing up in an alcoholic home means living in unjust conditions. So too for members of a societal “family” where powerful forces are at work creating addict-behavior living conditions for its members.)

A society’s capacity to normalize (1) industrial-strength unsustainability and (2) social and environmental injustices, are self-evident indicators of social immaturity. A lack of maturation being reflected in national policies and practices indicates the presence of some developmental roadblock—developmental roadblocks being predictable problems for an addict. The development of our environmental policies and practices appear to be anything but mature and sober. American society today, when seen through an unsustainability lens, appears to be drunk on the benefits of civilization, as evidenced by the unsustainable manner in which the resources for these benefits are being harvested from the environment. We, sadly, are creating havoc for the next generation(s) to fix.

It should be said that BOCs, like alcohol or other substances, are morally neutral. Many things are not a problem in and of themselves when used appropriately. It is not modernity or the use of BOCs that is the problem. It’s the use, abuse, and misuse of the intoxicating power of modern civilization that creates dilemmas.

In summary, indicators to measure for societal addiction:

1. Unsustainability (the reckless fantasy of endless resources)
2. Unmanageable social consequence (the end result of unsustainability)
3. Loss of control (social policies and practices that sustain and exacerbate unjust conditions)
4. Tolerance (normalization of these characteristics)
5. And developmental impairment (evidenced by persistent, destructive, and childish national judgement and behavior)

The progress of America’s social development and its global impact has been significant. But has it been an overall healthy impact? Has it been health-giving and peaceful? It’s complicated. There’s not a simple answer. How have we used our power? As a sober force for good? For selfish narcissistic advantage? There’s not a black and white answer. Where we are on the continuum of being helpful or harmful in the community of nations says something about our national sobriety and national maturation.
The following sections use the above measures to assess for just how sober and healthy we as a nation are.

Impaired Progress: the developmental block

Industrialized, technologically advanced civilizations\(^1\) have developed so rapidly in world history (see figure 1 below) that humanity’s maturation processes have struggled to keep pace. This has happened in a world of nations plagued by longstanding histories of social traumas. An unwanted result has been the normalizing of trauma in national psyches throughout history and around the world. This essay argues that unresolved social trauma can predispose society itself to addiction, just as unresolved trauma can contribute to addiction in the individual person. Further, a society shaped by a culture of addiction (with its underlying untreated trauma) remains vulnerable to ongoing traumatic social turmoil. Ongoing unresolved trauma impairs healthy human growth and development in the individual and at the societal level, too. The cycle once set and left untreated plays out from one generation to the next. The social maturation processes that are needed to empower us as a nation to grow, to live wisely, and to manage our technological power without harming others are thus impaired.

Addiction rooted in underlying unresolved trauma significantly arrests emotional maturation in the individual at approximately the age at which the trauma and its related addiction takes hold. It is at this point that thriving stops and surviving starts. Adults who suffer from an early onset of addiction oftentimes make decisions with the judgement of a child. Arrested development of judgement characterizes addict behavior. And addict behavior has consequences that are unfair and unjust for those around the addict. Addict behavior at the national level would be no different, except on a different scale.

A nation plagued by the unjust consequences of immature social behaviors may well benefit from an objective assessment.

Metrics that assess for societal growth and development need to go beyond simply measuring the number of years of national existence or a nation’s technological power or its economic achievements. To assess for a society’s maturity, it must be assessed along dimensions reflective of the true growth and development of human society, like the metrics as suggested above. Metrics that will capture how a society treats its most vulnerable, its children, its elders, and in a male-dominant society like ours, its women. How does it exercise its political, economic, and military power—for its self-interest or for the welfare of others as well? What kind of disparities of health and wellbeing are acceptable in society and why? Is its use of resources and its treatment of the environment wise or foolish? National behaviors along these lines fall on a spectrum. Where do we fall in that spectrum? If (1) social trauma left untreated blocks societal maturation, and if (2) blocked maturation results in significant and detrimental social consequences that repeat generationally, and (3) if the societal maturation process needs an environment of social justice much like healthy personal development needs a healthy home environment, and (4) a socially immature society is predisposed to a toxic kind of progress as represented by things like unsustainability and unjust social practices, then how will we address these issues without an honest, effective assessment?

The Problem of Societal Trauma

Generational trauma\(^2\), in which the effects of original trauma is transferred from one generation of survivors to

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2 Also referred to as transgenerational and intergenerational trauma

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descendants through intergenerational complex PTSD dynamics, is a recognized dynamic. Mental health and substance abuse clinicians note this as a common theme in clinical Addictions and trauma recovery. Historical trauma (a specific form of generational trauma), has been recognized in the literature since the late 1980s. It is a significant factor in treating mental health and addiction issues in many people groups. Historical trauma is also known to impair the wellbeing of whole people groups. For instance, the concept of historical trauma has been studied as the ongoing after-effects of the Holocaust in the Jewish community\(^3\). In the 1980s Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart applied the concept of historical trauma to her people of the Sioux Nations as part of her doctoral work. Much has been built upon her studies and the studies of others since.

Social trauma has been a theme throughout all of human history. Immigrants coming to America typically suffered significant levels of trauma in their originating homelands. They left an Old World long racked by a legacy of social trauma only to face oftentimes traumatic circumstances here in the so-called New World. European nation-states have deep histories of societal trauma. Trauma forged and shaped the very nature of American colonialism. After centuries of Europe colonizing itself, colonization was an accepted norm along with its inherent violence. Bringing this violent behavior to the shores of the New World went unquestioned.

It may at first be surprising and possibly unwelcome to hear historical trauma being applied to the colonizer as well as the colonized. It may sound like making excuses for past (and present) unacceptable behavior. It is not the norm to apply historical trauma to the people group holding the dominant power—in our case the Euro-American colonizers/settlers and their descendants. This application is made not to excuse anything, but rather to shift focus to the need for healing\(^4\) of all members of our society. If trauma is trauma, Euro-American descendants have layer upon layer of traumatic chapters stretching back in their histories, too. This is not to diminish the injuries done to indigenous people or to ignore the horrific human rights violations perpetrated under colonization and slavery. It is done to point out the gravity and depth of our national situation. And to point out the tragic reality of how traumatized people have traumatized people throughout history.

So, there are two sides to this national coin. On one side is the traumatized, on the other is the traumatized traumatizer. Both need their own kind of healing to deal with their own kind of trauma. With this being so, we then as a nation must take full responsibility for our actions in history and in the present. Great resiliency has been shown by all people groups in the US in spite of longstanding challenges and adversity. Resiliency is important. Resiliency is a necessary part of the platform for going beyond survival to true healing. With that in mind, it is past time to use that resiliency and take seriously our responsibility for national healing for the sake of building a more just society.

To the point, when the problems we face (internally and internationally) as a nation are handled in the energy of a collective trauma-response\(^5\) instead of an appropriate, thoughtful response, the outcome can be destructive. Reactive trauma-responses to problems can be a means of perpetuating trauma to generation after generation—domestically and abroad. The point of identifying and treating unresolved trauma is to interrupt the cycle and replace it with a cycle of healing.

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\(^3\) See Rachel Yehuda, PhD, professor of psychiatry and neuroscience and the director of the Traumatic Stress Studies Division at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and director of the Mental Health Patient Care Center at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in New York City. Her research has been focused on epigenetics, Holocaust survivors, and pregnant survivors of 9/11 and their children


Healing the national trauma would undo the core dynamics that predispose our nation to addiction. The remaining sections of this document unpack the diagnostic elements of America’s collective addiction to industrialized BOCs.

The Clash Between Progress and Sustainability

It goes without saying that sustainability is a necessary precondition for the ongoing wellbeing of a civilization. Sustainability, as we have proposed, also represents the sober use of the environment. Achieving environmentally just and sustainable practices are choices made by a stable, mature society. Furthermore, in a healthy society, social concerns regulate the choices a society makes in how it uses its resources. Concerns for a more just society shape a society’s ethic of the land and how it treats its people. Correspondingly, in a dysregulated, addicted society appropriate and wise use of the land and its treatment of its citizens are seriously flawed by self-interest. Greed holds sustainability in low regard. Environmental harm gets downplayed, along with the accompanying social ills affecting the less fortunate or privileged people.

The destructive effects of unsustainability are accelerated in the absence of social justice6 and in the presence of unresolved social trauma, no matter how deeply buried social trauma is from our collective awareness. Under these conditions people and environmental resources are at risk of ongoing misuse and abuse. Civilization’s maturation processes remain disrupted and stunted without accounting for social healing and justice somewhere along the way.

By way of illustration, we can again look to the Great Plains. Today in the same Great Plains locale that was once all but destroyed by the Dust Bowl (due to agricultural practices of greed, lack of environmental understanding, and mismanagement of the land) we are once again seeing new environmental catastrophes taking place. Currently there are daily man-made earthquakes throughout Oklahoma caused by oil and gas fracking and wastewater injection wells. These practices are permanently poisoning huge amounts of water. Also, in other areas of the region, in the name of industrial agriculture vast amounts of water are being drained from natural aquifers underlying the Great Plains. Large-scale irrigation systems drain aquifers much faster than they can be naturally replenished. The aquifers will be drained down for many future generations. In California during recent droughts aquifers have been drained to the point that in areas the land has measurably sunk down. Ecologically we are at the beginning of these new developments and others like them, and we have yet to fully appreciate the scope of the threats. Big business has not learned from the past, and by our complacency neither have we as society at large.

This exemplifies dysregulated, immature social practices in action.

6 See http://www.echohawkcounseling.com/terms/ at this author’s website, under “terms” for an unpacking of “justice”
Learning from History

We can look at the progression from sustainable tribal horticultural practices that once existed in the US, and other places in the world, to the unsustainable side of American agri-business practices of today. Unsustainable and socially harmful agri-business practices include a compilation of big money strategies used in intensive farming practices. These practices include the overuse of toxic chemicals harmful to consumers and the environment, the overuse of irrigation on lands naturally unsuited for the commercial crops being farmed, as mentioned, thereby draining huge aquifers, and other harmful practices. The progression from sustainable to unsustainable practices has had unintended but far-reaching consequences. Unsustainable practices are now the norm in how we feed ourselves as a nation. We are increasingly dependent upon these practices.

How did we get here? Historically in the US, pre-Columbian horticulturalists sustained whole tribal groups using stone and bone-based implements, technology in its basic form. An indigenous population could exist indefinitely with access to a resourced land base. The simple technology and the natural infrastructure for this organic way of life was self-regulating in many ways.

Old World agri-history took a different route. The shoulder-bone hoe was replaced by the iron plow long ago. In the march of time, so-called pre-European “primitive” horticultural societies advanced to technologically evolving farming societies. Production increased. The land became more and more domesticated. The intensive farmer displaced the horticulturalist. One intensive farmer with a good team of mules and a metal plow could feed more people. This meant that a class of people could emerge that was freed for other pursuits (pursuits necessary to the existence of things like metal plows). The population grew (see figure 1 and the change in population around the time when industrialization began to take shape). But note, this new class of people was dependent upon the more powerful farmer. They, including the industrialized farmer him or herself, no longer knew the skills necessary for the former, more indigenous way of living. Knowledge was lost. These are the forebearers of the farmers who immigrated to the Americas.

When they came, the wild American environment was changed. The natural “infrastructure” necessary for the former indigenous lifeway was lost, overwritten by deep changes in the environment. Wild lands became domesticated lands, as had happened long before in the Old World. This taming of the land was seen as progress. Sufficient populations of wild animals living in their natural habitat—habitat that was likewise wild, such as free running rivers for salmon, and open prairies with ancient prairie grasses that had evolved over the eons to survive the hard winters and long droughts—were gone. The indigenous environment looked unused and wasted to a new people geared up for industrialism. So, it was remade. The Industrial Revolution from the

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7 Some of the outcomes of unsustainable practices are positive for the short-term but are outweighed by negative consequences in the long-run. More can be read about recent developments in agricultural practices by researching the Green Revolution, intensive farming techniques taught worldwide - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution

http://www.echohawkcounseling.com/ehc-resource/articles/civilization-addiction-model/
1700’s on worked to transform irreversibly one type of infrastructure (a wild environment and ecosystem) into another type suited for industry (power grids, pipelines, water lines, mining and factories).

We live in a different world today. Industrialized civilization and its huge population have become dependent upon its technology. Technology bears the preponderant weight of its dependent populations. Today if technology vital to infrastructure fails, its dependent human populations will suffer. This is where we find ourselves today. We are in a modern society threatened by any disruptions in infrastructure, coupled with the growing power to addictively mine the environment for its resources faster than the environment can naturally replenish itself.

This disturbing predicament lies under a blanket of collective denial. Newer and newer developments are in higher and higher demand to sustain and grow economies and infrastructure. The hopes are for an even brighter future, however unsustainable it may need to be. Newly achieved levels of advancement, with every advent of higher technologies, are soon insufficient (as is characteristic of tolerance—you need more of the same substance to maintain the next high). Never mind the cost to the environment. This is another example of dysregulated, collective addict thinking and behavior.

Collective Tolerance and Withdrawal

Tolerance, a diagnostic criterion for addiction, is the ability to take in more and more of a substance and remain seemingly unaffected. Dependency is the need for a regular intake of a substance-of-use at an abnormally high level in order to feel “normal.” Without said intake withdrawal sets in. These three (tolerance, dependency, and withdrawal) are synergistically related. Tolerance facilitates dependency and dependency builds tolerance to ever higher levels of dependency in pursuit of achieving and maintaining the desired effected state. It’s a vicious cycle driven by pressure to avoid the withdrawal that sets in if the supply is reduced or cut off. The higher the tolerance the greater the dependency, the greater the withdrawal will be, and the greater the intake needs to be to get to the next high. By comparison, tolerance in a BOC addiction model means dependency upon the use of BOCs for everyday functioning. Indeed, in the presence of BOC dependency, a collective with high BOC tolerance must consume its achieved level of BOCs to remain in a normal, secure collective state of mind. It becomes a matter of survival to stay abreast of advances in tech (or get left behind), and sets up progression of the disease (to borrow from the medical model of addiction).

Withdrawal from BOCs means supplies have been significantly reduced or cut off, and the everyday functioning of life is threatened. Advancing levels of civilization (i.e., progress) seem irreversible—no one wants to live without the benefits of progress once the associated BOC levels have become embedded into a well-ordered life. A life organized by BOCs means things like the use of cars and highways to get to well stocked grocery stores (supplied by industrial farming and the trucking pipelines that get produce to far away market shelves). Modern systems of transport get us to work at the urban job centers that drive industry. The use of cell phones and the internet maintain the day-to-day connections we have come to depend upon. We enjoy a modern house to come home to, warmed by energy supplied by the grid, a home complete with electrical appliances built by factories dotting the land. We try not to think too deeply about the gasoline pulled up out of the earth that powers our yard equipment. Today it is considered a human right to have access to modern high-tech medical care to keep us fit to work, etc. In the modern age, we’re actually put at an unfair disadvantage without access to the basic BOCs of industry. Once our lives are dependent upon these things, to lose them could have serious and in some scenarios possibly even life-threatening consequences. In other words, an abrupt loss of BOCs could pitch us into a crisis of withdrawal, much like we are seeing in the daily news during the abrupt and tragic arrival of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

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On the dark side of tolerance is the fear of withdrawal. An addict knows that the higher the tolerance the harder the fall if the supply is abruptly cut off. In a model of BOC addiction, a perceived threat to the functioning of infrastructure can set off big reactions on the social landscape. Early personal and social withdrawal symptoms can begin, such as a sudden lost sense of wellbeing, potentially leading to outbursts of social fears and public insecurity. As the withdrawal process escalates collective panic or aggression can ensue. The situation can quickly turn drastic. In an addiction model, unmitigated physical withdrawal is serious business. Certain kinds of withdrawal symptoms are truly life-threatening. The nervous system goes into a state of riot. The same can be said of a social, corporate body in collective withdrawal from the sudden perceived or actual loss of access to important BOCs. If the supply chain that stocks our grocery shelves was cut off because farmers were too sick to harvest or truckers were too sick to drive, the social nervous system would go into a state of riot. Our basic instincts would get triggered. Who knows what would happen in society when panicked people’s efforts to avert an anticipated lethal BOC withdrawal got started?

Collective Denial, the Earmark of Addiction

If we’re honest, we all exercise varying degrees of denial. For modern life to continue on its current trajectory (in spite of the growing list of disconcerting questions about sustainability) our continued participation in a culture of denial is necessary. The voice of denial in addiction speaks in four voices, each voice getting progressively urgent in service to protecting the addiction. The first layer of denial’s defense is the voice of simple denial of fact. The alcoholic’s version of denial of fact would be, “There is no problem with the way I drink.” A BOC-addicted culture might say collectively, “In spite of the mainstream press, there is no real problem with how we use the environment.” If denial of fact fails, the next defensive wall is the denial of implications (a calculated unwillingness to connect the dots in order to protect the addiction). The alcoholic might say, for example, “Sometimes people have too much to drink. That doesn’t automatically mean I’m a drunk!” in an attempt to gaslight or guilt their accuser. A BOC-addicted culture might say, at the point where signs are beginning to show in the environment, “The polar ice caps aren’t melting because of human activity. It’s nature’s way for climate patterns to shift up and down over geological time,” in frank denial of scientific consensus. If reality penetrates the wall of the denial of implication, there is the more blatant wall of denial of change (manipulating others to lower or drop their expectations for the addict to change). An alcoholic speaking from this level of denial might shift blame by expressing the sentiment of, “I’m not changing just because you’re hysterical!”, aggressively upping their game of gaslighting. A BOC-addicted collective might say, “There is no point in us making changes without other countries doing their part, too,” which preserves the status quo and protects the BOC addiction. If all three walls fail, as a last line of defense for the addict who is still desperately maintaining his or her addiction, there is the remaining wall of denial of feelings (see footnote). Anyone pressing the addict’s denial system at this level is likely to run into an emotional buzz saw that protects the addiction. At this stage of denial, if a culture’s denial system continues to parallel that of an individual’s denial system, social conditions could become quite unsafe.

9 “Denial of FEELINGS: This is the least conscious, deepest level of denial and the last line of defense between the person and emotional crisis. Underlying feelings of fear, despair, shame, guilt, anger, etc., are avoided by defensive behaviors such as shutting down, repression and primary denial, dissociating, splitting. Intense acting out occurs. We use strategies designed to create chaos and powerful distractions that block out disturbing feelings. Getting angry or raging chronically can protect us from disturbing feelings when faced with the pain and the work of healing.” This note is from a training workshop slide presentation: http://www.echohawkcounseling.com/ehc-resource/workshops/healing-generational-historical-trauma-training/ by this author.
In an addicted society denial keeps the wheels of unchecked industry lubed and turning. Certainly, there are growing voices today sounding the alarms and there are those activists who are making a difference. But as a whole our culture lacks the collective will to make the radical changes needed now. It is said that an alcoholic won’t change until he or she hits bottom. It seems that way for a culture, too. If change doesn’t come until we as a culture are on the brink, then apparently, we have yet to hit bottom.

It remains to be seen if the new, more environmentally friendly technologies of the future will fix the problems of industrialization. It does smack of denial to me to hope that the problems created by modern technology will be fixed by modern technology. One thing seems clear, there is no way to change the industrial practices and infrastructure of the modern life we all currently enjoy without a willingness to sacrifice BOC usage in some manner. If the soothing voice of denial weaves a trap (and it does), then we’re all in it together.

**Progression (increasingly lethal side effects)**

To continue the theme from “Learning from History” above, there are very real economic pressures bearing down on people to advance with the times. If we don’t advance with the times we fall behind. Our ability to compete is compromised. Failure and deprivation wait for those who get left behind. But the processes of industry continue even though the environmental and social side effects get more and more destructive (hence, progression of disease).

Small family farmers today find themselves competing with big business farming. Large scale intensive farming requires machinery that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars, creating debt burdens that are crushing. “Green Revolution” farming\(^\text{10}\) is a must if you want your farming operation to compete. More and more, once viable small family farms that were passed down from one generation to the next are getting assimilated into big business farming.

The ever faster turning wheels of civilization create environmental potentials that did not exist in so-called primitive society. Consequently, the world’s population has more than doubled, growing exponentially by billions in my lifetime (again, see *figure 1*, above). This has not happened in a vacuum. It is the direct result of the industrialization of the last few centuries of human history. On the grand scale of time this has happened in the blink of an eye. Humanity hasn’t had time to adjust to its new powers. In a sense, this new power to change the environment is in the hands of children. Environmental limits are now more readily reached and exceeded by immature civilized societies in denial of the consequences. Impaired development of good judgement is the “gift” of untreated addiction.

Impaired development of good judgement is the “gift” of untreated addiction. The lack of maturity in a society’s collective judgement and behaviors leaves the door wide open to the worst of human nature taking charge and setting agendas. Exceeding natural limits invariably leads to destructive environmental conditions and, not surprisingly, destructive social conditions. Dynamics of greed and denial go hand in hand producing a growing list of harmful social side effects. Enduring but tolerated social conditions rooted in ill-gotten wealth, the exercise of unjust power and privilege over others as a sign of success, inhumanity and routine wars of aggression for territories and resources, economic policies undergirded by racism that insures unjust disadvantage for the marginalized and unjust advantage for the privileged, and the like, create a cultural atmosphere of normalized abuse. These abuses aren’t normal; they’re traumatizing. Without justice to regulate the power of civilization, society fails to provide for the wellbeing of all its members, to say nothing of caring for the environment. The collective breaks

\(^\text{10}\) The Green Revolution of the early-to-mid twentieth century introduced intensive farming techniques that greatly increased productivity around the world. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution)
down into braided streams of destructive societal agendas.

In a dysregulated and addicted society, the insistent need for BOC’s is blind to long term consequences. If just processes fail to regulate human behavior—with social justice being a requisite for and an expression of social maturity—a socially immature society is at risk of self-destructive outcomes. It is this author’s hope that disastrous environmental destruction with tragic consequences of human suffering need proceed no further for human activity to rebalance itself with nature. Hopefully we can avoid a truly sad case of “hitting bottom,” as AA puts it in the recovery world.

Summary

When a society accustomed to injustice feeds the machine in ways that the environment cannot sustain while everyone benefiting from so-called civilization complacently looks the other way, denial is engrained into the fabric of society. We are trapped by modernity seemingly with no realistic way out. Denial protects unjust social practices and keeps us stuck on a self-destructive course. We become a society “drunk on civilization,” a society anesthetized by the benefits of civilization stumbling down the road of unsustainability—unless there is a major course correction. Today’s uninspected collective participation in unsustainable social and environmental practices helps to create a culture of good people who would like to live in a more sober manner but “can’t quit.” No one wants to “detox” (migrate from unsustainability to sustainability). It’s too painful. It means giving up something at great cost to the way we’ve come to live.

Facing addiction at the social, corporate level also means squarely facing a history of injustice and the underlying unrecognized, unresolved trauma that is an age-old, ever present source of sabotage blocking social maturation. We are at a cross-roads. Are we to continue our path unchanged or do we choose a difficult, seemingly impossible, but higher road into the future? Can we let the pursuit of a more just society be our north star?

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