

Re: Yet Another Roswell Thread

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- *From:* Ian Parker <ianparker2@xxxxxxxxx>
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On 14 Jul, 22:45, eina...@xxxxxxxxx wrote:

Ian Parker wrote:

On 13 Jul, 17:39, eina...@xxxxxxxxx wrote:

You are raising some very deep questions here. At one level memes certainly exist and a very good example is natural language. I have told you my background. Looking at French and Spanish you can enormous similarities. The grammar is virtually identical and so is a lot of vocabulary and phrases like "todo el mundo" – "tout le monde". Now evolutionary biologists say that branches occurred at particular times, purely because of genetic markers. The main mammalian groups were divergent in the mid Cretaceous. We can say that in an "Eocene" period the West Franks adopted the language of the Visigoths. The memetic markers having identical maths to the genetic ones.

Mind you, after a consideration at a greater depth, I don't see it that way that memes clearly exist. As far as I can see just about everything memetics claims to explain can be explained just as well or even better by classical sociology.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memes>

I think I fundamentally agree with you. Except for one area Natural Language where memes fit very well and where memetic markers (such as "dormir" and "tojo el mundo") tell us how a language evolved and what trading contacts were made in pre history.

If memes function as a virus, how come that they spread so slow in ancient times? I mean far slower than humans do travel, even in those times. Often societies in ancient times coexisted side by side for thousands of years, without changing the ways they functioned, To name an example the oldest agricultural people of Europe coexisted for thousands of years beside people who persisted with their hunting/gathering lifestyle, gradually expanding their territories, while the territories of the hunting/gathering groups gradually shrank. There is

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no evidence that the hunting/gathering groups ever undertook the transformation over to agricultural lifestyle. Evidence has been found for ancient trading centers where the hunting/gathering groups and the agricultural people met and exchanged products, such trade seemingly lasting also thousands of years. Therefore the both types of people maintained regular contacts more or less as it appears the whole time. It appears that the hunting/gatherers really were gradually sidelined, gradually pushed into the periphery without ever adapting over to the winning lifestyle. I really think such factual examples are a real problem for the theory of memetics.

Mind you, anthropology and sociology has researched such examples that were still around close to modern times.

If they were a virus the ideas ought to have competed

Good point. Orthodox sociology tells us how opinions are formed and what the influence of individual thought and group thought is. Orthodox psychology tells us what sort of people are likely to be influenced by what influences. In fact psychology is the "micro" world and sociology the macro world. One concept that orthodox sociology has not taken on board, so far at any rate, is the concept of a "temperature" in a society, that is to say the extent to which individuals correspond to group influences, and to what extent they think for themselves. If people think for themselves this results in a noise level in a sociological level.

You can tell BTW that I am a physicist and not a sociologist. I think perhaps a little bit of thinking from Physics might be helpful.

One word about "democracy". Democracy is not simply giving people a vote, they must have the information available to them to make an informed decision. Blair made great play of being democratically elected – false! The CIA and MI6 created a false picture. They were not elected. If the British people had had true information they would never have agreed to the war.

Also you need a degree of freedom of thought both legally and in practice. It is no use voting for a government if the voters vote on ethnic and religious lines. I have a particular country in mind here.

Sociology, the Web and AI. Conjoint Analysis, finding relationships between widely varying parameters is now mainstream sociology (and marketing). Latent Semantic Analysis is closely related to Conjoint Analysis and will place a web page in the form of a set of vectors. Google is now gathering quite a lot of personal information on us. I just wonder whether it could be used for some form of sociological analysis. We have our vectors, how do the vectors for individuals relate.

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If combating terrorism is, in the main, the understanding of human behaviour then AI must surely have a major role.

At a philosophical level we can say certain things I think. If people believe in something fairly sensible and "empirical" you can argue that they have made a free choice. The philosophy of science tells us that truth is to be established experimentally. Now this is a fairly common sense position. If during a solar eclipse the stars move together and if the orbit of Mercury precesses by 43" a century I will believe in General Relativity. If this was not the case I would not believe in it. There is no need to psychologically analyze this viewpoint.

You might find it interesting to do a bit of reading in anthropology, but they often did research of dying societies before they finally vanished, tribal societies that had been living the same way for thousands of years. That does not mean they were always unfamiliar with people living some other lifestyle, or that they were always either unaware that other people were spreading while their numbers were shrinking. Yet, in such examples they clung to their lifestyle, and in cases still do in examples of some Amazonian tribes.

Examples like these in my opinion do not appear to indicate that ideas function like viruses, i.e. like memes.

I think people are inherently conservative. How change happens is an area for sociological investigation.

If on the other hand I were to say that if I blew myself up in a marketplace and killed a lot of civilians, I would be due for 72 hours, this requires analysis. One asks the question as to whether there really is free will. If I were simply greedy and robbed a bank, again I would simply be an immoral person.

All societies teach their young ones 'proper' behavior. Those who behave 'not proper' tend to be punished in various ways, depending on the severity of the offence as it is perceived by the others.

Sociobiologists do try to assess people's capacity for herd behaviour. It is to a large degree about belief structures. People do tend to adopt the belief structures of those around them.

People are taught also what to believe. In traditional societies being taught the 'right' religious ways is part of the general teaching of what is 'proper.'

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To what extent do people follow these norms?

There is one question about free will and group behaviour which I think we should bear in mind, and it is this. We may be free to make our own decisions, but one person making a decision (unless they are in an influential position) does not make much difference. Computer programs are being devised, I can fish the references out if you like, that attempt to model human behaviour and individuals are treated as interacting bots. Quite clearly we need good sociological and psychological research to make realistic models.

Sounds bit like the 'psychohistory' idea Asimov used in his Foundation books.

People are capable of reason, even though it may not nearly always be practiced. However, as people's tastes do vary so greatly, what may in each case be a rational choice based on each individual taste may still from distance seem like a random choice.

yes but what influence does the herd have? What is the effect of reason? Does a particular sort of person follow the herd? What sort of person think for themselves? Everyone does not.

I think there is a paradox here. People in charge of the military and such things as homeland security on the whole like people to be conformist. In fact society is safer, at least from terrorism, if it is non conformist.

I have told you my background. I wrote back to one blogger saying that they should not forget Calculus, and that the Ising model of ferromagnetism was relevant to human behaviour. Free will may be regarded as a temperature. Society has its Curie points. Above a Curie point we have a society where free will and decision making was the norm. Below we get a much more conformist society. The way too become a suicide bomber is to meet other suicide bombers and live below the Curie point. The Ising model is one of cooperative interaction.

That is really the great difference between modern societies and past societies. Past societies were conformist or in other words 'traditional'. It's really not such a long time since western societies were far more conformist than today, i.e. read about the history of fashion, I mean of the 20th century. Nowadays, the Beatles do not seem much but in the early 60s girls still wore skirts or dresses, and boys cut their hair the way societal norms told them to.

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Societies in the past had one view of groupthink. In modern societies some people think for themselves, but they form sub groups which are conformist.

Let us look at right/left. I find it odd that the right in America is against immigration and globalization. I think there should be cheaper rates of health insurance for Spanish speakers who are more able to engage in "health tourism". The right is against that. Now it used to be the case that the left was for the state control of industry – wholesale nationalization.

I personally believe in free enterprise and globalization as the means of raising living standards. I am quite a way to the left in terms of foreign policy. If you look at both questions rationally you will find that they are simply not related. Yet they are obviously related sociologically.

About suicidal bombers, people who are yet undecided about what direction to take in life appear to be more vulnerable to brainwashing. Have you ever heard about a suicidal bomber who was not young? These people prey on young people who, like I said, are still undecided about what direction to take in their life. In addition, additional factors may play a part. Are they unemployed? Are there great many unemployed like them around, making their prospects to get a job small? Is it widespread the feeling around them that their ethnic or religious is being treated in some unfair way? Have they experienced personal loss, like say a family members being killed by the perceived oppressors? Factors like these appear to increase the chances of a person becoming a suicide bomber.

An example of sociological viewpoint.

True we need to try and find out more.

Iron does in fact contain domains and Mars, as I have said, would represent a microscopic grain of ferrite with a rather high Curie temperature.

Democracy is safeguarded by heat. How anyone can say that high Curie points will safeguard democracy. It is totally crazy.

Now, remember Germany of the 30s. In 1928 the Nazi party only got 3% of the vote. In 1930 they were the second largest party. The difference, in 1929 the world depression began and in 1930 there were millions of additional unemployed, creating a large pool of angry

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dissillusioned people who demagouges could pray on.

Another example of seeing things through the sociological point of view.

BTW – I find the rise of Hitler fascinating. How did he rise from beer hall putsch to major threat to world peace? What backed him? Ludendorff was a great backer of Hitler yet he was merely comfortably off. He could not have provided the vast sums required by the Nazi party.

I said that in the blog and the investigators in point of fact wrote back agreeing with everything I had said.

As long as humans can remember groups of humans, no matter the scale, have competed about control of resources, land, etc. At the smallest scales the resemblance to animal behavior is complete, like when human hunting and gathering groups sometimes fought with another such groups on the control of territory – the comparison being to name an example competition between groups of wolves or lions, if one group temporarily is stronger it may push the other off their land. Later at larger scales, we were calling these conflicts wars. In ancient times, different states attacked, invaded others, sometimes formed empires until the next group came along and either destroyed that empire, formed an empire of their own. Sometimes some of the conquered folks were able to oust the foreign rule once the empire weakened for one reason or another.

There is one odd fact here. In fact modern war is not fought for the control of resources. The left mentions oil in connection with Iraq, but this is not really the case. Any economic analysis will tell you that war in the 21st century is a very inefficient way of securing resources. Far far better to invest in exploration, investment in things like Methane Hydrates, nuclear power (peaceful) and solar energy.

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The STATED reason for Iraq is to combat terrorism (which has in fact got a lot worse because of the war). The real reason for Iraq may be even more cynical than oil. It may simply be careers. The US accounts for nearly 50% of total world military spending. If this were to be cut drastically it would adversely affect careers, both in the military and the CIA. If this is so the the competition for resources is a struggle which is taking place within America not internationally.

As far as I know the idea was to strike several flies in one stroke. The precense of American forces in Saudi Arabia had long been very unpopular among muslims. The intension was to move them to Iraq, permanently. A democratic greatful Iraq would be US's primary ally within the Middle East. The expected economic suggess under US help would draw in the others, show them that democracy and economic freedom can drive dividents even in the Middle East. Iraw in other word would become a positive example, acting as an ideal for others. In addition to all of that, it was expected that there would be a dividint regarding the crisis in Israel with the Palestinians. Palestinians no longer would get money from Saddam, which was expected to weaken them considerably. And last but not least, it would be shown to all that USA was a force to reckon with.

Last but not least. That to my way of thinking is an extremely cynical argument.

For whatever it's worth, when christianity came along, and swept the ancient gods aside, it introduced the idea about the separation of religion and other activities, meaning the idea that there were worldly activities and religious activities, before that time all activies had been tied with religion. Now I'm most familiar with the history of the Roman church. The ancient Roman church adopted many of the ideas of the ancient Greek phylosophers, there was a thriving phylosophical discussion among the rank and file right from the first of times. It was naturally watched and sensed by the church authorities and sometimes and overstepping the line could lead to a banishment, which usually meant that the person involved had to abase himself and literally come crawling to Rome to beg the pope

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for forgiveness, which often was granted. Burning of people wasn't much practiced until after the protestant revolt, after which the old church became in many ways a far more dangerous organization than before.

All this does give credence to the general theory of memes. Some may be beneficial, others less so,

Mind you, bad memes presumably will die out, bad being seen in the context that they are bad for those having them. If people are more or less mindless being controlled by ideas in the form of memes, they ought simply to shift over to a good meme when confronted by a better meme. But instead it's quite common that people cling to ideas that are dysfunctional for them, even societies do sometimes cling to lines of thinking that do not work for them examples of that being hunter/gatherers that go extinct themselves instead of changing/adapting to the new ideas.

Since Tomas Aquinas Roman Church philosophy appears not to have evolved a great deal:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas

But according to him, humans are capable of reason, can solve matter through reason, there are events that occur to us that are genuinely due to chance, yet in order to know absolute truths humans need divine influence.

If we consider the difference between our traditions and those of the Islamic world, they lack in the first instance the thought of the separation of realms, that's basic difference no. 1. That is perhaps the most important single difference, as it implies that the idea that something can be due to solely ourselves is lacking. In other

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words,
somewhat similar to the idea of the ancient world, when
everything was
due to the gods, everything is due to God. To devout
muslims the
modern secular state as a result is a very unholy creation,
basigly a
wrong.

As I understand it, according to the particular extremist
muslim sect
which lies at the core of al-Qaeda, the idea that secularity is
a
wrong is championed. That is one of the greatest single
wrongs being
practiced by the modern societies according to them. They
champion the
return of the rule of god, naturally through those who are
closest to
the god athledgelly, i.e. those who have made theyr lifework
the study
of schriptide.

What needs to happen within Islam, is some sort of a
reasonably open
phylosophical discussion that long was ongoing within
christianity, in
which the idea of the separation of realms comes to be finally
accepted. Then the major religious shcooles of Islam will
need to
champion that idea and explane to theyr flocks why it is OK.

If something like this doesn't take plase the struggle between
the
religious among Islam and the modern world will persist.

There are as I think you are aware a number of traditions within
Islam. If you are a moslem in a particuular mosque you gets the
tradition, the memes if youu like of that particular mosque. The
mosque may be Sufi, it may be Jihadic. Certainly a Jihadic mosque
cannot coexist with secular society. My point, which I know I am
laboring a little, is that a Jihadic Mosque is the result of
socialogical conditions, including the emhasis put on rote learning,

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and the social framework in which its members live. Until we can understand this we have little hope of combating it.

How to you stop terrorism? The snap answer is "raise the "temperature" of society." If you are thinking of a collective phenomenon you immediately get the idea of a temperature. I think things like the Internet are, on the whole, hot.

If Germany of the 30s is the gaugche, then the best strategy in the Middle East is to develop those societies, i.e. giving all of those unemployed people jobs.

Agreed. BTW in Iran the youth unemployment rate is 50%. To solve these problems though societies will have to change. Force will in fact put change back.

– Ian Parker

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