1. Introduction

We can learn a lot about war through the study of civilization. We can learn a lot about civilization through the study of war.¹
William Eckhardt

The more civilization spreads throughout the earth the more we shall see war and conquest disappear.²
Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet

The cradle of civilization is also war's cradle.³
Ira Meistrich

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.⁴
Walter Benjamin

Are there two bigger topics than civilization and war? There might well be, but they are up there near the top of the list. That being the case, a lot has been written about civilization, likewise, a lot has been written about war. Less has been written about civilization and war as a single, interrelated topic, although as the quote from William Eckhardt suggests, some have found the relationship intriguing and worth exploring. There is a rather lengthy eight-part documentary, *War and Civilization*, based on the work of the military historian John Keegan and narrated by Walter Cronkite, but it is really more about war than

civilization. There is also Arnold Toynbee's short book, *War and Civilization*, which is not exactly a book dedicated to the topic of war and civilization, rather it is a series of essays extracted from his multi-volume *Study of History* that happen to touch on the topic.⁵ Civilization is a topic I think I know a bit about, I believe I even have some firsthand experience of it; war is a topic that I am less familiar with and thankfully have no real life experience of. This book is all about the close relationship between civilization and war; in large part it explores the nature of that relationship as variously alluded to in the four pithy epigraphs at the front of this book.

The relationship between civilization and war is closer than many might think; as Eckhardt notes, civilization and war have effectively "grown up together."⁶ This being the case, it is worth having a much closer look at the intimate relationship between them, for as Eckhardt highlights, they have a lot to tell us about each other. According to Condorcet, this relationship is one that would see war become a relic of the past as civilization spreads its wings across the globe. Although the past also shows us that this process of civilizing the masses is more often than not a bloody and violent process that can involve the waging of war. In contrast to Condorcet, Ira Meistrich's observation hints at a rather different relationship: civilization and war were born in the same place at the same time – they are in effect twins. Taken together, Eckhardt and Meistrich's observations

suggest that civilization and war are effectively two sides of the same coin. Walter Benjamin's quote similarly suggests that civilization is a bloody and violent process or state of being; civilization is not so much the antithesis of barbarism, they are one and the same.

In the rest of this introductory chapter, I give a brief account of the idea of civilization and outline some generally accepted definitions of war before providing a brief sketch of the chapters that follow. While the chapters are intended to follow each other in a logical and practical sequence, I have endeavored to make each chapter work as a stand-alone essay that if read in isolation is instructive in itself. Given that each chapter is self-contained and includes some concluding remarks, this introductory chapter also serves similar purposes as a conclusion in that it finishes with what are effectively some concluding thoughts.

On civilization

The idea of civilization occupies a prominent and complicated place in the history of ideas and world history more generally. It has played no small part in shaping history; the demands of civilization have long been employed to describe, explain, rationalize, and justify all manner of interventions and socio-political engineering.⁷ The significance of civilization is captured in the suggestion that it is one of a small number of "essential" ideas intimately linked to the "whole history of modern

thought and the principal intellectual achievements in the western world.”⁸ One might add to this claim that, while civilization is a distinctly Western idea, perhaps its greatest impact has been felt in the non-Western world, where much of the aforementioned intervention and socio-political engineering, sometimes in the form of war, has taken place, particularly since the Spanish discovery and conquest of the New World.

In the context of a century that gave rise to two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the Holocaust, it seemed for a time as though the very idea of civilization might be rendered something of an anachronism. But that was not to be the case, for the end of the Cold War brought with it a revival in the use of the term *civilization* – and its plural, *civilizations* – as tools for describing and explaining a wide range of events and issues in the social and behavioral sciences. Nowhere was this more the case than in politics and international affairs. The catalyst for this turn in thinking can in large part be attributed to Samuel Huntington’s provocative article and book in which he developed his version of the clash of civilizations thesis, which will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.⁹

In order to explore the relationship between civilization and war it is helpful to have a good understanding of what civilization means and how it applies to human affairs more generally. This exercise, however, is not as straightforward as one might hope; because from the time it was

coined the term *civilization* was imbued with a range of meanings. And in the time since then so much analysis has fallen under the broad umbrella of civilization that it often lacks any specific or readily graspable meaning. Serving as something of a “synthetic” or “unifying concept,” *civilization* is used to describe both a process through which individual human beings and nations became civilized, and the cumulative outcome of that process. As Jean Starobinski states, the “crucial point is that the use of the term, *civilization*, to describe both the fundamental process of history and the end result of that process established an antithesis between civilization and a hypothetical primordial state (whether it be called nature, savagery, or barbarism).”¹⁰

This account suggests that the term *civilization* is used to more than simply describe the civilizing process and the state of civilization that is achieved through that process. It implies that the idea of civilization also has an inherent value-laden or normative quality. I have discussed at considerable length elsewhere the socio-political characteristics and normative qualities of the ideal of civilization.¹¹ In a nutshell, the capacity for reasonably complex socio-political organization and self-government according to prevailing standards has long been regarded as a key requirement of civilization. One of the primary reasons why socio-politics is central to considerations of civilization is evident in the following oft-quoted passage from Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*:

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continual feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.¹²

One of the important lessons that is generally drawn from this passage is that life lived outside of society in a state of nature is constantly under threat; there is little to no chance of peace among humans without society. A related point is that some degree of socio-political co-operation and organization is a basic necessity for the foundation of civilization. As Hobbes went on to explain, the "procuring of the necessities of life . . . was impossible, till the erecting of great Common-wealths," which are "the mother of *Peace*, and *Leasure*," which is, in turn, "the mother of *Philosophy* . . . Where first were great and flourishing *Cities*, there was first the study of *Philosophy*."¹³ Thus, it is in society, and as members of society, that human beings are afforded the necessities of life that allow them to engage in the creative arts and activities that are the outward expression of civilization. Without co-operation in political society,

there is no knowledge of science and technology, no leisure time, which means no philosophy and fine arts, just as there is no industry and no personal property, wealth, or wellbeing. At least in the first instance, it is the first of these hallmarks of civilization, the presence of increasingly complex socio-political organization, which is the prerequisite and facilitator of the latter qualities. But as we shall see, these same prerequisites and qualities are essential in preparing for and waging war.

While the socio-political dimension of civilization is important, there is also a moral and ethical element to civilization that we cannot afford to overlook. Albert Schweitzer captures this aspect quite nicely when he writes, "Civilization, put quite simply, consists in our giving ourselves, as human beings, to the effort to attain the perfecting of the human race and the actualization of progress of every sort in the circumstances of humanity and of the objective world." This giving of ourselves is as much an attitude or frame of mind as it is a political, material, or cultural expression of civilization, for it necessarily "involves a double disposition: firstly, we must be prepared to act affirmatively toward the world and life; secondly, we must become ethical."¹⁴ For Schweitzer, the "essential nature of civilization does not lie in its material achievements, but in the fact that individuals keep in mind the ideals of the perfecting of man, and the improvement of the social and political conditions of peoples, and of mankind as a whole."¹⁵ To put it slightly

differently, "civilization originates when men become inspired by a strong and clear determination to attain progress, and consecrate themselves, as a result of this determination, to the service of life and the world."¹⁶ This call for service to life and the world is at the heart of Schweitzer's philosophy of civilization, which in effect is also his account of ethics; it is what he referred to as the idea of Reverence for Life (*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*).¹⁷ Reverence for Life requires of us a "world-view" that is other-regarding and extends a right to life and an ethic of "responsibility without limits towards all that lives."¹⁸

It is evident that despite some differences in emphasis here and there, these two perspectives on civilization are not so far apart; central to both of them is the idea of progress – both individual and social – and human perfectibility. A similar point can be made about Sigmund Freud's account of civilization as a largely socialized, maturing process similar to that which individuals undergo as they develop over time and come to rely more on their powers of reason rather than base instincts and impulses.¹⁹ The cozy nature of the relationship between the ideal of civilization and the idea of progress is captured by the French linguist Jean Starobinski in his observation that the "word *civilization*, which denotes a process, entered the history of ideas at the same time as the modern sense of the word *progress*. The two words were destined to maintain a most intimate relationship."²⁰

This most intimate of relationships between civilization and progress is evident in Robert Nisbet's questioning of "whether civilization in any form and substance comparable to what we have known . . . in the West is possible without the supporting faith in progress that has existed along with this civilization."²¹ He claims that "no single idea has been more important than . . . the idea of progress in Western civilization for nearly three thousand years." While ideas such as liberty, justice, equality, and community have their rightful place and should not be discounted, he insists that "throughout most of Western history, the substratum of even these ideas has been a philosophy of history that lends past, present, and future to their importance."²² Further in this regard, Starobinski makes the pertinent point that "*civilization* is a powerful stimulus to theory," and despite its ambiguities, there exists an overwhelming and irresistible "temptation to clarify our thinking by elaborating a theory of civilization capable of grounding a far-reaching philosophy of history."²³ Clearly, the twin ideals of civilization and progress are important factors in our attempts to make sense of life through the articulation of some kind of all-encompassing or at least wide-reaching philosophy of history.²⁴ Indeed, in recent centuries it has proved irresistible to a diverse range of thinkers from across the political spectrum.

The deeply intertwined relationship between civilization and progress was central to Francois

Guizot's early nineteenth-century analysis of Europe's history and its civilizing processes. In an account that captures both the socio-political and moral demands of civilization, Guizot insisted that

the first fact comprised in the word civilization . . . is the fact of progress, of development; it presents at once the idea of a people marching onward, not to change its place, but to change its condition; of a people whose culture is conditioning itself, and ameliorating itself. The idea of progress, of development, appears to me the fundamental idea contained in the word, *civilization*.²⁵

At first glance, the fundamentals of progress appear to concern merely the "perfecting of civil life, the development of society, properly so called, of the relations of men among themselves." Yet "instinct" tells us "that the word, civilization, comprehends something more extensive, more complex, something superior to the simple perfection of the social relations, of social power and happiness." This something more is the realm of humankind's deeper and broader moral progress; "the development of the individual, internal life, the development of man himself, of his faculties, his sentiments, his ideas." Like Hobbes, and others, for Guizot, socio-political progress or the harnessing of society is only part of the picture that is civilization, on the back of which, "Letters, sciences, the arts, display all their splendour. Wherever mankind beholds these great signs, these signs glorified by human nature, wherever it sees created these treasures of sublime enjoyment,

it there recognizes and names civilization." For Guizot, "Two facts" are integral to the "great fact" that is civilization: "the development of social activity, and that of individual activity; the progress of society and the progress of humanity." Wherever these "two symptoms" are present, "mankind with loud applause proclaims civilization."²⁶

Another distinguished historian, J. B. Bury, one of the first to undertake a large-scale study of the history of the idea of progress, similarly asserts that the "idea [of progress] means that civilization has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction."²⁷ In keeping with the irresistibility of promulgating a grand theory, Bury contends that the "idea of human Progress then is a theory which involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future." This theorizing is grounded in an interpretation of history that regards the human condition as advancing "in a definite and desirable direction." It further "implies that . . . a condition of general happiness will be ultimately enjoyed, which will justify the whole process of civilization."²⁸ In short, the end of history is a close proximity to a state of humankind's individual and social perfectibility in which the dangers and uncertainties of the Hobbesian war of all against all are left behind in favor of the relative safety and security of civil or civilized society. But is civilization really all that safe and secure and free from the scourge of war; for just as there is a close relationship between

civilization and progress, so too there is a close relationship between civilization and war, and war and progress.

On war

The term war tends to be bandied about a little too liberally in much of our day-to-day commentary; it is overdone in talk of sporting contests that are not matters of life and death, far from it. It is overdone in adversarial partisan politics in liberal democracies, where ideological differences are a matter of degrees and where battles are fought with barbed tongues and the only real casualties are bruised egos. It is even overdone in talk about wars on drugs, or poverty, or obesity. War is war, and for many it is a matter of life and death.

Nevertheless, as Quincy Wright notes, war means different things to different people: for "some it is a plague which ought to be eliminated; to some, a mistake which should be avoided; to others, a crime which ought to be punished; and, to still others, it is an anachronism which no longer serves any purpose." At the same time, "there are some who take a more receptive attitude toward war and regard it as an adventure which may be interesting, an instrument which may be useful, a procedure which may be legitimate and appropriate, or a condition of existence for which one must be prepared."²⁹

One of the most quoted passages on war is Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum "that *war*

is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means."³⁰ Clausewitz, who would fall into the second of Wright's categories, begins *On War* by stating that he will not dither on a "pedantic, literary definition of war, but go straight to the heart of the matter, to the duel." He continues:

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up a war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his *immediate* aim is to *throw* his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance.

*War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.*³¹

As is widely acknowledged, there is much more to war than a pair of wrestlers going at it, or even a mortal feud between families or rival gangs. As Karl Deutsch notes in the Preface to Wright's *A Study of War*, war differs "from simple murder" in that it is "large scale, highly organized, long prepared in advance, and carried out with more costly and effective equipment, and in that it has killed more widely and with less foresight and discrimination."³² War, then, is generally understood as organized, intentional, widespread, violent armed conflict between states, nations, or groups aspiring to statehood. It tends to take place over an extended period of time, although there are exceptions such as the Six Day War between Israel and its neighbors in June 1967. War is also likely to involve professional soldiers and result in high rates of mortality; although there is no real

agreement on the minimum number of deaths required for a conflict to be considered or classified as war. Wars generally fall into one of two categories, classical international wars between states, such as the First and Second World Wars, which involved many states allied against each other, and civil wars, where competing groups are fighting for control of the state or one or more groups are fighting for autonomy within or independence from the state. Critical to most definitions is an agreement that “war is a phenomenon which occurs only between political communities.”³³

The essential political dimension of war was highlighted long ago by Clausewitz who wrote “that war does not belong in the realm of arts and sciences; rather it is part of man’s social existence. War is a clash between major interests, which is resolved by bloodshed – that is the only way in which it differs from other conflicts.” He continued that instead of “comparing it to art we could more accurately compare it to commerce, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities; and it is *still* closer to politics, which in turn may be considered as a kind of commerce on a larger scale.” Clausewitz emphasized that “politics, moreover, is the womb in which war develops – where its outlines already exist in their hidden rudimentary form, like the characteristics of living creatures in their embryos.”³⁴

As explained further in the chapters that follow, war is as old as civilization, or, if you like, civiliza-

tion is as old as war. As Meistrich explains, in the land known as the Fertile Crescent, the cradle of civilization, the

same ground furrowed by the earliest plows was churned as well by the heavy wheels of the earliest fighting vehicles. The metals that made the sickle also made the sickle sword. Communal organizations that built irrigation systems and pyramids also organized armies and built walls against enemies, and the written word with which they wrote sublime psalms praising gods praised warriors, too.

Hence, it is entirely “fitting that the cradle of civilization is also war’s cradle.”³⁵

By some accounts, conflict between human beings, including war, predates human civilization and is as old as the species. Lawrence Keeley, for instance, argues that there has been a tendency to “pacify the past” by downplaying the extent and intensity of intra- and inter-communal violence amongst uncivilized peoples prior to their contact with and contamination by Western Civilization.³⁶ This argument has found a receptive audience, with a *New York Times* reviewer wondering why the case even needs to be made; how could anyone “argue otherwise by insisting, for example, that before the rise of civilized states, warfare was somehow different, gentler, less serious, more stylized, a game.”³⁷ Others have jumped on the bandwagon to argue that “primitive peoples, it appears, were nasty, brutish, and short, not at all the cuddly children of nature depicted by popular culture and post-colonial academic studies.”³⁸

There are a couple of points to make about this line of argument. A fairly straightforward point is that the kind of warfare revealed by Keeley in the course of his archaeological discoveries might not rise to the level of war as defined above despite the significant levels of inter-communal violence. A series of less straightforward points revolve around the issue of romanticizing primitive peoples. This argument seemingly entails an inherent assumption that the precursors of Western Civilization or Western culture were never primitive; rather, they have always been civilized. The primitive label seems to be reserved only for those peoples with whom civilized Europeans later came into contact with; in the case of Keeley's study various native peoples of the Americas, Australian Aborigines, and tribal peoples of Papua New Guinea. To read some of the supporting reviews one might be forgiven for believing that these peoples no longer exist, for it is implied that they are peoples of the past. It is worth noting here that primitive is not simply a term used to describe peoples or societies and their condition, it is a loaded term that is also employed to evaluate and pass judgment.

This general line of argument is at odds with the idea of civilization outlined above and its close relationship with the idea of progress. It runs against the idea of universal history, which permeates so much of this same literature, insisting that recently discovered primitives are just "us" at an earlier stage of development.³⁹ As Friedrich von Schiller described the situation in the late eight-

eenth century: "A wise hand seems to have preserved these savage tribes until such time as we have progressed sufficiently in our own civilization to make useful application of this discovery, and from this mirror to recover the lost beginning of our own race."⁴⁰ A final point that is worth making is that this supposed romanticization of native peoples and their "authentic" ways of life does not appear to extend so far as to make any serious attempts to improve their lot in life, for as noted, the peoples in question still exist, and many of them now live in less than ideal conditions.

Irrespective of when or who waged the first war, in the millennia since the first stones were cast in anger against an enemy, many thousands of wars have been fought between competing political communities at the expense of tens of millions of lives, both soldiers and civilians. In an attempt to better understand why so many lives have been lost to war, this book seeks to explore the relationship between civilizing processes and war-making. It then goes on to examine ideas about civilized and uncivilized behavior in the midst of waging war. Finally, it considers the suggestion that in the future major wars will be fought primarily between competing and conflicting civilizations.

Book structure

The chapter following this introductory chapter is titled "Civilization and peace." In it I explore

the arguments and intellectual history behind Condorcet's claim that as civilization spreads across the globe it renders war a thing of the past. This claim is based on a general understanding that there is a direct correlation between civilized society and a propensity for co-operation and peace over confrontation and violent conflict, both in domestic affairs and in international relations. Under the influence of Kantian democratic and liberal theories of perpetual peace, this leads to the assumption that the spread of civilization around the globe will hasten the cause of international order and world peace. Included in this peaceful international framework are associated ideas about the civilizing virtues of commerce as the fate of more and more nations are thought to be entwined together in growing interdependent webs of trade.

The third chapter, "Civilization and war," challenges this orthodoxy. It does so on the back of a misunderstanding about the nature of the relationship between civilization and war. While civilization is in part about the pacification of relations within society, it is also about organization and professionalization, including militarization, standing armies, and preparedness for war. As Meistrich and others explain, the capacity to wage the kinds of wars defined above requires the kind of organization and human and material resources that only civilization can command. Turning the generally accepted "civilization equals peace" equation on its head, the chapter demonstrates

a rather different relationship between civilizing processes and war, or civilization and war.

Chapter 4, "Civilization and savagery," turns to a discussion on the different methods and standards in the conduct of war between what are described as civilized and savage societies or peoples. It is widely thought that you can tell a lot about a person or a people based on how they fight or wage war: is it chivalrous and noble or is it dirty and underhanded? The former has long been described as civilized; the latter is thought to be the preferred tactics of savages, barbarians, and terrorists. The line that divides the two modes of warfare is the fabled military horizon, a largely European invention used to evaluate and describe newly discovered and conquered peoples. A key corollary of the military horizon is the different moral worth attributed to civilized and savage peoples.

The following chapter, "Civilization, war, and terror," continues this general line of inquiry into civilized and savage warfare. It explores the question of whether or not terrorism is a form of warfare. And if so, is it a savage form of warfare as some have argued. The chapter also examines the claim that terrorism is antithetical to the very idea of civilization and thus the global war on terrorism is a war fought in the name of civilization against a less-than-civilized enemy – terrorists and their cohorts. Following on from themes raised in the preceding chapter, Chapter 5 challenges the claim that the war on terror is a "war like no other";

rather, it is an “us versus them” kind of war, a form of warfare that has been common throughout history.

Chapter 6, titled “Us and them at war,” explores this kind of warfare further, including the demonization of enemies and the kinds of abuse and atrocities that this can lead to. The chapter returns to some of the issues raised in Chapter 4 in that it is similarly concerned with issues related to the ethical conduct of war, or questions of *jus in bello*. In examining the excessively violent nature of conflict between different collectives, or “us” and “them” groups, the chapter outlines some reasons why we should not be entirely surprised by the fact that severe abuses have been committed in times of war between deeply divided protagonists. Together, Chapters 4 and 6 are concerned with Benjamin’s observation about the barbarism that can go with civilization, especially in times of war.

The seventh and final chapter, “Civilizations at war?” engages with the issue of war between civilizations, which some see as the most likely form of large-scale conflict for the foreseeable future. It asks: What is a civilization? Are they political units that can be studied and compared? And more importantly, are they capable of waging war on each other? The chapter surveys the history of relations between our world’s major civilizations, recognizing that at times there have been tensions and conflict between them, while at other times there has been extended periods of peaceful co-operation and commerce.

Conclusion

Just over a couple of hundred years ago, Edward Gibbon declared in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that humankind may “acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.”⁴¹ In many ways, the record of human history bears out as much: for example, life expectancy for a Roman during the days of the Empire was around 25 years. Today, the world average life expectancy is somewhere in the mid- to late-60s, and considerably higher in many parts of the developed world. Thanks in part to advances in science and technology, in the twentieth century alone, the “average national gain in life expectancy at birth has been 66 percent for males and 71 percent for females, and in some cases, life expectancy has more than doubled” during the course of the century.⁴²

The twentieth century has also witnessed unprecedented urbanization, a key marker of civilization and progress, increasing from 220 million urban dwellers or around 13 percent of the world’s population at the beginning of the century to 29 percent or 732 million by mid century and reaching 49 percent or around 3.2 billion people in 2005. With urbanization expected to continue at pace, it is estimated that by 2030 almost 5 billion people will live in cities, equivalent to roughly 60 percent of the global population.⁴³ In respect to

the global economy, it has been calculated that in the past millennium, during which time the global population rose by around 22-fold, global per capita income increased by approximately 13 times, while global GDP expanded by a factor of almost 300. The vast majority of this growth can be attributed to advances made as a consequence of the industrial revolution; since 1820 the global population has grown by a factor of five, while per capita income has increased by approximately eight-fold. This kind of development far outstrips the preceding millennium when the Earth's population is estimated to have grown by as little as one-sixth, and during which time per capita income was largely stagnant.⁴⁴

It might seem then that civilization is chugging along quite nicely, just as so many have imagined it; we live longer than our predecessors, we are better educated than ever before, and we have access to far more stuff than most of us will ever need. Yet the twentieth century is also responsible for by far and away the greatest number of war deaths in human history, in part because of the same achievements of industrialization and civilization. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, the twentieth century, the "century of megadeath," has witnessed somewhere between 167 and 175 million killings.⁴⁵ This does not necessarily mean that humankind is destined to continue its warring ways into the twenty-first century; who could imagine such a thing when clearly most people and nations prefer peace over war. But few people

would have or could have imagined the atrocities at Srebrenica deep into the late twentieth century right in the heart of Europe. As Oswald Spengler observed:

The question whether world peace will ever be possible can only be answered by someone familiar with world history. To be familiar with world history means, however, to know human beings as they have been and always will be. There is a vast difference, which most people will never comprehend, between viewing future history as it will be and viewing it as one might like it to be. Peace is a desire, war is a fact; and history has never paid heed to human desires and ideals.⁴⁶

I would like to suggest that a good part of the problem may well be the very way in which we conceive of civilization and progress, which for so long now has been predominantly all about the social, political, and material dimensions of civilization at the expense of its ethical and other-regarding dimensions. In respect to the general progress of humankind and our civilization, Ruth Macklin is slightly at odds with Gibbon in her claim that it "is wholly uncontroversial to hold that technological progress has taken place; largely uncontroversial to claim that intellectual and theoretical progress has occurred; somewhat controversial to say aesthetic or artistic progress has taken place; and highly controversial to assert that moral progress has occurred."⁴⁷

The issue of moral progress appears to lie at the heart of the major challenges to civilization outlined herein. In respect to the relationship

between civilization and war we can see two potentially self-destructive processes in which civilization brings about its own demise as it cannibalizes itself in a kind of suicidal lifecycle. The relationship between civilization and war is seemingly one in which war-making gives rise to civilization, the organizational and technological advances of which in turn promote yet more bloody and efficient war-making, which in turn eventually brings about the demise of civilization either through overstretch or internal collapse. This, in effect, represents a sort of vicious circle in which civilization is ultimately its own worst enemy.

As will be seen in the chapters that follow, in respect to civilization and war, Arnold Toynbee, Pitirim Sorokin, Quincy Wright, and William Eckhardt more or less all identify the problem in terms of civilization's inability "to respond to the ethical challenge of altruism vs. egoism."⁴⁸ As Eckhardt summarizes, Toynbee, Sorokin, and Wright came to the similar conclusion that "war and civilization were motivated by a sense of superiority and self-righteousness, which rationalized and justified the destructiveness of their behaviour." Moreover, the "self-destructiveness of these behaviours was completely concealed by the self-deception of self-centeredness and self-righteousness so characteristic of civilized peoples, who tend to believe in their innate superiority to others and especially primitive peoples." Eckhardt poses the question: "Can we have civi-

lization without war?" His answer is an "unequivocal 'Yes'," so long as we can overcome the "authoritarian, egoistic, and compulsive nature of civilization as its war-making essence." In this he is in agreement with Toynbee, Sorokin, and Wright in calling for "an ethical solution to the problem of self-destruction." All agreed that "we can prevent war by restructuring civilization so that our human relations are more egalitarian, altruistic, and compassionate."⁴⁹

This call to alms as opposed to arms has much in common with General Douglas MacArthur's urging in his Farewell Address to Congress on April 19, 1951 in which he quoted his own remarks following Japan's surrender at the end of the Second World War:

If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

In many ways, a similar sort of point could be made in regard to civilization's uneasy and exploitative relationship with the natural world. If civilization was more about acting "affirmatively toward the world and life" and "becom[ing] ethical,"⁵⁰ including a "responsibility without limits towards all that lives,"⁵¹ as Schweitzer suggests, and less about progress, modernization,

urbanization, and growth at almost any expense, then we might find ourselves and our world in a considerably healthier state than at present.

On the whole, I think it is fair to argue that despite the passage of time and the many advances that humankind might have made from some rudimentary state of nature, or barbarism, or savagery, or some other uncivilized condition, the ice of civilization on which humankind skates is inherently thin and constantly at risk from our own destructive actions, perhaps none more so than our propensity for war.

Notes

1. William Eckhardt, "Civilization, Empires, and Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 1 (1990), 9.
2. Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet, *Vie de Voltaire*, quoted in Lucien Febvre, "Civilization: Evolution of a Word and a Group of Ideas," in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, ed. P. Burke, trans. K. Folca (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 257, note 118.
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