SKETCH NOTES FOR EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

ZULFIKAR MOINUDDIN AHMED

At the outset we would like to take a strong view against Reason being part of our human nature. We believe that the idea that Reason is part of human nature is strongly wrong, and therefore we must reject theories of religions based on Reason. I have declared that the basis of existence of human nature is the 99.9% of genetic code that is exactly identical across all human beings on Earth today. The inference from this is that human nature not only exists but is extremely subtle and complex as it involves understanding the effects of 99.9% of our genetic code. Whatever common effects there are in the expression of this common genetic code across historical time and will persist in the future, that is the deep common human nature that we all share. We point out that this knowledge was not available for two thousand years of the Western Intellectual Tradition and thus we stand at a moment of vast correction to our intellectual understanding of human nature as well as other features of our history and current life on Earth.

1. Theories of Religions

We consider the natural history of religions. We have to keep in mind that 'religion' as a word and concept are relatively recent, and gained prominence from around 1641 and the Scientific Revolution in Europe. I use this date for this is when Rene Descartes wrote *Meditations on the First Philosophy.*

It is worthwhile to re-examine natural history of religions from a slightly sharper current understanding of the subcortical emotional systems of the brain and its evolutionary history. Until Jaak Panksepp's work and *Affective Neuroscience* our understanding was not as clear about the emotions in human beings.

Instead of thinking of religions separately from human social life across the globe, it is worthwhile to consider the natural history of religions in a larger context of natural history of social life, mores, common faith and rituals across the globe over the past five million years.

Part of the reason I want to do this in this way is because I have a sub-theory that I am interested in as well, and that is that the notion of 'Divine' co-evolved with social status in human beings.

Then I want to focus on the seven emotion systems Panksepp has clarified, FEAR, RAGE, CARE, PLAY, SEEKING, LUST, etc. These existed in mammals for several hundred millions of years. Thus roughly we would like to understand the scenario in which we have the expressions of these emotions in some coordination with neocortex combined with social activity and natural selection for mating. And the idea is that these elements have the outcome of evolution of religions in the humans over the millions of years.

Now the interesting religious period is of course the Axial Age 800-200 BC. Here the great religions of the world find their birth.

2. Interesting Goals

We would like to remember the goals of examination of examining natural history of religions. First, we would like to have a story that is accurate for the natural history of religion. Second, we would like to understand the fundamental human nature that we all share. Third, we would like to understand what of these things of the past will lead to a better future for our progeny. In other words, as a totality of human race, what ought we emphasize and correct and improve so that our collective efforts do not deprive us of harmonious existence of human societies with flourishing and fulfilled people living individual meaningful existence in the future.

The topic is of enormous difficulty because here there are great many things we simply do not know with absolute clarity and certainty. Furthermore, the literature on the topic is so vast that there are yet to be clear formulations that people can digest in ways that allow the insights to have a positive impact on life on Earth in concrete ways.

3. Some Basic Dates

I won't attempt to be meticulous because I think that in this intellectual enterprise we are still missing deeper and more solid intellectual grounds. Religions in Shamanic forms have existed for 500k years. Sporadic evidence exists for ritual religions in Middle Paleolithic 300k-50k. There is an undisputed 100kya human burial.

Now Exodus from East Africa is around 75k, and so overall we have the rough history of Shamanic religions transforming into religions in the period 100k-Present.

The first observation is the deduction that it is not automatic to produce religions from any model where we simply invoke biological elements of Subcortical adaptations and Neocortex growth.

These very elementary inferences are quite important for me. We can safely dismiss all theories of natural history of religions where we simply place a set of human beings with modern subcortical elements and neocortex without any other element in an arena. This is clear for otherwise religions would have been detected 4 million years ago.

In other words, we roughly had three million years of relatively modern genetic code before the first time we actually took steps to care about the burial of someone who died in some ritual fashion. Those three million years had various things change, as human societies did exist, but the consciousness that leads to a concern for what occurs after death, or that there was some reason to commemorate the passing of a person to death, this was not automatically determined by biology.

This gap between having biological machinery to enable some sort of thing and the realisation of that thing, is extremely important for attempting understanding of human nature.

Our ordinary thinking is that nature and nurture are the two factors that affect an individual. Here we have something different an effect of long term history and this is conceptually different from 'nurture'.

4. Intellectual Infrastructure

My background is mathematics, and my professional career began in Finance in 1995. Rather than examining humanistic views about development of religions

I consider for the sake of specification an evolutionary graph model, a speculative one.

Suppose we have models of human beings, simplified, with a finite number of numerical features $F(t) = (f_1(t), \ldots, f_H(t))$. I won't bother with attempting to make the features realistic. Now we consider the model of history itself as a gigantic simulation.

We consider entirety of history as the evolution of an ensemble H(t). All humans an their social interactions are recorded.

Let's make things even simpler. Lets consider an interaction function

$$I(F_1, F_2) = (F_1', F_2')$$

As history moves from $T_i = 1$ Mya, to T_f which is today, We have $H(t)$ evolve by interaction. In this complex interaction we have produced all things known about history of human culture.

This whole infrastructure is a thought experiement, since I will not actually specify it or attempt to calibrate it. But it is a useful idea, and signifies the sort of things for which we do not have the measurements or data from T_i at all. But a model of this sort is more likely to be a useful scientific model for history of evolution of religions. The reason is that even with linear interaction, the sort of results we can imagine – especially today after some experience with social sciences – is that we will never be able to produce scientific models with simple universal statements. We will have to care about the relative values of the interaction matrix.

The idea here is the need for *extremely latent dynamic models* which are only now possible to conceive. I have worked on Stochastic Volatility models in Finance, and so I have quite a bit of experience with latent variable models. It is very important to understand that latent and missing information will always be the state of our understanding of evolutionary psychology and religion and therefore we have to push the tools that have developed to this end. Otherwise we will continue to have confusions and debates with neither side having truth.

Actually I have resolved the Hobbes-Rousseau debate with a statistical model for universal human moral nature already and so the idea here is just an extrapolation.