

Section 13 – Tomorrow and the Day After

Western culture is not new. It is the product of thousands of years of development and it evolved to suit the differing circumstances in which we found ourselves. Our cultural thread in the tapestry of human evolution changed when we moved into the temperate zone and experienced seasons. It changed when we discovered agriculture and settled life, when we built our first cities, when we developed warrior culture and yet again in the era of industrialisation and depredation.

It passed through curious byways, from Sumer to Akkadia, Assyria and Babylon, and via another branch through Egypt. It came together again in a desperately poor and harsh but strategically important part of the Levant, Judah in southern Canaan, where it evolved. Then, in reaction to the harshness of that evolution, it transformed, recovering a core that had been suppressed. It spread through the Hellenised Eastern Mediterranean and to Rome, where it eventually became the official culture of that great Empire. From there it was exported throughout Europe and ultimately across the world. But it is only one cultural thread. It may have evolved to suit the strongest, but this thread is stiff and fraying, and it is no longer appropriate in today's world. Many species have evolved to be strong, and then gone extinct; excessive armour is a precursor to extinction. Knowledge about how we came to be the way we are is vital. We need to know and understand.

Knowledge is not power; knowledge plus action is power. Humanity's success has been due to our adaptability. We are not particularly strong, not particularly fast, not particularly big. Nonetheless, time and again, we have risen to the challenges that our environment presented, adapted and moved forward. The evolutionary prize – survival – goes to the most adaptive, not the strongest. It is time for us to adapt again; to spin a new cultural thread.