

The Tower¹

The people of your village, numbering some two thousand men, women and children, have built a massive stone wall. The wall is 2.7 meters thick, 3.2 meters high and perhaps seven hundred meters in circumference, completely enclosing the village. At one point along the wall a massive stone tower, some 10 meters in diameter, has been built. An internal flight of stairs ascends to a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. The project took tremendous coordinated effort--planning, gathering the various materials, construction, maintenance, all of which means considerable time spent away from subsistence activities. The wall may be the first of its kind ever built. And what that wall encloses is certainly the first of its kind.

Within the walls--your people live year around, not traveling with the seasons nor following the nomadic herds of wild gazelles, goats and boars. Within the walls--your relatives engage in extensive trading with distant peoples for salt, obsidian, shells and bitumen. Within the walls--the burials include some bodies adorned with jewelry and buried with valuable tools while other bodies are without jewelry. Within the walls is the meager harvest of cultivated wheat and barley, stored for the winter and spring meals. The gazelle is still hunted; but you also eat of the grains you plant, harvest and store yearly. Within the walls there is a sense of protection from those from without who desire what is now within.

¹For additional ethnographic background, see Fagan 1989.

The time is some 9,400 years ago at a site that would later be called Jericho in the Jordan Valley.

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And you look down from your steel tower onto the forests below. With binoculars in hand, you watch for smoke, and observe the movement and size of the herds and the condition of their habitat. It's your responsibility.

It's a vast natural resource that needs protecting. Homes are to be built and jobs provided. And with the information you provide, the Fish and Game Department will be able to issue the proper number of elk tags.

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Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the land." So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth." God also said, "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food." (Genesis 1:26-29)

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When the Lord God made earth and heaven, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the Lord God had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground. A mist used to rise out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus the man became a living creature. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden away to the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

The Lord God made trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:5-9)

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The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and care for it. He told the man, "You may eat from every tree in the garden, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:15-17)

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The serpent was more crafty than any wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree of the garden?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree in the middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die." The serpent said, "Of course you will not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing both good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig-leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:1-7)

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The Lord God made tunics of skins for Adam and his wife and clothed them. He said, "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; what if he now reaches out his hand and takes fruit from the tree of life also, eats it and lives for ever?" So the Lord God drove him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken. He cast him out, and to the east of the

garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and a sword whirling and flashing to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:21-24)

Extensions

Domestication

For more than ninety-nine percent of its history, humanity has lived by gathering the wild plants and hunting the wild animals of the land. Beginning some 10,000 years ago all this changed. In the Hwang Ho (Yellow) River valley of China, in the Tehuacan and Oaxaca regions of Mexico, in the Nam Teng River valley of Thailand, and in the Jordan valley wild plants were domesticated. Although at slightly differing times, all these sites where domestication first took place occurred independent of each other. Millet, rice, maize, yam, wheat and barley, soon followed by dog, goat, cattle, pig and turkey, became inalterably tied to humanity. What first occurred only 10,000 years ago has dramatically altered how humanity relates to itself and to the natural world.

With the domestication of plants and animals, humanity becomes sedentary. Near the springs and along the water ways, permanent villages begin dotting the landscape where nomadic bands of people once traveled with the wild herds in their seasonal cycles. With domestication, significant craft as well as task specialization emerge. New, more function-specific, types of tools are made, helping produce a wealth of new material goods. With domestication, access to and distribution of resources is socially differentiated. Some receive more, while others receive less. Political authority is centralized. A few make the decisions for many. Social class distinctions emerge. Society is no longer egalitarian. New religious orders, such as priesthoods and temple complexes, emerge. Humanity begins to relate to the sacred in new ways.

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Every artist is a special kind of person.

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This new way of relating to the land was quickly adopted by gatherer-hunter peoples. By 2,000 years ago, domesticated farmer or herder ways of life characterized most of the world's societies and could be found in virtually every ecological niche of the earth.

As significant as domestication and all the associated changes are, as with the creation of the first stone tools, the human's conceptualization of the process and the associated changes is as significant. Some 10,000 years ago, humanity's view of the natural world was momentarily altered. To domesticate, a conscious effort is required. The human deliberately interferes with the natural cycles of a plant or animal, rendering that plant or animal dependent on the human. But in the process, the human is also rendered dependent on that plant or animal. And as a result, the desired attributes of the plant or animal eventually yield higher productivity.

Domestication renders something once "wild" dependent on the human for its continued existence. Or rephrased, domestication is a measure of loss of fitness in something to survive on its own. After years of selective planting, maize seeds became larger and clustered on its cob. The yield of this food source increased as a result. But maize could no longer effectively disperse its own seeds. Humans must now do what once was done naturally. Maize can no longer survive on its own.

Domestication eventually produces higher yields in the plant or animal. The emphasis is on the "eventual." In the instance of plants, the higher yield was not the motivation for domestication. Higher yield is an eventual, though not foreseen, consequence of domestication. For hundreds of years after the domestication of plants, plants were, in fact, less productive per capita than the harvest from gathering wild plants. Given the unpredictability of seasonal climatic changes and the crude horticultural techniques available, domesticated plants were also a far less secure food source than wild plants. The quality of human health actually deteriorated immediately after the domestication of plants. The size of the human anatomy decreased. And the populations of the farming villages did not immediately increase. Gatherer-hunters always had a diversity

and relative abundance of food stuffs to select from. All of their eggs were never placed in a single basket. In comparison with their gatherer-hunter neighbors, early farmers lived a very unstable and precarious existence. Why the domestication of plants was so rapidly adopted by gatherer-hunters remains a mystery to archaeologists. But eventually the yield from the plants did increase as did craft specialization, class distinctions and population.

Domestication forms a symmetrical relationship. As a plant becomes dependent on the human, the human becomes dependent on the plant. To continue to break bread together, wheat must continue to be grown. As the human population grows, the wheat harvest must necessarily grow. More natural lands must be brought under cultivation. The productivity of the domesticated plant or animal must be refined and increased. As a consequence, the domestication of the natural world extends the boundaries of the culture-created world. Humanity becomes the caretaker of an ever-increasing garden of its own creation. Hence the rise of "civilization."

As the cultural boundaries expand, there is less direct contact with the natural world, though this is certainly not apparent in the early stages of domestication. Nevertheless, domestication is as a barrier between humanity and nature. If the human garden is the domestic garden, then the natural garden is the wild garden. Domestication distinguishes between "domestic" and "wild." In the gatherer-hunter world, no such distinction is made. All plants and animals, and humans are part of a singular garden. The idea of "wildness" and "wilderness" becomes ingrained in the thinking of farmers and herders. Domestication separates the natural, the "wild," from the cultural, the "civilized."

Domestication not only separates, but it presupposes actively keeping the wild out of the cultivated fields and domestic herds. Without constant vigilance, the domestic returns to the wild. And any wild qualities that surface within the domestic must be purged. The domestic must be controlled if it is to be predictable and productive. If the domestic is the constructive and beneficial, then the "wildness" is not only something other than the cultivated, it is also an adversary of the domestic. The wild is potentially destructive of the domestic and thus harmful to the farmer or herder. Domestication attempts to

control and dominate the natural, the "wild," by the cultural, the "civilized."

Domestication not only attempts to separate and control wild plants and animals, but "wildness" is extended to other humans. Those who do not cultivate the fields or herd the cattle are thought of as a potential threat and must be kept at bay. History has repeatedly portrayed the nomadic peoples as threats to farmers. But it may not have been such experiences that first categorized the nomadic peoples as wild. It may simply have been guilt-by-association. As the wild plant and wild animal is the enemy of the domestic plant and domestic animal, those who live by the wild plant and wild animal are the enemies of those who live by the domestic plant and domestic animal. As their plants and animals are wild, so too are these peoples. "Wild" peoples are separated from and dominated by the "civilized" peoples.

Within the walls of Jericho, the wilds are kept at bay and the domestic is kept under dominion.

Population Growth

While not immediately significant, the human population eventually and radically increases after the domestication of plants and animals. It is important to point out that this growth in population is as much a result of the increased yield in food production as it is the requirements for increased labor input to sustain that mode and level of production. Preparing the soil, planting, irrigating, weeding, harvesting and storing the harvest necessitate intensive amounts of human labor. The increased yield allows larger families, yet larger families are needed to produce that yield. The one influences the other that influences the one.

It is estimated that 500,000 years ago, humanity numbered five million individuals throughout the inhabited world. The human population remained stable, at five million, up to the domestication of plants and animals. By 5,000 years ago, the population had grown twenty-fold to 100 million. In 1600 A.D., with the advent of the industrial revolution, the world population was 500 million. And, by 1992, in less than 400 years, the human population has grown more

than ten fold to 5.5 billion people. The United Nations estimates that the world population in the year 2000 will be 6.3 billion people. Each year, a 100 million human beings are added to the world's population.

Wilderness

"*Wilderness* n. 1. An unsettled, uncultivated region left in its natural condition, esp.: a. A large wild tract of land covered with dense vegetation or forests. b. An extensive area, as a desert or ocean, that is barren or empty; waste. c. A piece of land set aside to grow wild. 2. Something likened to a wild region in bewildering vastness, perilousness, or unchecked profusion: *a wilderness of voices*."

The American Heritage Dictionary. Second College Edition, 1982.

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"*Wilderness* in Greek refers to a "desolate, deserted, lonely place," a "desert." In this sense, wilderness can be delineated as the absence of relationships. "The Fall" is comprised of the demise of relationship between the Creator and the created, human to human, man and woman, humans and nature. In its purest form "wilderness" is where humans have not established their dominion and are therefore subject to forces which threaten to take dominion over him. It is there that he/she learns the truth of their poverty and vulnerability and must look outside him/herself to find meaning and security, to find relationship with the Creator, and through the Creator, find relationship with nature and with humans. We cannot within ourselves reconcile any of these relationships, BUT our God can and will. 'The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts (wilderness) like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing' (Isaiah 51:3)."

So spoke the pastor Dr. Richard Irish in his presentation to the *Wilderness Seminar* in February of 1992.

