

A Couple Thought Experiments

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Wednesday, June 14, 2023

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I have read a few books and watched several [Wondrium](#) courses on Mesoamerica cultures, the Mayans and the Aztecs, among others. Add works on the Incas, other cultures of South America, and the tribes of North America to this mix of education as entertainment. On the North American tribes, I have watched a couple of courses on their early period and another one on 18th, 19th and 20th century treatment and fate of the Native Americans. None of the sources paints a pretty picture of the European encounters of these ancient cultures .

While I would not call myself a Trekkie, I am a fan of the first two TV shows, Star Trek and Star Trek: The Next Generation. I also have enjoyed the movies.

Any fan of Star Trek will know that a reoccurring theme in the series is the [Prime Directive](#). Below is a summary of this concept from Wikipedia:

“The Prime Directive is one of many guidelines for Starfleet’s mandate to explore the galaxy and “seek out new life and new civilizations.” Although the concept of the Prime Directive has been alluded to and paraphrased by many Star Trek characters during the television series and feature films, the actual directive has never been provided to viewers. The most complete attempts to define the directive have come from non-canonical works and include:

The Prime Directive prohibits Starfleet personnel and spacecraft from interfering in the normal development of any society, and mandates that any Starfleet vessel or crew member is expendable to prevent violation of this rule.

and

As the right of each sentient species to live in accordance with its normal cultural evolution is considered sacred, no Starfleet personnel may interfere with the normal and healthy development of alien life and culture. Such interference includes introducing superior knowledge, strength, or technology to a world whose society is incapable of handling such advantages wisely. Starfleet personnel may not violate this Prime Directive, even to save their lives and/or their ship, unless they are acting to right an earlier

violation or an accidental contamination of said culture. This directive takes precedence over any and all other considerations, and carries with it the highest moral obligation.”

Clearly there is no way to know, but I frequently have had the fantasy, engaging in a thought experiment, as I read the books and watched the courses on indigenous people of the Americas, what this world would have been like if Europeans had a Prime Directive and followed it. Instead they did the exact opposite, attempting to eradicate the indigenous people from the land, endeavoring to stamp out their culture, to bring them Christianity to the survivors, at “best” using them as slave labor. There is no way to morally justify the behavior of the various colonial powers in the New World (or else where on the globe) . But I do wonder how things might have been if they had treated the native cultures with respect, adhering to the Prime Directive.

My other thought experiment / fantasy involves [Neanderthals](#) and [Denisovan](#) humanoids, variously referenced as a separate species from humans or a subspecies of humans. Their demise is multi-factorial, but interbreeding with *Homo sapiens* and violence from *Homo sapiens* had a role in it. To me, it is an interesting thought experiment / fantasy to imagine a world with three distinct species of humanoids. But then on the other hand, given how poorly we have treated other humans simply for having different color skin, a different religion, etc., it probably would not be pretty.

And so my mind rambles.

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