

Were Cavemen more civilized than Millennials?

In [a previous article](#) for Intellectual Takeout, I commented on G. K. Chesterton's complaint that the modern world's perception of the so-called "Cave Man" was based on a supercilious prejudice, or what might be called a chronological snobbery, which was akin to racism. The stereotype that we've created for our Neolithic ancestor is of a brute, scarcely superior to a chimpanzee, who treated his wife with sadistic cruelty, killing her when he tired of her and finding himself a replacement "mate" whenever he felt like it.

Insisting that we overcome this objectionable prejudice with a little scientific perusal of the actual objective evidence, Chesterton, writing in [The Everlasting Man](#), suggested that it might be a good idea to take a look in the cave. "What was found in the cave," Chesterton wrote, "was not the club, the horrible gory club notched with the number of women it had knocked on the head. The cave ... was not filled with female skulls all arranged in rows and all cracked like eggs." What was actually found in the cave was art, "drawings or paintings of animals," which, Chesterton added, "were drawn or painted not only by a man but by an artist."

Our ancient ancestors studied the natural world and were inspired enough to paint it. While the animals grazed, men gazed. Unlike the creatures he observed, the Cave Man was not a slave to instinct. He was born to wonder and admire the things he saw. He looked up. He saw the stars and wondered what they were and what they signified. He lived up to the label that the Greeks would give him. He was *anthropos*. The one who looks up. This was what separated him from all other creatures. He was a philosopher, a storyteller, a worshipper of the supernatural, and, last but not least, an artist.

Compare him to *homo millennial*, that peculiar creature who has only emerged in the past decade or so. *Homo millennial* never looks up. His eyes are fixed on the screen in front of him or the screen he holds. He spends all of his time in a cave, probably a basement, in a room in which the light of day, if it penetrates at all, is studiously ignored. He does not wonder at the magnificence and majesty of the stars because he never looks at them. He doesn't really care for reality, which he suspects is unpleasant (though he's never really experienced it so he wouldn't know). He prefers virtual reality to the real thing because he can select whatever "reality" he wishes to experience and can switch it off when he tires of it. He rarely exercises and is often obese. He never went for walks until he discovered *Pokémon Go*. Now he goes for walks obsessively but never looks up. He doesn't notice the beauty of nature, or the glory of the sunset, or the "moth soft Milky Way." He sees only his screen, on which an animated thing beckons him. He is not a philosopher. He does not tell stories, or write them. He doesn't worship anything except himself. And he is most emphatically not an artist. He does not have meaningful relationships. He does not know how to court a woman or sustain a relationship with someone of the opposite sex. He lacks the maturity to be either a husband or a father. He has chosen impotence and sterility over the fulfilment of potential and fruitfulness. He is not a man but a drone.

Who is more civilized? The artist in the cave or homo-millennial in his dead-end life?

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