The Proceedings of the (anti-)SOCIAL (anti-)BODIES

The following persons participated in one or more sessions of the group:
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An Epigraph:

> *To be sure, we need history. But we need it in a manner different from the way in which the spoilt idler in the garden of knowledge uses it, no matter how elegantly he may look down on our coarse and graceless needs and distresses. That is, we need it for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egotistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only insofar as it serves living.*

> — Friedrich Nietzsche, from "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life"

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The Framing Narrative

The spread of a novel coronavirus has sparked a global public health crisis. Uneven global responses to this public health crisis have sparked a global economic crisis. Uneven responses to this economic crisis are poised to exacerbate ongoing political and cultural crises that have rattled the (neo)liberal West and destabilized a global capitalist "order of things" that depends upon (neo)liberal political institutions and cultural practices.

What can we *make* of others and *do* with and for others in the midst of this cascade of crises? Are the forms of intimacy, community, hierarchy, and enterprise that we have at our disposal enabling us to care for others and to help others cope with these crises in a meaningful and transformative manner? If the social forms that we have at our disposal are disabling and failing us, mustn't we ask how we wound up with the social forms that we currently have and ask where we can find inspiration for new meaningful and transformative social forms?

We invite you to participate in a series of readings, watchings, doings, and makings that attempt to answer the questions posed above, not just in theory but in practice.

Covid-19 has intensified long running debates about the relationship between the individual and society—pitting "individual liberties" against notions of the "common good" and "social justice". During this time more than ever, it strikes us as important to consider the concepts and forms "commonality" or "society" that we deploy when we justify policies that protect the most vulnerable and check the advantages and avarice of the rich and powerful. How should we refute Magaret Thatcher's notorious pronouncement that "there is no such thing as society"?

If we want to take seriously the notion of a society that exceeds the sum of its parts and demands considerations beyond the individual liberties of its members, we must develop concepts and forms of "society" that take critiques and criticisms into account. To what extent are appeals to society merely appeals to protect certain members rather than others? Are these appeals reducible to some utilitarian calculus? If not, what are they based on? Is it possible to assert a positive conception of society without recourse to dogmatic universal norms?

These problems inevitably lead us to the metaphysical realm, in which we must consider the basic units—or lack thereof—of being (or becoming). Does the "social" provide us with a notion of relations and multiplicity that precede any relata and unities? Or does it merely lead back to an aggregate of units? To what extent can the "social" serve as a metaphor for a pre-individuated field of differential relations? And to what extent does it merely reinforce the primacy of its "individual" members? What's more, in order to talk about politics and metaphysics at all, it seems impossible to avoid the question of the "social" as a conception of our always-already being-with-others. In order to better understand this indispensable yet under examined term, this group will attempt to read a variety of different texts and pose problems of conflicting definitions of "society" and the "social."

In order to engage with this important concept that is all-too-often taken for granted, we will ask both metaphysical and genealogical questions. We will approach the "social" as both a metaphysical category that describes the fundamental relationships of dynamic processes and a constructed term that emerged from specific cultural and linguistic contexts.

We will begin by reading Gabriel Tarde's *Monadology and Sociology*, which already poses the problem of the relationship between the collective and its "members" and explores its deeper metaphysical implications. However, we will also heed his intellectual-cultural context in the development of sociology as an academic discipline and his ambivalent relationship to its founder: Émile Durkheim.

After examining Tarde's "Monadology" in its historical-intellectual context, we will turn toward a genealogy of social forms. Insofar as our social relationships are determined by many layers or strata—the ethological, the symbolic-linguistic, the ideological, the technological, etc.—we will attempt to isolate these layers or strata in their historical emergence and to discuss their implications. Beginning with an examination of primate social behaviors, we will then turn to the development of symbolically mediated social forms amongst *Homo sapiens*, to the emergence of ideology as a collective binding force, to the effects of agriculture and urbanization on social formations, and to the role of universalizing and individualizing systems in this context. Finally, we will discuss recent and unsettling social formations that are hot topics of debate: liberalism, nationalism, racism, and sexism and their context in (post)industrial, (post)colonial, digital, and anthropocene societies.

The Readings

*Session 1: **What is the "Social"?** //* Thursday, July 2, 2020

    Getting our bearings with regard to the term "social" and investigating Gabriel Tarde's propositions for a 'universal sociology'.
- [Parts 1- 4](#) of *Monadology and Sociology* by Gabriele Tarde
- "[Man the Social or Political Animal](#)" from the *Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt
- "[Society](#)", "[Tarde, Gabriel](#)", and "[Tönnies, Ferdinand (Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft)](#)" from the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*

*Session 2: **What is the "Social"? (cont'd)** //* Thursday, July 16, 2020

    Continuing to get our bearings with regard to the term "social" and continuing to investigate Gabriel Tarde's propositions for a 'universal sociology'.
- [Parts 5- 8](#) of *Monadology and Sociology* by Gabriele Tarde
- "[Durkheim, Émile](#)" from the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*
- *[The Cosmopolitical Proposal](#)* by Isabelle Stengers

*Session 3: **Which Sociality?** //* Thursday, July 30, 2020

    Investigating two different "archetypal" social forms: the (molecular) pack and the (molar) crowd.
- Excerpt from "[1914: One or Several Wolves](#)" from *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari
- Excerpts from *[Crowds and Power](#)* by Elias Cannetti: "The Open and the Closed Crowd", "The Discharge", "Destructiveness", "The Eruption", "Persecution", "Crowd Crystals" and "The Pack"

*Session 4: **When-and-Where-Abouts the Social?** //* Tuesday, August 11, 2020

    Before beginning a genealogical investigation of social forms over time, an investigation of social forms in space.
- Excerpt from *[The Production of Space](#)* by Henri Lefebvre
- Excerpt from *[The Practice of Everyday Life](#)* by Michel de Certeau

*Session 5: **Aping the Human, Humanizing the Ape** //* Thursday, September 10, 2020

    Investigating the social forms characteristic of our closest living relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, and speculating upon the social forms that nurtured the emergence of symbolic language and culture.
- Chapter 2 ("Power") and Chapter 3 ("Sex") from *[Our Inner Ape](#)* by Frans de Waal
- "[Symbolic Origins](#)" from *The Symbolic Species* by Terrence Deacon
- Chapter 4 ("The sex strike") from *[Blood Relations: Menstruation and the origins of culture](#)* by Chris Knight

*Session 6: **Minor Gods** //* Sunday, September 27, 2020

    Investigating the social forms characteristic of ancient hunter-gatherer societies.
- Chapter 3 ("A Day in the Life of Adam in Eve") and Chapter 4 ("The Flood") from *[Sapiens](#)* by Yuval Harari
- Excerpts from *[The Savage Mind](#)* by Claude Levi-Strauss
- *[Chapters 9-11](#)* from *Cannibal Metaphysics* by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Session 7: **RECAP** //* Saturday, October 10, 2020

Session 8: **Minor Gods (cont'd)** // Saturday, October 24, 2020

Investigating the social forms characteristic of ancient hunter-gatherer societies.
- Chapter 1 ("The Structure of Myths")from *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade
- Chapter 1 ("The Nature and Significance of Play as Cultural Phenomenon") and Chapter 8 ("The Elements of Mythopoiesis") from *Homo Ludens* by John Huizinga

Session 9: **Major Gods** // Saturday, November 7, 2020

Investigating the social forms characteristic of ancient agricultural societies
- Excerpt from *Women in Prehistory* by Margaret Ehrenberg
- Chapter 5 ("History's Biggest Fraud"), Chapter 6 ("Building Pyramids"), Chapter 7 ("Memory Overload") from *Sapiens* by Yuval Harari
- Second Essay from *On the Genealogy of Morality* by Friedrich Nietzsche

Session 10: **Almighty Gods** // Saturday, November 21, 2020

Investigating the social forms characteristic of the "world empires" of the Axial Age (800 BC - 600 CE).
- Chapter 9 ("Arrow of History"), Chapter 10 ("The Scent of Money"), and Chapter 11 ("Imperial Visions") from *Sapiens* by Yuval Harari
- Chapter 8 ("Credit Versus Bullion") and Chapter 9 ("The Axial Age") from *Debt* by David Graeber
- Section 11-16 of the Third Essay from *On the Genealogy of Morality* by Friedrich Nietzsche

Session 11: **Almighty Gods, cont'd** // Saturday, December 5, 2020

Investigating the social forms characteristic of the "world empires" of the Middle Ages (600 AD - 1450 AD).
- Chapter 10 ("The Middle Ages") from *Debt* by David Graeber
- Chapter 1 ("Studying a System in Formation") and Chapter 11 ("Restructuring the Thirteenth Century World System") from *Before European Hegemony* by Janet Abu-Lughod

Session 12: **Biopower and Capitalism** // Saturday, January 2, 2021

Investigating the social forms that characterized the Modern Age (1450 AD - 1971 AD).
- Chapter 11 ("Age of the Great Capitalist Empires") from *Debt* by David Graeber
- Excerpts from *Security, Territory, Population* by Michel Foucault
- Excerpts from *Society Must Be Defended* by Michel Foucault

Session 13: **Biopower and Capitalism, cont'd** // Saturday, January 23, 2021

Investigating the social forms that characterized the Modern Age (1450 AD - 1971 AD).
- "Race and Bureaucracy" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt
- *Necropolitics* by Achille Mbembe
- Chapter 12 ("The Beginning of Something Yet to Be Determined") from *Debt* by David Graeber

Session 14: **The Shape of Things to Come** // Saturday, February 6, 2021

Investigating the social forms that are characterizing the Postmodern Age (1971 AD -).
- *Postscript on the Societies of Control* by Gilles Deleuze
- Excerpts from *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects* by Byung-Chul Han

Session 15: **The Shape of Things to Come, cont'd** // Saturday, February 27, 2021

Investigating the social forms that are characterizing the Postmodern Age (1971 -).
- Excerpt from *The Natural Contract* by Michel Serres
- *Gaia, the Urgency to Think (and Feel)* by Isabelle Stengers

Session 1: **What is the "Social"?**
Thursday, July 2, 2020, 15:00-17:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

The centerpiece of the first two sessions of the *(anti-)Social (anti-)Bodies* discussion group will be [Gabriel Tarde](#)'s strange and remarkable book *[Monadology and Sociology](#)* and Tarde's proposition that "everything is a society, [...] every phenomenon is a social fact."

Tarde's book grounds this proposition for a "universal sociology" by arguing that the "descent to the infinitesimal" is the "key to the entire universe". In other words, Tarde argues that all beings are assemblages of infinitesimal beings (like a society and its members) and all becomings are assemblages infinitesimal variations (like social changes and the [inter/trans]actions amongst individuals from which social changes emerge). Tarde's informative anecdote here is the manner in which "science tends to pulverize the universe and to multiply beings indefinitely." Think about how scientific explanations can go from investigating organisms to investigating the cells that make up organisms, and then go from investigating cells to investigating the molecules that make up cells, and then go from investigating molecules to investigating atoms, and then go from investigating atoms to investigating particles, and so on to infinity. After exploring this informative anecdote, Tarde then describes how "science, having pulverized the universe, necessarily ends up by spiritualizing the dust thus created", or, in other words, Tarde describes how "science tends [...] to unify the Cartesian duality of matter and mind." Tarde describes how, by doing away with teleology, science has, rather paradoxically, been forced to attribute psychic phenomena (i.e., beliefs and desires) not only to all living organisms but also to cells, to molecules, to atoms, to particles, and so on to infinity. As such, Tarde holds that science is moving towards revealing all phenomena to be "nebulous clouds resolvable into the actions emanating from a multitude of agents who are so many invisible and innumerable little gods."

Tarde then proceeds to argue that the"little gods" that science discovers are none other than the "monads" of the great 17th Century philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. While Tarde's "monads" differ from Leibniz' in a few important ways, they behave similarly: they are forever colluding and conspiring with and against one another in order to dominate other monads, wielding power against others and resisting those who would wield power against them. Monads attempt to "impose forms on other monads, to subject other monads to their yoke, and to level with their scythe other monads thus subjugated and made uniform, [and this] although [each and every monad is] born free and original, all as eager as their conquerors to dominate and assimilate the universe." Ay, and thusly, "all natural laws, the similarity and repetition of phenomena and the multiplication of similar phenomena (physical waves, living cells, social copies) are the result of the triumph of certain monads who desired these laws." It is in this way that Tarde discovers "that everything is a society, that every phenomenon is a social fact" or, in other words, Tarde finds that "science, following logically from its preceding tendencies, generalize[s] the concept of society" and that "all sciences seem destined to become branches of sociology."

To return to the example of biology, Tarde argues that, although many have mistakenly apprehended that "societies are organisms", the advent of cellular theory actually teaches us that "organisms are societies [of cells]." What's more, following Tarde, we could say that, with molecular biology, cells have become societies of molecules and, going further, that molecules are societies of atoms and, going even further, that atoms are societies of particles, and particles are societies of something other than and smaller than them, and so on to infinity. However, we must note that Tarde's text was written before science reached the limit of its descent to infinitesimal. For haven't particle physicists found the limit of the descent to the infinitesimal at the Planck units? Are not the Planck units the smallest determinate units of individuation and variation? And this begs the question: is science in our era still, if it ever was, characterized by the descent to the infinitesimal?

To probe Tarde's metaphysical speculations in their historical and etymological context, we shall read Tarde alongside a selection from *[The Human Condition](#)* by Hannah Arendt. Arendt holds reservations regarding the term "social" and emphasizes its contrast to the term "political"—lamenting that they have become almost synonymous in ordinary language. She points out that when Aristotle calls man a political animal, a *zoon politikon (ζῷον πολιτικόν)* he is asserting that man's activity is part and parcel of an organismic body politic—a collective whole that exceeds the sum of its individual parts. In contrast, the term "society" comes from the Latin *societas*, a term which, Arendt points out, "originally had a clear, though limited, political meaning; it indicated

an alliance between people for a specific purpose, as when men organize in order to rule others or to commit a crime." Revealing her contempt for animality and her proud humanism, Arendt, following Plato and Aristotle, writes that the "social" is "something human life [has] in common with animal life, and for this reason alone it [cannot] be fundamentally human [...] the mere social companionship of the human species [is] a limitation imposed upon us by the needs of biological life, which are the same for the human animal as for other forms of animal life." The capacity for political *organization* and for living a political life is what makes the human "more" than a mere animal. From Arendt's perspective, the human being that has no political life, the one who only has a social life, is no more than an animal, an *idiotic* creature: 'idiotic' from the Greek *ἰδιώτης, idiōtēs* 'a private person', from *ἴδιος, idios* 'private', 'one's own'. If one doesn't want to be an idiot, one must play one's part in an organismic body politic, one must live a political life. Ay, and one might want to say that Tarde's theory of universal sociology is, thus, an *idiotic theory*.

To probe Tarde from another angle, we shall read an article on [Ferdinand Tönnies](#) from the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*. Tönnies is famous for drawing the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). Tönnies, another organicist, says that before modernity, the privileged practical term was Gemeinschaft (community). It is only with modernity and the erosion of *Gemeinschaft* (community) that *Gesellschaft* (society) becomes the privileged practical term. *Gemeinschaft* (community) is characterized by long term stability, shared trust, beliefs, and cooperation. *Gesellschaft* (society) is characterized by individualism, impersonal relations, doubt, and the calculation of interests. Given that Tarde's theory is a "social" theory, one might want to say that Tarde's universal sociology is a thoroughly modern theory of atomized *social* behaviors that cannot account for organized *communal* behaviors.

Both Arendt and Tönnies force us to ask how Tarde's concept of "society" relates to their dichotomies: is Tarde's a "society" in which the parts precede the whole as his terminological choice implies? Or is it closer to a "community" in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—despite its etymological connotations? His definition of society as an aggregate of monads suggests a "society" in Arendt's and Tönnies' sense of the word; however, his assertion that the relations of these elements precede their individual existences suggests a "communal" or "political" body. The relationship between the body and its parts is not only central for understanding his sociology, but also the metaphysics that it is based on: is Tarde truly a proponent of "panpsychism" in asserting that the world consists of many individuated "minds"? Or, taking note of Arendt's etymological reservations regarding the "social", is Tarde a proponent of something that we ought to call a "cosmopolitics", rather than a "universal sociology", and does Tarde assert that the world consists of relations and interactions that precede, exceed, and succeed any "individuals"? If the latter is true, one might want to say that the "cosmopolitical" body that Tarde discovers prior to any individual parts is not an "organismic body" but, rather, a "body without organs".

We look forward to seeing you all at this week's session of *(anti-)Social (anti-)Bodies***, where we shall evaluate Arendt's, Tarde's, and Tönnies' different takes on society and relate their takes to each of our own peculiar takes on society.**

Post-Session Impression

It was a heady and heavy discussion. On the surface, Tarde's *sociology* was pitted against Arendt's *politics*. Beneath the surface, however, Leibniz's *infinitesimal monads* were pit against Spinoza's *infinite substance*. It will be difficult, but I shall attempt to describe how we got from the tip of the iceberg to the base.

We began by examining the passage in *The Human Condition* where Arendt throws down the gauntlet, "The word 'social' is Roman in origin and has no equivalent in Greek language or thought. Yet the Latin usage of the word *societas* also originally had a clear, though limited, political meaning; it indicated an alliance between people for a specific purpose, as when men organize in order to rule others or to commit a crime." The resonances with Tarde here are quite stunning: Tarde, who would "universalize" society, is, of course, the founder of criminology and, what's more, the metaphysics of his universalized society is one in which the fundamental constituents of society, infinitesimal monads, "organized in order to rule others". Ay and, more profoundly still, we find Tarde turning to Leibniz's *Monadology* in order to universalize sociology: Leibniz who, [as Deleuze pointed out](#), is "the philosopher of order, even more, of order and policing, in every sense of the word 'policing'."

This seems a rather prescient observation given the current socio-political moment. For those of us who stand for abolishing the police, Tarde the criminologist and his Leibnizian project are (pun intended?) "suspect".

What distinguishes the political from the social for Arendt? Well, Arendt tells us that politics is the realm of *action*, and she tells us that action is to be contrasted with labor and work. *Labor* is that which secures basic necessities so as to sustain natural life. *Work* is that which expends luxurious surpluses in and through enabling artifice. *Action* is that which integrates enabling artifice and sustaining natural life gives them meaning: which is to say, in other words, that *labor and work are meaningless without action*. The realm of the political is the realm in which labor and work are made meaningful. For Arendt, the triumph of the social over and against the political is the triumph of meaningless labor and work over and against action that engenders integrated meaning.

Tarde, in describing how monads "socialize", says nothing about integrated meaning-making amongst mondads. Tarde is only concerned with (i) how one monad *works* to dominate other monads and (ii) how dominated monads *labor* for those dominating. The *work* of the dominating monad is the *work of innovation*; the *labor* of the dominated monad is the *labor of imitation*. While infinitesimal monads are, of course, very different from the individual persons that Arendt is referring to when she writes about Greek politics and society, in reading Arendt alongside Tarde, we found Tarde describing the sort of relation that Arendt considers characteristic of *private (social) life* in Greek society: the *work* of the male head of the household allows him to dominate the women, slaves, and children of his household; and the women, slaves, and children of the household *labor* in the service of the male head of their household. Going beyond Tarde, however, Arendt finds that the male head of the household in ancient Greece shared in *public (political) life* with other male heads of households and, in this public life outside of the household, their (inter-)*actions* integrated the work of domination and the labor of the dominated and generated meaning. Tarde has no corresponding notion of dominating monads sharing in a political life in which their (inter-)actions contributed to an integrated meaning.

We lamented Arendt's incredibly callous dismissal of the *social* concerns of the dominated, noting among these *social* concerns (i) the problem of domination through policing and (ii) the problem of patriarchy and the domination of women by men in the household and the workplace. That being said, however, we also lamented Tarde's lack of politics. We wondered how we might bridge the gap between the social and the political in an effort to (i) counteract exclusive social forces that dominate and privatize life and (ii) activate inclusive political forces that animate and expand public life. This part of our discussion revolved around whether and how Tarde's metaphysics could accommodate a politics and what such an accommodation would entail.

We noted that Tarde's metaphysics was fundamentally Leibnizian with two profound exceptions: (i) Tarde's monads were open and interpenetrated one another while Leibniz's monads were closed off and kept apart from one another; (ii) Leibniz's monads are always already perfectly related to one another according a pre-established harmony while Tarde's monads can, but do not necessarily, achieve greater and greater harmony through a contentious process in and through which monads become self-actualized and dissipate themselves. These two exceptions are profound because the closing off of monads and the pre-established harmony among monads are, considered together, the surest bulwarks that Leibnizianism erected against Spinozism. So, is it any wonder that we found ourselves slipping into Spinozism and talking about an infinitely varying substrate, a field of forces, whenever we attempted to conceive of the (inter-)actions of infinitesimal monads contributing to an integrated meaning.

Considering all of this, and anticipating the next session's juxtaposition of Tarde's universal sociology and Isabelle Stengers's cosmopolitics, I want to advance a proposition:

> *Whereas **universal sociology** proceeds from the descent to the infinitesimal point (à la Leibniz), **cosmopolitics** proceeds from the substantiation of an infinitely varying field (à la Spinoza).*

Taking this proposition for granted, I then want to pose a question:

> *Does universal sociology **conflict** with cosmopolitics or, alternatively is universal sociology **complementary** to cosmopolitics?*

Session 2: **What is the "Social"? cont'd**
Thursday, July 16, 2020, 15:00-17:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

Now we read the second half of _Monadology and Sociology_, wherein we find Gabriel Tarde taking aim at Durkheim's "misconstrual" of sociology. Tarde describes his approach thusly, "I shall attack it at its very source, the widespread prejudice according to which the result is always more complex than its conditions, and the action more differentiated than its agents, whence it follows that universal evolution is necessarily a movement from the homogenous to the heterogeneous, in a progressive and constant process of differentiation."

While Durkheim's sociology holds fast to the prejudice that Tarde attacks, we don't find Tarde attacking Durkheim's sociology directly. Instead, we find Tarde attacking the biologist Herbert Spencer, whom Durkheim draws inspiration from. Durkheim, in a text titled _The Division of Labor in Society_, makes the Spencerian argument that large and densely populated societies are more complex than the smaller and lightly populated societies from which these large and densely populated societies evolved. The Cambridge Dictionary article on Durkheim tells us that, according to Durkheim, the evolution of societies is such that "The _mechanical_ solidarity of simple society with a minimal division of labor [is] replaced by an _organic_ one [...] hang[ing] together primarily because its different parts interact with, and deliver goods and services to, one another. [...] This reminds one of the evolution of advanced biological species, which present organs which are diverse in structure and operation, but all subserve the needs of each other and of the whole." In other words, Durkheim argues that the evolution of a society is marked by the genesis of an increasingly differentiated sociological organization, just as Spencer argues that the evolution of a biological species is marked by the genesis of an increasingly differentiated biological organization.

Tarde counters this conception of biological evolution and sociological evolution, by taking up geological processes as an informative anecdote. More specifically, Tarde takes the principle of "geological uniformitarianism", from Charles Lyell's _Principles of Geology_, as a point of departure. Indeed, one could say that Tarde, in departing from Lyell, somehow manages to prefigure the principle of "geological actualism", which states that all past geological action was like all present geological action. Indeed, it could be said that Tarde goes further and affirms a "biological actualism" and a "sociological actualism": which states that all past biological and sociological action was like all present biological and sociological action. In other words, Tarde says that prior and primordial _life_ forms are no less complex than those life forms that evolve from them, and that prior and primordial _social_ forms are no less complex than the social forms that they evolve from them. Whereas Spencer says that the evolved multi-cellular organism is a _complex_ life form and that the primordial cell is a _simple_ life form, Tarde argues that _the evolved multi-cellular organism is the simple life form through which the cell, the more complex life form, actualizes its own complexity to a greater degree._ Whereas Spencer and his ilk mistakenly credit complexity to the multicellular organism that actualizes its identity, Tarde properly credits complexity to individual "stem" cells that—actualizing their differences—become so many different kinds of cells: blood cells, skin cells, nerve cells, fat cells, sex cells, bone cells, muscle cells, etc. For Tarde, so-called "higher forms", i.e., more evolved forms like multicellular organisms, should be considered _catalysts_ that enable so-called "lower forms", i.e., individual "stem" cells, to actualize those differences that are proper to them as more primordial forms.

Indeed, Tarde goes still further to argue that those "higher forms" that no longer catalyze the actualization of differences amongst lower forms should be swept away. Perhaps here we have Tarde's answer to Hannah Arendt? A political form, according to Tarde, would be a higher form of society whose "meaningful cohesion" _makes a difference_ only insofar as it _catalyzes_ the actualization of differences amongst the lower forms of society that constitute it. A political form that ceases to catalyze the actualization of differences amongst the lower forms of society that constitute it is a political form that will be swept away by forces that rebel against any imposition of "meaningful cohesion" that keeps them from expressing themselves differently. _Ay, and do **not** lament the sweeping away of political forms that no longer catalyze differences: such political forms no longer make any difference!_

Going further, let us now regard Tarde's definition of society:

What is society? It could be defined, from our point of view, as each individual's reciprocal possession, in many highly varied forms, of every other. Unilateral possession, such as that in ancient law of the slave by the master, of the son by the father, or of the wife by the husband, is only a first step towards the social link. Thanks to the development of civilization, the possessed becomes more and more a possessor, and the possessor a possessed, until, by equality of right, by popular sovereignty, and by the equitable exchange of services, ancient slavery, now mutualized and universalized, makes each citizen at once the master and the servant of every other.

Ay, perhaps here is Tarde's final response Arendt's "fetishization" of politics: the development of civilization proceeds, on the one hand, by the *creation* of new political forms that catalyze the actualization differences and, on the other hand, by the *destruction* of those political forms that persist although they no longer catalyze the actualization of differences. Indeed, *Tarde would say that the triumph of the social over and against the political, which is precisely what Arendt laments, is civilizational progress.* If the labor of imitation and the work of innovation were to become maximally mutualized and universalized and if social differences were thereby actualized to the max, then politics would cease to make any difference at all and it wouldn't make any difference whether work and labor were meaningful or meaningless. In sum, for Tarde, political forms are justifiable only insofar as they facilitate the further mutualization and universalizalization of the labor of imitation and the work of innovation, and political forms become unjustifiable hindrances whenever and wherever they cease to do so. Indeed, we could say that Tarde wants us to shift our attention away from political forms in and of themselves and, instead, to direct our attention towards *political transformations* and to ask whether and how political transformations *catalyze* differences on every scale: from the biosphere down to the ecological niches that constitute the biosphere, from the niche down to the multicellular organisms that constitute the niche, from the organism down to the cells that constitute the organism, from the cell down to the molecules that constitute the cell, from the molecule down to the atoms that constitute the molecule, and so on.

And isn't Isabelle Stengers on the same page as Tarde when she invokes the "idiot" (again, from from the Greek *ἰδιώτης, idiōtēs* 'a private person') to justify her "[cosmopolitical proposal](#)"? Doesn't Stenger's "idiot" question political-public life and meaningful cohesion whenever and wherever political-public life and meaningful cohesion hinder those who endeavor to think and act differently?

Post-Session Impression

What will we take from Tarde's *Monadology* as we proceed along our course?

Well, we agreed that we'd like to take up Tarde's "differentialism". Jon Agins took the lead amongst us and has summarized this aspect of Tarde's thinking for us as follows:

> Tarde emphasizes the role of **dividual** *differences*: conflicting evaluations *within* individuals that can also be shared *between* individuals. Two different individuals can be sites of the "same" two conflicting *dividual* evaluations contending for prevalence in each of the individuals separately, in disjunction from one another, and in both individuals together, in conjunction with one another; in other words, the significant elements of society are not "individuals" but, rather, the dividual evaluations that *inhabit* and *traverse* individuals. However, rather than eliminating "individual" evaluations, Tarde reduces them to one class of dividual evaluation amongst other classes. In one case, two individuals share the same prevailing dividual evaluation and they agree and converge with each other: because the same dividual evaluation prevails in both individuals, the encounter of the two individuals gives this prevailing evaluation trans-dividual status without the two individuals having to contend with one another. In another case, the same dividual evaluation causes the two individuals to contend and diverge from one another: because one dividual evaluation that prevails in one individual but is subordinated by another dividual evaluation that prevails in another individual, the two individuals will have contend with one another to give their respective prevailing evaluations trans-dividual status. In this way, Tarde complicates the *dyadic* relationship between member-group by making it into the *triadic* relationship between evaluation-member-group.

It follows from the above that the fundamental elements of the "differential" society are *not* atomic individuals, but differential evaluations that are only manifest in the relations of differential evaluations within different individuals. When two differential evaluations in two different individuals encounter one another in a *relation*, there is an "integral" interaction, a convergence or a divergence of different individuals, that constitutes a social event. Society is an aggregate of such *relational events* (of convergent and divergent integral interactions) between differential evaluations rather than an aggregate of individual atoms or a "whole" that exceeds its individual parts. Any regularities that emerge from a sustained pattern of such interactions are not timeless "laws" of sociology, but the provisional prevalence of certain evaluations over others.

To hammer the points above home to us, Jon Agins provided us with a handy chart that distinguishes the differentialism that we would avow from the atomism and holism that we would disavow.

Theory of Society	Fundamental Unit of Society	Conception of Social Form	Conception of Members	Conception of Sociology
Atomism (à la Spencer)	Individuals whose "interests" account for social forms	A complicated aggregate of individual elements (to which it is reducible)	Homogeneous individuals whose "interests" precede and determine their collective contexts	The study of how competing individual interests are assembled to generate supra-individual social forms
Holism (à la Durkheim)	The "whole" constituted by social forms that precede, exceed, and succeed individual interests	A complex aggregate that emerges from homogeneous individual elements (to which it is irreducible)	Homogeneous individuals whose "interests" are determined by the manner in which supra-individual social forms characterize their activity	The study of how supra-individual social forms determine individuals' interests.
Differentialism (à la Tarde)	Dividual evaluations that precede, exceed, and succeed *in*-dividuals and account for social forms insofar by collaborating and contending with one another for *trans*-dividual prevalence	An complex aggregate of trans-dividual relations	Heterogeneous in-dividuals whose heterogeneity is determined by their heterogeneity of dividual evaluations that inhabit and traverse them	The study of the how dividual evaluations collaborate and contend with one another in and through in-dividuals to generate trans-dividual social forms

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What will we leave behind with Tarde's *Monadology* as we proceed along our course?

Well, we all agreed that Tarde's notion that "to *be* is to *have*" had to be complicated. Indeed, in order to complicate Tarde's notion of that being is having, we proffered the following notion: to *become* is to *contend* over what can (or cannot) be had. Going further, we proffered that dividual evaluations do not want to *be* trans-dividual but, rather, they want to *become* trans-dividual. Or, in other words, dividual evaluations do not want to *have* trans-dividual status but, rather, they want to *contend* over what trans-dividual status can (or cannot) be had. If Tarde's sociology was about how dividual evaluations *contend* with one another, our sociology is about how dividual evaluations *collaborate* and *defer* to one another in order to find ways to *differ* and *contend* with one another. On the one hand, our sociology finds that dividual evaluations *collaborate* and defer to one another in and through individuals in order to *create games* that make it **possible** for them to differ from and contend with one another for trans-dividual status in and through the very same individuals. On the other

hand, our sociology finds that dividual evaluations *actually* play the games that they have collaborated to create: they *actually* contend with one another for trans-dividual status in and through individuals. Tarde's sociology, by contrast, thinks nothing of the collaborative creation of games and only considers the contentious playing of games.

So, to recap, we find that there is, on the one hand, a *collaborative and deferential* sociality amongst dividual evaluations that create increasingly challenging games because they "love to play"; on the other hand, we find that there is a *contentious and differential* sociality amongst dividual evaluations that "play to win" and fix games so as to face fewer challenges. If dividual evaluations are the fundamental units of society, then collaborative deferential and contentious differential socialities amongst dividual evaluations are what explain social developments and variations.

Looking ahead to next week, we might consider the following question:

- Does "pack sociality" correspond to "collaborative sociality" and, concomitantly, does "crowd sociality" correspond to "contentious sociality"? Or, alternatively, is the "pack-crowd" distinction orthogonal to the "collaborative-contentious" distinction?

Session 3: **Which Sociality?**
Thursday, July 30, 2020, 15:00-17:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

Last week, we proffered that there is, on the one hand, a *collaborative and deferential* sociality amongst dividual evaluations that create increasingly challenging games because they "love to play"; and, on the other hand, we proffered that there is a *contentious and differential* sociality amongst dividual evaluations that "play to win" and fix games in their favor so as to face fewer challenges. This week, while reading Elias Cannetti's *Crowds and Power* (German: *Masse und Macht*), we will focus on the distinction that Cannetti draws between **pack** sociality and **crowd** sociality. Reading Cannetti's text in light of last weeks profferings begs the following question:

> Does "pack sociality" correspond to "collaborative sociality" and, concomitantly, does "mass sociality" correspond to "contentious sociality"? Or, alternatively, is the "pack-crowd" distinction orthogonal to the "collaborative-contentious" distinction?

To answer this question, let us first define the pack-crowd distinction or, better yet, let us take up Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the pack-crowd distinction:

> Among the characteristics of a mass [i.e., crowd], in Canetti's sense, we should note large quantity, divisibility and equality of the members, concentration, sociability of the aggregate as a whole, one-way hierarchy, organization of territoriality or territorialization, and emission of signs. Among the characteristics of a pack are small or restricted numbers, dispersion, non-decomposable variable distances, qualitative metamorphoses, inequalities as remainders or crossings, impossibility of a fixed totalization or hierarchization, a Brownian variability in directions, lines of deterritorialization, and projection of particles. [...] There is no question, however, of establishing a dualist opposition between the two types of multiplicities [...] There are only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single *assemblage,* operating in the same *assemblage*: packs in masses and masses in packs.

Now, keeping the distinction above in mind, let us also note that Cannetti distinguishes not only between the pack and the crowd but also between the dynamic crowd, on the one hand, and the static crowd crystal, on the other. The crowd crystal is a small, static grouping of individuals, each of whom is assigned a specific role, which serves to precipitate crowds. Now, packs are like crowd crystals insofar as they are small groups but, at the same time, packs are different from crowd crystals insofar as they are dynamic groups as opposed to static groups. Moving on, the crowd differs from the crowd crystal not only because the crowd is a large grouping and the crowd crystal is a small grouping but also because the crowd, like the pack, is dynamic grouping as opposed to a static grouping. Cannetti writes:

> The clarity, isolation and constancy of the crystal form an uncanny contrast with the exciting flux of the surrounding crowd. The process of rapid, uncontrollable growth, and the threat of disintegration, which together give the crowd its peculiar restlessness, do not operate within the crystal. Even in the midst of the greatest excitement the crystal stands out against it. Whatever the nature of the crowd it gives birth to, and however much it might appear to merge with it, it never completely loses the sense of its own identity and always recombines again after the disintegration of the crowd.

All of the above points to the fact that, insofar as there is dualist opposition to be established, the opposition is not between the pack and the crowd but, rather, the opposition is between the "dynamism" that is characteristic of both packs and crowds and the "stasis" that is characteristic of the crowd crystal. In other words, it is not the crowd but, rather, the crowd crystal that expresses contentious and differential socialities amongst dividual evaluations that "play to win" and fix games in their favor. By contrast, *both* the pack *and* the crowd are expressions of *collaborative and deferential* socialities amongst dividual evaluations that "love to play".

To understand what the stasis of the crowd crystal achieves, one must understand the difference between the dynamism of the pack and the dynamism of the crowd. The pack finds that its growth and diminution takes place in "discrete quanta": packs band together and disband one-by-one, either one after another or one alongside other ones. By contrast, the crowd finds that its growth and diminishment is a statistical matter, the crowd does

not assemble and disperse one-by-one but rather the crowd assembles when a critical mass is present, the crowd disperses when a critical mass is absent, and the quality of a crowd is transformed when it grows to a higher critical mass or diminishes to a lower critical mass. Crowd crystals, the domesticators of the crowds, aim to regulate the presence and absence of critical masses: in other words, crowd crystals aim to make sure that critical masses present themselves at opportune times and do not present themselves at inopportune times. As such, crowd crystals must first create and enforce social hierarchies and distinctions of birth, rank, status, and property in order to prevent crowds from forming at inopportune moments, and then, subsequently, they arrange ceremonies and festivals that serve to precipitate crowds at opportune moments.

One thing that follows from the above is that crowd crystals, which express dividual evaluations that "play to win", can only ever take center place in societies that have the population density needed to bring together critical masses of individuals. Societies without the population density needed to bring together critical masses are societies in which expressions of dividual evaluations that "love to play" will always take center place and dividual evaluations that "play to win" will always be peripheral. Indeed, Cannetti's work is crucial insofar as it helps us understand how population density determines which dividual evaluations can take center place in a society. Indeed, with regard to human societies, Cannetti's work suggests that the transition from the band to the tribe[1] takes place when the first critical mass of humanity presents itself. But this suggestion begs the following questions:

1. Canetti's definition of the crowd seems to imply "outsiders" whom it must assimilate or exclude in order to maintain itself (he emphasizes that the cessation of growth is the beginning of dissolution in the open crowd and that the closed crowd is limited by space, but not by potential members--the latter seems to imply an "outer" crowd that wants to join. It seems like the "tribal gathering" of strangers to perform group-binding rituals in an open space with a limited number of people slips between his concepts. Then again, imagine a tribe of fifty or more people making a lively ruckus around a fire at night otherwise surrounded by darkness, warding off predators lurking in the darkness—mightn't this be the first "closed crowd" in the history of our species?

2. While the groups that Canetti described in the packs of "war," "lamentation," and "hunting" all seemed to emerge from bands, the "increase pack" of the buffalo dance seemed to be a tribal phenomena—the "buffalo dancers" and the people replacing them didn't seem to need to know each other but only to know the conventions of the dance ritual. How does the "increase pack" complicate the distinction between bands and tribes?

3. Bands are known to have well-developed ideological systems that (dangerously) supplement their personal bonds with ideological cohesion and impersonal institutions. How can we explain the existence of static social forms in bands given that bands lack the population density required to produce static crowd crystals? Doesn't the existence of static social forms in bands further complicate the distinction between bands and tribes?

Post-Session Impression

What shall we be taking from Cannetti moving forward?

Last week, we affirmed Tarde's differentialism but discovered two different socialities where Tarde only found one: whereas Tarde only recognized a *contentious and differential* sociality amongst differing dividuals, we also recognized a *collaborative and deferential* sociality amongst differing dividuals. This week, through Cannetti's text, we developed the distinction between these two socialities and sketched out further differential and deferential relations amongst them.

We began by proposing the following:

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[1] From the Encyclopedia Britannica: "By definition, a band was a small, egalitarian, kin-based group of perhaps 10–50 people, while a tribe comprised a number of bands that were politically integrated (often through a council of elders or other leaders) and shared a language, religious beliefs, and other aspects of culture." -- The "councils of elders or other leaders" that integrate bands and form them into tribes would constitute the first crowd crystals.

- The *collaborative and deferential* sociality amongst dividuals that "love to play" is in Cannetti's terms, the extraordinary and **absolutely dynamic** sociality of packs and crowds.

- The *contentious and differential* sociality amongst dividuals that "play to win" is, in Cannetti's terms, the ordinary and **relatively static** sociality of folkways, mores, and hierarchies.

We emphasize the terms "**absolutely dynamic**" and "**relatively static**''. This is because the *contentious and differential* is that which is static relative to the *collaborative and deferential* which is absolutely dynamic. In other words, folkways, mores, and hierarchies are, above all else, means of either facilitating or obstructing the formation of packs and crowds. Folkways, mores, and hierarchies only exist relative to packs and crowds and can only be understood by regarding the manner in which they enable or disable the formation of packs and crowds.

Now, pack formations and crowd formations have different dynamics: whereas the dynamics of pack formations are explained by *final causes* (by "end goals"), the dynamics of crowd formations are explained by *efficient causes* (by "prime movers"). And, thus, it follows that the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that enable or disable pack formations are geared towards shaping final causes, toward establishing end goals. By contrast, the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that enable or disable the crowd formations—i.e., the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that congeal at different loci to form what Cannetti calls "crowd crystals"—are geared towards shaping efficient causes, towards establishing prime movers. This will be important to us moving forward. Over the course of our genealogy of human societies, we shall observe how folkways, mores, and hierarchies that privilege "end goals" wind up giving way to social mores and hierarchies that privilege "prime movers" as human societies grow larger and pack formations yield to crowd formations.

Another important outcome of our conversation was the manner in which we came to understand the spatial formations peculiar to pack dynamics and crowd dynamics. Following Deleuze and Guattari, we spoke of the pack as having "schizophrenic" spatial formations: members of the pack expect that some parts of themselves will be out in the open, exposed to their surroundings, to someone or something other than or outside of their pack. We then spoke of the crowd as having "paranoiac" spatial formations: members of the crowd expect to be totally surrounded by other members of the crowd, they expect no part of themself to be out in the open, exposed to someone or something other than or outside of the crowd. In the midst of the crowd, the crowd member is paranoid that there is a traitor in their midst, paranoid that they might be standing next to someone who wants out, who does not want to be a part of the crowd. At the edges of the crowd, the crowd member is paranoid that they might be ousted from the crowd if others don't continue joining the crowd and if they cannot press their way further into the midst of the crowd. While there is no way to ward off the paranoia in the midst of the crowd, the paranoia on the edges of the crowd can be warded off by walling in the crowd. In this way, when a wall is built around a crowd, the "paranoiac" of the open crowd, who fears both internal and external dissolution, gives way to the "monomaniac" of the closed crowd, who only fears internal dissolution.

When it comes to human societies: first come the dynamics of the schizophrenic pack and the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that enable or disable its formation; second come the dynamics of the monomaniacal closed crowd and the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that enable or disable its formation; third come the dynamics of paranoiac open crowd and the folkways, mores, and hierarchies that enable or disable its formation. One might've expected that the dynamic of the paranoiac open crowd preceded the dynamic of the monomaniacal closed pack, but that is not the case. Indeed, it is worth quoting Cannetti on this point:

> The open crowd is the true crowd, the crowd abandoning itself freely to its natural urge for growth. An open crowd has no clear feeling or idea of the size it may attain; it does not depend on a known building which it has to fill; its size is not determined; it wants to grow indefinitely and what it needs for this is more and more people. In this naked state, the crowd is at its most conspicuous, but, because it always disintegrates, it seems something outside the ordinary course of life and so is never taken quite seriously. Men might have gone on disregarding it if the enormous increase of population in modern times, and the rapid growth of cities, had not more and more often given rise to its formation.

Session 4: **When-and-where-abouts the Social?**
Tuesday, August 11, 2020 15:00-17:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

We are reading Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* after having spent last week talking about spatial formations and ordinary life. Thus, a recap of our conversation from last week will be a part of our primer for next week.

With regard to spatial formations, we spoke last week of the different spatial formations characteristic of the pack, the open crowd, the closed crowd. We spoke of the pack as having "schizophrenic" spatial formations: members of the pack expect that some parts of themselves will be out in the open, exposed to their surroundings, to someone or something other than or outside of their pack. Then we spoke of the open crowd as having "paranoiac" spatial formations: members of the open crowd expect to be totally surrounded by other members of the open crowd, they expect no part of themself to be exposed to someone or something other than or outside of the open crowd, fearing both internal and external differences. Finally, we spoke of the closed crowd as having "monomaniacal" spatial formations: the members of the closed crowd expect themselves to either be surrounded by other members of the closed crowd or they expect themselves to be up against the barrier that closes the crowd off from anything and everything other than or outside of the closed crowd, fearing of internal differences.

With regard to ordinary or everyday life, we spoke last week of how the absolutely dynamic formations of packs or crowds are not "ordinary" or "everyday" phenomena but, rather, "extraordinary" phenomena. We found, instead, that the relatively static formations of folkways, mores, and hierarchies are "ordinary" or "everyday" phenomena. That being said, however, we also found that the ordinary sociality of folkways, mores, and hierarchies is above, all else, means for either facilitating or obstructing the extraordinary sociality of packs and crowds.

Now, the texts that we are reading, Lefebvre and de Certeau, are primarily concerned with the "normal" spatial formations of ordinary sociality, of folkways, mores, and hierarchies, as opposed to the "pathological" spatial formations of extraordinary sociality, of packs and crowds. That being said, however, our discussion from last week proposed that the "normal" spatial formations of ordinary sociality are, above all else, means to facilitate or obstruct the "pathological" spatial formations of extraordinary sociality. So, the question we must ask ourselves now is this: do Lefebvre and de Certeau's texts complicate or explicate this proposition?

Lefebvre argues any and every "ordinary" social space may be subjected to formal, structural and functional analyses. With regard to the latter, to functional analysis, our discussion from last week tells us that, in addition to serving any number of "superficial" functions, any and every social space will serve one or more of the four following "deep" functions:

1. Facilitating different kinds of pack formations;
2. Obstructing different kinds of pack formations;
3. Facilitating different kinds of crowd formations; and/or
4. Obstructing different kinds of crowd formations.

Now, there are many different forms in which a space can serve one and the same function. For example, insofar as there are many different ways in which one might facilitate the formation of a crowd, the social spaces that facilitate the formation of a crowd may come in many different forms. In other words, following a functional analysis, having discovered *what* the function of a social space is, a formal analysis of a social space proceeds to discover *how precisely* a social space serves its function.

Moving on from functional and formal analyses, having come to know *what* the function of a space is and *how precisely* a space serves its function, a structural analysis proceeds to probe *where* and *when* a space serves its function. In other words, a structural analysis situates a social space under consideration in space and time by relating to other social spaces. Returning to our example above, knowing that our space facilitates the formation of a crowd and knowing how precisely our space facilitates the formation of a crowd, a structural analysis

proceeds to discover *where* our space facilitates the formation of a crowd, situating our space *in space* relative to other spaces, and proceeds to discover *when* our space facilitates the formation of a crowd, situating our space *in time* relative to other spaces from which our space receives flows, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, relative to other spaces which receives flows from our space.

Now, de Certeau's chapter on "Spatial Stories" from the *Practice of Everyday Life* invites us to pay special attention to analyses of temporal structures, to analyses of *when* a social space serves its function, to analyses situating social spaces *in time*. "[N]arrative structures, de Certeau writes, "have the status of spatial syntaxes. [...] Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice." In other words, for de Certeau, to analyze the temporal structures of social space is to analyze its narrative structure. For de Certeau, whereas the *spatial or figurative structure* of a social space is what constitutes a social space as a *place (lieu)*, it is the *temporal or narrative structure* of social space that constitutes a social space as a properly-so-called *space (espace)*.

With the notion that narrative structure produces space qua space at his disposal, it is de Certeau who furthers our propositions from last week in the most remarkable ways: he accounts for the *delinquencies* or *pathologies* of extraordinary social spaces and he relates these delinquencies or pathologies to the *properties* of ordinary social spaces by citing/siting the ways that narratives involve both ordinary and extraordinary passages.

When we meet next week, might I suggest that we reflect upon Lefebvre and de Certau's texts and what they currently offer us by examining the following extraordinary passage from Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane:*

> According to the traditions of an Arunta tribe, the Achilpa, in mythical times the divine being Numbakula cosmicized their future territory, created their Ancestor, and established their institutions. From the trunk of a gum tree Numbakula fashioned the sacred pole (kauwa-auwa) and, after anointing it with blood, climbed it and disappeared into the sky. This pole represents a cosmic axis, for it is around the sacred pole that territory becomes habitable, hence is transformed into a world. The sacred pole consequently plays an important role ritually. During their wanderings the Chilpa always carry it with them and choose the direction toward which it bends. This allows them, while being continually on the move, to be always in 'their world' and, at the same time, in communication with the sky into which Numbakula vanished.
>
> For the pole to be broken denotes catastrophe; it is like 'the end of the world,' reversion to chaos. Spencer and Gillen report that once, when the pole was broken, the entire clan were in consternation; they wandered about aimlessly for a time, and finally lay down on the ground together and waited for death to overtake them.

Post-Session Impression

During our discussion, We *distinguished* (i) those activities that produce *figurative structures* (i.e., the "mapping of places", the "making of means") from (ii) those activities that produce *narrative structures* (i.e., the "touring of spaces", the "making of ways"), and we *related* these two structure producing activities to (iii) the *forms of spaces*, and (iv) the *functions of spaces*.

This discussion yielded two major discoveries:

1. *A figurative structure is given a form and narrative structures become functional* when multiple narrative structures (i.e., multiple tours, multiple ways) are *superposed* atop one another to onto one figurative structure (i.e., one map, one means). In other words, the superposition of multiple tours atop one another onto *one* map will *transform* the one map, and the multiple tours will become the *functions* of the one map.

2. *A narrative structure is given a form and figurative structures become functional* when one narrative structure (i.e., one tour, one way) is *transposed* onto multiple figurative structures (i.e., multiple maps, multiple means). In other words, the transposition of one tour onto multiple maps will *transform* the one tour, and the multiple maps will become the *functions* of the one tour.

The informative anecdote that enabled us to make these discoveries was not the anecdote about the sacred pole of the Achilpa, which was featured in the prime but, rather, it was an anecdote about how prevailing education narratives are being transformed before our very eyes as we live through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consider the physical classroom where learning *takes place.* As a result of the pandemic, students can no longer *make their way* from their homes to the school building where physical classrooms are, but learning still has to take place. And so, we are now in the midst of *transposing*, from one place to another, the narrative of students *making their way* to the *place* where learning happens. Prior to the pandemic, this narrative had been positioned upon the school building where learning took place in physical classrooms. As a result of the pandemic, this narrative is being re-positioned from the physical classroom to the virtual classroom on the desktop or mobile computer screen where learning is supposed to take place. As a result of this *transposing*, for better or worse, any place where one can set-up a desktop or mobile computer screen *functions* as a classroom and this education narrative is being *transformed* as a result.

What's more, it follows that the education narrative is now being *superposed* atop a host of other narratives in certain places. For instance, the student who places their virtual classroom on a kitchen table will now superpose the education narrative atop the dining and family bonding narratives that are already superposed atop the kitchen table. As a result of this *superposing*, for better or for worse, the student will find that dining, education, and family bonding are now the different functions of the kitchen table, and that the kitchen table is being *transformed* as a result.

Going even further, and here is the kicker, it may be the case that the education narrative will not survive being transposed and superposed in the manner described above: the education narrative may be *deposed.* Now, to say that the education narrative may be "deposed" is to say, in other words, that the education narrative may be found *delinquent* and *displaced*, and, moreover, it is also to say that the education narrative may be *replaced* by another narrative that functions better when superposed atop the other, more *imposing* narratives that share a given place.

The discoveries noted above shall prove important as we proceed with our genealogy of social forms in the coming weeks. For we shall be attending closely to when, where, and how the different narrative structures and figurative structures of different societies have been transformed by the trans-position, super-position, and im-position of different narrative structures atop different figurative structures. Or, in other words, we will be attending closely to how different com-positions of different narrative structures atop different figurative structures give rise to different social (trans-)form(ation)s.

Session 5: **Aping the Human, Humanizing the Ape**
Thursday, September 10, 2020, 15:00-17:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

Last week we focused on the relations amongst narrative structures and figurative structures. This week we add a third kind of structure to the mix: symbolic structure (i.e., coordinates, conventions).

Our species *Homo sapiens* is a **symbolic species** of the great ape family, *Hominidae* — that is to say, in other words, that our species is a species of great ape whose social formations are characterized by symbolic structures alongside narrative and figurative structures. We are, however, descended from *non-symbolic* species of great ape, species like our closest living relatives: the Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) and the Bonobos (*Pan paniscus*). Our readings for this week — Terrence Deacon's *The Symbolic Species*, and Chris Knight's *Blood Rituals* and Frans de Waal's *Our Inner Ape* — are speculation regarding how and why our curious symbolic species of great ape evolved from non-symbolic species of great ape.

In order to evaluate these speculations, we need to differentiate the social formations of symbolic species from those of non-symbolic species. To do so, I would like to build upon the discoveries that we made during our last session.

First, I would like to propose that **the social formations of *non-symbolic* species** are characterized by narrative structures that are [super-/trans-]posed atop figurative structures. During our last session, we managed to explicate this proposition as follows:

- *A figurative structure is given a form and narrative structures become functional* when multiple narrative structures (i.e., multiple tours, multiple ways) are *superposed* atop one another onto one figurative structure (i.e., one map, one means). In other words, the superposition of multiple tours atop one another onto *one* map will *transform* the one map, and the multiple tours will become the *functions* of the one map.

- *A narrative structure is given a form and figurative structures become functional* when one narrative structure (i.e., one tour, one way) is *transposed* onto multiple figurative structures (i.e., multiple maps, multiple means). In other words, the transposition of one tour onto multiple maps will *transform* the one tour, and the multiple maps will become the *functions* of the one tour.

Second, I would like to propose that **the social formations of *symbolic* species** are characterized by symbolic structures that are [super-/trans-]posed atop the narrative structures *in addition* to narrative structures [super-/trans-]posed atop figurative structures. I would like to suggest the following explication of this proposition:

- *A symbolic structure is given a form and narrative structures become functional* when one symbolic structure (i.e., one coordinate, one convention) is *transposed* onto multiple narrative structures (i.e., multiple tours, multiple ways). In other words, the transposition of one coordinate onto multiple tours will *transform* the one coordinate, and the multiple tours will become the *functions* of the one coordinate.

  - But the functionality of the multiple narrative structures will also register their being superposed atop one figurative structure. In other words, narrative structures will always be of both (i) functions of a figurative structure and (ii) functions of a symbolic structure.

- *A narrative structure is given a form and symbolic structures become functional* when multiple symbolic structures (i.e., multiple coordinates, multiple conventions) are *superposed* atop one another onto one narrative structure (i.e., one tour, one way). In other words, the superposition of multiple coordinates atop one another onto *one* tour will *transform* the one tour, and the multiple coordinates will become the *functions* of the one tour.

- But the formality of the narrative structure will also register its being transposed onto multiple figurative structures. In other words, a narrative structure will always receive its form from both (i) those figurative structures that it functionalizes and (ii) those symbolic structures that it functionalizes.

The chapter we are reading from Terrence Deacon's book, *The Symbolic Species*, asks the question, "What *functions* did symbolic structures initially serve?" Terrence Deacon resolves that symbolic structures were functioned to give form to new narratives about sex and power that enabled greater social cooperation in responding to ecological pressures. Deacon's argument, however, gives priority to symbolic narratives about males forming a pact to hunt big-game together on the basis that each hunter would receive exclusive sexual rights over one or more foraging females: this, of course, is **the convention of marriage and the taboo against adultery.**

Chris Knight's *Blood Rituals* goes beyond Terrence Deacon's book. In addition to asking the question, "What functions did symbolic structures initially serve?", Knight asks, "What *form* did symbolic structures initially take?" Chris Knight hypothesizes that the first symbol to be formed was "blood red" and that the formation of this symbol functionalized the narratives about (i) female menstruation, (ii) the hunting and slaying of game animals, and (iii) narratives about sex and power. Knight's argument "flips the script" on Deacon's, giving priority to symbolic narratives about foraging females forming a pact to refuse sex to hunting males who do not share the spoils of their hunts with the females who are party to the pact and their children: this, of course, is **the convention of sexual consent and the taboo against rape.**

Knight's text draws on the early work of Frans de Waal, work that de Waal would develop and expand upon in the very text that we are reading alongside Deacon's and Knight's, *Our Inner Ape*. *Our Inner Ape* is less concerned with the first *symbolic-narrative* compositions that characterized the emergence of the first symbolic species of the genus *Homo*, and it is more concerned with the *narrative-figurative* compositions underlying not only the first symbolic-narrative compositions but also subsequent symbolic-narrative compositions that have characterized symbolic species of the genus *Homo*.

The chapter on "Sex" and "Power" from *Our Inner Ape* cues us into the non-symbolic narratives about sex and power that characterize the social formations of humans (*Homo sapiens*) closes relatives Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) and the Bonobos (*Pan paniscus*). Whereas the non-symbolic narratives about sex and power that characterize the social formations of Chimpanzees would lead one to believe that symbolic structures first supported the male-driven convention of marriage and taboo against adultery; the non-symbolic narratives about sex and power that characterize the social formations of Bonobos would lead one to believe that symbolic structures first supported the female-driven convention of sexual consent and taboo against rape. If we are to follow de Waal's lead, however, we would say that it is not a matter of "either/or" but rather, it is a matter of "both/and": de Waal would argue that, insofar as we are both Chimpanzee-like and Bonobo-like, the first symbolic structures likely involved *both* the male-driven convention of marriage *and* the female-driven convention of sexual consent *and* other conventions that were neither male-driven nor female-driven, but driven by other differences that are not immediately salient to those of us who live in societies that are preoccupied by conflicts between those who essentialize and those who queer conventional male-female sexual binaries. Indeed, for instance, one might imagine there being age-driven conventions also involved in the first symbolic structures, as Chris Knight implies when he invokes the figure of the "mother-in-law".

Synoptic Grid of Terms for Social Structures

	Narrative Structures	Figurative Structures	Symbolic Structures
Cartographic Terms (à la Michel de Certeau)	**Tours** A tour is (trans)formed (i) by its transposition onto multiple maps or (ii) by superpositions of multiple coordinate systems. Tours become functional by either (i) (trans)forming a map or (ii) (trans)forming a coordinate system.	**Maps** A map is (trans)formed by superpositions of multiple tours. Maps become functional by (trans)forming a tour.	**Coordinate Systems** A coordinate system is (trans)formed by its transposition onto multiple tours. Coordinates systems become functional by (trans)forming a tour.
Practical Terms	**Ways** A way is (trans)formed (i) by its transposition onto multiple means or (ii) by superpositions of multiple conventions. Ways become functional by either (i) (trans)forming a means or (ii) (trans)forming a convention.	**Means** A means is (trans)formed by superpositions of multiple ways. Means become functional by (trans)forming a way.	**Conventions** A convention is (trans)formed by its transposition onto multiple ways. Conventions become functional by (trans)forming a way.
Semiotic Terms (à la Charles Sanders Peirce)	**Indexes** An index is (trans)formed (i) by its transposition onto multiple icons or (ii) by superpositions of multiple symbols. Indexes become functional by either (i) (trans)forming an icon or (ii) (trans)forming a symbol.	**Icons** An icon is (trans)formed by superpositions of multiple indexes. Icons become functional by (trans)forming an index.	**Symbols** A symbol is (trans)formed by its transposition onto multiple indexes. Symbols become functional by (trans)forming an index.

Post-Session Impression

Encountering the work of Terrence Deacon, Christopher Knight, and Frans de Waal in tandem was remarkably fruitful for us.

Our discussion began by making it clear that we were not interested in whether or not humans are the only creatures "gifted" with symbolic capacities. In fact, we know otherwise, and we spoke of the life of Nim Chimsky documented by Elizabeth Hess, the life of Kanzi documented by Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, and the life of Koko documented by Barbet Schroeder. The documented lives of these apes demonstrated that they had symbolic capacities and that they could be taught to use these symbolic capacities to communicate their desires and to tell truths and lies. -- *Ay, but there's the rub!* The documented lives of these apes also demonstrate that they are not driven to make such use of their symbolic capacities unless they are put in *artificial* circumstances that make them dependent upon humans for their primary wants and these humans condition them to make such use of their symbolic capacities so as to satisfy their wants.

Deacon, Knight, and de Waal all argue that early humans found themselves in *natural* circumstances that mirrored the *artificial* circumstances of Nim, Kanzi, and Koko: ecological factors made early humans depend upon each other for their primary wants, and these early humans mutually conditioned one another to make use of their symbolic capacities to satisfy their wants. Deacon, Knight, and de Waal also agree that the *want for meat* was the primary want that humans depended on one another to satisfy. Indeed, de Waal, musing upon ethologists' observations of public sharing amongst primates, writes in *Our Inner Ape*:

> "[The] primates best at public sharing [...] love meat, they hunt in groups, and they share even among adult males [...] If a taste for meat is indeed at the root of sharing, it is hard to escape the conclusion that human morality is steeped in blood."

Here, de Waal is readying us for the thesis of Chris Knight's *Blood Rituals*. Indeed, Knight's thesis is that blood was not only the associated with *want for meat* but it was also with the *want for sex*, given its connection to menstruation. In this way, gestures and activities that involved coating the hands the lips of the mouth, and the lips of the vagina with blood constituted what Terrence Deacon, in *The Symbolic Species*, describes as "the melange of indices transformed to symbols, each systematically dependent on one another, and defining a closed set of possible types of relationships." As noted in the primer above, likely among the first relationships to be symbolized were (i) the convention of marriage and the taboo against adultery and (ii) the convention of sexual consent and the taboo against rape.

During our discussion, however, we cared less about the first conventional relationships to be formed and cared more about how a "melange of indices" could be "transformed to symbols". Again, here we found Deacon and Knight in agreement with one another: "ritual" enables this transformation. It is worth quoting Deacon at length on this matter:

> [T]he answer is ritual. Indeed, ritual is still a central component of symbolic "education" in modem human societies, though we are seldom aware of its modern role because of the subtle way it is woven into the fabric of society. The problem for symbol discovery is to shift attention from the concrete to the abstract; from separate indexical links between signs and objects to an organized set of relations between signs. In order to bring the logic of token-token relationships to the fore, a high degree of redundancy is important. This was demonstrated in the experiments with the chimpanzees Sherman and Austin. It was found that getting them to repeat by rote a large number of errorless trials in combining lexigrams enabled them to make the transition from explicit and concrete sign-object associations to implicit sign-sign associations. Repetition of the same set of actions with the same set of objects over and over again in a ritual performance is often used for a similar purpose in modern human societies. Repetition can render the individual details of some performance automatic and minimally conscious, while at the same time the emotional intensity induced by group participation can help focus attention on other aspects of the objects and actions involved. In a ritual frenzy, one can be induced to see everyday activities and objects in a very different light.

We imagined the first frenzied "blood ritual": a band of early humans feasting and fornicating, relishing in the pleasures of the flesh, their hands stained with the blood of their quarry, the repetitive bumping and gyrating of their blood stained bodies inducing them to regard blood in a very different light, as "representative" of their want for meat, their want for sex, and the social relations that enabled them to satisfy these two wants. Ay, and we could not help but recognize in this primal scene the process that Canetti, in *Crowd's and Power*, termed the "transmutation of packs" -- in this particular instance, the transmutation of the "hunting pack", which forms for want of meat, into the "increase pack", the pack which forms for want of procreation and presages all "crowd" formations. Recognizing that this primal scene is the scene of a pack-cum-crowd formation, we also recognized that this primal scene expresses the prevalence of dividual evaluations that "love to play" over and against those that "play to win".

Reflecting upon the above, we might be tempted to draw the following conclusion:

- Rituals, which express dividual evaluations that "love to play", are the ways and means that enable us to make the transition from explicit and concrete sign-object associations to implicit sign-sign associations.

- Conventions, which express dividual evaluations that "play to win", are the subsequent explications and functionalizations of implicit sign-sign associations that have already been formed in and through rituals.

Session 6: **Minor Gods**
Sunday, September 27, 2020 10:00-12:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

We ended our last discussion by proffering the following propositions:

- **Rituals**, which express dividual evaluations that "love to play", are the ways and means that enable us to make the transition from explicit and concrete sign-object associations to implicit sign-sign associations.

- **Conventions**, which express dividual evaluations that "play to win", are the subsequent explications and functionalizations of implicit sign-sign associations that have already been formed in and through rituals.

This week, we pick up *The Savage Mind* by Claude Levi-Strauss and, surprisingly or unsurprisingly, we find Levi-Strauss echoing our distinction between the "love to play" and the "play to win" in his attempts to differentiate the rituals from games. What Levi-Strauss terms "games" seem to be what we would term "matters of convention" and what he terms rituals, rather obviously, seem to be what we would term "matters of ritual" but with an added twist. I shall quote Levi-Stauss at length on the matter.

> All games are defined by a set of rules which in practice allow the playing of any number of matches. Ritual, which is also 'played', is on the other hand, is like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results in a particular type of equilibrium between the two sides. [...]
>
> Games [...] have a disjunctive effect: they end in the establishment of a difference between individual players or teams where originally there was no indication of inequality. And at the end of the game they are distinguished into winners and losers. Ritual, on the other hand, is the exact inverse; it conjoins, for it brings about a union (one might even say communion in this context) or in any case an organic relation between two initially separate groups, one ideally merging with the person of the officiant and the other with the collectivity of the faithful. In the case of games the symmetry is therefore preordained and it is of a structural kind since it follows from the principle that the rules are the same for both sides. Asymmetry is engendered: it follows inevitably from the contingent nature of events, themselves due to intention, chance or talent. The reverse is true of ritual. There is an asymmetry which is postulated in advance between profane and sacred,· faithful and officiating, dead and living, initiated and uninitiated, etc., and the 'game' consists in making all the participants pass to the winning side by means of events, the nature and ordering of which is genuinely structural. Like science (though here again on both the theoretical and the practical plane) the game produces events by means of a structure; and we can therefore understand why competitive games should flourish in our industrial societies. Rites and myths, on the other hand, like 'bricolage' (which these same societies only tolerate as a hobby or pastime), take to pieces and re-construct sets of events (on a psychical, socio-historical or technical plane) and use them as so many indestructible pieces for structural patterns which they serve alternatively as ends or means.

Reading the above, you will note that Levi-Strauss is not talking about the pre-symbolic "ur-rituals" that we described last week but, rather, about post-symbolic "mythic rituals". Thus, Levi-Strauss describes there being "asymmetries postulated in advance" of rituals that arise from conventional distinctions, e.g., "profane and sacred,· faithful and officiating, dead and living, initiated and uninitiated, etc." The problem is that, from our perspective, "mythic rituals" *succeed* the emergence of conventions, yes, but conventions are explications of "ur-rituals" that *precede* them.

The distinction between ur-ritual and mythic ritual, is what drives Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's *Cannibal Metaphysics* and his critiques of Levi-Strauss. One way to describe Viveiros de Castro's project would be to say that it aims to demonstrate that the development of conventions and mythic rituals does not put an end to the development ur-rituals but, rather, that they overlay the development ur-rituals: ur-rituals persist beneath the conventions and mythic rituals and continue to shape societies alongside them. If we were to liken our sociality

to the geology earth, we might say that our "inner ape" is the core of our societiality, that ur-ritual is the mantle of our sociality, that convention is the crust of our sociality, and that mythic ritual is the biosphere that atop it all.

Indeed, going further, we might even conceive of Viveros de Castro's work in terms of the different perspectives on society that we explored during our first two sessions. In this way, we might propose the following:

- **Conventions** account for *atomizing* perspectives on society. This is because conventions, as Levi-Strauss has pointed out with regard to games, establish "differences between individual players or teams where originally there was no indication of inequality."

- **Mythic rituals [or Traditions]**, which *succeed* the emergence of conventions, account for *holistic* perspectives on society. This is because mythic rituals, as Levi-Strauss has pointed out, "bring about a union (one might even say communion in this context) or in any case an organic relation between two initially separate groups." In other words, through mythic ritual individual players or teams that have been disjoined by conventions are (re-)joined into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

- **Ur-rituals**, which *precede* the emergence of conventions, account for *differential* perspectives on society. This is because ur-rituals, as Viveiros de Castro has pointed out, bring about "intensive or primordial" alliances. Thes "intensive and primordial" alliances are *not* alliances between individuals or teams but, rather, they are equally both (i) *intra*-individual or *intra*-team alliances and (ii) *trans*-individual and *trans*-team alliances. It would follows that conventions succeed ur-rituals, and establish different individuals and teams, in and through breaking the symmetry that ur-rituals establish between the *intra*-individual or *intra*-team, on the one hand, and the *trans*-individual and *trans*-team, on the other.

Viveros de Castro and Levi-Strauss would both agree that what we conventionally call "traditional agricultural societies" are *holistic societies* engendered by mythic rituals that are overlaid upon conventions that are, in turn, overlaid upon ur-rituals. They would also agree that "modern industrial societies" are defined by a profusion of conventions too factious to submit to mythic rituals and, thus, our modern societies tend to be *atomized* societies rather than holistic societies. Now, here is the kicker, Viveros de Castro's writings, departing from those of Levi-Strauss, imply that paleo-lithic hunter-gatherer societies, like the Amerindian societies that Viveros de Castro studies, would have been *differential societies*, as opposed to holistic or atomizing societies. The reason for this being that paleo-lithic societies are characterized by having the fewer conventions overlaid atop their ur-rituals and, thus, by having mythic rituals that are less static and more dynamic as a result of having fewer stable conventions to stand on. This is to say, in other words, that ur-rituals played the *major* role in paleo-lithic hunter-gatherer societies and conventions and mythic rituals played relatively *minor* roles in paleo-lithic hunter-gatherer societies. Subsequently, thanks to the establishment of more and more conventions, mythic rituals took on the major role in traditional agricultural societies. Closer to the present, thanks to the establishment of an *inordinate* amount of conventions, conventions became relatively autonomous from both ur-rituals and mythic rituals and took on the major role in modern industrial societies, relegating ur-rituals and mythic rituals to minor roles.

Our discussion this week will revolve around putting the notions above to the test by cautiously reading them into Yuval Harari's [*Sapiens*](). Harari's text will provide us with informative anecdotes drawn from established empirical research about the social lives of paleo-lithic hunter gatherers. In preparation for our discussion, I invite you to pay special attention to Harari's descriptions of "animism" and to consider the resonances with Viveros de Castro's writings on Amerindian shamanism.

Post-Session Impression

Our discussion of prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies focuses on the curious figure of the "shaman". Admittedly, we've no idea whether such a figure was to be found in prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies. All we know is that "shamans" and "shaman-like" figures appear in the wide-variety of hunter-gatherer societies of which we do have historical records, and it is speculated that, despite their being even more varied than those for which we have histories, prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies likely had "shaman-like" figures.

We focused on the figure of the shaman because the figure of the shaman, as described by Viveiros de Castro, allows us to attend to how "ur-rituals" persist beneath "conventions" and "mythic rituals". Shamans are figures in

societies that hold "animist" belief systems. "Animism (from 'anima', 'soul' or 'spirit' in Latin)," Yuval Harari writes in *Sapiens,* "is the belief that almost every place, every animal, every plant and every natural phenomenon has awareness and feelings, and can communicate directly with humans." This is how we WEIRDos conventionally interpret animism, but Viveros de Castro interprets it differently in the book *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Viveros de Castro writes that the "animism" of the *Amerindian* shaman holds that "every place, every animal, every plant and every natural phenomenon" is an "othered human" rather than a "non-human other". That is to say, in other words, that what we call "nonhuman others" are, for the shaman, humans that have become something other than human. For instance, a rock is a human that has become a rock, a tree is a human that has become a tree, and a jaguar is a human that has become a jaguar. It would be wrong, however, to claim that the external nonhuman appearance of the rock, tree, or jaguar is a disguise that conceals their human essence. Rather, the external nonhuman appearance of a being is the expression of that being's perspective on its humanity. The rock's appearance expresses a "rock-ish" perspective on humanity, the tree's appearance expresses a "tree-ish" perspective on humanity, and the jaguar's appearance expresses a "jaguar-ish" perspective on humanity. Indeed, it might be said our very own appearance, as the animal *Homo sapiens*, is but one "ape-ish" perspective on humanity amongst others, like that of the chimpanzee and the bonobo. It follow that Viveros de Castro's book is titled *Cannibal Metaphysics* because, for those who believe "every place, every animal, every plant and every natural phenomenon" is human being first and foremost, then all consumption is cannibalistic: we eat other humans whenever we consume anything, be it animal, mineral or vegetable:.

Now, according to Viveros de Castro, the shaman maintains a perspectivism that regards the appearance of a rock, the appearance of a tree, the appearance of a jaguar, and the appearance of a *Homo sapien* as expressions of different perspectives on human nature, just as one might regard the word "cup" in English, the word "tasse" in French, and the word 杯子 (Bēizi) in Chinese as expression of different cultural perspectives on a cup. By way of "submersion" in French or Chinese *culture*, an English speaker can learn to adopt the perspective of a French-speaker on a cup (learning to refer to it with the term"tasse") or that of a Chinese-speaker (learning to refer to it with the term "杯子"). Similarly, the shaman can learn to express human nature through the perspective of a rock, a tree, or a jaguar by "submerging" themself in rock, tree, or jaguar *nature*. Indeed, one could say that the shaman, who *submerses* themself in other natures, is a multi-naturalist in the manner similar to the manner in which an anthropologist, who *submerses* themself in other cultures, as a multi-culturalist.

The key word above, of course, is *submersion*. To learn by submersion is to learn by commuting from sign-object to sign-sign relations by way of ur-rituals. To learn by translation, by contrast, is to learn by commuting from one system of sign-sign relations to another system of sign-sign relations. Learning language by submersion is how we learn our first language. We are born, and thus "thrown", into a culture, and submersed in its linguistic waters and we must either sink or learn to swim in its linguistic waters. We may, and many find that they must, learn a second, third, or fourth language in the same way, by being "thrown" into another culture by choice or by circumstance.

The shaman—who was born, and thus "thrown", into human nature, and who learned human nature accordingly—is a one who throws themself into another nature (rock nature, tree nature, jaguar nature) and learns a second, third, or fourth nature. Now, and this is Viveros de Castro's central point, for the shaman there are no such things as "cultures", there are only natures. Whereas we would say that two different tribes with different languages and social conventions have two different cultures, the shaman would say that they have two different natures. Ay and, what's more, the shaman would seek to learn the other tribes' nature in the same manner that the shaman would seek to learn rock nature, tree nature, or jaguar nature: through submersion.

So, what is the point being made here? Well, the point isn't so much to argue in favor of adopting a multi-naturalism and cannibal metaphysics (though some of us were tempted to do so). The point is to argue that anismistic hunter-gatherer societies are not necessarily insular traditionalist societies, that they need not be thought of as "isolated; self-contained; narrow or prejudiced in feelings, ideas, or manners." To the contrary, *some* animistic hunter-gatherer societies are cosmopolitan perspectivist societies insofar as (i) their animism regards all phenomena around them as having societies of their own and of a different nature and (ii) individuals are encouraged to engage in shamanistic practices and immerse themselves in the other natures. Again, note that only *some* animistic hunter-gatherer societies are cosmopolitan perspectivist societies rather than insular traditionalists: to say "some" is neither to say "all" nor "most" nor "many".

More profoundly still, we wondered whether there is always a tension between cosmopolitan perspectivism and insular traditionalism *within* any and every animistic hunter-gatherer society, and we wondered about the figure of the shaman as a figure who rebels against traditions and seeks to transform them, inviting madness and suffering upon themselves in the process. And it was here that we turned to Nietzsche's *The Dawn* and pulled up several aphorisms on the shaman as madman, rebel, and creator of new conventions:

> Aphorism 9: "Concept of the morality of custom"
> - "[M]orality is nothing other [...] than obedience to customs of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the traditional way of behaving and evaluating."
> - "What is tradition? A higher authority which we obey, not because it commands what is useful to us, but because it commands";
> - "[W]hoever wanted to elevate himself above [tradition and custom] had to become a lawgiver and medicine man and a kind of demi-god: that is to say, he had to make [new] customs - a dreadful, mortally dangerous thing!"

> Aphorism 14: "Significance of madness in the history of morality"
> - "[E]verywhere it was madness which prepared the way for the new idea, which broke the spell of a venerated usage and superstition"
> - "[T]he recipes for becoming a medicine-man among the Indians, a saint among the Christians of the Middle Ages, an angekok among Greenlanders, a pajee among Brazilians are essentially the same: senseless fasting, perpetual sexual abstinence, going into the desert [...] thinking of nothing at all except that which might bring on an ecstasy or mental disorder"

> Aphorism 18: "The morality of voluntary suffering"
> - "[A]ll those spiritual leaders of the peoples who were able to stir something into motion within the inert but fertile mud of their customs have, in addition to madness, also had the need of voluntary torture if they were to inspire belief—and first and foremost, as always, their own belief in themselves"

The aphorisms above brought us to an important problem that we still need to work out for ourselves:

> *How do we go from ur-rituals to convention, and then how do we go from conventions to mythic rituals [mythic rituals being what Nietzsche refers to as "traditions" in his aphorisms]?*

While we still need to work this problem out for ourselves, we did find the outlines of a solution to this problem in Levi Strauss. Levi Strauss teaches us that (i) conventions being game-like, form "a set of rules which in practice allow the playing of any number of matches" but (ii) a mythic ritual [or tradition] is "like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results in a particular type of equilibrium between the [different divisions]." We mused that mythic rituals [or traditions] take hold because replaying them regularly has created [meta-]stable conditions that have enabled different social divisions established by convention to cooperate, plan and carry out complex actions that provide pleasure and sustenance for the prevailing trans-divisional cross-section of their society. Ay, and the shaman-as-rebel, a creator of new conventions but *not* necessarily a creator of new mythic rituals [or traditions], is a figure who rebels against that which, hithertofore, has provided pleasure and sustenance for the prevailing trans-divisional cross-section of their society, and that is because the shaman-as-rebel is one who seeks pleasures and sustenance of a different nature from that of the prevailing trans-divisional cross-section of their society.

Session 8: **Minor Gods, cont'd**
Saturday, October 24, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PDT

Pre-Session Primer

We have distinguished ur-rituals from conventions and from mythic rituals. **Ur-rituals** are the pre-symbolic social rituals that engender "symbolic games" that organize societies in new ways; **conventions** are the "symbolic games" that organize a society up in new ways; and **mythic rituals** are the post-symbolic rituals that reiterate favored instances of a symbolic game, those instances that result in a favorable equilibrium for a prevalent cross section of the different social organs that a symbolic game generates. Ay, but what is a "myth" and what makes a ritual "mythic"?

This week, we shall turn to Mircea Eliade's *Myth and Reality* and Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* for answers. Here, in this primer for the coming week's session, I would like to lead us into the texts by Eliade and Huizinga by developing the distinction between "horizontal" shamanism and "vertical" shamanism that we made last week, when we read Viveiros de Castro's *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Briefly and to the point, I want to propose that the *ur-rituals* of "horizontal" shamanism are practices that presume a "multi-naturalism" and constitute "perspectival" beliefs, on the one hand, and, on the other, I want to propose that the *mythic rituals* of "vertical" shamanism are practices that presume a "super-naturalism" and constitute "traditional" beliefs.
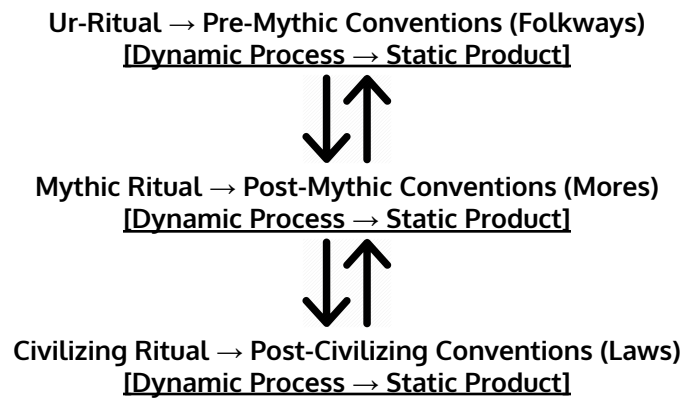
To clarify these two propositions, regard how Eliade defines the characteristics of myth in *Myth and Reality:*

> In general it can be said that myth, as experienced by archaic societies, (1) constitutes the History of the acts of the Supernaturals; (2) that this history is considered to be absolutely true (because it is concerned with realities) and sacred (because it is the work of the Supernaturals); (3) that myth is always related to a 'creation,' it tells how something came into existence, or how a pattern of behavior an institution, a manner of working were established; this is why myths constitute the paradigms for all significant human acts; (4) that by knowing the myth one knows the 'origin' of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will; this is not an external, abstract knowledge but a knowledge that one 'experience' ritually, either by ceremonially recounting the myth or by performing the ritual for which it is the justification; (5) that in one way or another one 'lives' the myth, in the sense that one is seized by the sacred, exalting the power of the events recollected or re-enacted. [...] In short myths reveal that the World, man, and life have a supernatural origin and history, and that this history is significant, precious, and exemplary.

Following from Eliade's definition, I propose that we account for what is 'mythic' about mythic rituals in the following manner: (1) ur-ritual engenders a symbolic game that serves to organize a society up in new ways; (2) the playing of a symbolic game and the symbolic organization of society can, by turns, bring about greater cohesion within a society or it can bring about division; (3) there can emerge a know-how to play a given symbolic game in a way that brings about greater cohesion as opposed to division; (4) it is this know-how to bring about greater cohesion that becomes *narrativized* in and through mythic rituals and is retroactively posited as the supernatural origin of a given symbolic game. First come *horizontal* shamans who invent the ur-rituals that engender new symbolic games, creating both potentials for greater cohesion *and* potentials for division. Then come *vertical* shamans who invent mythic rituals that convey know-how to bring about greater cohesion as opposed to division in and through playing a given symbolic game.

And this brings us to Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*. Before there is mythic ritual there is mythopoiesis: for the vertical shaman *invents* mythic rituals by *playing* a dangerous symbolic game and *discovering* how to bring about greater cohesion as opposed to division Huizinga's writings on mythopoiesis in *Homo Ludens* revolve around the fact that mythic rituals, in spite of their pretensions to a supernatural origin in a time before lived time, are *invented* in lived time through play.

What will be most important for us to consider is how the emergence of mythic ritual transforms conventions. Our discussion this session will revolve around the following process of development.

Ur-Ritual → Pre-Mythic Conventions (Folkways)
[Dynamic Process → Static Product]

⇅

Mythic Ritual → Post-Mythic Conventions (Mores)
[Dynamic Process → Static Product]

⇅

Civilizing Ritual → Post-Civilizing Conventions (Laws)
[Dynamic Process → Static Product]

With pre-mythic conventions or, for short, with folkways there is only the conventional distinction between 'right and rude'; it is only with post-mythic convention or, for short, with mores that there arises the conventional distinction between 'right and wrong'. Or, in other words, ur-rituals generate folkways (conventions that determine "rights and rudenesses"), then mythic rituals transform folkways (conventions that determine "rights and rudenesses") into mores (conventions that determine "rights and wrongs").

This coming session's discussion will prepare us for the session to follow. For, when we read the second essay of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, we will be dealing with **folkways** (conventions that determine "rights and rudenesses"), **mores** (conventions that determine "rights and wrongs"), and, additionally, **laws** (conventions that determine the proper punishments for wrongdoing and the proper rewards for righteousness). It is important, especially during this session, that we distinguish between the horizontal shaman (who establishes the folkways of a society) and the vertical shaman (who establishes the mores of a society) with the lawgiver (who establishes a civilization, a society of laws). The figure of the lawgiver will, no doubt, come up in our discussions, but, for the moment, we are dealing with social formations in which the lawgiver is a nascent presence, if a presence at all. This session's "minor gods" are the supernaturals of vertical shamans and their societies of mores, next session's "major gods" are the supernaturals of lawgivers and their civilizations, their societies of laws.

Post-Session Impression

Our conversation turned on the distinction between rituals as dynamic processes, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, conventions as the static products of rituals. This distinction, which we gleaned from Eliade's *Myth and Reality*, is paramount. As Eliade makes clear in *Myth and Reality*, myth is processual and cannot be divorced from ritual. When writers divorce myth from ritual, like Yuval Harari does in *Sapiens*, myths seem to *contain* knowledge of right and wrong. Eliade, however, stresses that myths do not *contain* knowledge of right and wrong but, rather, they *(re-)produce* knowledge of right and wrong either (i) in and through ritualized recounting the myth or (ii) in and through the performance of the ritual for which [the myth] is the justification. Subsequently, the "mores" of a society are the knowledge-products yielded by mythic ritual. Ay, and what is true for mythic rituals is also true for the ur-rituals that precede them and civilizing rituals that succeed them. In sum, all rituals are dynamic processes that yield conventions that are static products.

During our discussion we noted (i) that ur-rituals are processes that refine pre-conventional social behaviours so as to yield folkways; (ii) that mythic rituals are processes that refine folkways so as to yield mores; and (iii) that civilizing rituals are processes that refine mores so as to yield laws. We also noted, however, that mythic rituals can incorporate ur-rituals so as to ensure that there is supply of folkways that can be refined into mores. Furthermore, civilizing rituals can, subsequently incorporate mythic rituals so as to ensure that there is a supply of mores that can be refined into laws. Going even further, the mythic rituals that are incorporated by civilizing rituals may themselves incorporate ur-rituals and, thus, ensure that there is a supply of folkways that can be refined into mores that can, in turn, be refined into laws. It follows from the above that (i) *ur-rituals have primacy* relative to mythic rituals and civilizing rituals because they yield the folkways that are refined by mythic rituals into mores and by civilizing rituals into laws; (ii) *mythic rituals have centrality* relative to both ur-rituals and civilizing rituals because they incorporate the former and can be incorporated by the later; and (iii) *civilizing*

rituals have comprehension relative to ur-rituals and mythic rituals because they can incorporate both ur-rituals and mythic rituals.

Following Harari, we remarked upon the fact, although ur-rituals yielded folkways that enabled *Homo sapiens* to form larger and more stable *bands* that could include up to 150 individuals, it was mythic rituals that yielded the mores that enabled *Homo sapiens* to form *tribes* that could include several different bands, with each band including up to 150 individuals. In other words, the "rights and rudes" of folkways must yield to the rights and wrongs of mores if different bands are to come together and form a tribe or any stable social body with more than 150 members, and mythic ritual is the process of transforming some folkways and making other folkways must yield to them. Ay, and mythic ritual has never ceased performing this task: wherever and whenever a social body thrives beyond the 150 member threshold, there are mythic rituals that nourish a social body. Indeed, we spoke a great deal about the mythic rituals that we live with today, which nourish the tribalisms that permeate our societies, but more on that to come...

Session 9: **Major Gods**
Saturday, November 7, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

In session 6, we focused on ur-rituals that yield folkways: folkways being conventions that determine what is right and what is rude, and the transformative figure in this regard being the horizontal shaman who appeals to the multi-natural in order to proffer an "alternative" order of things.

In session 8, we focused on mythic rituals that yield mores: mores being conventions that determine what is right and what is wrong, and the transformative figure in this regard being the vertical shaman who appeals to the supernatural in order to proffer a "higher" order of things.

Now, in session 9, we shall focus on civilizing rituals that yield laws: laws being conventions that determine the proper punishments for doing wrong and the proper rewards for doing right, and the transformative figure in this regard being the lawgiver and oathkeeper who appeals not just to the supernatural but, more profoundly, to super-natural justice, to divine law, in order to proffer an "obligatory" order of things. Whereas the supernaturals of the vertical shaman (i.e., minor gods) are revered as role models, the supernaturals of the lawgiver and oathkeeper (i.e., major gods) are revered as rulers.

It is imperative that we understand that, prior to this session, we have dealt with societies that had folkways and mores but that did not necessarily have laws. Or, to put a finer point on the matter, we have heretofore dealt with societies in which there was a sense of "right and rude" and a sense of "right and wrong" but not necessarily a sense of "justice". It is worth quoting here a remarkable passage that we find in this week's selection from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*:

> That inescapable thought, which is now so cheap and apparently natural, and which has had to serve as an explanation of how the sense of justice came about at all on earth, 'the criminal deserves to be punished *because* he could have acted otherwise', is actually an extremely late and refined form of human judgment and inference; whoever thinks it dates back to the beginning is laying his coarse hands on the psychology of primitive man in the wrong way. Throughout most of human history, punishment has *not* been meted out *because* the miscreant was held responsible for his act, therefore it was *not* assumed that the guilty party alone should be punished: – but rather, as parents still punish their children, it was out of anger over some wrong that had been suffered, directed at the perpetrator, – but this anger was held in check and modified by the idea that every injury has its *equivalent* which can be paid in compensation, if only through the *pain* of the person who injures. And where did this primeval, deeply-rooted and perhaps now ineradicable idea gain its power, this idea of an equivalence between injury and pain? I have already let it out: in the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*, which is as old as the very conception of a 'legal subject' and itself refers back to the basic forms of buying, selling, bartering, trade and traffic.

The end of this passage is particularly important to attend to because it points to the socio-ecological-economic conditions that gave rise to law: the prevalence of buying, selling, bartering, trade and traffic.

As Margaret Ehrenberg makes clear in this week's selection from *Women in Prehistory*, it is not the invention of farming in general but, rather, the "secondary products" revolution that leads to the prevalence of buying, selling, bartering, trade and traffic. In other words, what Nietzsche calls "the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor" becomes commonplace only after low intensity horticulture yields to high intensity agriculture supported by the beasts of burden and the ploughing of land.

Ehrenberg goes on to propose that law and patriarchal power spring from the same socio-ecological-economic transformation, referring to the secondary products revolution as the "great male takeover bid". And we might go even further and add that anthropocentrism also emerges here, alongside patriarchy and legality, given that wild animals, plants, and landscapes are diminished in status relative to humans when humans begin to plough wild lands with the assistance of animals that have become their beasts of burden. Indeed, to confront the

secondary products revolution is to confront the socio-economic-ecological origins of what Jacques Derrida termed *phallogocentrism*: the human male capable of swearing an oath becomes the privileged subject in the social construction of meaning and, concomitantly, women, children, nonhuman animals, and plants become marginal subjects.

Yuval Harari, in *Sapiens*, calls the socio-ecological-economic transformation that lead to intensive agriculture "History's Biggest Fraud":

> Scholars once proclaimed that the agricultural revolution was a great leap forward for humanity. They told a tale of progress fuelled by human brain power. Evolution gradually produced ever more intelligent people. Eventually, people were so smart that they were able to decipher nature's secrets, enabling them to tame sheep and cultivate wheat. As soon as this happened, they cheerfully abandoned the gruelling, dangerous, and often spartan life of hunter-gatherers, settling down to enjoy the pleasant, satiated life of farmers.

> That tale is a fantasy. There is no evidence that people became more intelligent with time. Foragers knew the secrets of nature long before the Agricultural Revolution, since their survival depended on an intimate knowledge of the animals they hunted and the plants they gathered. Rather than heralding a new era of easy living, the Agricultural Revolution left farmers with lives generally more difficult and less satisfying than those of foragers. Hunter-gatherers spent their time in more stimulating and varied ways, and were less in danger of starvation and disease. The Agricultural Revolution certainly enlarged the sum total of food at the disposal of humankind, but the extra food did not translate into a better diet or more leisure. Rather, it translated into population explosions and pampered elites. The average farmer worked harder than the average forager, and got a worse diet in return. The Agricultural Revolution was history's biggest fraud.

According to Harari, however, this fraud was not a malicious fraud perpetrated by male elites but, rather, this fraud was a collective miscalculation that male elites profited greatly from and, thusly, male elites have fervently endeavored to legitimize these miscalculations *ex-post-facto*. Harari writes, "Nobody plotted the Agricultural Revolution or sought human dependence on cereal cultivation. A series of trivial decisions aimed mostly at filling a few stomachs and gaining a little security had the cumulative effect of forcing ancient foragers to spend their days carrying water buckets under a scorching sun." Indeed, in light of Harari's arguments, we can regard Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* as the genealogy of ex-post-facto legitimations of this most monumental of human miscalculations and of the many other grand miscalculations that have followed in its wake, miscalculations from which there is no turning back without redoubling dangers and hardships.

Post-Session Impression

Our discussion this week revolved around two topics. First, we discussed the differences amongst the minor gods of mythic ritual, the major gods of traditional civilizing rituals, and the almighty gods of universal civilizing rituals. Second, we discussed the different socio-ecological conditions of possibility for the emergence of these three different gods.

We articulated the differences between the minor, the major, and the almighty as follows:

1. The minor gods of mythic rituals act as *role models:* minor gods exemplify good behavior and bad behavior for a society: where minor gods find pleasure so shall their society, where minor gods find pain so shall their society.
2. The major gods of traditional civilizing rituals act as *whimsical rulers and dispensers of poetic justice:* major gods *find pleasure* in and through contriving and dispensing just rewards to those who do good and just punishments to those who do bad.
3. The almighty gods of universal civilizing rituals act as *deliberate rulers and dispensers of rational justice*: almighty gods *find reason*, as opposed to pleasure, in and through dispensing just rewards to those who do good and just punishments to those who do bad.

Having articulated the differences between the minor, the major, and the almighty, we proceeded to discuss the socio-ecological conditions that led to the emergence of the major from the minor and the almighty from the major. We will not deal with the emergence of the almighty from the major in this Impression, for this matter will be the focus of our next discussion. We shall only deal with our discussion of the emergence of the major from the minor in this Impression.

The socio-ecological condition that facilitated the progression from minor to major was, in our estimation, what Yuval Harari has termed "The Coming of the Future". In *Sapiens,* Harari writes:

> Foragers usually didn't waste much time thinking about next week or next month. Farmers sailed in their imagination years and decades into the future. [...] Foragers discounted the future because they lived from hand to mouth and could only preserve food or accumulate possessions with difficulty. The Agricultural Revolution made the future far more important than it had ever been before. Farmers must always keep the future in mind and must work in its service. The agricultural economy was based on a seasonal cycle of production, comprising long months of cultivation followed by short peak periods of harvest. [...] Concern about the future was rooted not only in seasonal cycles of production, but also in the fundamental uncertainty of agriculture. Since most villages lived by cultivating a very limited variety of domesticated plants and animals, they were at the mercy of droughts, floods and pestilence. [...] Consequently, from the very advent of agriculture, worries about the future became major players in the theatre of the human mind.

The "coming of the future" is the coming of the desire that good behavior that makes us suffer in the now is justly rewarded with pleasure in the future. In other words, with the "coming of the future", It is no longer enough for one to find pleasure in the now by faithfully following in the footsteps of a minor god. It becomes paramount that one can put one's faith in a major god who ensures (i) that suffering endured now will yield pleasure later and (ii) that the pleasure yielded later will be *commensurate* with the suffering endured now. The key desire here is, of course, that suffering now and pleasure later become *commensurate:* from Latin *com* "with, together" + *mensura* "a measuring, a measurement; thing to measure by", and meaning "reducible to a common measure, commensurable".

Civilizing rituals invoke major gods who *commensurate* passing sufferings with coming pleasures and, vice versa, commensurate passing pleasures with coming sufferings, and this means assuming the existence of a *future representative of the past*. Mythic rituals, by contrast, invoke and re-create the *originary* pleasures and pains of minor gods, assuming the existence of an *ever present past*. To borrow a figure from Nietzsche, those who humans adopted agriculture ceased being sea creatures living in the waters of the ever present past, and became terrestrial creatures living on the land of the future representative of the past. As Nietzsche writes in the second essay of the *Genealogy*:

> Now they had to walk on their feet and 'carry themselves', whereas they had been carried by the water up till then: a terrible heaviness bore down on them. They felt they were clumsy at performing the simplest task, they did not have their familiar guide any more for this new, unknown world, those regulating impulses that unconsciously led them to safety – the poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect, that is, to relying on their 'consciousness', that most impoverished and error-prone organ! I do not think there has ever been such a feeling of misery on earth, such a leaden discomfort, – and meanwhile, the old instincts had not suddenly ceased to make their demands! But it was difficult and seldom possible to give in to them: they mainly had to seek new and as it were underground gratifications.

After humans took to civilizing rituals and to life on the land of the future representative of the past, *when, where, and how precisely* did the old instincts, the instincts for mythic ritual and life in the waters of ever present past, find new gratifications?

Session 10: **Almighty Gods**
Saturday, November 21, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

This week, we read Chapter 8 and 9, from David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. These chapters turn on the argument that it is during the Axial Age (800 BC - 600 CE) that we encounter the emergence of complementary ideals of commodity markets and universal world religions. The universal world religions of the Axial Age are the religions of almighty gods that we discussed last week. Recall the distinctions between the major gods and almighty gods that we articulated last session.

- Major gods *find pleasure* in commensurating passing sufferings/pleasures and coming pleasures/sufferings; which is to say, in other words, that traditional civilizing rituals invoke the major god's *sensibility* for balancing the scales.
- Almighty gods, by contrast, *find reason* in commensurating passing sufferings/pleasures and coming pleasures/sufferings: which is to say, in other words, that universal civilizing rituals invoke the almighty god's *rationale* for balancing the scales.

A major god has a sensibility and, thus, has a perspective on the sufferings and pleasures that they commensurate. Thus, an appeal to a major god is an appeal to a supernatural being with a higher sensibility. Almighty gods, by contrast, are "pure, will-less, painless, timeless, subjects of knowledge". Almighty gods have objective knowledge, as opposed to perspectival knowledge, of the sufferings and pleasures that they commensurate. An appeal to an almighty god is, thus, an appeal to a supernatural being with objective knowledge. In the selections of the third essay of the *Genealogy of Morality* that we are reading this week, Nietzsche is suspicious of almighty gods and, more importantly, those who appeal to them.

> [L]et us be more wary of the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale which has set up a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless, subject of knowledge', let us be wary of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge as such': – here we are asked to think an eye which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded. There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'. But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could: well? would that not mean to *castrate* the intellect? . . .

According to Nietzsche, in seeking the socio-ecological that facilitated the progression from major gods to almighty gods, we are seeking the socio-ecological conditions that drove human beings to castrate the intellect. Yuval Harari in the two chapters of *Sapiens* that we are reading this week (Chapters 9-11) argues that we shall find what we seek only if we recognize that there are two universalizing orders that preceded the universalizing orders of almighty gods.

> The first millennium BC witnessed the appearance of three potentially universal orders, whose devotees could for the first time imagine the entire world and the entire human race as a single unit governed by a single set of laws. Everyone was 'us', at least potentially. There was no longer 'them'. The first universal order to appear was economic: the monetary order. The second universal order was political: the imperial order. The third universal order was religious: the order of universal religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

Graeber echoes Harari on this point but stresses that the first universal order to emerge was not just a monetary order but, more precisely, it was a monetary order that was based upon precious metals as opposed to credit arrangements. The first monetary orders, which were based on credit arrangements, were particular. The first universal monetary orders emerged when, in times of rampant warfare, precious metals became currency. Graeber writes:

Gold and silver coins are distinguished from credit arrangements by one spectacular feature: they can be stolen. A debt is, by definition, a record, as well as a relation of trust. Someone accepting gold or silver in exchange for merchandise, on the other hand, need trust nothing more than the accuracy of the scales, the quality of the metal, and the likelihood that someone else will be willing to accept it. In a world where war and the threat of violence are everywhere—and this appears to have been an equally accurate description of Warring States China, Iron Age Greece, and pre-Mauryan India—there are obvious advantages to making one's transactions simple. [...] For much of human history, then, an ingot of gold of silver, stamped or not, has served the same role as the contemporary drug dealer's suitcase full of unmarked bills: *an object without a history, valuable because one knows it will be accepted in exchange for other goods just about anywhere, no questions asked.* As a result, while credit systems tend to dominate in periods of relative social peace, or across networks of trust (whether created by states or, in most periods, transnational institutions like merchant guilds or communities of faith), in periods characterized by widespread war and plunder, they tend to be replaced by precious metal.

Graeber's description of hard currency echoes Nietzsche's link between objective knowledge (the "object without a history, valuable because one knows it will be accepted [...] just about anywhere") and the castration of the intellect ("no questions asked"). Indeed, Graeber proposes that the socio-ecological "sickness" that drove human beings to castrate the intellect was above all else the trauma of widespread warfare and plunder, and Graeber advances that the sickness progresses as follows.

- In a time of widespread war and plunder, when networks of trust and associated credit arrangements breakdown, the desire arises to simplify and rationalize transactions, giving rise to the universal order of coin.
- Next, there comes Harari's second universal order, the emergence of expansive empires that put an end to widespread warfare by establishing immense trade networks. Although expansive empires bring relative peace, the development and maintenance of the machinery of expansive empire only redoubles the desire to simplify and rationalize transactions, and there emerges the imperial "military-coinage" complex.
- Next, there comes the decline of an expansive empire and their military-coinage complexes, which does not diminish the desire to simplify and rationalize any further but, rather to the contrary, redoubles the desire to simplify and rationalize once again because with their decline comes the potential for widespread warfare and plunder to return
- This second redoubling of the desire to simplify and rationalize, the redoubling that attends the decline of empires, yields almighty gods. Believing in an almighty god serves to ward off the widespread warfare and plunder that would otherwise attend the decline of an empire by ensuring an empire life after death. The earthly empire may fall but the empire in the heavens persists, and peace on earth can survive the death of the earthly empire if we on earth are faithful to the simple and rational laws laid down by the ruler of the empire in the heavens.

According to Graeber, humans castrated the intellect in three blows in response to the sickness of widespread warfare and plunder: first by believing in the universal order of coin, second by believing in the universal order empire, and third by believing in the universal order of almighty gods. The third and final blow to the intellect, the belief in the universal order of almighty gods is the terminal symptom of the sickness of widespread warfare and plunder, the fullest expression of the desire for simplification and rationalization that this sickness yields.

Post-Session Impression

Our discussion revolved around on Nietzsche's investigations of ascetic ideals, on the one hand, and David Graeber's observations regarding the relationship between the prevalence of coined money and the emergence of materialist and idealist philosophies.

Before recapitulating the themes of this discussion, however, I would like to situate the ascetic priest as a ritual figure relative to other ritual figures in our genealogy.

- First, when dealing with the emergence of nomadic forager societies, we discussed **horizontal shamans** who would commune with "spirits" or "demons" in and through ur-rituals, and who act as vectors for the introduction of alternative values into a social body.
- Second, when dealing with the emergence of semi-sedentary horticultural-forager societies, we discussed **vertical shamans** who would draw lessons from the lives of "minor gods" in and through mythic rituals. Again, minor gods are role models: minor gods exemplify good behavior and bad behavior for a society: where minor gods find pleasure so shall their society, where minor gods find pain so shall their society.
- Third, when dealing with the emergence of sedentary agrarian societies, we discussed **oracular priests** who would intuit the will of "major gods" in and through traditional civilizing rituals. Again, major gods are whimsical rulers and dispensers of poetic justice: major gods find pleasure in and through contriving and dispensing just rewards to those who do good and just punishments to those who do bad.
- Fourth, and most recently, when dealing with the emergence of coinage and empire, we discussed **ascetic priests** who would understand the will of an "almighty god" in and through universal civilizing rituals. Again, almighty gods are reasoning rulers and dispensers of rational justice: almighty gods find reason, as opposed to pleasure, in and through dispensing just rewards to those who do good and just punishments to those who do bad.

The important thing to note is that, as we have progressed in our genealogy, the earlier figures have not been replaced, outmoded, and left behind with the emergence of the latter figures. To the contrary, the latter figures have only emerged to exist in addition to the former figures. With the emergence of coinage and empire, horizontal shamans, vertical shamans, oracular priests, and ascetic priests co-exist alongside one another, cooperating sometimes and conflicting at other times. Indeed, these four different ritual figures are often superposed and combined into one. Consider, for instance, the Christian ascetic priest who is called upon to perform the rite of exorcism, a rite which involves communing with spirits, drawing lessons from the lives of the saints, intuiting the wills of the "major demons" or "princes of hell" (Lucifer, Mammon, Asmodeus, Leviathan, Beelzebub, Satan, and Belphegor), and understanding the will of God the Almighty.

Now, with these figures in mind, let us summarize our discussion of Nietzsche's and Graeber's take on ascetic idealism. Starting with the latter writer, Graeber, we spent a good deal of time discussing his paradoxical notion that it is the increasing importance of matter, as opposed to spirit, that is the defining feature of the ascetic ideals. Or, in other words, ascetic ideals were formed in response to base materialisms and, thus, one cannot understand the form(ation) of ascetic ideals if one doesn't understand the base materialisms that they respond to. It is worth quoting Graeber at length on this point:

> [...] Axial Age spirituality, then, is built on a bedrock of materialism. This is its secret; one might almost say, the thing that has become invisible to us. But if one looks at the very beginnings of philosophical inquiry in Greece and India—the point when there was as yet no difference between what we'd now call "philosophy" and what we'd now call "science"—this is exactly what one finds.

> [...] A coin was a piece of metal, but by giving it a particular shape, stamped with words and images, the civic community agreed to make it something more. But this power was not unlimited. Bronze coins could not be used forever; if one debased the coinage, inflation would eventually set in. It was as if there was a tension there, between the will of the community and the physical nature of the object itself.

> [...] The war between Spirit and Flesh, then, between the noble Idea and ugly Reality, the rational intellect versus stubborn corporeal drives and desires that resist it, even the idea that peace and community are not things that emerge spontaneously but that need to be stamped onto our baser material natures like a divine insignia stamped into base metal—all those ideas that came to haunt the religious and philosophical traditions of the Axial Age [...] can already be seen as inscribed in the nature of this new form of money.

> [...] It would be foolish to argue that all Axial Age philosophy was simply a meditation on the nature of coinage, but [it] is a critical starting place.

It could be proposed that the ascetic priest is a figure who pursues a "final solution" to the ethico-philosophical problems of the Axial Age wherein Spirit, the noble idea, and the rational intellect would triumph over and

transcend the Flesh, ugly Reality, and stubborn corporeal drives. The "final solution" pursued by an ascetic priest is their ascetic ideal.

Nietzsche's investigation of ascetic ideals casts suspicion on the proposal above. It may be the case that the ascetic priest claims to pursue the triumph and transcendence of Spirit over Flesh, but Nietzsche tells us that these are false claims. Nietzsche would agree that the ascetic priest is reacting against a base materialism but Nietzsche argues that the idealism of the ascetic priest is, in practice, a more delicate and exquisite materialism. To put it differently, the ascetic priest doesn't privilege the rational intellect over stubborn corporeal drives but, rather, the ascetic priest privileges more delicate and exquisite corporeal drives (drives that "love to play") over more base corporeal drives (drives that "play to win"). During the Axial Age, the delicate and exquisite corporeal drives privileged by the ascetic priest were recast as ascetic ideals by the ascetic priest because these drives were simply too delicate and too exquisite to withstand the onslaught of base materialism that attended the rise of coinage and empire. In other words, the promotion of ascetic ideals was a drastic measure, a scorched-earth policy, that was promoted to preserve delicate and exquisite sensibilities in the face of the onslaught of base sensibilities that attended the spread of coinage and empire.

Indeed, returning to the example of the Christian rite of exorcism, one could say that the rite of exorcism as practiced by the ascetic priest is a universal civilizing ritual that preserves within it the delicate and exquisite sensibilities that characterized the ur-rituals of horizontal shamans, the mythic rituals of vertical shamans, and the traditional civilizing rituals of oracular priests. These more delicate and exquisite sensibilities would have been overrun by base transactional sensibilities were it not for the rite of exorcism.

Ay, but here comes Nietzsche's point, the victory achieved by the ascetic priest through drastic measures and scorched earth tactics might be a Pyrrhic victory. The ascetic priest maintains delicate and exquisite sensibilities over and against base sensibilities, yes, but at what cost?

Session 11: **Almighty Gods, con't**
Saturday, December 3, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

Last session we discussed how different materialisms and idealisms emerged as theses and antitheses during the Axial Age. This session, we proceed to the Middle Ages and discover that different syntheses of idealism and materialism emerged in different parts of the world following the demise of the great Axial Age empires.

Whereas the Axial Age was defined by ascetic idealisms and base materialisms that aggravated one another, the Middle Ages are defined by idealisms and materialisms that mollified one another. Last session we outline how it was that, during the Axial Age, thanks to the scorched earth policies asceticism, delicate and exquisite sensibilities were able to survive the onslaught of base sensibilities that attended the rise and dominance of economies of coin and empire. With the demise of the Axial Age empires and the retreat of coin, base sensibilities became tempered, which meant that delicate and exquisite sensibilities could survive alongside base sensibilities without having to deploy the drastic measures of asceticism. Thus, during the Middle Ages, asceticism also became tempered.

The moderating character of the Middle Ages has been obscured by modern history because modernity has put Western Europe at the center of world history. During the Middle Ages, however, Western Europe was on the margins of world history. This point is stressed the texts that we are reading this week: Chapter 10 ("The Middle Ages") from David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* and Chapter 1 ("Studying a System in Formation") and Chapter 11 ("Restructuring the Thirteenth Century World System") from Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony*. Graeber puts the matter quite succinctly, "[T]he Middle Ages proper are best seen as having begun not in Europe but in India and China, between 400 and 600 AD, and then sweeping across much of the western half of Eurasia with the advent of Islam. They only really reached Europe four hundred years later."

More profoundly still, the moderating character of the Middle Ages is obscured because Western Europe's ascetic ideal (the Christian ideal) was, of all the ascetic ideals that emerged during the Axial Age, the ideal least amenable to accommodating aspects of materialism. Indeed, this is one of the most striking insights to be found in Graeber's survey of the Middle Ages: whereas Hinduism in India, Buddhism in China, and Islam in the Middle East developed relatively robust syntheses of idealism and materialism, Christianity in Europe developed a remarkably fragile synthesis of idealism and materialism. The Western European synthesis of idealism and materialism advantaged idealism and denigrated materialism to such a degree that it is unsurprising that materialism, in the new guise of capitalism, re-emerged in Western Europe as an antithesis to idealism.

Ay, but let us not get ahead of ourselves by grappling with rise capitalism and the beginnings of the Modern Age in Western Europe. Let us, instead, consider the workings of the idealist-materialist syntheses that emerged during the Middle Ages. Again, Graeber puts the matter succinctly:

> The Middle Ages were marked by a general move toward abstraction: real gold and silver ended up largely in churches, monasteries, and temples, money became virtual again, and at the same time, the tendency everywhere was to set up overarching moral institutions meant to regulate the process and, in particular, to establish certain protections for debtors.

In other words, during the Middle Ages, ascetic priests who condemned the pursuit of base material wealth became the primary possessors of base material wealth and, concomitantly, a sure way to gain possession of base material wealth was to, hypocritically, become an ascetic priest: ascetic idealist in the theory, base materialist in the practice. And this brings us to the question that will be our focus this coming session. — *Was hypocrisy the functional feature of idealist-materialist syntheses everywhere during the Middle Ages?*

Post-Session Impression

The primer to this session posed the following question, "Was hypocrisy the functional feature of idealist-materialist syntheses everywhere during the Middle Ages?" The answer that we articulated during our discussion this week was, "Not quite."

We recalled that the base materialisms of coin and empire emerged first and that ascetic idealisms emerged afterwards as a *reaction* against the prevalence of base materialisms. What's more, we noted that ascetic idealisms did not overcome the base materialisms of coin and empire. To the contrary, the base materialisms of coin and empire proved unsustainable: they ran out of steam of their own accord and they left organizational voids behind them that had to be filled. Ascetic idealisms, being fundamentally reactive/reactionary, did not proactively step into fill the organizational voids left behind by the base materialisms of coin and empire. Instead, ascetic idealisms filled the organizational voids left behind by base materialisms by perpetually (re-)generating base materialisms to react against and overcome.

The perverse pattern of development described above, wherein the reactive must (re-)generate what it reacts against in order to perpetuate itself, is the critical starting place for the philosophies of the Middle Ages. As Graeber writes in *Debt*:

> If there is an essence to Medieval thought, it lies not in blind obedience to authority, but rather in a dogged insistence that the values that govern our ordinary daily affairs—particularly those of the court and marketplace—are confused, mistaken, illusory, or perverse. [...] Consider for example the great conundrum, pondered by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish philosophers alike: What does it mean to simultaneously say that we can only know God through our faculties of Reason, but that Reason itself partakes of God? Chinese philosophers were struggling with similar conundrums when they asked, "Do we read the classics or do the classics read us?" Almost all the great intellectual debates of the age turned on this question in one way or another. Is the world created by our minds, or our minds by the world? [...] The fact that Medieval money took such abstract, virtual forms—checks, tallies, paper money—meant that questions like these ("What does it mean to say that money is a symbol?") cut to the core of the philosophical issues of the day.

The last point is key: there was little base matter (gold and silver) in actual circulation during the Middle Ages. Instead, *symbols* of base matter were in wide circulation and, in characteristic Medieval fashion, this fact begged the question, "Do circulating symbols of base matter derive their value from the existence of base matter or, alternatively, does base matter derive its value from the circulation of symbols of base matter?" Ascetic idealisms all argued the latter, that base matter derived its value from the circulation of symbols and, what's more, most ascetic idealisms during the Middle Ages went on to argue that the circulation of symbols was, in turn, set into motion by an ideal being (God in Christianity and Islam, Brahman in Hinduism) that transcended both the symbolic and the material. The ascetic idealism of Chinese Buddhism is a notable exception, holding that an ideal nothingness setting the circulation of symbols into motion.

Whether they believed in an ideal being or an ideal nothingness, the ascetic priests of the Middle Ages were figures who knew how to properly interpret symbols in accord with an ascetic ideal. By contrast, the ascetic priests of the Axial Age who were figures who knew how to live life properly in accord with an ascetic ideal. To call ascetic priests hypocrites for living gilded lives is to judge ascetic priests according to Axial Age values. The values of the Middle Ages considered interpreting symbols according to an ideal to be as important as, if not more important than, living life according to an ideal.

Session 12: **Biopower and Capitalism**
Saturday, January 2, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

Toward the end of the Chapter 12, On "the Age of the Great Capitalist Empires", from *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, David Graeber, citing the work Immanuel Wallerstein, writes:

> [T]he French Revolution introduced several profoundly new ideas in politics—ideas which, fifty years before the revolution, the vast majority of educated Europeans would have written off as crazy, but which, fifty years afterward, just about anyone felt they had to at least pretend they thought were true. The first is that social change is inevitable and desirable: that the natural direction of history is for civilization to gradually improve. The second is that the appropriate agent to manage such change is the government. The third is that the government gains its legitimacy from an entity called "the people."

Our task during this session is to understand how it was that these three ideas came to prevalence so as to characterize the Modern Age: (i) the idea of social progress, (ii) the idea that government is a guarantor of social progress, and (iii) the idea that government serves "the people". Graeber, as is his wont, makes the argument that we ought to consider the form of money that preceded the emergence of these ideas. That is to say, in other words, that we ought to consider the monetization of government debts, the fact that the currencies put into circulation by governments during the Modern Age were symbols of interest bearing debts *owed by* governments and denominated in bullion. It is worth quoting Graeber at length on this matter:

> The national debt is, as politicians have complained practically since these things first appeared, money borrowed from future generations. Still, the effects have always been strangely double-edged. On the one hand, deficit financing is a way of putting even more military power in the hands of princes, generals, and politicians; on the other, it suggests that government owes something to those it governs. Insofar as our money is ultimately an extension of the public debt, then whenever we buy a newspaper or a cup of coffee, or even place a bet on a horse, we are trading in promises, representations of something that the government will give us at some time in the future, even if we don't know exactly what it is.

> [...] It's easy to see how the very idea of a national debt—a promise of continual future improvement (at the very least, five percent annual improvement) made by government to people—might itself have played a role in inspiring [the idea that a government that serves the people is the guarantor of progress].

> [...The problem is that] the national debt is, first, born of war; second, it is not owed to all the people equally, but above all to capitalists—and in France at [the time of the Revolution], "capitalist" meant, specifically, "those who held pieces of the national debt."

Graeber's argument is profound but it lacks a rigorous genealogy of the notions of "government" and "the people" that emerged during the Modern Age. To supplement Graeber's text, we will read Michel Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* lectures (1975-76) and *Security, Territory, Population* lectures (1977-78), texts that chart the development of (i) the notion that "peoples" are "populations" and (ii) the notion that governments are administrators of "populations". The latter text (*Security, Territory, Population*) deals with developments that took between the sixteenth and eighteenth century; the former text, (*Society Must Be Defended*) deals with developments from the eighteenth century on through the French Revolution and up until World War II.

In and through Foucault's genealogy of Modern notions of "government" and "the people", we shall also trace the development of a new ritual figure: the *public intellectual* who *understands* the will of *"the people"* and establishes conventions of "*social justice*"in and through *secular civilizing rituals*. Below is a synoptic grid that situates the ritual figure of the public intellectual in the context of our broader genealogy.

Synoptic Grid of Conventional Social Formations

Formative Social Rituals (Dividual Processes)	Formative Social Roles (In-dividual Personas)	Social Conventions Formed (Trans-dividual Forms)	Narratives of Social Formation (Trans-dividual Functions)	Age of Stratification
Ur-Rituals: animating rituals (Prototyping Social Forms)	Horizontal Shamans (Bricoleurs of Social Forms)	Folkways: conventions of "right and rude" (Prototypes)	*Communing* with other/preternatural beings: kindred spirits. (Enabling Cohesion [in Opposition to Alienation])	The Upper Paleolithic (~50,000 BCE - Present)
Mythic Rituals: moralizing rituals (Archetyping Social Forms)	Vertical Shamans (Artisans of Social Forms)	Mores: conventions of "right and wrong" (Archetypes)	*Emulating* higher/supernatural beings: minor gods (Enabling Ranking [in Opposition to Leveling])	The Neolithic (~10,000 BCE - Present)
Civilizing Rituals: rectifying rituals (Stereotyping Social Forms)	Oracular Priests (Sensible Technicians of Social Forms)	Teloi: conventions of "poetic justice" (Sensible Stereotypes)	*Intuiting* the will of higher/supernatural beings that are beyond emulation: major gods (Enabling the Rule of High Ranking Sensibilities [in Opposition to Low Ranking Sensibilities])	The Chalcolithic (~5,000 BCE - Present)
	Ascetic Priests (Rational Technicians of Social Forms)	Pure Reasons: conventions of "absolute justice" (Rational Stereotypes)	*Understanding* the will of the highest/supreme being that is beyond emulation and intuition: almighty god. Or, alternatively, understanding the non-will of the supreme void that is beyond emulation and intuition. The narrative of the Axial Age Ascetic Priest turns on the transcendence of the forms of understanding. The narrative of the Medieval Ascetic Priest assumes the Axial narrative of transcendence but it adds a twist and (re-)turns on the interpretation of symbols that relate subjective/immanent forms of understanding to objective/transcendent forms of understanding (Enabling the Rule of Rationalized Sensibilities [in Opposition to Irrational Sensibilities])	The Axial Age (~1,000 BCE - Present) The Middle Ages (~500 CE - Present)
	Public Intellectuals *(Practical Technicians of Social Forms)*	**Practical Reasons: conventions of "social justice"** *(Practical Stereotypes)*	*Understanding* **the wants and needs of a natural population of humanized/subjectivized beings: a "people".** **The narrative of the Modern Public Intellectual (**_advocate_ **for the people and** _prosecutor_ **of the people's enemies) turns on interpreting (dis-)information for the public, humanizing/subjectivizing some segments of a population and dehumanizing/objectifying others.** **The narrative of the Postmodern Public Intellectual (**_expert witness_ **for the people) turns on producing and framing (dis-)information for the public but letting the public interpret the (dis-)information for itself, letting the public decide for itself which of segments of the population are to be humanized/subjectivised and which are to be dehumanized/objectified: "We report, you decide."** *(Enabling the Rule of Instrumentalized Sensibilities [in Opposition to Superfluous Sensibilities])*	**The Modern Age (~1,450 CE - Present)** **The Postmodern Age (~1,950 CE - Present)**

Post-Session Impression

Our discussion began by investigating two two important characteristics of Modernity:

1. The emergence of a new kind of state that differed from previous kinds by assuming the role of governor and guarantor of the reproduction of the everyday life of a population;
2. The emergence of the public intellectual as a figure who appeals to and holds the State accountable for governing and securing the reproduction of everyday life or, in other words, a figure who claims to know how the state ought to govern and what the state ought to guarantee.

We clearly knew *when* and *where* these defining characteristics of Modernity found their footing: in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries. What we wanted to find out was *why* these characteristics emerged, *how* they emerged, and to *what* problems prompted their emergence. We wanted to find out the "why," "how," and "what," in order to better understand what is distinctive about "modern" society and what is (relatively) "continuous" with earlier forms of society—thereby allowing us to understand which prevailing social conditions are recent and which are longstanding. Put negatively, it is about avoiding the opposing traps of projecting modern developments into the past (e.g. Hobbes' individualist "state of nature" and Smith's "barter economy") and attributing "ancient" or "primitive" social structures to modernity (e.g. acknowledging cognitive sophistication of great apes, acknowledging cultural complexity of hunter-gatherer societies, acknowledging "proto-modern" features of Axial Age, etc.)

We found that the Foucault texts were excellent with regard to answering "how" but lacking when it came to "why" and "in response to what problems"? Foucault deftly, and with an eye for detail, described how a notion of the population emerged and developed between the 16th and 19th centuries and how a new historiography emerged during the eighteenth century that served to hold the State responsible for governing and securing the reproduction of everyday life. But, again, Foucault doesn't bother to look into what prompted this development and why, or, alternatively, Foucault takes it for granted that we already know what prompted this development and why. We, however, are taking nothing for granted and, as a result, we were interested in looking into what took place during what is conventionally called the early modern period: between 1350 and 1650 during the periods of European history conventionally known as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation.

You will recall from Session 11, that the Middle Ages were defined by religious authorities that symbolically mediated conflicts between materialist and idealist valuations. Relative to the religious authorities that emerged elsewhere during the Middle Ages (i.e., in India, China, and the Middle East), those that emerged in Western Europe symbolically mediated such conflicts in such a way that strongly favored idealist valuations over and against materialist valuations and, what's more, Western Europe's religious authorities mediated such conflicts rather poorly. Of all the Axial Age religions, Christianity was the most hostile to all that was earthly and material and, for that very reason, merchant classes struggled to find a place for themselves in Western Europe. Both Graeber's *Debt* and Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony* described the merchant classes that were accepted by and thrived under the Medieval religious authorities of Buddhism in China, of Brahmanic Hinduism in India, and, most remarkably, of Islam in the Middle East. Ay, and Graeber described in great detail the ways in which the merchant classes of Western Europe were viewed with suspicion and had to twist and torture Christian doctrines in remarkable ways in order to justify any sort of profit seeking enterprise.

The events of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter Reformation exposed and exploded the weaknesses of Western Europe's religious authorities and their inadequate attempts to mediate between idealist and materialist valuations. What was Renaissance Humanism if not the merchant classes' reaction against Christianity's suppression of materialism? Is it any wonder that the Renaissance began in Italy where the merchant classes first found power and prosperity in Western Europe? What was the Reformation if not a reaction against the Humanism and materialism that had taken hold in Italy and that had "infiltrated" and "perverted" the Papacy in Rome and the clergy more generally? What was the Counter-Reformation and Catholic Revival if not an attempt to counteract Humanism and materialism and reaffirm Christian doctrines so as to quiet the Protestant reformers?

On the one hand, the Reformation and the Counter Reformation put the merchant classes between a rock and a hard place, insofar as both the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation/Catholic-Revival reaffirmed the anti-materialist tendencies of Christianity (if only in theory[2]). That being said, on the other hand, the Wars of Religion in Europe that pit Catholic rulers against Protestant rulers wound up strengthening the merchant classes on both sides insofar as Catholic and Protestant rulers both needed strong merchant classes on their side to finance their armies. Indeed, in the end, the merchant classes came out of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation stronger than ever thanks to their financing of the Wars of Religion. Graeber is worth citing here, for he writes in detail about the new credit arrangements, the so-called "sovereign bonds", in and through which the "Warring States" of Early Modern Western Europe wound up becoming indebted to and, thus, "owned" by the merchant classes during the Wars of Religion. What's more, unlike the Warring States of China during the early Axial Age which were unified by the Qin empire, the Warring States of Europe during the early Modern Age were never unified under a single overarching empire too powerful to be held to account by its creditors. Instead, a "balance of power" amongst sovereign states of Western Europe was established and enshrined in a system of negotiable treaties, and this system enabled holders of sovereign debts to leverage states against one another to ensure that states would honor their debts. Thus, the merchant classes of Western Europe differentiated themselves from the merchant classes that were characteristic of the Middle Ages elsewhere and became something else, something new: the Modern capitalist bourgeoisie, owners of sovereign debt and manipulators of the "balance of power" amongst sovereign states.

In order to be able to service the interest on the debts that they owed to this emerging capitalist class, the rulers of sovereign states in Western Europe began to "interfere" in the reproduction of the everyday life of the populations that they taxed. Rulers everywhere in Western Europe wanted to know how to make sure that their subjects and territories were profitable enough to provide the tax base needed to service interest bearing loans, and the first public intellectuals that emerged were figures who claimed to know how (and why) states ought to govern and guarantee the reproduction of populations. But as rulers became more and more involved in the everyday lives of their populations, populations began to demand more and more of their rulers and to hold their rulers responsible for securing their livelihoods. The figure of the public intellectual evolved in line with this shift: the public intellectual as "courtier" and "advisor to the ruler with regard to the needs of a nation/people" would give way to the public intellectual as "advocate for a nation/people". Through these developments, the "nation-state" was born.

The Modern nation-state is commanded by two different "national interests". On the one hand, the nation-state has to satisfy its creditors and service its debts to the capitalist bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the nation-state has to serve as guarantor and governor of the livelihood of its people. The former national interest precedes the latter, for it is the nation-state that needs a people in order to service its debts and not the reverse. Again and again, the people of a nation must be made and remade by government intervention and they must be made and remade to desire a nation-state to serve as governor and guarantor of their livelihoods. Graeber stresses (i) that palpable communities had ways of securing their own livelihoods and governing themselves prior to the establishment of nation-states and (ii) that indebted sovereigns and their creditors fabricated nations as imagined, impalpable communities in order to justify government intervention in the everyday affairs of palpable communities.

There are further nuances to be added here. In order to satisfy the primary national interest—that is, to service the national debt—states cannot guarantee the livelihoods of all of their subject populations but, rather, only the livelihoods of a sufficient subpopulation of their subject populations. To aid states in selecting sufficient sub-populations, public intellectuals construct and promote racist, sexist, ableist, and meritocratic theories that legitimize securing the lives and livelihoods of these sub-populations while leaving those sub-populations exposed to death. It follows that states that fabricate nations as imagined communities also, concomitantly, fabricate pronounced racial differences, pronounced sexual differences, pronounced differences between the able bodied and the disabled, and/or pronounced differences between those with and without merit. Indeed, this is the point that Foucault is obviously making when he writes about state racism in *Society Must Be Defended* but Foucault is also making this point in a less obvious manner in *Security, Territory, Population* when

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[2] Protestantism was anti-materialist in theory but pro-materialist in practice insofar as the "purging" of materialism from the religious sphere left the material sphere open for the pure transactionalism of capitalism. This is why Protestantism was popular amongst the merchants of Northern Europe who were less prosperous but more industrious relative to their Italians counterparts and who, thus, resented having to pay lavish indulgences to religious authorities.

he proposes that the "human sciences" which emerged during this Modern Age should be understood "on the basis of the emergence of population as the correlate of power and the object of knowledge."

With this we have a large part of the story of the emergence of the nation-state and Modernity in Europe, yes, but it is important to understand that this is only part of the story. More precisely, it is important to note that the transformation of the Medieval merchant classes of Western Europe into the Modern capitalist bourgeoisie was not a centripetal event that centered global developments in Western Europe. To the contrary, the emergence of the Modern capitalist bourgeoisie was a centrifugal event that involved Western Europe in developments around the globe. Thus, during our next session, we will need to consider Western Europe in relation to other world regions during the period from the Italian Renaissance through the Second World War.

Session 13: **Biopower and Capitalism, cont'd**
Saturday, January 23, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

During our last session, we noted that modern nation states servicing their debts could not guarantee the livelihoods of all of their subject populations but, rather, only the livelihoods of a sufficient subpopulation of their subject populations. We also noted that public intellectuals are called upon to construct and promote racist, sexist, ableist, and meritocratic theories that legitimize policies that guarantee the lives and livelihoods of some sub-populations while leaving other sub-populations exposed to death. This session is about those "other" sub-populations that the nation-states would expose to death: the"inferior" races (e.g., the "non-white" races), the "inferior" sex (i.e., women), those who are disabled (mentally and/or physically), and those who have been demerited (e.g., those whose lives and livelihoods are criminalized: drug dealers, drug addicts, sex workers, the homeless, undocumented persons, etc.). Following Foucault, we may use the term "biopower" and "biopolitics" to refer to the power to and the politics of guaranteeing the lives and livelihoods of privileged populations. Following Achille Mbembe's essay on *Necropolitics*, we may use the term "necropower" and "necropolitical" to refer to the power to and the politics of exposing othered populations to death.

To get a clear picture of how "necropower" operates apart from biopower, is to understand how the sovereign states of Western Europe interacted with the outside world during the period from the Italian Renaissance through the Second World War. Before the sovereign states of Western Europe turned inwards and began internal nation building in earnest, these sovereign states had turned outwards and sought to conquer and exploit othered populations. The Age of Discovery (which runs from the beginning of the 15th century until the middle of the 17th century) coincided with the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation was marked by the increased adoption of settler colonialism as a state policy in Europe. What's more, the same merchant classes who financed the Renaissance and the Wars of Religion were also the financiers of Europe's explorers. At this early stage however, necropower was not directly exercised in colonialism by the state itself, it was exercised by the self-managed colonial expeditions of merchant-adventurers that were authorized and taxed by sovereign states and underwritten by joint stock companies and merchant banks in Europe. Here one should recall the passages from Graeber's *Debt* that described operations of the indebted conquistadors who conquered and exploited the Aztecs. In particular, one might recall that the conquistadors were not a regular military force but what Mbembe terms a "war machine". That being said, however, the exercise of necropower became more and more a function of the state as the state became more and more biopolitical over the course of the 17th, 18th centuries, and 19th century.

The chapter on "Race and Bureaucracy" from Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* charts the ways in which the exercise of necropower (i.e., the exercise of the power to expose othered populations to death) became increasingly a function of state bureaucracies as states became increasingly biopolitical (i.e., as states became increasingly involved in guaranteeing the lives and livelihoods of privileged populations). At first, the development of biopowers internal to the state during the early 19th century was intended to supplant the state's reliance on necropowers external to the state. Eventually, however, it became clear that governing and guaranteeing everyday life within their nations, could not, in and of itself, create the tax base needed for the leading nation-states to service their compounding debts. In light of this, the leading nation-states supplemented their internal biopowers by doubling down on and bureaucratizing their external necropowers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the era of the "New Imperialism". In other words, the leading European states became imperialist nation-states by joining their internal biopowers up with their external necropowers. During this time, the merchant-adventurer war machines of Early Modern Europe (authorized by sovereign states, underwritten by joint stock companies and merchant banks, but managed by the merchant-adventurers themselves) were incorporated into bureaucracies that were owned and operated by imperial nation-states and financed by sovereign bonds issued by imperial nation-states.

The development of humanism and the human sciences from the Renaissance through to the Second World War was deeply entangled with the developments that led to the emergence of the imperial nation-state that have been outlined above. Is it any wonder that Arendt, in her cringeworthy descriptions of the Boer experience in South Africa writes:

> Race was the emergency explanation of human beings whom no European or civilized man could understand and whose humanity so frightened and humiliated the immigrants that they no longer cared to belong to the same human species.

Why is it that no civilized European man could understand the existence of such human beings? Just think back to Session 6 and the animism of the horizontal shaman who saw kindred spirits in everything under the sun, whether animal, vegetal, or mineral. How is it that dark-skinned nomadic hunter-gatherers and semi-sedentary horticulturists would gladly find kindred spirits in beings that barely resemble them, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, Hannah Arendt, an "enlightened" European public intellectual writing after the Second World War, can take it for granted that no civilized European man would care to belong to the same species as a dark-skinned nomadic hunter-gatherer or semi-sedentary horticulturist? It should be clear to us, we who have delved deeply into human history, that Arendt's assumptions say very little about the lifeways of the hunter gatherers and horticulturist that civilized Europeans encountered and much more about the very limited notion of humanity, human dignity, and human achievement that was characteristic of European public intellectuals during Arendts lifetime. And it is in this light that I suggest you read Arendt's commentary on humanity, human achievement, and human dignity of non-European peoples in *Origins of Totalitarianism* in this light.

The chapter from David Graeber's *Debt* that we will be reading this session will begin to take us into the present moment. On the one hand, the leading imperial nation-state have been more or less successfully challenged by marginalized groups from within the nation proper to guarantee the livelihoods of all of its people (i.e., the non-white races, women, people with disabilities, and those who have demerits to their name). On the other hand, the leading imperial nation-states have been more or less successfully challenged by anti-colonial national liberation movements and have lost their imperial holdings. Unable to exploit empires without and social stratification within, the leading post-imperial nation-states are struggling to find way to both service their debts and maintain social safety nets for an ever increasing portion of their populations, and the new post-colonial nation-states are hardly faring any better [3 & 4]. Indeed, since 1971 our age has been the age of ballooning sovereign debts and increasingly frequent sovereign debt crises. What's more, with the decline of imperial bureaucracies and the emergence of the post-colonial nation-state, Achille Mbembe writes in *Necropolitics* that our age is also defined by "post-colonial" war machines that recall the old colonial war machines of the early modern era insofar as they "possess the features of a political organization and a mercantile company": e.g., transnational corporations backed by private security firms operating in failing post-colonial nation-states and rebel armies in failing post-colonial nation-states that organize the production of agricultural or mining products for global markets.

In light of the events described above, it is easy to understand why we would cringe at Arendt's writings on the levels of human achievement and human dignity of non-European peoples. In the time since Arendts book was published, the new breed of public intellectuals who have spearheaded the uprisings of marginalized peoples within post-imperial nation-states and the national liberation movements that yielded post-colonial nation-states have broadened the definition of humanity, human dignity, and human achievement to recognize the othered populations that they speak for. These new public intellectuals (who demand their inclusion of othered populations into definitions of humanity, human dignity, and human achievement) are, of course, the champions of today's oft-maligned "identity politics". What's more, in a preview of sessions to come, another recent group of public intellectuals, the "environmentalists", aim to extend definitions of humanity, human dignity, and human achievement to non-human animals, to plants, and to geological formations and, going further, they demand the extension of state guarantees of life and livelihood to non-human animals, to plants, and to Gaia (the earth itself). Can post-imperial and post-colonial nation-states possibly manage to both service their debts and extend their guarantees so broadly? If something has to give, what will it be? Will national debts (and finance capitalism) have to give and yield to "debt jubilees" in order to further extend state guarantees? Will the extension of state guarantees have to give and yield to ethnic, racial, religious, or meritocratic nationalisms that restrict guarantees to privileged populations? Will nation-states themselves have to give and yield to new social forms that are nascent in the developments outlined above?

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[3] A crucial exception here, which Graeber calls out, is the People's Republic of China. The PRC is currently able to exploit its western territories as internal colonies and, what's more, the PRC is currently able to exploit social stratification within, casting the "meritocrats" who earn CCP membership as the privileged sub-population and non-party members as "othered" populations.

[4] The United States is another exceptional case to examine. At its inception, the US was a *post-colonial* nation-state but, in a terribly exceptional manner, thanks to the genocide of Indigenous American peoples and the ruthless exploitation of slaves imported from Africa and then "bred" in America, the US eventually became the leading *post-imperial* nation-state. The fact that the US is both *post-colonial* and *post-imperial* accounts for a curious and seemingly contradictory characteristic of the government and people of the US: the manner in which US imperialism is conflated with US support for national liberation movements, nation-building projects, and "making the world safe for democracy". Leveraging this characteristic, finance capitalism has come to rely on US imperial might to muscle other post-colonial nation-states into servicing their debts, and the US has been allowed to run up massive debts in return for serving as finance capitalism's muscle.

The prevailing ideologies of our time are the different answers to the questions posed above:

- The **public intellectuals of the liberal center** argue that nation-states can balance servicing their debts and extending guarantees more and more broadly.
- The **public intellectuals of the socialist left** argue that national debts (and finance capitalism) will have to give so that nation-states can extend their guarantees more and more broadly.
- The **public intellectuals of the nationalist right** argue for ethnic, racial, religious, or meritocratic nationalisms that restrict state guarantees to privileged populations.
- The **utopian and dystopian public intellectuals** argue that nation-states themselves will have to give: the utopians argue that societies must either progress forwards or turn backwards and adopt a "better" social form than the nation-state; the dystopians argue that the decline of nation-states will precipitate societal collapse and perhaps even the extinction of the human species and the end of life on earth. Two types of progressive utopian public intellectuals and one type of dystopian public intellectual currently figure prominently in the public sphere.
  - First, there is the **utopian (neo-)liberal public intellectual**, the visionary radical spun from the liberal center, who argues that the nation-state should yield to transnational/cosmopolitan social forms that will enable nation-states to balance servicing their debts and extending guarantees more and more broadly (e.g., the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the Bank for International Settlements, and transnational corporations).
  - Second, there is the **utopian socialist public intellectual**, the visionary radical spun from the socialist left, who argues that the nation-state should yield to transnational/cosmopolitan social forms that would prevail over financial capitalism, establish pathways to cancel the debts of nation-states (some sort of debt jubilee), and, thus, enable nation-states to extend guarantees more and more broadly (e.g., the international socialist movement, the global justice movement, the alter-globalization movement).
  - Finally, there is the **dystopian nationalist public intellectual**, the visionary radical spun from the nationalist right, who argues that the demise of their nation-state will lead to societal collapse and that some form of ethnic, racial, religious, or meritocratic nationalism is needed to strengthen their nation-state so that it may fend off societal collapse as best it can and for as long as it can before going out in a blaze of glory.

Addendum: On the Free Individual and Liberal Individualism

It is commonly said that a defining feature of the Modern Age is the emergence of "free individuals" and a "liberal individualism" that puts individual interests over and above collective interests. Following our reading of Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population*, we have regarded the emergence of "populations" and "governments" as the defining feature of the Modern Age, and we have regarded free individuals and liberal individualism to be the necessary byproducts of the emergence of populations and governments. It is worth quoting Foucault at length on this point:

> [A] population is of course made up of individuals who are quite different from each other and whose behavior, within a certain limit at least, cannot be accurately predicted. Nevertheless, [...] there is at least one invariant that means that the population taken as a whole has one and only one mainspring of action. This is desire. [...] Every individual acts out of desire. One can do nothing against desire. [...] However, this desire is such that, if one gives it free play, and on condition that it is given free play, all things considered, within a certain limit and thanks to a number of relationships and connections, it will produce the general interest of the population. Desire is the pursuit of the individual's interest. In his desire the individual may well be deceived regarding his personal interest, but there is something that does not deceive, which is that the spontaneous, or at any rate both spontaneous and regulated play of desire will in fact allow the production of an interest, of something favorable for the population. The production of the collective interest through the play of desire is what distinguishes both the naturalness of population and the possible artificiality of the means one adopts to manage it.

In sum, Foucault is saying that "free individuals" and the philosophy "liberal individualism" does not put individual interests over and above collective interests but, rather, advocates the pursuit of individual interests as a means to further collective interests. Adam Smith puts it plainly in the following passage of his *Theory Of Moral Sentiments*.

> *Every individual... neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it... he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.*

In previous historical ages, we found that knowing the collective interest meant understanding the will of an almighty god, or intuiting the whims of major gods, or emulating the models of minor gods, or communing with kindred spirits. In the Modern Age, by contrast, knowing the collective interest means understanding when, where, and how individual interests can be *instrumentalized* so as to produce collective interests, and the instrumentalization of individual interests turns on the figures of the population and the government.

Ableism, sexism, racism, and meritocracy are means of classifying those individuals whose interests cannot be instrumentalized. The ableist, sexist, racist meritocratic intellectual of American extraction argues that able-bodied, educated, white men with good credit and without criminal records will, by virtue of the invisible hand, effectively promote the public good whenever they pursue their own individual interests. In turn, such an intellectual argues that the individual interests of disabled persons, of women, of non-whites, of insolvents, of dropouts, and of delinquents are defective when it comes to promoting the public interest. Thus, whereas able-bodied, educated, white men with good credit and without criminal records must be allowed to pursue their own individual interests, disabled persons, women, non-whites, insolvents, dropouts, and delinquents must not be allowed to freely pursue their own individual interests.

Now, here is the rub, when disabled persons, women, non-whites, insolvents, dropouts, and delinquents fight for liberal freedoms and inclusion, they take instrumentalization for granted and they fight to prove that their individual interests can be effectively instrumentalized so as to promote the public good. The environmentalist follows suit to the degree that their environmental activism revolves around promoting "ecosystem services". In other words, to fight for liberal freedoms and inclusion is to assume that the dilemma is to either suffer necropolitical marginalization or participate in your own biopolitical instrumentalization. Is this the assumption of a false dilemma? Is there an alternative? Let us not assume Margaret Thatcher's (in)famous slogan, "There is no alternative." But let us not summarily dismiss this (neo-)liberal slogan.

Post-Session Impression

Our conversation revolved around the problem of modern bureaucracy. Modern bureaucracy is the mechanism that generates the dilemma that we confronted at the end of the pre-session primer above. In other words, it is modern bureaucracy that compels individuals to choose between suffering necropolitical marginalization on the one hand and participating in their own biopolitical instrumentalization on the other.

In many ways, it was unfortunate that David Graeber's *Utopia of Rules* did not make it onto our reading list, as we wound up coming to conclusions very similar to those drawn by Greaber in this text. Like Graeber, we found that the past 200 years have been marked by "the gradual fusion of public and private power into a single entity, rife with rules and regulations whose ultimate purpose is to extract wealth in the form of profits." Indeed, like Graeber, we found that we have entered an age of "total bureaucratization" in which "financialization, violence, technology, [and] the fusion of public and private" are "knit together into a single, self-sustaining web." It is worth quoting Graeber from the *Utopia of Rules*:

> The process of financialization has meant that an ever-increasing proportion of corporate profits come in the form of rent extraction of one sort or another. Since this is ultimately little more than legalized extortion, it is accompanied by ever-increasing accumulation of rules and regulations *[these are what Foucault would call "biopolitical bureaucracies" and Arendt would call "bureaucracies of labor"]*, and ever-more sophisticated, and omnipresent, threats of physical force to enforce them *[these are what Mbembe would call "necropolitical bureaucracies" and Arendt would call "bureaucracies of terror"]*. Indeed they become so omnipresent that we no longer realize we're being threatened, since we cannot imagine what it would be like not to be. At the same time, some of the profits from rent extraction are recycled to select portions of

the professional classes, or to create new cadres of paper-pushing corporate bureaucrats. This helps a phenomenon I have written about elsewhere: the continual growth, in recent decades, of apparently meaningless, make-work, "bullshit jobs"—strategic vision coordinators, human resources consultants, legal analysts, and the like—despite the fact that even those who hold such positions are half the time secretly convinced they contribute nothing to the enterprise.

The remarkable thing that we recognized during our discussion was that the processes described above, which now characterize the WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic) world, first emerged not in the West but, rather, in the colonial outposts that the West established during the period known as the New Imperialism. This, of course, is Hannah Arendt's point in her chapter on "Race and Bureaucracy" in the *Origins of Totalitarianism:* the fused biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies that Western European imperial nation-states deployed abroad in order to defer and displace problems at home were eventually brought back home and deployed on the continent of Europe. From the (post-)imperial Western European nation-state's perspective, the narrative runs like this: first it was biopolitical bureaucracies at home and necropolitical bureaucracies abroad, then it was biopolitical bureaucracies at home and a fusion of biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies abroad, and then, finally, there came the fusion biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies everywhere, both at home and abroad. The advantage of being a post-imperial nation state is having had biopolitical bureaucracies in power for a considerable time prior to the merger of biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies. The disadvantage of being a post-colonial nation-state is having had necropolitical bureaucracies in power for a considerable time prior to the merger of necropolitical and biopolitical bureaucracies.[5]

Totalitarianism was a particularly terrifying fusion of biopolitical and necropolitcal bureaucracies that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe where the development of "proper" nation-states was "perverted" by a number of factors, including the catastrophe of the First World War, and yielded the totalitarianism of the Third Reich under Hitler in Central Europe and the totalitarianism of the Socialist Bloc under Stalin in Eastern Europe. Arendt wrote the Origins of Totalitarianism because she saw that the fall of the Third Reich and the death of Stalin did not put an end to the internalization of biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies by European nation-states but, instead, only tempered the totalitarian excesses of the process. In fact, since World War II, nation-states everywhere across the globe have increasingly insisted, persisted, and subsisted on biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies, and, if we follow Arendt's arguments, those nation-states that are not careful will fall into in totalitarian excesses again.

We talked briefly about Arendt's "solution" to this problem, her promotion of a refined politics of "action" over and against the adulterated bio-politics and necro-politics of "labor"[6]. But we were less interested in Arendt's political ideals and more interested in our own political reality. Which is to say, in other words, that we were more interested in understanding how and why the fused biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies that were pioneered in

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[5] The United States is once again a great exceptional case to examine. Again, the US began as *post-colonial* nation-state but, in a terribly exceptional manner, thanks to the genocide of Indigenous American peoples and the ruthless exploitation of slaves imported from Africa and then "bred" in America, the US eventually became the leading *post-imperial* nation-state. It follows that the US is unique amongst leading post-imperial nation-states in having an internal necropolitical bureaucracy that is as well developed as its internal biopolitical bureaucracy. The well established fusion of biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies in the US initially served to guarantee the lives of White Americans and to expose Indigenous Americans and African Americans to death, but they are evolving so as to expose larger and larger populations of the undermployed, the unemployed, and the undocumented of all races to death. This evolution of the American system is facing fierce resistance from White Americans who either are or are at risk of becoming underemployed or unemployed. A good portion of these White Americans want their racial privileges to be re-instituted.

[6] I would like to borrow heavily here from the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy's article and re-articulate Hannah Arendt's distinction between labor, action, and work. In *The Human Condition* Arendt argues for a tripartite division between the human activities of labor, work, and action. [...] Labor is that activity which corresponds to the biological processes and necessities of human existence, the practices which are necessary for the maintenance of life itself. [...] If labor relates to the natural and biologically necessitated dimension of human existence, then work is "the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not embedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life-cycle." [...] Work [...] is a distinctly human (i.e. non-animal) activity which fabricates the enduring, public and common world of our collective existence. Action is the activity which takes place *within* the enduring, public and common world of collective existence created by work. The fundamental defining quality of action is its ineliminable freedom, its status as an end in itself and so as subordinate to nothing outside itself. Labor is subordinated to the sustenance of life; work is subordinated to the sustenance of action; action is "sovereign". Action is free to affirm or negate both the labor that sustains life and the work that sustains action itself.

European colonies during the New Imperialism came to prevail globally in both post-imperial nation-states and post-colonial nation-states. Our chief observation was that the biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies forged by imperialist nation-states at the end of the nineteenth century effected social interactions and economic integration on a baffling scale that was far beyond the grand scales managed by the world empires of the Axial Age and the universal world religions of the Middle Ages. Once social interactions and economic integration were effected on this baffling scale there was no going back without a cataclysm or catastrophe, societies had fallen into a "luxury trap". What's more, the scale of social interactions and economic integration only continued to increase thanks to finance capitalism and the logic of compounding interest and, as a result, biopolitical and necropolitical bureaucracies have become more and more elaborate and entrenched in post-imperial and post-colonial nation-states.

Arendt writes, "Bureaucracy is always a government of experts, of an "experienced minority" which has to resist as well as it knows how the constant pressure from 'the inexperienced majority.' Each people is fundamentally an inexperienced majority and can therefore not be trusted with such a highly specialized matter as politics and public affairs." During the late nineteenth century, this notion of bureaucratic government was most characteristic of the "civilized" nation-states' imperial bureaucracies which were engaged in governing "backwards peoples" abroad. Today, during the early 21st century, this notion of bureaucratic government is characteristic of all governments everywhere: the peoples of every nation-state, whether post-imperial or post-colonial, are conceived of as "inexperienced majorities" that must be governed by an "experienced minority" of experts. When bureaucratic government is challenged, experts point to the baffling scale of social interactions and economic integration that characterize today's world and argue their expertise keeps catastrophe at bay. It is rather hard to argue against them.

Then again, no single bureaucrat claims to have a full or deep knowledge of how the bureaucratic system that they serve actually manages social interactions and economic integration on such a baffling scale. Each bureaucrat only claims to know their own designated role in the bureaucracy and has faith in the bureaucratic system in which they play their designated role. In this way, bureaucracy reveals itself to be a perverse expression of liberal individualism. Indeed, one might interpolate the quotation from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* that was included in the primer above, replacing the word individual with bureaucrat, and one will find that Adam Smith perfectly describes the bureaucratic mindset.

> Every **bureaucrat** neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

This interpolation echoes Arendt's assertion that, "At the basis of bureaucracy as a form of government, and of its inherent replacement of law with temporary and changing decrees, lies this superstition of a possible and magic identification of man with the forces of history." What's more, this also explains the apparent paradox, investigated by Graeber in *the Utopia of Rules,* that government policies intending to reduce government interference in the pursuit of individual self-interest actually end up producing more regulations, more bureaucrats, and more police. Indeed, it should be no wonder that Graeber recasts this paradox as the iron law of liberalism.

> **The Iron Law of Liberalism** states that any market reform, any government initiative intended to reduce red tape and promote market forces will have the ultimate effect of increasing the total number of regulations, the total amount of paperwork, and the total number of bureaucrats the government employs.

Next week, as we delve into "digital culture", we shall see how the rise of information technologies have played into these developments because, as Graeber writes in the *Utopia of Rules*, "our immediate experience of everyday bureaucratization is entirely caught up in new information technologies: Facebook, smartphone banking, Amazon, PayPal, endless handheld devices that reduce the world around us to maps, forms, codes, and graphs."

Session 14: **The Shape of Things to Come**
Saturday, February 6, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

Let us recap the genealogy that we have charted so far:

- [Session 5](#) examined the lifeways of our immediate predecessors within the genus *Homo*, and it enabled us to chart how proto-symbolic social forms or "social sentiments" gained new dimensions to become symbolic social forms or "social conventions".
- [Session 6](#) examined the social forms of nomadic foragers, and it enabled us to chart how symbolic social forms first came into being as animistic social forms or "folkways": conventions of "right and rude" that revolve around the sharing of sentiments with "kindred spirits", other beings (i.e., beings beside human beings).
- [Session 8](#) examined the social forms of semi-sedentary foragers and horticulturalists, and it enabled us to chart how symbolic social forms gained new dimensions to become moralistic social forms or "mores": conventions of "right and wrong" that revolve around the sentimental emulation of "minor gods", higher beings that serve as role models (i.e., beings above human beings).
- [Session 9](#) examined the social forms of sedentary agriculturalists following the secondary products revolution, and we have charted how symbolic social forms gained new dimensions to become aristocratic social forms or "teloi": conventions of "poetic justice" that revolve around serving the sentiments of "major gods", higher beings that are beyond emulation (i.e., beings above and beyond human beings).
- [Session 10](#) and [Session 11](#) examined the social forms that attended the rise and fall of world empires during the Classical Age and the social forms that attended the spread of universalizing world religions during the Postclassical Age, and it enabled us to chart how symbolic social forms gained new dimensions to become ascetic social forms or "pure reasons": conventions of "absolute justice" that revolve around serving the will of the "almighty", an absolute being or absolute nothingness that is beyond emulation and that is rational as opposed to sentimental (i.e., a being or nothingness that encompasses all beings, human and non-human).
- Finally, [Session 12](#) and [Session 13](#) examined the social forms that attended the rise and fall imperial nation-states during the Modern Age and the social forms of post-imperial and post-colonial nation-states during the Postmodern Age, and it enabled us to chart how symbolic social forms gained new dimensions to become bureaucratic social forms or "practical reasons": conventions of "social justice" that revolve around serving the rational will of a "people" (i.e., a population of human beings) by instrumentalizing the irrational sentiments of constituents of a people (i.e., individual human beings).

Again and again, we have argued that newer developments do not replace older developments but, rather, that newer developments come to exist in addition to older developments and that the newer and the older can either co-exist in accord with one another, co-exist in conflict with one another, or co-exist indifferent to one another. In the postmodern age, all of the different social forms that we have investigated co-exist: bureaucratic social forms, ascetic social forms, aristocratic social forms, moralistic social forms, and animistic social forms have all come to infect and inflect one another.

Take, for instance, the Walt Disney Company: a diversified multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate that exemplifies bureaucratic social forms by producing animated movies and amusement park rides that capitalize on animistic and moralistic social forms, producing products that feature animals that talk and superheroes that serve as role models. Again, here's the rub, the Walt Disney Company exemplifies bureaucratic social forms not in spite of the fact capitalizes on older non-bureaucratic social forms but, quite the opposite, *because of the fact that it capitalizes on non-bureaucratic social forms*. Indeed, newer social forms are defined by the manner in which they internalizes and transforms older social forms. On the one hand, older social forms can resist being internalized and transformed by newer social forms, and the newer may have to oppress, repress, or suppress the older in order to internalize and reshape the older in the image of the newer. On the other hand, newer social forms can be over-reliant on older social forms and, instead of reshaping the older in the image of newer, the newer might be oppressed, repressed, or suppressed by the older and (re-)shaped in the image of the older.

This coming session we will read Gilles Deleuze's *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, a text written in May of 1990. In light of the genealogy that we have charted so far, it is tempting to read Deleuze's text in the following manner. Initially, when bureaucratic social forms came into power they were overly-reliant on the ideologies, techniques, and technologies of ascetic social forms. Indeed, Max Weber's famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, is a testament to bureaucratic social forms' initial reliance upon ascetic social forms. Deleuze, after Foucault, finds that the "**disciplinary societies**" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were defined by bureaucratic social forms that were over-reliant upon the ideologies, techniques, and technologies of ascetic social forms: having their origin in the pastoral power of the priest. That being said, Deleuze's argument in the *Postscript* is that bureaucratic social forms have long since ceased to be over-reliant upon the ideologies, techniques, and technologies of ascetic social forms. Deleuze, again after Foucault, finds that the "**control societies**" of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are societies in which bureaucratic social forms have developed ideologies, techniques, and technologies of their own. In our time, the new ideologies, techniques, and technologies of bureaucratic social forms often come into conflict with those of ascetic social forms and, when conflicts arise, bureaucratic social forms no longer have to compromise with ascetic social forms, they can, instead, oppress, repress, and suppress ascetic social forms.

In sum, bureaucratic social forms have come into their own by freeing themselves of their over-reliance upon ascetic social forms and, as a result, "disciplinary societies" have yielded to "control societies". This, of course, does not mean that bureaucratic social forms no longer capitalize on ascetic social forms, it only means that bureaucratic social forms can break from ascetic social forms when bureaucratic social forms are frustrated by ascetic social forms. Deleuze's *Postscript* compares and contrasts (i) the manner in which bureaucratic social forms in "disciplinary societies'' worked with and through ascetic social forms and (ii) the manner in which bureaucratic social forms in "control societies" break with ascetic social forms and do their own thing. Byung-Chul Han's *In the Swarm* engages in the same compare and contrast exercise as Deleuze's *Postscript*, but Han focuses on digital networking in particular as the exemplary technology of the new "control societies". Deleuze would approve of Han's approach for, as Deleuze writes in the *Postscript,* "Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society—not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them. The old societies of sovereignty[7] made use of simple machines—levers, pulleys, clocks; but the recent disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, with the passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage; the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses." Han's argument revolves around the fact that, whereas the technologies of disciplinary societies aggregate populations as "masses", the technologies of today's control societies aggregate populations as "swarms".

Han's compare and contrast exercise is nostalgic, it focuses on all that we are losing in the transition from disciplinary societies to control societies: we are losing respect, we are losing quietude, we are losing our communal spirit, we are losing our shadows, etc. By contrast, Deleuze's compare and contrast exercise is un-nostalgic: "There is no need to ask which is the toughest or most tolerable regime, for it's within each of them that liberating and enslaving forces confront one another. [...] There is no need to fear or hope, but only to [find] new weapons." Our discussion next session will combine Han's approach and Deleuze's approach and we shall ask, "In today's 'control societies', what old weapons of liberation and of enslavement are being lost in the developments we are following and what new weapons are to be found?"

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[7] The "societies of sovereignty" that Deleuze and Foucault refer to were societies ruled by the triumvirate of aristocratic sociality, ascetic sociality, and bureaucratic sociality. The "societies of sovereignty" yielded to "disciplinary societies" when the ruling triumvirate became a ruling duopoly: aristocratic sociality was cast down and the duo of ascetic sociality and bureaucratic sociality ruled together. This duopoly has, as we have already described above, now become a monopoly: ascetic sociality has been cast down alongside aristocratic sociality and bureaucratic sociality has gone solo, ruling on its own.

Post-Session Impression

A nationally representative 2017 survey of American adults and found that about 39 percent of heterosexual couples reported meeting their partner using an online dating services, making online dating services the most popular way that couples meet in the US. Online dating services are exemplary bureaucratic social forms: they involve having individuals compile and upload dossiers about themselves (including text and photos) for automated storage, sorting, and matching. There can be no greater proof of the triumph of bureaucratic sociality than the popularity of online dating services: bureaucratic social forms are now a decisive factor in the formation of our most intimate social relationships.

In control societies, those who engineer and maintain automated systems for the storage, sorting, and matching of dossiers are *major bureaucrats*. Everyone else is a *minor bureaucrat*: compiling and reviewing dossiers on themselves and others, trying to find ways to exploit the features of automated systems to their own minor advantage. You are engaged in minor bureaucratic activities when you fill in a dating profile on OkCupid, when you search for products and make purchases on Amazon, when you perform searches on Google, when you like posts on Facebook, heart songs on Spotify, rate films up or down on Netflix.

The so-called "Big Tech" firms (Google, Facebook, Amazon, etc.) are all in the business of major bureaucracy: engineering and maintaining automated systems for the storage, sorting, and matching of dossiers. Their products make it appealing and easy for people to compile dossiers on themselves and others and to feed these dossiers into automated storage, sorting, and matching systems. Amazon was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's shopping dossiers. Google was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's internet search dossiers. Facebook was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's social network dossiers. Spotify was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's music listening dossiers. Netflix was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's movie watching dossiers. OkCupid was built for storing, sorting, and matching people's dating dossiers. "Big Tech" is a misnomer when it comes to such companies. Properly speaking these companies aren't "Big Tech", they are "Total Bureaucracy". It is a mistake to think that Google, Facebook, Amazon, and their ilk disrupt industries by eliminating bureaucracy, for they actually disrupt industries by accelerating and totalizing bureaucratization.

The bureaucrats of control societies, whether major and minor, do not care about piecing together individuals' personal motivations from their dossiers (this was the fantasy of the bureaucrats of disciplinary societies). Rather, the bureaucrats control societies only care about the storability, sortability, and matchability of the data that they can extract from a collection of different individuals' dossiers: they care about statistical correlations not personal motivations. The dossier on an individual compiled by a control society is a matrix that would inform the execution of a computation by an algorithm (e.g., the dossiers on individuals that form the basis for the [credit score systems in the US](#)). By contrast, the dossier on an individual compiled by a disciplinary society was a chronology that would inform the extraction of a confession by a priest, a policeman, or a psychotherapist (e.g., the dossiers on individuals kept by the [Stasi Records Agency](#)). Fears of the surveillance state and surveillance capitalism that cast Google, Facebook, Amazon, and their ilk as the forerunners of the harder, better, faster, stronger Stasi are nostalgic fears, for they imagine that we still live in disciplinary societies. Google, Facebook, Amazon, and their ilk do not simply surveil us, they optimize us.

To optimize, in computing parlance, is to rearrange hardware and rewrite software to improve efficiency of data retrieval or processing. Google, Facebook, Amazon, and their ilk believe that our bodies are pieces of hardware to be rearranged and our minds pieces of software to be rewritten in order to optimize the compiling, storing, sorting, and matching of dossiers. This is why Silicon Valley types speak of mind hacks on the one hand, of body hacks on the other hand, and of life hacks when referring to both hands, the body and mind together.

How do we resist optimizing powers of total bureaucracies? More importantly still, if optimizing powers are to be resisted, what do we propose as an alternative to optimization? If society ought to be more than a data retrieval or processing system, what ought it to be? This was the question that plagued our discussion and that we will return to next week.

Session 15: **The Shape of Things to Come, cont'd**
Saturday, February 20, 2020, 10:00-12:00 PST

Pre-Session Primer

Our last session focused on the technologies that have characterized the bureaucratic social forms that prevail in postmodern control societies. Taking our cues from Deleuze's *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, we held that technologies are easily matched with different social forms not because technologies are determining, but because they are expressions of the social forms capable of generating them and using them. We will continue to investigate technological developments during this session but we will now place these developments in a broader context and deal with the transformation of natural environments.

As we all know, the prevalence of bureaucratic social forms has coincided with the dawn of the "Anthropocene", a new geological age that begins with human society's consciousness of its ever increasing influence over natural systems. The Anthropocene is best defined by the emergence of a new Earth sphere: the technosphere. Traditionally, everything in Earth's system could be placed into one of four major subsystems: the lithosphere (land), hydrosphere (water), biosphere (living things), and atmosphere (air). The technosphere is a new subsystem of the Earth: a global system of bureaucratically interlinked production, communication, and transportation technologies that (i) metabolize fossil fuels and other planetary energy resources, (ii) drive flows of key planetary substances integral to the regeneration of the atmosphere, the biosphere, the hydrosphere, and the lithosphere, and (iii) generate techno-fossils (fossil traces of technological systems) that are recognizable in the fossil record because they feature materials and forms that were previously rare or nonexistent in nature.

The Anthropocene is not just about climate change. Human societies have now "colonized" more than half of the planet's surface and they drive flows of key planetary substances (including carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur—the three key life-building elements). Human societies do not (yet) have ability to change the speed at which tectonic plates shift and continents wander, but they have the ability to shift the speed at which all other biogeochemical processes occur—processes that previously shifted at over tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and millions of years. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (and the oceans) has changed again and again in earth's history, but almost always at a rate imperceptible to individual humans. The same is true of the mix of species on this planet. Catastrophes apart, species haven't become extinct very often. They disappear at a roughly measurable and steady background rate. The lifespan of a human being used to be an indiscernible increment in geological time—a brief instant. Now, a human lifespan—measured by the accumulation of atmospheric carbon dioxide and the demise of species—takes place during genuinely geological changes.

Alongside climate change and mass extinction, we must recognize the thinning of the biosphere as integral to the Anthropocene: the numerical robustness, the plenitude within the biosphere, has dwindled. Many species continue to exist but in greatly diminished numbers, which means that the species itself has a far more tenuous hold on existence. As species crash and vanish, the world loses diversity, but the loss of abundance is even more startling. The biosphere is simply not as full as it once was. Counting the number of species lost doesn't even begin to reflect the number of individuals lost. Just note the difference between extinction at the national level and extinction at the local level. Among birds there were only two national extinctions in Britain in the post-war period, the red-backed shrike and the wryneck. But the number of birds which have declined so much as to be locally extinct, over great swathes of the land, is remarkably higher. The picture is the same all over. In North America, forty-six common land-bird species have lost half or more of their populations—a net loss of 1.5 billion breeding birds since 1970. Half of those have lost between 50 and 90 percent of their 1970 populations.

The texts that we will be reading this session ask how the social forms available to us are responding to the Anthropocene condition. Half the world's wildlife has gone, half the world's forests, and half the world's topsoil. We have perhaps a couple of generations of food left before we wear out the rest of that topsoil, and 10 billion humans will need to be fed. We have the highest concentration of carbon in the atmosphere since humans evolved, and increased aridity inland and rising sea levels along littorals due to atmospheric carbon capture will displace millions. Can bureaucratic social forms adequately respond to these developments? Must we develop new social forms in order to mitigate future catastrophes? Are there older social forms that could be restored to prominence in order to temper bureaucratic social forms and mitigate catastrophes?

Post-Session Impression

The technosphere cannot be done away with now that it is here: it is now one earth system amongst others that must be attended to, but how ought we to attend to it. Total bureaucracy, of course, tells us that the technosphere (humanity) ought to be empowered to "optimize" all the other systems of the earth: the lithosphere (land), the hydrosphere (water), the biosphere (living things), and the atmosphere (air). The texts that we read this week sought to resist the total bureaucratic logic of optimization.

Isabelle Stengers, in her essay "Gaia, the Urgency to Think (and Feel)" in 2014, lamented that we seem fated to succumb to the logic of optimization:

> It will be claimed that there is no choice but to try and tame Gaia. Geoengineering will be presented as a logical accomplishment in the great history of human emancipation and mastery – and those who resist will be accused of betraying our destiny. The script is already written.

Michel Serres, in *The Natural Contract* in 1990, going further than Stengers, lamented the fatality of the fated logic of optimization:

> To be sure, we can slow down the processes already under way, legislate reductions in fossil-fuel consumption, massively replant the devastated forests … all fine initiatives, but together they amount to the image of a ship sailing at twenty-five knots toward a rocky bar on which it will inevitably be smashed to pieces, and on whose bridge the officer of the watch advises the engine room to reduce speed by a tenth without changing direction.

In sum, what Serres and Stengers believe is what the logic of optimization will yield is the optimal mass extinction event, a mass extinction event that isn't experienced as catastrophe. In other words, the logic of optimization is the logic of TS Eliot's Hollow Men, "This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but with a whimper." Serres likens us, humanity, to a parasite that is killing our host, the Earth, and Serres argues that the logic of optimization is the logic of interminably drawing out the killing of our host, so that our host persists for a greater span of time but does so hovering nearer and nearer death. Instead, Serres wants a symbiosis that would enable both the symbiont and host to thrive.

Against the logic of optimization, Serres and Stenger propose new moral intuitions, that would allow us to reason and sense our relationship to the Planet Earth, to Gaia, as a relationship to something beyond human. Serres's moral intuition is that new Philosopher-Jurist figures need to draft up a Natural Contract that legislates new responsibilities towards Gaia. Stengers's moral intuition is that, before any Natural Contract can be drafted, new Artists-Storyteller figures need to expand our sensual horizons so that we sense that we have responsibilities toward Gaia. Indeed, Stengers argues that a sense of responsibility ought to precede, exceed, and succeed the legislation of responsibilities.

The issue we found with Stengers, however, was this: how does feeling and sensing scale? The scale of the Anthropocene is baffling and the systems at play are immense. It is in recognition of the immensity of this problem that Serres turns to the Philosopher-Jurist rather than the Artists-Storyteller. For Serres, arguing for a "law of love", is arguing that it is *imperative* that we feel and sense responsibility and his Natural Contract must legislate this imperative in advance if feeling and sensing is to scale. And yet, still, how can the legislation of the law of love translate in an age of bureaucratic regulation in which the bureaucratic mechanisms of enforcing legislation are what make or break legislation. Mustn't there also be certain bureaucratic mechanisms before feeling and sensing can scale? Indeed, we spent a great deal of time discussing the bureaucratic mechanisms that effectively undermine endeavors to think beyond the human, including both the legislative endeavors of the Philosopher-Jurist and the sensitive endeavors of the Artists-Storyteller.

Lastly, we noted that the figure of the Philosopher-Jurist falls squarely into the category of the public intellectual that we have been investigating. By contrast, the figure of the Artist-Storyteller is a public intellectual and more. In Stenger's description of the Artist-Storyteller we also find recollections of the figure of the horizontal shaman, the vertical shaman, the oracular priest, the ascetic priest, as well as the public intellectual. Indeed, Stengers explicitly asks us to find inspiration in becoming Artist-Storytellers by attending to the horizontal and vertical

shamanism practiced by indigenous cultures and by neo-pagan witches. Indeed, in many ways, Stenger's figure of the Artist-Storyteller, epitomized by the popular SF writer, is a figure of the public intellectual that strives to include within their being the figures of the horizontal shaman, the vertical shaman, the oracular priest, and the ascetic priests. By contrast, the figure of the Philosopher-Jurist as public intellectual excludes from their being the figures of the horizontal shaman, vertical shaman, oracular priest, and ascetic priests.

Synoptic Grid of Our Genealogy of Sociality

Formative Social Rituals (Dividual Processes)	Formative Social Roles (In-dividual Personas)	Social Conventions Formed (Trans-dividual Forms)	Narratives of Social Formation (Trans-dividual Functions)	Age of Stratification
Ur-Rituals: animating rituals (Prototyping Social Forms)	Horizontal Shamans (Bricoleurs of Social Forms)	Folkways: conventions of "right and rude" (Prototypes)	*Communing* with other/preternatural beings: kindred spirits. *(Enabling Cohesion [in Opposition to Alienation])*	The Upper Paleolithic (~50,000 BCE - Present)
Mythic Rituals: moralizing rituals (Archetyping Social Forms)	Vertical Shamans (Artisans of Social Forms)	Mores: conventions of "right and wrong" (Archetypes)	*Emulating* higher/supernatural beings: minor gods *(Enabling Ranking [in Opposition to Leveling])*	The Neolithic (~10,000 BCE - Present)
Civilizing Rituals: rectifying rituals (Stereotyping Social Forms)	Oracular Priests (Sensible Technicians of Social Forms)	Teloi: conventions of "poetic justice" (Sensible Stereotypes)	*Intuiting* the will of higher/supernatural beings that are beyond emulation: major gods *(Enabling the Rule of High Ranking Sensibilities [in Opposition to Low Ranking Sensibilities])*	The Chalcolithic (~5,000 BCE - Present)
	Ascetic Priests (Rational Technicians of Social Forms)	Pure Reasons: conventions of "absolute justice" (Rational Stereotypes)	*Understanding* the will of the highest/supreme being that is beyond emulation and intuition: almighty god. Or, alternatively, understanding the non-will of the supreme void that is beyond emulation and intuition. The narrative of the Axial Age Ascetic Priest turns on the transcendence of the forms of understanding. The narrative of the Medieval Ascetic Priest assumes the Axial narrative of transcendence but it adds a twist and (re-)turns on the interpretation of symbols that relate subjective/immanent forms of understanding to objective/transcendent forms of understanding *(Enabling the Rule of Rationalized Sensibilities [in Opposition to Irrational Sensibilities])*	The Axial Age (~1,000 BCE - Present) The Middle Ages (~500 CE - Present)
	Public Intellectuals *(Practical Technicians of Social Forms)*	**Practical Reasons: conventions of "social justice"** *(Practical Stereotypes)*	*Understanding* **the wants and needs of a natural population of humanized/subjectivized beings: a "people".** **The narrative of the Modern Public Intellectual (***advocate*** for the people and** *prosecutor* **of the people's enemies) turns on interpreting (dis-)information for the public, humanizing/subjectivizing some segments of a population and dehumanizing/objectifying others.** **The narrative of the Postmodern Public Intellectual (***expert witness*** for the people) turns on producing and framing (dis-)information for the public but letting the public interpret the (dis-)information for itself, letting the public decide for itself which of segments of the population are to be humanized/subjectivised and which are to be dehumanized/objectified: "We report, you decide."** *(Enabling the Rule of Instrumentalized Sensibilities [in Opposition to Superfluous Sensibilities])*	**The Modern Age (~1,450 CE - Present)** **The Postmodern Age (~1,950 CE - Present)**