



Imperium Press was founded in 2018 to supply students and laymen with works in the history of rightist thought. If these works are available at all in modern editions, they are rarely ever available in editions that place them where they belong: outside the liberal weltanschauung. Imperium Press' mission is to provide right thinkers with authoritative editions of the works that make up their own canon. These editions include introductions and commentary which place these canonical works squarely within the context of tradition, reaction, and counter-Enlightenment thought—the only context in which they can be properly understood.

FIRSTNESS JOURNAL



ISSUE #3
Q4 2021



PERTH
IMPERIUM PRESS
2021

Published by Imperium Press

www.imperiumpress.org

© Firstness Journal, 2021

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted
Used under license to Imperium Press

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of Imperium Press. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be directed to Imperium Press.

FIRST EDITION



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

ISBN 978-1-922602-25-1 Paperback

Imperium Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

FIRSTNESS #3

War by Epistemic Means	3
Political Ontology and Partisan Violence	25
Ethics and the Trauma of Creation	33
Political Metastability	59
Talk of the Center	97
Generative Anthropology is Bullshit	106
Roman Law, Legality and John of Salisbury	124
Problematic Subjects	147
The Heuristics of Ancient Principles on Civilized Order	160

FIRSTNESS

#3

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

JOEL DAVIS

I. Sociological Nihilism

In my paper from Issue #2, *Ideological Exile and the Phenomenology of Authority*, I gave a critique of *sociological functionalism*. The argument I gave is that conceiving of society as a “system” relies on a circle of presuppositions that render it impossible to conceive of a purpose to its functioning beyond mere functionality itself. This impossibility translates into an impossibility for the sociological functionalist to concede legitimacy to any authority which violates his model of what constitutes this ‘functionality’. This line of thinking abolishes the ethical from the political, the continued functioning (survival) of the system is its only fundamental reason to exist. Sociology as a practice therefore arbitrarily imposes a nihilistic self-conception upon the political, as exemplified by the progressive rejection of metaphysics in favour of instrumentalized social sciences by the American ruling class from the early 20th Century onwards.

As I argued in my previous paper, the ethical significance of the political must transcend the mere functioning of society, functions only have value in terms of what they are functioning *for*. The development of this nihilistic political self-conception in modernity demonstrates that *society can function without a fundamental purpose*. However, we can trace the roots of this political nihilism far deeper than the discipline of sociology. We see in the godfathers of modern political philosophy, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza, a conception of the political as power producing order for its own sake. For all three of these theorists, despite their differences, we are to embrace the production of order by power because we lack the power to do otherwise. To quote Spinoza, “the sovereign power in a State has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject”. This actually is Spinoza’s

critique of the Hobbesian view that the political is a response to the antisociality of the 'state of nature,' Spinoza argues instead that the political is a reflection of nature. For Spinoza, power is natural not artificial. Yet both Spinoza and Hobbes agree that political power is the only thing that stands between us and the socially degenerative violence of our fellow man.

Where Spinoza and Hobbes conceived of the purpose of the political from the perspective of society as a whole, Machiavelli's focus was upon the practice of sovereignty itself. For Machiavelli, power was an expression of princely ambition and entirely dependent upon a masterful balancing of ruthlessness and the inspiration of loyalty. This concept of power for power's sake was in sharp contradistinction to the medieval concept of sovereign legitimacy being constrained to the role of custodian over a divinely instantiated legal order. The enlightened absolutism of Hobbes and Spinoza was essentially a means of justifying this naturalistic conception of political power given by Machiavelli in proto-sociological terms. Power's production of civic order may be self-interested, but the proto-sociological accounts given by Enlightenment political philosophy pointed out that this is all not merely for the prince's benefit, as his subjects also benefit immensely from participation in civil society. Power therefore did not simply need to rely upon its own cunning (as Machiavelli taught), or upon divine sanction, as by way of the proto-sociology of Hobbes and Spinoza it could claim legitimacy through appeals to its role in facilitating society's functionality.

This sociologization of sovereignty's legitimacy was not merely the basis of "enlightened" absolutism of course, but formed the basis of political philosophies which more explicitly advocated liberal democracy. If the legitimacy of the production of civil society was fundamentally a reflection of its status as a common good, common (democratic) participation in this productive process was a seemingly more apt means of arbitration. Power's self-interest came to be portrayed as a tyrannical violation of the common good (Rousseau's 'general will'), but how do we know exactly what this 'common good' even is? The poster-boys of Enlightenment political philosophy, Rousseau and Locke, both agreed that the common good was not simply an amalgum of private interests but was instead a common property of society as such. This presents

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

the epistemic problem then of how to interpret the common good, simply holding a vote is not sufficient if the participants aren't voting in the common interest but merely their private interest. Whilst Rousseau saw property as artificial and Locke thought property had a natural basis, both saw the State's defense of property rights as an expression of the common good. Ultimately then, the Enlightenment's solution to the epistemic problem of the common good was that it could be expressed in a fundamental body of law derived from Reason, and thus sovereignty could be legitimated by this body of law's authorization.

The late 19th Century however would herald a profound shift in Western political theory, as it became increasingly alienated from metaphysics. Where the Enlightenment sought to ground its concept of the common good and how the State could best embody it in Reason (and therefore fundamentally, metaphysics), at the turn of the 20th Century politics was increasingly understood in terms of the social sciences (economics, sociology, etc). American Progressivism was particularly self-conscious of this rejection of metaphysics, the political philosophy of the Enlightenment was increasingly seen as the outdated ideology of the bourgeois elite. A pragmatic and scientific project of *political engineering* was instead proposed in which the goal of political theory was primarily to inform *policy* rather than law.

This was a radical shift in attitude, for now the common good was subjected to the inquiry of compartmentalized social scientific disciplines as opposed to the (at least attempted) systematic unity provided by the great metaphysicians of the Enlightenment. Our epistemic access to the common good, and therefore sovereign legitimacy, was thus abstracted from speculative anthropological accounts of a rational construction of civil society's origin (the social contract). The common good became increasingly understood in the more explicitly pragmatic terms of economic efficiency, equitable resource distribution and social stability. This was also a radical transformation in practice as policy rather than law was now the primary means of expressing of the common good in the political order, and this would increasingly require executive bureaucratic means of implementation. The role of the State was now explicitly to preside over the social system, and its legitimacy became increasingly derived from its success at implementing policies as

adjudicated in the terms of quantifiable metrics conjured by the social sciences.

Jouvenel makes the argument in his magnum opus, *On Power*, that undergirding this dialectical process in modern political thought was the perpetual expansion of State power. However, this took its most pertinent form in the more contemporary move of replacing law grounded in metaphysics with policy grounded in the social sciences as our fundamental epistemic access to the common good and thus sovereign legitimacy. This move was exemplified in the pragmatist epistemic approach of American progressivism and facilitated a more purely Machiavellian attitude. The diminishment of the role of Reason in the construction of civic order elevated in its place the *technique* of political power as the central concern of political theory. The bureaucratic self-understanding facilitated by post-metaphysical social science liberated power from metaphysical constraints just as Machiavelli liberated power from the divinely instantiated constraints of the Natural Law. The key difference with Machiavelli however, was that this new approach to the political understood power not from the perspective of an individual tyrant, but as a technically complex set of administrative functions suited to an impersonal bureaucracy.

In the analysis of modern political history given by Jouvenel, this dialectical development of Western political theory through modernity was not simply the natural outcome of abstract reasoning about political ideas. Instead, Jouvenel shows how the expansion of state power functioned as a selection mechanism of sorts upon the process. We see in the undermining of the theologically grounded concept of the purpose of civil society, a liberation of state power to seize the legislative authority. This legislative authority was used to appropriate resources to the state which facilitated the development of greatly increased military capabilities by the European monarchies which embraced this revision of the medieval concept of the political. This expansion of military capacity was used to discipline both internal and external enemies and further imperial and colonial ends. This incentivized further revisions of the political up to the point of totally reconceiving the state in the aforementioned naturalistic proto-sociological terms, in order to justify this a metaphysical rather than theological justification of this new political concept was required.

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

Ironically, the very sort of enlightened political theory which enabled the monarchies of Europe to appropriate the resources of their aristocracies and usurp the authority of the Church ended up forming the basis for revolutionary liberal political philosophies which justified their constitutional limitation or outright overthrow. Nevertheless, the parliamentary usurpation of legislative authority only further grew state power and expanded the bureaucracy. Napoleonic France grew in military capabilities far beyond the wildest dreams of the Bourbon dynasty, and all of Europe had to unite to defeat it. But Napoleonic France was nothing in comparison to the state expansion enabled by the post-metaphysical technocratic approaches of progressivism and socialism. An attempt was made with Fascism to ground the new technocratic reality of governance as a function of policymaking in the metaphysical, in opposition to classical liberalism's foundationally legal conception of civil society. But ultimately, metaphysics seemed to take the position of a mere post hoc sentimental justification of policy decisions that could be understood through the same realpolitik logic that defined the behaviour of their progressive and socialist counterparts.

Upon reflection however, it seems as though this was also (albeit in a perhaps more sophisticated manner) how metaphysics has functioned in political philosophy since it was bootstrapped to the proto-sociological accounts of civil society at the very dawn of the Enlightenment. This is because the sociologization of sovereign legitimacy fundamentally relativizes the purpose of sovereignty in civil society to merely keeping it functioning. What is the point of civil society? According to Hobbes, surviving the war of all against all that it keeps at bay. What is the war of all against all? For Hobbes is this just the absence of civil society (law). Here we see the circularity of sociological functionalism, the end of civil society is itself. The legal order no longer therefore reflects a moralizing discipline which unites the individuals who make up the civic order with the divine will, and the transcendent purpose is slowly forgotten as the essential justification of civic order as modernity arises. Instead the practical reason of the subject was axiomatically posited in order to legitimate the making-immanent of the proto-sociological concept of civic purpose, we see this exemplified in the work of Immanuel Kant. But did the impressive logic of Kant's metaphysics-

ical innovations convert non-liberals to liberalism, or did he just engage in an elaborate philosophical labor to justify the view that both himself and his contemporaries were already committed to? The latter seems to be the obvious case here.

Stripped of its theological foundation then, metaphysics found itself incapable of substantiating an ethics and politics that could overcome the inherent nihilism of sociological modelling. Reaching back out to the Divine to grant us an ethical foundation and therefore purpose for civil society is the only solution to this as I argued in my aforementioned paper from this journal's previous issue, but is coming to this realization in itself enough? In the most fundamental sense, I believe it is. But this is only the beginning of both political theory and practical action. Identifying a transcendent source of purpose for civic engagement is what gives us our essential political goal, *to restore the divine law*, but merely realizing this intellectually it is not an engagement with the political in itself. A political ethic gives a fundamental reason as to why we should care about politics, but it is not a means of understanding how politics works. As Clausewitz famously remarked, war is politics by other means, and we are truly at war with the forces of evil who reject the divine law. But knowing what we are fighting for is different than knowing how best to fight for it.

II. Epistemic Weapons

The purpose of my explication of sociological nihilism then is not to reject the social sciences, but to limit them to their proper position in Hume's is/ought distinction. The social sciences cannot tell us what society ought to be, this is the key takeaway from my critique of sociological functionalism. The existential question of society I believe is fundamentally a theological question, theology being an inquiring into the absolute purpose of existence. The problem of nihilism has been most fundamentally a question dealt with by existentialists, existentialism being the philosophical inquiry into the meaning of the human condition. There are many Christian existentialists (Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky being the obvious examples), but also many anti-Christian existentialists (Nietzsche and Sartre being the obvious examples here), along with ambiguous figures like Heidegger who are hard to position. This paper however is not intended to be a defense of theology or

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

of existential critique in general, but a defense of bracketing social science (the question of what society is) from social existentialism (what society ought to be). This distinction is not ontological, but epistemological, as obviously the questions of what society ought to be must ultimately be embedded in what society is in political practice. However, before we can engage in this embedment we must first work these things out on their own terms as otherwise we will conflate an existential critique of the social sciences for a technical critique and lose technical precision.

Technical precision is vital to uphold because the social sciences are the epistemic arms of political practice, and as Clausewitz said, politics is war by other means. Gaining an accurate perception of the battlefield's conditions and the strategy of the enemy is not dependent upon existential inquiry into why and for what you are ultimately fighting. Sharpening this perception requires sober rationality, as erroneous social scientific frameworks will ultimately obfuscate how the political order functions and what strategies drive it. The key social scientific questions of political relevance are; how policy is created and implemented, how agency is distributed, what structural incentives are most influential, and what role epistemic paradigms themselves play. Answering these questions erroneously will necessarily lead to bad political strategizing, however noble the existential mission you are trying to serve is. Therefore, you owe it to your mission to bracket it from your social scientific analysis in order to ensure it doesn't bias your epistemic process. The purpose of doing social science is to make the most robust epistemic weapons possible to deploy in service of your cause, it is not to be (and it cannot be, ultimately) used for the purpose of justifying your cause.

Before we split the social sciences up into sub-categories (economics, political science, international relations, etc), we must first recognize that all of these sub-categories are fundamentally talking about the same thing, society as such. In other words, our ontological concept of what 'society' actually is must be common to all social sciences. If your political science and your economics aren't built out of the same social ontology at least one of them must be wrong because they are both talking about the same society. In the later sections of this paper I will touch on concepts pertinent to all the social sciences, with the political as such the central object

of focus. This is because all political discourse is grounded in the social sciences, at minimum by implication if not explicitly. We cannot talk about anything political, no matter how mundane the topic of conversation, without presuming the social order to possess certain qualities. Theory (at least in so far as it is relevant to the social sciences) therefore is inseparable from political practice, whether this relation is conscious or unconscious.

So what is 'society' then? Fundamentally, society is an organized field of human interaction. To build an elementary model of society we must therefore identify the minimal conditions of social organization. Most minimally, organization implies a shared problem or set of problems which it is responding to in the first place. This response implies a capability for intelligible communication to establish shared focus on the problem(s) at hand and what to do about them. That this communication must induce a practical response implies hierarchy, as someone must be in the position to at least approve (if not outright make) the final decision on what the response will be. The existence of hierarchy also implies trust, as if we don't believe this decision has been sincerely taken in response to the problem(s) at hand then why would we obey it? The threat of violence can only coerce so much compliance, and the organized application of violence (i.e. a military) cannot itself be violently enforced without this organization already being in place, which therefore itself requires trust. To break this down more simply; society is organization, organization implies authority, and authority draws its legitimacy fundamentally from proposing a plan to deal with a problem or set of problems shared by the members of that organization. This is true even in the case of divine notions of sovereignty, as the organization of authority must in this case reflect a recognition that the problem of man's relationship to God is the problem of highest priority.

The only thing that separates this minimal definition of 'society' from politics is whether this process is a product of primitive custom, or it is in some rudimentary sense rational. Politics is the rational organization of society. As there are multiple problems for society to solve, more than one authority is required, in order words there is *specialization*. And as there is therefore more than one scale at which problems must be solved, there is more than one type of organization required in society, in order words there

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

are *institutions*. All forms of organization, all institutions, possess in common the problem of security. This is because security is a minimal condition of all organization, as if violence threatens your organization it threatens your capability to solve whatever particular problems specialists and institutions are supposed to be responding to. Security is therefore the most fundamental social problem, whether it is threatened internally or externally. The development of law from custom to better administer internal security, and bureaucracy from kinship to better administer external security, gave rise to the political as a rational means of responding to the most fundamental social problem - security. 'The State', defined as the most dominant scale of organization in society, is fundamentally a response to the problem of security in its most general sense. 'Sovereignty' then, is the successful and therefore dominant administration of security within geographical area.

What I have laid out here is a basis for what I believe must be two foundational concepts in political science; the institutional theory of society and the security determinist theory of political structures. These concepts are vital foundations, as taken together they provide an immunization against various forms of erroneous social scientific concepts (both implicit and explicit) which are nevertheless popular in both academia and across political subcultures because they conform with their ideological commitments. These common errors in social scientific analysis must be purged from our thinking if we are to perceive political structures with clarity and consequently develop viable political strategies. I will therefore attack what I see as the 3* most commonly disastrous

* A 4th social scientific error, what I call the "consumer theory of markets", perhaps deserves to be included upon this list. However it is tangential to the direction of this paper, and to properly explicate it would require comprehensiveness to the level of a deep dive into economic theory. Only democratic and methodologically individualist ideological mind viruses could facilitate the delusion that consumers drive the economy rather than the corporate bureaucracies which actually organize production, distribution and marketing, or the investors which allocate capital. The view of the 'economy' as somehow distinct from the state (as in classical/neoclassical economics) or its constitutive ground (as in Marxism) are natural consequences of this delusion. Yet, as I deal with this in section V (on Economic Determinism), this paper touches on economics to the degree necessary to support its central argument without requiring of itself a historical analysis of all the major paradigms in economic thought. The critique of deductivism in economic theory given in Aaron Hunter's *Econofuturism (Part 1)* from Issue 1 of this journal, the institutional economics of Thorstein Veblen and the business cycle theory of Joseph Schumpeter are

social scientific errors with these concepts to demonstrate their efficacy; the democratic theory of policy creation, the autocratic theory of government and economic determinism.

III. Democratic Theory of Policy Creation

As I discussed in section I, ever since proto-sociological justifications of sovereignty replaced the traditional concept of divine sovereignty, law and policy came to be seen in terms of the ‘common good’. Naturally, law and policy became framed as expressions of the ‘will of the people’ by the ideological justifiers of their maintenance or reform within liberal democracies. But despite these claims, a closer examination at the process by which paradigms of legal interpretation and policy are institutionalized renders this ideological depiction suspect. Is there democratic oversight as regards to what jurisprudential theories are taught at Harvard and Yale? Clearly not, these theoretical paradigms are instead formed by a technical elite which preside over the relevant institutions. Did the so called ‘Washington Consensus’ become the official policy of the US State Department as a result of mass civic engagement? Did the citizens of the United States collectively decide in the mid-1960s that it wanted to radically reform immigration policy in order to reduce its caucasian population to a minority within a century? In these areas, and in the formation of every reform agenda that matters, we see specific institutions engage with and alter the policies of the United States government. “Consent”, or at least the impression of it, is then manufactured by the political media spectacle. And of course, if a bipartisan consensus can be forged by lobbyist groups or “experts” trusted by both major parties, then a performative demonstration of democratic consent isn’t even required.

All of these observations should be obvious to the point of banality, but yet even in majority of those who perceive this dynamic there persists the illusion that this reflects a kind of ‘corruption’ of what is supposed to be a democratic system. Hope is held out for some populist movement which could somehow restore

examples of economic thought which are compatible with an institutional theory of society. A future paper in this journal will take this subject matter on directly by building on the foundation I lay out here to work out in detail a compatible economics.

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

the democratic will as the determining factor in policy, or some constitutional reform agenda is proposed which could somehow defend against the alleged oligarchic subversion of the will of 'we the people,' but this is all delusional. As Robert Michels' famously remarked, *organization is oligarchy*. This notion is a reflection of what I called the institutional theory of society. The implementation of policy is a problem which requires institutionalization to solve, because the state is itself a highly complex institution and so reorganizing it requires operating on a scale beyond the scope of any one man. Therefore, institutions must optimize to the scale demanded by the reorganization of the state they wish to affect. The more complex the state, the more complex the scale of organization required to reorganize it. The masses which supposedly make up the 'demos' do not organize the state, *but are organized by the institutions which (re)organize the state*.

The creation of policy is a problem which requires specialization to solve, because policy is a technical product. Specialization requires hierarchical organization to train and verify potential specialists within fields of technical knowledge. This embeds policy creation within a series of think-tanks and foundations, but also leaves this network of think-tanks and foundations at the mercy of academic institutions to train their recruits. Policymaking is therefore engaged in within institutions funded by special interest groups within academic paradigms approved by the educational apparatus, therefore policy has a technocratic not democratic basis. The state however is not simply a product of policymaking, as the largest and most vital component of the state, the national security apparatus, administers a large amount of its own policy creation for itself. This enables the national security apparatus to intervene upon the (re)organization of the state by institutions which represent special interests where they conflict with security objectives. In the United States, this is embodied in what Michael J. Glennon called the "Trumanite Network". The existence of such confirms the security-determinist theory of political structures, for if national security was left to the direction of special interest groups, the very survival of the state is put in jeopardy.

The effect of the Israel lobby and neoliberal delusions overpowering security realism in American foreign policy is a good example of the impact of not prioritizing security. Alienating Russia

and empowering the rise of China during the first two decades of the 21st Century may go down as the greatest strategic blunder in the history of empires, with the multitrillion dollar wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in retrospect granting no obvious benefit to the United States as compensation. China has already surpassed the United States in GDP when corrected for purchasing power parity, and is on course to surpass the United States in outright GDP within the next few years. The rise of China was completely enabled and facilitated by the American establishment, while they were wasting their time on Israel's foreign policy goals rather than soberly reflecting upon their own. For the first time in over a century the United States will be economically surpassed by another nation as a result, placing their hard fought hegemony under grave threat. Was outsourcing American labor to China popular? Were strategically incomprehensible wars in the middle east popular? Of course not, these policies reflect ideological stupidity and Chinese and Israeli influence. Even the contemporary process of their partial overturning reflects the will of the security apparatus, the 'will of the people' has nothing to do with it.

Masses cannot generate policy because the sum total of discourse relevant to policy is too large and complex for any individual citizen to grasp. Therefore the overall structure of policymaking is irreducible to 'citizenship', as each field of policymaking requires organized collaboration between specialized "experts". The complexity of the modern bureaucratic state therefore implies institutionality, and we can only understand its operation by reverse engineering its policymaking practices to reveal their institutionality. If once does this, one quickly notices that effectively no non-specialists are included in policymaking practices, and therefore to participate one must obtain the relevant credentials from the relevant institutions. What we see then are layers of institutionality that configure themselves around political parties and the media organisations sympathetic towards them (which are both of course themselves institutionally structured) to form policy orthodoxies. The fact that no one living person knows all the laws and policies of the United States government themselves implies these laws and policies must be the consequences of institutional organization. Functionally then, democracy is simply a means by which institutions organize masses into consenting to their own policymaking practices.

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

The survival of policymaking institutions within the system then is not dependent upon their popularity, but their ability to secure themselves within a coalition of institutions that form an orthodoxy with formal political, academic and media representation. It is this coalition that manufactures both popularity and a strategy of implementation. It is this structure of political institutionality that forces policymaking institutions to not merely solve the problem which they are created for (specialized policy creation), but to solve the problem of survival (security) within the institutional system by forming alliances that subject individual institutions to a higher orthodoxy. In this way institutionality implies security-determinism, and this why in the United States all policymaking institutions end up coding themselves 'progressive' or 'conservative' with very few exceptions. Obviously policymaking institutions do not engage in direct violence with one another, but they do engage in informational warfare and ostracism with the goal of denying rivals access to resources, undermining their capacity to organize at a competitive scale. No matter how good (or popular) your proposed policy solution to a particular political problem is, if you can't defend your position in the institutional system you will be unable to compete with those who can.

IV. Autocratic Theory of Government

Another tendency we see across the political spectrum is the personalization of political agency. The formal leader or publically presenting figurehead of an institution is typically seen as essentially responsible for the workings of the institution they lead. What this implies is that this leader or figurehead fundamentally controls the institution they are perceived to run, and that therefore institutions are reflections of the personality of their leaders. We speak of the 'Trump Administration' or 'Obama Administration' as though the formal president was arbitrarily responsible for the direction taken by state policy under their watch. An institution of course is an impersonal entity which cannot speak for itself, individual representatives must always speak on its behalf. But this perception of personalized agency falls apart when we recognize the structure of the practices which form institutionality. Institutions exist to solve problems which are too complex to be solved by individuals, the more complex institutionality is developed the more problems so-

cial organization can solve. Problem solving practices are therefore developed which can function according to an impersonal rationality that can be reproduced abstractly without direct apprenticeship. One does not need to trace a lineage of personal instruction directly back to Karl Marx to become a Marxist, initiation into Marxist literature is itself enough.

The development of institutionality beyond the arbitrary control of any one individual we call *bureaucracy*, the contemporary reality of the bureaucratization of the entire world demonstrates that organizing problem solving beyond the grasp of any individual leader outcompetes non-bureaucratic organization. The advantage of bureaucracies is the centrality of formal documentation (literature) to their practices. The limitations imposed by direct communication are overcome through the abstraction of authority from interpersonal relationships to impersonal textual bodies. Of course, executive authority is still constrained by interpersonal communication but this constraint is still effectively breached through the practice of expert consultancy. Academic institutions verify an expert's initiation into a specific impersonal textual body to provide them with accredited expertise in order to be employed by executive authorities to advise them based upon the knowledge formally contained in the literature. These same bodies of literature are also appealed to in the policymaking institutions which expert advisors will endorse to executive decision makers. In this way, personal authority is embedded within the impersonal authority of the academy.

This embedment of personal authority in the impersonal is compounded by the incapacity of any one person to hold a comprehensive understanding of the entire formal body of literature, specialist expertise is therefore a perennial requirement. These specialists can only be verified within their specialized fields of expertise, specialists therefore conjure their own authority from within their own institutional organization. The various disciplines that make up the impersonal academic superstructure that support the policymaking and advisory infrastructure of government can therefore not be ruled by any personalized authority. The executive command of the state may ignore or shut down disciplines it doesn't like, but if those disciplines provide problem solving value and rival states embrace them they will suffer relative disadvantage.

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

es as a result. If such disciplines create more problems than they solve, disregarding or sabotaging them may be a wise action by an executive authority, but in any case such an authority *cannot rule the disciplines but may only at best select them*. Also, this capability for an executive authority to select which disciplines to embrace, ignore or shut down is itself a decision making process which an authority will need to consult experts to carry out, for otherwise the personal authority will not be capable of acting knowing what he is doing.

Compounding this, the highly complex realities of governing in the contemporary world requires the organization of far too many people than personal relationships can facilitate. Procedural rules therefore must be communicated and enforced through impersonal and formal means. There is only so much capacity in any one individual to lead an organization, so the more complex an organization becomes the less control its leader has over its functioning. There is no organization more complex than a government. There is likely no organization in world history less controlled by its formal leader than the United States government. Of course, the US government has undergone radical transformations over the years, but this process makes far more sense if understood not in terms of the personal agency of presidents but the impersonal agency of institutions. Was the decision to invade Iraq an extension of the personality of George W. Bush, or an outcome of decades of organization by the so called 'neoconservatives' and Israeli foreign policy think-tanks? Were the economic reforms of the 1980s an extension of Ronald Reagan's personal understanding, or the outcome of over a decade of organization by the so called 'neoliberals' and Chicago School economists? The institutions which produced Reagan and Bush's advisors clearly exercised far more agency over these processes.

In order to fundamentally alter the functioning of a governing bureaucracy, impersonal means are required. This is because bureaucracies are impersonally organized by definition, all bureaucratic decisions must be formally articulated as extensions of already authoritative documentation. Only institutions which develop impersonal means of reproducing their internal rationality are capable of reforming the internal rationality of the state. This abstract basis of enforced compliance via bureaucratic review is a

reproduction of the formal rationality of law itself. The judiciary is the ur-bureaucracy, all other bureaucracies are extensions of it. In order to become compliant with law, bureaucratic methods are required. But more fundamentally, law itself in order to be enforced consistently across a vast judicial network that transcends personal relationships must take on this impersonal formality. When sovereignty was understood as fundamentally divine, the impersonal was personalized in Christianity, and the church provided an authoritative bureaucracy over the law. The popularizing of sovereignty however in creating a sociological rather than theological concept of the law called forth the academy to take the place of the church. The inherent nihilism of sociologizing sovereignty liberated the academy to reformulate its authority beyond the constraints placed upon the church by heresy. The impersonal ground of the law devolved from divine to metaphysical to ideological.

The appeals to metaphysics of “enlightened absolutism” may have superficially appeared to authorize autocratic monarchy, but in reality it was the monarchy replacing its subordination to the church with a subordination to the academy. In searching for a legitimation of its authority within the academy’s metaphysical justification, the monarchy rendered itself defenseless to the academy’s revision of its role in administering the law. The academy trained the King’s bureaucracy, and soon enough the bureaucracy realized it could provide itself with a King more appropriate to its impersonal logic if the personality of the King clashed with it. This is even more true today of presidents and prime ministers. Executive leadership may win battles, but the academy always wins the war, as executive leadership has no means of justifying itself or ruling except by the ideological orthodoxies produced by the academy and its policymaking offshoots. Governance therefore is fundamentally determined by the institutional battlespace in which these orthodoxies are formed and compete.

V. Economic Determinism

There are many across the political spectrum who perceive this institutional battlespace for policymaking orthodoxies, yet commonly (particularly with Marxists) this is reduced to expressing the economic interests of the capitalist elite. It is reasonable to make the inference that the economic interests of drive their

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

investments in specifically economic policymaking, but it does not follow that these interests hegemonically extend to all forms of investment in policymaking. Furthermore, it is not reasonable to reduce policymaking to the interests of the donor class as this conflates productive and selective agency. In the same way that a corporation's production is not managed by investors, policymaking is not managed by investors. In both cases a technical class produced by the academic system manages production, and there is no reason to presume the motives for production are reducible to the motives for donors to select producers with patronage. In fact, the opposite makes more sense, for the investment decisions in policymaking by the donor class must be informed by technical advice. Also, there is no reason to discount their ethnic loyalties or ideological beliefs and suspect that donors are only motivated by their economic class interests.

The selection process in policymaking is also not monopolized by "private" economic actors, the role of intelligence agencies is well documented. The CIA's involvement in the neoconservative takeover of the American Right to counter its isolationism by promoting anti-Soviet warhawking stands as an obvious example. As discussed in section III, the security driven self-organization of the state drives a substantial amount of policymaking. Not only does the security interest drive the production of policy though, it also has the capacity to sabotage, subvert or outright shut down policymaking activities which go against it. The security apparatus therefore has a selective capacity upon policymaking with the power to supervene upon donor selection. Also, there is no larger source of funding for the academic system than the state itself, this enables the political class itself (which controls the allocation of "public" funding) to drive a significant portion of selective pressure upon policymaking. This is the case not only directly but perhaps more significantly indirectly through the promotion of particular academic paradigms in the social sciences and media (propaganda) institutions. The state also holds direct regulatory authority over the education system, partially integrating the educational apparatus into the state apparatus itself.

From an institutional and organizational standpoint there are myriad forces which constrain and supervene upon attempts by the dominant economic class to control policymaking. Due to the

aforementioned structure of relationships between institutions relevant to governance forcing them to form orthodoxies, these relationships can seldom remain neutral but must take the form of cooperation or conflict with one another. This structural reality between the institutions that make up governance within states is mirrored in the international system between states, this forces the state to build security apparatuses to defend against both external and internal threats. Much like how smaller states must form alliance coalitions with other states or become clients of larger and more powerful states in order to secure themselves in the international system, policymaking institutions must either ally themselves with institutional orthodoxies or with the most powerful agencies of the state itself (which are all security agencies). Just like in the international system where alliance coalitions are seldom formed without the support of at least one of the more powerful states, it is hard to imagine a policymaking orthodoxy could form without at least the tacit consent of a significant portion of the security apparatus.

Fundamentally, the security apparatus and the political class alike due to their official position within the state have far greater capabilities in conflict scenarios against non-state actors who merely have wealth. A recent example of this is the steps taken by Hungary to shut down the operations of policymaking entities funded by billionaire George Soros, demonstrating that his actions within the United States are permitted and not imposed. History is full of examples of conflict between ruling political classes and economic elites to further demonstrate this, generally speaking Absolutism was an act of structural conflict by the ruling political class against the landed aristocracy which were the dominant economic class of medieval Europe. In requisite fashion, both Nationalism and Socialism (and their fusion) have also generally been acts of structural conflict by ruling political classes appropriating power and wealth for the state from capitalist elites. All of this isn't to totally negate the obvious translation of wealth into political power that does occur, but to negate the notion that this is in any way the *fundamental* determinative factor in the formation of the political order. The political is not reducible to the economic, quite the opposite. Wealth must always rely upon the political to secure its wealth and therefore it cannot secure its wealth against the po-

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

litical, rendering the economic organizationally secondary to the political's self-organization of security.

The reality is most clearly demonstrated in the phenomenon of *total war*, when modern bureaucratic states were existentially threatened during the two world wars they completely subordinated all economic interests to the requirements of national security. This demonstrated that the most fundamental problem that must be solved by state organization is survival, thus demonstrating the logic of how our institutional theory of society implies security determinism. The new ideological orthodoxies in policymaking that were developed in the Cold War period further extended this logic, as the CIA and US State Department funded and promoted the New Left (particularly its interpretations of "human rights") and the Washington Consensus (in economic policy) into hegemonic operation, forming the backbone of contemporary "neoliberal globalism". The use of these ideological forms to set the consensus paradigm for global trends in governance demonstrate the dominant role of security focused state organization as a selection mechanism for ideological institutionalization. The Soviet enemy during the Cold War engaged in a far more obvious manner in exactly the same process, the only substantive difference being the more subtle organization of Western policymaking.

Discourses are practices, not mere abstract exercises, they therefore require material fields for their actualization in a process which itself requires institutions to establish and reproduce practices. These institutions therefore must secure their practices in material reality from attack, placing the institutional organization of security itself underneath all other forms of organization as fundamental. Security takes three essential forms; consensus, finance and force. It is not my position that the abstract meaning of the ideas contained within the policymaking agenda of institutions is not important, clearly they play a significant role in motivating security organization either in defense or attack. However, ideas do not succeed in policymaking by how compelling they seem in the abstract but instead by how effectively they are organized and secured institutionally as practices. This is why security-determinism stands in opposition not merely to economic determinism, but ideological determinism (as exemplified by Hegelianism). This explains why bad and unpopular ideas are successful in policymak-

ing all the time, because superior organization can institutionalize bad and unpopular ideas.

VI. Epistemic Warfare

This derivation of security determinism from the political structure implied by institutional theory enables us to describe the mechanism which drives the pathologization of the political as described in section I. Essentially what we see is the parasitical growth of power from authority. Genuine authority emerges from the problem it proposes its self-organization as the solution to, power emerges from leveraging the security requirements generated by inter-institutional relations between these different organizational solutions. As the institutionality of society becomes more complex, inter-institutional relations become an increasingly more complex task to secure. This requires security organization to strengthen its control over access to resources - this is fundamentally what the 'bureaucratization' and 'centralization' of government is.

The more complex the security organization of the state becomes, the more capability it has to obstruct institutions from forming which threaten its power. In order for security organization to secure institutions from inter-institutional conflict (or at least impose formal rules which constrain this conflict), it must secure itself. This self-securing itself requires the selection of institutions both directly and indirectly related to the formation of policymaking orthodoxies which generate the political structure this organization requires. Hence the security-determinism of the political. And, as formalized discursive practices are the means of forming these policymaking orthodoxies, this security-determinism drives the production and selection of the ideas which make up a culture. An obvious example of this is the support of protestant theology by European monarchies hostile to the power of the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Politics is war by other means, and these means are primarily an epistemic-security feedback loop of institutionality. This is more true than ever in the Information Age where the line between epistemic and security functions has blurred to the point of near total dissolution.

Where power originally emerged to secure authority, it has come to undermine it. Power's expansion is largely facilitated by creating greater dependency upon it, and this dependency is often under-

WAR BY EPISTEMIC MEANS

mined by authorities attempting to provide genuine solutions to social problems. Instead social problems must be framed in such a way that they are leveraged to justify and reinforce the expansion of power. Today an utterly perverse victim-centric discourse is promoted which justifies this reinforcement and expansion with great social cost. There are myriad examples, such as the use of 'Critical Race Theory' to undermine the integrity of the legal process for enemies and scapegoats of the ideological orthodoxy, or the concept of 'hate speech' justifying the bureaucratic and legal imposition of censorship upon heretics to the ideological orthodoxy. The enforcement of consensus against epistemic adversaries to orthodox positions has become blatant in several highly relevant fields of inquiry to policymaking. The most egregious examples being climate science, covid-19 and the biological analysis of race and gender. These examples clearly demonstrate power's capability to overrule genuine authority. These enforcements (securing) of consensus in confirmation of policymaking orthodoxies demonstrates the security-determinism of institutionality's capability to overrule sincere epistemic processes.

The ultimate source of authority in politics is an ethical question which cannot be reduced to social scientific discourse as discussed in section I. However, simply having a better political ethic than the enemy then is not enough, you need a strategy for implementing that political ethic, you need the power to secure authority. You aren't going to develop that strategy without getting your social science right, and as social science is itself an institutional process this challenge is not merely epistemic but institutional. Any critique of the system, no matter how true, cannot significantly challenge it without developing the means to do so in the institutional battlespace. Any counter-institutionality capable of meaningfully challenging the established orthodoxies for power must recognize security-determinism explicitly and avoid the social scientific errors listed above to stand a chance. The democratic theory of policy creation has held back the conservative movement from converting its electoral success into genuine political success for decades. Economic determinism is currently threatening to obfuscate the populist's strategic perception of its true enemy. But the greatest threat of error to the Right's cutting edge is the autocratic theory of government.

FIRSTNESS #3

Due to the Right's affirmation of hierarchy and hostility to the institutionalized ideological orthodoxies, it has a tendency to focus on persons rather than institutions and inter-institutional relations (structures). There is no more potent example of this than the Trump Administration, where the person who was supposed to be in power proved ineffective due to a lack of institutional organization behind the agenda implied by his rhetoric. The Right's growing embrace of Caesarism threatens to reproduce this ideological delusion in future strategy. Politics is a complex system, a structure of institutional relations, and the necessarily bureaucratic nature of these institutions renders their organization formally impersonal. The ruling policymaking orthodoxies cannot be challenged without the composition of a rival institutional structure to take their place. If the Right cannot theorize and formally develop this structure, even Caesar cannot lead it to victory.

POLITICAL ONTOLOGY AND PARTISAN VIOLENCE

THOMAS 777

As a historical revisionist, I can state honestly and with a certain enthusiasm derived admittedly (at least in part) from pride, that I have observed in my lifetime revisionist scholarship develop from the humblest of origins to becoming practically a mainstream tendency in forums where serious historical and military research is facilitated and encouraged. Not so long ago, there were almost no outlets for *any* viewpoint relating to the European War of 1939-41, the subsequent World War of 1941-45, and the cult of Jewish martyrdom therein that constituted anything other than a kind of hysterical, quasi-religious, moral cant that presented Adolf Hitler and the German Reich as the epitome of human evil. Revisionism was restricted to suppressed newsletters published (often on irregular schedule) by erstwhile organizations like the *Institute for Historical Review* and was concerned almost exclusively with the Second World War and specifically the more outlandish claims presented by the Nuremberg charging instrument relating to the mass homicide of Jewish civilians by the German Reich.

Twenty years into the 21st century, and three decades after the capitulation of Warsaw Pact, historical revisionism (and the demand for historical research methodologies that are both integral and reliable) is practically mainstream. The scope of interest now encompasses the whole of the 20th Century and not merely *The Holocaust* and its theological narrative trappings. Within revisionism however, there is an ever conspicuous silence relating to the history of European political philosophy itself. If the history of events can be distorted to the extent the revisionists claim, the history of thought itself must be held with the same suspicion.

An Ever Cautious Band of Radicals

There is a lingering tendency within revisionism to avoid discussion of the origins of 20th Century rightist thought, save perhaps for a handful of traditional Catholic American polemicists such as the people under the *Culture Wars* brand. This seems curious at first glance but owes to a greater than vestigial desire to accomplish “respectability” according to the strictures of mainstream academia. The standout exception was the late Ernst Nolte, and it is likely the hardships he endured, primarily ostracism by peers on grounds of the *historikerstreit*, that may be the cause of the aforementioned tendency towards avoidance of theoretical discussion within revisionist circles. However this tendency must be overcome if revisionism is to be placed in context, no matter the discreet emphasis of any given historical study and concomitant interpretation of occurrences therein.

Nolte himself spoke of the, “*past that will not pass*”. What he was referring to of course was the insurmountable conceptual bias in mainstream historical analysis of the German experience of the 20th century specifically and its political and philosophical orientation towards modern political challenges and cultural values. In other words, a deliberately punitive *sonderweg* theory of German (and in many if not most instances generically European) historical experience is generally accepted, while only individual features of this prevailing narrative (the privileging of “the Holocaust”, a grievance driven view of European colonization of *colored* domains, etc.) are addressed for rebuttal or critique. This is misguided for both factual and political reasons, it is not merely a polemical concern. The development and conclusion of modern political philosophy can not be rendered coherent or even discussed conceptually without identifying the causes, proximate and ultimate, of what has been called the “short century” of the years 1914-1989.

Causation and Double Standards

Paul Gottfried, eminent scholar of European political theory, took up the question of whether the European *right* of the interwar years could be understood as a political and intellectual tendency “in itself” or if it is best and most correctly understood as a “mere reaction” to Marxist-Leninist discourse and the great, almost monolithic, momentum that it came to enjoy in the wake of

POLITICAL ONTOLOGY

revolutionary enthusiasm provoked by the Bolshevik Revolution. Gottfried, in his outstanding study of the subject titled *Fascism - The Career of a Concept*, citing Nolte on the topic of where to locate early *Fascist* movements on the commonly accepted ideological spectrum directly quoted a paragraph from the closing chapters of Nolte's *Faschismus, von Mussolini zu Hitler* (2002):

The First World War was... the nurturing soil [of Fascism and National Socialism] and the Second World War was its most significant result: it recognized no higher court than that of War and the decision went against Fascism. Historical circumstances gave Fascists an opportunity that as late as 1918 would have seemed entirely unlikely, and after 1945 it became impossible for a European nation ever again to wage war in order to assert and secure its hegemony. This became clear even to the onetime devotees of Fascism who now saw...the critical weak point in their movement.

Stated simply, Nolte, for all his insight into the nature, origin and context of the categorical brutality and violent excesses perpetuated by *all* combatant parties of the Second World War and related political conflicts, is dismissive of the interwar political culture that was the direct progenitor of the European regimes. For Nolte, the Communists and their New Deal/Progressivist allies in the USA represented nothing more than a mere reaction to the fact of Marxist-Leninist ascendancy to position of pre-eminence within the European political mind.

This is problematic, owing not merely to the obvious fact that a conservative Hegelian historian such as Nolte himself should be the first to recognize that the very nature of dialectical processes preclude identifying some victorious political tendencies as "original" or spontaneous and others as "mere reaction" is as misguided as it is logically inconsistent. But there is a peculiar issue of material fact also present which Nolte opted to ignore almost entirely, that *socialism* in conceptual terms could not be said, at least in the context of modern European thought, to somehow "belong" to the ideological Left. Neither in the figurative authorship or in terms of ultimate causation of tensions that culminated in the "European War" of 1939-41 and the subsequent "World War" of 1941-45 does the Left monopolise either the discourse or organization that could be said to be "socialist". No where is this more in evidence than in

the now largely forgotten career of French socialist Georges Sorel.

Was There a True "Fascist Philosophy"?

Giovanni Gentile is credited as the author of the philosophical "basis" of fascism for the same reason that Alfred Rosenberg's role in the German Reich and its inner ruling cadre from 1933-45 is purposefully overstated. Court history zealously abides the narrative first posited by men like Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* that the revolutionary European right was intellectually impoverished and devoid of actual believers in its purported program at the executive level. This view holds fascism as a sharp deviation from the intellectual heritage of the West save perhaps for some crude and borrowed structural terms relating to the effective organization of the State apparatus. The truth is of course far more complicated and myriad thinkers contributed to the political cultures that generated interwar ideological trends, but none is more overlooked than Sorel.

Remembered mostly for his association with the French syndicalist movement, and specifically its anarchist wing, Sorel in fact held a view of history that was as far removed from Marxist historiography as is conceptually possible. Sorel exhibited a basic disinterest in engaging directly with Marxist dialectic in either approving or punitive ways. Sorel viewed political structures in highly organic terms and historical processes as immutably cyclical. He viewed *violence* as the proximate causal force of social and political development, be it in the form of war fever, revolutionary fervor, general strike and direct action, or the pious extremism of Christian religious movements from antiquity to the modern era.

If one accepts that the defining characteristic of the interwar right was in fact palingenesis - of the *rasse*, the *volk*, the historic nation, of Europe itself, then its impossible to disregard Sorel for contributing to the revolutionary Right's conception of itself as a vanguard called into being by an existential crisis of the political order as such. Sorelian *violence* entailed a remedial function in history as well as representing a means of catharsis for organized human communities (cultural, sectarian, military, political and otherwise). It was not merely premised on an idea that gratuitous bloodletting was essential in order to *sacralize* guiding mythologies of mass movements. Sorel himself pointed to early Christi-

POLITICAL ONTOLOGY

anity as fulfilling this essential purpose, in spite of the fact that it did not engage in mass bloodletting of its enemies or martyring of its adherents. Of course it did in fact inspire later martyrs (and Crusaders) in their sacrifices, but this was not why Sorel held out the original Christian congregation as an exemplar of the phenomenon in question.

Sorelian *violence* can best be understood as an absolute, uncompromising, and radical commitment to *pure history*. Bloodletting (one's own in the case of the martyr, and that of the enemy in the case of the partisan) is the sanctifying process. A partisan unwilling to kill or die for the political struggle he is engaged in is not a genuine agent of history, for violence is itself the means by which history expresses itself in political transformation. It is this willingness to die and kill that connects a political struggle to its transcendent meaning, therefore for Sorel, pacifism is nihilism.

Sorel viewed the modern bourgeoisie as particularly decadent and harmful, but he did not discern the conditions of his epoch to be otherwise unique. All ruling regimes, political and social, develop overtime a kind of moral and intellectual apathy that precludes its worthiness to act in a role of guardianship over its dominion. This is not to suggest that Sorel shared a secularized, echatological vision of utopian "salvation", common to Marxists and Progressives, which posited that the condition of Man (or the State or national community) was capable of *perfection* by way of revolutionary processes. Rather, he viewed the fervor of *violence* as a hygenic mechanism, entirely congruous with his own rejection of the linear view of history.

Anti-Modern Modernism

Sorel shared with Proudhon and Hobbes a pessimistic view of human nature. This is one facet of Sorelian thought that fundamentally alters the way in which Sorel's relationship to *socialism* is to be understood. Sorel viewed man as basically mired in *sin* and driven by his own avarice and egoism and desire for his own gain. This tendency, in the Sorelian view, is only overcome by submission to sovereign authority (customary as well as formal) under ordinary conditions. For Sorel, under conditions of extraordinary crisis, then immersion in collectively dynamic and *violent* efforts (whether revolutionary or restorative) becomes necessary.

Sorel's commitment to *socialism* must be understood within this context that socialism, for better and worse, was considered a historical inevitability (in structural terms). If nothing else, it was at least grudgingly stipulated even by many of its staunchest critics on the European right that at least *some* stipulations to the popular demands of socialist parties would need to be realized for any future government to enjoy the legitimacy it required to effectively rule. Despite any arguably *reactionary* tendencies, Sorel was genuflecting more than slightly to the modernist conceptual bias of political philosophy. We see this in his embrace of the idea of a pseudo-Newtonian "balancing" of forces in society. This is not to say that Sorel's seminal volume *Reflections on Violence* is merely anarchist apologia in guise of Adam Smith (substituting bloodshed for labor and capital mobility), but it is relevant in discerning the Sorelian relationship to modernity.

Sorel like Proudhon postulated that poverty (or at least the real possibility of it) was a "beneficent" force in highly scaled human societies. With urbanization and the attendant tragedy of the commons forcing men to seek out new and more efficient productive mechanisms, this generated new tensions between castes thus accomplishing a balance of social forces but also conditioning man (individually and collectively) towards *action* in lieu of apathy and sloth. Industrialization therefore created more ideal conditions for Sorel's positive view of action in his notion of *violence* where virtue was political empowered as a consequence of the hardships faced by man. He found it outrageous that political discourse at the turn of the 20th century seemed to revolve almost entirely around a degenerate, secular eschatology of material comfort and hedonism. Sorel's dissent therefore had an unmistakable modernist guise.

Much, if not most, of what both orthodox academics and historians as well as revisionists discern as the "Nietzschean" influence in Fascist and National Socialist aesthetics and ethical discourse in fact owes far more to Sorelian influence. Sorel's most intriguing essays in this regard revolve around his own belief that the trial and execution of Socrates was entirely justified. This was not mere polemic, nor an effort to court controversy for its own sake. Rather, Sorel's justification for the execution of Socrates was an essential component of what he considered to be the "common good". For Sorel, Socrates brought into question the influences which are most

essentially positive and laudable in forming the social character of individual men in the societies they live. The critical Socratic attitude he therefore considered to be irredeemably harmful and deserving of scornful contempt in kind.

Modernist Violence in Service of Ancient Virtues

Sorel's model of an ideal society is easily discernible as what was "old Athens" by the time of Socrates' trial. The ideal Athenian citizen having been a yeoman farmer and soldier. Sorel did not view the combining of social *functions* (as in Dumézil's trifunctional hypothesis) as accidental. Class differentiation was for Sorel not simply a pragmatic means of organizing men tied to the land into a warrior caste as a hedge against the emergence of tyrants or oligarchies who relied upon mercenary armies. He viewed the management of the homestead and the cultural values intrinsic to this enterprise as being inextricably linked to, and mutually reinforcing of, military competence in the waging of war itself.

Relying heavily on Xenophon as a primary source of identifying and describing the aforementioned virtues, Sorel discovered what he believed to be an ideal balance of formal equality between those men deserving of citizenship (the warrior yeomanry), agrarian productivity, paternal virtue, and heroism (violence and competence in violence makes the homestead possible). He viewed the yeoman homestead as a school of *command*. A man must rule his wife and children *firmly* but also caringly and justly. He must also demonstrate his worthiness to wield the authority that he does. A man's wife and children are obliged to obey his commands, but only insofar as his command role is tempered by correct virtues and practical reason. A man incapable of wielding authority over his homestead correctly is not fit to command men in battle and vice versa.

It is this essential structure, the foundation of any *good* society, that Socrates was undermining for Sorel. Making matters worse, this was during a period of active warfare with a highly competent enemy. It is in this regard that Sorel defended the trial and execution of Socrates as not merely just and legitimate under the law, but in fact necessary. This is where it becomes clear that Sorel, radical as he may have been in describing political remedies to the crisis Europe inflicted upon itself in its revolutionary production

of modernity, was at base a highly conservative theorist, far more in the mold of De Maistre than of Nietzsche.

The contemporary Right can therefore not afford to avoid Sorel, nor dismiss him out of hand on grounds that he was an anarchist who did not truly *belong* amongst the most significant theorists of the 20th century European Right. The charge that Sorel was not a "true conservative" owing to his revolutionary sensibilities does not preclude a reading of his thought's fundamental attitude as *reactionary* in the deepest sense of the term. As the eminent academic commentator and scholar of Fascist political theory Paul Gottfried posed in recent years, who exactly (other than DeGaulle perhaps) will the European Right retain as exemplars once completing the purge of their 20th Century intellectual heritage of any and all "Fascist" or revolutionary socialist influences?

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

JOSH NEAL

While we have always been concerned with the character of our creations and the ethical consequences of our use of them, in our present age of hyperpolarization the hysteria surrounding the character of the internet and our ethical responsibility in using it is noteworthy. Due to this hyperpolarization, all matters (significant or otherwise), have become lightning rods for embittered discourse. With the lifeworld¹ having fallen into a state of disarray, what we may call *the hyperworld*² (drawing from Baudrillard's con-

1 We come to understand the 'lifeworld' through the work of mathematician and phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, who described it in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* as:

"In whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each "I-the-man" and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this 'living together.' We, as living in wakeful world-consciousness, are constantly active on the basis of our passive having of the world... Obviously this is true not only for me, the individual ego; rather we, in living together, have the world pre-given in this together, belong, the world as world for all, pre-given with this ontic meaning... The we-subjectivity... [is] constantly functioning." (pp. 108-109).

Husserl's lifeworld encompasses the domains of the individual, the social, the practical, the perceptual, and the geographical. It contains the primary facts of Being which inform our psychosocial conduct. For our purposes here, we are emphasizing the shared and pre-given aspects of the lifeworld. The critical dimension which we are building upon is the primordially social and contingent feature of the lifeworld, for without it we may not begin to understand, much less define, humanity itself. Moreover, Husserl's notion of the lifeworld makes possible what Julian Jaynes called the '*analog-I*', for in this view, consciousness is a reflection or analog of the world as such, therefore enabling the creative power of psyche.

2 In contradistinction to the lifeworld, we have the *hyperworld*, a term used to describe the emergence of (and intended usurpation by) screen-mediated simulations of the lifeworld. The hyperworld's rise to prominence results from the domination of the mind by what Lacan called 'the Imaginary', a fundamental narcissism preoc-

cept of *hyperreality*) has become a site of refuge against the impossibility of life in the Real. Forums, comment sections, various social media platforms (among others) grew in popularity and quickly became the home for unfettered speech. Naturally, this reaction has grown unacceptable to the regime, and we have observed as all those digital spaces where such conversations took place have fallen prey, one by one, to its terrible might. This tightening of the regime's control has occurred in all the various hyperrealities, as progressive reformers have hunted down the various hyperreal ghettos and ethicized them as they saw fit. The ethical question of "free speech" vs. "hate speech" here is however a red herring.

The dispute over the ethical use of a given creation, beyond being a matter of political antagonism, is in fact a gesture which may guide us to the deeper problem at hand. Rather than concerning ourselves with the ethical use of a given technology, we should be concerning ourselves with *its ethos* and the condition of the psyche which created it. Ethics, as the old saying goes, is downstream from ethos. Said another way, the conduct befitting a particular creation is secondary to its essential character. And its character, given that the creations we speak of are inorganic, are bestowed upon them as a set of possibilities by their creator. It is true that what the creation actually is – what its functions are – instruct the behaviors derived from it, but the attitude present at its conception can either expand or delimit how it is used and conceived by those who follow in the creator's wake.

The ethos of the internet is invariably bound up with the intentions of both those who developed it, as well as those responsible for further innovations which developed over time. At present, its ethos can be understood in terms of its challenging-forthness (in Heideggerian terms, the reductive and instrumentalized effect it has on us) and also its overdeterminedness. This overdeterminedness originates within the psyche, within the intentions behind

cupied with fantastical images of the self and its desire. For Lacan, entrance into the Imaginary announces the beginnings of differentiation, loss-induced anxiety, insatiable demands, and thus, existential horror. What, ideally, ought to be a temporal period of development instead lingers and stagnates, locking the individual into a psychologically anachronistic state of being. Use of the term 'hyperworld' blends insights made by Husserl with those of Jean Baudrillard, in particular his notion of '*hyperreality*' – a mode of existence indicative of an epochal shift characterized by narcissism, the prominence of sign values and signifiers, and a fatal detachment from primary sources of intimacy.

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

the creation of the internet – the desires *to control and to expand*. Whatever other desires or hopes may have informed the invention and subsequent development of the internet, they are sorely underrepresented in terms of how we relate to it at present.

Through control (of information flows, of neurochemical processes induced by online interaction, of merchants as well as consumers) and expansion (of possibilities both conceptual and experiential, of supposed knowledge, of political power), who we are in the lifeworld as well as in the hyperworld is tightly constrained and diminished by these dual intentions.

Naturally this is not unique to the internet, as there is always a traumatic conflict at the heart of technological innovation. The more awesome the power of our creation, the more intensely we fear it. We stand before the creative act in a state of Lovecraftian horror; terrified of the consequences that creation may bring upon us. This takes the form of a sublime awe at the unyielding and imperceptibly endless horizon of possibilities which fundamentally alters our future in such a way that it transforms the meaning of the past and present. We cannot be sure what demands our creation shall make of us, nor can we grasp the myriad ways in which our existence, as we have come to know it, may be utterly thrashed in its wake. This trauma persists across every subsequent generation of beneficiaries to that creation, as by its nature trauma is generally repressed. Even in the full throated embrace of the trauma, it is multiplied many times over by the multitudinous reactions and counter-reactions to its integration.

Creation is relational. It is a meeting between a set of forces and factors which may complement or challenge the manner in which we conceive of and organize the social order (usually both at once). Psychologically, everything that we interact with is meaning-charged and subject to (and capable of objecting against) this set of relations. The problems of meaning and relatedness are fundamental to the creative act, and as such, demand our careful consideration. This is not to say that there is no room for spontaneity and improvisation, as these too are fundamental to creativity. Rather, we must be certain to avoid denial of the teleological dimension of creation. The proper creative act is one which has purged its telos of the will to subjugate, for it is this desire which

diminishes technology, and in doing so diminishes man himself³.

Defenestrated by the Lifeworld

Whilst the challenges posed to the denizens of the lifeworld do affect all its occupants, young men are particularly beset by crises of expulsion and conformity resulting from the automation and bureaucratization of daily life. Critical domains of the lifeworld are continually subjected to lumpenproletarianization⁴, whilst those who retain a sense of the lifeworld's esteem are increasingly preoccupied with innovating and expanding the reach of the internationalist bourgeois morality⁵. The degeneration of aesthetic, ethical, and institutional forms serves to reinforce the security of those well-seated members of society. A slackened educational standard produces two valuable outcomes for the ruling class: a far greater percentage of the underclass will be conditioned by hegemonic ideas, and the lives and careers of would-be dissenters are made that much more difficult.

The only response to such a situation is conformity or expulsion. Tragically, both produce the same result: a loss of humanity. In the case of the former, one may either choose to sacrifice their humanity so as to retain, or perhaps, improve their material and social standing amongst their peers. Conforming to the increasingly irrational and psychotic demands of the corporate or academic worlds demands that the individual self-amputate; he must ritually and repetitiously partition his own consciousness. In effect, he may hollow out his soul or he may die. Regardless of whether the individual seeks to maintain or improve his position, all the same he makes a slave of himself to punitive and undeserving authorities who are mostly interested in humiliating and instrumentalizing their underlings. Expulsion forces a humiliation and instrumentalization of a differing kind (though for differing reasons). Thrust

3 The 'will to subjugate' always embeds within the subjugated object a counter-will or resistance, such that a bloody revolt (however temporally distant) is always in the cards. Harmony (the kind one may find in a paternalistic arrangement, or in the meeting of true peers) is preferable to the discord fomented by resentment and envy. Wisdom, not power, must be the driving impetus behind creation.

4 What, in some circles, has been termed '*bioleninism*', and by others (most notably, Dr. Edward Dutton) '*spiteful mutants*'.

5 Said another way, there is a belief that the lifeworld can only be redeemed by a select few commandeering it, steering it into a new direction and thus violating its nature as a shared, contiguous experience.

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

into the ghetto of parallel realities (the streets or the internet), man finds that the depravity of social exteriority insists upon the soul. The abject need for survival pushes the individual into self-compromise, as the environments themselves more deftly and nakedly play on base human instincts. On Twitter and OnlyFans we find the pimp, the pusher, and the prostitute, just as we find them on the street corner and in the crack house.

As these observations relate to the truth of the hyperworld, it is not difficult to see that the social image of the internet obscures this uglier reality. In truth, it is a parallel existence, a simulated realm – or perhaps more cynically – an escape hatch for those people who can no longer tolerate what is required to persevere in the lifeworld⁶. While the credentialism, nepotism, and general corruption of the former world is obvious enough as to present a strong discrediting argument, the absence of any formal measure (the proverbial low barrier to entry) guarantees a lower pool of applicants within the hyperworld. Taking into consideration the fact that success is based, again, on an image or representation of something desired, the pathway to success is itself even more corrupted (or corruptible). Elaborating on this notion of representation, verbosity gets mistaken for intelligence, extravagance for depth, narrow-mindedness for profundity, superficial expansivity for erudition, and so on. The regime imposes a deeply felt insecurity upon its subjects which disables their capacity for accurate discrimination. The hyperworld facilitates not only intense overexaggeration of the lifeworld's events that it represents, but frequent duplicity.

The problem of despair then, is even more pronounced within the hyperworld. Despair of the deepest kind (in the Kierkegaardian sense, the despair which arises from the refusal to be true to oneself) creeps around every digital corner, lurks behind each post and beneath every video. Compelled to ward off the responsibility of moral courage, denizens of the hyperworld sardonically assail all who dare to inspire honesty and forthrightness. For some individuals, the indignation which they experience in the face of lifeworld's new edict propels them into the hyperworld. This too is

6 It should not go unnoticed that this is hardly a fault to be laid solely at the feet of the average person, and in many cases, should be seen as a marker of great dignity and foresight.

a manifestation of the despair of which I am detailing: it is the refusal to confront the challenge, to become the man or woman that potentiality insists they become. Conformity and self-deception are antidotes to despair, as they safeguard the individual against the perils of bravery. It should be said however, that they are only temporary antidotes; should these individuals detect even *the slightest hint* that their tenuously secured consensus is in jeopardy, they will reveal the depth of their despair through the volume of their hysterical outbursts.

Our vanities play a more immediate role in the selection process; by and large the relationship between producer and consumer naturally falls into a vanity feedback loop, mutually reinforcing and reconciling the one with the other. Disruption of the pleasure cycle, then, becomes the only real prohibition. Should two individuals focus on the same digitized hyperobject (a meme, a video or piece of news, an audience) with differing intentions (say, for example, integrity versus admiration), this naturally generates an endlessly self-propagating mimetic rivalry which can decimate whole communities.

I use the word 'community' loosely. As I have explained elsewhere, the hyperworld knows not the meaning of the word⁷. Absent some mediation with the lifeworld, it can only know simulation. Thus, these mimetic rivalries will only persist. There can be no reconciliation. The victimary mechanism can persist ad infinitum as there is virtually no agency to be found within a simulated community and thus no capacity for sacrifice and renewal. Rivalries foment without end in sight, causing the simulation to degenerate and incite the production of splinter groups which themselves break up and splinter again. Some may become defectors, but this only allows resentment to deepen on all sides.

Returning to the question of formality, there is a misguided notion that the decentralized and (supposedly) apolitical nature of the hyperworld entirely resolves the problem of corruption and degeneration found in the lifeworld. This line of argumentation is itself an extension of the belief in the predominance of rational individuals, a kind of union of egoists capable of self-interestedly creating something good and lasting. The absence of a formalized

⁷ Neal, Josh. "American Extremist: The Psychology of Political Extremism", *Imperium Press*, 2021.

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

disciplinary culture with a rigor of practice and self-overcoming, and of constructive critique and mentorship, leads to stagnation and self-aggrandizement⁸. The hyperworld is a double (in the Girardian sense) of the lifeworld, and thus contains within itself almost all of the problems associated with its supposed rival. The major distinction between the two is the hyperworld's intensification of the lifeworld's characteristic problems.

Lack and Parasociality Within the Hyperworld

The essential point of this essay is that we face an existential problem which, while not unique to the hyperworld, is magnified by it to such a degree that it enables our making it explicit. *Parasociality* was always a subtle aspect of the lifeworld, but rarely rose to the level of intelligible discourse. The hyperworld illustrates for us the psychological riddle of the veil we must conceal ourselves behind to find ourselves within the social. The critical problem posed to us when we allow the screen and the image to mediate our social experience is that once we are caught within their gaze, we *necessarily* fall into parasociality. Physical interactions that occur within the lifeworld offer us far more comprehensive information than is possible from a merely image-mediated interaction. The depth of investment is stronger and more honest in the lifeworld's more dynamic exposure and vulnerability. Parasociality then is the great plague of the digital spectacle, an innovation of the worst kind.

The parasocial relation never achieves any kind of wholism, or even proper demarcation. It can only hope to achieve the status of sycophancy. The lower man submits to the strength of the stronger, producing what Girard called metaphysical desire, while its resultant affects (obsession and resentment) spread, contaminating the whole of the space⁹. The problem of parasociality is brought to the forefront thanks to the cult of the screen. It is for this reason, chiefly, that the internet and internet culture cannot properly usurp the lifeworld's centrality to the eusocial order. In hypermodernity, sociality recedes even further into the Lacanian Real; though it increasingly stands just outside of our grasp, it nonetheless re-

8 Put more succinctly, what we are lamenting is the loss of an adversarial discursive culture.

9 Here, 'affect' has a social meaning distinct from its typical usage (synonymous with 'emotion')

mains as our foundation. What we may now identify as *the virtual principle* only encroaches on the lifeworld as the lifeworld recedes into itself, shrinks into the dirt, leaving exposed ground for the hyperworld to colonize.

If Freud was correct in identifying a dimension of the psyche which socializes the libido into conformity (the reality principle of the Ego), then we can correctly identify the virtual principle as its Giradian double within the hyperworld. However, the virtual principle does not socialize the individual. Or it may be more correct to say that it socializes the individual within a space which valorizes the Id and the pleasure principle. The violence and aggression of the lifeworld (violence which threatens the individual psychically and physically, threatening him into conformity) does not exist in the same way within the hyperworld. There are quantitatively fewer repercussions for transgression, so the virtual principle operates in a fundamentally inverted way as compared to Freud's reality principle. But the virtual principle is more than just a phenomenon of drives and pleasures; it is more fundamentally about distance and intimacy. The virtual principle is perhaps defined preeminently by its paradoxical imagistic nearness contrasted with the distance of intimacy, the combination of which is essential for the development of parasociality. Virtual orders impress themselves upon the individual, but their poverty of relational meaning – the absence of an intermediated encounter – causes the individual to collapse into solipsism. All relations become unidirectional and narcissistically charged, an objectification of the highest order.

By this point it should be evident that there is a lack at the heart of the hyperworld. The fundamental absence of intimacy owes much of its cause for being to the larger hypermodern trends of abstraction and undifferentiation. An essential feature of the hyperworld (and thus of the virtual principle itself) is this undifferentiatedness, a contamination of the same which corrupts all particularity. Undifferentiation contains its own repetition compulsion particularly in the hypermodern period, as the hypersubject denies the fact that it is a complete recapitulation of that which came before, but with only the slimmest and most superficial dimension of change. Only on a surface, ideophilic (ideologically fixated) level, can repetition stake its claim to the new. Yet this fact must be insisted upon, as the creative legitimacy of the hypersubject hinges upon the notion that

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

something meaningful is being advanced. In actuality however, the same formula has merely been reintroduced¹⁰. The hyperworld lacks an essential humanity.

Having said all this, the hyperworld is not without its virtues. Earlier we spoke of the potentiality innate to a new creation. We also spoke of the decrepitude of the lifeworld. Of course, what is available in the hyperworld is the capacity to transgress upon the borders of the morally and creatively sclerotic liberal totalitarianism. It allows us to resuscitate older knowledge forms as well as repurpose contemporary hegemonic knowledge forms beyond the limitations of ideological orthodoxy. In the hands of progressive academia, this knowledge resists new and meaningful interpretation. This is true across most disciplines – business, art, literature, music, and so on.

This tremendous capacity for renewal, the very promise of the hyperworld itself, is still very much alive despite the hegemonic forces of the lifeworld's attempts at regulating it. Nevertheless, the capacity for deception threatens to undermine the virtues of the internet and shatter its gifts. Deception takes several forms here: firstly, one of self-presentation (inaccurately presenting myself to others), secondly as self-representation (inaccurately presenting myself *to* myself), and in its final conclusion, one of parasociality (inaccurately believing in a real and meaningful exchange of intimacy due to the fundamentally deceptive grounding of the dynamic).

A new potentiality emerges, one which assuredly was not part of the intention of its creation, but which nevertheless avails itself to us whenever a new creation is birthed. The hyperworld is itself a mirror to the lifeworld, revealing its flaws in a new way such that we may re-enter and potentially correct it with a new perspective. With this mentality, we may engage its bringing-forthness and find its true purpose and place in our lives. As it stands, the hyperworld remains a sophomoric retreat whose most lasting contributions to the lifeworld are a slew of phantasy identities and pre-egoic ideophilias which have further poisoned the lifeworld.

There is an additional relation between the lifeworld and hyper-

10 Ideophilia, as defined in my previous work, refers to the fetishization of a singular notion, concept, or affect, which is then expanded beyond any reasonable justification. It loses all explanatory power and collapses into solipsistic phantasy.

world here, which is the inverse of the very promise we just described. In Lacanian terms the creative process as it relates to technology (in particular the internet), traverses from the Real to the Imaginary back again into the Real, now transformed. Of course, we must always bear in mind the imperceptibility of the Real; the creative energies which birth new technological forms (as much as such a thing can be said without wandering needlessly into error), proceed from a phantasy of the Real into the Imaginary, and then back into the phantasy. They emerge transformed, mutated, and even more detached than they were prior to the alchemical process which generated them. The poison of hyperreality then is an ever-present social potential which has been technologically liberated to more fully unleash its feedback loop upon the lifeworld.

The reality principle, in its fullest expression at least, is not merely a mediating force of the psyche. It is not simply something we must contend with so that, here and there, we may indulge our twisted desires and fulfill our pathological complexes in a less odious manner. Exercised properly, it is the will or necessity to submit oneself to a transcendent force as embodied within the social order, so that we may pursue lasting happiness and justice. Freud's model of consciousness leaves no possibility of reprieve from man's alleged existential ugliness. Though his image of man was incomplete, that does not mean we are incapable of appropriating his concepts and developing them further than he would have imagined. The *true* reality principle does not merely shelter man from the aggression of others, rather it unifies him with a higher principle that elevates him to a state of greater beauty, truth, and fulfillment than he would otherwise experience. Replacing the reality principle with that of the virtual further disempowers man, enslaving him to vice and subjecting him to the principles of more chthonic deities.

Rejoinders from the Lifeworld

Commonly we will hear defenses of the hyperworld which extoll its virtues and denigrate the decrepit and necrotized lifeworld. As we have already admitted, they are not without merit. However the same is true in the inverse. The habits and institutions of the lifeworld, even in their compromised condition, are themselves worthy of consideration. Formal mentorship, rigorous education and training, the humility that comes through subjecting oneself

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

to an existing hierarchal structure – these are but a few of the developments of the lifeworld which the hyperworld has not yet managed to simulate.

When denizens of the hyperworld, in their typically bellicose manner, tell us of the lifeworld's expiry date (and how it has already passed), they neglect the fact of the symbiotic relationship between the hyperworld and the lifeworld. This is but a microcosm of the larger chasm between technological developments and their 'organic' genesis. The two only compete with one another insofar as the two misunderstand and threaten one another. In fact we can think of instances where the two strike a balance, however imperfect, between one another (the emergence of cryptocurrencies, remote labor, etc) even after a period of intense and uncertain contestation. At least, in as far as commerce is concerned, the two wrestle with one another. Even if the result is undesirable, this process highlights the fact that neither realm can indefinitely ignore the developments occurring within its companion space.

The hyperworld, engaged in a pattern of generational dispute common to all innovations and developments, situates its excellence and patent superiority over the lifeworld by eulogizing it while the body still draws breath. The lifeworld mounts its defense by proclaiming the transience of novelty and denigrating the hyperworld for not sufficiently developing a dogma of its own – for not having an immediately apprehensible telos. Such arguments are, when compared to the true distinction to be made between the two, inconsequential. The superiority of the lifeworld is found in the fact that its lack is capable of being filled. Desire's supposed insatiability can be quenched, ordered, and given meaningful purpose. Organisms of the lifeworld are capable of this by participating in a transcendent ideal, a psychospiritual unity which binds them to Eulerian circles of the social, fused together by commonality, duty and devotion¹¹.

The hyperworld insufficiently simulates this ordinal structuring in large part because of its narcissistic drive toward differentiation for difference's sake. It is too preoccupied, too bound up within the logic of hypermodern marketing, which does not seek to show how one thing *may be better than the other*, but rather *how it is dis-*

11 Eulerian diagrams, as opposed to Venn diagrams, illustrate the actually existing relationships of a given set.

tinct from the other. This endless cycle of differentiation achieves nothing of profundity, but merely cycles through the established spectrum of positions, beliefs, icons and rhetoric. The essential sameness of hyperreality ushers in the pointless desire for differentiation – difference for differences sake. We must indulge in the fantasy of dissimilarity to obfuscate the essential repetitiousness of all culture. This necessarily is the consequence of obliterating actual differences where they truly exist. The hyperworld collapses all being into a form of homogenous androgyny and then over-estimating (if not entirely fabricating) the difference in products, commodities, and social movements which do not in fact exist. If at this point I have ventured into repetition, it is only in the hopes of emphasizing the significance (and falseness) of this rivalry. Attempts at such differentiation can only reveal their similarity, and instead of intensifying the rivalry, denizens of each realm ought to seek reconciliation.

Reconciliation can only come through a mutual recognition of the shared similarity, a similarity which does not neglect particularity, but rather, situates them justly in accordance with their type, place and need. Critique from one realm to the other, rather than perceived as a kind of existential arms race, has escalated toward the destruction of both. We ought to be seeking a means for achieving unity between the hyperworld and the lifeworld, between episteme and techne, and with the ultimate aim of rupturing the pre-egoic phantasy.

This notion of the ‘phantasy’ has been used vigorously throughout and deserves some elucidating of its own before we continue. Integral to Klein’s theory of early infancy, the phantasy (innate to the paranoid-schizoid position of the neonatal child) being predominantly concerned with annihilation (we may dispense with the unconscious motivation attributed by Klein, as the weakness of the infant is a material reality and not a psychological phenomenon), is undifferentiated, pre-egoic, and prone to splitting. As such, the individual enraptured by phantasy marshals his creative energies in precisely the way one might expect: fearfully and short-sighted, making enemies where none need be made. The harshness of life, the natural tendency of the powerful to exploit the weak drive the propensity for individuals to partake in creative acts (such as childbirth) for narcissistic and maladapted compen-

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

satory reasons. This projection of one's own lack into the object of creation, as well as the very mystery of consciousness itself are typically the reasons behind the phenomenon we are discussing here.

Fears of death and destruction, of self-overcoming, of uncertainty and alienation are the undercurrents of the Kleinian phantasy. These projections, which always emphasize a lack and seek to punitively satisfy an unrealized desire through totalitarianism, create the capacity for both overestimations *and* underestimations of character and ability. We see now the origin of the problem of disintegration between psyche and reality, between man and creation, and between the lifeworld and the hyperworld.

Primary Virtuality in the Pre-egoic Individual

The parasociality of the hyperworld is secondary to the parasociality found within the lifeworld. This is so because the virtual principle active in the hyperworld is presaged by its phantastical and pre-egoic counterpart in the lifeworld. Now to clarify, for Klein the paranoid-schizoid position is a normative phase in the very early stages of human development. It is to be progressed beyond as the individual becomes less inner-focused and more capable of interacting with the external world as a discrete phenomenon from itself. For Klein there is often a periodic return to this phase throughout the course of one's life. It is my contention (and I am stretching the boundaries of this concept here), that many people never meaningfully exit this stage. Or rather that it is a relatively safer psychic space for many to operate within and so they either regress to it in times of stress (potentially forever) or, in some sense of the word, *choose* to occupy it. When we refer to someone as 'pre-egoic', we are referring to an individual who is fundamentally fragmented (only receiving a 'form' through engagement with the other), image-focused, death-fearing, and vulnerable to rivalries of metaphysical desire. The phantasy is endemic to this period of an individual's life, and so when we assume one of these psychological phenomenon, the others follow in tandem. Therefore virtuality is another way of describing this Kleinian phenomenon; the virtual principle is the law that governs phantastical subjectivity.

Parasociality, in the lifeworld as in the hyperworld, results from projection and phantasy, from the disregulated flow of desires and ambivalences which contort the minds of those afflicted by it. We

can only expect creation to yield parasociality when its creator holds such a one-sided image of man himself in his mind. Man is something to detest or something to worship, and as such he is an object, an abstraction. Man the idea overtakes man as he exists. For the layman (as well as the morally profligate), those visionary images and flashes of the future produced by phantastical subjectivity are impossible to discern from higher forms of creativity. The outside viewer, in being so enamored by the brilliance of creativity, hardly proposes any strong criticism and as such fails to rebuke the antisocial fruit of phantastical creativity.

Phantastical subjectivity enters into a dramatized engagement of the paranoid-schizoid position, constantly seeing threats of annihilation where they do not exist, or reacting with inappropriate strength and frenzy at the possibility (or even mere suggestion) of their existence. I am not speaking of mere theatricality or of some performative dimension of human behavior, but rather a real phenomenon which reorganizes man's entire nervous system. His responses are real and lasting, regardless of the falsities which generated them. It is a melodrama with serious consequences for man's health and happiness, as the creative act in *techne* is subjugated to the malevolent deities who inhabit this undifferentiated, pre-egoic paranoid state.

It follows quite clearly then, that the hyperreality of the internet and social media is second to the innate or embodied hyperreality nascent to the phantasy. Hyperreality is an ever realizable mode of being, as the eyes are the first screen. Phantasy brings to the fore a certain imagined experience, a particular construct of man and society; the antisocial tendency derived from this produces the distance which alienates man from his environment and his loved ones. The virtual principle is already at work within the phantasy, and it is for this precise reason why the individual struggles with demarcation, discernment, and differentiation. An example of this is transhumanism as a phantasy-derived antisocial tendency: the apologist struggles to see the qualitative difference in meaning between wearing a pair of eyeglasses and mechanically replacing (or merely enhancing) the body, instead choosing to insist on the mere quantitative chain of events which ontologically equalizes the two¹². It is the virtual principle already operational behind

12 This example is not a mere thought experiment, but rather a near word for

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

the phantasy which loses sight of the difference between man and woman, between profit and exploitation, between criticism and deconstruction, between compassion and manipulation. These are all special cases of the essential loss of the distinction between truth and falsehood.

In essence we are highlighting the degree to which fiction is the most essential commonality between the phantasy, the virtual principle, and hyperreality. Hyperreality in the Baudrillardian sense is understood as a lack of emotional engagement with reality. Fictions predominate as the reality principle falls to the wayside. This is especially true when we consider the Real as the shadow of the Virtual; the Real is split away and condemned as evil and incapable of integration. The fiction necessarily swells with power, annexing more psychic space for itself. On a long enough timeline this sets the stage for tragedy, but let us not concern ourselves with that at the moment. Phantasy, which by now has already absorbed nearly all potential and actual affect, leaves only the residue of a weakened and agency-less remainder. It acts as a social toxin, poisoning the larger Eulerian circles of social organization surrounding it, reproducing itself at every step along the way.

This remainder shrivels and decays as the psychic bloat of phantastical subjectivity is catalyzed by its incongruous nature, as it is emboldened by failure and pain (or even misapprehended pleasure). It exerts a catastrophically transformative influence on creativity, mimetically reproducing itself because of the intensity with which it is felt by others. It is seen as 'more real' in large part because of its inherently transgressive dimension. Fear of annihilation allows the death drive (since we are now speaking of an adult and no longer a child, we may reintroduce the unconscious hypothesis of Freud and Klein) to manifest in the various forms of transhumanism which are now on the horizon.

Pathology as a Parallel Dimension

It is perhaps necessary to further elucidate the nature and definition of the phantasy, beyond mere psychopathological language, beyond an appeal to drives, instincts, and impulses. It is indistinct, non-discrete, fear-oriented, and pain-sensitive. It is inordinately

word restatement of an argument I've had with several different people on the subject of technology and transhumanism.

preoccupied with its own sense of power, of its own Godlike capacity to imagine and control. We recognize this as pure fiction, though we must also recognize this to be a profound understatement. It is an alternative reality, an unimaginable and almost imperceptible parallel consciousness. It is Schrödinger's soul. Moreover, it is a thoroughly elaborated tragedy. The God of the phantasy is Dionysus, due to its proximity to madness, ecstasy, theatricality, and its desire to abstain from suffering and misery. It is a lower state of development, thus subterranean, completely hidden, inaccessible, and thus properly chthonic.

Phantastical subjectivity conjures up an utterly alien social universe, complete with its own gravity and particles, its own anthropology, and as such, its own impenetrable system of logic and rule-making. It has fixed psychological characteristics as we have discussed, such as the dual phenomenon of splitting and death-fixedness. One dimension of splitting – fragmentation – finds its realization in particular through the continual process of neurotic delineation. This reflects its co-dependency with the external by continually self-dividing and drawing up new interior boundaries, transgressing against them, and then redrawing them, *ad infinitum*. As I illustrated earlier, for many individuals it is the baseline, the mean, of individual subjectivity that one always regresses to. This is in part due to the continually evolving process of alienation which has unfolded across the technological age. But it is also a result of the rigidity of form, the need to reduce self-identification and consciousness to only a handful of possibilities by partitioning the natural polytheism of the mind to but a few acceptable, over-articulated concepts.

The limitation of possibility is the consequence of the rejection of the absolute, of the Total Man and all his richness. The developing person's desire is stifled by those closest to him just as those around him suffer the ever constricting effects of the modern world. The psychic split is not primary, but a consequence of the unfolding of history. Why does splitting occur? Its origin is not contingent upon the dynamics of a singular individual or a localized set of relations, but a profound counterwill, a will against life, against fullness and against complexity. It is a consequence of the imitation of man through *techne*, the ways in which man is made redundant by *techne*, and in particular the way in which we

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

reflect techne back on to man via metaphor, reducing the mind to the products and effects of the mind. The psychic split causes man to lose his enantiomorphic capacity, and instead, the good and the bad merely intensify rather than extend into their opposite (and in transforming, realize their mutual compatibility).

Let us pause to take further note on this idea of the Total Man, before we continue along our way. The two essential components to this equation of pathology and parallelity may reduce, as we have already noted, to the disregulated flow of desires and the non-specular, undifferentiated ego. As regards the latter, we are at an impasse; either the individual lacks a total image of man, or else the image that he *does* possess is one of craven horror. It is possible that he managed to capture a mere glimpse of the Total Man and grew stupefied at the sight of him. Regardless of the causality (which is not to say that it is insignificant), all possibilities lead us to the same psychological position. Because of the fragmented self's absence of ego, the individual is torn ambivalently between the pull of mimetic desire and the push of sub-threshold biological necessities. The one gets confused for the other, with the decisive narrative influence coming from the paranoiac imperative local to this stage of development. It need not be elaborated any further how this combustible subjectivity can and does adapt poorly to environmental and technological developments, and in particular to the digital panopticon of the internet.

Now, the Real can seep into the Imaginary, just as much as the inverse is true. Put more bluntly, it is possible to achieve a measure of authenticity through a sufficiently narrow but intense focusing of desire which can puncture through the Imaginary, granting the individual a limited but serviceable access to the Real, and as such, the Social. Such a process is not unlike the adolescent who learns to ride their bicycle with the aid of training wheels; they are not capable of navigating the wide open road of the Real. They therefore must patrol a tightly regimented path with tremendous assistance, or else they would totally lose their equilibrium and injure themselves. It is possible to go further than the boundaries we are presently aware of. History is certainly replete with examples to this very point. But we are still not yet ready to discuss this, only hint at it as we just have.

Gods in the Mind

In discussing these matters we find that we are merely being confronted, once again, with millennia old social problems. However, the alienated state of modern society amplifies the difficulty of intersubjectively mediating experiences of the Real. Intensifying objectification of other people, destruction of the family, the omnipresence of screens and images, the overemphasis placed on autonomy, the simultaneous public expulsion and private militarization of responsibility, the constricting of social organization, and the absolute decimation of social trust has created a new cultural paradigm. Our contemporary social environment produces this intense schizoid neurosis, preventing people from genuinely interacting with one another, let alone entering into a jointly mediated confrontation with the Real. There is no unifying principle, no transcendent God which oversees and formalizes all, but rather a pantheon of antisocial gods, each responsible for its own realm (or subset of realms) which are unrevealed and thus unknowable. The only exceptions are the more psychologically durable or masochistic individuals who elect to naively and misguidedly enter into the phantasy of another. It is essential to understand that there is always a set of principles which appear divine operating within consciousness (as Hillman has argued), and so we must ultimately concern ourselves with the nature of the gods which govern the subjectivity of the individual¹³.

Let us assume, as Joseph Campbell and Adolf Bastian did, the existence of an essential and contingent folk mythos, itself a divine expression of a particularistic ethnic consciousness. Ensclosed within what Bastian called 'the societal soul', pockets of collectives exist as distinct, self-contained ontological spheres. This essential alienness of man creates a barrier of unintelligibility, existentially segregating the various tribes of man. The only force capable of rupturing this ontoethnological divide is the genocidal scrutiny of a willful and vigorous analysis (a violence which is displaced, as men of previous eras would no doubt have found more practical applications of such hostility). The essential unintelligibility of man to man is an a priori fact. This is however far from the most troubling aspect of the whole affair.

Conditions worsen once we begin to consider the confused re-

13 Hillman, James. "Re-Visioning Psychology", *William Morrow Publications*, 1975

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

ligiousness of our time, the degraded ideals and false gods which presently dictate consciousness. This essential unintelligibility is not interminable; however these additional psychical layers create a further level of unintelligibility to the social order which make joint mediation, empathy, and intersubjectivity increasingly difficult. The virtual principle reigns supreme in our time, rendering love and intimacy, respect and authority, dignity and integrity nearly inaccessible to most people. Within the phantasy the other becomes the Big Other; the self-serving fictitiousness of the virtual artificially extends the distance between man to man, and also man to God. Speaking in archetypal terms, this form of consciousness is related to the rivalrous brother, the jealous demigod, the borderline mistress, and so on. It is the *'that'* which refuses to be what it is.

The virtual extends this *'ethos of what it is not'* through a melodrama which banishes the interplay of consciousnesses to hell. This throttles intersubjective mediation in favor of an infantile mode of being, preoccupied with falsehoods and harm-avoidance. It is the triumph of non-differentiation and, if we are to take Freud and Klein at face value, the triumph of a simultaneously naïve and omnipotent self-destructiveness. The psychological importance of gods, and their self-evident plurality, is demonstrated in the mind's analog status in relation to the given world¹⁴. The psychological is a reflection of the theological. In the work of James Hillman, concepts and ideas are divine. The 'polytheism' of the mind is a reflection of the polytheism of Being. However, even in polytheistic religions there is a hierarchal order, with a most supreme god sitting atop a pantheon of lesser gods. Platonists and Christians attempt to resolve this through the One and the Many, preserving the fact of radical difference despite sublating it to an absolute unity.

But we can sidestep the metaphysical conundrum posed by such ideas by speaking of the competing *images* of God as opposed to the existence of real entities. Regardless of the position one elects to take, we invariably arrive upon the problem of existential gaps or chasms and the irreconcilability of Being (which in an ever centralizing technocratic and mercantile order, forms a consensus which poses problems for the issue of creativity and the relation

14 Jaynes, Julian. "The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind", *Houghton Mifflin, Mariner Books*, 1976.

of the individual to the social order). We may say that if the Man-as-Creator actually worships a particular god or merely conceives a different image of God than those around him, that the fruits of his creation may prove disastrous to the entire social order. His conception (or practice) may be more correct or even less correct, but in both cases, the fundamental irreconcilability and difference between his cognitive process and those around him constitutes an existential and cataclysmic threat to the fruitful development of his civilization. Ethos precedes ethics, and so the character of what one worships (whether imagistic or actual) naturally informs the instantiation of its core principle(s). Hedonistic consequentialism does not provide us the firm grounding with which to approach innovation and guide it appropriately. We must look to the divination of first principles, to the revelation of one's most deeply held beliefs, if we are to assess the fruitfulness of their creative instinct.

Before we move forward with the analysis, let us briefly summarize the arguments which have thus far been made:

- The virtual, then (as is true with the phantasy), is a denial of consciousness just as much as it is a lapse, a recession, or even a stagnation of consciousness.
- The internet is *virtuality par excellence* and represents a *dystopic paradiso*, a simulacra which seeks to invade the Real. Should this argument prove correct, we may, at least partially, dismiss the Baudrillardian account of the simulacra for it always has an original. The inspiration of the simulacra merely resides within the phantasy.
- Its invasion will not so much be repelled as it will simply collapse into its own impossibility. However, it constructs *ex postfacto* an ethic ignorant of the originary ethos. This makes an authentic reformation of the internet seemingly impossible. Only a reconciliation with (and overcoming of the distance within) consciousness, can enable us to reconstruct our creations and situate them justly.

Theatre and Suffering

It is with this view in mind that we must also reevaluate psychopathology. In a way we are returning to the very beginnings of psychoanalysis and yet at the same time we are exorcising it of its drab and cumbersome naturalization. We may view personality disorders, neuroses and psychotic conditions not merely as genetic phenomena or social constructions, but as enactments of a divinatory drama operating far beneath the awareness of the individual. We call such individuals insane and fear them for their unintelligible and chaotic behavior. However, we fear even more intensely the conscious individual, the actor who intimately and preternaturally understands the god which directs his tragedy. Whereas a psychotic rambling schizoid nonsense on the street-corner points seemingly to nowhere, causing us to regard him as a lost soul abandoned by the world (and as a consequence, beneath us). The vitality of the conscious individual, his teeming coherence, and the abundance of moral gifts in his possession troubles us all the more for the conscious actor always points in the same direction with the fervor of a zealot. Even if he does not invite us to follow him along his divine path, the fact that we can recognize the divinity of his course terrifies us.

Psyche is animated by a divine force. That divine force flows through the genetic, environmental, political, and historical contingencies which give rise to the phenomenon we know as psychopathologies. Hillman viewed psychopathology as an essential challenge to Being, an unending process of meaning-development capable of producing great fulfillment and wisdom. Rather than a phenomenon to be naturalized, psychopathology is to be experienced, to be enacted. Pain is play. Pain is *a* play.

An insufficiently religious individual cannot pierce the veil of the phantasy to share in jointly mediated intersubjectivity. In some ways, the inverse is true as well. As Jung once said, "Religion is a defense against the religious experience". Overly cynical, and not a sentiment I wholeheartedly endorse, but in a sense it is true insofar as a tyrannically hostile and repressive religious order closes down the psychospiritual space between members of opposing religious orders. Just as often *within* a given religious order, too. *Suo quisque fitu sacrificial faciat* – the dictum of a soft religious tolerance is thus made impossible. Perhaps we can never truly share a God amongst

differing peoples, but a shared image of God is another matter entirely. With a proper image, the creator may reconcile himself and his creation with the social order more broadly, insulating us against the horrific vindictiveness of our own demiurgic potential.

The Impossibility of a Left-wing Revolution

All this talk of reformation and revolution, of transforming the world and rescuing creativity but thus far, we have spoken little about which sector of the social order this energy will originate from. With great confidence I can say that it will not come from the biotypal left-wing. Mark Fisher famously announced the age of Capitalist Realism; with that announcement came the supposed triumph of the merchant class and the impossibility of imagining a future beyond accumulation, exploitation, and alienation. Sadly for Fisher and his many acolytes, this proclamation was not a truth statement about the condition of the world, but rather an unconscious projection out onto the world regarding the viability of a left-wing revolt against the capitalist order. The mass proliferation of pathological consciousness among self-identified left-wing individuals is not just a testament to the high neuroticism associated with being left-wing, but is more directly a consequence of the libidinal capture of the Left by Capital. Their energies are repressed, confused, stagnated. They have no movement. No depth. Cruel as it may be to say, we should not long ponder the reasons why Fisher took his own life. We merely need to consider what the true meaning of his magnum opus actually pointed towards.

The rigidity of the French intellectual movement of the twentieth century also said more about its own thinkers than the actual conditions of the world. Accurate as a great many works from that era were, the future became a slave to their language – a seductive language which gave a kind of fatalistic order and predictability to an increasingly destabilizing world. Of course, this is to say nothing of the well established fact of the American Intelligence community's unique interest in the post-Marxist thought developing across continental Europe. There is a certain bleak comedy to an intellectual and artistic milieu so intently focused on the question of revolution, and yet so utterly incapable of it. Liberation movements were in reality, the great anti-power of the preceding century. This served as both a geopolitical bludgeon against the

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

USSR during the Cold War, and also as a demoralization of politics which could challenge the establishment within the West.

It was during this period that the left-wing lost its revolutionary capacity. And while we may look at the internet today and see it as the fertile ground which spawned the various leftist ideophilias which reterritorialized the lifeworld, their essential depravity and life-denying character all but ensures an expiry date. Far from being incapable of imagining a future, those with the true revolutionary character are only now emerging from their inferiority complex. Having consciously encountered the dominating, intelligence community-aided might of a tyrannical system of language, it is possible for biotypal rightists, or perhaps even another as-of-yet unknown type, to rupture the phantasy and restore authentic creativity. Of all the varying forms of the innovative instinct, it is the realm of the political that is in particular need of such a rejuvenation.

The Overman-as-Avatar

The hyperworld's predominant function is that of a playground, and the freedom of play enables its occupants to get lost in what often amount to trivial pursuits. Trivial in the sense that the types of projects participated in are of secondary importance, essentially vain curiosities lacking in truly divine first principles. The challenges which confront the lifeworld find themselves multiplying and deepening, all while the treats of the hyperworld detain and delay valuable psychic energy.

An extension of the free flowing sea of desire, the hyperworld is a space perfectly suited to assuaging the failures of the lifeworld. It heals the absence of physical communities by replacing them with the semi-presence of digital communities. The hyperworld offers its hostages a sense of connectivity and social integration decreasingly available to the denizens of the lifeworld. As we have already detailed however, the distance of the hyperworld robs this relationality of any lasting impact. The fruits of the hyperworld are only truly available to those who can bridge the gap between the Real and the Virtual. They will be available first to the Overman endowed with glorious purpose; like Prometheus stealing the power of the Gods and turning it over to man, he will share the possibility of this new mode of being with all mankind. Only the man with

an eye to the future, who possesses the keenest sense of the present and the fullest understanding of the past, has the capacity to shatter the collective phantasy and *truly* create. His creation differs in that it would not entrap man and his order within a psychic dystopia, but instead allows for a furthering, deepening existence capable of tremendous beauty and profundity. This Overman is an avatar, and his creativity would reflect that of the greatest divine power.

The psychological and spiritual challenges of the lifeworld are mirrored in the hyperworld such that, what one must learn to overcome them both in the truly social environment and the digital one, for the two are doubles. Even if the one is the lesser of the two, their essential structures and demands are quite similar. The veneer of competition between the two worlds (just as with the veneer of competition between man and his many creations) is illusory, little more than a product of his own psychic split. And this split of course, first took place between man and the Divine. Man's divine split occurred because his conception of God shrunk, and as such was antagonized by developing successes in other domains. The stolen fire of the gods, given to man, tricked man into thinking he could be God. Only now, this new Promethean Overman is not a thief, but a participant. He does not take from the divine, but is instead the recipient of its beneficence.

The Overman who bridges the hyperworld and the lifeworld, who subsumes the fruit of creation to the health of the social order, is not an Overman-as-God, but an Overman-as-Avatar. He is a representation of the Divine, or more accurately an embodiment. If he is first among men it is only because he is second before the divine principle. Both in the hyperworld and in the lifeworld, he restores ambition and authenticity to man; freeing him of resentment, fear, and vanity. In lieu of these values, intellect does advance, but it also cannibalizes itself. We can vicariously enjoy ourselves as voyeurs to the development of a distant other, but we once again fall victim to the screen, to the Virtual. We come to desire the alienated small-scale success of the man on the fringe. Without the Divine, all that can truly persist are mimetic and metaphysical rivalries. Unlike in the lifeworld however, the Virtual can only offer a partial-sacrifice (mockery, disgust, objectification, etc). Its relief comes in the form of an immediate and alienated satisfaction that never truly saves the community, for once again, there is truly no community

ETHICS AND THE TRAUMA OF CREATION

to save. The Overman-as-Avatar has a steep hill to climb in this regard. His duty is to overcome the *inavailability* of radical thought to conventional wisdom. An unenviable challenge to be sure, as the pure otherness of radical consciousness is not merely *unavailable* to the status quo, like a grocery store temporarily starved of green apples, but it is *completely outside of and inaccessible to it*. Radical thought is deliberately marginalized by the power structure, but then, it is also deliberately ostracized by the denizens of the status quo. The man who preaches a denial of all the pleasures offered by the distorted lifeworld is a man destined to have few friends and fewer comrades. History has shown us however, that he can prevail and so the present challenge demands he resuscitate and resituate this alterity within our present context.

It is possible to abolish the reign of the Virtual and to resituate it back in the position of a developmental fragment. A piece of the whole with no independent significance from the part it plays in progressing the individual and the collective along the course of their maturation. All of this to simply say: the ethic of the internet (as with all creations) must go beyond the present attitude. All future technologies must be made with that *'aftermath of the aftermath'* mentality, to abuse a phrase first uttered by Jean Baudrillard. He spoke of life as *'an orgy'*, which for him was synonymous with the process of libidinal liberation. It gave way to the period *'after the orgy'*, a period of profound indifference to particularity, culminating in a self-erasure which we are still grappling with. Our hyperreal condition, having emerged *'after the orgy'* is the attempt, in some sense, to escape from the mundane hell-of-the-permanent-present known as liberated desire. The *'aftermath of the aftermath'* will once again reintroduce a formal structure (one that is eusocial and eugenic) to our psyche by reuniting us with transcendent principles, assisting us in once again occupying that pre-conscious unity of being which we have increasingly strayed from. Whether we grant more credence to the polytheistic theory of consciousness or to the theory of the image of God depends on whether we prefer psychological explanations or metaphysical ones. It is likely that there is in fact a through line connecting these two trains of thought, though I have not yet discovered it. What remains significant here is that we have uncovered the origins of hyperreality. We have also granted tremendous clarity to the virtual principle, and

FIRSTNESS #3

have chartered a course for the Overman back to the Divine.

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

MARCUS CUNNINGHAM

“Eine Historische Wahrheit ist nur einmal Wahr”
Carl Schmitt

History does not repeat, but it certainly rhymes. We observe similar figures encountering similar problems, we see familiar structures and structural conflicts, we observe distinct patterns given certain circumstances and conditions. However, no piece of history is testable under lab conditions, the similarity of circumstances does not predestine the same outcome. Carl Schmitt said that a historical truth can be true only once. I can think of no better an example of this than the fate of Kerensky. The man came to power in the 1917 February revolution in Russia to overthrow the Tsarist regime which was having a difficult time modernising. Kerensky was perfectly aware of the possibility of a “second revolution” happening, particularly he thought of the French Revolution with the reactionary coup of Thermidor removing and executing the initial radical Robespierre. After the Kornilov affair had passed and the popularity of the Bolsheviks had reached an all time high Kerensky underestimated their threat, maintaining his policy of “no enemies to the left” instead of crushing them and was blindsided in October. History repeated, only it repeated differently. For this sake of this difference inherent to repetition, the only iron clad rule which will we will hold to in the ensuing investigation is the absolute necessity of contingency, deterministic models of history will be thoroughly rejected.

Models of history must inevitably fall into discussions of ontology, for otherwise history cannot disclose itself as structured. Yet if an ontological theory fails in the face of empirical history it must be discarded, historical contingency must take absolute prece-

dence to ensure theory discloses rather than conceals its structure. The theory has to explain the facts and it has to be consistent with the ontology we apply to other domains of applied theory in the empirical sciences. In this essay I will argue that process ontology, in the form of structural realism and theories of structural conflict are the only adequate approaches to explain history.

We do not need to think in terms of linearity in order to develop a structural theory. When predicting weather cycles using models from dynamical systems theory we are able to uncover patterns from the seeming randomness of the weather. These patterns are themselves so complex that we cannot make predictions beyond certain limits, but on particular time horizons we have achieved considerable accuracy. In the historical context the first major attempt at a structural analysis of history to explain dynamics was Karl Marx's historical materialism. Marx's theory however had several flaws, the most fundamental of which was its economic determinism. To provide the foundations for a new structural analysis of history which overcomes this determinism the theorist to whom I am most indebted is Bertrand De Jouvenel. Jouvenel provides a theory of structural analysis which places primacy on the political over and above the economic and his analysis can easily be integrated into a broader ontological framework which will build a new and improved historical materialism.

The extent of analysis which will go here to form an understanding of the dynamics of history based on understanding the structural dynamics of political relations will be necessarily incomplete due to the fact that I will not be examining ideological or religious dynamics in their internal complexity. To reduce ideology and religion down to terms of structural power analysis would be a mistake. This does not restrain political analysis from having something to say about ideology or religion. Political powers often promote particular ideologies or religions as opposed to others for reasons that a structural analysis of the political reveals, but to reduce the contents of the religion to such analysis is a mistake. Theological or metaphysical meanings inherent to religions and ideologies are genuine products of theological and metaphysical inquires, they may be *instrumentalized* for political purposes but this does not mean this instrumental purpose is what motivated their generation in the first instance.

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

Explanatory power, explanatory scope and predictive power is where theories go to die. In these areas Marxism has died, but this does not mean a new historical materialism which overcomes the central obstacles which held it back cannot be erected. The central error of Marxism in its materialism was that it took from classical economics the atomist ontology of Newtonian physics. It is not Marx's fault that he was writing half a century before the emergence of Quantum mechanics and requisite developments in ontology which undermined traditional atomism. This meant that Marx reproduced many of the same *ontological* errors which we see in classical and neoclassical economics. Aaron Hunter's paper in the first issue of this journal, *Econofuturism (part 1)*, deals with this. The central error of Marx's historicism was that there has been an inverse tendency for historicising the scientific disciplines to undermine their objectivity, as is exemplified by misreadings of Kuhn or in pessimistic meta-induction, whereas going on the counter offensive and applying science to history had been rarer, but is totally necessary. Thus there needs to be a new materialism to form historical materialist analysis and new historical tools to found a new synthesis.

Part 1: Structural Power Analysis

Structural Realism

My basic thesis in this paper is that political structures operate analogously to organic structures as described by the so called 'natural sciences'. This could be something like a physical systems, an organism or a species, all of which do work as dynamical systems. Dynamical systems are eloquently described by an eponymous theory, which has been applied in thermodynamics, biology, neuroscience, and many other disciplines in myriad ways. The likes of Gilbert Simondon, Giles Deleuze, Steven French and Manuel DeLanda are my main influences in viewing these convergent developments as a new ontological paradigm.¹ On the historical side

1 Steven French is a contemporary English philosopher primarily known for his structural realist exposition of physics, the most important work being *The Structure of the World: Metaphysics and Representation*. Gilbert Simondon was a French philosopher who created a "relational realism" in his magnum opus *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*. Deleuze radicalised Simondon's ontology in a number of his works most importantly *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* with Felix Guattari. He made a rigorous contribution to struc-

there have been a number of thinkers who have posited something similar with respect to history, but they have focused mostly on natural history to show its impact on “human history”. This typically takes the form of positing natural phenomena like race, geography and/or resource availability as playing a vital role in the historical processes pertaining to social and political organisation.

Fernand Braudel, Manuel DeLanda, William McNeil, Arthur Iberall, and Immanuel Wallerstein are all exemplars of this way of thinking. Their work has influenced the work here, but the task at hand with this essay is to examine political systems as dynamical systems. This essay therefore has more of a direct historical focus as opposed to a scientific one, this however isn't merely a difference in emphasis. Material historical processes exist in interactions with political structures, but these structures are themselves autonomous and have internal complexity; they aren't simply the necessary outcomes material processes. Some of the thinkers mentioned here recognise this contingency, particularly those from the discipline of international relations, but some do not largely as a consequence of Marx's influence. To set up our argument for the contingency of the political, a basic understanding of dynamical systems and structural realism broadly is necessary.

The obvious entry point to this ‘new materialism’ is thinking in terms of historicising essences as in Darwinism and contrasting it with the older Aristotelian teleological perspective. Aristotelian hylomorphism was a response to Platonism's lack of operative explanatory power in explaining the genesis of forms in nature. Rather than having an archetypal origin as in the Platonist account, forms become the *entelechy* in Aristotle, the purpose towards which things realise their potential, the acorn striving towards the end of the tree, the boy striving towards the end of man. Aristotelianism is a philosophy of man finding his place in nature by fulfilling his end of excellence or eudaemonia, rather than the proto-gnosticism we find in Platonism of man's alienation from

tural realism with his notions of the virtual and the actual, thus modally clarifying the project, and with his notion of counter actualisation completely avoids a “top down” view with any power on the side of possibility compared to real things. Manuel DeLanda develops his version of conceptualisation of Deleuze's core argument and contributes with his own understandings from analytic philosophy of science and subsequent scientific developments in Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy. All have contributed immensely to my understanding of ontology.

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

the eternal realm of forms in our impoverished realm of temporality which distorts them.

Aristotle's brilliant innovations over Plato gave the forms operative movement and far more actionable explanation, but nonetheless is hugely outdated based on subsequent developments to Aristotle over thousands of years. Aristotelian essentialism as an explanation for the unity and identity of forms however runs into serious problems in accounting for morphogenetic processes. Darwinism is correctly seen as in large part a refutation of teleology due to the fact that it immanentises forms as historical responses to particular problems in the environment. The essential character of species emerges as a solution to the problem of survival. There is a multiplicity of solutions to the problem of survival in different species and different possible selection options which are contradictory.

Rather than a unified static species-essence, there is the space of contradictory possibilities which are resolved in a dynamic and complex relation to an itself transforming environmental problematic, where species are malleable adaptive systems in a feedback loop. Forms are produced which can be more or less adaptive in history, less adaptive possibilities lose to more adaptive possibilities. Thus in order to explain the fossil record and the clear dynamism of species we need to posit their evolution in time. Historicising essence therefore must replace essence itself with a *problematic* which has a multiplicity of potential solutions. In other words, the traditional metaphysical language of objects around us as we experience them need to be *historicised* to describe what is behind the production of that world. The process of individuation must be placed anterior in our ontology to the categorical form of the constituted individual things we encounter, which are products rather than actual ontological entities which are basic.

To quote Delanda on this *new* materialism and its relevance to history:

It should come as no surprise, then, that the current penetration of science by historical concerns has been the result of advances in these two disciplines. Ilya Prigogine revolutionised thermodynamics in the 1960s by showing that the classical results were valid only for closed systems, where the overall quantities of energy are always conserved. If one allows an intense flow of energy in and out of a system (that is,

if one pushes it far from equilibrium), the number and type of possible historical outcomes greatly increases. Instead of a unique and simple form of stability, we now have multiple coexisting forms of varying complexity (static, periodic, and chaotic attractors). Moreover, when a system switches from one stable state to another (at a critical point called a bifurcation), minor fluctuations may play a crucial role in deciding the outcome. Thus, when we study a given physical system, we need to know the specific nature of the fluctuations that have been present at each of its bifurcations; in other words, we need to know its history to understand its current dynamical state.

And what is true of physical systems is all the more true of biological ones. Attractors and bifurcations are features of any system in which the dynamics are not only far from equilibrium but also nonlinear, that is, in which there are strong mutual interactions (or feedback) between components. Whether the system in question is composed of molecules or of living creatures, it will exhibit endogenously generated stable states, as well as sharp transitions between states, as long as there is feedback and an intense flow of energy coursing through the system. As biology begins to include these nonlinear dynamical phenomena in its models—for example, the mutual stimulation involved in the case of evolutionary “arms races” between predators and prey—the notion of a “fittest design” will lose its meaning. In an arms race there is no optimal solution fixed once and for all, since the criterion of “fitness” itself changes with the dynamics. As the belief in a fixed criterion of optimality disappears from biology, real historical processes come to reassert themselves once more.^{2 3}

In order to move from this intuitive biological example towards a general ontology which replaces ‘billiard ball’ materialism, dual-

2 Manuel DeLanda, *1000 years of nonlinear history* (Zone Books, 1997) p.14

3 There are 2 notes in the original text suggesting further reading. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1984). For the developments in physics and particularly chemistry and thermodynamics in shaping a new materialism. And in *Evolutionary Biology* he looks at non-reductionists who don't want to chalk everything up to gene selection and take into account self-organising systems, and in particular recommends Stuart Kauffman, *The Origins of Order: Self-Organization and Selection in Evolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and David J. Depew and Bruce H. Weber, *Darwinism Evolving: Systems Dynamics and the Genealogy of Natural Selection* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

ism, or idealism we will need to look at physical cases of individuation. The basic move is to replace the simple idea of stability and instability with the more complex notion of *metastability*. In order to eliminate transcendent essence a more powerful realism which incorporates tendencies and capacities is necessary. If we look at water it has a liquid structure or “phase” and has the real tendency to freeze at a bifurcation point and to vapourise at another. Realism of tendencies and capacities is fairly common in analytic philosophy but the insistence here is that they are resolved in structural transformation. The capacity for structural transformation implies the existence of a “pre-phase” being which is called by Simondon the *pre-individual being*, there is a necessary excess of being which is not exhausted in individuating processes which enable the being of becoming or “ontogenesis”.

Combes in this quote explains this notion:

A physical system is said to be in metastable equilibrium (or false equilibrium) when the least modification of system parameters (pressure, temperature, etc.) suffices to break its equilibrium. Thus, in super-cooled water (i.e., water remaining liquid at a temperature below its freezing point), the least impurity with a structure isomorphic to that of ice plays the role of a seed for crystallisation and suffices to turn the water to ice. Before all individuation, being can be understood as a system containing potential energy. Although this energy becomes active within the system, it is called potential because it requires a transformation of the system in order to be structured, that is, to be actualised in accordance with structures. Preindividual being, and indeed any system in a metastable state, harbours potentials that are incompatible because they belong to heterogeneous dimensions of being.⁴

Being does not select for order like Leibniz’ God selecting for the best of all possible worlds, it is the dynamism of metastability which enables the rarer and fleeting negentropy, the striving for movement and a temporary continuation of order. When an equilibrium is broken, in order to ensure the continuity of dynamism and movement a transformation is required, and for this to be possible a system must possess the real capacity for structural transformation (metastability) which points to a far more complex

4 Muriel Combes, Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual MIT Press (2012), p. 3-4

nature of the world. The absolute individual is completely undermined because it is never without relation, it is instead a *system of individuation*.

To quote Simondon:

Indeed, a hypothesis can be made that is analogous to the hypothesis of quanta in physics and also to the hypothesis of the relativity of levels of potential energy: it can be supposed that individuation does not fully exhaust pre-individual reality and that a regime of metastability is not merely sustained by the individual but carried by it, such that the constituted individual transports along with it a certain associated charge of pre-individual reality that is animated by all the potentials which characterise it; an individuation is relative, like a structural change in a physical system; a certain level of potential remains, and further individuations are still possible. This pre-individual nature, which remains associated with the individual, is a source of future metastable states from whence new individuations will be able to emerge. According to this hypothesis, it would be possible to consider every veritable relation as having the status of being and as developing from within a new individuation; relation does not spring forth between two terms that would already be individuals; relation is an aspect of the internal resonance of a system of individuation; it belongs to a system state. This living being, which is both more and less than unity, conveys an interior problematic and can enter as an element into a problematic that is vaster than its own being. For the individual, participation is the fact of being an element in a vaster individuation through the intermediary of the charge of pre-individual reality that the individual contains, i.e. due to the potentials that it harbours.⁵

Pre-Individual being thus possesses none of the normal characteristics we associate with matter. It is a multiplicity of potential which resolves itself into the distribution of singularities which are disparate potential resolutions for the problematic environment every system of individuation finds itself within and must respond to. Each system of individuation must produce negentropy (reverse entropy) via a metastable movement towards new equilibria. The classic example of this given by Simondon is that a salt crystal in an amorphous phase will always tend towards that structure

⁵ Gilbert Simondon, *Individuation in light of notions of form and information*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), p.8

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

which has the minimum possible bonding energy, which is a cubic form. This is a cute example but there are far more complex morphogenetic processes out there like weather systems, stars, rivers, embryogenesis, psychic individuation etc, and you will need different language to describe them but in every case you need metastability. When it comes to analogies with political systems it will be maintained that they are in fact dynamical systems but clearly it is more intuitive to think of them in analogy with species being conceived as adaptive systems.

A great example of this is the psyche, a person clearly does not have their personality purely predetermined genetically, as massive personality differences between family members demonstrates. It could not be a purely epigenetic process either, because clearly specifically human brains and physiology and environmental conditions severely limit the infinite scope of difference. It could not be that there are multiple personalities present at the exact same time, otherwise everyone would be in an even worse state than a schizophrenic. A psyche thus is something which forms in individuating processes which come as a result of certain genetic mechanisms combined with a pre-individual well in their personality which allows for change, they are a field for experience. This is a slightly disturbing thought on the one hand because it means there is an essential black box inside you which is plastic and anomalous, but also inspiring because that pre-individuality is what allows the potential for self-improvement.

The absolute individual is totally undermined everywhere and is seen as always embedded in structures and has relations with a field of potentials. The individual is the result of processes of individuation and is always still undergoing individuation, it never exhausts pre-individual being. This metastability is what gives the individual the ability to adapt and change to new circumstances, specifically adopting new structures in response to new development. There is nothing necessary or automatic about this, when an equilibrium (which in the case of the psyche is systems of behaviour) breaks down in terms of its ability to confront problems, this means that a movement to a new equilibrium in response to these transforming conditions in the environment is necessary.

So what does it mean to apply this ontology of dynamical systems to political structures? At a basic level it means that a political

system has internal complexities, that it has tendencies and capacities, that it has the potential for structural transformation under certain intensive conditions. As a more formal thesis it would be that a political structure is a dynamical system, and that it is centred around a problematic. But this is a *complex* problematic, it is centred around multiple constitutive problems which it has to respond to at the same time. A political structure is also comprised of not just one unitive central actor, but of a coalition of institutions and interest groups. These institutions and groups are embedded within their own problematic fields which could produce contradictory conditions of stability to what stability looks like from the vantage point of an absolute political centre. To see all this and how it explains the development and transformation of political structures, we will need to move from the domain of ontology to history.

The Problematic of Power

The most basic property of a political structure which is a historical invariant is that there is a centre of power. The centre of power is basically a sovereign institution which governs a territory. Institutions which attempt to secure their sovereignty have a distinct set of problems which face them uniquely which they is required to solve in order to survive. The most fundamental of these problems is governance itself, to secure and maintain order and control such that it can forcefully dominate all other institutions within the geographical area it claims sovereignty over. Even if you assumed an absolutely self-interested governance, which is more cynicism than can perhaps be reasonably assumed, a government will require a smoothly functioning political and legal order such that it can appropriate resources for itself. Therefore a government must authorise people to perform functions (whether implicitly or explicitly) in exchange for obedience to itself which becomes normative through compliance, which comes from either fear, convenience, or legitimate loyalty. Thus the most basic imperative of governance is dominance over a particular geographical area, and as a sovereign institution this is a unique and autonomous function.

A consequence of this is that a sovereign institution faces threats to its domination over a geographic area. Internally it has to deal with the whole sets of institutions within its own territory which

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

could threaten its domination of that territory in terms of competition for authority over men and control of resources. As the only institution capable of mediating conflicts between internal institutions it must by any means necessary secure itself against rivals which could threaten its sovereignty. The sovereign institution is also thrown into a geopolitical situation in conflict with other sovereign institutions in other territories to which it must respond, such that its dominance over its own territory is not threatened. This leads to expansionist tendencies in order to proactively defend against external threats. International competition also requires internal security and the administrative mobilisation of resources and men. In other words it has come to require modern states to have the capacity for policing, taxation, maintaining standing armed forces and the technological development and production of weapons. To put it in the terms described initially in terms of dynamical systems, the sovereign institution is an adaptive system which interacts with its environment and requires changes in the structure of its behaviour in order to answer the basic demand of its domination over a territory.

Power can be simply defined as the capacity of any institution to control resources and men, theoretically 100 percent power would be that at any one moment an institution could take 100 percent of the resources available to it within its sovereign geographical domain. Power can of course be subtle, such as media influence and so on, but fundamentally institutions all will seek power differentially to competing institutions, including the sovereign institution, and this explains their behaviour in the long run. This is institutional thinking as opposed to thinking on the level of the individual agent because institutions possess these supervening incentives. An individual bureaucrat in charge of an institution who is not interested in pursuing the expansion of that bureaucracy's power will not remain in charge for long if that institution is to stay a relevant player.

Technological superiority, administrative superiority, and other factors will all help in the qualitative goal of victory abroad and dominance at home. Thus it requires a sovereign institution which is powerful and strategically competent enough to defeat internal and external threats to its sovereignty. This is one of the primary drivers of history, since if one state is at a comparative advantage in

terms of its political structure other countries will be forced to follow suit and modernise or face domination. The Napoleonic wars and the adoption of Napoleonic policies by the European states which opposed Napoleon is an excellent example of this. Global systems will be forced into new equilibria by innovative statecraft which is more adaptive to their competition and conflict.

Contrary to popular assumption in the past the monarchies of Europe had very little resources and manpower at their disposal, the Capetian Dynasty which ruled France from 987 until 1328 for example had no permanent taxation.⁶ There are many cases of total humiliation of the European monarchs during this period as calls for resources were often simply denied by aristocratic power brokers, this was perhaps exemplified by the king of Aragon being forced to cancel a crusade. Nothing approximating this level of decentralisation is imaginable in the modern period.⁷ The absolutely decisive process throughout the Middle Ages is this centralisation of power wherein by the end we see proto-liberal states like Britain and highly developed Absolutism as in the case of France. In this process taxation, permanent armies, bureaucracies and sophisticated central administration of the affairs of state were established.

There are a number of important developments to note throughout the Middle Ages such as the emergence of permanent capital cities, the introduction of mass coinage and later the printing press, and of course the introduction of gunpowder and modern mass warfare. Coinage allowed for nonlocal economic relations and literacy allowed for mass communication which both enabled the rise of the modern State and the subordination of intermediaries. Gunpowder also removed to a large extent the qualitative nature of war and made mobilising mass numbers of men and the industrial production of weapons and other relevant military equipment the most decisive factor. Modernising reforms were introduced in a top-down fashion in refutation of common assumptions informed by liberal ideology. The adoption of these innovations by one state ahead of others gives that state a comparative advantage geopolitically and so the innovation is forced on other states which now require structural reform in order to keep up.⁸

6 Bertrand De Jouvenel, *On Power* (Liberty Fund, 1993), p.20

7 *ibid.* p.6 Refers to the failed 53 day crusade by Philip III "The Bold"

8 An overall impression of this process could be found in chapter 1 of Chris Bond's *Nemesis* (Imperium Press, 2019) But for primary sources one could look at

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

The observation that government uses crises as an excuse for centralisation is nothing new, and the geopolitical account of the centralisation race in Europe during the middle ages from a hyper decentralised order to a centralised one (the modern Nation-State) is not controversial in the slightest among medievalists or those who study the ancient world. What Bertrand De Jouvenel in his masterpiece *On Power* demonstrates which is unique is that it is impossible to reduce this process down to the factors just mentioned. Jouvenel demonstrates that sovereign institutionality faces internal rivalries capable of preventing this process, and so there are always internal conflicts in a social order which are brought forward from the top down, this contradicts how we typically think of political systems as always trying to maintain a status quo:

These non-governmental authorities, to which we give the name social authorities, are no more blessed with an angelic nature than is Power itself. If they all were so blessed, there could be, depend on it, nothing but perfect harmony and cooperation between them. But it is not so: however altruistic one of these authorities, such as the paternal or the ecclesiastical, is intended by nature to be, human nature imparts to it a measure of egoism: it tends to make itself its end. Whereas, conversely, an authority which is by nature egoist, such as the employer's or the feudal lord's, is sobered by time, and develops by unequal stages the spirit of protection and kindness. Every authority is, by the law of its nature, essentially dualist. Being ambitious, each separate authority tends to grow; being egoistical, to consult only its own immediate interest; being jealous, to pare down the role of the other authorities. There thus ensues an incessant strife of authorities.⁹

And so there is simply an inherent tension or contradiction to sovereign institutionality, at any one moment it forms a social order

Carrol Quigley's *Weapons Systems and Political Stability* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983) for the relationship between political systems and military technology, Peter Spufford's *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1988) on Monetary evolution and its relation to centralisation and state building. And the link between the printing press, literacy, and centralisation is so well known it's not worth linking but I would suggest looking at Brian Stock's *The Implications of Literacy: Writing and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 1983) especially pages 3-88 for the political implications prior to the well known printing press revolution.
9 *ibid.* p.143

with its own subsidiary institutions but it also has every reason to undermine them, and vice versa, and so there is a prolonged conflict within a social order. Popular movements can of course easily be defeated by the state, as is demonstrated by huge peasant revolts failing due to lack of support from above and in the many governments where minorities have ruled throughout history. The mechanism by which pressure from below gives the impression of transforming the structure of governance has been called *High/Low vs Middle* by Jouvenelians, it is just one among many possible conflicts internal to a political order but it is the most important because it is the mechanism which drives centralisation specifically:

Always and everywhere the labour of men is put to use, and the energies of men are tamed. Power, which needs them for itself, must therefore start by detaching them from their first overlords. The leaders of groups, the masters of resources, the gatherers of tithes, the employers of labour, are all despoiled by it, but their servants get no more than a change of masters. Thus, in the time of its expansion Power's predestined victims and natural enemies are the powerful—the men with payrolls, and all those who wield authority in society and are strong in it. To attack them Power need feel for them no conscious how stilted; with animal instinct, it overthrows what irks it and devours what nourishes it.¹⁰

And so we see a basic duality with power, a social and expansionist nature, which is possessed both by central and intermediary institutions. The sovereign institution, which in modernity is the state, has the binary choice of cooperation or sabotage with its intermediaries, and vice versa. Society is an amalgamation of institutions which all possess the duality of having the basic incentive to perform their basic social function, for example of a corporation to deliver a product or service, but also the incentive to dominate their market and increase their own power. The complexity can increase infinitely since sovereign institutionality could side with some intermediaries against others (with the nobility against the church, with the high nobility against the low nobility or the opposite etc). This means that the sovereign institution is always maintaining a balance of a coalition which is comprised of

10 *ibid.* p.173

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

different institutions represented by ethnicities, religious authorities, familial or tribal authorities, nobility, corporations, regional authorities, and so on. Power is thus not simple but comprised of coalitions which at any one moment uphold a given order. They are not necessarily stable and there will be gradual temporal shifts in power balances depending on any number of contingent factors imaginable. There will always be different degrees of sabotage and cooperation among the different parts of the coalition and this will also determine how things play out.

The tragedy of power is that this game has no final solution, there will always be transformation of society, the state is permanent revolution. The sovereign institution will always be an assailant of an established order in the long run. However as noted in the brief discussion of the definition of power it must be noted that this is reciprocally true for subsidiary institutions which also seek to increase their share of power and may have the potential to sabotage sovereign institutionalism. This is why political structures are dynamical systems, like animals which are a response to the problems of the environment, political structures are stable equilibria in response to balancing different internal factions and managing this with external threats. None of these factors are static and so an adaptive strategy of leadership will necessarily not be static either, politics must be dynamic to adapt to metastability. This necessity of dynamism in institutional relations and metastability is described eloquently by Jouvanel here:

We see here the state playing two roles at the same time, guaranteeing the established order by its organs and undermining it by its legislation. What I am saying is that it has always filled this double role. True it is that the judiciary, the police, and, at need, the army do cause acquired rights to be respected. And if the state is viewed as a collection of institutions, as so much machinery, it is abundantly clear that these institutions are conservative in character and that the machinery works in defence of the existing social order.

But we have already proclaimed our intention of not studying the state as an "it," but of finding in it a "they." As machinery, it plays its conservative role automatically; as a living thing with a life of its own, thriving and developing, it can but thrive and develop to the detriment of the social order. Look at it in its Being, and it is the protector of the privileged. But

look at it in its Becoming, and it is the inevitable assailant of the master class, a word under which I comprise every form of social authority.¹¹

The most important event in politics is a social revolution, a structural transformation of the organisation of the social order. The question is why do these happen? From the structural realist perspective it is that revolutions liquidate weakness (maladaptation) and bring forth strength. Jouvanel correctly points out that after every revolution there is an extraordinary increase in the power and organisational capacity of the state. It is a historical irony for example, that one of the moments in the buildup to the rejection of the power of Charles I was raising finance to build a sovereign Navy. Of course what happens immediately after Cromwell comes to power is an extraordinary fleet buildup and crushing of Dutch hegemony at war. The greatest ambition of the Russian state for all its history was the domination of Eastern Europe, something only accomplished by the USSR, and the accomplishment of a nuclear program was surely beyond Nicholay II's wildest dreams.

As Jouvanel says "Did the people rise against Louis XIV? No, but against good natured Louis XVI, who had not even the nerve to let his Swiss guards open fire. Against Peter the Great? No, against the weakling Nicholas II, who didn't even dare avenge his beloved Rasputin. Against that old Bluebeard, Henry VIII? No, but against Charles I, who, after a few fitful attempts at governing, had resigned himself to living in a small way and no danger to anyone."¹² This striking fact should throw off immediately the typical narrative around revolution that it is against tyranny, when in fact there is an extraordinary increase in state power after a revolution, and all the famous tyrants of monarchical history seem to get off without much trouble. Revolutions under our model are the result of a failure of state. The state is incapable of structural reform in light of competition with other states which can be for a number of reasons, and so a movement to a new equilibrium is necessary, a phase change, a bifurcation. If the metastability of a particular ruling institutional configuration is insufficient to adapt to a geopolitical problem then it will be destroyed and replaced by one which will in a great event, if the metastability of the sovereign

11 *ibid.* p. 175-176

12 *ibid.* p.240

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

institution is greater then a revolution will be unnecessary. Theda Skocpol sums up this here:

“We can make sense of social-revolutionary transformations only if we take the state seriously as a macro-structure. The state properly conceived is no mere arena in which socioeconomic struggles are fought out. It is, rather, a set of administrative, policing, and military organisations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organisations.⁷⁷ Of course, these basic state organisations are built up and must operate within the context of class-divided socioeconomic relations, as well as within the context of national and international economic dynamics. More over, coercive and administrative organisations are only parts of overall political systems. These systems also may contain institutions through which social interests are represented in state policymaking as well as institutions through which non-state actors are mobilised to participate in policy implementation. Nevertheless, the administrative and coercive organisations are the basis of state power as such.

State organisations necessarily compete to some extent with the dominant class(es) in appropriating resources from the economy and society. And the objectives to which the resources, once appropriated, are devoted may very well be at variance with existing dominant class interests. Resources may be used to strengthen the bulk and autonomy of the state itself - something necessarily threatening to the dominant class unless the greater state power is indispensably needed and actually used to support dominant class interests. But the use of state power to support dominant class interests is not inevitable. Indeed, attempts of state rulers merely to perform the state’s “own” functions may create conflicts of interest with the dominant class. The state normally performs two basic sets of tasks: It maintains order, and it competes with other actual or potential states. As Marxists have pointed out, states usually do function to preserve existing economic and class structures, for that is normally the smoothest way to enforce order. Nevertheless, the state has its own distinct interests vis-a-vis subordinate classes. Although both the state and the dominant class(es) share a broad interest in keeping the subordinate classes in place in society and

at work in the existing economy, the state's own fundamental interest in maintaining sheer physical order and political peace may lead it (especially in periods of crisis) to enforce concessions to subordinate-class demands. These concessions may be at the expense of the interests of the dominant class, but not contrary to the state's own interests in controlling the population and collecting taxes and military recruits."¹³

This inherent contradiction of the political is the cause of the movement of civilised history. The most important Jouvénien dynamic is the aforementioned High/Low vs Middle simply because it is the least recognised. An easy aesthetic example to point out is kings have always tended to use foreign troops for support (Swiss guard, Varangians Guard, Jannisaries, etc) rather than rely on their own native nobility. The peripheral elements of society are mobilised by the centre against the subsidiary institutions and demographics (the social authorities that Jouvénien refers to), this is because institutions are essentially jealous. The political is a zero sum game, power is accumulated differentially. Power increased by the state is power lost by the social authorities. The Reformation, particularly in England and Sweden, is basically a universally accepted example of this. The King seized the land of the church for himself and took the money too. He mobilised popular resentment against Catholic authorities, which tended to be more powerful and landed in Northern Europe, by providing protection to protestants and then used this as an excuse to form a national church with the monarch at the head. The commoner is tricked, power has simply been transferred from one authority to another. Individualism is thus structurally a means of atomising people from non-state authorities (e.g. paternal or ecclesial), bringing individuals directly under the authority of the state apparatus. A further

13 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge University Press, 1973, 2015) p.29-30. The Note here for here citation 77 found at p.301 is "My views on the state have been most directly influenced by such classical and contemporary writings as: Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 3 vols., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), vol. 2, chap. 9 and vol. 3, chaps. 10-13; Otto Hintze, *essays in Historical Essays*, ed., Felix Gilbert, chaps. 4-6, 11; Tilly, ed., *Formation of National States*; Randall Collins, *Conflict Sociology* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), chap. 7; and Collins, "A Comparative Approach to Political Sociology," pp. 42-69 in Bendix, et. al., eds., *State and Society*; and Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). See also the references in note 73. (found on same page)"

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

verification of this view is clear since in Southern Europe where centralisation had happened earlier in Europe, secular powers had already infiltrated and subverted the Church to the extent that it would defend it against the protestants, and so quite simply the protestants failed.¹⁴

The essence of a social order therefore is coalitions of social forces forming the basis of a regime, these forces are at any one time pointed towards social ends but are in constant struggle and tension with one another. It is perfectly possible to have a Middle/Low vs High in which the aristocracy mobilises the peasants against the central administration, although the conditions for the possibility of this move is rare. Perhaps the best example of it is the fairly successful revolt against Akhenaten in ancient Egypt, where he tried to eliminate the polytheism of the old Egyptian tradition in favour of a new cult around sun worship and a new centralised state to come with it.¹⁵ Cooperation of the different castes of society is possible under certain strategies which exist in particular economic and geopolitical conditions, but contingency and random events can completely shift the balance of power and direction of the system. The most obvious example of such cooperation is war, or when there is a particular threat to society which needs immediately dealt with. Take Israel for example, a country surrounded by hostile Arabic powers, because of this threat a harsh cooperative nationalism is the only adaptive ideology to the situation, and so measures are put in place to maintain demographics constant and militarism is high to prevent these threats.

Arnold Toynbee gives a poignant example of how international competition alters political organization by contrasting Bavaria and Austria. Bavaria is a land with lots of great arable land, population, and resources in comparison with mountainous Austria, and so in the abstract one would expect Bavaria to have become a more significant power in history. But this of course is not remotely the

14 See William T Cavanaugh's *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford University Press, 2009) particularly chapters 2-3. Southern Europe were more complex developed states which had incorporated ecclesial power and so defended it. In the Northern HRE church held land and competing with the Austrians, with similar situations in England and Sweden, the reformation was defended. I'm not taking any particular side in this dispute this is just historical record and neither come off well in terms of reasons for defence."

15 See Donald Redford's *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton University Press, 1984)

case and it is because Austria constantly had to deal with external threats such as the Ottoman empire and so by necessity adopted an aggressive statecraft to secure regional domination. Thus the adaptive strategy pursued by nations under threat from outside pressures necessitates innovation. And so, political orders which are significantly more dynamic often outcompete rivals with better positions.¹⁶ Evolution has a more conservative character than people assume, there are life forms today which are basically exactly the same as they were millions of years ago, and this holds true for political structures, absent of external pressure on the imperatives of sovereign institutionalities, they will have much less of a tendency to change.

There is a great deal of complexity to political dynamics but it fundamentally boils down to the binary of sabotage and cooperation. It's possible that social authorities could completely sabotage centralisation, it's possible that the central authority could pursue centralisation without significant resistance from intermediary authorities, it's possible the central authority has to side with lower levels of the social strata of institutions against higher, or with higher against lower, as in an ecclesial or aristocratic setting. The arbitrary decisions of fallible leadership, and the anomalous and unintentional nature of a lot of this should be emphasised. Events happen and material conditions can be unpredictable, but this doesn't change the fact that structures are real and that contingency affects them in a structural manner.

Order is therefore not spontaneous but based on the cooperation of disparate parts of a political order which are simultaneously motivated to either cooperate and sabotage each other. The state is considered as an autonomous actor not because it cannot be usurped and subverted by intermediary forces but because it has a unique problematic scale it is responding to as compared to its intermediaries. The political is fundamentally a self-reflexive problematic of security organization and any other problematic it is solving must be subservient to its fundamental goal of geographic domination. No matter how much influence subsidiary institutions wield influence they cannot undermine this, the state will turn against dominant classes and engage in class warfare if

16 See Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (Oxford University Press, 1961), specifically the section, *The Stimulus of Pressures*, which can be found on p.111-125.

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

this is required by a geopolitical situation which requires intense structural reform. This is very easy to intuitively understand under the aristocratic or ecclesial examples of the rather simple feudal medieval system but this becomes increasingly controversial and obscured in modernity. Nevertheless championing the “oppressed” is always something which helps rather than hinders the expansion of power.

To again quote Jouvenel:

And now we no longer understand the process, we no longer protest, we no longer react. This quiescence of ours is a new thing, for which Power has to thank the smoke-screen in which it has wrapped itself. Formerly it could be seen, manifest in the person of the king, who did not disclaim being the master he was, and in whom human passions were discernible. Now, masked in anonymity, it claims to have no existence of its own, and to be but the impersonal and passionless instrument of the general will. But that is clearly a fiction.¹⁷

Part 2: Applied Structural Analysis

English Absolutism

English institutional sovereignty so thoroughly, and so impressively outclassed France prior to the 15th Century such that for a long period of time the comparatively sparsely populated England could dominate the much larger France. This enabled an early advantage in the Hundred Years War, and serious competition for longer than could be expected on a purely material basis. But this wasn't to last of course. The French would eventually centrally reform and develop the capability to mobilise a decent proportion of their men and resources, and as soon as this was achieved, the tables turned. France and England's monarchies would diverge significantly in their development, the French becoming the most formidable force in Europe with the Sun King Louis XIV. With the exception of the Russians, France became the most developed in its Absolutism within the Europe whilst England was chopping off Charles I's head before this could be developed in the mid seventeenth century.

After the Norman conquest England had an unusually small noble class due to the decapitation of large parts of the native aristoc-

17 *ibid.* p.12-13

racy at the hands of William the Conqueror, and England wasn't a huge country in terms of land or population for the new nobles to deal with. English towns had already been weak in their local power under the Anglo-Saxon period and so never posed a serious threat to the central power and the Church had never acquired an obscene amount of land. All of these factors meant that England never faced the same problems as the French, Germans or the Nordic countries for example. The Angevin empire's administration had no equivalent anywhere in Europe, an unrivalled force. The centralisation was so effective and unopposed in England that it was a victim of its own success in some ways, baronial authorities, knightly authorities, and local town's representation at parliament meant that there was a peculiar unity amongst potentially conflicting factions, Perry Anderson sums up the situation here:

The unitary Parliaments which met in London did not achieve the degree of meticulous fiscal control nor the rights of regular convocation which later characterised some of the continental Estates systems. But they did secure a traditional negative limitation of royal legislative power, which was to become of great importance in the epoch of Absolutism: it became accepted, after Edward I, that no monarch could decree new statutes without the consent of Parliament. Viewed structurally, this veto corresponded closely to the objective exigencies of noble class power. In effect, since centralised royal administration was from the start geographically and technically easier in England than "elsewhere, there was proportionately less need for it to be equipped with any innovatory decretal authority, which could not be justified by inherent dangers of regional separatism or ducal anarchy. Thus while the real executive powers of English mediaeval kings were usually much greater than those of French monarchs, for that very reason, they never won the relative legislative autonomy eventually enjoyed by the latter. A second comparable feature of English feudalism was the unusual fusion between monarchy and nobility at the local judicial and administrative level. Whereas on the continent, the court system was typically divided between segregated royal and seigneurial jurisdictions, in England the survival of pre-feudal folk courts had provided a kind of common terrain on which a blend of the two could be achieved. For the sheriffs who presided over the shire-courts were non-hereditary royal appointees; yet they were selected from the local gentry, not from a central bureaucracy; while

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

the courts themselves retained vestiges of their original character as popular juridical assemblies in which the free men of the rural community appeared before their equals.^{18 19}

The superiority of Angevin administration and internal peace wasn't to last once the French developed a superior state and became able to outcompete the English, collapsing the English continental empire. During the Wars of the Roses, the more bureaucratic centralist Yorkists were miraculously defeated by the more localist and aristocratic Lancastrians, but this wasn't to last either. Henry VII massively expanded the state with new reforms and new means of taxation, marking a decisive shift towards Absolutism and the modern state. He was also a pious figure as well and spent large sums in building the image as a holy, Catholic leader and unifying figure after the tumult of the wars of the roses and the loss to France. But this stability wasn't to last, as his successor was Henry VIII.

As has been already noted briefly earlier, the invention of Protestantism and its proliferation by sovereign institutionality in Northern Europe is a good example of the political selection of ideologies for the purpose of the expansion of power. The split between Henry VII's advertising and imagistics of divine kingship were in total contradiction with Henry VIII's antics of divine right. Divine right was a very late development in Europe and in times past ecclesiastical authorities posed a very real limitation on what sovereign institutionality could do. Henry II's humiliation by the Church for his murder of Beckett and the Ghibelline Guelph conflict demonstrate this clearly. Henry's decision to split with the Pope, and to seize the Church's property, placing himself as head of the Church is a huge moment in the centralisation process in England.

Another significant factor in the development of Absolutism in England which is often overlooked about this period of time is Henry VIII's continental adventures. Aimless and pointless as has been often remarked, they represent the delusion of a declined nation coming down from the heights of the great English conti-

18 Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (NLB, 1974) p.115

19 From the Previous sections citation, the well worth reading "J. P. Cooper, 'Differences between English and Continental Governments in the Early Seventeenth Century', in J. J. Bromley and E. H. Kossmann Ced.), *Brztazn and the Netherlands* London 1960, pp. 62-90, esp. 65-71."

mental ambition of the English aristocracy which had dominated France for the most part in the Hundred Years War. Their successes extended across Belgium, as far as Iberia, as local as Scotland and as glorious as the Crusades. But this was now a fantasy, continental European powers had begun having successes with centralisation and England was no longer as important. All this was in living memory of Henry VIII however and so the wars were fought, and although tactically inconsequential they would prove to be the seeds of the downfall of the English monarchy:

“Nor were they without fundamental results in England itself. Henry VIII’s last major act, his alliance with the Empire and attack on France in 1543, was to have fateful consequences for the whole ulterior destiny of the English monarchy. Military intervention on the continent was misconducted; its costs escalated greatly, eventually totalling some ten times those of the first French war of his reign; to cover them, the State not only resorted to forced loans and debasement of the coinage, but also started to unload on the market the huge fund of agrarian property it had just acquired from the monasteries – amounting to perhaps a quarter of the land of the realm. The sale of Church estates by the monarchy multiplied as war dragged on towards Henry’s death. By the time peace was finally restored, the great bulk of this vast windfall was lost;¹³ and with it, the one great chance of English Absolutism to build up a firm economic base independent of parliamentary taxation. This transfer of assets not only weakened the State in the long-run: it also greatly strengthened the gentry who formed the main purchasers of these lands, and whose numbers and wealth henceforward steadily grew. One of the drabest and most inconsequential foreign wars in English history thus had momentous, if still hidden consequences on the domestic balance of forces within English society.”^{20 21}

The land which had been seized from the church and transferred to the monarchy was sold to the gentry. This is the same class of small landowners who would be lampooned by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio being a clear stand in for the humourless landed puritan. This is where we arrive at the modern mis-

20 *ibid.* p.124-125

21 The work cited by Anderson is “F. Dietz, *English Government Finance 1485-1558*, London 1964, pp. 147, 149, 158, 214.”

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

understandings of the monarchy, we have the English tradition of parliaments which had a tendency to resist certain decisions and a new latent capitalist class which didn't understand or have any favourability towards what they saw as a deeply outmoded, inefficient medieval system of governance. Whilst Charles I's Pax Carolina is forgotten by many, it shouldn't be. His maintenance of peace during this period is remarkable. However during his personal rule, he was totally incapable of running the country effectively and had to rely on old feudal methods to get anything done. This further alienated the new landowning gentry which, thanks to centralisation, infrastructure and a successful commercialisation of agriculture were now creating a burgeoning national market.

The emerging Absolutist state had a very difficult position because it had strong and entrenched classes with a long history of overall success which meant that erratic actions by the monarch were very difficult not to notice and very difficult to justify. This is a very interesting dynamic, which is that regimes can be victims of their own dynamisms, it becomes very difficult to enact structural reform in a country where the regime is basically unopposed at a high level, there's no reasonable justification and ideologies overtime cement themselves to prevent further centralisation, this is something ingrained in the English people. A sovereign institution which finds it impossible to structurally reform will be maladaptive in competing with its more dynamic neighbours. Therefore at the same time there that there was extreme reluctance to change there there was also an anxiety deeply felt amongst the English people that they were becoming irrelevant to continental affairs. Once it was clear with Charles I's attempts to reform the situation failed, more extreme actions became both possible and necessary. The system was fragile, and in this case the perennially disloyal Scots resisted reforms in an ecclesiastical context and had a revolt in 1637 which required the King to ask Parliament for taxes. Once Parliament was reconvened the tension between legacy and emerging factions escalated continuously until it had to be resolved in civil war. Charles was not willing to give up at any point without a fight:

The struggle to seize control over the English army that now had to be raised to suppress the Irish insurrection, drove Parliament and King into the Civil War. English Absolutism was

brought to crisis by aristocratic particularism and clannish desecration on its periphery: forces that lay historically behind it. But it was felled at the centre by a commercialized gentry, a capitalist city, a commoner artisanate and yeomanry: forces pushing beyond it. Before it could reach the age of maturity, English Absolutism was cut off by a bourgeois revolution.²²

The purpose of this discussion of British history is to demonstrate that there is an inherent tension and feedback loop between internal and external security which sovereign institutionality must juggle. External pressure can provoke internal destabilisation (as the brilliant Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* demonstrates), and internal dynamism (or *metastability*) is often vital to adapting to the challenges presented by external competitors. Competition between sovereign institutions triggered organisational innovation towards centralisation at first in Europe and then globally, birthing the modern world. The picture this gives of power is endless struggle forever, because maintaining internal coalitions whilst competing with external forces is to enter a state of perpetual societal sabotage. This is why for Jouvenel, the state is permanent revolution.

The Primacy of the Political and the Russian Revolution

The political and the economic are reciprocally determining and radically intertwined processes. Perhaps the greatest initial economic thinker who thought both in terms of structures and radically related together politics and economics was Karl Marx. The basic idea is to look behind the "ideology" of the state and look at the underlying problematic it is a product of solving. The central problem faced by human societies for Marx is organising productive activity and its solution for Marx in the material reality of history is class domination. The state's role in capitalist society is thus determined by Marx by the material reality of class struggle, it either enforces class domination or if seized by the proletariat becomes a means of class liberation. This description simply cannot be correct since the state as sovereign institution must respond egoistically to the problem of securing a geographical territory, granting it an inherent drive for power which contradicts understanding it as a mere servant of economic class interests.

22 *ibid.* p.142

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

This is demonstrated clearly by the actions of “communist” revolutionaries when they have been successful in seizing state power. In order to maintain state power they have been forced to act in accordance with the requirements of internal and external security even where it contradicted their mission of class struggle on behalf of the proletariat.

Looking at the origins of the Russian Revolution and the behaviour of the Bolsheviks after seizing power demonstrates this thesis. In the early 19th century with the victory over Napoleonic France, Russia emerged as the most developed Absolutist political order in Europe, getting further with centralisation than any other monarchy in history. However things started to take a turn for the worse as the 19th century went on. The economy was mostly agricultural with only 8–10% of people living in cities.²³ It was impossible to industrialise most of the country due to the lack of a rail system until the late 19th century.

However, the growth of the agricultural sector was immense despite a lack widespread change in agricultural technology.²⁴ The Russian system was a hybrid of Feudalism and older forms of agricultural organisation which allowed for a great deal of peasant autonomy. A significant portion of agricultural land which was run by de facto peasant collective ownership. We see this autonomy in the *Obshchinas* which were essentially village communes with locally managed redistribution to maintain perceived equality. Individual households would be ancient patriarchal extended families and it was basically impossible for peasants to escape this arrangement due to strict laws on land purchase and sale. This was due to parochial enforcements of old rules by the the village councils (*mirs*) of which there were elected elders and well established custom.

This arrangement existed in tandem with the most advanced imperial bureaucracy Europe had produced at the time, yet the mid-19th century would bring major disturbances. The event which marks this is of course the Crimean War in which the Russian navy was humiliated by the Anglo-French alliance and their ambitions

23 Cited in Skocpol's *State and Social Revolutions*. The estimate is from Jerome Blum's *Lord and Peasant in Russia: From The Ninth to Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J, Princeton University Press, 1961)

24 Cited in Skocpol, Gilbert Rozman's *Urban Networks in Russia* (Princeton University Press)

in the Near East were crushed. But like many war defeats the geopolitical implications were not nearly as serious as the domestic ones. The war highlighted that the Russian economic system was woefully inadequate to compete in the modern world, it had become maladaptive to the geopolitical situation.²⁵

This would very quickly prompt the Tsarist regime to create the Zemstvos to promote development and aid local governments but most importantly to abolish serfdom in 1861. The feudal system had to be broken up to enable Russia to modernise without fear of peasant revolts, and was successfully implemented. The peasants now legally owned a huge amount of land, and there was no possibility of any kind of aristocratic resistance in Russia because they were comparatively weak compared to any other European countries due to their dependency upon the central bureaucracy. Imperial Russia was truly one of the most meritocratic societies in history and nowhere else has a nobility been more dependent on service and participation in the state to get ahead, and so they has no significant means of preventing the reforms. However, due to their influence the reforms were not as totalising as had been intended and so a modernisation of agriculture was not achieved as the peasants were forced to rent most key resources from nobles.²⁶

The reforms however did enable some commercialisation of agriculture and the economic stratification of the peasants, near urban areas nobles and richer peasants known as the kulaks use wage labour on their land and sell product for profit. This was allowed due to the Stolypin reforms granting unconditional individual property rights. The Obshchinas still effectively owned/managed two thirds of land at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁷ The Mirs had gained power due to aristocratic retreat and would negotiate directly with the imperial bureaucracy. This would prove to be an extremely precarious situation for the Russian imperial bureaucracy as they were the only agent left standing which could suppress these peasant revolts from well organised Obshchina communities during the modernisation of agriculture process.

25 Alexander Gerschenkron, 'Russian Agrarian Policies and Industrialisation, 1861-1917,' in *Continuity in History and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) p.143.

26 Skocpol, p.89

27 Lazar Volin, *A Century of Russian Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970)

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

This metastable dynamism of the Russian regime certainly prevented a revolution in the 19th century. This is in stark contrast to pre-revolutionary France and China, where the entrenchment of economic elites within sovereign institutionality prevented these exact sort of reforms taking place and precipitated revolution. 19th Century Russia was however capable of structural reform and improving their situation without such drastic means. This runs counter to the Marxist analysis because the reforms were primarily motivated by internal security of the sovereign institution in response to external security threats. The political is the more fundamental problem faced by society and domination over a geographic area supervenes over the interests of a dominant economic class. The state can and does go directly against these interests in this and many other cases.

Witte's reforms from 1892-1903 were the next major moment in Russian statecraft as he heavily promoted railroad construction and infrastructure investment to allow for national industrialisation such that Russia could fully catch up to Western Europe. They were a great success with 8 percent growth per year in the 1890s,²⁸ light and heavy industry expanded significantly as a result. Witte also managed to hugely increase tax revenue and also implemented successful monetary reform. There were two problems though, although foreign investment increased a great deal and this helped growth it also left Russia vulnerable to economic crashes, as was the case in 1899. Although ultimately Russia was a great power still and was not so dependent on foreign finance to the point it was a vassal of France and England, as some have suggested. The second problem was the growth simply wasn't fast enough. Witte was not only a great statesman but he was also a prophet and warned Nicholay of this:

If we do not take energetic and decisive measures so that in the course of the next decades our industry will be able to satisfy the needs of Russia and of the Asiatic countries which are-or should be-under our influence, then... it is possible that the slow growth of our industry will endanger the

28 Skocpol cited "Von Laue, Sergei Witte, chap. 8; Carson, "State and Economic Development," in *State and Economic Growth*, ed. Aitken, pp. 118-27; and Alexander Gerschenkron, "Problems and Patterns of Russian Economic Development," in *The Transformation of Russian Society*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 47-61.

FIRSTNESS #3

fulfilment of the great political tasks of the monarchy. Our economic backwardness may lead to political and cultural backwardness as well.²⁹

Russia at the critical juncture was catching up and making the right moves but it simply wasn't prepared for advanced wars with modern powers, the Japanese proved too much and the First World War went terribly, as one would expect and this was more than enough to destroy the regime, which likely needed 20 years of peace. But what specifically allowed the destruction of the old system was the complete breakdown in the ability to suppress peasant revolts due to the First World War, as the 1861 reforms crippled any kind of enforcement by local aristocrats. The Soviets in the big urban areas and the Mirs of the obshchinas revolted and many of the soldiers in the Russian army defected and joined the mass mobilising party state of Lenin's War Communism for the Russian Civil War. If the agriculture had been modernised fully, in other words largely automated and commercialised, peasant revolts would have been impossible. Russia was a house of cards, but it's tragic because in this case we see a state trying its best to reform and was doing a good job, but the reforms in their intermediate stages cause the country to be extremely vulnerable to outside threats. As Witte warned, Russia had to stay out of wars until it achieved greater internal stability. Ignoring Witte was one of the greatest mistakes of statesmanship in history and arguably the cause of the Urkatastophe of the 20th century, World War I.

The Soviet party structure organised centralised means of coercion and created the Red Army under Trotsky, they formed a huge police force and won the civil war. The party state was much larger than the previously existing imperial bureaucracy and once Stalin was in power it was capable of full industrialisation and achieving the long term Russian foreign policy goal of conquering Eastern Europe and defeating Germany (with significant economic support from their American allies). To be sure the USSR made plenty of mistakes along the way like the adoption of lisenkoism, draining the Aral Sea and the failed Siberian forest project. However in terms of adaptiveness to the modern world, the overall huge success of the Soviet Union in the first part of the 20th century cannot be overstated.

29 Von Laue, *Sergei Witte* p.2-3

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

Of course the mass starvation induced by the famines of the 1930s cannot be hand-waved away, it is the nail in the coffin of Marxist historiography due to the naked hypocrisy of it. Soviet success shows the savagery of its land reforms under Stalin benefitted the regime's grip on power, but it is a direct refutation of Marxist ideals. The commercialisation of agriculture had been completely halted by the revolution because the nobles and richer peasants land had been seized and redistributed, in accordance with the ideals of the revolution. Since these groups dominated commercial agriculture this practice basically was halted and this stopped. With commercial agriculture dead, the traditionalist peasants weren't going to help modernisation. Industrial capacity could not be expanded under these conditions because the urban-ite soviet state had no influence whatsoever on the rural Obshchinas which were entirely autonomous and who didn't want to participate in the national economy in any meaningful way. They wanted to continue to be self sufficient and only engaged in limited production for the cities, capping their capacity for economic and population growth.

The split within Soviet leadership was over how to solve this problem with Bukharin representing the right and Trotsky representing the left. Bukharin proposed a peaceful long term method of increasing the production of consumer goods such that peasants would want to buy them and so they'd raise money by commercialising. However as we all know this isn't what happened, instead Stalin went for the second option of forcing the peasantry to provide manpower to the cities for mass industrialisation as well as the "collectivisation of agriculture". This brought agriculture under the administrative control of the party and basically forced the peasants to work for the state and hand over the grain. Managerial authority from urban commissars in the party basically liquidated the Obshchinas. The Soviets destroyed the ancient communistic system of Russian agriculture, which is a deep irony of history, because the whole revolution was only made possible by the peasants revolting against the Kerensky. Communism is the great theory of the primacy of the economic, and yet communists who sincerely tried to govern were bent to the will of political necessity and in order to be an adaptive state to the situation had to completely betray their principles, As Skocpol notes:

Indeed, the great irony-and poignancy of the Russian Revolution lies in the role and fate of the peasantry. For the peasants made their own thoroughgoing social revolution in 1917-and as a result became a threat to the viability of Russia as a revolutionised nation-state in a world of militarily competing nation-states. The efforts of the revolutionary state-builders to cope with this autonomous peasantry, even as they dealt with organised political competitors at home and abroad, led them bit by bit to erect a regime of monstrous proportions and consequences - especially for the peasantry. Thus the outcome of the Russian Revolution was a totally collectivist and authoritarian system in which the mass energies of all of the Russian people were finally turned-through coercion and terror if voluntary enthusiasm was not forthcoming-from the anarchic rebellions of 1917 toward active participation in centrally determined and directed efforts. At first these efforts involved the construction at reckless and breakneck speed of heavy industries. Then they turned to the defence of the Russian nation against a ruthless foe in World War II. Whatever the human costs-and they were terrible-this revolutionised system ultimately proved itself as a national state power. One need only compare the fate of Soviet Russia in World War II and after to that of Tsarist Russia in World War I to convince oneself of this.³⁰

Japan: Entrenched Regime Sabotage and the Conditions of a Nationalist Revolution

Our final example to look at in our applied structural analysis is Japan. Now, the Meiji restoration was a huge structural transformation of Japanese society which enabled decisive economic and military reform. It enabled Japan to be the only colonial empire in Asia at the time and a superior power to the much larger China (in terms of land, natural resources and population). It even enabled Japan to defeat the Russian empire in a war.

One of the reasons why looking at Japan turned out to be a useful exercise is because it has been an island with few geopolitical threats. Outside of the few failed Korean expeditions and the costly Mongolian invasion, it has not been greatly involved militarily with the continent prior to the 20th century, or the outside world much at all. Of course they were influenced by ideas from the out-

30 Skocpol, p.232-3

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

side but they weren't faced with significant pressure outside of the aforementioned ones.

In Japanese history the first major structural transformation was the Taika reforms and culminated in the creation of the Taiho state. Based on the government in Tang China the city of command which was permanently established at Nara there was extensive centralisation of the government:

An extensive central bureaucracy composed of a civilian aristocratic class, recruited to office by heredity rather than examination, maintained unified political control of the country. The realm was systematically divided into circuits, provinces, districts and villages, all under tight governmental supervision. A permanent conscript army was also created, if somewhat insecurely. Symmetrically planned imperial cities were built, along Chinese lines. Buddhism, syncretically mixed with indigenous Shinto cults, became an official religion, formally integrated into the apparatus of the State itself.³¹

However, this system was cannibalised and destroyed from the inside. This was likely a result of not establishing a mandarin caste and instead making most government roles hereditary which allowed the creation of a new aristocracy which gradually privatised and sabotaged many functions of government. Another explanation is the lack of foreign involvement in Japan in a serious way, with the one major exception of the failed Mongol invasion, meant that maintaining a complex society and bureaucratic structure was impossible. Without external energy to feed it and give it vectors of expansion, the structure moved out of equilibrium and was replaced by a new one. Private ownership of land steadily increased and the government allotment and even inspection became impossible. The peasants tilling the land were now out of reach of the state and directly working under the lords. After the collapse of the Taiho system there was the rise of the Kamakura Shogunate

31 Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (NLB, 1974) p.435 This book is an excellent resource in terms of practical structural analysis, from a mostly Marxist tradition in terms of looking at power dynamics, he sometimes runs into issues with his analysis but constantly sees and notes Jouvenelian dynamics regardless. For this Period of Japanese history and generally with sharp religious and institutional understanding J.W Hall's *Japan: From Pre-history to Modern Times*, is the gold standard.

and then the Ashikaga Shogunate which moved towards a total feudalisation of the state.

What was cemented in the beginning of the 17th century after the Sengoku-Jidai was often called the Bakufu government or Baku-Han system.³² The system was essentially run by a central government with the Shogun at the top (the bakufu), which owned about 20-25 percent of the land and had 5000 banner men (Hanomoto).³³ After Ieyasu, the power of the monarchy quickly became mostly symbolic in a similar way to what had happened to the emperor. So the Shogunal Bakufu apparatus and Hanomoto nobility basically controlled the political system:

The population was divided into four closed orders - nobles, peasants, artisans and merchants. Bushi were separated from the villages and congregated in the castle-towns of their daimyo, as disciplined men-at-arms ready for immediate military deployment. Their numbers were officially registered, and the size of the samurai class was henceforward fixed at some 5-7 per cent of the population, a comparatively large sword-bearing stratum. Peasants were by the same token deprived of all arms, bound to the soil and juridically forced to deliver two-thirds of their product to their masters.¹⁶ The autonomous cities of the Ashikaga and Sengoku epochs were suppressed, and the merchant class forbidden to purchase land (just as the samurai were excluded from commerce). On the other hand, the castle-towns of the feudal magnates themselves grew prodigiously in this period. Trade developed rapidly, under the protection of the daimyo whose castellar headquarters provided the central nodes of a greatly enlarged network of cities in Japan.³⁴

The merchant class was being completely sabotaged from developing in sharp contrast to Europe. The independence of merchant towns was crushed upon unification and they were forbidden to buy land. The Shogunate mostly received income from its own domain and monopolies on mining. There was a huge increase

32 See The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 4 Early Modern Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1991) especially chapter 4 The Bakuhan System by John Whitney Hall.

33 A Craig, Choshu in the Meiji Restoration (Cambridge USA, 1961), p. 15, quoted from Lineages.

34 *ibid.* p. 441, the note suggests evasion means it could have been as low as 2/5 of wealth appropriated

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

in the population in Japan in the 18th century and there was a commercialisation and modernisation of agriculture with many specialised crops being developed for sale and the expansion of the money economy into the peasantry allowing for more layers of stratification within the peasantry. The power shifted from the land to the growing urban areas and the proto-bourgeoisie were becoming increasingly rich with Daimyo influence shrinking. Part of the reason why there was such a rise in urban fortune was that the caste system prevented the merchant from buying rural land, hence the concentration and expansion of the cities.³⁵ What is so unique about the Japanese situation here is that the merchant class sees an astonishing rise of wealth and proportion of the wealth from the 17th century right up to the mid-19th century and yet they see no corresponding rise of power. Whenever the ruling nobility ran out of money they would simply sabotage the merchants gains by cancelling debt and this allowed for a political stasis of sorts:

The Shogunate and the daimyo reacted to the crisis in their incomes by cancelling their debts coercively, extracting large 'gifts' from the merchant class, and cutting the rice stipends of their samurai retainers.³⁶

This was due to a number of factors but the most overwhelmingly important was the fact of total Japanese isolationism. Once merchant capital reached a threshold of national wealth it had no vectors of expansion left whatsoever and was simply permanently killed before it could live. Capitalism was permanently sabotaged by an advanced bureaucratic feudal elite which was focused on maintaining its own power. The Japanese under the Bakufu had the single most successful saboteur regime in history. Education and economic development peaked off and the country was remarkably stable, the regime lasted for two and a half centuries more or less. A saboteur state is effectively an entrenched elite whose primary goal is simply maintaining their place at the centre of a political system and prioritise this over any other governmental imperatives. However this can have serious implications on the vulnerability of the system to external shocks, it will fall like a house of cards. This is a case contrary to High/Low vs. Middle in which power genuinely

35 C. D. Sheldon, *The Rise of the Merchant Class in Tokugawa Japan 1600-1868*, (Locust Valley, 1958)

36 *Ibid.* p.453

is conservative, however methods of conserving power succeeding so well eliminates the dynamism required to counter external security competitors. One of the major structural weaknesses of the Baku-Han system however was the disloyal Han:

The founder of the dynasty, Ieyasu, had defeated the rival lords of the South-West at Sekigahara: he had not destroyed them. The daimyo numbered some 250-300 under the Tokugawa Shogunate. Of these, about 90 represented tozama or 'outside' houses, whom had not been early vassals of the Tokugawa, and many of which had fought against Ieyasu. The tozama houses were regarded as potentially or traditionally hostile to the Shogunate, and were rigorously excluded from participation in the machinery of the Bakufu. They included the great majority of the largest and richest domains: of the 16 biggest han, no less than 11 were tozama.³⁷

This is the exact elite who was mobilised against the Bakufu government when it came under pressure. The Japanese regime change was uniquely smooth because Japan had such a uniquely advanced feudal society and its bureaucracy was sufficiently indifferent to the government that it could be integrated rather than broken by the new elite. Also due to the merely formal role its emperor held, shadow rulers can be replaced whilst retaining the public figure-head of the sovereign institution. The event which precipitated the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate was the treaties enforced by Commodore Perry when the Americans literally forced the country open economically in 1853. Very quickly this allows a vector of expansion for Japan's merchant class and so permanent sabotage from feudalism became totally unsustainable. In an irony of history, the ruling ideology of total xenophobia was weaponised against the ruling class. A fanatically anti-foreign population after this humiliation very quickly proved its downfall. Sabotage guaranteed through xenophobia paved the way for revolution based upon it. The Tozama, particularly those at Satsuma and Choshu openly conspired to overthrow the system. For Japan not to be humiliated and turned into a puppet state of European colonisers, a new centralised powerful state would need to be created with a modern economic system and military.

The structural transformation was consolidated in 1871, and a

37 Ibid. p.445

POLITICAL METASTABILITY

huge modernisation based on the spirit of reform resulted ultimately in the creation of a nationalist developmentalism. Clearly this was a nationalist revolution against foreign threats above anything else, the treaties completely destabilised the Bakufu's ability to keep the merchants in check and to maintain their feudal system but it wasn't capitalism which replaced it. Mercantile capitalism only abortively emerged in the 1920s but it was disciplined by the strong central bureaucratic state, and a colonial empire was built.³⁸ These developments allowed Japan to become a genuinely modern nation very quickly, able to compete with foreign powers in stark contrast to the collapse and civil war in the Qing dynasty.

What destroyed the old Japanese system was its traumatising encounter with American "gunboat diplomacy" which could not have been predicted, this shock from the outside triggered a structural transformation. Again we see this feedback loop of external competition with internal security organisation as the defining mechanism in the historical development of modern statecraft. This is also a good counter example against theories of the primacy of the economic, because the political external threat to security was prioritised by the new elite over the long term trend of the decline of the feudal order by burgeoning mercantile capitalism.

Conclusion: History as Tragedy

There is no final solution to history, there is no utopia. What Meirshemer called the tragedy of great power politics presents us with a brutal world that rewards power for its own sake. To paraphrase Jouvenel, the state is the repository of men's dreams, and it is where they go to die. This tragic view we must oppose to utopian ideological visions of the state's role in history. Order is fleeting and rare, entropy is far more endemic than negentropy. From this perspective, politics is about the balancing of internal coalitions and interests, bending the will of would be saboteurs to the greater cause of surviving security competition with opposing powers.

38 For an account of the Meiji Restoration as a Nationalist Revolution See W.G Beasley's *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford University Press, 1972). Also See W.J MacPherson's *The economic development of Japan 1868-1941* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) For Post Meiji Economic development and state involvement enabling the miracle. Post War roughly the same exact policies were followed to revivify Japan.

FIRSTNESS #3

This political negentropy is impossible to secure permanently, a permanent equilibrium is impossible. Real order in a society is metastability, a dynamic society is capable of constant structural reform in response to shifts out of equilibrium as new situations develop. Society is not a closed system but constantly in interaction with shifts in the natural world, power balances at home and abroad are always shifting, and man is the sick animal, there is no permanent solution. Metastability is only possible when you have a leadership willing and able to be pioneering, which thrusts into the unknown, which confronts problems, and creates new precedents in the state of exception.

The eternal return of the metastable, due to constant shifts and disequilibrium, is actually what makes life possible in the first place. Without struggle and conflict there would be no life, but in my view a life without struggle is not worth living at all. Real equilibrium is death, the only truly stable form is static equally spread out energy, heat death. Life itself is not the striving to this form it is the struggle against it, so of course there's no permanent solution, and ideologies which promise an end of history ultimately promise a pathetic and uninspiring vision. The struggle for order is therefore meaningful because it is an extension of the struggle of life. Political nihilism is the result of the idealism of playing to win forever and establish a utopia, all real victories are secured by people who are playing to play. Affirming struggle is the only way to engage with actual political reality as meaningful in itself, all else is cope and denial.

TALK OF THE CENTER

ADAM KATZ

“...the social sciences were born on the day when the ‘origin of society’ was consigned to a desk draw—to the file labelled ‘fantasies.’” Regis Debray

Where to begin? This is a basic question for any philosophy or discourse in the human sciences: what do you take to be the fundamental “unit” of analysis, or methodological principle, or subject position of the master of the discourse—and why? You can start with something that seems very fundamental, like “Being,” or a perplexing question that might come up in discourse (what is the “good?”); in psychology you start with something like the “mind” or “psyche,” in sociology “society,” or the “group,” but these concepts just reiterate those posited by the disciplines themselves. Why are there “groups”? Why is there “society”? “Mind”? “Consciousness”? Is “Being” anything more than a grammatical artifact? Etc. If these are not simply transhistorical or eternal concepts, both the concepts and their referents must have come into existence at some point, so, to answer a question like “why ‘society’” or “why ‘mind’” assumes at one point there was no such thing as “society” or “mind” and at another point there was—or that at one point concepts like “society” and “mind” would not have been intelligible and then at another point they became so—the referent and the term came into being together.

It’s possible to say that there are no starting points or origins: we are always in the middle, always becoming. To say something like this to have already chosen a starting point: the question of Being vs. Becoming. It’s a philosophical starting point, which therefore locates us within the discipline of philosophy—a discipline which has always had imperial ambitions, asserting a right to examine the passports of anyone claiming to enter into the discourses of

what we could broadly call the “academy.” What, then, is the origin of philosophy? Is there a time when humans were not questioning the relationship between Being and Becoming (or the One and the Many, etc.), and then a time when they were—and, therefore, an event, something happening, that involved crossing over that threshold? If so, we can’t expect philosophy to be completely aware or forthcoming about what that event entailed. After all, we know for certain that ritual came before philosophy; so, for that matter, did tragedy (with ritual preceding tragedy, which is really a modification of ritual). So, philosophy’s “coming out” must have had something to do with opposing, modifying, or rejecting (philosophy itself might say “transcending”) ritual. Can philosophy be trusted to tell us what was involved in crossing that threshold?

Any starting point that cannot account for its emergence out of ritual must therefore be of limited value, and this is the case for philosophy and all its children, which includes all of the human sciences. “Groups,” “society,” “mind,” “consciousness,” “Being and Becoming” and all the rest are concepts raised over the graves of ritual. This would mean that a real origin would have to precede ritual. But, of course, even a word like “ritual” is a product of the human sciences and is therefore a way of looking at rituals through the rear-view mirror, so to speak. Still, what we now call “rituals” can share a common point of reference with peoples who engage in rituals, and with peoples who have left us records of the rituals they once engaged in in a way concepts that emerged in philosophy’s wake can’t. We could ask, for example, what happens when a particular act is performed and those performing the act could give us an answer. We could elicit a language, overlapping across ritual scenes, of interactions between beings performing rituals and beings summoned, or appeased, or vivified, by those rituals. And we can ask about the origins of rituals because any group of people performing rituals will have their own accounts of the origins of those rituals because the origins are part of their efficacy. Are inquiring into, narrating, and performing the origins of the things we do no longer part of the efficacy of those doings? If not, when did they cease to be so?

The remnants of rituals we retain today give us information about what distinguishes a ritually based order from whatever we are to call what we have now. We can work with the kinds of simple

TALK OF THE CENTER

examples J.L. Austin used in explaining his concept of linguistic “performativity,” like marrying a couple or christening a ship. We could argue about this, but I’m going to say that what appears to be the attenuated nature of these rituals is precisely what provides us with information regarding their origins, and our human origins along with them. We know that a clergyman can’t actually provide a married couple with good fortune or prosperity or curse them with the opposite if they fail to fulfill their vows—the ceremony doesn’t “do” anything in that sense. What it does is change their condition and initiate them into the community in a new way. This change of condition has all kinds of consequences that are reinforced by other measures taken by the community—a married couple is treated differently in the law, their children have a different status, and so on, than is the case with unmarried couples. This is precisely the kind of “privilege” so resented by those who object to even these minimal elements of ritual culture remaining, and who are the intellectual descendants of those who first of all defined their practices against ritual—philosophers. On what would philosophers form a community, if not on ritual? Surely the search for truth, of which ritual will sooner or later come into philosophy’s sights as the primary enemy because while, for the practitioner of a rite, the rite lives within the sphere of radiation of its origin, for the philosopher the ritual has no real origin—it is an invented origin, by someone interested in suppressing the search for the truth. And the philosopher has a point here, even if we can note that a violent act of instituting a mythical account of the origin of a ritual so as to suppress its real origin would itself be a kind of origin, pointing more reliably to the more obscure one than does the philosophical critique.

The philosopher has no interest in seeking out the true origin of ritual (even though that should be exactly what he’s interested in) because that origin lies in something that precedes and makes possible the search for truth: the foundation of the community itself in a shared act or event. If marriage changes the condition of the couple by conferring upon them a new (for them) status honored in a particular way by the community, then it might very well be that the origin of ritual lies in changing the “status” of the entire community, which can only mean creating that community as this community. This claim gets us into paradoxes which not too many

philosophers have taken seriously—Rousseau, to his credit, was an exception, as he found himself puzzled by the relation between the community as constituting and the community as constituted. To found the community you must have already been a community so as to carry out the founding. It's no coincidence that we find a similar paradox when it comes to the origin of language which, unless you want to embark upon the arduous and disingenuous practice of denying all differences between human language and the communications of even the most intelligent animals, must also have not existed at one point, and therefore come into existence at another. And we have the same problem here as with ritual: how could members of a community know what the newly created words or signs mean without already having a linguistic system and community which would confer meaning upon those words or signs?

I think we've wandered off of philosophy's reservation here. Do we even have any right to continue? I, and you, if you're still with me, have found myself in the same kind of paradoxical situation as those originating language and ritual: I have to confer a kind of legitimacy on my discourse without having the kind of legitimacy that comes from subordinating myself to an acknowledged "master" within philosophy or the human sciences that would enable me to do so. Not to be too dramatic, but this is the kind of "pharmakonian" situation that Derrida drew our attention to without, at least in my view, being willing enough to set aside his own institutional and disciplinary legitimacy to occupy. Whether other practitioners of what has come to be known as "generative anthropology" (you knew that's what I've been talking about), including its founder, have efficaciously occupied such a position; whether it's necessary to do so, and if so, how, in order to inscribe in history the hypothesis we must leap into in order to resolve while preserving these paradoxes, are all very interesting questions. Think of the kind of overwhelming authority those historically located at the "vortex" of such paradoxes have had to invoke in order to imperatively impose their ritual enactment of the paradox. Obviously, I don't have anything approaching such revelational or scriptural authority, or even anything resembling it. One can just elicit signs of the origin of the sign one is issuing in all the other signs and acts it is deferring and differing and in the conditions of deferral

TALK OF THE CENTER

(or difference) across the infrastructures enabling its articulation.

Why it is difficult to do so will lead us to the, not resolution, but presentation of this “stack” of paradoxes. I think that Rene Girard was never more correct or insightful when we asserted that dwelling too much upon our fundamentally mimetic nature is simply unbearable. Literature professors, he said, in his book on Shakespeare, would rather admit they want to have sex with their mothers and kill their fathers than admit that they feel envy. Who could bear to see an unflinching inventory of the successive bouts of imitation, emulation, envy, resentment, installation of gestures and attitudes, dwelling upon and forgetting of slights and, even more, those brief glimpses of the shameful (why so shameful?) pretense that the acquiescence to the desire of others was nothing more than our own self-creation? Imagine what speaking to each other would be like if we just took for granted that every word and movement of the other was borrowed and translated from another on the condition that that borrowing and translation be denied to the point of forgetting. Much better to argue about whether to be a materialist or idealist. Like with ritual, we retain some sense of our mimetic nature—we speak of good and bad models and examples, and most arguments about “culture” take that mimetic nature for granted. And yet there’s not much appetite for looking into how the sausage is made, with “positive” and “negative” role models rather anodyne euphemisms for what’s involved in the chaotic construction of a “self,” especially under conditions bereft of any carefully plotted out initiatory path for doing so—which suggests that the suppression of mimesis has something to do with the burial of ritual under philosophy. The belief that your mother-in-law is torturing you through the “evil eye” in its way demonstrates greater knowledge of social interaction than most of our psychology. Even, or especially, if your mother-in-law happens to be dead.

In a social order that takes the individual as the foundational social “unit” any admission that you are not wholly yourself just paints a target on your back—you’re laying out your vulnerabilities before those who might very well be enemies and, in fact, might be more likely to become your enemies precisely because they see those vulnerabilities. Consider how much of the discourse and practices you and others are engaged in can plausibly be seen as ensuring the boundaries around an intact, self-originating self

remain intact. That thing I did—it was the real me who did it. All our institutions, most basically our legal ones, would fall without everyone being willing to say that. I do wonder whether so much of what seems to me ineffectual in the presentation and promotion of “generative anthropology” can be attributed to the sense that there is something impossible about being a bearer and constant reminder of the mimetic nature of the human and what is involved in not simply falling sway to it. The terms of acquiring a “warrant” to boldly proclaim “generative anthropology” the rightful successor of, say, cybernetics, are far more difficult than those required to proclaim, say, the latest new form of co-existence between man and machine.

Ritual must, then, be “about” all this mimetic fervor, but ritual can’t speak about it as such (it can only reconcile it on the spot), and the fact that we can speak about ritual in these terms also means we can’t return to it in any strong sense. We have to get “behind” ritual so as to get beyond it in the “right” (non-philosophical, non-mimetic denying) way. I just present your own brief inspection of human interactions you’re familiar with as evidence that our mimetic nature is regarded as shameful (who comes out and says, “that’s not my idea, I’m just repeating what that guy said,” other than to quickly, cleanly and shamefacedly disavow what has been said. But we can all see that others do “repeat what the other guy said” all the time.) Any serious inquirer into things human will keep pressing on this point, then. And I remind you that we are without warrant here, we’re liable to be rounded up and ticketed for unlicensed inquiry at any time. Now, the very thing that makes mimesis unavoidably evident and therefore shameful is what also what would seem to neutralize it: everyone just repeating what everyone else says. Conflict would be impossible in that case. Except that what counts as “repeating” is not so simple. Now, this is the kind of question philosophy loves to get its hands on—“identity and difference”! But if we’re talking about a situation in which the condition and maybe the existence of the community depends upon some kind of “agreement” here, how the impending disaster is to be avoided must at least some extent be improvised and assessed on the spot. (In thinking through mimesis, then, we are always thinking about ways of landing in and preventing humanly made catastrophes.)

TALK OF THE CENTER

This thought experiment (it could be tried out in actuality—surely some enterprising therapist could give it a go) of avoiding conflict by having each person repeat what the other said, however fruitful, does not get us out of the paradoxes I'm insisting we refuse to lose sight of. You could always notice some difference between what each person and then the next says, some difference in tone, posture, gesture, or context (since part of the context is what the other couldn't have included because it's what he said). So, you can always try to repeat more precisely and unmistakably, but at the same time this means everyone involved would become more expert in noticing ever smaller differences and making ever larger issues of them. But we might at least arrive at a kind of steady or meta-stable state of the paradoxes here. The more this ritual of repetition goes on, and even the more "narcissisms of small differences" it generates, the more each participant can only represent to himself what he is doing by locating other reference points within the other ways those in the community have said the same thing as everyone is saying. The fact that we're all trying to repeat the same thing, and woe to us if we don't, is installed at and as the basis of the community. No one could ever say anything that couldn't be treated as a more or less competent, ingenious, desperate, defiant attempt to repeat what everyone else is saying—perhaps with an ever greater awareness of how, after all, impossible it really is.

In this way we find the "transcendence" of mimesis within mimesis itself. Criteria for more and less highly valued cultural products suggest themselves. The cultural products we would want to repeat the most carefully and elaborately (eddies of repetition within the broader arena of repeating) would be those that find likenesses among practices that seem to be different (failed attempts to repeat, and therefore dangerous), without minimizing the perception of failure that attended to the reception of those practices—the scope of what can count as repeating what everyone else is saying is expanded, while also creating the expectation that the newly perceived scope be brought into future efforts to repeat what everyone else is saying. Landmarks, ceremonies, holidays, and monuments are all created to commemorate events where likely failure was retrieved as a new way of repeating what everyone else is saying. Those commemorations in turn provide more ways of repeating what everyone else is saying, because they are

themselves what everyone else is saying. (I hope you will all notice the way I have repeated without exactly repeating what I always say, and in that way maybe repeating it all the more faithfully.)

I can now propose that what I have described in this thought experiment is exactly what happens all the time, in every human community. There is not a human interaction that can't productively and exhaustively be studied as an attempt on the part of all involved to repeat as exactly as possible what everyone is really saying. You're trying to repeat what your enemy is not quite succeeding to say by identifying his inimical sayings and doings, you're repeating what those who don't "get it" really would be saying if they had arrived at a higher level of circulation of repeating what everyone is saying, you're trying to create a history for yourself as a continuous attempt to meet ever more exacting standards of saying what everyone else is saying. I would challenge you to identify some human interaction that couldn't productively and exhaustively be described in this way, so as to integrate any human word or deed into the full expanse of history and the spread of institutions. I challenge you to find a more productive and exhaustive way of doing so, even if you want to bring into play the full philosophical and sociological apparatus of "society," "mind," "becoming" and so on.

What this means is that "generative anthropology" is ultimately a kind of "languaging," entering any discourse and making it more of what it already is, saying the same thing everyone else is saying and, therefore, finding ways to say that you are saying the same thing everyone else is saying. This involves remembering when the crisis of imitation was resolved by first one and then two and eventually everyone reversing the cataclysmic trajectory by repeating what the others say by, first of all, treating it as something said rather than an appropriation of something. You can remember this collective extrication from the crisis because language is nothing more than a field of monuments to such extrications, with reciprocal references that can be made to saturate the space by selecting the way of saying what everyone else is saying that draws into its orbit as many other ways of saying what everyone else is saying as possible. If all utterances carried along with them reminders of their origin in the first humans' materialized imagining of the dead end created by their own mimetic desires then "generative anthro-

TALK OF THE CENTER

pology” would no longer be necessary. And this means that the proper practice of “generative anthropology” is to locate oneself as close as possible to that vanishing point where language use itself would be nothing more than “tagging” all utterances with such reminders and thereby maximally leveraging the inexhaustibility of saying the same thing everyone else is saying.

The paradoxes of founding are not thereby eliminated and we will always remain mimetic creatures—indeed, our shared project of saying the same thing everyone else is saying cements our mimetic nature and closes off all exits (not that there were any, or that we still can’t fantasize about any). And as long as we are mimetic beings the space of mimesis can be saturated, which means it is always possible to imagine that the other has always already tracked all of your future moves and gotten there before you so you can never again say or do anything that is “yours.” This possibility of being utterly silenced, and therefore being taken with the paradoxical necessity of joining the race to silence the other first, will always remain the background, threatening to become the foreground of everybody saying what everyone else is saying. To say what everyone else is saying therefore entails including by gesturing toward this possibility, which always takes on a different form. Everybody wanting the same thing must endlessly be converted into everyone saying the same thing, without a firm line ever being drawn once and for all. Doing so must involve saying the wanting, which is to say making explicit what might be and usually is left implicit—we can’t say everything we want all the time, just those things and times we want that make the pursuit of wants unredeemed by sayings more likely. All the wants converging together create necessity, and necessarily converge on those who make the interplay of wanting and saying explicit and insistent. Repeating that we’re all repeating and must continue repeating what everyone else is saying enacts that interplay of “absolute” mimesis and its ongoing dispersal. And you could repeat what everyone else is saying in the only way that you can right here and now by making it a bit more the same this time.

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

AARON HUNTER

1. Introduction

Adam Katz is well regarded as an insightful political theorist in the scene which surrounds this journal. His work has many influences, but it leans heavily on Eric Gans' Generative Anthropology in his writings. In spite of his influence, the originary hypothesis (the centrepiece of Gans' theory) itself has been subject to much scepticism. It seems that many people like Katz as a political commentator but dislike Generative Anthropology. This scepticism towards Generative Anthropology I argue is warranted and Katz's best insights should be retained without this unnecessary baggage. The problems with Gans' theory connect with a broader trend towards highly speculative and epistemically defective theories in the online right. This often results in the endorsement of some form of pseudoscience or pseudophilosophy. I contend that Gans is ultimately guilty of both, albeit in a mild and relatively innocuous form. Thus, the question of the demarcation of science from pseudoscience and the nature of both this and pseudophilosophy are relevant. Consequently, this discussion will be framed in the context of Moberger's philosophical understanding of *bullshit* (where it becomes a rigorous philosophical concept not just a pejorative), of which pseudoscience and pseudophilosophy are two sub-types. Moberger defines bullshit as a "lack of epistemic conscientiousness, meaning that the person arguing for it takes no care to assure the truth of their statements" (Hendricks 2020).

If Gans is guilty of bullshitting (in this technical sense) in his theory of Generative Anthropology, it seems more plausible that whatever explanatory power Katz's writings have must be derived

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

from the wide variety of other credible historical and anthropological sources that he deploys such as Olson and Tomasello. In fact, the speculative nature of Generative Anthropology runs against the rest of Katz's resources that are decidedly non-speculative in nature. The irony of this is that the liberal theoretical tradition which Katz so often critiques was founded upon speculative anthropological accounts of civil society, a theoretical foundation which Graeber (one of his other major influences) overtly attacks as illegitimate. This isn't intended as a rigorous critique of the content of Gans' theory, rather it is a general and somewhat light-hearted critical commentary on its speculative anthropological form. If speculative anthropology is found wanting epistemically, any conclusions we draw from it can be dismissed easily as the argumentative foundation for why we should believe it is vulnerable. This is a big problem for Generative Anthropology and Generative Anthropology-based political theorizing, and a reason to reject it and prefer other theoretical approaches. Or at the very least, would be cause to reform it by excising the nonviable speculative aspects of it. While Generative Anthropology itself seems fairly harmless, it does speak to a broader issue with speculative theories and questionable engagements with science and philosophy in the online right more broadly. Thus, this case study is also of a general interest as it serves to highlight why using speculative methodologies in political theory are deeply problematic.

2. Bullshit

Frankfurt first introduced the idea of bullshit as a philosophical concept. For Moberger, "According to Frankfurt's analysis, the essence of bullshit is unconcern with truth. Unlike the liar and the honest person, who both have their eyes on how things are, the bullshitter is indifferent toward the truth [...] thus, the distinguishing feature of bullshit is that it stems from a lack of concern with the truth of one's statements". While Frankfurt isn't explicit about this, what he is getting at is the issue of a "culpable lack of concern with truth" (Moberger 2020). For Moberger, this "relevant form of culpability is specifically epistemic" in nature. Consequently, the act of bullshitting is independent of the truth of a theory as such as it is an epistemic failing, and in principle a bullshitter can accidentally say something true by pure luck. However, in general

the two tend to run together and consequently those that engage in bullshit ought to generally be disregarded. Moberger (2020) points out however that this epistemic culpability can be understood in two ways.

Being culpably unconcerned with truth can be understood in a narrow and a wide sense, however, and Frankfurt tends to run these two senses together. It is one thing to be culpably indifferent toward the truth of one's statements. It is another thing to be culpably unconscientious with respect to the truth of one's statements. Those who are indifferent toward the truth of their statements are of course lacking in epistemic conscientiousness, but the converse need not hold. One can care about the truth of one's statements without taking care with respect to them. Being intellectually humble, honest and discerning even to a minimal degree is, unfortunately, not guaranteed by a desire that one's statements be true.

Gans is clearly not guilty of the first sense of culpability as he is clearly sincere in his advocacy of his theories. There is no reason to think that he is being purposefully dishonest or is in any way a man of bad character. In fact, the opposite is demonstrated in his rejection of 'woke' progressive ideological trends in an academic setting shows real courage. So it is his theories and methods that are under question, not his overall character. The issues with his speculative approach and why he considers this type of theorising to be worthwhile are likely an artefact of the kind of sloppy thinking encouraged by literary studies as a discipline. So, rather than implying any malice on Gans' part the flaws of Generative Anthropology most likely derive from institutional failings in modern academia that have allowed this kind of thing to run rampant. To return to the topic at hand, for Moberger (2020) "the wider notion" of bullshit "is more appropriate for characterizing" it anyway. If we "consider astrology, for example. The term 'bullshit' certainly seems applicable to astrology, but taken in the narrow sense this presupposes that proponents of astrology are indifferent toward the truth of their claims. This seems wrong. Astrology should be classified as bullshit even if its proponents are sincere in this regard". The same logic can potentially be applied to the originary hypothesis. To do this however, we would have to establish the notion that Gans engages in a the required of lack of epistemic

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

conscientiousness to fit Moberger's categorical schema.

This is trivially easy to do, as the originary hypothesis is entirely speculative and has no empirical support whatsoever, yet is performatively treated within Generative Anthropology as something with comparable truth to the findings of conventional anthropological work. If this is not the case then the entirety of their corpus is purposeful nonsense built on a known fiction. However when confronted with this, advocates of Generative Anthropology will sometimes retreat to the position that it is merely a heuristic. This is a highly questionable form of motte-and-bailey argument that will be addressed in section 4. Ultimately, the very fact that Gans is willing to engage in anthropological speculation without evidence, and then draw sweeping conclusions about politics and ethics, is enough to demonstrate an egregious lack of epistemic conscientiousness on his part as there is no reason to believe that that any of his constructions have any basis in reality whatsoever. This speculative anthropological method is bullshit, the question remains of what specific type of bullshit it is, pseudoscience or pseudophilosophy remains.

One last issue is worth briefly addressing though: namely what is meant by truth, as Moberger expresses no position on this issue. The concept of truth itself is subject to much debate. A problematic theory of truth attributed to DeLanda was proposed by Hunter (2021) in an earlier issue of this publication, which is largely compatible with the general position expressed here, is one potential stance to take on this. Additionally, this essay also operates from the assumption of ontological and scientific realism. These are both easily defensible postulates, see DeLanda (2002), Worrall (1989), Ladyman (2001), Bhaskar (1998) and Hunter (2021) for arguments in favour of this. Ultimately, one could utilise one's truth theory of choice here, and the gist of this argument and Moberger's will hold, the only exception would be appealing to anti-realist relativism. Such an appeal would essentially be a denial of 'truth' actually meaning something coherent and intelligible in the first place, which is not a viable position anyway.

3. Pseudoscience

The issue of Generative Anthropology's scientific pretensions can serve to further illustrate Gans' epistemic unconscientiousness.

This is where Moberger's use of the philosophical concept of bullshit to take a stance on the demarcation problem comes in. The demarcation between science and pseudoscience is a notoriously thorny issue, as the traditional view espoused by Popper centring around the notion of falsifiability is undermined by arguments from the history of science, showing that in practice scientists do not act as Popper expects. Thus, Popper's notion that a theory that is falsified by a single failed experiment or observation is incorrect as theories are often retained in spite of this, and justifiably so. This occurred in the case of Newtonian mechanics when the orbit of Uranus did not adhere to its predictions. Instead, scientists looked for another planet that may distort Uranus' orbit and used Newtonian mechanics to predict Neptune's location. Thus an anomalous finding, rather than leading to a key theory's abandonment, facilitated a new discovery. A wide variety of responses have been given to this issue ranging from alternate demarcation criteria such as shifting the focus away from individual theories and toward research programs (Lakatos) or outright scepticism of demarcation as a whole and the insistence on a detailed case by case analysis of questionable science (Laudan).

Moberger (2020) seeks to add clarity to these debates where, claiming that even if the distinction between science and pseudoscience is fuzzy, it is still substantial, and supervenes on the distinction between bullshit and non-bullshit. One example of the complexity of the demarcation problem, that Pigliucci (2021) recently discussed, where in some cases, contrary to popular opinion, pseudosciences do not always "lack empirical content". Pigliucci points out that "Astrology...has plenty...But that content does not stand up to critical scrutiny. And astrology is a pseudoscience because its practitioners don't seem to be bothered by the fact that their statements about the world do not appear to be true". Pigliucci explicitly echoes Moberger's views regarding pseudoscience being a form of bullshit on this point. However, it was Ladyman (2013) that seemingly inaugurated the connection between Frankfurt's concept of bullshit and the demarcation problem however, utilising it as a means of articulating the difference between pseudoscience, non-science, bad science and science fraud. Thus, the idea of employing the philosophical concept of bullshit in this context has proven fruitful. Ultimately, Moberger (2020):

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

Suggest[s] that we understand pseudoscience as bullshit with scientific pretensions. Bullshit consists in epistemic unconscientiousness, but what do scientific pretensions involve? Here we can distinguish between a wide and a narrow sense. In the wide sense, to make a claim with scientific pretensions is simply to take a stand, in the sense of asserting a proposition, on a scientific issue. In the narrow sense, scientific pretensions also involve a certain mode of presentation – an aura of scientificness. We can thus distinguish between bullshit that takes a stand on scientific issues, and bullshit that does so while wearing a lab coat, as it were. We can call them wide and narrow pseudoscience, respectively (cf. Hansson, 2017, sections 3.2–3.4, 3.2–3.4).

GA does not fit the narrow sense of the term but explicitly fits the wider sense by the very nature of its central claim: to explain the origin of language. A question clearly empirical in nature and within the purview of not just anthropology but also biology, linguistics and cognitive science. If the origin of language isn't a scientific issue, then I don't know what is – and, via the originary hypothesis, GA is clearly taking a stand on this and postulating a specific real-world event to explain this. Gans (2020) describes his views as follows:

The originary hypothesis is not anti-scientific. Yet neither is it comparable to the kind of hypotheses that are taken seriously in the sciences, including the human sciences. A hypothesis, whether in physics or sociology, is only of value if it can be tested empirically. A purely heuristic schema that purports to model the early development of language is not testable/falsifiable in any conceivable manner.

He even states;

“Social-science anthropologists, as well as linguists, unanimously consider that the originary hypothesis is not “scientific” because it is unfalsifiable. The idea of a hypothesis that can be made plausible only by reference to its consequences, that is, of a heuristic hypothesis, is unacceptable in domains where conclusions must be based on the analysis and prediction of data.” (Gans 2021)

As mentioned, the origin of language is clearly an issue that falls

within the purview of the sciences, yet Gans weighs in on the issue with a rival entirely evidence free approach nonetheless with full awareness that this is not acceptable scientific practice. He instead chooses to ignore the appropriate scientific practices and take a stance on a scientific issue using speculative anthropology. A clear sign of epistemic unconscientiousness. This is the precise kind of thing Moberger is setting out to identify and condemn in his discussion of the wide notion of pseudoscience. Oddly enough, the originary hypothesis is also an almost perfect example of what Popper was getting at with his original definition of pseudoscience. Gans, in explicitly admitting its unfalsifiability, tacitly acknowledges this. The problem with this is that Generative Anthropology predicts nothing specific which can be observed and can be used to explain away many observations in an ad hoc way. That it is simultaneously seen to support Gans' neoconservative political commitments, Katz's reactionary/'postliberal' views and the more standard progressive positions of the rest of Gans' followers shows that, like Freudianism, the lack of epistemic constraints enables it to be deployed in defense of pre-conceived biases. We need not accept Popper's theory as a whole (as mentioned, there are good reasons not to) to recognise that, to the extent that Generative Anthropology purports to be an authority over the human sciences or make claims that fall into the domain of the social sciences, its lack of predictions and ability to accommodate multiple contradictory interpretations in a manner similar to psychoanalysis is at least disturbing. Gans and Katz both refer to the originary hypothesis using the term 'model'. This adds more weight to the claim that Generative Anthropology has scientific pretensions, as this is a use of the language of science to attempt to grant credibility to what is in actuality simply armchair speculation.

Moberger provides a general guideline for how to identify pseudoscience, as "a good rule of thumb is to keep an eye out for classical fallacies such as ad hominem, straw man, false dilemma and cherry picking. Such fallacies occur in all kinds of contexts, but what signifies bullshit is that they occur more systematically." This is relevant as the entirety of GA appears to rest on various types of faulty generalisations, the most foundational of which being its axiomatic use of mimesis. To the extent that it builds on something based in the real world, not the mind of its creator, this depends on

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

the axioms it postulates. While Gans is coy about the specific nature of his methodology he ultimately employs a form of deductive argument, a method that Lawson (2013) shows to be inappropriate for the social sciences. See my paper in the first issue of this journal, *Econofuturism (part 1)* for a detailed exposition of this.

Generative Anthropology builds itself up from 3 fundamental movements: a postulation of axioms, the construction of the hypothesis and the deduction of the modes of language and the rest of Gans' complex theoretical construction. All 3 steps are contentious. We will focus on the first only, as, if Gans fails on this point his theory doesn't get off the ground. This also further illustrates his epistemic sloppiness. For starters, the use of the deductive method presupposes the extreme surety of one's axioms. They must have comparable strength to laws in the natural sciences. It is well known that such laws, or even universal generalisations are thin on the ground in social science and likely don't exist at all. For example, Gans provides no real scientific argument for mimesis to be treated as the necessary and exclusive elementary unit out of which socially mediated abstract cognition is composed. In some of Gans later writings we see vague invocations of Tomasello's far more respectable work, but the basis for Gans' postulation of axiomatic mimesis in his model is the equally suspect speculative anthropological theory of his mentor, Rene Girard. Typically, axioms in a deductive argument are based off a well supported empirical generalisation, based in turn on some real-world research. Ultimately Generative Anthropology provides no serious argument for mimesis as being fundamental and that human behaviour is reducible to this. At best we see a form of unjustified reductionism. Katz (2021) himself articulates the reductionist logic going on here where he claims:

There is a powerful and, indeed, I think irrefutable (I've never seen someone even make an attempt at refutation) logic to the originary hypothesis, as long as you are willing to start with the undeniable fact (one even attested to by Aristotle!) that human beings are especially imitative. If you accept that human beings are imitative, can you set a limit to imitation—what does any human do that can't be traced back to the imitation of another human?

Aside from being a clear case of the appeal to ignorance fallacy,

there are 3 claims that can be extracted from this passage about imitation. (1) That imitation is a noteworthy human trait. This is reasonable and could plausibly be supported by Tomasello's research. (2) That it is an essential trait. This is a non sequitur, an argument for why this follows from the first claim is needed. This point also depends on the idea that there is such thing as essences, and the idea of essential properties is a metaphysical notion that requires a rigorous philosophical defense. So to keep this claim, as well as the claim that follows from it, Generative Anthropology's rejection of metaphysics must be abandoned. Finally (3) that humanity can be reduced to mimesis and that this can be used as an axiom in the deductive argument Gans sets up. This is the real blunder here, as humanity may well have multiple essential traits (if such things even exist), such a reductive analysis in omitting them is almost certainly leaving out something crucial. This seems like an unduly strong reductionism that Katz (2021) just handwaves in with no justification other than asserting this "can you set a limit to imitation—what does any human do that can't be traced back to the imitation of another human". The obvious retort to this is that imitation itself presupposes a model to imitate, if that model is also just imitating another model who is imitating another model, and so on, this leads to an infinite regress. The question of *firstness* therefore itself stands directly against this mimetic reductionism.

What evidence is given for mimetic essentialism? Strong evidence is required for such a counter-intuitive claim, it is by no means self-evident that our desires are reducible to mimesis. Despite this, none is presented, even though cognitive science is able to produce a basis for testing this empirically. This empirical work is conversely held in high esteem in phenomenology and other schools of thought in philosophy of mind which acknowledge and integrate the empirical literature into their theories. Instead of dealing with or even recognizing this massive body of evidence, Generative Anthropology defends itself with mere armchair pontificating. This shows further epistemic unconscientiousness, which is a huge problem for anyone trying to derive a political theory by appeals to the authority of Generative Anthropology. If your fundamental claims have not been subjected to epistemic rigor, on what basis can you claim the authority to reform the political system upon them?

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

Methodologically Generative Anthropology bears significant resemblance to the Misesian branch of Austrian economics that similarly pursues an a priori deductive approach to social science explanation. 'Praeology' is based on a set of questionable axioms, and constructs a vast entirely speculative theoretical edifice upon this bullshit foundation. This deductivism is also present in neoclassical economics and Menger's notion of barter as the origin of money that similarly lacks any evidential support. One of Katz's key influences, Graeber (and many other anthropologists) have demonstrated that it has no basis in reality whatsoever. These comparisons are apt, as Katz seemingly accepts the typical heterodox economics based critiques of these ideas as pseudoscientific on this basis. In the interests of consistency, shouldn't Gans' speculative-deductive method also be rejected on the same grounds?

Speculative anthropology, in the work of Hobbes and as exemplified in the work of Rousseau, has been the foundation of the Enlightenment political philosophy undergirding liberalism from its very origins. Therefore it seems that attempting to critique liberalism with more speculative anthropology is quite an odd choice, rather than just dismissing it entirely. To the extent that anthropology is viable as a discipline, it has to leave armchair speculations and a priori deductions behind and deal with empirical reality to be epistemologically legitimate. Consequently, the very practice of speculative anthropology demonstrates a complete lack of epistemic unconscientiousness above and beyond the use of logically fallacious arguments. Thus, deductivism and speculative anthropology is inappropriate for social science, and even if they were methodologically viable, Generative Anthropology founds itself upon axioms that lack the surety necessary for this argumentative method to work. Therefore, Gans is guilty not just of Mobergerian bullshit in general, but of bullshit with scientific pretensions, rendering it categorically pseudoscientific. Thus, Generative Anthropology is methodically unsound and Gans' decision to persist with it demonstrates significant epistemic unconscientiousness and produces a pseudoscience as a result.

4. Pseudophilosophy

While Generative Anthropology via the originary hypothesis clearly advances a scientific claim, it also possesses many of the

traits of philosophy. Gans weighs in on many philosophical issues, often in a dismissive and ham-fisted manner typical of the Derridean tradition his work derives from. Thus, he is possibly also guilty of philosophical bullshit or what Moberger calls pseudophilosophy. He divides this into two categories:

First and foremost, I have in mind a seemingly profound type of academic discourse that is pursued primarily within the humanities and social sciences. I do not mean to suggest that the disciplines in question are inherently pseudophilosophical, only that, for some reason, a whole lot of pseudophilosophy goes on within them. Often philosophical issues are raised concerning knowledge, truth, objectivity and scientific methodology, but without awareness of relevant distinctions and arguments. Let us call this familiar phenomenon obscurantist pseudophilosophy.

Moberger (2021) elaborates, stating that:

A characteristic trait [of obscurantist pseudophilosophy] is a deferential attitude toward some supposedly great continental European thinker or thinkers, such as G W F Hegel, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Martin Heidegger or Jean-Paul Sartre (who might or might not have themselves been guilty of pseudophilosophy). Usually, the prose is infused with arcane terminology and learned jargon, creating an aura of scholarly profundity.

This is contrasted with scientific pseudophilosophy “usually found in popular scientific contexts, where writers, typically with a background in the natural sciences, tend to wander into philosophical territory without realizing it, and again without awareness of relevant distinctions and argument” (Moberger 2021). Sam Harris is a good example of this.

The first category seems to be an apt description of a significant portion (if not all) of Gans’ output, that focuses on obscurely written literary theory. He also adopts an entirely uncritical attitude to Derrida’s (bullshit) arguments against metaphysics, that are treated with similar axiomatic surety as his assumption regarding mimesis. To say this is a controversial philosophical stance is to put it mildly. In fact, Derrida is arguably the most controversial philosopher of the 20th Century. While there is not enough space

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

for a detailed critique of Derrida, to even be able to do such a thing presumes that there is an illegible Derridean argument to critique. This is questionable however, as the letter penned by Barry Smith (1992) shows. This was written in opposition to the decision to award Derrida an honorary doctorate and aptly summarises the sentiments of Derrida's detractors that I am sympathetic to, it states:

In the eyes of philosophers, and certainly among those working in leading departments of philosophy throughout the world, Derrida's work does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour [...] Derrida's career had its roots in the heady days of the 1960s and his writings continue to reveal their origins in that period. Many of them seem to consist in no small part of elaborate jokes and puns ('logical phallusies' and the like), and Derrida seems to us to have come close to making a career out of what we regard as translating into the academic sphere tricks and gimmicks similar to those of the Dadaists or of the concrete poets [...] Derrida's voluminous writings in our view stretch the normal forms of academic scholarship beyond recognition. Above all – as every reader can very easily establish for himself (and for this purpose any page will do) – his works employ a written style that defies comprehension. Many have been willing to give Derrida the benefit of the doubt, insisting that language of such depth and difficulty of interpretation must hide deep and subtle thoughts indeed. When the effort is made to penetrate it, however, it becomes clear, to us at least, that, where coherent assertions are being made at all, these are either false or trivial.

This hardly seems like something to pin one's hopes of refuting the entire pre-Derridean philosophical tradition on. At the very least you would think a translation of Derrida's supposed arguments into ordinary English and then a defence of them against all challengers (particularly contemporary philosophy of science and philosophy language) would constitute a key portion of Gans' work, given the crucial eliminative role they play in clearing the slate for the construction of his own ideas. Yet this is not the case. Gans instead builds Generative Anthropology upon the tradition of Derridean deconstruction uncritically, consequently anyone that rejects this simply has no reason to care about it. Generative Anthropology therefore has no grounds to dismiss metaphysics,

in fact as I argued earlier, it presupposes one. In setting up the originary hypothesis in the way that it does, a form of physicalism is implied – this should, like any other metaphysical claim be argued for, not just assumed. As it so happens, physicalism is a perfectly respectable, although far from uncontroversial, metaphysical stance that takes on a wide variety of forms, absolutely none of which are discussed by Gans in any depth or argued for. Further complicating matters, such arguments would themselves necessarily be incompatible with Derrida’s antirealist rejection of metaphysics.

The originary hypothesis if seen in a philosophical rather than scientific light may be guilty of another related form of pseudophilosophy, identified by Pigliucci (2020): the posing of a false problem then purporting to solve it. Pigliucci draws on Wittgenstein who identifies many apparent problems as in fact artifacts of language. He explicitly names Chalmers’ hard problem of consciousness here. The originary hypothesis, if it is considered to be philosophical not scientific, appears to be a much stronger case of this than Chalmers, who at least has done some serious work on two-dimensional semantics to address key objections to his infamous conceivability argument and makes far more of an effort to philosophically defend his views and engage with relevant contemporary philosophical literature and arguments than does Gans. It is perfectly plausible to think that the search for an origin absent of any evidence could plausibly be considered to be simply a false problem derived from the desire for nice neat explanations with a definitive beginning. In defense of the originary hypothesis, Katz often puts the challenge to Generative Anthropology’s opponents to propose an alternative model, however the epistemic obligation is with Generative Anthropology to defend its model regardless of whether than alternative is proposed. Agnosticism towards the origin of language based upon a lack of epistemologically valid means of modelling it is a perfectly reasonable view. The obligation to provide an originary account of language is arbitrarily conjured, and can therefore be arbitrarily dismissed with requisite validity.

Ultimately for Moberger “the most common fallacy in obscurantist pseudophilosophy is equivocation. This fallacy exploits ambiguities in certain key terms, where plausible but trivial claims lend apparent credibility to interesting but controversial ones. When

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

challenged, the obscurantist will typically retreat to the safe house provided by the trivial interpretation of his claims, only to reoccupy the controversial ground once the critic has left the scene". This equivocation is seen in a common defence mounted by advocates of Generative Anthropology when confronted with the speculative hypothesis and asked to provide evidence for its conclusions or assumptions. I call this the 'it's just a heuristic bro' argument. This involves backing away from the claim that the originary hypothesis is a strong truth claim, instead claiming it is merely a heuristic meant to help with literary criticism, understanding the human or perhaps even political theory. Gans (2013) make the case for this heuristic approach here:

The minimal originary hypothesis of GA [is not] testable or verifiable [...] the point GA shares with religion, and more broadly, with the humanities in general, is that we need to understand the foundational configuration of the human, the scene of representation with its sacred center, now. We cannot wait for some hypothetical future means of verification/falsification; we need a heuristic.

Aside from aptly summarising precisely what's wrong with religion and the humanities, the problem here is that absolutely nothing Gans says makes any sense at all if the originary hypothesis is merely this weaker heuristic claim. Generative Anthropology's claims only have force if the hypothesis and all of Gans' further deductions based upon it are true, that's how deductive argument works. Yet this defensive strategy is regularly employed to enable retreat to the safe but trivial space of a humanities heuristic, and yet nevertheless emerge at a later date to make sweeping claims about language, politics, ethics and aesthetics that only make sense if the originary scene is a truth claim comparable to that of metaphysics or the hard sciences. This is a form of the motte-and-bailey fallacy; conflating two positions that share similarities, one modest and easy to defend (the 'motte') and one much more controversial (the 'bailey'). When the controversial position is challenged, it is insisted that only the more modest position is being advanced. This retreating to the motte is then used later to claim that the bailey has not been refuted (because the critic refused to attack the motte), or that the critic is unreasonable (by equating an attack on the bailey with an attack on the motte). Thus, to the extent that

Gans engages in (pseudo)philosophy, his work fares little better in this regard than it does as science. Once again, the whiff of bullshit is in the air.

5. Implications

The implications of this regarding Generative Anthropology are pretty simple. It isn't a good theory and those interested in political theory should look elsewhere. However, the epistemic issues here are illuminating as they speak to a broader problem with spurious pet theories that gain an undue degree of prominence in online substructures where they are not subject to an adequate degree of scrutiny as the skills and knowledge needed to adequately scrutinize them are not widespread. For example, the argument made here against Gans is applicable almost in its entirety to his far more popular mentor, Rene Girard. The sentimental attachment to an equally speculative hypotheses of a perennial tradition amongst so called Traditionalists is another notable case of sloppy thinking. Far worse is the endorsement of outright woo perpetrated charlatans like Sheldrake and Steiner. These latter ideas are downright destructive and pernicious. This is often combined with a turn to obscurantist pseudophilosophy and uninformed anti-science or conspiratorial rhetoric. Dugin, the nadir of online political discourse seems to be the embodiment of this negative trend. In addition to the rise of entirely speculative conspiracy theories, a return to traditional forms of pseudoscience like the rejection of evolution is also noteworthy, Jay Dyer comes to mind as guilty of both. The fact that these kinds of bullshitters are allowed to operate as online influencers with access to the vulnerable disenfranchised youth is quite disturbing.

All in all, the recent dogmatic religious turn in the online right appears to be a significant factor in this tendency towards these more extreme kinds of bullshit. However secular thinkers are not immune either as Jason Jorjani's outlandish UFO conspiracy theories demonstrate. Compared to these far more egregious examples, many of which go far beyond mere bullshit conceived of as epistemic malpractice, the speculative nature of Gans' theory and its rather silly conclusions are fairly innocuous in comparison. Thus, it is worth noting that Generative Anthropology is a remarkably harmless case of this, where accepting it merely leads one to mere-

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

ly have somewhat odd ideas about philosophy and the origin of language. This might provoke an impulse to write boring literary theory, but this is incredibly innocuous unlike many other cases where outright cults have formed around crank theories of various sorts. This all speaks to a trend of rejecting genuine evidence and reason-based attempts to understand the world scientifically and philosophy as a basis of political thought which must be intervened upon.

The sincerely truth-seeking tendency that motivates many to reject the bullshit of the current political order and entertain heterodox political views in the first place, is gradually being replaced with a sentimental turn from orthodox to dissident forms of bullshit. What we need in this project of proposing a genuine heterodoxical alternative to the established order is good political science and good political philosophy. Hence much of Katz can be retained (such as his innovative use of Graeber and Olson) as a contribution to this, but Gans' speculative anthropology cannot. One possible way to go about this, if Katz or his fans wish to remain resistant to the already existing cybernetic style theoretical frameworks, is to embrace Robert Brandom's system of inferentialism. Brandom shares with Katz both a language centric approach, and the desire make explicit the goings on within language and identify the norms and commitments involved in linguistic actions. This is done without the need for speculative anthropology and with the precision of the best of analytical philosophy. This is only of many potential options however, a phenomenological inquiry into language is another promising route to take in replacing the role of Generative Anthropology within Katz's thought.

Ultimately, we must be uncompromising with this anti-bullshit stance as a whole as a place to draw the line in determining acceptable methodologies. As whilst Generative Anthropology is itself seemingly rather harmless bullshit, a lot of far more pernicious bullshit lurks if we relax our philosophical and epistemic standards too much. While I have been rather hard on Eric Gans who is almost certainly well-meaning if wrongheaded – a hard line has to be taken here against epistemic unconscientiousness in all its forms, and the Generative Anthropology question is a good test case to make this point. We cannot afford to relax our epistemic standards, instead we must do the opposite and strengthen them

as much as possible. What both society-at-large and the dissident right specifically need is non-bullshit social science and to underpin this, non-bullshit philosophy.

References

- Bhaskar, R. (2008) *A Realist Theory of Science*, Verso, London.
- DeLanda, M (2002) *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Gans E (2020) <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw680/>
- Gans E (2020) <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw688/>
- Gans E (2013) <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw447/>
- Hendricks, S (2020) <https://bigthink.com/hard-science/pseudo-science-reasoning/>
- Hunter A (2021) <https://firstness.org/issues/1#econofuturism-part-1>
- Katz A (2021) <https://dennisbouvard.substack.com/p/originary-hypothesis-as-mobius-strip>
- Ladyman J (2001) 'Science, Metaphysics and Structural Realism', *Philosophica (Belgium)*, 67(1) pp. 57–76.
- Ladyman, J (2013) *Toward a Demarcation of Science from Pseudoscience*, University of Chicago Press.
- Lawson, T. (1997) *Economics and Reality*, Routledge, London.
- Moberger, V. (2020) 'Bullshit, Pseudoscience and Pseudophilosophy', *Theoria: A Swedish Journal of Philosophy*, 86(5), pp. 595–611.
- Moberger, V (2020) <https://psyche.co/ideas/pseudophilosophy-encourages-confused-self-indulgent-thinking>
- Pigliucci, M (2021) <https://medium.com/socrates-cafe/its-all-bullshit-on-the-relationship-between-pseudoscience-and-pseudophilosophy-3485ade26500>
- Pigliucci, M (2020) <https://www.patreon.com/posts/how-to-make-up-32929866>

GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY IS BULLSHIT

Smith B (1992) http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/varia/Derrida_Letter.htm

Worrall, J (1989) 'Structural Realism: The Best of Both Worlds?', *Dialectica*, 43(1-2) pp. 99-124.

Worrall, J (2003) https://joelvelasco.net/teaching/2330/worrall_science_religion.pdf

ROMAN LAW, LEGALITY AND JOHN OF SALISBURY

FREDERIK BOREAS

Political Theory Within the Confines of Legality

Is it possible to speak of political theory in the West outside the confines of the concept of the 'rule of law' or Roman legal terminology? I would make the claim that such a thing is impossible, at least when speaking of political theory prior to modernity. Even then, we must recognize that Western political theory is deeply steeped in legalism and a legal mindset based on Roman legal terms. Karl Ludwig Von Haller made the point that western political theory has been marred with a Roman republican legal terminology ripped out of context and missapplied to the European polities, ultimately laying the intellectual foundation for the French revolution. In this way, we have to recognize the centrality of legal inquiry to understand the trajectory of western political thought.

There are many reasons why studying legal history is the best way to study political theory. One obvious reason is that jurists are usually directly implicated in the working out of policy and the attempt to resolve the major political issues of the day. This is why some of the major political theorists in the West are also jurists, like Hugo Grotius, founder of international law, or Jean Bodin, the man behind the modern concept of sovereignty. Another reason is that Western political theory usually presupposes the confines of law. The concept of law has had many different meanings, but there is always some law, whether it be God's law, natural law or the laws of reason, even rights. All political theory circles around a reference to some abstract concept of law and legality. One of, if not

the most important and interesting question in Western political theory is on the relationship between rulers and the law and how to legally conceive of authority.

Naturally, we should be cognizant that the meaning of law, the rule of law and legitimacy have all changed dramatically throughout the centuries. As I showed in my previous paper, *The American Legal Landscape*; the rule of law authorizes the rule of lawyers and judges with the structural goal of epistemic centralization and formalization, once we become cynical enough to penetrate ideological descriptions. In the medieval period their concept of what law fundamentally is was not the same. Law was connected to the idea of divine equity. It was not conceived as something human, but as something divine, ordering not only human society, but also something inscribed into the ordering of the universe. According to the medieval legal profession, this transcendent concept of law found its earthly expression and ideal model in the study of Roman law. That this difference between medieval conceptions of law and modern exists should be clear upon the recognition that medieval jurists could both proclaim the rule of law and the full might of kings, something that modern thinkers would see as anathema.

Today the rule of law is understood primarily as a constraint upon executive authority. So the central question we must ask is how the relationship between authority and law was fundamentally transformed, and this will be the topic of this paper. The treatment of this question will happen through a reading of John of Salisbury, the most prominent political theorist in Christendom until St. Thomas Aquinas arrived on the scene. John of Salisbury, as I will argue, embodies the entire legal revival of the 12th century and presents a distinctly medieval vision of the relationship between prince, law and the body politic, where the influence of Roman law is very apparent. But first, we must get an overview of the introduction of Roman law into Christendom and the general legal revival of the 12th century.

The Reception of Roman Law and the Formation of a Western Legal Tradition

The fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century is said to have ushered in the period known as the Dark Ages. And whilst there was certainly a great deal of chaos in the West in the aftermath of

the fall of the empire, the new barbarian kingdoms settled the old lands, institutions were kept in use by new people, jurisdictions were upheld and life went on, as it always does. Nonetheless, Roman jurisprudence, a legal profession and the body of Roman law was lost with the collapse of the empire in the West. The law that emerged in the new kingdoms, was of a different character to the professional legal tradition of Rome:

The legal rules and procedures which were applied in the various legal orders of the West in the period prior to the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries were largely undifferentiated from social custom and from political and religious institutions. No one had attempted to organize the prevailing laws and legal institutions into a distinct structure. Very little of the law was in writing. There was no professional judiciary, no professional class of lawyers, no professional legal literature. Law was not consciously systematized. It had not yet been "disembedded" from the whole social matrix of which it was a part. There was no independent, integrated, developing body of legal principles and procedures clearly differentiated from other processes of social organization and consciously articulated by a corps of persons specially trained for that task. – Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*

As Berman points out, there was no idea of law as a distinct discipline. The laws promulgated by the Germanic kingdoms were based on custom and closely tied to the king who made them and the content of the laws tell us much about the society in which they were made:

The earliest known legal orders prevailing among the people of northern and western Europe were mainly tribal in character. Every tribe or "stem" (*stamm*) had its own law [...] the basic legal unit within the tribe was the household, a community of comradeship and trust based partly on kinship and partly on oaths of mutual protection and service. [...] On the other hand, there were territorial legal units consisting typically of households grouped in villages, villages grouped in larger units often very loosely organized duchies or kingdoms. In the local territorial communities, the chief instrument of government and law was the public assembly ("moot", "thing") of household elders. Besides kinship and

ROMAN LAW

local territorial communities, there were also various kinds of lordship (feudal) bonds, often formed by households "commending" themselves to great men for protection. Harold J. Berman, *Law And Revolution, The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*

This society based on kinship and blood is highly evident in the laws of the time, which are chiefly concerned with remedies for blood feuds. As such, we find in the *Lex Salica Karolina* from around 500 AD, compiled by King Clovis and The *Liber Constitutionum Sive Lex Gundobada*, known as the Burgundian code, specific remedies for violence between families, like specific fines for different kinds of mutilation. These law codes were chiefly concerned with royal control and regulation of blood feuds in a society based on clan structures, but they would also become an important backbone for the customs of these kingdoms going forwards. Notably the *Lex Salica* was an important part of the Frankish and French right of succession in the later middle ages, being resurrected in the succession disputes of 1316 and 1328. And so, even though these laws lost most of their positive force way before the great legal revival in the 11th and 12th centuries, they constituted a set of traditions and customs, which were important for later jurists in a legal order which put high value on custom and tradition as binding authorities.

While the West had lost the body of Roman law, a legal science and profession, the Byzantines kept the Roman legal tradition alive. Of major importance is Emperor Justinian's ordering of the complete codification of Roman law and custom. The jurist Tribonian and a committee undertook this task, which resulted in an amalgamation of all Roman law (though chiefly consisting of law from the imperial era) into what came to be known as the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, "the body of civil law", also sometimes called the Justinian code. This collection was divided in 4 parts: Codex constitutionum, digesta/pandectae, institutiones, and novellae. The codex was a collection of ordinances by emperors, the digest a collection of writings by the most prominent ancient roman jurists, the institutiones would act as guide or textbook for legal students, while the novellae contained imperial ordinances by Justinian himself. Especially the Digest would become important for the development of a legal science and profession.

The reception and study of this *Corpus Iuris Civilis* in the 11th century was to form the central backbone of the Western legal revival. Contemporary with the reception of Roman law is the Gregorian revolution, which much of the historiography on the topic considers to be the central event in creating the condition for a legal revival and the origin of the rule of law (Møller, 2017). The Gregorian revolution and the investiture conflict resulted in a massive uptick in litigation between secular powers and the church (Brundage, 2018). The issue of the relationship between church and secular powers was the central political issue in the 11th century and the growing amount of litigation in affairs concerning the relationship between these entities created the ideal conditions for legal inquiry.

These conflicts spurred both church and state to find a common legal framework within which their quarrels could be resolved. It is no coincidence that the first university in Europe was formed at this time in Bologna, initially centering around the study of law and Roman jurisprudence. The formal study of law was (re)established seemingly in response to the political problems of the time:

As law became important in politics and in all other parts of medieval society, schools were established to teach it. Stories circulated about how the teaching of law originated. Not surprisingly some of these tales credited rulers with encouraging the teaching of Roman law. One of the most intriguing is a report by a German chronicler, Burchard of Biberach, that Matilda, Countess of Tuscany, petitioned Irnerius to teach the books of Justinian's compilation. Whether the story is true or not it reflects an assumption of the early twelfth century that rulers were interested in fostering the study of ancient Roman law and that the knowledge of law would enhance a ruler's authority. In any case Irnerius was a major figure of the early twelfth century who taught law in Bologna, advised the Emperor Henry V (1106-1125), and served as a judge in Tuscany (Cortese 1995, 58-61; on Irnerius, see Spagnesi 1970). Legal historians generally credit him and an even more shadowy figure, Pepo, for establishing Roman law as a field of study in Bologna. – *Politics in western jurisprudence in A treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence Vol. 7* – Kenneth Pennington

The semi-mythical figure of Irnerius, credited with establishing

ROMAN LAW

the study of Roman law at Bologna in 1088, was seemingly deeply involved in the legal disputes surrounding the investiture conflict. The need for a legal framework and terminology to resolve the disputes between the church and temporal powers was filled by these new universities and the legal science and jurists emanating from them.

In the European universities, the systematic study of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* begun with the most prominent expounders of Roman law being the so called glossator school. The glossators get their name from their praxis of writing comments on the text by leaving small glosses that sought to explain the text and work out its contradictions. Making the body of Roman law coherent was the main goal of the glossators as the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* contained laws and legal thought stretching from the twelve tables to the end of the empire, and as such, it was filled with contradictions. Notable jurists, who played a key role in forming the study of roman law include Irnerius, the so-called four doctors of Bologna: Bulgarus, Martinus, Jacobus and Hugo De Porta, as well as Azo of Bologna and Accursius. These jurists laid the foundation for a legal science that would define the practice of law in Europe for centuries.

People from all around Europe would uproot themselves and travel to these universities to learn about law, and these same people would travel back home and bring their legal learning with them. This is part of the formation of what is called the European *Ius Commune*. The legal scholars knew that Roman law had no positive force in the various European kingdoms and polities, but they strongly believed that Roman law was *the* law. They believed the *ius commune* to hold universal force as a pan-christian common law from which legal thought could be drawn. Roman law was the ideal law and acted as a model for all other types of legislation and as all the various lawyers around Europe were educated in the study of Roman law as the fundamental body of law (Bellomo, 1995).

A conflict and distinction was therefore drawn between this *Ius Commune* and the *Ius Proprium*. The *ius proprium* is the name given to the local laws, custom and legislation that had actual force in the European kingdoms and polities. In terms of actual adjudication the various royal statutes, laws, customs and traditions had primacy against the *ius commune*, or Roman law, which

could only be drawn from when all other options were exhausted. So while the *ius commune* constituted a pan-christian common law and conditioned the way jurists thought about law and the terminology in use, it took a backseat to the local laws and could not officially be anything else than a model and source of inspiration. The conflict could also be put in the terms of a fight between reason and custom. Gratian asserted in his *Decretum* that reason triumphs over custom, and so the *Ius Commune* was either seen as an attack on local customs by intellectual speculation or as Divine reason replacing the errors of local polities. The conflict led to pejoratives being given to Roman law as "the professorial law" or "learned law", clearly giving the impression that it was merely an intellectual pursuit with no practical use.

Downplaying its influence would be a mistake though, as these jurists who had the *ius commune* in mind would take this legal science into the various royal administrations of Europe. This is particularly significant because in the 12th and 13th centuries, there is a massive amount of new legislation being crafted in the European kingdoms. Harold J. Berman writes on the great law kings of this time:

In the various kingdoms of Europe the common law of the king and of the king's courts gradually replaced most of the disparate features of tribal, local, and regional law within the territory. In England, for example, it replaced the law of Wessex, the law of Mercia, and the Danelaw, into which English law was till divided at the beginning of the twelfth century. In Sicily, the laws of the Greeks, the Arabs, the Lombards, and the Normans were subordinated to a common law by Roger II, who ruled from 1112 to 1154. Roger was the first of the great lawmaking kings of the twelfth century. He was followed in the second half of the twelfth century by Henry II of England (1154-1189), Frederick Barbarossa of Germany (1152-1190), Philip Augustus of France (1180-1223), and Count Philip of Flanders (1169-1190), and in the thirteenth century by Frederick II of Sicily and Germany (1208-1250), by Henry III (1216-1272) and Edward I (1272-1307) of England, by Louis IX of France (1226-1270), and by Ferdinand III (1217-1252) and Alfonso X (1252-1284) of Castile and Léon. – Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, The formation of the western legal tradition*.

ROMAN LAW

Noteable laws under these monarchs and others are Roger II of Sicily's *Assizes de Ariano* from 1140, the first major law code in medieval history. Ranulf De Glanvill's *Tractatus de legibus et consuetudinibus regni anglie* (1187-1189), written under king Henry II of England, which was highly concerned with legal procedure and introduced the writ into English law, and was the foundation of the English common law. In Germany, the *Sachsenspiegel*, "Saxon Mirror", written by Eike von Repgow between (1220-1235), a codification of Saxon customary law, which would be in use for many centuries. In France, the *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* from 1283, a voluminous work on the customs of Beauvaisis, written by Philippe de Beaumanoir.

Simultaneously with the growth of royal and secular legislation, the church underwent a similar process of codification and legislation where church customs and papal decretals were ordered into a coherent body of canon law. Around the time of the Gregorian revolution, the church started to systematize the various canons, texts and statements issued by popes and bishops into a coherent whole. An important event in this process is Pope Gregory VII's assertion of the papal right of legislation as Berman writes:

Gregory VII asserted for the first time the power of the pope to "create new laws in accordance with the needs of the times". The new laws, called decretals, issued by him and his successors were not viewed simply as incremental additions to the preexisting canons but as something new. Thus a revolutionary periodization was introduced into the history of ecclesiastical law, and it became possible to summarize the laws on the basis of that periodization. This summarizing movement culminated in 1140 in the great treatise of Gratian, which was immediately recognized as both a definitive summary of what was called the *jus antiquum* and an integration of it with what was called the *jus novum*. The phrases "old law" and "new law", which are usually attributed to the period just after Gratian, were actually implicit in his division of legal sources of canon law into two groups, the (old) conciliar canons and the (new) papal decretals. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, The formation of the western legal tradition*.

The culmination of canon law in the summary of Gratian from 1140, the *Concordia discordantium canonum*, commonly known as the *Decretum*, was a result of the complete systematization

of canon law. Gratian himself drew from many other canon law codes, like Anselm of Lucca's from 1083 and the *Panormia* of Ivo of Chartres from 1095 and of course the papal decretals. Gratian's decretum was succeeded by *Liber Extra* from Pope Gregory IX in 1234, which was to be the primary source of canon law in the church until the 20th century.

The historical backdrop of the investiture controversy for the legal revival of the 12th century would also invariably lead to a clash of jurisdictions, which seems to be a defining feature of medieval law. The attempt to put into legal terms the conflict between secular and ecclesiastical only pushed the question of their relationship ahead, but it did mean that the conflict found its expression through jurisdictional battles. We see in the constitutions of Clarendon promulgated by King Henry II of England the claim in article 1 that:

If a controversy arise between laymen, or between laymen and clerks, or between clerks concerning patronage and presentation of churches, it shall be treated or concluded in the court of the lord king. *The Constitutions of Clarendon - 1164*

The constitutions of Clarendon were chiefly concerned with resolving any questions about the legal relationship between church and secular powers. The king claimed that ecclesiastics were also his subjects and therefore should also be subject to trial at royal courts. The church did not believe this, and wanted complete legal immunity for priests. A priest should only be tried in an ecclesiastical court on canon law principles. This was a major dispute on the issue of royal and ecclesiastical jurisdiction and these constitutions led to the dispute between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket, who was later martyred in Canterbury Cathedral.

Besides the major clash between royal courts and ecclesiastical courts, various other jurisdictions emerged at a lower level. Local lords developed more sophisticated forms of legal adjudication and more layers of feudal law and jurisdictions emerged.

Around this time, city-states began to emerge and created their own laws free from royal control and a general *Lex Mercatoria* (merchant law) emerged, which was a sort of European wide law regulating the conduct of commerce. As such, legal refuge could be found in various courts that all claimed jurisdiction against each other. What was accepted was the reverence paid to the law in all

its manifestations and the idea that law should rule. The discourse on this rule of law came from the studies of Roman law and the legal science developed out of it.

Through this juridification of Christendom, Roman law became the dominant framework through which politics and law was understood, though in practice coexisting with local traditions and customs. The Roman legal terminology conditioned the thought of the political thinkers who would emerge in the wake of this legal revival. As mentioned; the jurists firmly believed that Roman law encompassed all law in an abstract sense and that it had universal force. This transcendent law could be studied and applied universally, and this general legalistic view is seen very well in the political thinker John of Salisbury.

The Legalism of John of Salisbury

John of Salisbury, born between 1115–1120 at Old Sarum, has been recognized as the most prominent political theorist of his time, and perhaps the first systematic one of the middle ages. John was deeply embedded in the conflict between secular powers and the church in the Angevin Empire led by Henry II. In 1147 John joined the court of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, and became his personal secretary and adviser, playing an important role in English ecclesiastical politics. In the entourage of the Archbishop he became acquainted with many of the greatest minds and political figures of his time and build a huge personal network including the Bolognese jurist Vacarius, Nicholas Breakspear, later Pope Adrian IV, and Thomas Becket who was infamously martyred.

John of Salisbury's main two works, *Policraticus* and *metalogicon* were written in exile from 1156-1159 after having lost favour with king Henry II because of his role in the negotiations with the papacy for the right to invade Ireland, in which John had received this grant on the condition that it would be supervised by the papacy. Safe to say that Henry II did not like this, and John was forced into exile. When Thomas Becket succeeded Theobald as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, John became a supporter of Becket, which naturally resulted in another exile, from which he returned in 1171, after the martyrdom of Becket. In 1176, he was appointed as Bishop of Chartres, where he died in 1180(Giraud, Mews, 2014).

As a scholar John had a diverse set of influences. John was a man

of his times, a period that C.H. Haskins has popularized as the 12th century Renaissance, in which a general revival of the latin classics and poetry, Roman jurisprudence, Greek philosophy and the first universities as well as the crusades. The reception of latin literature is a prime feature in John's writings. He frequently cites Cicero and Plutarch and takes many examples from Roman history(O'Daily, 2018). But John was also a biblical scholar. He relied heavily on the authority of scripture from which he derives great inspiration for most of his worldview. John has been said to have been a sceptical fideist(Grellard, 2014). He was familiar with the emerging scholasticism of his time, but he saw great limitations in human reason and firmly believed that certain things could only be proven by the authority of scripture and faith, and that all reason was based on certain principles which had to be taken by faith.

Another central influence on John was the revival of jurisprudence and his acquaintance with Vacarius. John showed great knowledge of the law, even though he was not formally a jurist, but his time at the court of Archbishop Theobald and his own time as a bishop would have made him very familiar with the legal process of ecclesiastical courts and canon law. He also allegedly read Gratians *Decretum* from 1140 and also had a copy of Justinian's code(Sassier, 2014). John's works were widely disseminated in his aftertime, and he continued to be a relevant thinker in Europe throughout the middle ages(Lachaud, 2014).

John of Salisbury – *Policraticus*

Policraticus – De Nugis Curialium et Uestigiiis Philosophorum, "On the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers." This is John's main work which, as the title suggests, centers on the ruler and his court. Despite being presented as a systematic work of political theory, the book is often considered to be chaotic and eclectic without what we would usually consider to be an argument properly presented. John oscillates between condemning the decadency of court life with amusing passages like this:

there is no mention made in the law of actors and mimes, clowns and prostitutes, pimps and similar prodigal men whom the prince ought rather to exterminate than to encourage; not only are all these abominations to be excluded from the court of the prince, but they are to be eliminated from the

ROMAN LAW

people of God. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book IV.

In describing the difference between the prince and the tyrant, with occasional excursions into biblical history, statements like these and the contentious issue of the relationship between prince and tyrant is probably what made him write about his own work to his friend Peter of Celle that:

it is a garrulous piece of work, and such as will scarce find a single friend at court. But I should not like it to make me an enemy to the courtiers. *letter 111*

Despite its chaotic structure there is a thematic unity to the text, which is the distinction between prince and tyrant, a vital distinction to John's concept of the rule of law.

The Legality of the Prince and the Illegality of the Tyrant

John is very clear that the main thing that differentiates the prince from the tyrant is the rule of law:

There is wholly or mainly this difference between tyrant and the prince: that the latter is obedient to law, and rules his people by a will that places itself at their service, and administers rewards and burdens within the republic under the guidance of law in a way favourable to the vindication of his eminent post, so that he proceeds before others to the extent that, while individuals merely look after individual affairs, princes are concerned with the burdens of the entire community. Hence, there is deservedly conferred on him power over all his subjects, in order that he may be sufficient in himself to seek out and bring about the utility of each and all, and that he may arrange the optimal condition of the human republic, so that everyone is a member of the others. [...] Certainly this is proper because nothing is useful to the people except that which fulfills the needs of the prince, since his will should never be found opposed to justice – *Book IV*

Here we find the idea that the prince has full power over his subjects, and that he is "sufficient in himself" on the condition that his will conforms to justice and the he is "obedient to the law". Not ruling by law is tyranny, and this is what leads John to argue for the right of tyrannicide:

FIRSTNESS #3

the tyrant, as the image of depravity, is for the most part even to be killed. The origin of tyranny is iniquity and it sprouts forth from the poisonous and pernicious root of evil and its tree is to be cut down by an axe anywhere it grows. – *Book VIII*

The tyrant should be killed as he is the anthesis of the prince. The prince has all his power from God, and through the power of God he enforces the law:

For all power is from the Lord God, and is with Him always, and is His forever. Whatever the prince can do, therefore, is from God, so that power does not depart from God, but it is used as a substitute for His hand, making all things learn His justice and mercy. 'Whoever therefore resists power, resists what is ordained by God, in whose power is the conferral of authority and at whose will it may be removed from them or limited. For it is not even the ruler's own power when his will is harsh to his subjects, but a divine dispensation at His good will to punish or train subjects. [...] who ought not to venerate what is instituted by God for the punishment of wrongdoers, for the approval of the truly good, and for the enforcement of devoted service to the laws? – *Book IV*

Salisbury posits a transcendent law that it is the duty of the prince to enforce. Law is, for John, far removed from any instrumental conception where law is a means to an end; the law is the end. Thus, the law has a cosmic scale and is ultimately Divine, which John makes apparent when talking about what the law actually is:

Equity (as the experts in law assert) is a matter of what is appropriate, according to which reason equalises the whole and seeks just equality in matters of inequality; what is equitable to all is what grants to each person that which is his own. Its interpreter is law, inasmuch as law makes known the will of equity and justice. And thus, Chrysippus asserted that law has power over all divine and human affairs, for which reason it presides over all good and all evil and is ruler and guide of things as well as of men. Papinian, a man of the greatest experience in matters of jurisprudence, and Demosthenes, the influential orator, would seem to support this and to subject all men to its obedience because all law is a sort of discovery and gift from God, the teaching of the wise, the corrective to excesses of wilfulness, the harmony of the city, and the

ROMAN LAW

banishment of all crime. It is proper for all who dwell in the community of political affairs to live according to it. All are, for this reason, obligated to be restrained by the necessity of observing the laws, unless perhaps someone imagines that he is granted the license of iniquity. - *Book IV*

Law is what interprets equity, which is essentially the good, the law is the good, but it is also the order of the universe and a gift from God. Returning to the idea that the enforcement of this law is the main distinction between prince and tyrant, it is clear that John exemplifies a strong legalistic worldview, wherein everything is subject to the law. The law is not a specific law or constitution, but it is the entire ordering of the universe and is congruent with the will of God. The prince has full might, but his power is in the service of the law as an abstract entity, which is an end in itself. This legalistic worldview can be broken down into many differing points of origin, John references classical literature, the Bible and the academic lawyers of his time. However, the key facet of John's worldview is his casting of the relationship between the prince and the law in the contemporary jurisprudence of his time. To explain this we will need an excursus into the issue of the seeming incongruence of the *Digna Vox* and *Princeps legibus solutus est* in the body of Roman law.

Salisbury on the Prince and the Law

Whether or not the prince was beneath the law was a contested issue at John's time, which in legal terms arose from a set of contradictory passages from the code of Justinian. Squaring the many contradictory passages from the Roman law compiled on the order of Justinian in the 6th century, was one of the primary backbones of the legal revival of the 12th century, and the business of ordering these was the central goal of the glossators in the 12th century. As such, John of Salisbury was part of a larger Pan-European debate on the matter. Yves Sassier has treated John of Salisbury's stance on the matter in detail. Sassier makes John's jurisprudence and the 12th century glossators apparent when he states that:

His own knowledge of Justinian sources allows him, at the end of Chapter 1 of Book 4, to cite the great Roman text proclaiming the supremacy of the law over the prince, the *Digna vox* constitution promulgated in 429 by the emperors Theo-

FIRSTNESS #3

dosius II and Valentinian III. Yves Sassier – *John of Salisbury and Law, Companion to John of Salisbury*

This is a central part of the Roman legal corpus, which stated that the authority of the prince was derived from and dependent on the authority of the law and that the prince could do nothing which departed from justice and equity. But on the other hand, John also knew of opposing texts in the Roman legal corpus, namely Ulpian's statements from the *Digest*, where he states that: "*Princeps Legibus Solutus Est*," "the prince is not bound by laws" and "*Quod Principi Placuit Legis Habet Vigorem*", "what the prince has decided has the force of law". These two irreconcilable statements had been sought to be resolved by the legal glossators, a solution and argument that John knew, which stated that an important distinction should be drawn between the necessary obligation imposed upon the people to obey the law, and the obligation imposed on the prince to obey the law by his free will. John partly adopts this argument as Sassier argues:

John would seek to demonstrate that the *voluntas* of the prince is only apparent, not the equivalent of "whim," and that it is in reality strictly subject to the supreme principle of equity, comparable to the will of God: as he writes at the end of his quotation from *Digna Vox*, the prince can be assured "that nothing is permitted him that departs from *aequitas iustitiae*."

John took this route because he knew that the words of Ulpian, which seemingly granted complete arbitrariness to the ruler, would be abused by jurists in the household of certain kings, especially as we are in the times of the investiture conflict and the words of Ulpian nicely alligns with wishes of secular powers, while the *Digna Vox*, suited the ecclesiastical position very well, a position where we find John of Salisbury. If we return back to the idea that John posits, which says that the willingness of the prince to submit to the law is not a matter of mere whim, and that he is strictly subject to the principle of equity, and that he cannot depart from "*aequitas iustitiae*", then what does John believe this principle of supreme equity to be? To continue to quote Sassier:

John opens the following chapter by giving a series of definitions designed to explain the sense of this expression "equity of justice", and the constraint it imposes on the prince. The

ROMAN LAW

"equity of justice" is none other than divine law disseminating *iustitia Dei* to humanity. *Cuius (Dei) iustitia iustitia in aevum est et lex eius aequitas*: "The justice of God is justice for eternity, and his law is equity". John's words join with those of Martinus in identifying *aequitas* with God. But Martinus also qualified it as *fons iustitiae*, while the canonist Gratian called it *mater iustitiae*. No expression of this kind is to be found in John of Salisbury, who, as we were able to note in the very first pages of this study, immediately gives another definition of *aequitas*, no doubt inspired by the *Summa Trecensis* and the glossators, but to which he also applies the classic definition of justice: *tribuens unicuique quod suum est*. John thus departs from the glossators, whose discourse on equity and justice sought to draw a pronounced distinction: making the former a primordial concept, an objective reality inscribed in the world's natural order and originating from the divine will alone, and the latter a reality concerned with the sphere of human activity, deriving from the intervention of a human will.

John identifies the equity of justice with divine law flowing from the justice of God, thus identifying equity with God, a point in which he agrees with the eminent jurist Martinus, one of the four doctors of Bologna. But Martinus also talked off equity as the font of justice, while Gratian calls it the mother of justice, thus making it a causal connection. John simply sticks to the identification of equity with God, while also applying the classical idea of justice, *tribuens unicuique quod suum est* (often translated as "to each his own"). The distinction drawn by the learned jurists of his time between equity as "an objective reality inscribed in the world's natural order and originating from the divine will alone" and justice as a "reality concerned with the sphere of human activity, deriving from the intervention of a human will", is dissolved by John because he desires to completely absolve the law of any connection to human will. Still continuing with Sassier:

"In John's eyes, law as a gift of God can only be *dogma sapientium*, and *compositio civitatis*: it depends on the truth revealed to those who possess *sapientia*, who formulate it, and, in a way, relay it to other humans; it "assembles" the city, and "puts [it] in order" (the main meanings of *componere*, from which *compositio* derives). It is precisely these characteristics, and this desire to fuse together divine and human law, or at the very least, make the second the direct extension of the first,

that is found at the end of the *Policraticus*, in the definition in Book 8 already evoked above: law is the "gift of God [divine law], image of divine will [human law], guarantor of salvation [...], the union and consolidation of people." In short, John takes the *Digest's* definitions as his starting point, but changes their wording in order to liberate the law in its fundamental aspect from any voluntarist intervention, to free it from the autonomous will of a human legislator; the voluntarist vision gives way to a theological vision of law's origin, in which the human mediator – the one who necessarily translates divine *aequitas* (the definition in Book 8 makes law the *forma aequitatis*) into words – is reduced to the role of telling to the people, in the manner of Moses the initial "legislator," or Gideon the arbiter of the law's application, the rule whose *auctor* is none other than God. The two definitions, of an equity that subsumes justice and of the law interpreter of divine will, serve the same end here: to assert that the will of the human legislator is a captive will, totally subjugated to this objective principle of equity, coming directly from God.

This is a profoundly theological vision of law as something that is not only divine in origin and then revealed to humanity, but also inscribed into the ordering of the universe. Thus, all law is a matter of revelation, in the style of Moses. Furthermore, it "assembles the city" and puts in it order, by way of those who possess the wisdom to formulate and relay it to other people. This of course has important consequences for the way John understands lawyers and priests as well as the general ordering of society. For this purpose, John utilizes a corporeal metaphor to describe the political.

The Political Body

John is certainly not the first writer to employ the body as a metaphor for political organization, but his is probably of a more systematic nature as opposed to those preceding him. John has a very specific set of functions, which he applies to the body and its real world equivalent:

that which institutes and moulds the practice of religion in us and which transmits the worship of God (not the 'gods' of which Plutarch speaks) acquires the position of the soul in the body of the republic. Indeed, those who direct the practice of religion ought to be esteemed and venerated like the soul

ROMAN LAW

in the body. For who disputes that the sanctified ministers of God are his vicars? Besides, just as the soul has rulership of the whole body so those who are called prefects of religion direct the whole body. [...] The position of the head in the republic is occupied, however, by a prince subject only to God and to those who act in His place on earth, inasmuch as in the human body the head is stimulated and ruled by the soul. The place of the heart is occupied by the senate, from which proceeds the beginning of good and bad works. The duties of the ears, eyes and mouth are claimed by the judges and governors of provinces. The hands coincide with officials and soldiers. Those who always assist the prince are comparable to the flanks. Treasurers and record keepers [...] resemble the shape of the stomach and intestines; these, if they accumulate with great avidity and tenaciously preserve their accumulation, engender innumerable and incurable diseases so that their infection threatens to ruin the whole body. Furthermore, the feet coincide with peasants perpetually bound to the soil, for whom it is all the more necessary that the head take precautions, in that they more often meet with accidents while they walk on earth in bodily subservience; and those who erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body are justly owed shelter and support. *Book V*

The soul of the body is the church and its priests, while the head is the prince. The prince is subject only to God and his vicars on earth and this of course shows us John's vision for the relationship between church and prince, where he takes the ecclesiastical position. The heart is the senate, a term which we should probably read as parliament, gathering or "ting", a meeting of the people and the king for talks concerning the state of the realm. Judges and governors are the eyes, ears and mouth of the political body and as such they speak the law of the head and soul. Naturally, a healthy stomach equals a good economy and the peasants are the feet carrying the body. This is John's vision for political organization, which we should now bring back to his broader legal and theological vision.

The Legal-Theological Vision of the Republic

To synthesize all this, we must return to John's leading idea, the difference between prince and tyrant, which is a difference understood on the basis of the rule of law. The prince rules by law and the tyrant doesn't. The prince submits himself to the law while

the tyrant sees himself as above the law. The law is something inscribed into the ordering of the universe, it is divine and a gift from God, it is understood through revelation and it is something to be discovered. In the body politic, the head, which is the prince, naturally submits himself to the guidance of the soul, the church. Judges are the mouth and speak the law of the head. The idea of law that John presents where it is something to be discovered by people who possess knowledge of the legal science is very emblematic of the general legalistic view of the world in medieval thought, it was also closely connected to the legal revival. John says himself of judges that:

I have seen nothing more miserable than judges ignorant of the science of law and devoid of a good will [...] a judge must be an extremely religious person and one who hates all iniquity more than death itself. *Book V*

When John says that the prince should rule by law and submit to the law, he is obviously thinking about the law of God as the revealed moral teachings of scripture and tradition, but also the "law" as the abstract entity which is discovered and studied by jurists. This more general law is also divine, and requires special training in a legal science to relay and so the prince must submit himself to the guidance of lawyers in legal matters and priests in theological. Both theology and law requires special training, and so John has presented us with an idea of the rule of law which is connected with the general formation of a legal profession in Europe, which has entered the various royal households and staffed the royal administrations and bureaucracies of medieval Europe.

At the same time the familiar dispute between the church and prince is resolved on John's own ecclesiastical premises by the idea that the prince submits to the guidance of the church and the theology which is administered by the church, this would hardly be a controversial statement in the abstract, but its concrete application was of course the source of great dispute at the time. Still, when speaking of John's conception of the rule of law, there is no idea of an independent judiciary overruling the prince when he oversteps the boundaries of the law. The prince has full might, but must submit to the law on account of his own free will. The prince must follow the law as it is, but he also has the power to change and abrogate the law at his discretion, as long as it conforms to divine

equity, which is to say that he should conform to the will of God. Naturally, understanding the will of God falls within the power of the church. Understanding the law is the area of the jurists, whom the prince should heed, but he is not subject to a judge's interpretation of the law, only to the law in itself on account of his own free will.

Conclusion

What differentiates the prince from the tyrant is then that the prince is willing to submit to the law as it is, and follow the legal advice of the jurists, while the tyrant offends the law and disregards all legal learning. The law that John posits is wildly different from any voluntaristic conception of law, while he says that it is divine in origin as what interprets divine equity, and so there is a natural discrepancy between this conception of the rule of law and modern notions of the rule of law. According to John, the jurist grounds the law in the divine, in order to fulfill the will of God, and only constrain the King to follow the will of God. When law is connected to divinity and is seen as divine equity, the ordering of the world and the will of God, it cannot take on this modern characteristic.

On divine ground, law cannot be understood through human voluntarism or instrumentality, but must be seen as the end of the political in itself. Law is understood holistically in this way as being connected to God. We must understand the inadequacy of applying this concept to modern, secular and technocratic politics. The rule of law has lost its foundation in the divine and this is why it takes on such a profane character in modern politics, where it essentially means the rule of lawyers and judges with the goal of epistemic centralization. The necessary institutions needed to actualize and interpret the divine will, the church, has been left severely weakened by modernity. This is a central problem in the development of the concept of the rule of law.

The medievals understood that the rule of law being attached to the divine will naturally needed institutional means for interpreting this will, the church, and that seeing the rule of law outside this framework would leave the concept hollow. Because law broadly speaking has this divine aspect, John sees no problem with granting the jurists a special status. The jurists, however, were also

capable of working in the interest of the medieval kings. Naturally, John's conception of the rule of law granted considerable power to the church in constraining royal authority, but because of the ambiguity of Roman law, many kings were able to use jurists to their own favour. The kings were able to appeal to the jurists wish to free themselves from theological oversight, a process which had been underway since the formalization of law as a university discipline distinct from theology. This is why the legal science and jurists ended up playing such a key role in the development of royal institutions in the 12th-century. What fundamentally happened was the emergence of a legal profession, which could play both the royal and ecclesiastical side, utilizing a divinely conceptualized idea of the rule of law and appealing to roman law as the ideal model of law. This divine grounding and the reverence payed to the law would still persist even after the medieval period.

Liberals like John Locke still appealed to the divine for some kind of grounding for the law and rights, but he does so in a highly protestantized fashion with no formal institutions being able to relay the will of God. This is why the rule of law has become so insincere. Within a modern secularised framework, the law is only capable of being a set of instrumental rules managing society, and fundamentally utilized by a legal profession to assert its own centrality. We still ascribe some kind of transcendent quality to the law as being fundamentally true. In the end though, we can only defend modern law on instrumental grounds by appealing to the need for order, due procedure etc. The rule of law is a fundamentally hollow concept without a solid grounding in the divine and with no institutional means for theological interpretation.

Through the appeal to Roman law that became the new basis for legal inquiry, outside the theological a whole host of problems arose. This is why I mentioned the work of Karl Ludwig Von Haller in the introduction. Haller correctly indentified the centrality of Roman law in western political thought, with a brilliant hindsight already in the 19th Century. He argued that the study of Roman law and its missapplication had led to the French Revolution. He argued this on the basis that Roman legal terms were derived from a historical situation wholly alien to the political organization of the premodern and modern West. The body of Roman law made use of such concepts as civil society, citizens, the public and the re-

ROMAN LAW

public; concepts that formed the basis of the revolutionary liberal concept of the political.

These Roman concepts were already used by John of Salisbury back in the 12th Century as seen above. Naturally, the elaboration of concepts like *res publica* would lead jurists to assert their own position within the royal institutions and lead to a more modern understanding of the rule of law, as an institutional constraint on executive authority. In freeing the jurists from the church, the kings were also able to free themselves from church oversight by appealing to their own idea of the rule of law. The jurists however, would then utilize this concept of the rule of law against the king, prosecuting the absolutism of the premodern/early modern European monarchies with Roman legal terminology. This trajectory of jurists asserting themselves against executive authority is still visible today in the institutional battles between the supreme court and the president in the United States.

Of course, the inability of anyone to coherently describe what the “rule of law” even means now that it has been secularized suggests that only a cynical attitude can make sense of the contemporary jurisprudential dynamic. The liberal democratic tradition’s attempt to claim the rule of law as uniquely their possession is a view that only historical ignorance can support. The concept of the rule of law has in reality degenerated with the Enlightenment’s replacement of divine notions of sovereignty and natural law with appeals to a general will. In claiming to “interpret” this general will, the contemporary judiciary has liberated itself to effectively legislate from the bench.

Literature

Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution, The formation of the western legal tradition*

John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Cary J. Nedermann

Miller, Butler, Brooke, *The Letters of John of Salisbury, Vol. One, The Early Letters(1153-1161)*

Grellard, Lachaud, *A Companion to John of Salisbury*

- Yves Sassier, *John of Salisbury and Law*

FIRSTNESS #3

- Frédérique Lachaud, *The Medieval Afterlife of the Policraticus*
- Giraud, Mews, *John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12th century*
- Christophe Grellard, *John of Salisbury and Theology*

Padovani, Stein, Lobban, *A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence, Vol. 7, The Jurists' Philosophy of Law from Rome to the Seventeenth Century*

James A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*

Irene O'Daily, *John of Salisbury and the Medieval Roman Renaissance*

Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*

Manlio Bellomo, *The Common Legal Past of Europe, 1000-1800*

J. Møller, *Medieval origins of the rule of law: The Gregorian Reforms as Critical Juncture? Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

OWEN GILBRIDE

It isn't my desire simply to think about life – I want to live it. I want to be in amongst it, to breathe it in, to swim through it. Is thought alone a valid mode of experiencing life? Can we keep life at a safe distance, as a spectacle which excites the imagination but not the sensibilities? Our mental model of how the world works may become more complex, but the felt sense of being *in* the world will never develop in an appreciable way. We can contemplate virtue, or power, or creativity - but this familiarizes us only with the process of contemplation. Alternative modes of being are known only in the form of abstract representations, rather than as what they truly are – vast experiential fields, each with their own distinct senses of what is possible.

Life in its totality is given as a pre-rational intuition. It's too big, too close. Thus, one must separate themselves from life in order to better appreciate it as an object of thought. In philosophizing, one should attempt to approach the pre-rational substratum of understanding, in an attempt to raise it to a higher level of conscious articulation. We must engage directly with intuitive being, in the hope of making explicit that which had been merely implicit. Our intention shouldn't be to render complex that which had been simple, rather to open up new possibilities of experience. But like anything new, you can't describe it ahead of time. At the outset there is only a vague compulsion which cannot be explained, a desire to embark on a journey that can only be understood once it is completed. Doing philosophy necessarily involves this leap of faith.

But who is this *you* who philosophizes? What is this *journey* to be completed? The subject who approaches the world is as much a mystery to conscious understanding as is the world itself (and indeed, as much a mystery as this thing called "approaching"). One does not construct his understanding from fresh cloth, with

full conscious clarity of the process he is undertaking. Rather, one gradually becomes aware of the fact that he is already projecting a frame onto experience. At first this frame is largely unconscious and mistaken for experience in itself. It is only by way of conscious reflection that one comes to appreciate just how much of so-called “objective reality” is a product of his own subjective experience. Your physicality, your cultural heritage, your social milieu – these things inform your understanding of the world more than you could possibly imagine. The project of philosophy, then, is not so much one of creating understanding wholesale, but of becoming conscious of the particular forms of understanding one already holds. More often than not, the way in which you pose a question reveals more than whatever answers you settle upon.

I

To be a child of Modernity is to know ambiguity. You move through a world you don't understand, a bit part character in a story that started further back than anyone can remember. Even the being that you are appears to you as a mystery which can't be satisfactorily explained. Pluralism makes explicit the myriad ways in which one might interpret and orient themselves towards life, and thus allows one to call into question the traditions and modes of interpretation that they have inherited. No longer is one's individual identity fully subsumed under a particular mode of being (or so it seems). Rather, like a dancer who has become aware of the fact that he is being watched, one is all too conscious of their own identity as a participant *choosing* to carry on in a particular fashion. The mode of being that one is subsumed under then, is that of an isolated individual making arbitrary choices based on his own egoic sensibilities. The feeling of there being myriad alternative possibilities to any course of action (and the sense of hesitation that inevitably brings) is always ready at hand. This hesitation is conceptualized as *free will* – a shattering of a previously existing sense of pre-determination, which opens one up to a field of infinite potentialities. But free will is in fact not the affirmation of one's freedom to do anything; rather it is the negation of the immersive potential inherent in any particular act. Anything that one might choose to do is called into question. The unknown haunts us like an unresolved argument, a gnawing compulsion to under-

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

stand that which we as yet are unable to articulate.

The mind observes the process of life unfolding, gradually accumulating a vast storehouse of experiential data. From this, it attempts to discern predictable patterns of cause and effect. Gradually a mental model is constructed, a symbolic representation of life as a cohesive system, which is projected onto the unfolding ambiguity of immediate experience. The mind does this in order to more effectively navigate being, to formalize desires, to anticipate changes, to actively determine that which one is to seek out or avoid. The mental model of understanding is at all times being developed in an experimental fashion, tested, expanded and revised as new experiences are had, and new patterns of recognition are incorporated.

The above is the point of view taken by the so called free-willed individual; the individual as explorer, as scientist, as pioneer. The subject of Free Will is a formless abstraction, a soul lacking corporeal form but tied to a particular time and place. These particularities (accidental in nature) are said to inform the individual's life experience, but are made secondary to one's supposed freedom to self-determine. Free Will denies that one's course of development is pre-ordained. It recognizes that irrational desires drive one's decision making process, but treats these desires as if they were something the individual had consciously chosen to pursue.

The Free Will perspective does not deny that to be human is to be party to a vast cultural inheritance. The "data" with which one is said to construct their intellectual understanding is not limited simply to that which is given via personal experience. Each individual is born into conditions which inform the course of action he is most likely to take. Each generation receives from its forebears the consolidated understandings of those who lived previously – in the form of art, literature, religious dogma, social institutions, etc. One engages with this cultural heritage (or is made to engage with it) in order to take on forms of understanding far richer than that which is typically revealed by immediate experience. These higher forms of understanding require prolonged effort to integrate, and may at first appear far removed from one's own intuitive sense of valuation. In traditional cultures, youth are typically disciplined into accepting their cultural inheritance. This is practiced out of an understanding (on the part of the elders) that this inheritance will

only be fully appreciated after it has been successfully integrated. It is understood as well, that the culturally elevated ideal of *the good life* is more often than not something wholly distinct from that which is called for one's immediate impulses.

Tradition (and any sort of adherence to external codes) is framed as a process of self-discipline. Self-discipline then, is a negation of a negation. Free Will compels one to question the validity of any particular mode of being. Self-discipline allows one to adhere to a particular mode of being in spite of this. To obtain particular ends, one must engage in particular patterns of behaviour. No amount of positive thinking allows you to get past the fact that becoming an athlete necessitates not gorging yourself on pound cake five nights a week. The individual organizes their myriad desires into a hierarchy of values, and determines a distinct course of action based on that which appears most compelling. You *could* eat an entire box of cake mix, but you'd *really rather* go to the gym, and pursue the life-path associated with that.

Regardless of the ends you choose to pursue or the identity you choose to affirm, the fundamental presupposition remains; the subject as formless abstraction. The end is pursued as something drawn arbitrarily from an infinite field of equally valid options. It isn't just that one is faced with the possibility of abandoning, questioning, or redefining the particular ends they have chosen to pursue. Rather, one remains at all times haunted by a deeper existential ambiguity. *What's the point of any of this? What is my ultimate nature? This thing that I'm doing isn't me – it's just a thing that I'm doing.* All forms of lived experience are made secondary to this problem of the subject as formless abstraction, haunting itself wherever it goes.

Adherence to cultural inheritance (and any other system presented as a possible course of action) fails to address the concerns that a belief in Free Will illuminates. Every system that one might choose to engage with is all too easily called into question. One only has to spend time with a young child to appreciate just how easily even the most unseasoned ego can pose questions for which no answer can be readily provided. It isn't simply a matter of there not being enough time to try on every possible point of view like outfits in a clothing store. To truly inhabit a particular mode of being is by necessity, to not inhabit other modes of being. To know

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

the experience of being a man is (amongst other things) to not know the experience of being a woman. The possibility of the individuated subject experiencing *all things* in their turn is rendered impossible from the outset, even if said individual were to live for a million years.

In light of this, the subject as free-willed individuality is made to acknowledge its limits. One's mental understanding of the material universe is merely the systematization of that which one has encountered thus far. It is understood that understanding (at best) approximates but a small sliver of the world as such. The mind requires a means of articulating this awareness of a known unknown, this feeling of there being untold layers of understanding still to discover and perhaps even forms of understanding which will remain forever beyond reach. The mental model is woefully incomplete, failing to produce satisfactory explanations regarding the nature of being. And yet, being itself seems to endure just fine. One inevitably reaches the conclusion that some ultimate explanation must be hidden in the field of unknowns, some self-justifying absolute (or at the very least, some foundational paradox which would render the absolute itself absolutely impossible). The will of the absolute must ultimately be mysterious. And yet, there it is.

II

Faith, within the logic of what we have described, is a conscious recognition of the fact that being endures, despite one's inability to articulate how or why it endures. Man seeks endlessly to understand the world around him, without ever arriving at a sense of completion. In the experience of faith, he comes to recognize that this subject who seeks is contained within a greater totality – a totality which requires no conscious explanation or justification, because it *is* the foundation upon which all explanations and justifications are constructed. In the experience of faith, the free-willed individual acknowledges that their subjectivity is not a formless abstraction that approaches the world. Rather, the subject is constructed *out* of the world. Your thoughts, feelings, and sense of individuality emerge out of all that which you perceive as Other. In faith, we come to recognize the continuity of the Self with the totality of Being as such.

Faith allows the recognition of the contingency of Free Will. The

concept of the subject as a formless, individuated Self approaching the world-as-Other is merely one method of conceptualizing subjectivity. The notion that one freely chooses a course of action from an infinite number of equally valid possibilities is merely one way of interpreting causality. In recognizing this, we allow for the possibility that our subjectivity could be framed entirely differently. Furthermore, we allow for the possibility that subjectivity *has* been framed differently in different epochs, and that the Modern conception of Free Will is something that emerged by way of a historical process.

The difficulty in considering a radically different stage of human development is that one is at all times tempted to project his own understanding backward. It's hard enough to remember what a summer day feels like when there's snow on the ground; harder still to imagine how a subject not predicated on modern notions of Free Will might have experienced life. Thus so-called Prehistoric Man is all too easily understood as Modern Man in a loincloth. He speaks in grunts and growls, but still attempts to convey the same sense of self as someone speaking contemporary English. He understands the world in terms of crude superstitions, but maintains the same metaphysical relation to the world as someone living today. Clearly, this is not the case. Interiority is a culturally-mediated phenomenon, and culture is a product of history. The primitive subject engages with life not as an incorporeal ghost haunting experience, but as experience itself. There is no inner self who senses and feels, but only the process of sensing and feeling. There is no *I* who determines my own individual course of action, but only a universal unfolding of causality. Experience is revealed, there is not yet a *for whom* or a *for what*. At this stage, the fact that something occurs is explanation and justification enough. Even in attempting to determine what compelled primitive man to begin developing complex society, we adopt a historical time consciousness, and frame the past as a linear sequence progressing towards the present moment. Only modern man could think in such terms.

Experience isn't a process of quantitative accumulation, to which the present moment is an $N+1$ containing all prior moments. Rather, experience is a process of constant qualitative transformation. Events can radically transform our perception of the world, they do not simply encapsulate it in another layer of complexity

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

like Russian nesting dolls. The present moment is a distinct totality, from which the idea of a past is constructed. You held certain notions as a child, and different notions as an adult. This can of course, be framed as a linear progression where the world of the child gradually evolved into that of the adult, with an abstract 'youness' enduring throughout. But this is merely a narrative. You *recall* the experience of being a child, but you do not *retain* it. The childself does not live on in your present form, as an eternal essence. You reconstruct your past out of the being that you are today. This applies both to individuals and cultures.

Consider the religious icon and the work of art, we perceive these things as symbolic representatives of higher meaning. If we take them to be nothing more than objects or processes *through* which one might discover meaning, we've already lost sight of the thing we were looking for. In perceiving the faded icon as something that was once charged with a divine essence which has now become absent, we find ourselves again mired in the fundamental problem of Modernity. The subject of Free Will engages with the world as a void which cannot be filled, forever seeking something beyond immediate experience. But a work of art does not convey meaning, it *is* meaning. One does not adhere to a tradition because it serves some higher purpose, the maintenance of the tradition is in itself a higher purpose. You resist immoral behaviour not because it has some degenerative consequence, but because you recognize the act itself as disobedience of a transcendent authority. In approaching artifacts as though they were former repositories of some divine essence which now fails to present itself, we turn them into the antithesis of that which we take them to be. Rather than illuminating your connection to the totality of all things, these faded icons serve only to emphasize the foundational disconnect which gives you no reprieve. *This used to mean something, it **should** mean something, but I feel nothing.*

Notions of faith and Divine will initially seem to offer a means of addressing the existential uncanniness of Modern life. One quickly comes to recognize that these things cannot be consciously called forth. One cannot simply talk themselves into experiencing awe. No amount of reasoning (and no amount of Queer Theory) can make you see beauty in that which you perceive as being ugly. You don't aspire to love, you fall into it. The spirit catches you and you

fall down. Faith is ultimately a process of the outside coming in, of one's isolated ego being overwhelmed by the totality. You don't choose to experience it – that's the whole point. Thus, the tradition which presents itself as something you might choose to adopt or neglect at your leisure is nothing more than another game to play, another outfit to try on.

Existential ambiguity is not to be approached as a problem to solve, or as a loss of some vital essence which must be recovered. Existential ambiguity itself is nothing more than the act of viewing life as a problem, or as an absence of some indescribable force which ought to be there. Simply acknowledging this however, does not cause the feeling of uncanniness to dissipate. The feeling you feel is that of being unmoored from any concrete sense of identity. Of course, remarking "this too, is an illusion" only serves to complicate matters further. What then are we to do?

III

To be *conservative* is to maintain certain institutions out of a sense of obligation. You honour a tradition not because doing so offers you some practical advantage, (or so you tell yourself) but because you recognize the tradition as having inherent value. This recognition however, takes the form of a logical proposition. You approach the tradition not as a living quality that infuses your being, but as an artifact to be preserved. Perhaps you identify with it, recognizing it as a symbol of your people, nation or creed. But the felt sense of connection just isn't there, at least not in any appreciable amount. You tell yourself it is something akin to the hand that holds, when really it's just a thing you're holding onto. The further removed one gets from an imminent connection to the object of conservation, the more conservation takes on an air of mundane practicality. The tradition needs to be maintained, because that's what we've always done. If we lost our tradition, perhaps society as we know it would fall apart. In this way the conservative comes to be seen as disingenuous, as demanding the preservation of institutions whose only *real* purpose is to keep society in the fossilized configuration in order to secure his status.

Within the modern field of understanding, the conservative is always playing at a disadvantage. His position fails to justify itself on spiritual or on pragmatic grounds. The pragmatic materialist seeks

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

to progress to something better, rather than to limit his horizons with holdovers from a bygone era. The self-proclaimed spiritualist in contrast, is searching for that which infuses her being with a distinct feeling rather than worn-out clichés which merely claim to do so. To that end she'll turn away from the conservative's offerings in favour of that which genuinely excites. Note that in each case the subject is put forward as nothing more than an individual concerned with their own personal experience. Those who truly *grasp* a tradition are those who as yet still hold faith. They recognize in the tradition a living aspect of their own subjectivity. This is something entirely different from conservatism. The conservative fails to grasp his tradition as anything other than an external institution, lacking divine imminence. Thus, the tradition begins to fall into disrepair. Faith, if it is anything at all, is an experience which overwhelms categorical understanding. Attempting to conserve objects of faith for the sake of pragmatism is a losing battle.

The youth in particular are typically at odds with the conservative position. Even in a culture which holds spiritual sway over its people, a child still requires initiation to fully appreciate that which he has been born into. When a tradition comes to be seen in strictly pragmatic terms, or as an artifact to be preserved, it begins to erode. Each subsequent generation becomes less invested in the process of maintaining and passing on the traditions because they are no longer perceived as a fundamental component of one's own being. The process of initiating youth into a particular worldview comes to be seen as an increasingly archaic and unnecessary hold-over from another time. The youth fail to see their cultural inheritance as anything other than an unnatural imposition attempting to dissuade them from the kind of faith they more readily experience. If one understands faith as nothing more than the process of the individual ego being overwhelmed by pure experience, then this clearly cannot be facilitated by lifeless institutions. What they seek is experience which is intense or novel in character. For the youth of an advanced civilization, spiritual sensibility is more readily discovered through rebellion, ecstasis and the exotic. The kind of spirituality handed down to them by the older generations appears as nothing more than an attempt to hold back the transformative flow of life by those who have fallen out of touch. The flaws of the elders are projected onto everything that the elders

claim to represent, and thus established conventions come to be seen as dehumanizing forces to be challenged directly.

An imperative which fails to evoke a sense of subjective identity tends to invite behaviours antagonistic to its intent. A cultural inheritance which one is invited to adopt as their primary identity but which lacks any sense of inherent meaning or spiritual validity. This for the youth comes to be seen more as a sort of challenge to overcome. Mass youth revolt against tradition therefore does not destroy tradition, it is a symptom of its prior weakening. Rebellion and the process of ritualistic self-undoing offers up an intensity of feeling which fails to present itself within the confines of established customs. For the subject who perceives themselves as a free-willed individuality beholden to a single short lifespan but not to any particular course of action, it matters little if these sorts of experiences are unsustainable. What matters is that one is alive, and seeks to feel something *now*. Ergo the romanticized image of the social malcontent engaging in dangerous and self-destructive behaviour for no other purpose than to satisfy his own libidinal impulse. Better to burn out than to fade away. No doubt many alleged forms of rebellion are in truth nothing more than commodified time-sinks, put forward by cynical industries aiming to profit from identity-seeking ghosts. But by the time you come to recognize this, you've already sacrificed your best years to the machine.

In modernism, the subject and object are alienated. No longer is experience given as a self-justifying totality, instead the subject understands itself as a formless void approaching experience. A Self forever searching for an unknowable *something* that lies beyond it. Life is no longer lived for its own sake, but always with reference to some abstract point one is trying to reach. This illusive point that distracts one from the flow of life is paradoxically, nothing more than the promise of a life lived fully.

IV

A logical consequence of modernist alienation is one's relation to the world no longer being perceived as an inner spark which desires to expand outward, but rather as that which is oppressed from every angle by an external force. The world is felt as something alien, beyond the control of an identity now wholly predi-

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

cated upon the individual ego. The self is experienced as nothing more than a vector of despair, a victim weighed down by incessant demands and limitations (cultural, biological, etc.). Faith represents a conscious awareness of one's connection to the totality of all things. In despair then we see a kind of anti-faith – a feeling of becoming detached from Being as such as an absolute totality. The more one experiences despair, the more one creates conditions for further despair. Despairing-production is a self-perpetuating process. It seeks to uncreate that which it experiences as pain, but pain itself is the act of uncreating. One never attacks that which brings pain, but only the Self as pained. A subjectivity which has become wholly negative in constitution views life as an agitation to be settled, or as a disturbance against the peaceful emptiness of eternal slumber.

Despairing-production asks: You suffer, but why? The world is perceived only in terms of that which decays, and this recognition in itself only facilitates further decay. The institutions one maintains lack meaning, and stymie one's ability to seek novel forms of short term self-gratification. Self-gratification itself is a meaningless pursuit. Even the most degenerate forms of hedonism offer diminishing returns. Ultimately one seeks nothing more than to be freed from all of these external impositions – even those put forward by their own libido. Life no longer holds lustre. You would rather just *relax*. Established patterns break down. Energy spreads out in every possible direction, becoming undifferentiated. The tendency towards ironic detachment is an early stage of the decline. There is still an engagement with the world, but only in the form of active negation. The ironist mocks established institutions, not out of a revolutionary desire to replace them with something better, but as an expression of nihilistic frustration. Perhaps there is a hope that in making explicit this feeling of emptiness, the process of entropic decline will take on an affirmatory character. Misery loves company, and those who have become cast off from all coherent forms of identity would love nothing more than to know they are not alone. Regardless, negation of existing structures fails to coalesce into any sort of lasting positive identity. One's sense of meaning continues to diminish, and what was initially a world-weary cynicism slowly becomes a raw, animalistic cry of pain.

The communist emerges as an anti-traditionalist product of Mo-

dernity. The subject as despairing seeks release from the weight of difference, which the nihilist cannot perceive as anything but arbitrary. So it aims to unveil the hypocrisy of the existing order, to undermine its legitimacy and destroy it. In theory this is done in service of moving towards some newer, better order. In practice, it succeeds only in dismantling that which previously gave a sense of continuity. The communist regards any imposed discipline or hierarchical structure as at best, a bad deal to be renegotiated. Thus, any newer and better system it develops to replace some older, more problematic system in time comes to be seen as problematic itself. The communist worldview is predicated on an understanding of the subject as that which approaches the world, rather than as a product of the world itself. *Freedom* must therefore always be in spite of the world's limitations, and so no revolution can ever be the *final* revolution. The communist attacks any emergent form of order (even those it had itself previously erected) in the name of a utopian vision that grows ever more incoherent. To ensure the rights of every hypothetical individual, the rights of every actual individual are restricted. Every definable aspect of humanity is seen as a challenge to be overcome, the destruction of which is required for humanity's "liberation". Of course, the logical conclusion of this is death, for death is the only perfect equality.

V

The progressive mindset eventually causes one to abandon progress itself. In time, even science and rationality come to be seen as arbitrary impositions standing in the way of self-expression. Free Will taken to its logical conclusion necessitates no experience or point of view being off-limits, except limitation itself. You can be a man, or a woman, or a neon green fox. You can become healthy, or beautiful, or talented simply by deciding you already are these things. Fixed definitions are chains upon the free flow of desire. The world doesn't define you, you define *it*. The world is yours to reconfigure however you see fit. But in the end this gets you nowhere. You watch the game of life unfolding, telling yourself stories about how you've already won. That which you actually wanted, to *participate* in the great unfolding, remains forever beyond your reach.

Despair persists so long as one perceives themselves as an extrad-

PROBLEMATIC SUBJECTS

dimensional spectre haunting the material plane. But the world isn't something for you to figure out, you *are* the process of the world figuring itself out. Your corporeal being isn't an empty vessel which the mind fills up with experience. It is corporeality which gives rise to selfhood. You do not approach tradition – you *are* tradition, extending itself in this living moment. You are the song of life, writing its own particular melody. The subject is not some empty abstraction, it's full of its own particular vitality. You're just too close to see it. The intellect is a marvellous tool, but don't get it twisted. Your task was never to know all things, but to further develop that which flows through you.

The task of life is not to comprehend the objective rules of the game, but to play it. Too often we moderns face reality as some great difficulty we would like to free ourselves of. We seek freedom, *for what?* Life itself is the freedom we seek. To affirm life in its totality, in its particularity, ugliness and limitations – this is at the root of all meaning. To have faith is not to recognize some abstract essence which exists beyond corporeal forms. Rather, faith acknowledges what is unfolding right now in this moment in its uniqueness. Faith is a process. It is that which is developed through constant participation. It is that which one repeatedly affirms. To hold faith is not to seek some end destination, but to hold firm to life itself. To dance with it.

THE HEURISTICS OF ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

A SURVEY OF EGYPT'S MIDDLE KINGDOM AND SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

JIM BONNER

“One generation passes, another stays behind—
such has it been since the men of ancient times.”

Tomb of King Intef, 17th Dynasty¹

I - Introduction

A verdant band slithering through the desert; a solitary life-force surrounded by an otherwise inhospitable environment. The ancient cities that emerged from the Nile lay like pearls threaded through it, never straying from the riverbank — the agricultural sustenance they depended upon was itself reliant on seasonal shifts in water quality and quantity. Jealous eyes always sought for a way to possess the infrastructure and resources these Egyptian cities produced. This vulnerability required a stable society that could organize and defend its perpetuation.

For a sense of order to emerge, from which civilization could be perpetuated, specific delineations on developing collective existence (who does what and why) and making predictive calculations (when do things need to happen and how) were needed. For the ancient Egyptians, these were concisely informed by theories

1 Foster, John L. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*. University of Texas Press, 2001, pg 179.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

on how a perceived 'spiritual source' interfaced with and moved the apparent manifestation of reality through the context of lived experience in the habitat of the Nile. The awareness of nuance necessary to perceive these facets was only available to a miniscule population of highly-intelligent and motivated people, who would become religious priests. They established the underlying ontology of the collective consciousness and its social hierarchy through a mythologized identity. Without this continuity of metaphysical relation to one another — through some authoritative set of 'approved' activity / knowledge and purpose stemming from a shared mythological origin² — the cities along the Nile would lose their coalescence and any collective which *did* have a cohesive sense of itself would swoop in.

Everyone needed the priests, then, regardless of sentiment. Those who cannot understand the true nuance of a situation will require direction toward an optimal outcome by those who can. Likewise, the population also needed information filtered so there can be a social focus — not 'lying', not a moral thing, but to establish an anchor so the collective was not unmoored. Reality is too complex for most people to want to try to comprehend — they need (and often want) someone to filter reality into explanations that they can use in their daily lives. The average human mind yearns to exist within limits, the exceptional seeks to surpass them, but anyone who feels they exist in a limitless cosmos would shrink from it and create imagined limitations. In very simple terms: religious practices enables individuals strapped for leisurely contemplation or intellectual capacity to arrive at complex ideas with minimal effort, while helping the collective by consistently reinforcing cohesion. In no way is this a derisive statement, but meant to exemplify how and why religion is so vital to maintaining social life in that it concisely informs cosmology, morality, and identity in group relations / functions.

Rising from Egyptian religion, the political and economic affairs that rulers concerned themselves with helped maintain this precarious civilization by enforcing an established order, conserving the social hierarchy that the priests justified. The line between fail-

2 The quality of the mind being a by-product of the brain's neural synchronization; the quality and will of the collective consciousness being by-product of social synchronization.

ure and success depended upon skilled and obedient functionaries at every level, even if through slavery, torture, and immoderately dogmatic rulings. Therefore, those families of conquerors turned divine emissaries at the top of the hierarchy, advised by the religious intelligentsia, were preoccupied not with justice, not with equality or ‘fairness’, not with the support of the common laborer, but with far more practical concerns about long-term survival.

How will the succession of power play-out after the ruler’s death? How can the many local powers and single central power be balanced? Can measures be taken to ensure the victories of one generation do not become the decadent lethargies of their descendants? To the rulers of the ancient world, especially to Egyptians so especially reliant on the Nile, the answers to these questions were not based in any ideologically rigid system. It is true that civilization fundamentally relies on a religious tradition and a set social hierarchy, but these emerged as adaptations to their environment — they were not necessarily impressed onto the *rulers* to believe. Much like parents issuing directives to their children, the parents themselves must have the flexibility of different principles to not only authoritatively issue those directives but also to behave contrary if they deem survival depends on it. For the ancients, survival for all social classes depended on authoritatively applied general principles rather than the dispensation, promotion, or securement of universalized beliefs and ethics. Indeed, the only universality we find in all history is in the need for securing order.

Much like how the violence of predators keeping the populations of prey at an environmentally stable level prevents the entire biome from imploding in overpopulation, so too must there be similarly ‘natural’ and innate proclivities that the artificial environment of civilization demands and incentivizes, as an organic extension of human nature. This is not to say the same brutality of the wild is necessary for civilization to be perpetuated, but that there are historically empirical principles used to address concerns regarding threats to order — alignment to them will always be magnetized or gravitated toward regardless of understanding as such. If there are principles that are necessary to maintain civilization as much as there are conditions which must be met before its emergence, then they are of paramount importance to understand because it would imply that lessons learned from historical studies would

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

apply to any time, even our contemporary one. It would therefore also imply that situations which we are encountering presently are not wholly modern or unresolvable. Nowhere is this clearer than during the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, when Egypt encountered the Hyksos.

II - Prologue

In the southern part of Egypt, off the western bank of the Nile, there is a wide, gullied ravine named Shatt er-Rigal. Though afflicting heat and erosion have contoured the rusty-tan rock lining the walls of the ravine, there remains a section of human-carved etchings that have survived for eons. Beside informal, ancient graffiti and prehistoric pictographs of giraffes lies the engraved image of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II, a pharaoh proclaimed as the “Horus Uniter of the Two Lands”. He is depicted in full regalia, exhibiting many bizarre and formidable Bronze Age trappings: a war-mace in his right hand, a staff in his left, and the *pschent* two-parted crown, symbolizing his dominion as both “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” — over both the northern and southern Nile. Behind him stands his diminutive mother, Iah, and before him his dead father — both also parents of Neferu II, who would become queen to Mentuhotep, her brother.³ Now, after shadows have stretched across the stele engraving for four thousand years, any onlooker feels little more than that universal awe at ancient things. For the contemporaries of Mentuhotep II, however, for those that endured the end of the First Intermediate Period, these personages and symbols were a reminder of events in their personal lives and of struggles extending back generations before.

The First Intermediate Period (a wholly modern term) began c. 2180 BC, when the Old Kingdom withered. There was not a single, cataclysmic event that ushered in a change as we might expect. Instead, it was the culmination of repeated failures in dynastic succession coupled with the centralized power’s inability to handle large-scale drought and famine, which led to the development of de facto city-states.⁴ Unable to glean any benefits from fealty, these

3 Winlock, H.E. *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*. The Macmillan Company, 1947, pg 60-63.

4 Arnold, Dieter, and Dorothea Arnold. “A New Start from the South: Thebes During the Eleventh Dynasty”. *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. Edited by Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, et. al. The Metro-

cities formalized their own preexisting aristocracies into rulers who oversaw their municipal territory completely on their own terms⁵. Due to the widespread famines of the early First Intermediate Period, there was a need for control over the Nile and land for producing food. This led to competition or agreements between cities into provincial *nomes*, typically organized by one dominant city. A century of this evolving arrangement produced two main powers: the northern, Tenth Dynasty, whose capital was Herakleopolis Magna (the name given by Romans when they discovered the ruins); and the Eleventh Dynasty's southern powers centered in Thebes.

Very insignificant evidence remains of what customs or people ruled the Tenth Dynasty, but what knowledge remains of the Eleventh expands beyond formal inscriptions and titles into a familial narrative. It began with a nameless “door keeper”, (perhaps a palace guard or city sentry) who managed to attain influence and helped confederate the area surrounding Thebes. His son, Intef II continued consolidation and more cohesively organized the region. *His* son, Intef III expanded his grandfather's vision in increasing logistical ferocity to begin opposing the northern powers. Inheriting this potent southern kingdom was the “door keeper's” great-grandson: Mentuhotep II. The desperation over famines and the upheaval in competing regional powers had escalated into a binary struggle for domination over all Egypt.

Into this situation, the Asiatics⁶ arrived. Coming from Canaan and the lower-Levant, across the Sinai Peninsula, groups of these people would raid the northeastern ‘border’ of the Tenth Dynasty, even causing havoc inside the Delta region. One document, called *The Instruction for Merikarê*, likely written contemporaneously to these raids near the end of the First Intermediate Period, touches upon the universal Egyptian sentiment for these people:

And this you can say of the barbarians: the accursed Asiatic,
life is dreadful where he lives—

Lacking water, unfriendly due to the many trees, the paths
difficult because of the mountains!

politan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2015, pg 38 and 43.

5 Compare with situation after the fall of Rome and closing-off of Mediterranean trade after c. 700 AD.

6 Egyptian ‘*ʿm*’ — an ethnic, geographical denotation that the Egyptians used in reference to Canaanites, Amorites, Bedouins, and generally Semitic peoples.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

He will not stay in one place
He has been fighting since the time of Horus: he cannot
conquer, nor can he be conquered!
Nor will he indicate the day of battle, like a thief who skirts
the fringes of the camp.⁷

Another document named the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*, written well after but about this period personified the Asiatics as a chaotic foil opposed to ‘virtuous order,’ and warned rulers about the cost of an unguarded border.⁸ This instability along land trade routes leading outside Egypt, along with mounting dynastic and bureaucratic issues, formed an ideal opportunity for Thebes to strike.

The future of Egyptian Civilization was decided in combat so archaic and abstruse that chariots and composite bows were still centuries away. Though the details are uncertain, Mentuhotep II likely campaigned up the Nile, establishing supply chains and crushing resistance before assaulting Heracleopolis Magna directly. Victory was decisive for the Eleventh Dynasty, and the conquered Tenth suffered both physical and symbolically spiritual defeat with executions performed, monuments destroyed, and religious icons consolidated. Mentuhotep II declared himself sovereign over all the Nile and remerged the white *hedjet* of the north with the red *deshret* of the south into the *pschent* crown, as Menes, the first pharaoh had done. The Middle Kingdom of Egyptian history was inaugurated. The Shatt er-Rigal stele was carved with celebration. The world turned with a new generation dawning c. 2025 BC, a thousand years after the First Dynasty.

III - Usurpation and Succession

To prevent another fracturing of Egypt and for order to be reestablished, the regional system of the *nomes* that had emerged in the First Intermediate Period had to be suppressed. By imposing a central authority of fealty and taxation that superseded and inhibited their learned sovereignty, (a process that was never-ending but always advancing) Egypt could once again have a monolithically imposed identity and destiny. Many of the *nomarchs* were just as wealthy and powerful as Mentuhotep himself, and many of them

7 ‘Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology’, pg 179.

8 Mourad, Anna-Latif. *Rise of the Hyksos: Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early Second Intermediate Period*. Holywell Press, 2015, pg 117-118.

surely therefore saw him as one who had overstepped his territorial bounds. The pharaoh always had to be aware that, at any point, a group of dissatisfied subordinates could align against them and, through the arbitration of violence, strip them of power.

This anxiety over potential usurpation is something very alien to most modern people, as we have grown accustomed to a 'peaceful transfer of power' through 'agreed-upon political procedure'. It is true that the procedure itself holds no inherent authority in determining 'succession', but more so it prompts a regular, very wastefully tedious process via a 'mock civil-war' where votes are cast to determine which faction could potentially allocate the most violence. This fundamentally undermines the order necessary to civilized processes by dividing society against itself and denying any overarching, common identity to contextualize relationships. Contrast this to the rule of Mentuhotep II: worshiped as a living god during his lifetime as *the* religious focal point who emanated a spiritual grammar for collective identity to coagulate and communicate through. Though subordinate, local rulers might oppose obligations put upon them, and though they might even act against the pharaoh, this was ultimately a dispute among the social elite over who would occupy that focal point, not a denial that one existed whatsoever — in fact, it reinforced the authority of that sovereign role.

But regardless of rivalry to their living power, the pharaoh would eventually die which forced them to account for who would rule after. Though Mentuhotep II seamlessly passed the mantle to his son, the line of rulers that the progenitor Theban "door keeper" had produced would be broken after the reign of Mentuhotep II's grandson: Mentuhotep IV. These issues in succession are often best understood by the circumstances surrounding and the nature of the following ruler. It is unknown whether Mentuhotep IV had a child or some other designated successor. What is known is that his *tjati*, Amenhemat, would become the next pharaoh and begin his own 12th Dynasty.

A recurring situation in pre-modern history involves the relationship between a ruler and their vizier, their lieutenant and second-in-command (*tjati* in Egyptian). Due to the necessity of rulers relying on advisors, viziers, and regional compliance, opportunities can emerge for figures to assert their will above that

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

of the pharaoh. If the ‘true’ ruler does not make their authority known to all beneath them and instead only issue decrees through others, then those intermediary figures essentially become de facto rulers who can easily usurp power, even indirectly. A vizier, for example, could assign harems or other luxuries to the ‘true’ ruler so they are occupied while important decisions are left open to be made by others. This incentivizes pharaohs to select loyal, adept viziers, which strengthens their ability to secure order. But there are no guarantees in any system.

Amenemhat’s 12th Dynasty would rule a united Egypt for a century, spanning eight rulers from the same extended family. Amenemhat I came to power c. 1990 BC with the specter of regional autonomy and rebellion persisting throughout his otherwise orderly reign. The *Instructions of Amenemhat*, commissioned by his son and successor, Senusret I, and written in the voice of his deceased father, includes a passage that recounts the prosperity and security⁹ under the pharaoh:

One did not hunger during my years, did not thirst; they sat content with all my deeds, remembering me fondly; and I set each thing firmly in its place.

I bated lions, captured crocodiles; I conquered Nubians and brought back Medjai, [Nubian nomads] and I made Asiatics crawl like dogs.¹⁰

Other passages recount advice from Amenemhat I, telling his son to avoid becoming too close with anyone and to be distrustful of servants and vassals.¹¹ The text describes how, unexpectedly, and while Senusret I was away on campaign in Libya, a conspiracy against Amenemhat I approached his bed in the night and assassinated him.¹² In a poignant line, this juxtaposition of historical scenes stemming eulogistically from the son, but spoken by the

9 We should note, however: “the general prosperity of the period was enjoyed by relatively few”. Van-Seters, John. *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*. Yale University Press, 1967, pg 40.

10 *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*, pg 88.

11 Which is particularly interesting regarding these comments is the context surrounding them if Amenemhat actually did usurp Mentuhotep IV’s throne.

12 Arnold, Dieter, and Peter Jánosi. “The Move to the North: Establishing a New Capital”. *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. Edited by Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, et. al. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2015, pg 57.

vanquished father to him showcases the tragic nature of the conspiracy: “[. . .] the attack happened when I was without you [. . .] Before I had sat with you, to make your position”¹³ The son, considering his fathers last thoughts, asks himself: ‘where were you when I needed you?’

Another interesting work, *The Tale of Sinuhe*, was also written shortly after the thirty year reign of Amenemhat I. The narrative opens with an official named Sinuhe on campaign with Senusret I in Libya. When they receive word that Amenemhat I has been assassinated, Senusret I stops everything and rushes back to Egypt to control the situation while Sinuhe, motivated by fear of the tumultuous situation, flees to Retjenu (an Egyptian term for Canaan and the lower-Levant). Though he lives successfully with the Asiatics, he longs to return to his homeland. Then, as a prodigal son in his old age, he is invited to live in Egypt again by Senusret I.

After consolidating his dynasty by defeating the conspiratorial uprising that assassinated his father, Senusret I would leave the throne to his son, Amenemhat II. This ruler continued stabilizing the volatile situation in Egypt by establishing co-regency with *his* son, Senusret II to ensure the transition from one ruler to another was less fluid, as it had been with their predecessor. It is historically ironic that the grandson of a (likely) usurper would take measures to ensure a successful succession. Though Senusret II would not continue this practice, he still took keen interest in movements toward long-term stability, especially in his work exploiting the Faiyum Region around Lake Quarun (the ancient name of the lake was Moeris). This kidney-shaped area is a natural oasis that sits west of the Nile, approximately 70-75 miles south of Cairo, and fills during seasonal floods — a feature that had potential to store excess water for dry seasons, but one which had never been given serious attention under prior pharaohs. The time-horizon of possibilities was widening in the stability their family ensured.

IV - The Two-Sided Sword of Stability

During this same time, first-hand experience of Asiatics would begin to be more common for those living in Lower Egypt. In the 12th Dynasty, raids against Palestinian tribes, though a common

13 Translated by the University of College London, 2000. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/literature/teachinga1sec1.html>

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

historical practices, was atypical compared to the amount of trade passing between Egypt and the Levant, specifically Canaan and the port of Byblos.¹⁴ Ultimately any overland trade from the rest of the ancient world had to pass through Canaan, leading many Asiatics and their wares to the eastern part of the Nile Delta. There was now a growing need for some hub in the area to absorb this influx of trade so it could be better controlled.

The settlement of Avaris, though underdeveloped, was ideally located on the eastern-most branch of the Nile for both land-trade across the Sinai and sea-trade from the Mediterranean. Resources would begin pumping into the settlement, allowing it to fully utilize its advantageous position and accommodate the commerce entering it — all eventually in a feedback loop that attracted enterprising Egyptians and Asiatics alike. Whether the Asiatic immigrants were primarily refugees or entrepreneurs is unknown, though it is likely there was representation from both populations. For those preexisting Asiatic servants in the homes of prominent individuals, it could be that (if their master trusted them) they would invite relatives to work with.¹⁵ Most Palestinians, however, would not have had this opportunity and would likely not have even spoken Egyptian. This would lead to the need for bilingual supervisors, probably typically drawn from those who had connections with Egyptians or who had been working in Egypt for decades and understood the operations. Regardless, an entire parallel hierarchy of Asiatics steadily trickled in over the years.

Some began contemplating where this would inevitably lead. *The Prophecies of Neferti*, written during this period, is mostly concerned about the potential to regress into another Intermediate Period through political turmoil, but also foretells:

“A strange bird shall be engendered in the marshes of the Northland:

He has built a nest beside the citizens so that our people bear him of necessity.”¹⁶

If internal social cohesion was deemed paramount, then what about these immigrants who did not even speak the same language, who were rapidly growing in number, and who the Egyptians in the Nile

14 *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*, pg 92-93.

15 *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*, pg 90-92.

16 *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*, pg 80.

Delta, were steadily relying on to do the 'hard work'? Throughout history, successful states often willingly abdicate their connection to the fundamental labor prefacing their success so that they can live more comfortably. Yet by doing so, they open themselves up to groups less culturally predisposed to their method of rule, undermining their own strength and the civilization that elevated them.

Historians tend to blame famines, invasions, and other overt phenomena for the decline of dynasties and the civilizations around them; and no doubt these are important indicators for how situations shift and whether people can adapt. Yet just as often, they fail to qualitatively gauge the stagnating effect of 'stable' periods upon political elites who grow too accustomed to the security of their power. Quite simply: entropy catches up with the system and those who otherwise have inert material advantages cannot adapt to the return of instability due to their incentive to defend a status quo which empowers the formation of more ambitious enemies.

It was around 1850 BC that 'multi-racial bureaucrats' began to be noticeable in the Nile Delta. The predominantly male children of Egyptian fathers and Asiatic mothers would have emerged first in outpost towns, where being bilingual and biracial would be useful. More often than not, a local governmental role was filled from father to son unless the father managed to upset the crown one way or another. Through this lineage, the half-Egyptian, half-Asiatic boys of officials could come to oversee certain aspects of local business. Especially in Avaris this phenomenon allowed for the accumulation of relatively insignificant local influence, but as that influence consolidated it could be exchanged for real political and economic power.

More trade caravans and diplomatic envoys continued to cross the Sinai peninsula from Canaan, adorned in brightly-colored clothes and bearing foreign goods, both luxury and common. A stele commemorating the tribute from one of these envoys gives us the earliest mention of the term 'Hyksos.' The Greek designation Ἰκσῶς (Hykussos) directly derives from the Egyptian *ḥkꜣw-ḥꜣswt* (hik-swa his-wot), meaning 'rulers of foreign lands.' It is only ever used in two contexts throughout Egyptian history: one is for Asiatic chieftains, and the other is for the future 15th Dynasty.

V - Instability and Conquest

The 12th Dynasty had reached its zenith. Senusret II's great-nephew had built a Great Canal at Lake Moeris, allowing the region to thrive. The prosperity of the region prompted the designation of 'capitol city' to move to Itjawy near the lake. The *nomarchs* had been thoroughly brought to task. Nubia paid Egypt tribute in their subjugation. But in the course of two pharaohs — Amenhemat IV and Sobekneferu (one of the first confirmed sole female rulers in all history) — all this would change. Sobekneferu would leave no successors at her death c. 1800 BC, ending the 12th Dynasty. This was not as dramatic as we might anticipate because a 13th Dynasty emerged almost simultaneously through some vague familial relation of Amenemhat IV or Sobekneferu. It was a broken but still connected chain of rulers — a seemingly mild stumble in tempo. The new dynasty overall experienced a time of uncertainty, attested to in the fact that the average reign for each ruler was only three years.¹⁷

Within the decade of the 13th Dynasty's emergence, the situation would open up, and from its maw would emerge a rival 14th Dynasty and the beginning of a Second Intermediate Period. The Asiatic-dominated eastern Nile Delta broke away from the rest of Egypt. To the 13th Dynasty, which still had firm control from Bubastis to Elephantine, (modern day: Tell-Basta to Aswan) this emergent, rival jurisdiction was at best a 'soft coregency' of Egypt.¹⁸ At worst, it was annexation. Though the 14th Dynasty perceived the latter interpretation more favorably, they were still heavily reliant on avoiding bad diplomacy with the 13th so they could move trade to the rest of Egypt and further south, to Nubia. But if that was the case, then the 13th Dynasty was more reliant on the only overland trade route off the continent. The very conditions that had made Avaris a nucleus of trade has positioned it to strangle the rest of Egypt and assume the role as the 14th Dynasty's capital city.

The great-great-great-grandchildren of Avaris' original immigrants were now kings, though they acknowledged they were Asiatics, not pharaohs, in their refusal to 'Egyptianize' their names

17 Ryholt, K.S.B. *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.* Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1997, pg 282.

18 *Ibid*, pg 75-78.

or titles, still very aware of how their ancestors set the stage for their usurpation.¹⁹ One-hundred and fifty years prior, the settlement and expansion of Avaris followed a gradual evolution from an initial state of Egyptian farmers and laborers to an Egyptian palace with minor Middle Bronze Age, 'Proto-Hyksos' influences. These influences steadily developed further into a more diversified, affluent city, and ultimately the Egyptian influences became more minor.²⁰ The tiny laborer rooms were replaced by spacious family homes.²¹ Now it was a massive Hyksos metropolis, which was the center of Asiatic potentiality in Egypt and would be the 14th and 15th Dynasty's capital city.²²

The history of trade relations, shared linguistic and cultural characteristics and ethnicity allowed diplomacy with the Levant to come naturally for the 14th Dynasty, but they appeared adept and energetic with many foreign powers. Avaris' inherently economic character lended itself well to tactful agreements, and the skills the Asiatic immigrants had learned from the Egyptians were now being used to politically surround them. Minoans painted frescoes in their halls.²³ Evidence exists that, through intermediaries, they traded goods as far west as Spain.²⁴ And relations with Nubia to the south of Egypt were strong.

One 14th Dynasty ruler, King Seshi, appears to have had a particularly long and prosperous reign with his queen, Tati. Seshi's origin to the throne is unknown, but we do know he had two sons: the eldest, Ipqu (a Semitic name), would die before he could ascend to power, leaving the younger brother, Nehsy, to assume command as his father waned in years. Of particular interest is that King Nehsy's mother, Tati, was a Nubian princess. So we have an inter-ra-

19 Ibid, pg 99-102.

20 Holladay, John S., Jr. "The Eastern Nile Delta During the Hyksos and Pre-Hyksos Periods: Toward a Systemic/Socioeconomic Understanding" *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997, pg 184-186.

21 Bietak, Manfred. "The Center of Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a)". *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997, pg 97-111.

22 Ibid, pg 113.

23 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 111-115

24 *The Eastern Nile Delta During the Hyksos and Pre-Hyksos Periods: Toward a Systemic/Socioeconomic Understanding*, pg 209.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

cial marriage of 14th Dynasty Semetic royalty to African Kushite nobility.²⁵ The ever-worsening situation in the 13th Dynasty and the constricting pincer of the Delta and Nubia, helped acclimate the initiative into the 14th Dynasty's hands.

It is around this juncture when historians separate the 14th Dynasty from the 15th. And though there was little difference in those who held authority, the objectives and mindset of the rulers had shifted. Three 15th Dynasty rulers — Šamuqēnu, 'Aper-'Anati, and Sakir-Har — came and went before Sewoserrenre Khayan took the mantle of power.²⁶ His name translates to: 'Khayan, the one that Re made strong'. Interestingly, through the strength of an Egyptian god, he would eventually seize the title of 'pharaoh' and relinquish his association with a foreign origin by discarding his 'Hyksos' moniker. It was Khayan who would attempt complete conquest of Egypt.

Human beings are pack-predators; we hunt in a group-strategy of cooperative efficiency. Whereas other predators use talons, claws, speed and camouflage to better catch prey, human beings have a hyper-adaptive intelligence to produce weapons.²⁷ As an enhancement of our social prerogative, we also have linguistic communication: gestures, signs, commonly understood verbalizations. Therefore, to understand humanity, we cannot ignore that our mindset is one of a pack-predator's. Moreso, since all predator animals require a defined space to exist in, to own, and propagate their will throughout,²⁸ and since there is only so much space in any given biome, competition between two different parties claiming the same things is inevitable. We call that competition: war.²⁹ There is no higher competition for human beings — war is the ultimate arbiter between collectives. Therefore, though there are material gains from territorial expansion and opportunities to advance in the hierarchy, warfare more importantly allows the collective to be totally engrossed and in-touch with the potentiality of humanity

25 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 252-254.

26 *Ibid*, pg 119-123.

27 Spengler, Oswald. *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*. Translated by Francis Atkinson & Michael Putman, Arktos Publishing, 2015.

28 Bronze Age Pervert reworking Darwin.

29 This is why Gnosticism ultimately fails for predators: all matter / space is already malevolently owned and always will be by the enemy in a spiritual war.

as a pack-predator. The more capable, cohesive and energetic the collective, the more it will want to assert its will upon others.

We must also regard ancient mores about warfare firstly as vastly different from those of our contemporary times. This is predominantly due to the fact that 'equality' among modern populations includes the stipulation that all people must equally be called during war. In ancient times, however, there was a special class of people for this purpose who constantly trained and exercised their skill. Furthermore, in ancient times, the interests of the ruling class did not need to be justified to the craftsmen or laborers in rational or even sentimental terms. Many times, the populace would only be generally aware of some war their rulers were waging, but not know (or possibly even care) about the specifics except in how it affected them directly, which was often very minutely. The army would leave and then return. If they were defeated, the people would labor for their conquerors. If the army returned victorious, there would be many foreign treasures and slaves paraded through the town. Much like the tribal setting from which civilization emerged, the celebration over victory could interrupt life for as long as the sentiment persisted. This was actually a way of maintaining order (even if it temporarily interrupted structured behavior) by spontaneously releasing tension while also actively reminding everyone of the potency of the rulers.

The 13th Dynasty quickly fell to Khayan's sword. In the power vacuum, two short-lived *nomes* established autonomy: the 'Abydos Dynasty' and the Theban 16th Dynasty. We know nothing of the obscure Abydos Dynasty or what happened during its approximately twenty-year run. It was crushed. With the Abydos territory absorbed, Khayan encroached on Thebes, rolling down the Nile: dreadful and grim, looting rapaciously in conquest. After a ten-year struggle, the 16th Dynasty eventually succumbed. After moving further south and absorbing territory down to the First Cataract of the Nile, Khayan brought all of Egypt under the dominion of Hyksos rule c. 1582 BC.³⁰

VI - Cultural Divestment and Decadence

Shortly after his conquests, after bringing Egypt under their peo-

30 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 189.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

ple's dominion, and after a fifty-five year reign, Khayan would die and the throne would pass to a man named Awoserre Apophis. It is disputed exactly how the throne came into Apophis' possession, since Khayan's son, Yanassi, was the designated heir.³¹ As we have seen, however, these issues with succession were not as seamless as we have come to expect. Regardless, Apophis was not the intended successor or from *any* royal family for that matter, which leads to suspicions of usurpation. This image of a foreigner squabbling over titles that do not belong to them and then imposing their will onto Egypt was the standard image of the Hyksos to the Egyptians, which Apophis epitomized.

Throughout the reign of the Hyksos, in both the 14th and 15th Dynasties, monuments from prior rulers were commonly defaced, destroyed, or relocated to Avaris. For conquerors to assert themselves over the people they subjected, this cultural divestment is common. By removing or defacing the physical objects that signify their collective identity, it erodes the supporting spiritual connections that the conquered people had. The Egyptian monuments (statues, busts, pillars, religious icons, etc) would be taken by force or perhaps even offered by local *nomarchs* as a sign of compliance to the Hyksos. Monuments have been discovered in the ruins of Avaris that date to prior dynasties.³² Some transported items were sent with emissaries and given to foreign rulers as diplomatic offerings.³³ Apophis had his name inscribed on sphinxes from the 13th Dynasty as if to claim they were made for him.³⁴

This phenomenon can be further understood as an extension of historical Asiatic behavior. In the city of Sidon, archeologists had long known about trade between Lebanon and Egypt but came across some peculiar crafts with strange hieroglyphs on them. These artifacts were mulled over, but the writing on them could not be deciphered. Finally, it was concluded that these hieroglyphs did not have any meaning — they were unintelligibly scribbled images that only *imitated* hieroglyphs: ancient forgeries.³⁵ Scarabs

31 Ibid, pg 120-121.

32 The Center of Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a), pg 111-114

33 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 133-136

34 Grimal Nicolas. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Translated by Ian Shaw, Blackwell Publishing, 1994, pg 193.

35 *Rise of the Hyksos: Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early*

and jewelry had these designs put on them to increase their value as being ‘from the Nile’, surely with impromptu or scripted ‘translations’ by those trying to sell them. The peoples of the lower-Levant and Canaan could only ever imitate what it was to be Egyptian.

The religion around Avaris had evolved into its own ‘imitating’ entity over the years as well. Asiatic immigrants had brought their Canaanite beliefs and gods with them: El and Ashera, Ba’al, Dagon, and Mot. But to integrate, they had to amalgamate their foreign gods and traditions into a land that already had rites of its own. So they adapted the synchronistic relationship between Canaanite deities and Egyptian ones, particularly with regard to similarities between the Canaanite Ba’al and the Egyptian Set as spiritually synonymous forces.³⁶ Set is the ‘patron’ god of the desert and foreigners. He is a storm god, like Ba’al. Set is the son of the Earth and Sky, and Ba’al descends from the sky to the Earth during the dry season — they represent a liminal meeting of the two at the horizon. So the Hyksos were incentivized to revere Set, even naming him ‘Lord of Avaris’ in locations around the city and having rulers designate themselves ‘beloved by / son of Set’.³⁷ This zealous preoccupation with obscure cults, combined with the destruction or theft of historic artifacts, did nothing to endear Egyptians to their new overlords.

But in their moment of victory, instead of reordering society and establishing long-term stability, the Hyksos suckled on their spoils. Though their ancestors had ultimately persevered through lives of difficult labor, subtly asserting their interests over time, the Hyksos were losing touch with the conditions that had allowed for their new comfortable station in the hierarchy. Throughout history, the generation of peace that follows the ultimate victory over the ancestral enemy, along with the boons of regional supremacy, bring with it a self-destructive introspection. Hegemony breeds hubris where efficiency, frugality, and creativity (important traits that allowed the structure to out-compete others) decline in importance.

In some cases, with an increase in comfort, there comes a decline in one of the primary justifications for personal acceptance of spir-

Second Intermediate Period, pg 176-180.

36 *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*, pg 174-180.

37 Redford, Donald B. “Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period”. *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997, pg 4-7

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

itual beliefs; that my material suffering must be given a sense of transcendent purpose and significance. This leads to an active interrogation of the utility of the traditional structures that allowed for victory. From these inward views, differing perspectives on the collective emerge and people begin to see one another as enemies. If not properly mitigated by the discovery of a new enemy or new lands, this success can actually cause a defeat of cohesion and fracture the collective.

VII - Reactions and In-Fighting

A generation into Apophis' reign, after his predecessor, Khayan, had conquered the entire Nile, a new dynastic entity emerged in Thebes under the shadow of Hyksos rule. The 17th Dynasty was an invigorated effort at autonomy which sprung from the vision of the Antef family, an elite Theban faction of clannish relations. Though they were still beholden to Hyksos demands, they nevertheless prompted considerations of serious resistance. The city's relatively removed proximity from the northern hubs of politics and economics allowed it to be less reliant on a centralized system, which had allowed Thebes to establish a semi-autonomous hierarchy. A dozen years after the emergence of the 17th Dynasty, the Antef family succumbed to a new family conglomerate which seized Thebes. There was no way to determine who would lead the city except through explicitly self-issued authority.

Senior Queen Teti-the-younger and her husband, King Senakhtenre Ahmose beget Seqener Tao and Queen Ahhotep I along with Wadjkheperre Kamose and Ahhotep II, all four were siblings. The former two would be consorts, as would the latter two. Seqener Tao further beget a numerous number of children named Ahmose, male and female, but of upmost concern is Ahmose I and his sister-queen Nefertari. This would make Senakhtenre the father of Seqener and Kamose and it would make Ahmose I Seqener's son and Kamose's nephew.³⁸ This family no longer wanted away from Hyksos authority. They wanted an end to it.

The progenitor of the family, Senakhtenre Ahmose, began skirmishes against outposts north of Thebes. In one of these battles, he would die, setting a tenuous tone for the future. But Seqener Tao

38 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 272-280.

would continue the fight by uniting nearby city-states like Edfu to their vision, and exerting control over cities as far north as Cusae, even if by the sword.³⁹ But he too would fall during these efforts, failing to finish the fight. His brother, Wadjkheperre Kamose, (whose name means: the one who flourishes in the manifestation of Re') expanded the battle to capture the vision his forebear had left incomplete.

Kamose is recorded in the *Carnarvon Tablet* justifying the increase in hostilities toward the Hyksos:

One chief is in Avaris, another in Kush, and I sit (here) associated with an Asiatic and a Nubian! Each man has his slice in this Egypt and so the land is partitioned with me! [. . .] No one can be at ease when they are milked by the taxes of the Asiatics [. . .] I shall grapple with him that I might crush his belly, (for) my desire is to rescue Egypt which the Asiatics have destroyed.⁴⁰

Hyksos behavior was abhorrent to most Egyptians, but especially for the 17th Dynasty, who had to rely on them and the Nubians for any external interactions. Furthermore, Hyksos taxes were likely especially heavy on Thebes since it resisted the conquests of Khayan for the longest.

Still, other court officials and wealthy Thebans dissented on why an attack would be imprudent:

We are doing alright with our (part of) Egypt [. . .] Our cattle have not been seized [. . .] He has the land of the Asiatics, we have Egypt.

Put simply: 'the material benefits of maintaining the status-quo should persuade even the most zealous that resistance, let alone open war, is counter-productive to their interests'. Many of the elite class would have been unperturbed by any impositions on them as long as they retained their position and local influence. Yes, the illegitimacy of the Hyksos was apparent, but they had a reservoir of manpower in their allied cousins in the Levant along with power to cut off their rival from the north and south. This situation must have been incredibly delicate to navigate for the family of Kamose, as their control over the Theban confederation was as tentative as

39 Ibid, pg 171-172.

40 *Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period*, pg 13-14.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

the Antef family's had been over Thebes before Senakhtenre asserted himself. But to Kamose, who viewed Apophis as a "chieftain of Retjenu",⁴¹ any impositions by the Hyksos were illegitimate. He would be able to consolidate this sentiment and there would be war c. 1550 BC.

VIII - The Crusade

While gathering strength, Thebes fortuitously intercepted a messenger from Avaris on route to Kush. Kamose seized their correspondences and learned that the Hyksos were moving a large army through the Bahariya Oasis, far west of the Nile. It was almost 300 miles from Avaris to the oasis, and a similar distance from Thebes if taking a direct route; but it would be almost double that distance if taking a provisionable route with roads. There was little time to plan or prepare if something was to be done with this information. The family deliberated with their confederation, consulted oracles, and spoke with advisors. Then with decisive energy, Thebes mobilized their forces and rushed to the Oasis. This rapid move would have been impossible if not for the way the ancient world revolved around warfare with hierarchies that engendered definite and immediate enforcement of authority.

They arrived at the oasis before the Hyksos and prepared an ambush either beneath the palms and Cretaceous plants of the millennia or among the surrounding Martian rocks poking out from the sand. The Hyksos approached the nebulous green mass hidden in the tan sea. Theban commanders, hiding with their men, issued expectations and encouragement about righteously laying waste to their nemesis. They had not founded the cities they resided in. Their priests were only imitators, shaman in robes. Their rulers were thieves. And as the soldiers watched the glistening silhouettes emerge from the horizon, where the pale sky met dry sand, their commanders reassured them that all that would end now.

The Hyksos suffered a crushing defeat at the Bahariya Oasis. The army they had sent was vanquished, its goods pillaged. A thin trail of smoke rose from the desert, too distant to be seen in Avaris, but present and palpable in the royal palace there all the same. With momentum in his favor, Kamose returned to the Nile, using it to amphibiously raid towns as they went north, down river:

41 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 131.

FIRSTNESS #3

[. . .] the army provisioned itself everywhere [. . .] My army acted like lions with their spoils – chattels, cattle, fat, honey – dividing their things, their hearts joyful.

These raids were incredibly successful and forced the Hyksos to call upon their ancestral allies: mercenary Canaanite tribes from Palestine. But Kamose kept pushing north, past the Great Canal, victory after victory, until there were fires along the shore of the Nile at Memphis and beyond, where Avaris lay within sight.

Kamose leaves nothing to the imagination regarding the awe and potency of his advance when he states:

The mistresses of Avaris shall not conceive, their hearts shall not budge in the midst of their bodies, when the war-whoop of my troops is heard! Does your heart fail, O you vile Asiatic? Look! I drink of the wine of your vineyards, which the Asiatics whom I captured pressed out for me.

From Avaris, Apophis wrote desperately to his ally in Kush:

Do you see what Egypt has done to me? [Kamose] is pushing me off my (own) land! I have not attacked him in any way comparable to all that he has done to you; he has hopped up the Two Lands in their grief, my land and yours, and he has hacked them up. Come north! Do not hold back! See, he is here with me: There is none who will stand up to you in Egypt [. . .] Then we will divide the towns of Egypt, and [Kush] shall be in joy.⁴²

The plea for Nubia to invade north and attack Thebes while its army was away would not go heeded. Though diplomatic allies in trade, Kush saw no reason to be involved in Egyptian wars. And so all aid was cut off from Avaris, preventing any distraction.⁴³ Apophis and Kamose, the Hyksos and the Theban Egyptians, prepared for the siege of Avaris and the inevitable battle in its streets.

However during this final stage of the war, both leaders would die, leaving successors to carry out the conclusion. For the 15th Dynasty, the figurehead Khamudi was either forced to take the role or forcefully took it in a last-minute power-grab. For the 17th Dynasty, Kamose's nephew, Ahmose I, would rise to the occasion, likely having been hoping for this moment his entire life. He brought his

42 *Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period*, pg 14.

43 *Ibid*, pg 14-15.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

family's army within Avaris itself. They gazed upon the captured monuments and stared at the faces of pharaohs who could never have imagined the tumultuous events which would have precipitated their statues arriving there.

Kamudi and many Hyksos elites were nowhere to be found though. They had fled east to their ancestral homeland, congregating at Sharuhén, (south-east of present-day Gaza) a city which had maintained close relations with Avaris since the 14th Dynasty. Ahmose I followed and besieged the city for three years before finally conquering it. A firm end was set to the Hyksos 15th Dynasty and a close to the Second Intermediate Period.

From the beginning of Senakhtenre Ahmose's rule to the end of Kamose's was around a decade. Yet in that time, those who had aligned themselves with the family, especially with Kamose, treated it as the proudest moment of their lives. They had come to believe in the vision of an Egyptian Egypt and had helped to bring it about. We have personal accounts from some of these people, giving unprecedentedly clear insight into their thoughts. A leader from Edfu, a drummer named Emheb,⁴⁴ states:

I was one who followed his lord in his footsteps, and did not cringe at any statement he made. Thereupon I brought about the overpowering of the master of craftiness through my agency [. . .] [Kamose] is a god while I am a ruler; his job is to slay, while I keep alive⁴⁵

Another, a fighting man named Amose, recorded this statement:

I was a brave fighter of the mighty ruler [Ka]mose living forever. I acquired 46 people while following the ruler [. . .] I protected my (fellow) townsfolk, and I did not have anyone else sent.⁴⁶

It was a completed duty and fulfillment of purpose, a victorious crusade.

IX - Epilogue

For 125 years the 14th Dynasty had ruled, and the 15th had ruled

44 Baines, John. "The Stela of Emhab: Innovation, Tradition, Hierarchy." *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 72, 1986, pg 41-53.

45 *Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period*, pg 12.

46 *Ibid*, pg 12.

for 109 years after that. For approximately 250 years then, the Second Intermediate Period had endured;⁴⁷ longer than the United States has been a nation. Egypt was reunited c. 1540 BC. To express this reconquest, the Thebans fused their local Sun god, Amun, to the more archaic solar deity, Re, to create the new god of the New Kingdom; Amun-Re.⁴⁸ The Sun that rose over Thebes now rose over all Egypt. For nearly 250 years after as it hung its blessings over the 18th Dynasty, that Sun did not set. The 18th Dynasty would produce such rulers as: Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Akhenaton,⁴⁹ Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun. All borne from the same lineage and family tree, whose roots were laid by Senakhtenre Ahmose and his vision.

We can almost hear the 18th Dynasty swearing to themselves that no foreign kings would ever rule a divided Egypt again. Sometime around 50 years after the Hyksos expulsion, in a list of temple reconstruction projects, the pharaoh Hatchepsut states that:

I have restored what was destroyed, I raised up what had formerly been shattered, since Asiatics were in the midst of the Delta (at) Avaris, when the nomads in their midst were destroying what had been made [. . .] I have driven off the abomination of the great god, and the earth has removed their footprints⁵⁰

But there were some Hyksos stragglers who had escaped. In their flight, they took the knowledge and experience they had gathered from a life in Egypt back to their ancestral homeland in Palestine, altering the region forever.

There are stories that have been passed down, recounting how a man named Joseph (great-grandson of a nomadic shepherd named Abraham) was sold into bondage and arrived in Egypt, in a region of the Nile Delta called Goshen. There are stories of how he rose to the role of vizier to the pharaoh and invited his family to live with him in the new land. Generations later, one of their descendants, named Moses, rediscovered his ancestor's deity af-

47 *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.*, pg 185.

48 *Amun-Re and the Theban Triad*. University of Memphis. 2019 https://www.memphis.edu/hypostyle/meaning_function/amun-re.php

49 A pharaoh who would distill this merging of solar deities into a quasi-monotheistic devotion to the Sun.

50 *Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period*, pg 16-17.

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

ter being raised as an Egyptian. Helping the rest of his people out of bondage, they flee to the Red Sea. After crossing they wander toward their ancestral homeland as strangers, constantly reliant on distant, almost inaccessible concepts of purpose and identity. After establishing a hierarchy once their identity was rediscovered in the wilderness, they emerge into Canaan and conquer the land one tribe at a time. Dividing the land among the victorious clans, Judges emerged who unified the tribes and led the people toward their vision of a new kingdom called Israel.

X - Conclusions

What can we distill from this historical study? Firstly, we can observe that the establishment of a social hierarchy was necessary to maintain stability on both the local and central levels, the rulers of this hierarchy being the most vital component. This is demonstrated by periods of instability when the rulers faced some issue; famines due to inability to plan or prepare, times of lustration, conquest, dynastic issues and struggles of succession creating opportunities for usurpers, or the inability to assert themselves. In the hierarchy, like in a body, there are hands, muscles, a heart, and sensory organs. In the metaphysical body of the collective, the rulers are the brain. Therefore, the more intelligent and strong willed the rulers, the more adept the collective will be.

We also observe the phenomenon of this ruling class being conquerors or usurpers and therefore excellent competitors. The familial system formed a network of 'genetic trust' that did not necessarily have to be initially earned or maintained. As pack-predators too, ensuring the promulgation of your own lineage has evolutionary advantages. This is also why there were so many inter-familial marriages, such as with Mentuhotep II, Seqenere Tao, and Kamose all having sister-consorts. These were formalized and justified as keeping 'divine blood' from being affected by admixture. But what greater demonstration of one's connection to divinity was there than victory at the highest competition: war?

The 'transfer of power' followed from one generation of the family to another. Not only did this keep power within the family but it allowed for rulers to be educated and familiarized with responsibilities and necessary knowledge their entire lives. This produced a capability to rule that could extend for decades, like the fifty-year

reign of Sewoserentre Khayan. The fact that the Hyksos ascribed by the same system of power transference as the Egyptians also shows how it was universally applicable in its simplicity and utility. The experimentation of 'co-regency' during the 12th Dynasty also shows how to mitigate the problem of the ruler failing to leave a designated heir or prepare their designated successor well enough.

The possibility of usurpation is a threat to any system, but it is especially clear and present when power is concentrated into one person, one family, and one exclusive class. For rivals to emerge successful over the current rulers, they have to expend a massive amount of energy consolidating their faction and ensuring the current rulers do not have support. This will actually maintain order by 'upgrading' or 'reinstating' loyalty, even though there would be a period of conflict. But the common person had little to fear if this transpired since they were only working *for* the rulers, not *with* them. This is why, for ancient rulers, the prerogative of maintaining order could not be met by treating others 'humanely' or respecting 'rights'. This only allowed for others to gain resources that could be used against you. Order could only be achieved maintained through maintaining rigid hierarchy forcefully.

However the ruling class of intelligent and initially energetic rulers can degenerate due to their own victory. As we saw with the Hyksos themselves, their inability to secure strength and will across generations while also disrespecting the people they would have turned into an ethnic underclass, allowed for the more energetic Theban confederation to supplant them. Therefore, to keep the ruling population strong, they either had to regularly wage war to reaffirm their status as successful competitors or they would be replaced by those who were. The established descendants of conquerors had something to lose, whereas their energetic, emergent rivals had something to gain. Again, regardless of gained victory, this system maintained order even if at the cost of a brief unstable period.

What can stop a collective who wants what you own at any cost? Only their death. How can you secure that? By being skilled at war. How can you be skilled at war? Having the resources available to maintain a military class. How do you acquire those resources? By having a class below them to labor for resources. How do you maintain this structure? By justifying the force necessary to defend

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

it through a unified sense of purpose and identity. The principles that rulers ascribed to allowed for the securement of order and stability for civilization. These principles maintain the social hierarchy by exercising power against threats and keeping power within the family while actively taking measures against usurpation (by keeping vassals satisfied) and decadence (by testing and refreshing the ruling family's sense of being conquerors). These principles and concerns are intuitive, not reliant on any carefully laid out or specific protocol. They are consistently beneficial behaviors for the rulers that allow for a baseline of civilized existence and are therefore perpetually propping it up to one degree or another.

In regards to what lessons we might be able to extract for the contemporary situation from this, we can make the observation that the incredibly wasteful and needlessly complex processes of 'deciding' who figureheads will be in democratic forms of political organization do little to establish order compared to the simple, ancient principles that guided the ruling class. Firstly, how can there be any ontological foundation for the collective consciousness if there is no single nexus of authority? It is like an orchestra trying to form a symphony without any sheet music or conductor. The myriad ideological, racial, economic, and religious categorizations will naturally factionalize, but the fissures between them are exacerbated by democracy, which sets each identity against one another politically until there is only cacophony. Secondly, in no way does this mean that a social hierarchy does not exist, but that the rulers must attempt to hide their role as such from the general populace because the foundational, justifying mythology that allows for any semblance of continuity claims to preclude their existence. All civilizations have a ruling class, the brain is necessary for the social body to function.

The cultural divestment of a subjugated people is something which conquerors are obliged to enforce or they risk unnecessarily sustained conflict with a still undispersed collective consciousness. The removal or defacement of monuments, the erosion of religion, and forceful implementation of new monuments and religious rites incline the subjugated population to accept their defeat, as the indicators of their identity have been removed. This principle holds regardless of motive or justification. Therefore in modern times when we see statues toppled, defaced, closed-off, mocked, or

legislatively quarantined, we must acknowledge that the status quo has shifted against the native population's interests and they risk total subjugation.

Another point with parallels to modern times regards the phenomenon of immigration and its logical consequences. For the Egyptians, the demography of the Nile Delta effectively determined who ruled it. The only difference between the Hyksos and any other invaders was the timetable in which they arrived. Border regions are especially susceptible to this as there would always be cross-pollination between peoples on either side. But as one crosses more and more into the other, two peoples (especially if they cannot even speak the same language) who exist in the same space will invariably come into conflict eventually. This is especially the case when one of those peoples is an imported underclass of laborers. How this applies contemporaneously is obvious, especially in a democratic system.

Lastly, we must look at the importance of local infrastructure for the ancient Egyptians. One of the more important take-aways regards the observation that collapses can happen frequently and over seemingly minor things (like with what antecedent Sobekneferu's reign). The only way recoveries took place in either Intermediate Period, or even with the Hyksos themselves, was through local clannish factions exerting the influence they had steadily built for decades or even generations before they had the opportunity to be potentialized. The rapid movement of these factions when they sensed an opportunity ensured their fitness in competing to restore stability, guaranteeing them a prominent role in the post-crisis hierarchy and generally affording them a higher degree of survivability. Creating independent high-trust networks separate from the central authority during periods of stability is what provides the means to take advantage of destabilization.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amun-Re and the Theban Triad. University of Memphis. 2019
https://www.memphis.edu/hypostyle/meaning_function/amun-re.php

Arnold, Dieter, and Dorothea Arnold. "A New Start from the South: Thebes During the Eleventh Dynasty". *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. Edited by Adela Oppenheim,

ANCIENT PRINCIPLES ON CIVILIZED ORDER

Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, et. al. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Yale University Press, 2015.

Arnold, Dieter, and Peter Jánosi. "The Move to the North: Establishing a New Capital". *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. Edited by Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, et. al. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2015.

Foster, John L. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*. University of Texas Press, 2001.

Baines, John. "The Stela of Emhah: Innovation, Tradition, Hierarchy." *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 72, 1986.

Bietak, Manfred. "The Center of Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab-^{ca})". *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997.

Grimal Nicolas. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Translated by Ian Shaw, Blackwell Publishing, 1994.

Holladay, John S., Jr. "The Eastern Nile Delta During the Hyksos and Pre-Hyksos Periods: Toward a Systemic/Socioeconomic Understanding" *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997.

Mourad, Anna-Latifa. *Rise of the Hyksos: Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early Second Intermediate Period*. Holywell Press, 2015.

University of College London, 2000. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/literature/teachinga1sec1.html>

Van-Seters, John. *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*. Yale University Press, 1967.

Winlock, H.E. *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*. The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Redford, Donald B. "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period". *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Edited by

FIRSTNESS #3

Eliezer D. Oren. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997.

Ryholt, K.S.B. *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800-1550 B.C.* Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1997.

Spengler, Oswald. *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life.* Translated by Francis Atkinson & Michael Putman, Arktos Publishing, 2015.