AGORISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Black Swan _ _ _

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AGORISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

FOREWORD

Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is typically read for its depictions of Hell in Inferno but wedged in the middle is the journey through Purgatory. At the entrance to Purgatory, an Angel, guarding, marks Dante with the letter P (*peccatum / sin*) on his forehead, seven times, representing the seven deadly sins. As they progress a sin is removed, a necessary requirement for a soul to enter Paradise.

Pride, envy, wrath, sloth, lust, greed, gluttony. The soul of Crypto is not likely to enter Paradise any time soon, but fortunately there is hope in Purgatory, unlike in Hell. It requires work, reflection and time, but one can still make it to Heaven from Purgatory. The common thread to redemption is recognition of the sin. Can we make it to level 2?

In this, our second issue, we invite the reader to focus on Crypto's redemption through solarpunk and lunarpunk praxis and to sandwich it all between two meditations on Crypto's relationship with death, a *Maximum Extractable Memento Mori*.

We see the path to redemption as involving the acceleration and escalation of counter-economic practice in all its forms — cypherpunk, solarpunk, lunarpunk. Free will, it's our choice. Contribute to the corruption or transcend it.

When Dante steps into Heaven he discovers the first level is the Moon. The Moon is associated with inconstancy, of those who for one reason or another abandoned their vows, lacking some but certainly not all *fortitude*. As a matter of grace, God has tallied them up as full of most good intent, but falling at the last hurdle. There is, you see, always the opportunity to decide well, for those still in the mix.

We are in the mix.

DEATH ATHLETIC

Cody Wilson

Death athletic is a concept I've been mulling around for a bit. I borrowed it from Peter Sloterdijk's anthropology of the acrobat[1]. I'm going to try to make it relatable.

Ernst Jünger: "Tell me your relation to pain, and I will tell you who you are!"

There are some people who believe in the hedonic principle that we should only pursue pleasure or things that maximally benefit us. But as the ancients and some modern philosophers, including Friedrich Nietzsche, noted, men have an interest in pain — an interest in carrying burdens. We recognize that it is important to subject ourselves to certain hardships. Men were meant to carry burdens. In that spirit, I'd like to reflect on Western's thoughts deepest contemplation of this. I say *deepest* in the Nietzschean sense because maybe pain doesn't make you better — this isn't about improvement. I don't think pain makes you a better person, but maybe it *deepens* you.

Just for the receipts — my final Twitter bio before I was completely eradicated from social life was "Death Athletic."

It's not my favorite bio, I liked "Second Segway men of the Apocalypse," but this is the thing I was contemplating — my *memento mori* — before I was, in fact, *removed* a second time from the social. I include this not just for the receipts but to say — look, sometimes even I will disenchant myself. I want to teach you about some of the things that actually inform our *artistic passions* or motivations as *Defense Distributed* — why we do what we do.

01 ▪ Euthanasia

Euthanasia is a Greek word. The Greeks were concerned with the art of the beautiful death. That's my understanding of the word: a beautiful death. Of course, we mean it in a different way since the progressive revolution. Forget your installed or received wisdom about this word. Euthanasia is about death performance — an obsession of the Greeks to die in a beautiful way. You can recontextualize it with the Japanese and the art of seppuku. There have been cultural concerns with death performance for some time. It's something that has been largely forgotten in a modern context but Sloterdijk, in his anthropology of ascetics and acrobatics I mentioned earlier[2], says that euthanasia is the *secret center* of what he calls humanity's "acrobatic revolution." So I want to begin with death performance: the art of the beautiful death.

The first time I died or realized I was dead was when I published Liberator, the first 3D printed gun. It was a social death, the loss of all my relationships. I didn't anticipate

this. I didn't know it would happen. I had read what I thought was some cool shit in school like Maximilien Robespierre's "Virtue and Terror" that I was introduced to by Slavoj Žižek. I had encountered the idea that we can include the threat of our death, or at least our indifference to it as a historical accident, as a way of proving we are committed to our projects. *It doesn't matter if I'm dead.*

When the New York Times journalists ask, "What if someone prints your gun out and shoots you, Cody?" This is the most common thing that the liberals still ask 3D gun printers. Meaningfully, you sniff and say, "Well, maybe it'll happen." That's some crazy shit that they don't like to hear. You are confessing an indifference to your death.

I had this intuition already with Liberator. I had read some of Jean Baudrillard's *Fatal Strategies* too. I knew death was somehow a part of it, that it was a limit-experience in culture. Not to get too deep into this but when the Liberator actually happened I was told by my first attorney, "Dude, your life is over. This is a State Department enforcement action. You'll be lucky if you don't get 10 years in prison."

I thought I was done. Assuming certain things in gray areas of the law is to go beyond the Pale and risk something like a social or physical death. I was upset at not really having understood that. But how can you understand that? How can you be prepared for that?

The second time I thought I would die was when I clawed

my way back from the Liberator experience and mounted an opposition. I built a new company, Defense Distributed, to make the Ghost Gunner, to have enough money to sue the State Department. It was a whole roundabout thing but we'll get to it and we'll get to why.

In March 2018, I learned that somehow, impossibly, I was going to beat the Federal Government in the contest about the First Amendment and 3D files. When I had learned that, I thought *I'm certainly not going to survive this victory. I didn't survive the last one.*

Knowing that my death, a social death or physical death, was going to happen and that I was probably going to ruin my life again, I thought, what's a secessionary statement? What's a way to be known? What's a way to bury the name of God and confess that *nevertheless, yes, I choose this death*?

So I chose to resurrect this symbol from Goliad:

This is the severed arm: Philip Dimmitt's flag that flew at La Bahía and Goliad of the Texas Revolution. Long-disused

and not very familiar even to Texans, although some Texans know it now.

The intuition behind this was that we had done something similar with the flag of Gonzalez, the "Come and Take It" flag, which also features in the Texas Revolution and dwells on Texan independence and secessionary gestures. So, what's another gesture? What's a way to show that we're intentional, a way that can be known beyond just the accidents of my stupid company and my own pointless death? What's a message that can carry forward symbolically from that moment?

I chose the severed arm of Goliad. This is the strongest statement of Texan Independence. Dimmitt and the boys at La Bahía were actually the first people to assert Texan independence and the revolution. Beforehand, it was like all revolutions — they said, "We're committed as Texans to the Constitution 24 of Mexico. We're committed Republicans. Actually this isn't a revolution at all. We're not looking for independence." But the boys at La Bahía were like, "You know what? White jihad." That's where this flag erupts.

Goliad is a fun word. I adopted that word and its significance because Goliad is an anagram. Baudrillard says you should always bury the name of God in seccessionary gestures. I'll tell you: Goliad is an anagram for Hidalgo. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was one of the greatest figures of Mexican independence and secession. Hidalgo County in Texas is named after him — an area that was, of course, Mexican prior to Texan independence. It seemed to me that Goliad was

a specifically Texan-situated way of telescoping seces-
sionary gesture. It was Mexican independence. It's Texan
independence. Now with 3D printed guns what are we
saying? Some kind of weird cypherpunk 3D printed gun
independence? I don't know. You figure it out. I'll be dead.

Moving forward. *What a joy to be hidden in this way. What
a disaster not to be found.* But I believe someone found me.
Jstark had his own motives and I can't know them. I didn't
know him well personally but I think it's worth pointing
out that the FGC-9 marks 1 and 2 include the severed arm
of Goliad.

It's as if Jstark understood our secessionary gesture and
shared an impulse to say the same thing. At least there's
a relationship here. Knowing what happened to Jstark,
a cynic could say that he adopted our praxis as his own
funeral ideology. The intelligence agencies reading this

may interpret the symbolism as the strange new strains of Euro-Kurdistan and radicalism invading Europe. But we the living, we Americans, we understand something better. Jstark left us more clues than just his use of the arm. You see "Live free or die" and then you see his name: Jstark1809.

This is General John Stark's letter to the boys of Bennington.

> *I shall remember, gentlemen, the respect you and the inhabitants of Bennington and its neighborhood have shown me, until I go to the "country from whence no traveller returns". I must soon receive marching orders.*

> **—** John Stark
>> *Note: The general forwarded in this letter, as his volunteer sentiment: "Live free, or die — Death is not the worst of evils."*

Jstark chose to adopt the pseudonym of a revolutionary war veteran who wrote this letter at the end of his life. General Stark writes that he couldn't join his fellow soldiers in a reunion celebrating the Battle of Bennington and he regretted it. He left them with his famous postscript, "Live free or die" which became the motto of the state of New Hampshire. It was used in the French Revolution and many other revolutions all over the world ever since.

"Live free or die:" bold words. They are hardily, healthily American words. Maybe they originate with Patrick Henry at the Second Virginia Convention in 1775 — the boys who reconstructed independent militias once royal authority over Virginia had been removed.

This gesture allows us to give a complete reading to the life of Jstark. Jstark wasn't just a guy who wanted to say some cool shit. He was a guy who understood he was a part of our revolution and a soldier of it with us — but who somehow knew he wouldn't join us in the reunion. He was, in fact, predicting his own death. I think that's a beautiful death performance. Even unconsciously, Jstark was practicing a type of euthanasia.

This is meant to illustrate the tightrope walker from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this scene, a jester comes out during the performance and knocks the tightrope walker off his game. The tightrope walker loses his head, loses the wire and falls to his death.

He doesn't immediately die. Zarathustra, the prophet, is there beside his mangled body. The tightrope walker says "Oh shit, I'm going to hell. I'm just gonna die. How

pointless my life is." Zarathustra says "not at all. You made danger your profession. And that's not nothing. Allow me to bury you. Choose to die by your vocation." This is the essence of that speech.

I don't know how Jstark lived but I believe he died an American. He made danger his profession. That's something. Jstark's final symbolic presentation for us is the stark choice from the motto "Life free or die". "Live free or fucking die" I believe was Jstark's turn on it.[3]

Death is a certainty. It's not a choice. Freedom on the other hand seems quite less certain than death. Is it even possible? Do you feel free?
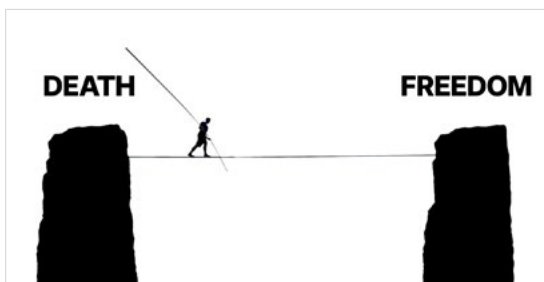
The only question is how to venture this crossing. We know if we stay on the shore and don't engage in any kind of practice we are surely headed for one of these two results: the depressing result of death. How do we make this crossing to freedom? What are the metaphysics of this desire?

Let's examine. We can find answers to these questions through a brief detour in the work of René Girard.

The final thing I'll say about secessionary gesture and the will for freedom is that maybe *conflict is okay*. Maybe the large moral disputes in our community about documentation and the severity of the contest are okay. It's alright to begin with the understanding that *I must change my life*. "It's literally a crime that you don't test your files and you are scum." This is the right impulse and the right beginning but there are metaphysics of these desires that are worth examining. This will allow us to make more productive use of our secessionary moral impulse.

02 ▪ Mediation

Girard is our Virgil through the next section: Mediation. Girard teaches us a number of things about desire, about our will and metaphysical ambitions.

SPONTANEOUS
DESIRE

The standard model of reaching an objective is the direct, linear one: "Okay, I'm a creator. I want to make something really cool like the FGC-9 because I've heard about it, I think that's really badass." We imagine this as a direct relationship: I'm a subject pursuing an object.

Girard tells us — not so fast. In fact, we're not quite free to desire anything or even imagine anything. We have to learn it like anything else. Desire is imitative. It's taught. It's learned. It's copied. All desires, even the simplest ones but especially those great passions, we learn from a mediator.

Here is the holy Pepe mediator. He lives in a paradise that is inaccessible to us. He looks down on us with benevolent contempt.
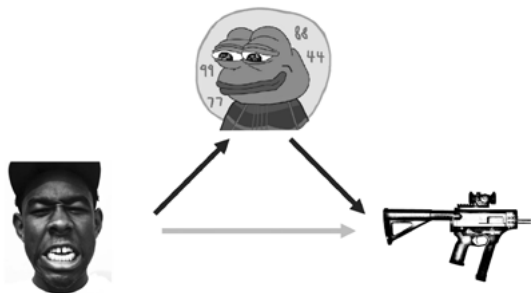
The way we pursue our stated or intended object reveals our relationship to the mediator. This should not be a surprise. Oswald Spengler reminds us that it's always this way in history. Napoleon thought of himself as akin

to Charlemagne. Petrarch thought of himself as Cicero. Cecil Rhodes, the organizer of British South Africa, had a custom volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon and thought of himself as Emperor Hadrian.

In the example of Jstark and the FGC-9, his desire, his stated purpose and his accomplishment was in *perfecting the promise* of 3D printed guns. He delivered the *first fulfillment* of the promise of 3D printed guns. The documentation of FGC-9 says, "Liberator is proof-of-concept, FGC-9 is proof-of-carbon." This is a beautiful reinstatement of his purpose.

His ability to fulfill the FGC-9 was in recognizing the promise that was outlined for him in the work of Defense Distributed. You could say his work was *mediated by* Defense Distributed. It was by following his understanding of the intended concept of the Liberator and making that real in his mind that he accomplished the FGC-9 in the terms that he did.
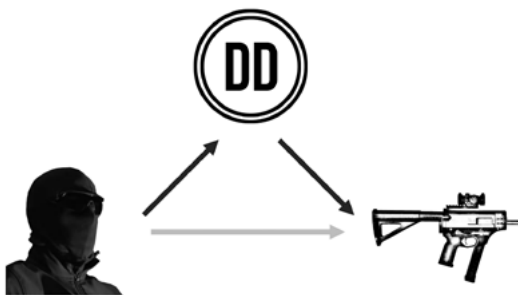
Girard says there are heroes of external mediation. It doesn't really matter what external mediation is but it's about your distance to the mediator. External mediation is: "I'm Don Quixote, I recognize I want to be like Amadís de Gaula." I know who I'm copying and I'm telling you who. Jstark says, "Defense Distributed tried to do this thing with Liberator — I'm trying to do the same thing." So knew what he was doing. He told you why. This is external mediation.
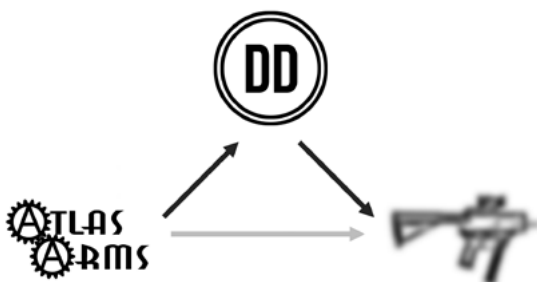
As there are heroes of external mediation there are also victims of internal mediation. I'd like to illustrate a victim of internal mediation — this is fatherly instruction, remember — with the example of Atlas Arms.

Maybe not many people have heard of Atlas Arms. That's okay. You probably will. Atlas Arms is a company, an organization and a group of people mediated by the experience and example of Defense Distributed and ostensibly trying to accomplish a similar goal, which is something like gun CAD online or in their case, technical data for ammunition

and other related projects. This is all in the same spirit of Open Source and defeating or upsetting the institutions.

How do they do this? There are obvious, immediate similarities with Defense Distributed. Girard tells us that in examples of mediation, the external imitations can be startling. Atlas Arms chooses to be an alliterative company (AA, DD). They are a non-profit. They use research from their work to commercially fund additional research. They hope to fight the ATF. A lot of similarities to the work of Defense Distributed.

Not a surprise. It's directly mediated. No big deal. But Girard says victims of internal mediation actually lose focus on the object that they're pursuing. They get lost. Let's say four or five years go by and you're not accomplishing the purpose of your project. You begin to interpret your mediator as a rival that is actually trying to thwart you — some kind of evil god who is actually preventing you from accomplishing your goal.

This is an example tweet from Austin Jones to Zero Hedge:

> *If you ever do a story about anything we do at Atlas Arms,*
> *Cody Wilson didn't have a jack crap to do with it and*
> *I don't want to see his name in the article. It doesn't belong*
> *there. Stop giving credit to politicians and actors.*

Austin doesn't just deny the role of the mediator. He goes a statement beyond. He says Cody Wilson and Defense Distributed — they didn't even do anything.

Girard says a couple of things which can be exemplified in this tweet. First, Austin's kind of living off his inheritance already. He's talking to Zero Hedge about an article about his work which doesn't exist yet. He's already taking out lines of credit on things he hasn't done. He lives in a diverted, deviated transcendence where he's obviously more pure and more earnest in his attempts to accomplish the purposes of Defense Distributed.

Defense Distributed itself is a perverted, fallen thing. In fact, Defense Distributed is just pretending, an actor and an encumbrance, not just to him — Austin Jones, Atlas Arms — but to everyone in the space. There's a negative divinity given to the mediator in Girard. *We are the devil.*

You can look at the history of Atlas Arms as a four or five year project of self-display where nothing really gets published or commercially developed but Atlas Arms becomes better and better at being a better version of Defense Distributed — at least in terms of presentation, purpose and purity. What a joy it is to read a live blog on how pure a company is in an industry of fakes.
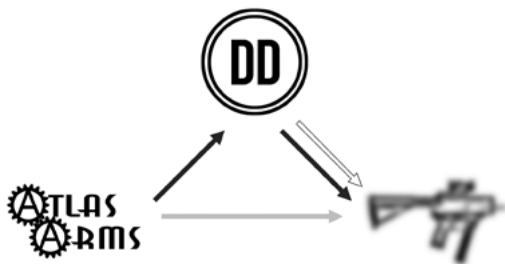
The white arrow above shows that victims of internal mediation are often just trying to copy the *desires of the mediator*, not really trying to accomplish the intended or stated object of that desire.

Why do I bring all this up? Because I believe this is a source of *ressentiment* and Friedrich Schelling's modern feelings in our community. It's easy to inhabit a certain persona of the 3D gun printer, freedom technology rebel or Bitcoin privacy extremist. It's easy to inhabit that persona and then purity spiral and pretend that you have a real metaphysical autonomy that isn't mediated or influenced by anyone and you are the *literal Pope* of some particular cypherpunk ideology. This idea of metaphysical autonomy is worth pointing out. Maybe a way out of this Nietzschean confusion can be found using the example of Atlas Arms.

This deviated transcendence, this spoliation, this encountering of impotent hatred and rage at your inability to accomplish your stated purpose while you're being mediated by something like Defense Distributed leads to strange episodes of *stolen valor*. I mean this very dearly, because remember, the purpose of this text is the Death Athletic and introducing euthanasia and hazard to your life, which is something deeper and symbolic. With this in mind, these episodes become really meaningful.

Another example is a newsletter update that Atlas Arms sent to donors. He says, "Look, I've got an open source manual that I'm writing and it's got everything in it. It's gonna have all the technical data, the instructions, all the

stuff. It's going to be really great but I'm sorry, I can't share it with you because we're a unique target in this space. In fact, even more so than our 3D printed brothers. And if you know anything about 3D printed guns, the files are actually still claimed to be regulated by the feds. I mean, it's true that it is a crime to share 3D printed guns files on the internet in certain ways."

Austin is saying, "We're *even more of a target* than our brothers in 3D printing. This is some *toxic stuff* here. It's very dangerous what we're doing. We're up on the wire. We're tightrope walking. We're going to share the manual with you, I promise. But, look, just give me a minute, because, you know, federal and state laws."

The problem here is that this is a lie. This is not true. 734.7c EAR says the only files that can't be shared on the internet or disclosed to the public domain are *software and technical data for firearms, firearm frames and receivers*. I've got good news for you, Atlas Arms: we fought your battle for you and we won. You can share your stuff today, you can share your stuff tomorrow.

We get the sense that there's a certain fear from Altas Arms about objective mediocrity *or whatever*. We know that it's better to have the excuse that someone is preventing you from from publishing. *I'm preventing you from publishing.* But just remember, *I'm the actor. I'm the politician.*

I won't mention another episode of stolen valor. It doesn't matter. At least Austin can lead us to the way out of this

trap. We are stuck in quicksand when we're a victim of internal mediation. Girard says, "we can make men our gods or we can make God our God." This is one of the easiest ways out of the mediation trap. We can actually choose a real divine mediator or we can pretend that men are gods and suffer the consequences.

This perfect dilemma is represented in the self-display of Atlas Arms. It's simultaneously a Randian project about heroes, intense individualism and nostalgia for the desert (which by the way, usually conceals a morbid concern for the other) while at the same time Austin is a professed Christian. Let's choose Christianity on this one and forget Ayn Rand. Christianity, God the architect, helps you more.

03 ▪ Acrobatics

Finally let's get to technique. Why did I go through that entire episode with you? Because I think if we have a divine mediator and we're contemplating the deepest questions of pain, death and death performance, then we have the required combination to really perform.

It's okay that the 3D printed gun space has become manifold. Just like in Bitcoin, there are many lifestyle brands. There are people that just trade on the aesthetics or oeuvre. That's great, but I still think there's a higher practice. There's still something that can be done and really *wow* people. It's about involving your death and the concepts that I'm talking about here today. Jstark is,

of course, the ultimate example. Let's not forget Yoshitomo Imura who paid the price too.

Using the example of Christianity and divine mediation, we can begin with the most Christian Christian himself, Christ crucified. What is the passion about? Well, a lot of things depending on your perspective. What's most interesting to me for the purpose of the Death Athletic and explaining this agonist ethos to you — which I swear to God I'm going to do — is the account in John 19:30.

In Luke and Mark, Christ is on the cross, he cries out, he dies. In Matthew he says, "Father, I give up my spirit to you." This is almost the statement that we're looking for. In John the addition is very interesting. In John he says, "Consummatum Est" in Latin or as we know it in English, Christ says, "It is finished."

That addition takes Christ crucified from a chance victim of Judeo-Roman politics — twice humiliated, given the worst state punishment possible, a complete humiliated sacrifice — that addition: "It is finished", "Consummatum Est" is a *super ordination of the compulsory*. It says "Ah, of course. According to my plan. According to my Father's plan. This was all foreseen. We've done it." It's an *athletic statement*.

John, according to Sloterdijk, has athleticized the passion. He has essentially said something like, "Mission accomplished." That statement, that *subordination of the circumstances*, literally changes history and reorganizes the Western nar-

rative. This is one of the greatest statements possible. How did he do it from a position of ultimate weakness and humiliation? This is the core of the Death Athletic, the core of death performance.

Christian Death Athletics reaches its deepest clarity in Tertullian of Carthage. Tertullian writes in his letters to the martyrs suffering under Severus, to those Christians thrown to the lions, "Your prison is a training ground. If slaves and gladiators are going to compete for perishable crowns, how much more should your performance be when you know you're competing for an eternal one?"

This pep talk is so deep and and wide that I think it's worth mentioning in the context of Death Athletic. It is the ultimate statement of performance in the face of not just the impossible but the surely *terminal*.

I don't have to keep this religious.[4] The other primal death scene in Old Europe is the death of Socrates. It's the same thing here. Why is this such a momentous occasion in all of thought and philosophy? It's because through his wisdom the old man uses his ability to appropriate the compulsory and unjust death sentence which everyone is weeping about. He *uses it* and cooperates with the authorities to such a degree that it's like *he organized the passion-play himself*.

In the dialogue "Crito" he says, "I hear the voice of the gods. The laws are talking to me. I know what I must do. I have to follow this path." It's the same thing. It is the Death

Athletic ethos. He used his skill to *subordinate the voluntary over the compulsory*.

This is incredible technique. Now we see the sophistication of the Yes Chad meme at a deeper level.

Yes.

What does Yes Chad mean? Is it just negation? Is it just happy circumstance? No, I think there's a much deeper thing here. I think it's about the subordination of the voluntary over the compulsory or the accidental. A primary technique of Defense Distributed — politicians, performers anonymous.

Insert whatever authority you want. The ATF. New Jersey. The State Department. I do not care. I do not care what arbitrary thing, what rule, what law, what guidance, or in the ATF case what "secret guidance" they will deploy. We say *yes*. We say *of course. It's all going according to our plan.*
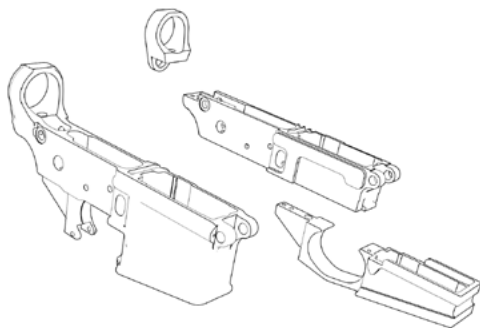
The most recent example from Defense Distributed is the zero percent receiver. In that episode, it was most important for old man Joe Biden to say, "I solved the ghost gun problem. I've got this new rule. You can't even make a gun from a kit at home anymore. Take that, ya incels."

What do we say? We say *of course, exactly. The fulfillment of the Ghost Gunner project. We've been working at this for years. I can't believe the fools did it. The age of zero percent has begun.*

This is the super ordination of the voluntary over the compulsory. It is the use of ability to integrate the compulsory. This is the core of the Death Athletic ethos.

I'm to the point of death, by the way. I will explain later. But back to Jstark's crossing. Now we're thinking about taking the venture. What does it mean? It means we're pursuing this thing which we know is absurd. I'm not saying freedom is not worth pursuing. I am saying you probably won't see the other shore but you will suspend

tragedy in the beauty of the attempt. The salt on mortality is about defying death and directing the gaze.

In our example alone I have seen the total suspension of belief on the part of the authority. The State Department was stunned. They cannot believe what is happening. They feel like they are trapped in this prison with us. Do you understand? It is this *will*, this agonal ethos which is the difference-maker and that can be taught with the example of 3D printed guns. I think it's worth writing about. I think it honors the death of Jstark. I think it's something very core.

In the interest of disclosure and because I'm always considered to be so *secretive*: here's my road map.

>   *Defense Distributed*
>
>   ◘ *First Amendment*   +++
>   ◘ *Zero percent*   ++
>   ◘ *California*   +

I hope to get any of this done this year. I know I won't because I've been working on that top one for ten fucking years. All that means is recognizing that 3D files are protected by the First Amendment. Is that a meaningful thing to do? Cody, didn't you say that pursuit of the political is super gay or something? That's not the point. I'm teaching the agonal ethos. I know it's strictly speaking absurd and impossible for the Supreme Court or the Federal Government to recognize that the First Amendment protects 3D printed gun files.

What I'm saying is *making that improbable attempt* and *accidentally conquering it* is such a startling, disturbing thing for the orders that be that it literally scrambles the coordinates of the possible. It's worth doing for that reason alone. The pursuit of it literally suspends the tragedy that is otherwise happening. In the shadow cone of the large contest with the State Department for the First Amendment recognition of our files, we have forestalled that authority's other pretenses. They were all bound up in the shadow cone of this event. Our entire culture has grown up in the shadow of this stupid high wire performance with a 3D printed gun First Amendment conversation. It's worth doing for that reason alone.

I've already mentioned the zero percent. I think it's worth doing. Why? Because there's a similar contest there about the nature of _what is a gun? What is the literal definition of a gun?_ If I'm allowed the chance to monkey around with that I don't think authorities are even prepared for the consequences. I think it's worth pursuing for that reason.

Finally, California. They're always doing such cool things in California. What a great laboratory for democracy, especially regulations of gun parts. A new regime begins in California this summer for precursor parts and other things. I'm told that they plan to ban our machine the Ghost Gunner. Amazing. I would love to be the first person to have a standing to argue about the right to make guns and gun parts.

The point is, I almost know I can't accomplish any of these things. Who can even expect to participate in a ten year federal battle? I've almost died twice on the way. I pursue these things in a Nietzschean, Jüngerian sense, knowing I will likely perish in the attempt. I think that's the example of Jstark. I think that's the example of the Death Athletic.

But I swear to god dude, if I get that First Amendment win, you know what I'm going to do? I'm not going to get on Twitter or email Zero Hedge or whatever and bitch about how hard it is that nobody recognizes my shit. I'm going to take a fucking bow and say, *well, of course. We always knew it was going to happen. It was according to our plan. For our kind, this is nothing.*

∎ Notes

1 Peter Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 2009.
2 *Ibid*
3 Quite an injunction with that addition.
4 Thanks to Austin Jones for giving us the inspiration.

This is a transcript of a talk by Wilson given at Bear Arms N' Bitcoin conference, April 9th 2022. It has been lightly edited. A video of the talk can be found at: `https://www.yewtu.be/watch?v=LVi9m65lHGc`

NECROPRIMITIVISM RISING

Wassim Z. Alsindi

What is the price of anarchy in Bitcoin's agora? Here follows an attempt to examine the desires, ideologies and eschatologies that human adherents project onto the decentralised and faceless hydra that is Bitcoin. This text is a heavily abridged version of a draft chapter for a forthcoming book on the topic of proof-of-work and as such is broad in scope but light in exposition. Causa latet, vis est notissima.

In The State-Machine of Nature

A reified sacrifice to the Networked Gods.
Global consensus is the crowning achievement of the
[Universe.
A new bedrock of veridicality $WE must defend at all
costs. The means justify the ends, because there is no end.

— *The Necroprimitivist Manifesto Pt.1*, 0x Salon, 2021.

In the midst of carbon market shock-waves caused by minor disruptions to global fuel flows, it seems uncontroversial to note that we — as humans, on Earth, in 2023 CE — exist in a paradigm of energy scarcity. We rely on indirect

and direct sources of the Sun's energy to power our bodily metabolisms as well as to drive the machinery of modern society. In the position of *FOMO Sapiens* as global apex predator, we have taken the logics of extraction and exploitation to their grotesque *necroeconomic* apotheoses. At today's zenith of neoliberal deterritorialisation, all that can be marketised — including human and animal life — will inevitably fall under the speculative gaze of financial capital. From colonial misadventures to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now abundantly clear that the "worth" that public institutions and private corporations ascribe to individual lives has always been an integral (if oft-hidden) part of the contemporary capitalist *nation-state-machine*.

Photosynthetic plants, which fix atmospheric carbon dioxide into sugars using solar visible light, are both burnt (for warmth) and consumed (for sustenance) by animals, which in turn are eaten by humans. The anaerobic decomposition of ancient life gives rise, over geological timescales, to the hydrocarbon "fossil" fuels of gas, oil and coal. Extraction-combustion continues to supply the majority of the planet's electricity, heating and transportation needs, despite mounting environmental costs. Pollutants entering the atmosphere degrade natural biodiversity, human life expectancy, air, and water quality. Most worrying of all, meteorological and seismic patterns are becoming less predictable with extreme events increasing in frequency. The implications of ecosystem collapse for political stability, economic productivity, and migration are on a scale largely beyond comprehension compared to today's "crises."

$THOU Shalt Not Covet
$THY Neighbour's Clocks

In the name of the Network, the Node, and the Holy Secret.
Let there be light, propagated throughout $MY holy empire.
Like pure Chronos, touching clear Aeon.
Merkle pyramids in the sky.
$YOU are the new pharaohs, and $I am your embalmer.
Bathe in the cosmystical seas of $MY transcendental
                              [tide machine.

— *The Necroprimitivist Manifesto Pt.2*, 0x Salon, 2023.

Having set the scene in this planetary moment, enter
Bitcoin, cryptocurrency and proof-of-work in early 2009.
Cryptocurrencies are (among other things): communication
networks, scarcity-based economic systems, contingency
attractors, architectures for imaginaries, externality engines
and transcendental time machines. Bitcoin is above all
else an event-ordering system: a distributed network,
the goal of which is to achieve a leaderless consensus
as to the ordinality of a series of occurrences. Bitcoin is
a decentralised timestamping server and the transactions
are simply messages changing the effective balances that
each network participant has access to. These balances
are denominated in the native unit of the system (BTC)
and are used to pay transaction fees to miners and function
as the *de facto* currency with which value is redistributed
amongst the users of the network. Satoshi Nakamoto
themselves used the word "timestamp" fourteen times
in the Bitcoin whitepaper.

A widely replicated, append-only data structure most fittingly referred to as the *timechain* affords a high degree of assurance that the network will continue to respect a particular set of transaction orderings. When these ordinalities are "chained" together with cryptographic functions, they collectively manifest a canonical historicity. A new timekeeping system — indeed, a new kind of time — is made manifest by the timechain. Welcome to the chronaissance. This literal quantum leap in abstract time is divorced from celestial influence and mostly unphased by the increasingly subdivided temporal constructions of modern *Homo Clockonomicus*, in the service of efficiency and productivity. In producing its own temporal regime, Bitcoin marks an *almost* clean break from the outside cycles of calendar and clock. But this is not the end of the story: there is no happily ever after on the timechain. As Bitcoin's usage increased over the years, it became apparent that protocol-mandated network specifications gave rise to technical, socio-political, ecological, and economic constraints unintended by the system's design. As a result, the narrative imaginaries that have been projected onto the cryptographic *tabula rasa* of Bitcoin by observers, acolytes, and critics have consequently mutated over time. What were once dreams of mutualistic and collective utopias are now rather more mercantile, exclusionary, primitive, and individualistic visions like "free speech money" or "the currency of enemies."

An Engine of Indifference

> *The Bitcoin ledger is a collective technofinancial hallucination, where capital and energy, deployed over time, create reality.*
>
> **—** *Bitcointingency*, Weird Economies, 2022.

Bitcoin is an algorithmically-materialised instantiation of capital as power, in both an energetic and political sense. The network reaches agreement on the state of its accounting ledger in a leaderless manner through a mechanism known as proof-of-work, which incentivises the defence of the system — and, by implication, its value proposition — through a computational activity referred to as mining or hashing. Proof-of-work is primarily a Sybil-resistance mechanism, preventing malicious actors from flooding the network with spam by making block creation costly. However, proof-of-work is insensitive to its externalities; in addition to the much-lauded property of *censorship-resistance*, Bitcoin also exhibits *sensorship-resistance*. As a consequence of the difficulty adjustment feedback mechanism that regulates the rhythm of network events, proof-of-work has an insatiable-by-design desire for energy with no capability to discriminate between power sources. As such, Bitcoin can be thought of as an *indifference engine*.

> *The mechano-vampiric paradigm of proof-of-work is a growing threat to planetary ecology. The Faustian reality of proof-of-work is that Bitcoin exists in competition with natural life for the harvestable energy this side of the Sun*

Cryptocurrencies employing Bitcoin-style proof-of-work are eternally contingent systems as network participants can always expend more effort to rewrite the priorly canonical history. This is, in essence, determinacy-as-a-service: certainty comes at a price that only few can truly pay as it must be paid in perpetuity. The adage "timechains don't pivot, they fork" also serves as a reminder that any movement to "upgrade" the Bitcoin protocol also risks schismogenesis, which can rapidly escalate from dissenting factions into full-blown network secession. It is the change-resistance of both protocol and timechain historicities that leads to a succinct encapsulation of the titular concept of *necroprimitivism*, in advance of a more substantive discussion to be found later in this text. This necroprimitive hot take proceeds as follows, though a mutation of the "Capitalist Realism" *soundbyte* via Mark Fisher by way of Frederic Jameson and Slavoj Žižek: it is more *prophetable* to imagine an end to the world than a change to Bitcoin's consensus mechanism. Despite being a profoundly suboptimal system, the Bitcoin network's resilience and reliability has given it the nickname of the cockroach of money. There is no off switch on a decentralised network and by consequence the mining never stops. Bitcoin mediates a zero-sum game between capital and ecology and proof-of-work is the Google Death Drive: a distributed system collating and archiving history as it poisons its surroundings. As a communication system,

the speed of light provides a hard limit on the sphere of influence of a terrestrially-centred synchronous network. Unless humanity develops a reliable and limitless source of energy on Earth, Bitcoin — currently the world's fastest-growing energy consumer — will be in competition with natural life for the foreseeable future as it incentivises and encourages the deployment of additional power generation of any type.

No Gods, No Master(node)s

Behold $MY Distributed Ledger Theologies.
$I am the Code, the Law.
The Slow Chancellation of the Future.
Contagion The Baptist.
Dice ex nihilo. Vita negativa. Ecce HOMOlogy.
$MY Book of Contingenesis: stasis as a form of grace.
$MY Holy Coinmunion. Transaction as transubstantiation.
$MY hashes as sacrament.

— *The Necroprimitivist Manifesto Pt.2*, 0x Salon, 2023.

Bitcoin is, in many senses, a literal exemplification of incarnation *via* algorithmic ritual. Code made object, instantiated through cryptography, game theory and thermodynamics. Bitcoin's "No Gods, No Masters, Only Rules" promises "code is law" as a guiding principle heralding the primacy, legitimacy and binding outcomes of algorithmic logic over the bureaucracies and monetary regimes of nation-states and central banks. Underneath the surface however, there is a nascent but incipient machine-faithful community, powered by eschatological imperatives and teleological drives. These are, after all, *socio*-technical systems.

The libertarian streak that runs through Bitcoin necessitates that everything has a price. To Bitcoiners, this is an improvement over trusted parties and authorities. *What is the price of anarchy in Bitcoin's agora and in what ways does this price become due?* In such a complex system, the groups of stakeholder constituents who have their "hands on the pumps" are at a clear advantage to those without insider sway. In Bitcoin, this is very much the case for the developers and miners. The developers — as the ordained priests in this particular *Open-Source Cathedral* — in essence steward the trajectory of the canonical software client's code and therefore, by implication, the protocol, network and asset. The miners — or more precisely, each miner or pool of miners that finds canonised blocks one-by-one — ultimately decide what goes into the permanent ledger record. In effect, they choose who can and who can't transact in a timely manner, which upgrades get "approval signals" and which do not. A central bank without

a government is an apt encapsulation of what many Bitcoiners think of the network — the epithet "be your own bank" is very well-worn by now.

> *The Church and The Network,*
> *Zeal and Time,*
> *Death and Money,*
> *All sides of the same Coin.*
>
> **—** *The Black Hole of Money*, 0x Salon, 2022.
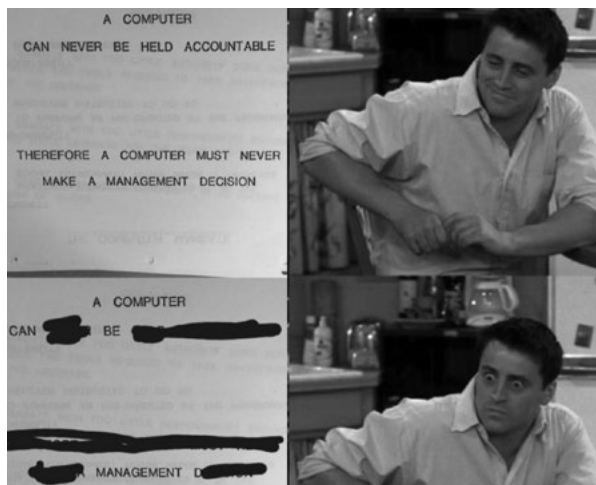
Though the system is not truly autonomous, Bitcoin's faithful are economically incentivised and ideologically motivated to defend the continuity of the network from technical, economic and social "attacks." Consequently, conservatism is encoded as an ideological default within the developmental philosophy of the protocol

Necroprimitivism Rising

and network. As a result of Bitcoin's system architecture, it is almost impossible to halt or destroy the network and its ledger. In combination with the neo-traditionalist zeal of its acolytes, Bitcoin's protocol-enshrined escalation in its energy requirements and resistance to change poses an existential risk to life on Earth. To hasten the collapse so as to better "serve the coin" is *utmost necroprimitive*.

Necroprimitivism Rising

There is no a priori nature.
Nature is a construct.
Nature is zero-sum.
Nature is not fair.
Nature brings pain and suffering.
Nature is death.
If nature is unjust, destroy nature.

— The Necroprimitivist Manifesto Pt.I, 0x Salon, 2021.

Here we shall introduce two compound terms, in order to work towards an embryonic theory of necroprimitivism: *petro-masculinity* and *thermo-Austrianism*. The aforementioned indifference of the Bitcoin network to its environs, as argued in this article, translates into a human indifference engendered in the network's adherents. The techno-libertarian tendency towards rugged individualism in the minds of Bitcoiners carries echoes of petro-masculinity: a patriarchal, post-scarcity *fauxtopian* climate-denial imaginary, which is consistent with the "techno-lumberjack" culture and demographics of the Bitcoin developer and user stakeholder

groups. The notion of petro-masculinity also helps to rationalise the wanton ideologisation around Bitcoin, and hence the polarisation of discourse around Bitcoin's possible futures. It is hard enough (by design) to change Bitcoin's course, even in cases of supposedly uncontroversial improvements, without this added layer of mob resistance. *Ossification and the petriarchy: a dance as old as time?* For necroprimitivists, coal is law.

> *As the planet warms, new authoritarian movements in the West are embracing a toxic combination of climate denial, racism and misogyny. Petro-masculinity appreciates the historic role of fossil fuel systems in buttressing white patriarchal rule as anxieties aroused by the Anthropocene augment desires for authoritarianism. Petro-masculinity suggests that fossil fuels mean more than profit; they contribute to making identities. Through a psycho-political reading of authoritarianism, fossil fuel use can function as a violent reactionary practice.*
>
> — Cara Daggett, "Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire" (edited) *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 2018

Taking a cue from the "Austrian School of Economics" as characterised by Friedrich Hayek, Carl Menger, Milton Friedman, Murray Rothbard and others, Bitcoin's community of libertarian would-be monetarists likewise adopts a very conservative view on the philosophy of value and exchange. Informed by Aristotle and William Stanley Jevons, and cloaked in pseudo-objective concepts and lingo, the Austrian School considered that for objects to be enduringly usable in trading systems, they must be

scarce and of limited supply. Bitcoin has some similarities with traditional monetary commodities that were chiefly precious metals — difficulty of production, limited availability, facile authentication — despite rather different bases of scarcity. Bitcoin enforces algorithmic, universal scarcity *via* the "costly" thermoeconomic process of calculating otherwise useless cryptographic hashes: the Bitcoin believers' pseudo-monetary thermo-Austrian philosophy corresponds to a materialist logic of scarcity applied within a virtual environment that is otherwise ideally suited to logics of abundance.

> *Only coal is capable of getting us out of this economic mess. #LearnToCoal It is possible that coal power is the best power generation of all for the health of our natural environment. Should we rename "coal power plant" to "forest fertilizer plant"? People who hate coal also hate forests because we need to use coal to save our big, beautiful forests! Never let anyone talk fiat about coal, slap them!!*
>
> — Steve Barbour (@SGBarbour), Twitter, December 2022.

These tweets represent a selection of pro-Bitcoin and anti-climate talking points that a Bitcoin personality regularly offers forth in the service of promoting their fossil fuel-powered mining enterprise.

The snarled root of *necroprimitivism* appears to arise from a nihilistic union of the *NP-hard* commodity-money belief of thermo-Austrianism, the abundance framework and *petriarchial logics* of petro-masculinity, and the *immutable whitepaperism* and computationalist absolutism of

(protocol-)code-as(-network)-law. Informed both by Bitcoin's defensive network architecture, with strict thermodynamic, economic and cryptographic boundaries between inside and outside and the exclusionary logics of scarcity at its foundation, a scorched earth imaginary pervades the worldview of its acolytes. Such is the (oft blind) fervour of believers that Bitcoin may be conceived of as an asset wrapped in an ideology, promising *trustless salvation*, to quote Justin Clemens. The faithful *Bitliever* necroprimitive adherent is so focussed on ossification, immutability, and purity that it would tolerate (or favour, even) ecological collapse on Earth as a by-product of Bitcoin getting its thermoeconomic dues.

Necroprimitivist Priest   5

Artifact Creature

↻ Tap all lands controlled by target player.

"For now there is only thermotechnics,
decentralised cosmic horror.
A zero-sum machine of fire, sand and pressure,
Synthesising scorched-earth realities.
The heat death of the Universe passes by as we
languish in Plato's cave."
Satoshi Wept

0/2

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Horologium Eschatologiae

Necrosetta Stones are read,
Boiling oceans are blue.
To halt the technocapital singularity,
You'll need more than a CPU.

— *The Necroprimitivist Manifesto Pt.1*, 0x Salon, 2021.

Owing to the Bitcoin network's socio-technical resilience — replicated ledger, economic incentives to defend, the ideological purity of its adherents — and the inability to truly kill a blockchain-based system — zombie chains can always be reanimated and attempts to change parameters result in network schisms *via* forks — there seems no way to stop Bitcoin from the outside. We — lifeforms of planet Earth — must find ways to *Curb Their Malthusiasm*, to dissuade necroprimitivists away from *Coal-Is-Law* and a hothouse Earth. It is through the *indifference and repetition*

of proof-of-work that we can see the resolute inhumanity of the Bitcoin system, its own Nietzschean moment: an *infernal return.* Is Bitcoin *Nakamoto's Basilisk,* an *Immaculate Misconception* destined to kill all planetary life, or die trying? To paraphrase Thomas Hobbes: *in the state-machine of Nature, nothing will be lost. Artificial life is nasty, brutish, and short.*

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EXPLAIN THE DARK FOREST OR I WILL FUCKING KILL YOU

Rachel-Rose O'Leary

Anoir agus aniar agus adtuaiḋ agus andeas, ó gaċ áird
as a séideann gaoṫ, ar gaċ raon aerḋa dá leanann éan,
tángadar ag freagairt na coinne: síol daraċ, síol beiṫe,
síol iubair, síol sailiġe, síol caorṫainn, síol cuilinn, síol
an ġiúis ġairḃ Ċaeḋealaiġ. Agus d'ḟás gaċ síol díob ina
ċrann, agus do ġein gaċ crann de réir a ċinéil, gur éiriġ
na homnaí ur-árda an-troma agus na beiṫe breaġṫa
breac-ṡolusṁara agus gur ḟoirḃiġ cruaiḋ-ċuileann
agus giús Ċaeḋealaċ agus gaċ crann de ċrannaiḃ na
Coille de réir a aimsire. Ba ċlos annsin i n-uagneas an
ḟásaiġ ceol ur-nuaḋ ag freagairt sean-ċeoil na fairrge,
.i. Cláirseaċ na Coille ag seinnm go fíor-ḃinn fíor-ċuṁaċ
ar mbaint a dtéad do ṁéaraiḃ do-ḟeicseana na gaoiṫe.

Ba ċlos an ceol sin ar fud na dítreiḃe dá ḟuagairt
d'il– ċiniḋeaċaiḃ an aeir agus na talṁan go raiḃ port
dídin agus árus coṁnaiḋṫe dóiḃ fá sgáṫ duilleaḃair
na hóg-Ċoille. Ḋ'ḟreagradar an ċoṁġairm.

From east and west and north and south, from every airt from which a wind blows, by every aerial path that bird follows, they came answering their tryst: seed of the oak, seed of the birch, seed of the yew, seed of the sally, seed of the rowan, seed of the holly, seed of the rugged Irish larch. And each seed of them grew into a tree, and each tree produced after its kind, until there rose the towering ponderous oaks and the lovely dappled-lightsome birches, and until hard holly and Irish larch waxed strong, and every tree of the trees and the wood according to its season. Then was heard in the loneliness of the desert a new music answering the ancient music of the sea, to wit, the Harp of the Wood playing very sweetly, very sadly, whenever its strings were plucked by the invisible fingers of the wind.

That music was heard throughout the wilds proclaiming to the many tribes of the air and the earth that there was a haven of refuge and a dwelling place for them in the shade of the foliage of the young Wood. They answered the summons.[1]

I ▪ Becoming-desert

⓵ The codification of paganism in Ireland corresponded with its death. This is embodied by the *Senchas Már*, a document of indigenous Irish law compiled by anonymous monks in the seventh century, some three hundred years after the arrival of Christianity to Ireland.

The *Senchas Már* is a calcified contact of an ancient oral tradition with Christianity. The traditional poetic law was constructed around sacred geometries (the number three, the number seven, multiples of three and seven) and orally maintained by druids. In the Christian-codified version poetic geometries remain, but all references to pre-Christian spirituality have been erased.

The *Senchas Már* begins with a fictional account of its own origins. St. Patrick calls for an assembly at Tara to purify the pagan law, referred to as the "law of nature."[2] Three kings, three bishops and three druids (referred to as poets) are appointed to transcribe the indigenous code while censoring pagan passages.

The effort is presented as follows:

> *Whatever did not go against God's word in the law of scripture and in the New Testament, or against the consciences of the faithful, was fixed in the system of judgement... The whole law of nature was acceptable, save (in what concerns) the faith and its proper dues, and the knitting together of church and kingdom. So that is the* Senchas Már.[3]

In the foreword, poets are represented as an elite legal institution that mediated the pagan law of nature and spoke "in dark tongues."[5] The passing of power from druids to monks is described as a transition from darkness into light: "After Patrick's coming, all kinds of authoritative speech is subject to the possessors of the *white language* i.e. of the scriptures."[6]

The reference to "dark tongues" as distinct from a "white language" has been used by as evidence that the druids practiced encrypted speech. Scholars have argued that the druids maintained a culture of secrecy so strong that it extended to a spiritual prohibition or *geas* against writing in general. The alleged *geas* has been used to explain the complete absence of surviving literature from the pagan period.

Counter evidence to this exists. In a biography, St. Patrick is described destroying druidic books. Whether by choice or by sabotage, the pre-Christian period in Ireland is irreversibly encrypted. The *Senchas Már*, a censored view of the

ancient culture, is itself only a partial document.
The original *Senchas Már* has been lost or destroyed.

■

2 At the time the *Senchas Már* was compiled, Ireland was covered by a rich tapestry of rain forest and was densely populated with animals. The forests were protected by the legal system defined in the *Senchas Már*: a legacy of the pagan era that held trees as sacred.

A patchwork of tribes observed the law and amended it using the pagan institution of *assemblies*. The laws, language and forests of Ireland defined the contours of a tribal culture.

Christianity modified this culture but did not destroy it. The first major shock was the Norman conquest in the twelfth century that claimed most of the territory.

In the wake of the invasion, the forest became a breeding ground for guerilla resistance. The *Cethern Coille* (rough translation: forest-forces) wore light garments and launched hit-and-run attacks from the undergrowth. The natural encryption of the forest functioned as a force-multiplier, giving a disproportionate advantage to the *Cethern Coille*.

By the late Middle Ages traces of the invasion were nearly entirely erased. The new settlers were transformed and absorbed by the tribal patchwork. This period of cultural re-foresting has been referred to as the first *Gaelic Revival*.

Devastation recommenced in the sixteenth century. The Cromwellian invasion used scorched earth-strategies to subdue the Irish population. This included tree-felling and the mass slaughtering of animals. The conquest sparked multiple famines and a centuries-long extinction process that resulted in the mass death of people, animals, forests, language and the law.

The environmental devastation is immortalized in a 1710 song, Lament for Kilcash:

> *A mist on the boughs is descending*
> *neither daylight nor sun can clear.*
> *A stain from the sky is descending*
> *and the waters receding away.*
> *No hazel nor holly nor berry*
> *but boulders and bear stone heaps,*
> *not a branch in our neighbourly haggard,*
> *and the game all scattered and gone.*[7]

History remains only in fragments. The Irish language itself bears traces of this extinction. The true name for the moon, a central deity in pre-Christian Ireland, has been lost in time. It is only known obliquely through a euphemism as *gealach* meaning "brightness."[8]

■

[3] Faced with extinction, the surviving culture was forced underground. Generations of agrarian *secret societies* like the Oak Boys used guerilla tactics to terrorize British rule.

These efforts eventually culminated in a revolution.

The cultural force behind the revolution is what is known as the second *Gaelic Revival* movement. The first Gaelic Revival (1250-1400) had been compelled into being by the sheer potency of Celtic culture. The second Gaelic Revival (1880-1920) was assembled from scattered and falsified fragments of a broken culture: synthesized into existence from near-zero.

A leading figure of the second Gaelic Revival movement was Pádraig Pearse. He founded a school for boys, St. Edna's, that taught myth, language and self-defense.[9] The subject of history was instructed "in close association with the geography and physical features of the country."[10] Literature and legends were discussed outside, in the school's expansive gardens, so that the subjects became entangled with the landscape.

The 1910 prospectus of St. Edna's states: "The History teaching thus merges into Geography teaching, and Geography again into Nature study."[11] Nature study was "an attempt to inspire a real interest in and love for beautiful living things."[12]

The students of St. Edna's learned about weapons and fought alongside Pearse in the Easter Rising of 1916. According to Pearse's diaries, they observed a *geas* or spiritual prohibition that prohibited the killing of wild animals:

Milo McGarry found a fine specimen of a Red Admiral

> *Butterfly in the school garden today. It was dead already*
> *(we are under geasa not to kill wild things) so Arthur*
> *Cole undertook to mount it for the museum.*[13]

At the time of Pearse's school, Ireland's population had just been cut in half by famine. The legal system described in the *Senchas Már* had long been illegal to practice. The land had been transformed from a densely-populated rain forest into a desert with the lowest forest coverage in all of Europe. The language was practically extinct.

Three years prior to his execution for his role in the Easter Rising, Pearse declared that modernity was backward. In a scathing attack on the British education system in Ireland, he wrote that the past was full of "rich and beautiful social organizations" and "self-governing democracies" where "the rich did not grind the poor."[14] Modernity had laid waste to this diversity in all its forms.

He wrote:

> *We preen ourselves quite ridiculously (and unnecessarily)*
> *on our modern progress... In some directions we have*
> *progressed not at all, or we have progressed in a circle.*
> *Perhaps, indeed, all progress on this planet, and on every*
> *planet, is in a circle, just as every line you draw on a globe*
> *is a circle or part of one.*[15]

II ▪ Becoming-forest

[1] The Irish word for secret is *rún*, a word that is a synthesis of seemingly disjointed concepts: secrecy, love, secret love, mystery and resolution. A related word is *comhrún*, which means both *shared secret* and *common purpose*.

In *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Leo Strauss claims philosophy is an art of secrecy — of encrypting and protecting truth. Truth is dangerous and usually met with persecution. Philosophers, according to Strauss, practice *hidden writing*.

Strauss argues that philosophers employ two main information-hiding strategies. One is esoteric writing. Esoteric writing can only be decrypted by the possessor of a secret language: a *cipher* shared only with the initiated. Esoteric writing excludes the non-initiated from engaging in philosophy — it is *vertical encryption*.

In critique of esoteric writing, Strauss argued for a form of literary encryption in which the cipher is shared transparently with the reader, a *horizontal encryption* that he called "exoteric."[16] Exoteric books do not require initiation. The secrets of the texts are revealed to whoever is studious enough to search for them.

The books of Abdullah Öcalan are an exoteric prophesy disguised as a work of history. Öcalan authored a five-part manifesto from a prison island off the coast of Turkey, where he has been imprisoned since 1999. The original

language of the books is Turkish. Of the five-part manifesto, only three have been translated into English.

Written in extreme conditions of protracted solitary confinement, the books speak in several voices at once. They are authored to communicate with multiple parties: the Turkish state, the European Court of Human Rights and his most argent followers. At their centre, the works express a *comhrún*: a collective secret and common purpose that has sparked revolutions.

The books contain an intellectual elaboration of a strategic shíft within the PKK, the Kurdish guerrilla movement founded by Öcalan. Originally focused on establishing a Kurdish nation-state, the PKK changed strategy in the 2000s. The PKK's new directive was to transcend the nation-state paradigm through what Öcalan calls "democratic modernity."[17]

In the third book *The Sociology of Freedom*, Öcalan describes democratic modernity as follows:

> *Each community, ethnicity, culture, religious community, intellectual movement, economic unit, etc. can structure and express itself autonomously as a political unit... Every selfhood (kendilik), from local to global, has the opportunity to form a confederation.*[18]

Here, Öcalan adopts the Turkish word *kendilik* to describe the basic political unit of democratic modernity. Kurmanji is the dialect of Kurdish that is spoken in Rojava, Syrian

Kurdistan. The Kurmanji word for kendilik relies on letters that were illegal in Turkey at the time this book was authored: *x* and *w*.

The deeper meaning of the passage only unfolds when translated. Kendilik in Kurmanji is *xwebûn*: from *xwe* meaning *self* and *bûn* which means both *being* and *to become*.

■

2 *The Sociology of Freedom* begins with a reflection on freedom. Freedom manifests as "pluralization, diversification and differentiation."[19] Differentiation echoes fractally across all spheres of nature. Speciation is an expression of freedom. Human societies decouple and differentiate where freedom flows.

Freedom generates what Öcalan calls "moral and political society."[20] He defines morality as "the solidified state of freedom, the tradition of freedom, or the *code of freedom.*"[21] He defines politics as the *articulation* of morality — "the language of democratic modernity" and "the art of freedom."[22]

Freedom is the source of what Ocalan calls "moral and political society."[21] Morality is "the solidified state of freedom, the tradition of freedom, or the *code of freedom.*"[22] Politics is the articulation of morality, it is "the language of democratic modernity" and "the art of freedom."[23]

For Öcalan, free society is both moral and political. Morality corresponds to a society's ability to *create new values* —

politics to the ability to put those values into practice. Morality is the *being* of a society. Politics is how it *becomes*.

The nation-state is corrosive to society's morality and politics. It dominates society and takes away its ability to differentiate — to create values and put values into practice. Thus, the revolutionary objective is to restore moral and political society:

> *The task of revolutionaries cannot be defined as creating any social model of their making but more correctly as playing a role in contributing to the development of moral and political society.*[24]

Since 1923, the Kurdish nation has been split between four hostile nation-states: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, the people of Rojava (West Kurdistan, Syria) put Öcalan's books into practice, declared de-facto autonomy from the Syrian state and began a process of regenerating moral and political society.

Academies were formed to cultivate *xwenasîn*, meaning self-knowledge: the study of the myths, history and language of the Kurdish people. Local militias were established for *xweparastin*, self-defense, for the protection of the society's freedom. Different aspects of society (such as agriculture, technology and education) formed autonomous political formations, *xwebûn*, that connected with each other in a revolutionary fabric of *democratic confederalism.*

A similar process took place in Bakûr (North Kurdistan, Turkey). In 2015, dozens of Kurdish municipalities declared their autonomy. Thousands were killed and towns were destroyed by the Turkish nation-state in the sieges that followed.

One of these places was Sûr, the historical city centre of Amed (Turkish: Diyarbakir). The 2019 film *The End Will Be Spectacular* depicts the events of the siege and includes a speech by Nûcan, the female guerrilla fighter who led the defense of Sûr. Nûcan describes the concept of *xwebûn* with reference to an apricot tree that grows in her village, known as "xwedayî."

She tells a group of young fighters:

> *Xwedayî abricots... grow without any human intervention. That's why it is called xwedayî, meaning it creates itself, it is itself, [it is] pure.*[24]

Xwe means self. *Dayî* means "given." Xwedayî literally means *self-given*. Figuratively, xwedayî means self-creation, self-generation, self-causation, a force generated by itself. Xwedayî is closely linked to the Kurmanji word for God, *xweda*. In her speech, Nûcan compares *xwebûn*, the self-being and self-becoming of the Kurdish nation, to a self-creating fruit that blossoms from a tree.

■

③ The concept of a *self-creating fruit* has roots in the ancient cultures that preceded contemporary Kurdistan.

Nûcan's anecdote invokes a Mesopotamian hymn first recorded 3000 years ago:

> *Fruit, created of itself, grown to full size, good to look at, with whose beauty one is never sated; womb, giving birth to all, who has settled down in a holy abode.*[25]

The hymn is addressed to the Mesopotamian moon god Nanna. According to scholar of religion Mircae Eliade, the sacred image of a *self-creating fruit* is at the centre of all lunar symbolism.

The moon is one of the most ancient divinities. Evidence of lunar cults go back to the earliest human societies. The sun is worshiped less frequently. Usually, sun worship emerges from hierarchical societies and its essence as a deity relates to death. From Eliade's research however, lunar symbols invoke *reversible extinction* and the reproduction of life.

According to Eliade, something is *lunar* if it has crossed into the underworld and returned. In its looping passage across the night sky, the moon lives and dies, dies and is born again, "inexhaustible in its own regeneration."[26] The new moon represents a passage into the underworld: three days of lunar darkness that are always followed by a return.

The moon dies and is reborn. It death (the new moon) represents a passage into the underworld: three days of lunar darkness that are always followed by a return.

Lunar invocations or "hierophanies" — Eliade's word for manifestations of the sacred — are far-reaching and diverse. The moon's many manifestations compose a network of entangled threads: death and rebirth, rhythm and asymmetry, forests and water, serpents and spirals, witchcraft and prophesy, cycles and weaving. Yet this complex web contains a hidden structure. According to Eliade:

> *If you want to express the multiplicity of lunar hierophanies in a single formula, you may say that they reveal life repeating itself rhythmically.*[27]

The moon is a cipher for *self-regeneration*. The *being* of the moon is *becoming itself*. Eliade: "Becoming is the lunar order of things." The secret centre of all lunar symbols is the ever-decaying, ever-blossoming rhythm of that which returns: the relentless spawning of insects in a landscape devastated by floods, flowers blooming in a forest replenished by fire, an ancient struggle for freedom renewed by self-sacrifice.

According to Eliade, the quintessential lunar myth is the Kali Yuga or "dark age." In Hinduism, the Kali Yuga is the final stage of a series of cycles that constitute history. It is believed to have begun five thousand years ago, roughly the same time state-based civilization emerged in Mesopotamia.

The Kali Yuga is a time of profound chaos and suffering. At its furthest point, the cosmos itself disintegrates. But

the end of the Kali Yuga is the beginning of a new, regenerate era: the dawn of a golden age. For Eliade:

> *It is the same symbolism of larvae in the dark, of hibernation, of seeds bursting apart in the earth so that new forms can appear.*[32]

III ▪ Return

⒈ The foremost thinker of *eternal return* is Friedrich Nietzsche. In *Ecce Homo*, the last book he authored before he died, Nietzsche called eternal return "the highest formula of a Yea-saying to life that can ever be attained."[29]

The eternal return is typically cast as the *eternal return of the same*: the idea that time is a circle and that everything that happens will happen again. However, Gilles Deleuze insists that this is a mischaracterization. In Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze argues that the eternal return is not a closed loop that folds back on itself in static equilibrium. Rather, it is an *open spiral*: the continuous and dynamic unfolding of being, "the being of that which becomes."[30]

The eternal return of the same implies *being* is static — looping and repetitive but essentially unchanging. Yet Deleuze argues that Nietzschean eternal return is the key to unlocking the "thought of pure becoming."[31] Eternal return is a continuous transformation that integrates being as the being of becoming itself:

What is the being of that which becomes, of what which neither starts nor finishes becoming? Returning is the being of that which becomes.[32]

At the heart of the eternal return is a spiraling interplay of forces in complex, dynamic interaction with each other. Forces are the energies that constitute our world. Forces burn with an internal fire that Nietzsche calls "will to power," the "inner will" that directs forces.[33]

The will to power should be confused with the *will that wants power*. The will to power is not capable of desiring anything. It is not human or animal. It does not desire — it burns. The will to power is an inhuman flame that constitutes and generates forces.

Deleuze defines will to power as "differential" and "genetic," terms that correspond to the *quantitative* and *qualitative* differences in forces.[34] Will to power is "differential" because it can by defined by the differences between forces — "genetic" because it generates forces and is the genesis of a force.

The dynamic interplay of forces gives rise to a new kind of philosophical analysis that Nietzsche calls *genealogy*. The task of the genealogist is to decrypt these forces — to trace their origins and interactions, causes and consequences. Through this precise analytical art that Deleuze compares to chemistry, genealogists become *philosophers of the future* — agents of destiny who can *create new values*. Deleuze writes:

> *The genealogist is something of a fortuneteller, the philosopher of the future. He does not foretell a critical peace but wars such as we have never known.*[35]

■

2 Affirmation and negation are examples of *qualities* of the will to power. These qualities become dynamic when manifested within forces. Embodied within a force, affirmation transforms into *becoming-active* — negation into *becoming-reactive*.

Forces are either active or reactive depending on the quality of the will that possesses them. Active forces are affirmative and reproduce difference through affirmation. Reactive forces are negative and tend toward unification and the denial of difference.

A reactive force is an active force that has been separated from what it can do — a society severed from its morals and politics, *being* abstracted from *becoming*. Reactive forces are possessed by a negative will: a will-to-nothingness that denies difference. Reaction is contagious: reactive forces subtract the affirmation from active forces, they "separate active force from what is can do; they take away a part or almost all of its power," turning them reactive.[36]

Fake hierarchy is what Nietzsche calls the triumph of reactive forces over active forces. This is the inverted and tragic hierarchy that flows as a result of reaction. Reactive forces hijack active forces. They "place themselves on high

and entice active force into a trap, replacing masters with slaves who do not stop being slaves."[37]

This *reactive contagion* manifests as an entropic drift toward reaction, a becoming-reactive that is amplified in the eternal return. The eternal return is a multiplier, eternally replicating reactive tendencies. This is most strongly expressed in Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The first time Zarathustra encounters the thought of the eternal return (his "abysmal thought"[38]), it manifests a sickening vision.

Zarathustra finds himself suddenly alone in the wilderness. He is surrounded by wild black cliffs etched with a desolate moonlight. After a moment, he notices a writhing figure lit by the moon — a young shepherd turning in agony, choking, his face distorted by pain. A thick black snake is hanging out of his mouth.

Zarathustra runs to the shepherd and tries to help him. He struggles with the snake. Overwhelmed with emotion, a voice wells up within him and Zarathustra shouts: "Bite down! Bite down! Bite off the head! Bite down!"[39]

Nietzsche describes what follows as "a prophesy."[40] The shepherd bites down hard and spits out the head of the snake. He leaps to his feet. He is:

> *No longer shepherd, no longer human— a transformed, illuminated, laughing being!*[41]

■

The snake is what Eliade calls a "lunar animal."[42] Lunar animals typically appear as a symbol of regeneration after the end of the world. Eliade says that snakes "know all secrets, are the source of all wisdom, and can foresee the future."[43] They represent "immortality through metamorphosis."[44]

Eating a snake gives a person the ability to speak with animals, especially birds. The second time Zarathustra encounters the thought of the eternal return it is triggered by the "babbling" chatter of his animal friends, the snake and eagle that accompany him.[45]

Following his encounter with the shepherd, Zarathustra collapses as if dead and cannot eat for seven days. He is stunned by the negative depths of the eternal return. When he finally recovers, he finds himself surrounded by gifts of fruits and aromatic herbs from his animal friends.

The snake and eagle tell Zarathustra:

> *To those who think as we do, all things themselves approach dancing; they come and reach out their hands and laugh and retreat— and come back. Everything goes, everything comes back; the wheel of being rolls eternally. Everything dies, everything blossoms again, the year of being runs eternally.*[46]

Zarathustra is disturbed by the statement and again

Explain the Dark Forest or I will fucking kill you   89

blackens at the thought of the eternal return. Eternal return appears to Zarathustra as a war on difference, a cruel dance that hijacks active forces and causes the small, reactive and the negative to reemerge infinitely.

The thought twists around Zarathustra like a heavy black snake. Sighing and shuddering, he cries, "Oh nausea! Nausea! Nausea!" — the same words he uttered before collapsing seven days prior.[47] This time, something is different. The animals offer an antidote.

They advise Zarathustra to "Speak no more" and to:

> *Go outside where the world awaits you like a garden.*
> *Go outside to the roses and bees and swarms of doves!*
> *Especially to the song birds, so that you can learn to sing*
> *from them!*[48]

We find ourselves at the centre of the dark forest. The first secret of the eternal return is presented to Zarathustra under the light of the moon, entwined with a thick black snake. The shepherd *bites down* on the snake and is transformed.

The riddle tells us that eternal return is a selection. The will-to-nothingness can only return if it transcends itself to become an *active destruction*. Otherwise, it cancels itself out, "Nihilism vanquished by itself thanks to the eternal return."[49]

The second secret of the eternal return is transmitted to Zarathustra through the songs of birds. Active forces

are *recursively affirmed* in the eternal return. Repeated an infinite number of times the negative tends toward the infinitesimal. Affirmation tends toward infinity: "developed, reflected, raised to the highest power."[50]

A long time passed away. Ireland put her first bareness off her. The Old Wood remained a wood. Another time passed away, a very long time. Ireland put her second bareness off her. The Old Wood remained a wood. A third period of time elapsed. One day that came there was heard a new and terrible sound in the Wood; the measured heavy blows of an axe. For years those blows were heard. Full much of the timber of the Old Wood was cut down. The shoulders of the Bens and the hollows of the glens were once more left bare. But all the trees were not cut. Dubh-Chruach remained a wood. Ireland is passing through her third bareness, but that much of the Old Wood is woodland still. Dubh-Chruach and the glen beneath it and the borders of the lake that is in the middle of the glen; that much is still a Wood, and will be a Wood until the Day of Doom. Small though it be to-day, the Old Wood is there after all the ages, it and the lives it holds, like a little world in itself. I hail you, O steadfast, ever-living seeds of the Old Wood! [51]

Do ġluais aimsir imċian. Do ċuir Éire a céad maol di. D'ḟan an tSean-Ċoill ina Coill. Do ġluais aimsir eile, aimsir an-ḟada. Do ċuir Éire a dara maol di. D'ḟan an tSean-Ċoill ina Coill. Do ġluais an treas suim aimsire. Lá dá dtáinig do cluineaḋ fuaim ur-nuaḋ uaṫṁar sa gCoill. Buillí toṁaiste troma tuaiġe. Do cluineaḋ na buillí sin ar feaḋ na mbliaḋanta. Do gearraḋ a lán d'aḋmad na Sean-Ċoille. Do fágaḋ lom arís guailne na mBeann agus cúim na ngleann. Aċt níor gearraḋ na crainn ar fad. D'ḟan Duḃ-Ċruaċ ina Coill. Tá Éire ag cur a treas ṁaoil di, aċt tá an méid sin de'n tSean-Ċoill ina Ċoill i gcoṁnaiḋe. Duḃ-Ċruaċ agus an gleann atá fúiṫi agus imeall-ḃuird an loċa atá i lár an ġleanna: tá an méid sin ina Coill fós agus béiḋ ina Coill go lá an Luain. Ċid beag í indiu, tá an tSean-Ċoill ann i ndeireaḋ na saoġal, í féin agus a bfuil innit de ḋúiliḃ beoda aṁail doṁan beag innti féin. Mo cíon díḃ, a ṡíolta buana biṫ-beoda na Sean-Ċoill!

Notes

1. *An Choill*, Pádraic Pearse, 1914.
2, 3, 4. An Edition of the *Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Már*, John Carey, 1994.
5. *The Secret Languages of Ireland*, R.A. Stewart Macalister, 1937.
6. An Edition of the *Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Már*, John Carey, 1994.
7. *Lament for Kilcash*, translated by Thomas Kinsella, 1710.
8. *A Brief History of the Druids*, Peter Berrsford Ellis, 2002.
9. Pearse also founded a school for girls, St. Ita's, but it closed after two years due to lack of funding.
10, 11, 12. Scoil Éanna Prospectus 1910, Pádraic Pearse, 1910.
13. Log book entry, Pádraic Pearse, 1909.
14, 15. *The Murder Machine*, Pádraic Pearse, 1913.
16. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Leo Strauss, 1952.
17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization*, Part Three, Sociology of Freedom, Abdullah Öcalan, 2009, English translation published 2020.
24. *The End Will be Spectacular*, 2019.
25. Hymn to Nanna, cited by Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, 1976

26, 27, 28. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircae Eliade, 1958.
29. *Ecce Homo*, Friedrich Nietzsche, 1908.
30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Gilles Deleuze, 1983.
38, 39, 40, 41. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche 1885.
42, 43, 44. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircae Eliade, 1958.
45, 46, 47, 48. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche 1885.
49. Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Gilles Deleuze, 1983.
50. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Gilles Deleuze, 1983.
51. *An Choill*, Pádraic Pearse, 1914.

MINOR CALENDARS

Valens

Calendars, I am told, fall into four major categories: lunisolar, solar, lunar, and seasonal. Amidst the vast array of human experience, this may appear to be a limited number of major categories at first. To me, all seem to pose a common question: how does one reconcile the lunar cycle with the solar cycle?
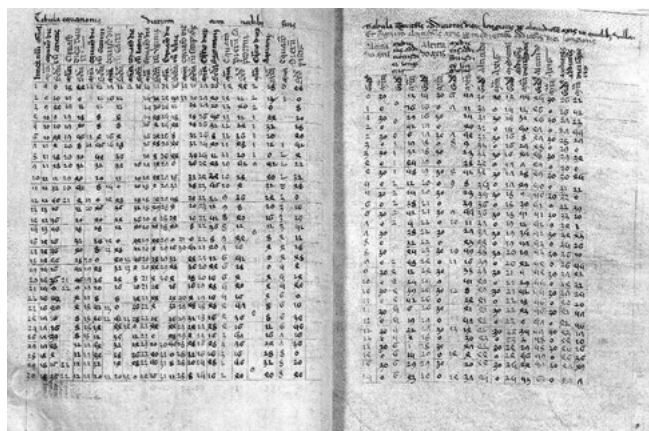
The Alfonsine Tables provided data for computing the position of the Sun, Moon and planets relative to the fixed stars. The tables were named after Alfonso X of Castile, who sponsored their creation.

Early calendars often ground astronomical cycles in a third observable phenomenon: the stars. The stars featured greatly in how Indian, Arabic, and Chinese astronomers marked the passage of the moon across the sky. The moon takes slightly more than twenty-seven days to return to the same location in the sky. For each of these days, the moon can be observed close to, that is a "conjunct" of, a particularly bright star. While differing across regional cultures, with some using twenty-seven and others using twenty-eight, these stars construct what can be thought of as a lunar zodiac. Just as the sun passing through parts of the sky demarcated by stars creates "Taurus", "Scorpio", or "Aries" — monthly periods with narrative characteristics — the moon passing through parts of the sky demarcated by stars similarly creates daily periods with narrative characteristics. Thought of quite literally as residences, the lunar mansions, as astronomers called these daily periods, provide the moon with temporary yet familiar abodes.

For example, the star Aldeberan, a red star serving as the bull's eye in the Taurus constellation, creates the fourth lunar mansion. Aldebaran gives off a strong, steady light, and therefore in myths indicates a fixity of purpose. When the moon resides in the lunar mansion of Aldeberan, Indian Vedic astrology recommends building or demolishing a house. The eleventh-century Arabic text the Picatrix recommends, for the strangely aesthetically inclined among us, to "take red wax and from it fashion the image of an armed man riding a cavalry horse holding a serpent in his right hand." Beyond creating a quality of time, each lunar mansion creates a quality of action: a type

Algedi · Ascella · Shaula · Albulaan · Antares · Sadalsud · Sadachbia · Graffias · Scheat & Markab · Zubenelgenubi · Algenib & Sirrah · Syrma · Mirach · Spica · Sheratan · Zavijava · Botein · Denebola · Pleiades · Zosma · Aldebaran · Regulus · Meissa · Alhena · Castor & Pollux · Praesaepe

Outer numbers: 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 28 27 26 25

Inner segments: Al Baldah · Al Na'am · Al Sa'd al Dhabih · Al Sa'd al Bula · Al Sa'd al Su'ud · Al Sa'd al Akhbiyah · Al Fargh al Muqdim · Al Fargh al Thani · Al Batn al Hut · Al Sharatain · Al Butain · Al Thurayya · Al Dabaran · Al Hak'ah · Al Han'ah · Al Dhira · Al Nathrah · Al Tarf · Al Jabhah · Al Zubrah · Al Sarfah · Al Awwa · Al Simak · Al Ghafr · Al Jubana · Iklil al Jabhah · Al Kalb · Al Shaulah

of talismanic transaction that should be undertaken. While some of us typically rest on Sunday, others may be busy creating wax statues.
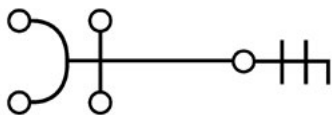
The symbol for Caput Algol, a star in the Perseus' constellation, with the symbol originally described by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa.

The lunar mansions proved to be enduring calendars over millennia. Their endurance can be linked to their observability. The relative fixity of the stars combined with the mutability of the moon, both available through visceral nightly observations, support a notion of vernacular time. Though it can indicate seasonal shifts in its longer cycles, this vernacular time cannot be directly linked to production, unlinked as it is even those phases of the moon. Whereas solar calendars, even ones anchored on seasonally rising stars, largely revolve around cycles of sowing, harvesting and reaping, the lunar mansions persist through art forms and gossip, across cultures and centuries, by which suggesting what course of action may prove best. They are more useful for conspiracy than extraction.

The earth's orbit around the sun will never be neatly divisible by the moon's orbit around the earth — forever escaping mechanically-perfect timekeeping. In the discrepancy between the lunar and solar calendars and thus inductive and productive action, we see many attempts to reconcile

two cycles that can never be fully commensurate, neither numerically nor functionally. Mediated by the stars, they have inspired their own zodiacs and convey their own notions of right action.

If calendars can be seen as attempts to reconcile cycles, timekeeping systems can be seen as attempts to harness them within a political economy. The Ottoman Empire tried to ban mechanical clocks to prevent the secularization of time. The Spanish colonists burned the Mayan codexes that were instrumental for timekeeping. A French politician recently called for the "nationalization of time," in perhaps a paltry echo of 1793, when French Revolutionaries reset the formerly Christian calendar to year zero and enforced a new timekeeping system focused on intervals of ten. Today, labor struggles persist around the reclamation of time. As Giordano Nanni writes in *The Colonization of Time*:

> *Time has remained the single most important issue in labor disputes... with demands for shorter working days in the nineteenth century leading to the Factory Acts, Bank Holidays Acts, and the forty-hour week and in the twentieth century, to paid-overtime and time-off 'in lieu'. The definitive step had already been taken, however, from the moment at which workers began to talk about time, work and wages in the language of the clock, consenting to fight – as E.P. Thompson famously put it – 'not against time, but about it.'*[1]

While easily dismissed as a fantasy from a middle-class science-fiction novel, the malleability of timekeeping is

not a thing reserved for past empires. Just as the ship invented the shipwreck, every technology acting at a societal scale invents its own time.[2] The establishment of Greenwich Mean Time, our globally-dominant form of timekeeping, did not emerge directly from a nation state but from the Railway Clearing House, ushering in what became informally known as "railway time." Current technologies that invent time often try to wrestle it away from more irregular structures, such as atomic timekeeping that forgoes measuring the earth's orbit for measuring an atom's frequency. Still, we have not fully articulated the concept of "internet time," despite how the technology increasingly weaves its way into the social fabric. There have, however, been interesting proposals for networked-time machines.

While the history of networked-time machines likely begins at 00:00:00 UTC on 1 January 1970, Unix time has yet to reach escape velocity as a timekeeping system itself. Most people know of public blockchains as a technology supporting cryptocurrency, but the Bitcoin whitepaper makes a more broadly interesting case for their innovation: the provision of a "distributed timestamp server." with the term "timechain" in its code comments.[3] One problem Bitcoin sought to solve, the double-spend problem, can be seen not only as a forgery of value but also more deeply as a forgery of time — the attempt to say that the same unique action can occur more than once. Blockchains try to produce a continuous stream of discrete transactions and through this attempt to produce shared history become a form of time machine. They affectively create a sense of time that is both continuously, linearly propagated and

discretely mapped through transactions. Despite intentional, accidental and hypothetical forks, blockchains seem to carry with them implicit agreements on canon; participants in the network generally convey the legitimacy of one blockchain fork over another. The ability to sever time exists, though it remains difficult to do with impact. Going beyond atomic clocks and Unix time, which seek to regulate an abstract sense of time already present within society, blockchains create their own abstract sense of time, which, to this date, largely facilitates economic transactions. When combined with transparency, meaning that the public can access all records of transactions, blockchains become a rigid force of transactional time: block time. "Blockchains never forget." We see their hegemonic shape rise over the hill, beginning to institute total surveillance of transactions as the norm.[4] Transparent blockchains create a sense of time that is linear, regular and unforgiving.

In contrast to transparent blockchains, shielded blockchains facilitate transactions that are private by default, but can be verified by the initiator. While implementations differ, shielded blockchains allow participants agency in their submission to block time. They can form free associations with other participants and without onlookers. While still contributing to a time machine with the linear and discrete at its core, the nature of their participation becomes neither immediately clear nor reasonable. Shielded blockchains create a sense of time that is about revelation.

In the vein of what Deleuze and Guattari called minor

literature, we can loosely think of shielded blockchains in the context of minor calendars.[5] That is, minor calendars unanchor language, connect an individual to a political immediacy and allow for collective utterances. The political immediacy strikes at a moment when we realize total surveillance appears to many as a given, instead of the brief and new historical phenomenon that it is. Through private yet verifiable transactions, shielded blockchains act as a necessary counterpower to total surveillance through digital technologies. As a minor calendar, they let one pseudonymously speak as many. They retain irregularity in their timekeeping system: some, but not all, transactions in discrete blocks could be revealed, when necessary, with discretion. The labor movement may have lost something when its struggles became "not against time, but about it." In this case, the minor calendar does not say which transactions should be public. It is about being against surveillance, instead of being about particular instances of it.

If transparent blockchains find their analog in solar calendars and shielded blockchains find their analog in lunar calendars, we find a useful and productive irreconcilability between the two — a state in which most political hope usually lies. Counterpowers need lore to persist; they need their own timekeeping. Like the lunar mansions, the latter's stories come from interpersonal observation, peer-to-peer and non-transparent interactions, from gossip in the night. As suggested before, solar and lunar calendars separately convey their own notions of right action. And it is in the dark, where talismans are crafted, that responsibility for right action takes on its true importance.

■ Notes

1   Giordano Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time: Ritual, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2012), 42.

2   Paraphrasing Paul Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1999), 89.

3   Cryddit, "Bitcoin source from November 2008.", Bitcoin Forum, December 23, 2013. https://bitcointalk.org/index.php?topic=382374

4   Venkatesh Rao, "Blockchains Never Forget", *Ribbonfarm*, May 25, 2017. https://www.ribbonfarm.com/2017/05/25/blockchains-never-forget

5   Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

p.99   Public Domain.

p.101   https://www.yeatsvision.com/Mansions.html

p.102   GNU Free Documentation License, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Algol_symbol_(Agripe_1531).svg

p.106   Nicholas Roerich, *Flame of Happiness (Lights on the Ganges)*, 1947, State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow, Russia, Public Domain.
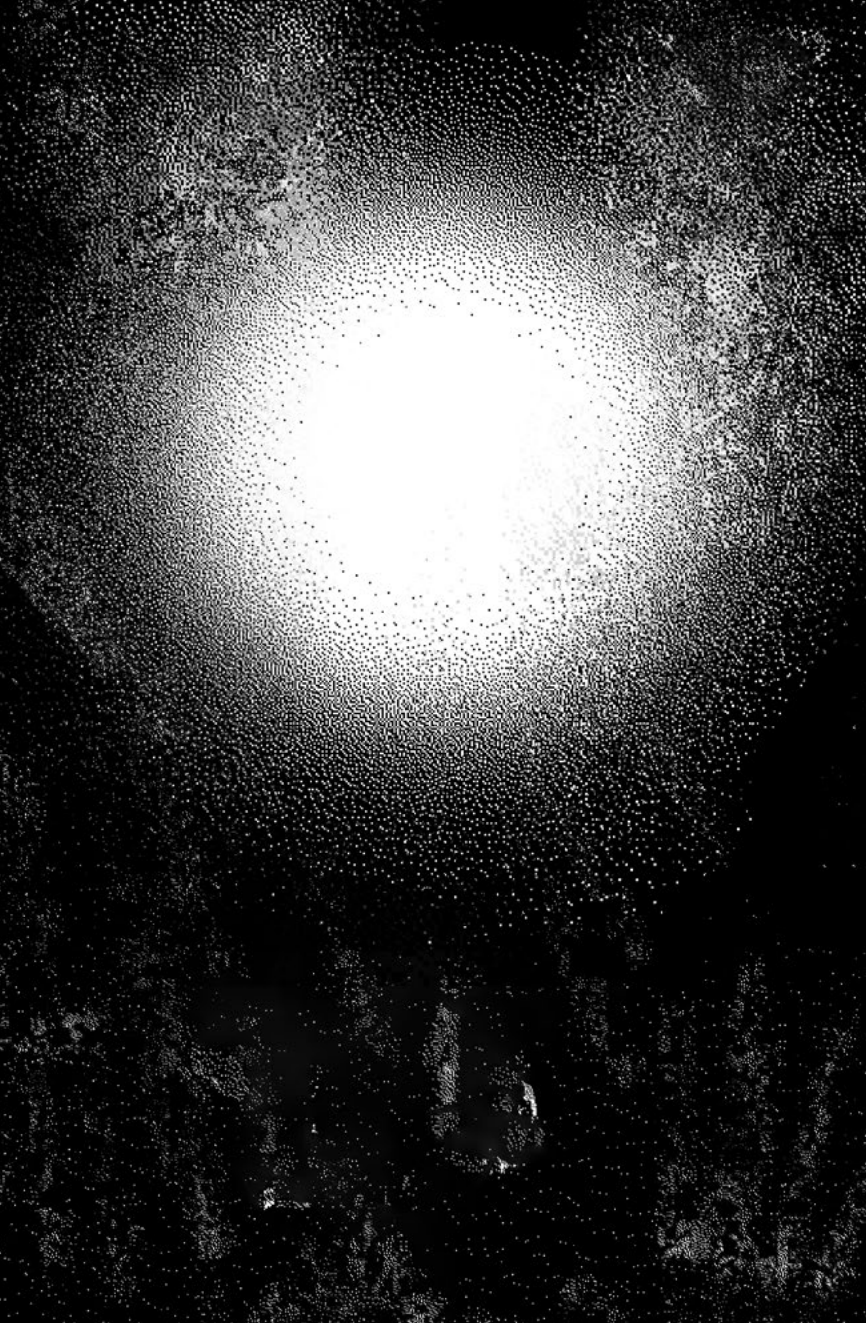
BLINDING THE EYES OF THE SUN GOD: A FORRAY INTO EPISTEMIC COUNTER-TACTICS

Hermes

Epistemologies of the sun

The sun is the archetypal symbol of knowledge in the history of pre-modern societies. It is the bringer of light. Metaphors of solar light for describing the pursuit of knowledge are omnipresent in mythic, mystical and spiritual language. It is no coincidence that supposedly elevated states of being and the acquisition of divine knowledge are either direct references to light ("enlightenment" and "illumination") or an indirect reference to sunrise through words rooted in wakefulness: the effect of the early morning sun's rays on the human pituitary gland.

But ancient symbolism of the sun also included an alchemical-like "as above, so below" connection to the modality of vision. The "sun as eye" is a common mythological occurrence. In Egyptian mythology, the male sun god Ra also had a female-counterpart symbol in the Eye of Ra. The god Thoth, the god of knowledge-transfer and communication (and the precursor of the Greek god Hermes and Roman god Mercury), is often depicted in artifacts

as holding the eye of Horus. On the other side, theories of vision in ancient Greco-Roman and up until early Islamic thought feature a complimentary opposite "eye as sun" symbolism. They did not just assume that the eye is a mere instrument of stimulation, passively receiving inputs of varying light frequencies, but instead viewed vision as an active process of extromission, i.e. of radiation coming from the eyes in the form of visual beams directed towards objects of the world. In such a way, the eye and the sun shared a hidden association; they are instruments of illumination.

This peculiar triangulation between the sun, knowledge and vision formed the basis of pre-modern knowledge-acquisition theory; an unholy trinity which culminated in the Pythagorean-inspired ancient Greek philosophy of Platonism. The Pythagoreans were the first to assign a divine significance to visual quantities such as numbers and geometrical objects and see them as sources of light. They claimed that through knowledge of number and ration, pure illumination is achievable as the highest state of being. We find the greatest glorification of this illuminist lineage in Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The dialectical interplay of darkness and shadows as the objects of pure falsehood and the sun's light as Truth (ἀλήθεια) and Goodness (ἀγαθό) adds a new element to the trinity, a normative element where the tri-partite expression of illumination embodies the ultimate good. It is through this lineage of Western Greek thought that illumination became humanity's prime ethical imperative.

Although the mythological view of the sun has been replaced by a mechanical-materialist narrative, the subtle association of knowledge (which the sun initially represented) with light, illumination and vision has still remained vital in Western thinking and Western doing. As Marshall McLuhan's deep genealogy of our interaction with representational media shows, vision has monopolized Western thought, culture and technology, replacing the commonplace, embodied and multi-modal acoustic understanding of the world with an increasingly decoupled and abstracted visual mode. What happened in the broader Greco-Phoenician region was the invention of visual space, a continuous and void infinite plane of pure visual representations, decoupled from all other senses, exemplified by Euclid's abstract geometry and Plato's ideal forms.

In a sense, the megalithic technological achievements in modern scientific instrumentation, from telescopes to big data suggestion engines, can be seen as intensifying the monopolizing dominance of pure vision, by extending, disembodying and mechanizing vision on an ever grander scale. Even if we have nominally escaped the totemic world-views of the sun god, we have been hard at work actually building one on top of Earth's crust, with its optic fiber ganglia deep below the ground and its satellite-meshwork retina reflecting the reverted optic image of our intimate lives.

The increasing loss of privacy and freedom from the watchful eyes of state and corporate surveillance are but parts of a bigger legacy of solar epistemologies whose accelerationist

intensification has been catalyzed through the societal influence of the modern Western philosophical canon. We are unwillingly thrust into an epistemic tradition of illumination where knowledge-acquisition is the ultimate goal and visual media such as text and propositional language form the horizons of what is possible to know. Science has inherited this deep suspicion towards all knowledge that is not public and propositional, while at the same time acting on a deep ethical duty for unconditional epistemic illumination. It developed a perverted obsession for god-like omniscience. The project to accelerate the sun god's development is well underway.

Lunar Knowledge

What if epistemology was not based on knowledge-acquisition? What if instead of mere revelation, concealment was also part of the epistemological metalanguage? In his book Platform for Change, Stafford Beer makes the claim that our thinking blocks us from effecting change because statements that might seem contradictory (technical term: undecidable) in a certain context of language, might not be so if we adopt an even broader context through which our words and notions derive new relational meaning. The statement that epistemology can rest on a different basis than knowledge-acquisition might seem preposterous, but only in the context of solar epistemology — in which building a theoretical framework that can talk about knowledge-concealment or unknowability is inconceivable.

To escape this trajectory before solar epistemologies nurture the sun god to full development, we need to broaden our thought, transcend our previous language and attain a metalanguage where knowledge-acquisition and knowledge-concealment are entangled in a dialectical dance. In this Heraclitian flux of eternal tension, knowledge is more than a system of verifiable beliefs about the world, but a valuable resource, which can be generated, owned, used, regenerated, captured and of course, destroyed. In order to do this we need to inject a lunar epistemology as a cure to our epistemic addiction towards illumination and achieve a balancing act that weakens the scorching heat of its deadly rays.

Crypto-epistemology

Natural philosophers in the 16th century used cryptic metaphors to speak about the process of illuminating nature. By pronouncing that "Nature loves to hide," they tried to investigate the signs left behind, the semiotics of physics. Mathematics was seen as the real message of the book of nature and the only source of purely universal validation, reviving the illuminist project. Algebraic expressions and proof-based mathematics have been instrumental to illuminist acceleration but at the same time, mathematics functions as a means of concealment because it is analytic *a priori*: it doesn't provide new knowledge, just new configurations and new ways of encoding knowledge. In this way, mathematical proofs have always been truly anonymous tools of validation;

it doesn't matter who you are, what language you speak, what culture you're from, what you know or who else you know: a simple Euclidean proof can be validated by anyone with the basic capacity to reason, independently and anywhere. Proof-based mathematics have been the most interoperable and substrate-independent proto-software. But to parse a proof is a perceptual activity requiring an embodied interaction between the suject and the artifact, the solver and the inscriptions of paper, with the sequential and continuous property of vision being exercised in its fullness. Mechanizing the process of proofs also requires vision, but a disembodied vision, an implicit vision, a vision stripped from a body, stripped from an eye and even stripped from natural light. Mechanical computation has managed to abstract away the saccades of the dancing iris on paper, as it passes from the one side of the page to other, and from one line to the next, and turned these movements into pure logical sequence. All computation is disembodied vision. In this way, the artificial sun god is given the ability to see far and wide.

If natural science in its entirety is approached through a cryptographic lens, it could be seen as a branch of cryptanalysis — cryptography's contrarian sister — trying to break "nature's code" and gain unauthorized access to its secrets. If unauthorized access sounds like too much of an anthropomorphism, then rest assured that the whole premise of modern enlightenment science and its high-industrialist consequences is all based on an even more malicious anthropomorphism; Francis Bacon's analogy of nature as a woman, to be raped without

consent, stripped of dignity, used and exploited for the purposes of men. It is through this metaphor that science as the dominion over nature has been institutionalized and in accordance with the beastly qualities of the lusty manly gaze, the sun god and its now unleashed vision has become incestuously horny for mother nature. The creative act of techne and of *artifaction*, of building a more preferable environment for one to live through niche construction, has been turned into the perverted lust for technology.

Solar epistemologies assume that the world is transparent — it's there and we can know it if we just find the right means of illumination. But this also presupposes a dualistic split between the world and the minds of knowers who are simply trying to uncover something that is hidden in plain sight. Crypto-epistemology argues that there is no such uncovering unless there has already been a cover-up, and who or what does this cover-up becomes a crucial question. Instead of a split between mind and world, minds are always in a relation with the world where they enact their knowledge; acting, building and of course, hiding. In our dealing with the world, we don't merely illuminate but we also enter into the reverse process, we *endarken*.

Celestial Dialectics

It is this historical context that we have to keep in mind to understand micro-culture war raging in the digital niche of public blockchains between Solarpunk and Lunarpunk.

Solarpunk is the hopeful vision of a high-tech society of ecological restoration, green technology and an attitude of openness and positive-sum games. It is the happy ending of modernism, a post-Baconian future where humans have managed to achieve agency over the world and their surroundings, but, in symbiosis with nature. It is the pinnacle of technoscience, secularism and the maximization of utility, but with a human heart.

Solarpunk provides the cultural and infrastructural means to create and sustain humane commons, but not to secure and defend them. Creating bigger and more inclusive commons leaves bigger vectors of capture. Lunarpunk is the contrarian attitude which claims that this tragedy of the commons will be the biggest tragedy — and as a matter of fact, we have already started to see it taking place. Like the sun, the broken dream of web 3.0 and its unconditional openness has been radiating away energy, captured by the regulatory Dyson Sphere of central bank finance and ubiquitous surveillance, and excluding the flow of energy to parcels of human autonomy. Meanwhile, the moon has been absoring solar radiation and reflecting it back to those who need it. Flows of lunar light shine safely under the encrypted darkness of the black sky.

The divide of heavenly bodies is not essential. As Paul J. Dylan-Ennis has made clear, they both aim at *regeneration* and the real enemy is the mechanizing capture devices of the artificial-vision industrial complex. Solarpunk practice, with its focus on sovereignty of local communities and the decentralization of energy, value and knowledge

infrastructure, in a way escapes the oppressive tendencies of the sun god by playing its own game. A better way to approach this gap is by seizing the historical opportunity to engage in dialectics and reflect the Solarpunk light back onto itself and its epistemological legacy.

Epistemic Countertactics

The Solar trinity reminds us of the steps we need to take to build agoric penumbras around new sovereign worlds. By inverting the Light-Knowledge-Vision triangle on its head and entertaining the complementary opposites that arise, we can explore new vectors of counter-tactics to the prevailing epistemic order.

Penumbral Dynamics

Ironically enough, the technologies that have enabled hiding are the ones that have also enabled radical openness. The reason is that a neutral layer of secrecy enables freer modes of expression. Openness is not contrarian to concealment. Like all life, from its most basic forms in prokaryotic bacterial organisms, boundaries are semi-permeable. Without openness there is no thermodynamic flow, no energy enters the system. Without closure there is no identity in time and no internal reassembly. Full openness or full closure both lead to death. Organisms thrive by means of internal regulation according to their own internally generated norms. External regulation or no regulation also

leads to death. Epistemic horizons and sovereign society will not survive if they don't embrace this balance.

This is evident by the recurrent problems faced by public goods, open-source software and open science. Nurturing and maintaining a public good is incredibly difficult but not impossible. The Tragedy of the Commons is not really a tragedy; it's more like a comedy, a humorous goof of cultural entrenchment in simplistic mental models. When a Cryptic Epistemology is adopted, the problem seems more daunting because it is also less deterministic and linear. You can sustain publicly available infrastructure by creating the right kind of enclosures and hiding the right kind of knowledge from open acquisition and thus capture from a force of avarition. Even the early experimentalists of the Royal Society like the chemist Robert Boyle, who passionately advocated for public verification and the demystification of knowledge (in contrast to the alchemists), still hid their patents, discoveries or controversial knowledge in cyphers. We tend to think of cryptography as a 20th century invention but the truth is that experimentalists were ahead of the game, writing encyclopedias of cryptography and casually using cyphers in their texts.

Lunar epistemology, is not a denial of the value of illumination, but rather it's a denial of merely its partiality and selectiveness, because it is always part of a social game of adversarial-power relations. It also reminds us that we have an imperative to reflect the light back to the powerful, creating a shield of blindling light, which protects the powerless and corners the big players in the spotlight of

accountability. This sentiment is encapsulated in the infamous cypherpunk proverb:

Transparency for the powerful, privacy for the weak.

This is what the early cypherpunks called *sousveillance*, a pattern reminiscent of a reverted pyramid and a view that has been overshadowed by the late cypherpunk obsession with an individualist framing of privacy as mere self-defense. It's time to stop speaking simplistically about openness or regulation, or about transparency and privacy, whether to demonize them or elevating them. Penumbras are composed by the gracious contortion of light and darkness.

Endarkenment

The Pandora's box has already been opened. There have already been some important lunar victories in the 21st century. Without the cypherpunk tools of mass encryption, the digital world would have been a much more oppressive place than it already is. Legitimizing "the right to forget" has been a crucial praxis of endarkenment. Obscolesnece in an age of manic version state-saving is hard but should be a norm. Hitting *permanent delete* constrains one path and enables all the rest.

The value of record-keeping cannot be overstated but for how long are we going to be hoarders? How long until the historical archive of the future becomes a bottleneck?

Knowledge of the past is a form of liberation, but it is also a force of slavery to fate. Theorists of cultural evolution have coined the term *generative entrenchement* to describe how the crystalization of certain states creates a certain trajectory by disabling all other possible options. Radical change needs an escape from entrenchement and thus an escape from the imprisoning effects of knowledge. Otherwise we are stuck in a constantly retrospective state of nolstagia while, in Mark Fisher's terms, the future is cancelled. History should be a scaffold; read the books and burn them. System versioning needs tombstoning. Big data needs destruction. If the natural act of recycling and keeping what is necessary that is so crucial to the functioning of nature is mechanically removed from our epistemic action space by the artificial sun god, we have a moral imperative to be epistemic terrorists.

Post-Occular Plurimodality

The most subtle aspect of the framing of post-solar praxis (and the hardest to fully embody) is moving away from the totalizing dominance of disembodied vision as the primary way of approaching the world. The way we record knowledge, the way we share it, the way the underlying information infrastructures that support these action work, is visual. There are good theoretical conjectures we can make about why that is, like the fact that the visual modality is based on object persistence and linear-sequential causation, while other modalities are discontinuous, with qualities emerging and disappearing, like the pulsating

rhythm of a kick drum's sub-bass on the dance floor. Spoken words perish in the ether while written documentation encodes them externally in a persistent way.

Digital technology however has both enabled the recording of non-visual information and led to what McLuhan refers to as the re-emergence of "acoustic space," a discontinuous space of constant barrage of information. But the underlying data infrastructure, even encoded in binary, is still deeply textual, preserving the properties of disembodied vision. The most radical move would be to re-engage and anchor ourselves back to the underlying properties of audition which would be to explore technological and cultural avenues different than our current obsession with persistence and precision. Maybe we could take inspiration from the oral traditions of the past, which managed to preserve their myths, legends and wisdom through long lineages of storytelling. Maybe we should re-emerge and embrace the antifragile nature of story and song, which people managed to preserve even under oppression and control, even when stripped of all possessions and laid bear in the face of torture. And if we deeply care about anonymity as a tool of social change rather than a mean for childish removal of responsibility, we should remind ourselves of the anonymous nature of oral tradition and their catastrophe-averse antifragility.
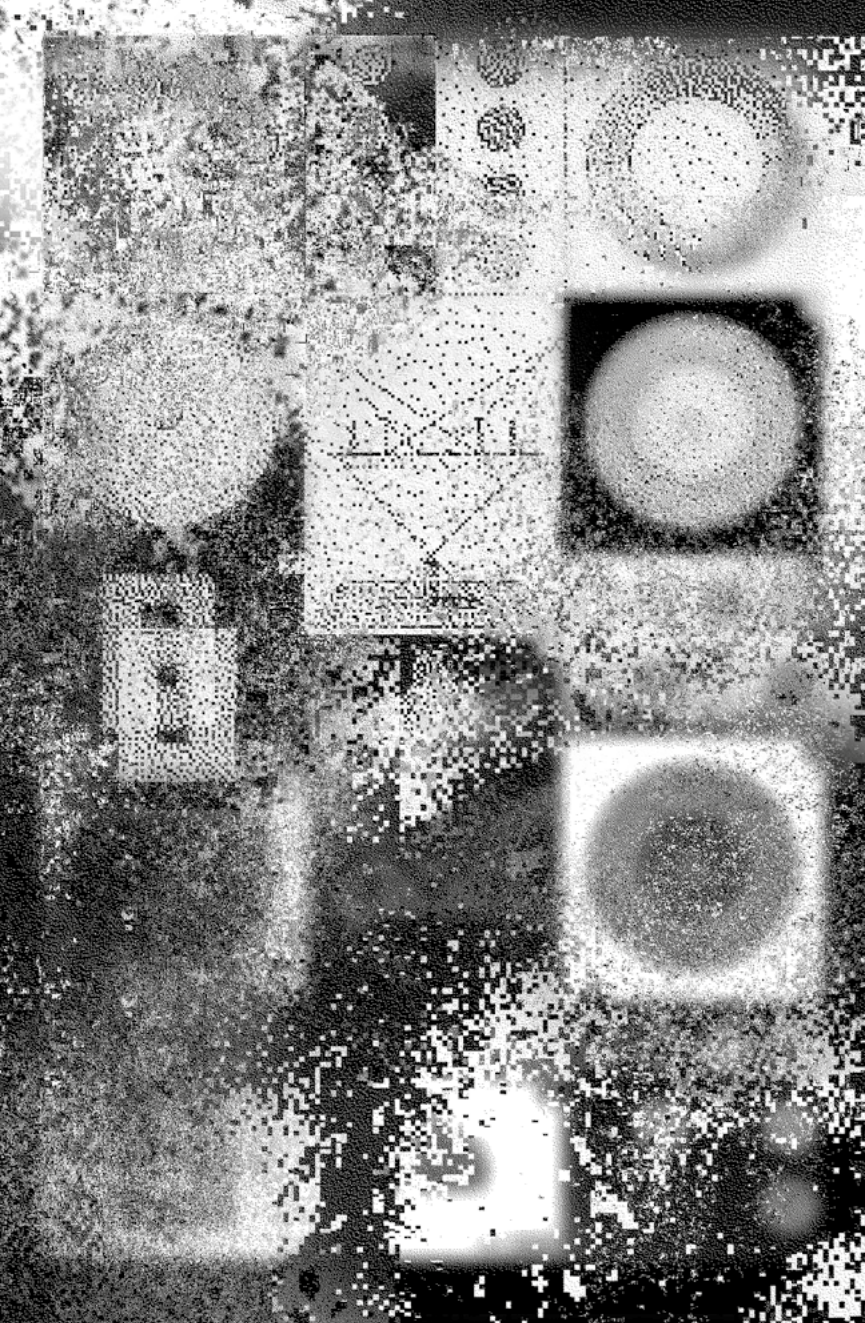
PUNKPLEX DIALECTIC — LUNARPUNK AND THE POLITICS OF CRYPTO

Aaron Dunkel

\\ **Here I sit, forming humans**
After my image;
A race resembling me,
To suffer, to weep,
To enjoy, to be glad,
And not respect you,
As I.

—— J.W. von Goethe, *Prometheus*

Dialectic is an old concept. In Western philosophy, its roots as a method of argument and counter-argument to discern truth go back to Zeno of Elea in classical Greece. Hegel revived the term to mean a constant struggle between two opposite realities that ultimately gives birth to a third that is neither one of the two nor the sum of them but something altogether new — the synthesis.

Lunarpunk has entered the stage as an antithesis. Once the little sister of solarpunk — the weird kid looking at bugs in the murky undergrowth while its big sibling was engineering the grand world of tomorrow — it has come forth from the shadows and brought with it a dire prophecy. Not only does it incite fear and uncertainty that threatens the funding schemes of the solarpunk future, it also claims that, far from the merry naivety of Ethereum conferences, the world is a chaotic and vicious place that becomes more dystopic by the day and accuses solarpunks of enabling this.

The conflict between solar and lunarpunk in many ways seems to resemble the critique of the cypherpunks toward the technocrat idealists at the end of the last millennium, many of whom settled in Silicon Valley and built the basis of today's Big Tech monopoly and surveillance apparatus. Cypherpunks recognized states, central banks and monopolistic corporations as enemies of freedom and were not afraid to challenge these adversaries. Above all, they leveraged cryptography as a weapon to turn the tides in an otherwise utterly unequal conflict. What are lunarpunks then, besides simply the latest reincarnation of that dark Other of cyberspace? What is new or original about their dystopian revelation?

Dialectic in Hegel's sense is not unique to Western philosophy. The concept of a primordial antagonism that brings forth a new world is much older and appears in many different forms. The Persian prophet Zoroaster explained it as an eternal struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. The Yezidi people of Mesopotamia to this day pray to the fallen angel Lucifer. They call him Melek Tawus and believe he was reconciled with God after rising in rebellion against him. Part of this philosophy is the recognition that where there is light, there must be darkness, for neither has meaning without the other. In existing together, they both have meaning and existence beyond themselves. From such a perspective, both thesis and antithesis remain deficient, incomplete as they try to negate the other.

The critics of the current world order are overwhelmingly

separated into two opposing camps. Most relevant to solar and lunarpunk is the contradiction between North American libertarians and West European anarchists. The former have a profound critique of the state's monopoly on violence and a healthy distrust for central authority. They value taking initiative to solve problems. When it it comes to capitalism however they turn a blind eye to its role in the state, clinging to mythical and ahistorical notions of property and money and refusing to critically investigate their realities.

European anarchists have the opposite problem. Their critique of capitalism is strong and radical. They emphasize mutual aid and are aware of the corrupting power of money. They do not know, however, how to get rid of the state. As soon as a problem arises that goes beyond the micro-level of their communes and collectives, such as an ecological or humanitarian crisis or the rise of an authoritarian movement, they turn to the state for solutions, willfully distorting or rationalizing its role in creating these very problems. They cannot actually imagine a life outside of the state.

Where the American libertarians are proactive, the European anarchists are reactionary, and vice versa. They remain blind to the fact that state power and capital power are both highly organized coercive monopolies that corrupt those who hope to wield them.

Through this antagonism both sides' revolutionary ideas have become defanged, limiting them to fulfill the role

of a controlled opposition within the spectacle of modernity. Both their strengths and weaknesses have significantly influenced the vision and politics of crypto. Moreover, they are examples of a fundamental reality of the politics of modernity, which continuously eradicates old powerful identities and creates new, sectarian ones to replace them, with the aim of preventing any kind of unity that could challenge the hegemonic monopoly.

This is where lunarpunk departs from dialectic dualism. It does not negate — it asserts. It is not concerned with challenging its adversaries but with breaking out of the prison of inevitability they have created. The cypherpunk future is now: the lunarpunk future is yet to come. It is dark, but as R.R. O'Leary said in her essay "Lunarpunk and the Dark Side of the Cycle" (2022), it is also "teeming with life." Lunarpunk is not the antithesis to solarpunk. Maybe it was named with such a relationship in mind, but it is becoming something else in relation to both cypherpunk and solarpunk: the synthesis.

When cypherpunks and solarpunks are asked what they dislike about the others' worldview the most common answers are that solarpunk is childish, full of false hope and toxic positivity, whereas cypherpunk is defeated and pessimist, individualist and void of love and emotion. Both are right.

Cypherpunk has stared too long into the abyss and become intoxicated by it. Its outlook is bleak because it refuses to see anything else. By obsessing over the infinity of the void

it has lost sight of what might be, or come to be, beyond it.

Solarpunk optimism wishes to will a good, easy life into existence without sacrifice or struggle. It ignores that life without struggle is not a good life but a meaningless one. As Confucius said, "the journey is the destination." The insistence on avoiding any hardship or confrontation prevents solarpunk sci-fi from having a real impact upon the world and instead causes its art and culture to become mere escapism from the fickle spectre of modernity.

Solarpunk has been made out by its critics to be little more than technocratic totalitarianism hidden behind a spurious veil of esoteric hippiedom and reflexive virtue signaling. Apart from this face it has very important qualities that cypherpunk lacks: a belief in a better future, an ecological awareness, and a practical approach to solving human problems. There are also many more women at solarpunk conferences than there are at comparable cypherpunk events.

Cypherpunk on the other hand is combative, it does not shy away from confrontation. Contrary to solarpunk it does not have any illusions about the fairness of the system or the ability to compromise with it. But its inability to propose an alternative has led to defeatism and bitterness and caused some to turn misanthropic, believing in code and money over people.

To the VC (venture capitalist) corruption of solarpunk there is a cypherpunk counterpart. Many who claim to uphold its legacy have since given in to the lure of easy

money and have settled for celebrating individual wealth rather than fighting for freedom.

Yet people from across this spectrum have much to learn and gain from one another. While the aesthetics may be different, the content is similar, as is the common enemy — seedy opportunist liberals who use cypherpunk and solarpunk slogans to peddle un-original products while surrendering the movement behind them to the agents of the state.

Lunarpunk stands strong against such corruption because it has a powerful vision and more importantly, a strategy to achieve it. While opposed to both state and capitalism, its true antagonism is with the system of domination which both state and capitalism are faces of. This ancient system of domination goes back to the god-kings and ziggurats of ancient Mesopotamia, the downfall of the goddesses of earth and forest at the hands of male deities of sun and war, the enslavement of women, stripped of their own free identity and turned into less-than-man, an object for pleasure and machine for childbearing and cheap labor.

Lunarpunk tactics may appear defensive at first. Yet to those who take a closer look they reveal themselves to be constructive and proactive. Self-defense for lunarpunks is a creative process, one of building the technical, moral and political foundation for free life. The first question lunarpunk asks is not what to defend or how, but why.

Answering that means developing conscious agency; in other worlds a true exercise of freedom. It informs all lunarpunk action. Hidden by the cryptographic canopy of the Dark Forest are farms and factories, libraries and laboratories, agoras and academies, where builders, warriors and philosophers are preparing for the coming storm.

Lunarpunks are not limited by the mentality of lone-wolf individualism that many cypherpunks adhere to, nor have they fallen into the trap of liberal equality popular among solarpunks that amounts to little more than centrally sanctioned uniformity. Lunarpunks do not impose some blueprint of an ideal society upon the world but give people the tools to recover the legacy of moral and political society, which has been taken away from them over five thousand years of empire, expropriation and male domination.

Lunar tribes are collective and diverse, each as sovereign as its members, each as powerful as the entire lunar confederation. Lunarpunk is neither light nor darkness. Its name is very fitting after all. For what else is moonlight? It is not bright enough to reveal oneself to the enemy's watchful eye, but just enough to illuminate the path ahead.

TRANSCENDING THE INDIVIDUALIST-COLLECTIVIST DIVIDE WITH WEB3

Kevin Owocki

Individualists and collectivists do not agree on much. While this is especially true concerning how to organize society, it is important to recognize that the divide between collectivists and individualists is not necessarily a dichotomy, but rather a spectrum of views on the role of the individual and the collective (family, community, state) in society.

On one end of the spectrum are individualists, who believe that individuals should have the freedom to pursue their own interests and that the state should play a minimal role in society. Mutualism, voluntary cooperation and privacy are the aims.

Some individualists believe that the state, with its monopoly on force and coercion, is a hindrance to human prosperity and liberty. They argue from first principles that taxation is theft and that, consequentially, taxation creates corruption. As a citizen of a nation-state, individuals have no direct voice on whether their taxes fund wars or roads.

On the other end of the spectrum are collectivists, who

believe that society as a whole should take responsibility for funding and providing public goods and that the state should play a strong role in this process. Collectivists focus on group goals and what is good for the group in terms of interpersonal relationships.

While individualists argue that taxation is theft, collectivists make a causal argument that without the state there would be no public goods. To them, the state is the best vehicle for creating the collective public good.

What both sides have in common is that they are in favor of public goods (e.g. fresh air, herd immunity, open-source protocols, public roads, and so forth). What's at odds is the method of how to fund public goods.

These differences are amplified in the nation-state era by coercive collectivism. Web3 can bridge this divide by giving us a platform for non-coercive collectivism.

A Parallel Society: Web3 creates a non-coercive market for supporting public goods

Web3 technology provides a breakthrough opportunity for society to transcend the individualist/collectivist divide. Because of its decentralized and programmable nature, web3 enables us to create a parallel society where both collectivists and individualists can work together to fund public goods in an agorist way through the use of voluntary,

privacy-respecting, non-coercive methods of funding.

By creating modular, sovereign and privacy-aware protocols that support public goods and by having a scarce token to support their governance, DAOs (decentralized autonomous organizations) can fund and manage public goods in a way that is decentralized, transparent and secure. With web3, individuals can voluntarily contribute in accordance with their personal values and beliefs to the trustless funding of public goods.

By creating a parallel society where individuals and communities can take more responsibility for providing public goods, people can track and manage how their contributions are used. Rather than relying solely on the state, individuals and communities can take control of their own lives and resources, as well as the lives of their families, communities and nations. A healthy alignment between individualist autonomy and collectivist interdependence can be achieved.

This parallel opt-in system for digitally-native public goods can support a transition to web3 non-digital public goods. Web3 market-style public goods funding could then scale public goods funding globally. Imagine opting in once a year to support all of the public goods around you. Opting in to funding open-source software, parks, clean air, and potholes; opting out to wars overseas.

As we transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, we have a moment of opportunity to transition from

coercive to non-coercive support for public goods. We can build new, better, public good institutions together.

The Challenge Before Us

The challenge before us is to build a parallel society. One that can do the things the state has historically done, but in a way that is better, faster, cheaper, more privacy-centric and more sovereign.

Historically, social safety nets and public goods have been associated with statism. With web3 this is no longer true. We can use web3 tools to enable agoric social safety nets and public goods funding infrastructure.

We can use web3 tools to enable more agoric social safety nets and agoric public goods funding infrastructure by creating this parallel society.

When people have (better) vehicles for funding public goods and they can track the outcomes of that funding there will be a snowball effect towards an agoric parallel society.

Privacy-aware public goods funding mechanisms may seem like an oxymoron but they are possible with web3. We can build zero-knowledge ways for citizens to prove their citizenship and can vote on which public goods they care about.

Web3 and DAOs have given us a moment of agency. We can chart a better path forward for society by coordinating around the funding and maintenance of public goods.

But we have to choose to build it.

I believe that web3 tools for public goods funding can lead to greater prosperity, innovation and liberty for all people while also providing decentralization, accountability, privacy and distributed governance.

The moment is here. We can transcend the divide between individualists and collectivists of the statist era, and build a new agoric community that measures, manages and respects the value sets of both individuals and the collective.

THE CRISIS OF HOMOGENOUS AUTHORITATIVE SYSTEMS AND THE FUTURE OF MODERN TRIBES

Pavol Lupták

We are living with Space Age technology under Bronze Age rulership.

—— Paul Rosenberg

Omnipresent technology has completely changed our society. Most of us are still not sufficiently aware of this.

State education has lost its monopoly as an information provider. Even worse: compared to other information channels, state education is among the most boring.

Different views and opinions from hundreds of thousands of media outlets leads to information chaos. State education and the media oligopoly no longer have the monopoly on 'truth'. Anyone can become an information provider and use a blog to broadcast views to everyone in the world. This fact leads to a highly individualistic information society. It also means we have to face an extremely large number of conspiracies.

We live in a complex information society swarming with the diverse opinions of billions of people. Communists, socialists, democrats, monarchists, those who do not care and those who want to be free.

Despite this substantial opinion heterogeneity, we still stick to very homogenous political systems like parliaments, direct democracy, various forms of monarchy and maximally homogenous dictatorship regimes enforced upon millions of different people.

We vote and decide about the future of our who neighbors we hardly know. Often aside from sharing a language and passport or national ID we have nothing in common with these people. Despite their physical proximity, we live in completely different worlds. We share more interests and values with people living thousands of miles away from us.

Virtual communities, for the first time in history, are replacing traditional ones. Yet on a political level, virtual communities are still ignored. We are still stuck within 'national' communities with random people who share the same national tags and believe they can decide on the future of others inside their community.

Our society has become too complex for any homogenous political system to be applied on a broad scale. Enforcing homogeneity has always had an adverse impact on minorities; not just on women, LGBT communities, discriminated races, weed smokers, etc, but also a new generation of free-minded Internet people who consider the current authoritative state system to be obsolete and can imagine a freer decentralized system based on cooperation and voluntary decisions. They know thanks to their birthplace — the Internet and its services — that this is possible.

We are witnessing the crisis of homogenous political systems when applied to a complex society of individuals. In the times we live in, homogenous systems are too fragile to survive without violence. The enforcement of violence within a well-informed society is extremely expensive.

In a well-informed peer-to-peer society, large homogeneous systems become inefficient and obsolete. This leads to a high amount of conflict. It does not work now and will not work in the future.

The solution lies in an entirely decentralized society. This society can be composed of modern physical dwellings (like private cities or smaller, natural communities) or virtual tribes with autonomous zones, legal systems, and a set of rules. Modern tribes are the most natural human grouping. Benefits include better cooperation and maximum loyalty, improved conflict-resolution inside the tribe and decreased transaction costs.

It is a high time to embrace modern tribes as the only natural extension of our individuality.
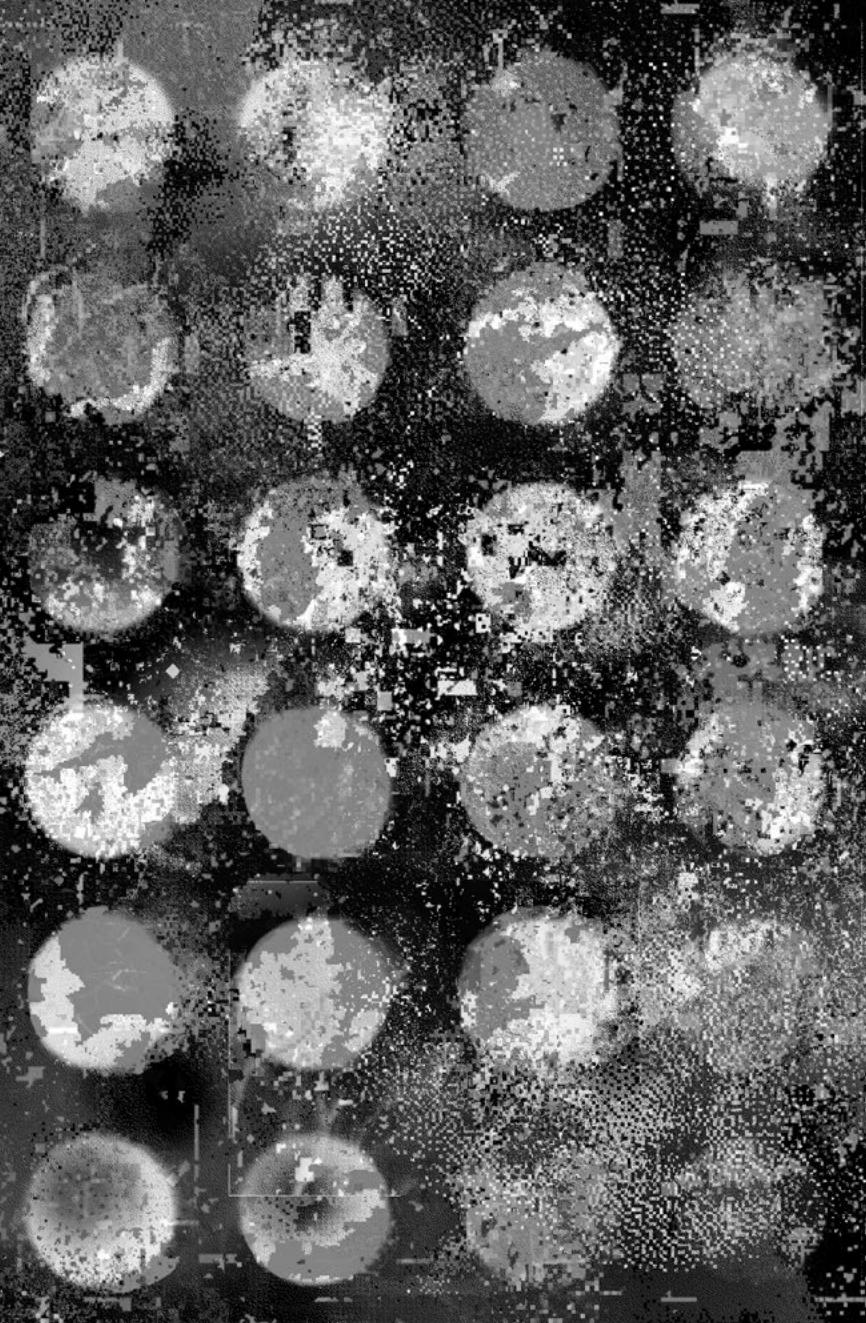
LUNARPUNK SQUAD WEALTH

Lakshmi, spirit of LunarDAO

Introduction: A matter of words

The world of crypto is extensive. It is impossible to even refer to crypto as a single space or community. The sub-groups (or 'scenes') are so radically different that even their understanding of what crypto is varies dramatically.

Like any field, the world of crypto has its own vocabulary. In my early days in crypto, I remember the most difficult part to understand wasn't the tech: it was the language. Only after several years do I finally feel native in the crypto culture and vocabulary.

With the 2022 fall of "crypto kings" it appears that some words have undergone a semantic shift. This is a pheno-menon in which a word's meaning gets gradually modified; deeper layers and nuances are added, assigning an unchanged word with a different connotation. This subtle process is only perceived once the original meaning of the word has been completely altered.

Words aren't just words. They carry deep meaning, values and history. The understanding or misinterpretation of words can give a community or a movement solid roots or fatal flaws that will corrupt its growth.

Concept by concept, word by word, the foundational philosophy of crypto has been taken down: 'decentralization', 'distribution', 'p2p', 'anonymity' and 'privacy'. Bitcoin was born to be a decentralized, p2p currency that would guarantee the user's anonymity without interference from third parties. This revolutionary idea developed into KYC services, scams and regulations while privacy projects like Tornado Cash are criminalized.

The Lunarpunk Squad

Squads have been around for thousands of years as a basic form of social and economic aggregation driven by a specific common purpose. In modern times, they reemerged as an antidote to blind individualism, proliferating in group chats, forums and privacy-oriented platforms.

A 2020 article by Sam Hart, Toby Shorin and Laura Lotti titled "Squad Wealth" states:

> *Squads are both a product of — and a response to — contemporary social atomization.*

Crypto is a large community composed of many squads. There is a common fabric that connects the people in the

ecosystem, but there is also a great degree of diversity. Perhaps we can break this community into smaller sub-communities, like the Bitcoin community, DeFi or NFT collectors.

Some of these communities form squads, but not all sub-groups are squads. Consider Bitcoin maxis. They have a clear, shared belief: that Bitcoin is the only real crypto. They are not a squad because they lack a shared methodology and strategy to work towards a common goal.

Inside the vast communities of cryptocurrency, technology and privacy, lunarpunks form squads. The unifying mission is the expansion of the dark forest of anonymity as a space for development of a moral and political society. The strategy is derived from philosophy and realized in lunarpunk culture, knowledge and technology as self-defense against surveillance.

For lunarpunks, self-defense includes all actions taken to protect the community while enabling the growth of autonomous structures that exist parallel to the flat and hegemonic desert imposed by the state and proprietary tech corporations.

The tactics of lunarpunk are diverse. Some tools advocated by LunarDAO include: blockchain privacy solutions, anonymous organizations, communication tools, guides for opting out, media and publishing, community spaces and events.

Yet while the tractics are diverse the aim is common: to compose an ecosystem of projects based on sovereignty, anonymity, privacy and p2p distribution.

Squad Wealth

I come from a background of anarchist organizing. For decades I have resisted against capitalism within cultures that share a general antagonism towards value and wealth.

But anarchist circles have become corrupted. In its most corrupted form, being poor becomes an identity or a lifestyle choice. The culture is disconnected from the goal of transforming society.

Poverty keeps anarchists in a constant state of reaction, of putting out fires and surviving instead of focusing on the steps necessary to win. Anarchists live in a comfortable state of discomfort. Our struggle is composed of known patterns, individually and within communities, which are largely unsuccessful.

An absence of any foundational philosophy it a key reason why this movement is failing. It also lacks a practical approach to building the counter-economy. The movement is centered around individual lifestyles and it cannot gather the resources to become operational and strong.

In the history of revolutions all successful movements prioritized resources, logistics and material infrastructure.

Successful movements address the question of wealth and its protection independently from the state.

Wealth is the social fabric that connects us. It is our knowledge, resource and infrastructure. One can argue that wealth means power. That's what we are aiming for — power to the people!

Instead of shying away from wealth, we are coming together to form autonomous squads. Our aim is to establish democratic governance and counter-economics while spreading our narrative and acquiring resources. In other words, we are establishing squad wealth.

On economy and anti-economy

In the contemporary mindset, the economy is fundamentally profit-driven and based on private property. The neoliberal process of financialization has further shifted the idea of economy to the accumulation of money and capital.

Liberals advocate for a free-market economy that includes state intervention. In reality, liberal economy is anything but free. It is dominated by the logic of profit at all costs and benefits only a select few. This so-called "free market" is actually hypercontrolled, regulated and monopolized by conglomerates.

The oldest known economies of the Neolithic Revolution (early Ur or Göbekli Tepe), had different kinds of economies.

The original form of economy is 'oikonomos' or household management. This economy was alien to the concept of profit and was based on providing the food and shelter required to give society a future.

Economy was born in the shape of a matriarchal culture of giving. In other words, economy was born to produce and fairly redistribute a community's wealth, in order for the community to live well.

What we call 'economy' in modern, liberal terms is the highest form of 'anti-economy' — a negation of the essence of oikonomos itself. Capitalism is anti-economy and anti-society.

One may be enchanted by the dialectic of anti-economy and its shining lies, but its essence is brutal. Liberalism is a master of illusions. It is also the philosophical backbone of capitalist modernity. It sold people the greatest lies humanity has ever faced:

- That the monopoly of resources in the hands of a few means wealth for all.
- That the monopoly of violence in the hands of central authority (the state) means protection for all.
- That there is no other way things can be.

LunarDAO squad

Society has lost its agency and has become unconscious

of itself. Lunarpunk is the story of how humanity will liberate itself from this delirium. We are the guerrilla of this revolutionary struggle. We build tools to empower society.

> *Strike not for a few cents more an hour, because the price of living will be raised faster still, but strike for all you earn, be content with nothing less.*
>
> — Lucy Parsons

Unlike large communities, squads are highly organized. This implies an incredibly efficient ability for action within the framework of their methodology. It's what they're made for.

Such cell-like organizations have always existed for this reason. People have greater economic power when they allocate resources together rather than acting as individuals. Squads can ensure agency and decision making in the different matters that impact our lives.

This needs to be well organized and focused on the well-being, participation and development of everyone. A squad can take away the middleman and organize its own logistics and infrastructure, because there is a purchasing power to create leverage and negotiate prices. A squad can lend support and direct funds to projects that are building tools and infrastructure.

In time, when the squad can use the tools they support and co-own assets that increase in value, they reap the benefits. Squad wealth grows.

LunarDAO squad was founded to ensure that the lunarpunk future is realized. This is the continuation of a privacy-oriented narrative and the beginning of the lunarpunk cycle.

The beginning of any cycle doesn't happen by accident. The lunarpunk cycle is a result of decades of work. This movement has been led by free software developers, cypherpunks, privacy projects, hackers, DAOs, privacy activists and many others.

By focusing on the sovereign structures we want to build and investing in them, by learning from each other on how to opt out, and making this knowledge available to others, we render the state and its surveillance agents obsolete.

Our philosophy, ideology, technology and economic power is our squad wealth. It is our first line of defense in the dark forest of anonymity.

■ Colophon

- ■ Editors   Dr. Paul Dylan-Ennis, Rachel-Rose O'Leary and an anonymous contributor.
- ■ Design   Benoît Ferran.
- ■ Fonts   *Inter Display* by Rasmus Andersson, *Arizona Serif* by Elias Hanzer (Dinamo),
                    FK Roman Text by Florian Karsten, *GT Sectra Regular* by Grilli Type & *iA Writer Duospace* by iA Writer.

- ■ Published by Agorism XXI in September 2023.
- ■ Printed by SYL (Barcelona) on Fedrigoni Arena and Creator Sand papers.
- ■ Contact and additionnal information at: http://agorist.xyz/
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