An An-arkhḗ-ology, or: Preliminary Materials for Any Future Account of the State

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Introduction

Signatures move and displace concepts and signs from one field to another (in this case, from sacred to profane, and vice versa) without redefining them semantically. Many pseudoconcepts belonging to the philosophical tradition are, in this sense, signatures that, like the "secret indexes" of which Benjamin speaks, carry out a vital and determinate strategic function, giving a lasting orientation to the interpretation of signs. Insofar as they connect different times and fields, signatures operate, as it were, as pure historical elements. Foucault's archaeology and Nietzsche's genealogy (and, in a different sense, even Derrida's deconstruction and Benjamin's theory of dialectical images) are sciences of signatures, which run parallel to the history of ideas and concepts, and should not be confused with them. If we are not able to perceive signatures and follow the displacement and movements they operate in the tradition of ideas, the mere history of concepts can, at times, end up being entirely insufficient.

—Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*[1]

[1] Giorgio Agamben, *The Power and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Matteo Mandarini) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 4.

Toward and An-arkhḗ-ology of the State

I offer here an account of the state that is neither historical nor empirical. This is because my approach is indifferent to any concrete state of affairs. The reason for this method is to avoid the reformism and other rationalizations furnished to legitimize the transformation of the state from one shape to another. Therefore, I refrain from engaging any who debate where to draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate exercises of state power. Recourse to a philosophical method further allows me to pose a different problem: how are different states all a symptom of the same disease?

Philosophically considering the state this way prevents state power before it takes root. This is not to say that the state ever ceases to be a problem. The lure of state power has existed as a virtual potential at every moment of humanity. As many anthropologists have long held, the state is not a product of evolution, as in a higher step that necessarily emerges as a solution to increased social complexity, material abundance, or technological advance-ments.[2] Even the most anti-authoritarian non-state societies are stalked by a menacing image of the state, even if they have never seen one—in fact, for them, it is this conceptual knowledge of the problem of the state that is necessary to put in place measures that ward off its emergence.[3] Philosophy, then, is what provides a virtual concept of the state that allows it to be preempted at every turn, especially in those instances that have not yet come into being.

The method I employ is an *an-arkhḗ-ology*. It should not be confused with Michel Foucault's archaeology. His archaeological method stopped too short, focusing squarely on the transcendental foundations of knowledge as crystallized in the archive.[4] A more thorough inquiry into the archive reveals it to be but one concept of a whole constellation whose center of gravity is its *arkhḗ (ἀρχή)*. Broadly meaning both "origin" and "order," pre-Socratics like Anaximander used *arkhḗ* to posit a primary substance from which everything springs forth.[5] The term serves as a sort of foundational riddle for state-builders who construct ever-more arcane hallways dedicated to onto-theology: what is the original something from which our world arises?

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[2] See Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology,* trans. Roberty Hurley and Abe Stein (New York: Zone Books, 1990), and David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

[3] Anticipation-warding off is one of the concepts behind Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's nomadology plateaus in *A Thousand Plateaus,* translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). For an anthropological account, see the chapter on "The Evolution of Egalitarian Society" in Charles Boehm, *Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 171-196.

[4] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

[5] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 119-129.

Plato poses an *arkhḗ* as both metaphysical ground and axiomatic starting point, a principle to which nothing prior exists.[6] Aristotle outlines it in a rather encyclopedic fashion at the beginning of Book 5 of his *Metaphysics*, providing a 6-point definition, whereby:

> 'BEGINNING' [arkhḗ] means (1) that part of a thing from which one would start first, e.g., a line or a road has a beginning in either of the contrary directions. (2) That from which each thing would best be originated, e.g., even in learning we must sometimes begin not from the first point and the beginning of the subject, but from the point from which we should learn most easily. (4) That from which, as an immanent part, a thing first comes to be, e.g., as the keel of a ship and the foundation of a house, while in animals some suppose the heart, others the brain, others some other part, to be of this nature. (4) That from which, not as an immanent part, a thing first comes to be, and from which the movement or the change naturally first begins, as a child comes from its father and its mother, and a fight from abusive language. (5) That at whose will that which is moved is moved and that which changes, e.g., the magistracies in cities, and oligarchies and monarchies and tyrannies, are called *arkhai*, and so are the arts, and of these especially the architectonic arts. (6) That from which a thing can first be known,—this also is called the beginning of the thing, e.g., the hypotheses are the beginnings of demonstrations. (Causes are spoken of in an equal number of senses; for all causes are beginnings.)[7]

The larger project of which this text is a part takes all dimensions of the term to express a shared vision. But the fifth meaning Aristotle outlines, which is tied to political authority, is paramount. That is because *arkhḗ* carries forward mythic traces of the Myceneans, for whom an *árkhōn (ἄρχων)* was a magistrate who ruled over the city, and whose authority was monumentalized in the civic buildings, *arkheîon (ἀρχεῖον)*, and the official documents housed in them (from which we finally arrive at the "archive"). Hence the words "monarch" and "patriarchy," which refer to modes of ruling over others—as well as "architecture" and "hierarchy," which furnish authority with the means for the administration of people and things. *Arkhḗ* thus binds together (1) the metaphysical principle of a substratum or divine founding event with (2) the commanding authority of rulers and their rules. As an *an-arkhḗ-ology*, I rigorously track the virtual potentials of the state as embodied in its foundational *arkhḗ* and it many symptoms, to hasten its withering away.

Anarkkḗological Precursors

A first approximation to *an-arkhḗ-ology* has been richly developed by anarchists. In anarchism's classical period of the 19th century, they identified three archenemies in the church, state, and capital. This put the anarchists in close proximity to socialists and other

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[6] Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2004), 511b; Plato, Phaedrus, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1995), 245c-d.

[7] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W.D. Ross, Volume III of The Works of Aristotle (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1908), 1012b-1213a.

utopians, who were riding the modernist push to bring a better world into existence. Usually forgotten, then, are the anti-social elements that did not blueprint a better future, such as the Russian nihilists or the regicides, who adopted a fiercely negative orientation to end mon-archist rule—refusing to suggest anything to replace the empty throne. By our time, anarchism now questions all forms of authority, such as classism, gender, sexuality, racism, anti-Blackness, colonialism, eco-devastation, and ableism. Yet in the field of philosophy, anarchism is regularly treated as an extreme liberalism and conversations thus devolve into odd debates over possessive individualism, non-domination, and pacifist ethics. Even worse, anarchists themselves often revert to consent, consensus, and shared rule—all of which are based on the liberal *arkhḗ* of the contract. While the impulse to question all authority is crucial, an *an-arkhḗ* must push past the stop-overs to which anarchists retreat for comfort.[8]

A similar challenge emerges in discourses of democracy. At the core of democracy is the *arkhḗ* of the *krátos (κρᾰ́τος)* of the *dêmos (δῆμος)*, which is commonly supported through republicanism and popular sovereignty. The target of an *an-arkhḗ-ological* investigation is how the *dêmos* is made into a *dēmokratíā (δημοκρᾰτῐ́ᾱ)*, locating how the violent might that defines the state—*krátos*—is woven into social life. As such, "the dominion" of "the people" is used as the ground upon which state rule most often secures its legitimacy. *Dêmos* can stand for a territory, the people, or even a people's assembly. What appeals to the statutory power of "the people" miss is that the constitution of the *dêmos* is itself an act of state *(krátos)*, on which their claims rest.

It would be a mistake to imagine these words as holding fixed meaning over time. Each term is but a constellation within a "sematic field," whose sense can only be understood through the patterns it establishes with other terms.[9] Law *(nómos, νόμος)*, justice *(díkē, δῐ́κη)*, and power *(krátos, κρᾰ́τος)* all shift, and can be understood only through inter-relation.[10] Jean-Pierre Vernant turns to Greek tragic theater as a demonstration of this understanding. He points to the period of 534-530 B.C.E., when popular tribunals are instituted in Athens to judge contests in tragedy: a shift away from informal noble arbitration of culture to a contemporaneous transformation in a system of popular justice that established the city as city, ruled through formal law.[11] Tragedy thus becomes the means through which problems of law are elaborated socially, tensions are teased out, and the connection between laws *(nómoi)* and justice *(díkē)* is forged.[12]

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[8] This is not meant to minimize the crucial work of sexual violence advocates. In fact, it is meant to confirm a belief held by many of them: that consent *does not go far enough*. Just as anti-discrimination laws individualize harm, necessarily bracketing out larger systemic issues, feminist philosophers such as Carole Pateman have long identified how the sexual contract equates to contractual sexual submission.

[9] See page 273 of Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Greek Tragedies: Problems of Interpretation," in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds., *The Structuralist Controversy*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1972), 273-289.

[10] Ibid, 275.

[11] Ibid, 278-279.

[12] Ibid, 279.

Antigone remains an exemplary tragic playing out of the tensions of law. The conventional distinction is between humans making their own laws *(nómoi)* in opposition to that of non-human nature *(phúsis, φῠ́σῐς)*, but a crucial turning point arrives as Antigone denies her uncle Creon's authority as chief of state.[13] Before long, three different forms of *nómos* are visible, each grounded in a different sense of *díkē*: the laws Creon issues on behalf of the popular tribunals of the city, Antigone's evocation of a justice of the underworld, and Zeus's (humanly) incomprehensible rules of tragedy as recited by the chorus, in which "nothing good happens for humanity without some admixture of misfortune."[14] The point of tragedy is not to resolve any of these contradictions. Rather, *Antigone* reveals a deeper challenge grinding away beneath: that the problems of the law are also problems of the family, and that although women are excluded from being political beings, they prove to be the only decisive figures in tragic matters of law.[15] The putative irrationality of women had been used to keep them captive within the house, reduced to human filiative stock captured in war or traded for the sealing of the bonds between families in "the exchange of women."[16] The centrality of the excluded-woman will only be amplified with the rise of *oikonomía (οἰκονομῐ́ᾱ)*, in which the administration of the household *(oikos, οἶκος)* mutates into the science of society now known as *economics*.

Perhaps Jean-Pierre Vernant's most central claim about the Greeks arises from the abstract concept of *isonomía*. With this, he argues that the Greeks of antiquity transitioned from the metaphysics of mythology that underwrote monarchy to a democratic *pólis* ruled by the citizen,

> a coherent system, governed by numerical relations and correspondences that permitted the citizens to declare themselves "the same," to enter into relations of mutual equality, symmetry, and reciprocity, and together to form a unified cosmos. The polis was seen as a homogeneous whole, without hierarchy, without rank, without differentiation. Arche was no longer concentrated in a single figure at the apex of the social structure, but was distributed equally throughout the entire realm of public life, in that common space where the city had its center, its *meson* [intermediate space]. Sovereignty passed from one group to another, from one individual to another, in a regular cycle, so that command and obedience, rather than being opposed to each other as two absolutes, became the two inseparable aspects of one reversible relationship.[17]

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[13] Ibid, 280; *Antigone*, 449-461.

[14] Ibid, 281.

[15] Ibid, 282.

[16] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

[17] Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 101.

Lekane with gigantomacy scene. Stuttgart Group, 4th c. B.C.E. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

Perhaps this is the birth of "politics," emerging both in concept and word from this new *pólis*. Its attributes were identified by Vernant as a new form of relation, one built on "mutual equality, symmetry, and reciprocity" that allowed citizens to simultaneously inhabit the position of commander and subservient. This is a transformation in geometry from the citadel of the Acropolis to a secularized physical space that was common, public, and egalitarian,

"symmetrically organized about a center correspond[ing] to certain images of the social order."[18]

While Vernant holds that democracy arrives after a journey out of myth to physics, it is equally clear that such a shift does not undo the *arkhḗ* of state power, but only reassembles it on firmer ground. The task is laid out even more clearly in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. In this book, Aristotle is concerned with addressing the question of science's *arkhḗ*, its first principles. This leads him to the analogy of an army in retreat, with the *arkhḗ* appearing from soldiers in the grip of fear—"stopped by first one man making a stand and then another, until the original formation has been restored"—almost as if the fleeing soldiers were a chaotic substance that could be made to obey the commanding officer's *arkhḗ* one-by-one, until full order is restored.[19] The implication is that the positing of a grounding substance (*ousia, hypokeimenon, hypostasis,* or *subiectum*), even something as seemingly egalitarian as a *dêmos*, also calls into existence a matching *arkhḗ* that rules over it.

There have been sophisticated attempts to defend an anarchist conception of democracy. Jacques Rancière argues that the constitutive act requires a "division of the sensible," through which he describes how every *pólis* draws a boundary between those whose speech is entertained, such as citizens, and those who lack the standing to be heard, such as slaves, women, foreigners, or beasts.[20] Within the already-sensible, only "policing" occurs, which he specifies as the administration or distribution of people and things.[21] "Politics" only appears in the insurgent act of demanding the "part who has no part" of the sensible.[22] This is appealing to many anarchists because, like Jacques Derrida or Stathis Gourgouris, he presents democracy as constantly under deconstruction in an ongoing struggle to live up to its own axiom of equality. Yet Deleuze and Guattari argue, in contrast, that the heart of every state pumps to the rhythm at which it adds and subtracts axioms (with social democrats adding protections and libertarians stripping them away in the movement of re- and de-territorialization). In the final analysis, then, democracy cannot remain standing in the face of *an-arkhḗ-ology*. Even the endless self-questioning of what constitutes a *dêmos* entailed in the most ambitious forms of democracy is not enough.[23] It goes without saying that many democracies have considered a small selection of privileged men with common interests to be worthy of constituting a *dêmos*. Yet democracy's universalist assumptions are no less nefarious: its ongoing deconstruction reveals how, even when democracy contains a plurality, it remains in the shadow of a supremely flexible *arkhḗ* whose *krátic* strength is derived from its ability to accommodate everything and nothing.

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[18] Ibid, 126-127.

[19] Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, trans. G.R.G. Mure, Volume 1 of The Works of Aristotle (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1926), 100a. Also see Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 39-40.

[20] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

[21] Ibid, Chapter 2, "Wrong: Politics and Policing."

[22] Ibid, Chapters 1 and 4, "The Beginning of Politics" and "From Archipolitics to Metapolitics."

[23] The *deh/da of Proto-Indo-European *deh-mos and the Mycenean Greek da-mo means "to divide" or "a part," making the *partage* of the *dêmos* intrinsic to the very notion of a people.

The closest previous thought has come to ungrounding *politics* is in the thought of Reiner Schürmann. He pursues a thoroughly an-archic thought that deconstructs both the commanding and commencing sides of *arkhḗ* (and the Roman *principium*) that take "science," "God," or "a vision of the world" to authorize the principles of the "authority of God or the magisterium of the Church," "the authority of Conscience," "authority of Reason," "the social Instinct," "historical Progress," "Civilization," or "Business."[24] There are numerous moments when this deconstruction has interrupted history by introducing action characterized by an "absence of any principle of legitimization," namely, "the citizens' unions in North America around 1776, the 'popular societies' in Paris between 1789 and 1793, the Commune of 1871, the soviets of 1905 and 1917, the Democracy of Councils in Germany in 1918."[25]

Crucial to Schürmann is how each of these introduced a caesura that suspended the operations of the *arkhḗ*, preventing authority from rushing immediately in to fill its place. In this sense, his argues that classical anarchists are still trapped in images of thought that turn back into *arkhḗ* (Bakunin: "the substitution of Science for the domination of man by man"; Proudhon: "spontaneous life," "passion," "the revolt of life against science").[26] Yet Schürmann does not leave thought just the task of metaphysical ground-clearing, as if thinking alone could make *arkhḗ* unthinkable. In channeling the spirit of anarchism, he praises the above-noted revolutionary events, lauding them for having "invaded the political field and for brief lapses, before one ontic origin could replace another," which "set action free."[27] These moments constitute an interval, a space where the *arkhḗ* of the previous epoch has loosened and a new one has not yet established itself. The anarchy of thought is manifest within each *interregnum* as it unfolds. Such refusal is exercised in modes of thought and action that only exist during the suspension of all *arkhaí*: an anarchy whose powers reside in affirming the rupture.[28]

The Long March of the State

My preference is for structuralist thinkers, for whom an allegiance to materialism is inescapable. Details from the past overflow nearly every page. But I am an unreliable narrator of history. For as Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet contend in their dialogues, history is too deeply intertwined with state thought.[29] History carries with it "a whole race of judges" who rule over history like a court where Pure Reason or Pure Faith carry the day.[30] Deleuze and Parnet's immediate target is state philosophy, which proceeds slowly through the accumula-

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[24] Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, 90; 91.

[25] Ibid, 91.

[26] Ibid, 6; 292.

[27] Ibid, 91.

[28] Michele Garau, "Without Why: The Existential A Priori of Destituent Action," *Ill Will*, October 2021, https://illwill.com/without-why.

[29] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1-14.

[30] Ibid, 9.

tion of dull commentaries, effectively censoring anything too original.[31] This intersects with Schürmann's anarchic method, which takes as its point of departure a refusal of the historical mode of philosophy's reduction of thinking to a series of footnotes on previous works.

Beneath history, Deleuze and Parnet find a superior materialism. Its material substance is becomings that are too wild and too abstract to live up to history's forensic need to get the facts right.[32] This alternative thought is embodied by nomads, to whom anthropologist Pierre Clastres dedicated his "history of people without a history," *Society Against the State*.[33] Nomad thought travels at absolute speed, only skimming the surface of concrete states of affairs, to avoid getting bogged down in them. This does not mean that such thought must outrun its enemies—"one must be like a taxi, queue, line of flight, traffic jam, bottleneck, green and red lights, slightly paranoid, brushes with the police."[34] Its absolute speed glides between abstract differentials, finding those inflection points that allow one to synthesize different relationships ("with women, plants, animals and metals...") than those that are codified by the state.[35] These relationships allow the nomad to find it purest expression in a permanent engine of change, the war machine, whose primary task is "to shake the model of the state apparatus."[36]

After clarifying that, it can be more plainly stated the point of this project is to contribute to the nomadic war machine's arsenal in its attack on the state. Hence, I can now explain the uneasy inclusion of archconservative Georges Dumézil.[37] The centrality of Dumézil's *Mitra-Varuna* to this project (as well as other structuralist accounts of state thought) is like Karl Marx's use of the classical economists in *Capital* or Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's approach to Freud in *Anti-Oedipus*. The former helps launch "a critique of political economy," the latter serves as "the Martin Luther and Adam Smith of psychiatry" —both of which provide metaphysical sketches of the reactionary forces one is up against.[38] To put it bluntly, I do not invite Dumézil (or the Greeks and Romans of Antiquity, for that matter) into the text as a friend, but as an adversary.

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[31] Ibid, 12-16.

[32] Ibid, 30-32; 37.

[33] Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1987).

[34] Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, 32.

[35] Ibid, 32.

[36] Ibid, 32.

[37] Georges Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty*, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

[38] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Helen R. Lane, and Mark Seem (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 271.

Figure 1. Myths of States and Nomads

	State Pole	**State Pole**
Power	Conquest	Contract
	Complementarity (Dialectical Relationship)	
Figure	Magician-King	Jurist-Priest
Capacities	Binder/Bond/Debt *Nexum*	Pact/Law/Faith *Mutuum*
Appearance	One-Eyed Creator	One-Armed Organizer
Technology	Emits Signs that Capture, Ties Knots at a Distance	Gifts Legal Rights and Technology, Wields the Law and the Tool
Relationship	Capture	Give Order to Violence
War	Sends Warriors into Battle (Not Himself)	Gives War Laws (Lays Out Field, Imposes Discipline, Subordinates to Politics)
Capture	Encasts the War Machine (Dazzling, Stupor)	Appropriates the War Machine (Institutionalizes & Professionalizes Violence)
Battle	Reverses the Tide of Battle (Suspends Weapons, Throws Net)	Wages Peace (Forces Concessions, Codifies Imbalances)
Coding	Shifting Totalitarian Economics	Stable Liberal Economics
Epithets	Warlike, Bloody, Bad, Terrible, Mad, Proud, Cruel, Ruthless	Peaceful, Saintly, Good, Just, Fair, Pious, Kind, Generous

	Nomad
Power	War Machine
	Evades Dialectical Capture
Figure	Warrior
Capacities	Unbinder, Betrayer
Appearance	Brutal, Violent, Excessive
Technology	Arms with Weapons, Adorns with Protective Charms
Relationship	Minoritarian Lines of Flight
War	Irregular Guerrilla Nonbattle
Capture	Wards Off State Cooption
Battle	Decomposes States

A table outlining the attributes of the two poles of sovereignty and the nomadic war machine following from Georges Dumézil's *Mitra-Varuna* and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus.*

Figure 2. Deformations of the State

	Archaic	Modern	Social	Present
Pole	Magician-King	Publicity	Spectacle	Empire
Pole	Jurist-Priest	Police	Biopower	Metropolis

An abridged categorization of the state's two poles, each of which combine in a 'strange complementarity' with its dialectical other to form the signature of the state.

The abstract lines that nomad thought uses to trace the state do not follow a single unbroken evolutionary development. "The state was not formed in progressive stages," Deleuze and Guattari contend, "it appears fully armed, a master stroke executed all at once; the primordial *Urstaat*, the eternal model of everything the State wants to be and desires."[39] Rather than offering a developmental model with stages of development, I instead follow *arkhé-ological* types that persist across time. In the parlance of Deleuze, the *arkhé* is what every state virtually insists on, independent of the contingencies of any given situation. One should not take any particular *arkhé* as more advanced than any other, only that they are deformations of the same abstract concepts that subsist beneath all state forms.

What follows are the first steps in a longer inquiry into the figures of the sovereign. It begins with the terrible magician-king, whose presence is repressed by the mechanical operations of procedural democracy. This is not to say that he hides much below the surface, as his epithets are just as common today as ever: excessive, brash, violent, mad, ruthless, cruel, and irrational. It would be a fatal mistake to affirm his opposite, however, as if the restoration of order, measured action, fairness, impartiality, or generosity were a more legitimate exercise of power. The magician-king and jurist-priests are complementary doubles. Even when they are in relative conflict, they do so as dialectical antinomies that ultimately reinforce the absolute power of the state.[40] The greatest contribution of additional work on *arkhé* may be found through unexpected admixtures of the two poles, in which faith in the virtues proves fatal.

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[39] Ibid, 271.

[40] See the chapter on the death-state in Eugene Holland, *Nomad Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

1. The Magician-King

1.0   All states dream of capture. This makes *bondage* one of its two modes of relation.

1.1   The paradigmatic form of bondage is debt-slavery, *nexum*, literally a chaining or linking of forms. The fetters of a binding nexus can be expressed in a great variety of ways: speech, kinship, money, faith, and more. Even as certain expressions are abolished, the history of such bondage is not the progression of freedom but the invention of new forms.

1.2   The *arkhe-ic* discourse of economics emerged from technical concerns following the "lust to dominate" in cultures obsessed with maximizing status.[41] As the Latin title *dominus* later expresses, the first texts on *oíko-nomíā (οἰκο-νομίᾱ)* were practical guides on bondage for ruling men, proposing how best to dominate wife, children, slaves, and property.

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[41] *Lubidinem dominandi* in Sallust, *The Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 2.2, Perseus Digital Library, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0123%3Achapter%3D2 and Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei*, 1 pr, The Latin Library, https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/augustine/civ1.shtml; *Cupidine dominandi* in Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.10, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0077%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D10.

1.0.0 *To imagine having the hair of a swine brings about dangers that are violent and of the sort to which this animal is liable, I mean, the swine. But to have the hair of a horse signifies slavery and labor [even] for those who are well-born. And, moreover, for slaves it puts them into bondage. For a horse's mane is typically bound.*

—Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 1.20[42]

1.0.1   There are as many forms of bondage as there have been social formations. Yet comparative work between slave societies, feudal serf societies, and other class societies remains imperative. Max Weber famously stated that "the ancient plantation consumed slaves the way a modern blast furnace consumes coal."[43] The scale of slavery in the Roman Empire appears to have been massive, likely demanding the capture or importation of 250,000 slaves per year—a number extrapolated from a tax Augustus passed to support the *vigiles* in firefighting, apprehending thieves, capturing fugitive slaves, and putting down riots.[44] Therefore "no slavery, no state" remains an essential phrase for understanding governance, especially if we take it to mean not just chattel slavery but the various form of bondage that reduce people to draft animals.[45]

The work of Moses Finley remains canonical, even as subsequent scholars have filled out a competing historical record and disputed many of his conclusions. He outlined analytic criteria for distinguishing various "societies with slaves" from "slave societies" utterly dependent on slavery.[46] This leads him to the audacious claim that there have only been five genuine slave societies: classical Greek and Rome, the colonial Caribbean and Brazil, and the American South.[47] What remains in dispute is whether slavery needs to be studied as socially embedded, or if it is a transcultural phenomenon with analytic categories that confidently cut across all cases. Economic historians are more inclined to take slavery as a set of material conditions that are not limited to a handful of cases. For instance, David M. Lewis has argued that within the Eastern Mediterranean alone, Sparta, Crete, Attica, Iron Age Israel, eight to seventh century B.C.E. Assyria, seventh to fifth century B.C.E. Babylonia, the Persian Empire,

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[42] Page 73 of "Text and Translation," in *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* by Daniel E. Harris-McCoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 44-407.

[43] Max Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, translated by R.I. Frank (London and New York: Verso Press, 2013), 398.

[44] Cassius Dio, Roman History, Book LV, 31, Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/dio_cassius-roman_history/1914/pb_LCL083.475.xml?readMode=recto; Walter Scheidel, "The Roman Slave Supply," in Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 287–310

[45] James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 156.

[46] Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 79.

[47] Ibid, 9.

and   Punic Carthage were all slave societies.[48] Further comparative work includes the Sarmatians from second through fourth century C.E., eighteenth to nineteenth century Northwest Coast Native Americans, the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century, and nineteenth century Dahomey, to name a few.[49] From the perspective of that world, the Romans were so accustomed to slavery that encountering a society without it was rare, and thus, remarkable.[50]

Although it did not invent it, the state ensured that over three-quarters of humans lived in bondage as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century.[51] "Little more than two centuries ago, personal bondage was the prevailing form of labor in most of the world": a stunning image of the ubiquity of subjugation that led Seymour Drescher to argue that "freedom, not slavery, was the peculiar institution."[52]

1.0.2   Consider this: the eighteenth century was a highpoint for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with almost eighty thousand Africans annually submitted to the life, death, and terror of the hold of slave ships. Many Native Americans engaged in slavery, a practice they extended to Europeans after they arrived. The triangle trade meant that slaves far outnumbered free peoples in many parts of the Americas. The same held true for parts of Africa, whose system of slavery was not always as severe but included so many millions that there was always an ample supply to be spread across the Islamic and New worlds. The Ottoman Empire practiced its own form of slavery; throughout their empire, they employed an extensive tributary tax system imposed on all non-Muslims called *haraç*—a word that has been revived to describe the extractive violence of International Monetary Fund structural adjustment schemes. Most Russians were serfs, living in bondage to owners who bought, sold, whipped, and conscripted them. And across Asia, such as in India, there were millions of farmworker slaves while many peasants endured rigid debt bondage.[53]

Many imagine that everything has changed; that freedom has overtaken enslavement, liberty bondage, and reason superstition. But both wars of conquest and overtures of peace are motivated by the same realization: "that men as well as animals can be domesticated."[54]

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[48] David M. Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context, C.800-146 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[49] Noel Lenski, "Framing the Question: What Is a Slave Society?" in Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron, eds., *What is a Slave Society?: The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15-57.

[50] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. John Bostock, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D24.

[51] The details of which are outlined further below in section 1.0.2. Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2006), 2.

[52] Seymour Drescher, *From Slavery to Freedom: Comparative Studies in the Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), 158.

[53] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, 2.

[54] V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (London: Watts & Company, 1936), 134.

Why defeat an enemy when they can be made to work? This is a discovery essential to ancient industry on par with the domestication of animals. This comes to define a form of violence inherent in all states. The blood of the bond, sealed through terror, burned directly onto the flesh.

Such naked violence is exemplified in Southeast Asian padi states, empires built from rice. In *The Art of Not Being Governed* and subsequently *Against the Grain,* anarchist academic James C. Scott describes the advent of such a state.[55] Setting the scene, Scott details the alluvial plains where he says that the simplest states formed in fertile valleys. The key to Scott's account is his political economy of their emergence, which emphasizes the mass cultivation of rice. Among the many aspects of the padi state specific to Southeast Asia, there are two more general characteristics that contribute to a broader definition of statecraft: first, captivity, the result of a heavy reliance on forced labor secured through raiding and trading; and second, projectivity, whereby visibility is power through the ability to act at a distance. Abstracting these characteristics from what is historically specific to padi states in Southeast Asia, it becomes clear that the first basic process of governance is not cultivation but conquest.

1.0.3 *If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of Black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment.*

—Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*[56]

1.1.0 *The words "nexa" and "nectier" are used in the original [of Cicero's* Republic*]. And at the first glance, the passage, connecting it with the well known custom of keeping debtors in chains, as well as the memorable occasion which produced this insurrectionary movement, would appear to declare, that all kinds of bondage for debt were abolished in future. In early periods, whoever was unable to pay his debts, was adjudged by a decree of the prætor, to discharge them in personal services: for which purpose his person was delivered to his creditor; whose slave in every sense of the word he thus became, until the debt was discharged. A debtor thus situated was termed "addictus" or sentenced. Livy, vi. 36., relates "that those against whom judgments had been given, (addictos) were led out daily in herds from the Forum, to the mansions of the patricians, which were filled with enchained debtors: and that wherever a patrician dwelt, there was a private prison." That all debtors were subject to actual bonds, appears from every indebted person under voluntary judgment, being called "nexus," meaning linked or chained; and probably when judgment was passed, debtors were delivered in that condition to the creditors. But "nexus" changed its meaning, as the word "bond" has done in our language, where we bind ourselves only with forms. The urgent*

[55] James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[56] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008), 6.

necessity of the plebeians, arising out of the exactions of the patricians, obliged them to borrow money at usury; and upon such occasions, for money weighed out to him "per æs et libram," before witnesses, the borrower pledged his person and liberty to the lender as security for the debt. This voluntary act, which was equivalent to a modern confession of judgment, constituted the debtor a "nexus;" before the period of payment had expired, at which time only he was liable to fetters. Upon the occasion of the insurrection mentioned in the passage; a young man of respectable plebeian family, C. Publilius, surrendered himself to Papirius, a patrician usurer, in the place of his father who had failed to redeem himself from his "nexus." Rejecting the infamous propositions made to him, Papirius caused him to be cruelly scourged. This transaction having roused the people, the senate was obliged to consent to the liberation of all persons who had become "nexi" by their voluntary act, and to order the practice to be discontinued in future.

—GW Featherstonhaugh, *The Republic of Cicero*[57]

1.1.1   In Roman Antiquity, incurring and discharging debt obligations is not just an issue of material exchange. The ritual of *nexum* followed the formal procedure of *par aes et libram* ("with bronze and balance"), a transfer of property that required five witnesses and a *libripens* (the ceremonial scale-holder). "This is probably best viewed not as a relationship between two individuals, as we would today," Peter Meijes Tiersma argues, "but rather as a passage of one person into the status of debtor."[58] The reason he gives is that:

> the will of the debtor and creditor had little to do with the matter: one person who injured another could by this act become a debtor. The debtor was seen as the bonds-man of the creditor, indicating that the essence of *nexum* was not that the creditor had certain rights as against the debtor, but that the debtor entered into a particular status. This status did not end when he paid his obligation to the creditor, since it was not in essence a relationship with the creditor.[59]

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that ritual of *par aes et libram* created a unilateral incorporeal ontological transformation in the debtor. The debtor passes from one social class through an official speech act, akin to the ruling declarations of a sovereign or judge, while the creditor remains the same.

A less formal means of debt available to citizens was *stipulatio*. Viva voce a creditor would ask a question that concluded with *spondesne*, such as *estertium decem miliamihi dari spondesne?* "do you promise to give me ten thousand sesterces?", followed by the debtor's response of *spondeo* ("I promise").[60] The ritual evolved to allow synonyms like *promittere*,

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[57] Footnote on page 106 of G.W. Featherstonhaugh's translation of Marcus Tulius Cicero, *The Republic of Cicero* (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1829), 106.

[58] Peter Meijes Tiersma, "Rites of Passage: Legal ritual in Roman law and anthropological analogues," *Journal of Legal History* 9 (1988), 13.

[59] Ibid, 13.

[60] Ibid, 8.

and later, the question-and-answer format was replaced by intent.[61]

1.1.2 *In the presence of five witnesses the libripens weighs out to the borrower the corresponding amount of raw metal, and the lender at the same time declares in solemn words that the borrower is now in his debt (*<u>dare damnas esto</u>*). The borrower is now under an obligation to repay. He is said to be 'nexus' to his creditor, i.e. he has directly pledged his own person for repayment of the loan, and thus stands already in precisely the same position as a judgment debtor. [...]*

Execution proceeds directly with inexorable rigour against the person of the debtor. He falls into the power of his creditor, who may bind him and cast him into chains. After having thrice publicly invited some one to come forward and release him, the creditor may—in default of any one appearing, and after the lapse of sixty days—regard the debtor as his slave, and may either kill him or sell him 'trans Tiberim,' i.e. into a foreign country, say, Etruria. If several creditors have claims upon one and the same debtor, the law allows them to cut the debtor into pieces, and provides that a mistake in the division shall in no wise prejudice their rights. [...]

The rigour of the private law finds its counterpart in the rigour of the family power. Within his family the paterfamilias is an absolute sovereign; he has power over the life and liberty of any member of the household. The only external checks on the exercise of his legal rights are furnished, not by the law, but by religion and custom.
—*Rudolph Sohm,* <u>The Institutes of Roman Law</u>[62]

1.2.0   "The freedom of some could not be imagined without the servitude of others" in Antiquity, Austin and Vidal-Niquet note of the Greeks, explaining that the two "were not thought of as contradictory, but as complementary and interdependent."[63] In this way, commanding slaves was not just a luxury, but an expected part of everyday life for a Greek citizen. With the character of an Athenian helping set up a new colony in Crete, Plato suggests in his *Laws* that every citizen should be afforded "as far as possible, with a sufficient number of suitable slaves who can help him in what he has to do."[64] And in Aristophanes' comedy in which women take over government and pass sweeping social reforms, the Greek utopian imagination wishes up a world of 'everything for everyone' that does away with the rich and poor, *by equally distributing slaves among them.*[65]

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[61] Ibid, 8.

[62] Rudolph Sohm, *The Institutes of Roman Law*, trans. James Crawford Ledlie, 4th edition (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1892), §10, 26-27.

[63] M.M. Austin and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction*, trans. M.M. Austin (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1986), 19.

[64] Plato, *Laws*, 777b-e, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.6.vi.html.

[65] Aristophanes, *Women in Congress*, 590-605, trans. Amanda Krauss and Jess Miner, http://www.women-in-congress.com/.

1.2.1   Slavery, however, is more than being the property of another. The "property" approach to slavery goes like this: "slavery is the fact that one man is the property or possession of another."[66] Implied in the definition is an economic account of slavery as a system of forced labor. This is echoed by Aristotle when he called the slave "a tool with a soul" and when Varro contrasts "talking tools" with inarticulate cattle and mute vehicles as essentials for agriculture.[67] Both are true: punishing fieldwork and the murderous labor of mining has often been secured through slavery, and slaves were subject to being sold as commodities. And there is little dispute that slavery was the engine that powered the Greeks, Romans, and other "great" civilizations. But this is as far as those steeped in modern economics can see. "High status," Dimitris Kyrtatas writes, "did not depend on profit maximization but rather *on honor maximization*."[68]

Classical economics enters political discussion in the 5th century B.C.E.[69] For the next half-millennium, all major schools of Greek thought will develop their own treatises. Unlike modern societies, economics was not taken to be an isolated sphere obeying its own laws, unified around independent concepts for study.[70] Their economics was fully social-embedded, organized around a shifting set of concerns. Karl Polanyi names four: reciprocity, redistribution, trade-based exchange, and managing the household.[71] Generalizing further, to the extent to which "economics" was a concern, it was not about wealth-generation but proper consumption. In one writer's estimate, Xenophon's *Economics* contains "astonishingly little" about production and "too much about an orderly way of living."[72]

Slavery and patriarchy were written into the earliest writing on economics. The customary rules found in these texts were based on an "uncritical acceptance of enslavement and the subjection of women"; they expressed a preference for "a valorization of self-sufficiency of the household (autarky) and a degree of scorn about market trading."[73] Xenophon further attests to the slave's abject status when he suggests that they be treated as domesticated animals.[74] Taking the comparison with domestic animals one step further, Aristotle says that

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[66] H.J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1900), 7.

[67] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1161b, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd edition (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 131; Varro, *On Agriculture*, 1.17, Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/varro-agriculture/1934/pb_LCL283.225.xml?readMode=recto

[68] Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, "Slavery and Economy in the Greek World," in Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds. *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 96; my emphasis.

[69] "Dotan Leshem, "What Did the Ancient Greeks Mean by *Oikonomia*?," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30:1 (2016), 227.

[70] Austin and Vidal-Niquet, *Economic and Social History*, 7-8.

[71] Ibid, 8.

[72] Kyrtatas, "Slavery and Economy," 96.

[73] Leshem, "What did the Ancient Greeks?," 228.

[74] *Economics* 13.9 and 13 broadly, in Xenophon, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, vol. 4, trans. E.C. Marchant and O.J. Todd, Perseus Digital Library,

some people are by their very nature slaves: their soul demanding it, their body benefitting from it.[75]

1.2.2   Addressed to male citizens, economics texts took the term literally (*oíko-nomíā, οἴκο-νομῐ́ᾱ*), outlining values and practical principles for running agricultural estates. The house is more than just the structure of the dwelling (*dómos, δόμος; domus*), even though its name carries with it the dominating power of a master (*kúrios, κῡ́ρῐος; dominus*). The household here stands in for lines of filial descent based around a house—such as the extended *Alcmaeónidae génos*, *gens Julii*, or House of Medici—with a master's wife, children, slaves, and property projecting like spokes from his centralized power. Moreover, as a mere appendage of the house, slaves lacked a personal identity, confirmed by Philostratus's description of those "who had neither name of his own, nor parentage, nor city, nor inheritance"—those for whom "not a name is supplied anywhere."[76]

To put an even finer point on it by rendering it in Latin, economics began as theory for guiding the practice of *domination*.

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Xen.+Ec.+13&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0212.

[75] *Politics* 1.1254a-b in Aristotle, *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 21, trans. H. Rackam, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Aristot.+Pol.+1.1254a&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0058,

[76] Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius,* 8.7.xii, trans. F.C. Conybeare, Livius, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/philostratus-life-of-apollonius/philostratus-life-of-apollonius-8.7.xi-xvi/.
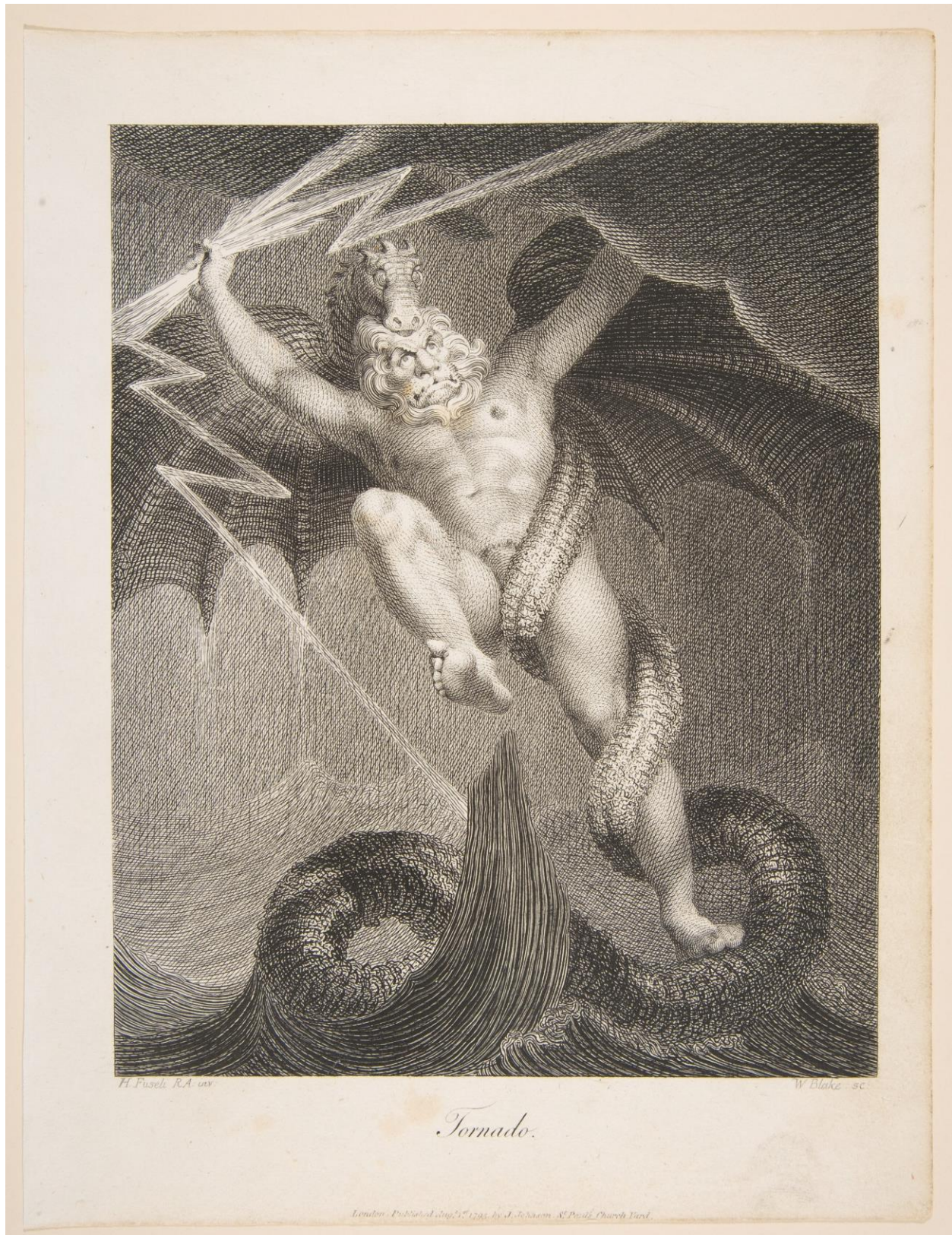
Henry Fuseli (engraved by William Blake), *Tornado-Zeus Battling Typhon*, 1795, from Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

1.3   A state is more than the administration of people and things. It demands a whole aesthetic economy of glory expressed in arcane liturgies and pompous ceremony.

1.4   Visibility means death in the state's war of appearances. It magically dazzles subjects at a distance through its capacity to over-see, over-hear, and overwhelm.

1.3.0   The terrible tyranny of the state arrives in a flash of lightning.[77] It is not a mundane institution just as any other but something far worse, something "too terrible, sudden, convincing, and 'other'" to be anticipated, let alone repelled.[78] Its founders come from some heavenly realm, memorialized as radiant gods whose bodies shine "with such an intense brilliance that no human eye can bear it."[79] The splendor of these beings makes it so they are visible to mortals only by allowing a sliver of their majesty to shine through as a mist, a bird, a star, or a rainbow.[80] Even then, spectators are struck with *thámbos*, stunning them into terrified reverence. There is the story of Anchises, who, upon seeing Aphrodite's "neck and lovely eyes," reacts with utter terror—and is later blinded by one of her thunderbolts.[81]

The thunderbolt embodies an essential sovereign function of *dazzling*—to "fascinate, terrorize, and immobilize."[82] In this sense, the paradigmatic dazzler is not Aphrodite but the one-eyed night sky gods who use their omnipotent power as magician-emperors to wield supernatural otherworldly powers that dazzle through strength and will—attacking, inspired, unpredictable, frenzied, swift, violent, terrible, demanding, totalitarian, and warlike.[83] They are chaotic agents of disorder, such as the Luperci, who move with the dizzying speed of *celeritas*, warlike Romulus, thundering Jupiter, defender of light Ahura Mazdāh, god of victory *Wôdhanaz-Odhinn, the shining Lug, and one-eyed Horatius Cocles.

1.4.0   *The ancient Greeks were connoisseurs of fear. The Greek language offered wide-ranging terminology to calibrate different shades and effects:* déos, *straightforward terror, fear, or apprehension;*[84] phóbos, *fear that impels panic and battle rout;* ekplektos, *shock that strikes one dumb. Fear can be* krúoeis, *chilling, freezing, numbing; or* smerdaléos, *a huge and terrifying adjective—in origin it appears to have been a dreadful sound, such as the crushing of bones or gnashing of teeth, and is used of the thunder of Zeus. Fear turns warriors green,*

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[77] B2§17 of Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58.

[78] Ibid, B2§17, 58.

[79] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 44. It may be worth noting that the goddess Demeter denounced her dazzling *thámbos* when Persephone was stolen from her by Hades, and worked as a slave nurturer in Eleusina, supposedly leading to a great famine as she was the mother earth goddess. The author would like to thank Dāna Papachristou for this suggestion.

[80] Ibid, 44-45.

[81] 181 of Hymn 5 to Aphrodite, in Homer, *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis, 2nd edition (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 47.

[82] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 68.

[83] Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*.

[84] *Déos* is also closely related to a wonderous or cowardly reaction of overwhelming astonishment; and *ekplektos*, to be taken by surprise.

jabbers their teeth, trembles their limbs. It can be deinós, *dread or awe-inspiring, a term used frequently of gods, and a feeble echo of which is captured in our dinosaur—the dread lizard.*

—Caroline Alexander, "The Dread Gorgon: The Head of Medusa, in Myth and in Memory"[85]

1.4.1   Crucial to slavery is the institution of the overseer (*ēpítropos, ἐπίτροπος*). Slaves worked in all sorts of jobs in Antiquity, as farmers, slaves, miners, blacksmiths, sex workers, merchants, bankers, doctors, gladiators, city administrators, or even tax inspectors.[86] But the overseer role is reserved for an elite class of slaves given the role of commanding others. *Ēpítropos* appears throughout Greek writing on economics. Antisthenes, the author of the first economics, penned a guide on them. Evangelus, Pericles's overseer, excels in the *oīkonomia* of "accounting, storing reserves, calculating expenses, estimating and organizing budgets."[87] And in Xenophon's *Economics*, the success of overseers depends on their ability to command (*arkhēin*) as well as to distribute.[88]

1.4.2   *There is not a single epic warrior who has not trembled on some occasion. This does not mean that he forever merits the title of* tresas. *Of course he quaked with fear. And then, always, in the end he overcame himself, all the stronger because of this instant of terror. Or to put it another way, fear can be transcended, but without fear there is no epic. There is not a single great warrior who has not one day felt terror quake throughout his whole being, as if fear were the hero's qualifying test. [...] The coward, then, is afraid (Paris, Thersites, and Dolon when he confronts Diomedes), but so is the man of valor. To be more precise: so is the bravest of men, as if true courage were revealed in the capacity to experience terror, all the better to vanquish it.*

—Nicole Loraux, "The Warrior's Fear and Trembling," *The Experiences of Tiresias*[89]

1.4.3   *Power is exercised simply by this play of light; it is exercised by the glance from center to periphery, which can, at every moment, observe, judge, record, and punish at the first gesture, the first attitude, the first distraction. This power needs no instrument; its sole support is sight and light.*
        [...] The power is without materiality; it has no need of all that symbolic armature of sovereign power; it does not need to hold the scepter in its hand or wield the sword to punish;

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[85] Caroline Alexander, "The Dread Gorgon: The head of Medusa, in Myth and in Memory," *Lapham's Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2017), 187-192.

[86] Jean Andreau and Raymond Descat, *The Slave in Greece and Rome*, trans. Marion Leopold (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 73. Scholars are also divided over whether the historical record evinces "sacred prostitution," whereby slaves would be bound to temple for the purpose of engaging in sex as part of fertility rites or other sacred ceremonies.

[87] Ibid, 79.

[88] Xenophon, *Economics*, 13.2 and 13.12.

[89] Nicole Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*, trans. Paula Wissing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 77-78.

it does not need to intervene like a bolt of lightning in the manner of the sovereign. This power belongs rather to the realm of the sun, of never-ending light; it is the non-material illumination that falls equally on all those on whom it is exercised.

—Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power.*[90]

1.4.4   Each mythical sovereign commands a visual power so potent that it freezes humans magically at a distance; they arrive in a flash of lightning chronicled in myths about the luster of their glory.[91] Their warlike power is not the result of a battle well-fought; they miraculously turn around defeats in the last-minute way of their divine intervention (*deus ex machina, apò mēkhanês theós*).[92] The accompanying bolts visually objectify a small shard of their dazzling power, which, even as momentary streaks of light, remain so potent that they leave mortals incapacitated, blind, or dead. Such lightning's electric energy stands in more generally for the divine power of images, through which dazzlers possess an appearance so stunning that it radiates awe, compels obedience, and rains down death.

The sky gods of the night also find ways to appropriate the power of daylight. Consider their triumph over the deadliest Gorgon, Medusa. Understanding its dazzling power, Zeus takes the image of the Gorgon to be held as aegis to serve as "a thing of dread, crowned on every side with Panic all around," its dazzling appearance so full of awe and terror as to cause an enemy's troops to freeze or flee.[93] But *aigís (αἰγῐ́ς)* is also the word for a rushing windstorm; Zeus's holding of it expresses how he holds up the heavens and the sky. The Gorgons themselves embody the chaos of the night as formless, indistinct figures of confusion.[94] (Therefore, it would be unbearable to view them—their faces are death itself, a death so complete it carries no image.) Their gaze reveals something about light itself held in the phrase "to see is to be seen," a principle the dazzling sovereign makes into a weapon whereby what can be seen can be killed. Put more simply: visibility means death. To lock eyes with such a deadly face of horror does not simply provoke fright or even blindness, but renders one permanently frozen in stone—lifeless, buried in objecthood.

The appropriation of light explains why one-eyed gods often command the power of the sun. It is because the sun is "who oversees and overhears all things," as seen in Helios serving as the eye of Zeus or Hvarə-xšaēta as the eye of Ahura Mazdāh.[95] Such eyes do not simply view or listen, they *over*see and *over*hear. The implication being that the sun acts as an informant to the gods, and as such, the sun comes to symbolically represent a type of sovereign power: the beating rays of the sun are the muscle that oversees the enforcement of oaths and contracts, demonstrating how visibility is wielded as a weapon of sovereign might

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[90] Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 77.

[91] Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, vol. 1, trans. Philip Krapp (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 177-179.

[92] Ibid, 187,

[93] 5.739-743 of Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Caroline Alexander (New York: Harper-Collins, 2006), 113.

[94] "In the Mirror of Medusa" in Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 144.

[95] Homer, *The Iliad*, 3.277, 62.

and compels praise as the source of life.[96]

For the Roman *nobiles*, everything that appears is good and everything that is good appears. Light binds things to power. It does not render everything visible through a principle of general transparency. Here, the visual is as precious as it is powerful—to be seen is to be significant. This makes its gaze greedy, making it ruthlessly discriminating and one-sided. Appearance is accumulated and hoarded. Representation is never afforded to the unworthy, whose irrelevance can easily be determined on sight alone.

There is also the deathly glare of a black sun. Its devastating power is felt but not seen. For instance, Perseus's use of "the dread darkness of night" embodied in Hades's invisibility helm proves essential for completing his quest to decapitate Medusa.[97] It has been fetishized by occultists, who often adorned it with Nazi symbols. Such devotion speaks volumes about the sovereign appeal of the sun, its ability to entrance.

No matter the approach, the flash always serves one sovereign purpose: to captivate. While associated with conquest, the flash reveals a different story of subjugation than subjection at sword's point. Although appearing behind the façade of a warrior, it is the work of a magician-king who intrudes before the outbreak of hostilities or after a battle seems lost. It is the modality of power that undertakes action at a distance. The fight: the war of appearances.

1.4.5 *Being blasted by a thunderbolt is good for slaves because those who are blasted by a thunderbolt no longer have masters nor do they toil, and bright clothes are placed on them just as on those who are freed, and men associate with them as if they were honored by Zeus, just as they also associate with freedmen who have been honored by their masters.*

—Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 2.9

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[96] David H. Sick, "Mit(h)ra(s) and the Myths of the Sun," *Numen*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2004), 432-467.

[97] 227 of "The Shield" in Hesiod, *The Shield, Catalogue of Women, and Other Fragments*, vol. 2, trans. Glenn Most (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19.

Cornelis van Haarlem, *The Fall of the Titans*, 1588-90. SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

1.5   The state depends on its *proboletic* superpower, a capacity to project itself across space and time. By aligning the state with the Sun and the Good, the sovereign claims a superlative power more powerful than power whereby "that which appears is good, that which is good appears."[98] This projective capacity is the means through which the state rules over everything it knows.

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[98] Jacques Derrida, "Teleology and Architectonic: The Neutralization of the Event," in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 137-139; Thesis 12 of Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlman (Detroit: Red and Black Press, 1970).

1.5.0   *Probolḗ (προβολή) / provolí (προβολή)* means projection, or more literally, "putting forward." In its original sense, it is lunging forward with a spear or cavalry as a weapon for defense or a thing raised up as a defense (such as screen or bulwark). Additional uses include conceptual projection, such as the sacred emanation of the Holy Spirit from God in Christianity, visual projection of a light or film, especially onto a screen; physical jutting out, as in a rock or an anatomical protrusion; and the legal presentation of a case or a political candidate to the Assembly; it has also been adopted by Freudians.

1.5.1   State projectivity can be illustrated by means of a light bulb.[99] The example comes from Javanese culture, in which the bulb has four essential characteristics: first, power exists independently of its possible users and thus does not require belief; second, power is homogeneous and of uniform type, emerging from the same source, and is identical regardless of user; third, power exists as a fixed and limited quantity, so a rise in power in one place reduces it in another; and fourth, power is not a question of legitimacy but instead establishes what is good or evil.[100] For us, there are two important attributes revealed by its glow: first, how light dims and fuzzes as it travels farther from its source; and second, that there is no clear edge to the light, but rather a continuous gradient that fades to black.

The *proboletic* state space of padi states, which James C Scott describes in terms of friction, has a similar shape and decay because it thrives in mild, unbroken terrain and suffers under more severe conditions.[101] Usually arising in valleys, padi states only control land that is easily traversed, either by oxcart or fast waterways, where the "light" of influence can spread without interruption. Physical obstacles, such as sharp changes in elevation or the difficult terrain of swamps and thick vegetation, slow down or even obstruct sovereign influence and thus act as a fetter to its political control. Therefore, the projectivity of padi states is often described by how quickly distance is spanned, in "three rice-cookings" or "two cigarette-smokings," rather than by its geometric measurement, ten feet or ten miles.[102]

Distance not only impedes the flow of goods but also drives an alternating cycle of military occupation and retreat, such as the seasonal friction that comes with monsoon season or the permanent friction of mountains that harbor escaped slaves. In Burma, for instance, military campaigns have been fought from November to February only for the kingdom to shrink to a quarter or an eighth of its size as roads become impassable in May through October.[103] Trying to work against this alternating cycle, colonial states often fight protracted wars with distance-demolishing technologies but usually see their gains washed away during the wet season nonetheless.[104] So, when padi states are locked in battle against the earth, its enemies develop strategies that take advantage of frictions that keep them at a distance from state rule.

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[99] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 59.

[100] Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 1-70.

[101] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 43-50.

[102] Ibid, 48.

[103] Ibid, 61.

[104] Ibid, 62.

A Burmese proverb, "Yes, a soil, but no people. A soil without people is but a wilderness," is not a republican ideal but a quiet acknowledgment that a people are always suspended in a state of captivity.[105] Dispelling a common misunderstanding, this adage clarifies that labor is the basic element of padi state political order and not arable land. Of course, land must be conquered and controlled, but labor-power is the source of power for two functions essential to padi states: wealth, as the fruit of laborer's work is taken as tribute, and security, as the workers are made to defend the resource-intensive infrastructure needed for rice cultivation. And for this reason, the foremost indicator of a padi state's power is its ability to capture and maintain slaves, which eventually leads to slave majorities or super-majorities in many padi states, as well as to slaves being such a common commodity that they serve as the medium of exchange. Yet this labor-power does not come voluntarily from workers hired or invited, it is bled from slaves captured through war or trading.

The implication of captivity for our understanding of governance is that it requires a constant application of force, else the source of its power disappears back into the hills. State conquest thus tends to avoid salt-the-earth wars of annihilation because humans are its most precious resource. Their lives are most valuable when preserved and should not be left on the battlefield, dead or mutilated. Because labor-power fuels the padi state, its power grows and recedes with the forces of capture and escape and not innovations in production. As a result, its hunger for slaves is never satisfied. The result is that wars are not rare bloody events locked away deep in the annals of the state but a continuous set of moments in a campaign compelled by the endless need for new labor.

In summary, Scott's political economy of the padi state suggests that it exists through herculean might. Either an ongoing hunt keeps humanity in chains in a feat of strength, or they break free. But even in this battle of forces, there are many who escape: there are people who establish rhythms that work against the routine ebb and flow of state governance while others adopt elusive ways of life that make them too costly for the state to pursue. Yet the permanence of their escape is established less by evasion than by distance, as the light bulb analogy demonstrates: they use spatial separation to evade its grasp.

1.5.2   What if the general orientation of the state can remain the same—conquest, enslavement, command—even with shifting material conditions? Then the state is not just a system of organization but something deeper. Purely material accounts of states leave little room for remarks on the magic of the state. Missing from James C. Scott's account of the padi state, for instance, is a careful reading not of grain and soil but of the sedimented cultural codes circulated as chronicles of gods, founding heroes, the genesis of heaven and earth, and the splitting of day and night.

Clifford Geertz further argues for the importance of understanding the cultural foundations of the state, which he does through three Balinese notions: the doctrine of the exemplary center, the concept of sinking status, and the expressive conception of politics.[106] The third holds that "the principal instrumentalities of rule lie less in the techniques of

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[105] Ibid, 70.
[106] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 331.

administration than in the arts of the theatre."[107]

Referencing Robert Heine-Geldern, Geertz explains the doctrine of the exemplary center as following from a court-and-capital theory whereby an image "of the universe on a smaller scale" stands for the whole political order.[108] More than a mirror or metaphor of a social order ("not just the nucleus, the engine, or the pivot of the state: it *is* the state"), the ritual life of the court is the supernatural sky that holds up the whole world—a world that reflects the court's excellence back to itself.[109]

The concept of sinking status is the consequence of the Balinese dying-fire view of history.[110] Such a view does not take gradual decline to be predestined, but merely a result of chance.[111] It demands a certain type of response: neither a reversal of the path of history nor its celebration, but the immediate reenactment of the cultural practices found in creation myths. Ritual here functions as an "aesthetic correction" of the present via the past.[112] In drawing directly from the emanating brilliance of Gelgel—the location of a founding myth for the Javanese court, an arkhé Geertz equates to that of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States, whence the colonizing origin tale of "The Madjapahit Conquest" that both explained and justified relations of command and obedience—ritual looks to "re-create, to some degree, the radiant image of civilization the classic state had embodied and postclassic history had obscured."[113]

Balinese politics help illuminate the aesthetic dimension of politics, whereby delving into the hidden structure of the symbolic renders better results than measuring more material things.[114] The political life of Balinese culture always pointed toward:

> spectacle, toward ceremony, toward the public dramatization of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture: social inequality and status pride. It was a theatre-state in which the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, the peasantry the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience. The stupendous cremations, teeth-filings, temple dedications, the pilgrimages and blood sacrifices, mobilizing hundreds, even thousands of people and great quantities of wealth, were not means to political ends, they were the ends themselves, they were what the state was for. Court ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics. Mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state; the state was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. To govern was not so

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[107] Ibid, 331.

[108] Ibid, 332.

[109] Ibid, 332.

[110] Ibid, 334.

[111] Ibid, 334.

[112] Ibid, 334.

[113] Ibid, 332-334.

[114] It is worth nothing that Jacques Lacan orthogonally adopts "the symbolic" from Claude Lévi-Strauss's "symbolism" (Lucien Scubla, "Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, and the Symbolic Order," *Revue de MAUSS* vol. 37, no. 1 [2011], XV). Their shared quest was to replace the religious with the symbolic. And even if neither fully succeeded, Lévi-Strauss's kinship maps and canonical formula of myth and Lacan's schemas offer rigorous theories for analyzing everything from the sacred rites of kings to the social death of slaves.

much to choose as to perform. Ceremony was not form but substance. Power served pomp, not pomp power.[115]

The consequence for the Balinese was a dispersion of power. Rather than accumulating it in clear hierarchy or a single ruling class, power formed a supralocal "extended field of highly dissimilar political ties, thickening into nodes of varying size and solidity at strategic points on the landscape and then thinning out again to connect, in a marvelously convoluted way, virtually everything with everything else."[116]

1.5.3   Attracted to mythologies of sovereign power across a wide range of cultures and motivated by a structuralist impulse, Georges Dumézil argued that the two figures of sovereignty nearly always appear in myth to operate independently from the other.[117] Such myths are not the antithesis of truth to be dispelled with reason; rather, the birth of reason was written with the same pen that declared sovereign glory. As Marcel Detienne points out, the Indo-Iranian word *Ṛta* not only means truth but also liturgical prayer, the power of returning dawn, order that results from the cult of the gods, and law.[118] Truth (*Alētheia*) arrives in Parmenides, not as the product of cognition or dialogue, but from a strange setting sun that 'illuminates' truth: "a chariot journey guided by the daughters of the Sun, a way reserved for the man who knows, a path that leads to the gates of Day and Night, a goddess who reveals true knowledge."[119]

No wonder the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Republic* draw out the analogy between statecraft and navigation; with roots in religious practice, mythological accounts of sovereignty follow from Durkheim's suggestion that "spirits, demons, genies, gods of every rank" form "a kind of anonymous and impersonal force" whereby "none possesses it entirely and all share in it" because the force "is so independent of the particular subjects embodying it that it both preexists and survives them."[120] For instance, cosmogonies regarding the ordering of the world address the riddles of the world in a Machiavellian vein, asking who is "the prince that presides over its present arrangement"?[121] In turn, myth provides answers in the form of avatars of sovereignty left behind by each successive generation of divinities that claim dominion over the universe (*anassein, basileuein*) until one gained supreme power over them all (*dynasteía*).[122] It is no surprise that fascists continue to excavate these myths in a search for cultural resources in revanchist struggles for ethnic authority.

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[115] Ibid, 335.

[116] Ibid, 336.

[117] Dumézil, *Matra-Varuna*.

[118] Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 35.

[119] Ibid, 36.

[120] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 148; 140.

[121] Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 113.

[122] Ibid, 114.

William Blake, *The Book of Urizen*, Copy A, c. 1794. Yale Center for British Art.

1.6   Orthodox Marxists are wrong when they claim that states are the result of a mode of production. It is the inverse that is true: it is the state that makes production into a mode (of life).

1.7   The magical powers of the state should not be reduced to the simple feat of marshalling the forces of production. Its magic endures through an *arkhḗ* that persists long after its roads have crumbled and city walls have collapsed.

1.8   Writing is an essential technology of state magic. The state did not invent the word, rather, it over-writes it. When writing and numbers accompany cities and empires, it has always been "to facilitate enslavement of other human beings," due to their ability to "assemble workpeople by the thousands" and push them point the past of exhaustion.[123]

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[123] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), 292.

1.6.0   Slavery and bondage cannot be properly understood in purely economic terms. Labor was a disgrace to most in the ancient world. Not only was hard work beneath them, it provided none of the edifying characteristics the Protestants would attribute to labor. Moreover, "because slavery in antiquity was grounded in ideological rather than economic considerations," John Bodel writes, "slave labor was endemic in Roman culture—and was bound to be so, regardless of its profitability."[124] In fact, the central importance of slaves for many Romans had little to do with work.[125] Slaves were status symbols.[126]

Many elements of bondage remain inscrutable unless we look to how societies are held together symbolically through *status*. From Aristotle to Cicero, slaves remained virtually invisible. In a status society where appearances were more important than material substance, they were treated as pieces of human machinery. Good Romans were forbidden to dress themselves and were trained from youth to ignore the presence of slaves, who dissolved into the background of the most intimate moments of their master's lives, including sex.[127] Their ubiquity gave rise to anxieties over eavesdropping, as most masters overlooked them.

1.6.1   What does it mean for slaves to suffer "social death"? Those quoting Patterson identify three characteristics in his writing about the slave's social death: generalized loss of honor, natal alienation, and gratuitous violence.[128] The first can be understood most starkly in status societies that subordinate economics to separate social concerns. The third, gratuitous violence, follows from the bondsman's desire to make the metaphysical distinction between him and his slave real through excess: excess symbolization written on the body through tattoos, brands, and scars, excess power through cruel treatment that goes beyond what is effective for achieving their aims, and excess violence that tries to make the metaphysical separation between master and slave true through overkill.

Natal alienation deserves more investigation, as the name mistakenly gives the impression that it is limited to birth or even filiation. In a technical sense, it means that slaves are formally barred from holding anything that could be symbolically coded; hence prohibitions against marriage and the fact that any children born of slaves are the property of the estate. Slavery can be further rendered in terms of libidinal economy, especially in the original sense of *oíkos* as the management of relations within a colonial estate.

Orlando Patterson presents a sociological theory of social death whereby "slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons."[129] Natal alienation entails a loss of all social ties that one can claim by virtue of birth, namely,

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[124] John Bodel, "Slave labour and Roman society," in Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 313-314.

[125] Ibid, 313.

[126] Ibid, 313.

[127] Jonathan Edmondson, "Slavery and the Roman Family," in Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 346.

[128] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 10; 5.

[129] Ibid, 13.

membership in a family, nation, or people. This loss is important in regard to autochthonic belonging, as in legal (or other) membership based on a connection to lands people call their own. Slavery begins when one ceases belonging "to any formally recognized community."[130] The full extent of social death does not come from a lack of belonging, but rather from the "lack of a lack," to put it in Lacanian terms. Quoting James Curtis Ballagh, Patterson notes that the "distinguishing mark" that defines slavery is not "loss of liberty, political or civil, *but the perpetuity and almost absolute character of that loss.*"[131] Social death does not arrive through the revocation of the slave's ability to forge legitimized relationships, but rather through the permanence of that loss across past, present, and future. Moreover, the only ties a slave is afforded are those that begin and end with their master. And without the master, the slave does not exist. So as a practical matter of domination, social death renders slaves socially powerless, having lost any recognized ties that might offer grounds for limiting a master's power over them.[132]

1.6.2   At least in theory, the only relation the slave is allowed to have to others is that of an absolute stranger. The formalization of citizenship in early Greece and Rome included the abolition of debt-slavery, which came with a guarantee that no citizen would be made into a slave. Additionally, the slave trade ensured that slaves were spatially dispossessed from their homes, guaranteeing the permanence of the break from all social ties. The consequence is a doctrine of the period: the slave is "always a stranger, but never a slave in his own city," or even more simply, "every slave is a stranger, every stranger is a slave."[133]

       The consequence is a permanent loss, which distinguishes slavery from other forms of bondage. For instance, sharecroppers or serfs may be subject to dishonor, deprivation, violence, and coercion. Yet, as Peter Hunt argues, "they still possess an acknowledged family and often a village or community of some sort."[134] For those searching for conceptual vocabulary, we can thus distinguish between "bound peasants" and "disastrously alienated people." Unlike other peoples who are exploited for their labor, the socially dead cannot form a full social class capable of forming a shared consciousness.[135]

1.6.3   Productivist accounts risk occluding the full social significance of bondage. Certain orthodox Marxists, for instance, hold that societies can be defined by nothing more than the type of production undertaken, relying simply on the material tools of political economy for determining how those societies emerge and transform. Scott's materialism is a cousin to this Marxism—though his anarchism is an attempt to explicitly depart from Marxism—especially as production remains central to his analysis. To put it starkly, James C. Scott depicts hill

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[130] Ibid, 6.

[131] Ibid, 9; my emphasis.

[132] Ibid, 4-6.

[133] Andreau and Descat, quoting Henri Levi-Bruhl in *The Slave in Greece and Rome*, 42.

[134] Peter Hunt, "Slaves or Serfs?: Patterson on the Thetes and Helots of Ancient Greece," in *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*, edited by John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 58.

[135] Austin and Vidal-Niquet, *Economic and Social History*, 22-23.

people as 'state-effects' and draws a picture of peasants painted by the strokes of state production, which therefore defines both padi states and their escapees according to comparable modes of production that merely contrast. The centrality of production is clear, as Scott dedicates whole chapters to hill people's high-altitude crop cultivation and slash-and-burn 'swidden' agriculture techniques. He finds that these forms of production are what allow them to maintain a lifestyle that makes capture difficult and undesirable.

Production need not be the centerpiece of a way of life. In fact, those who practice the 'art of not being governed' offer an image of existence that displaces analysis centered on a mode of production. This is because the power that emerges from outside the state is not organized in terms of production. If anything, the people who exist exterior to the state, such as hunter-gatherers, anticipate every attempt to turn production into a mode of life and ward off all of them.[136] While possibly counter-intuitive from the perspective of a society obsessed with production, in these societies, people find that the plentitude of the earth provides more than enough productive capacity to sustain life.[137]

Circulation and not production defines their existence, and production emerges only as the kernel of state thought and is actively suppressed (as outlined by the 'alliance theory' of Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Elemental Structures of Kinship*). When the state does arrive, it does not appear in parts through a slow advance in technology but invades in the flash of an instant. Even the state cannot eliminate the anticipation and prevention of production. It instead channels and mobilizes this anti-production to ward off all modes of production but one: its own. Therefore, the state does not appear after an evolutionary leap that builds upon prior modes of production; rather, it arrives the moment that production is made a mode. It can then be said that all societies are organized by how they manage their internal lines of escape (as a "mode of anticipation"), while only states are organized according to production.

Hill people's farming techniques offer a glimpse into the operations of anti-production. Their slash-and-burn agriculture intentionally looks unappealing as a mode of production, as it gives the appearance of recklessness that jeopardizes the stability of wet-rice cultivation that is essential to building the power of the padi state. As a type of anti-production, slash-and-burn agriculture illustrates how hill life sustains itself and prevents state production by simultaneously warding off state formation and providing a means of subsistence. This approach extends further than farming techniques. According to Marcel Mauss, common to the American Northwest and Northeast Asia is that "slaves are put to death, precious oils burnt, copper objects cast into the sea, and even the houses of princes set on fire" both as a sacrifice to a higher power ("the true owners of the things and possessions of this world ") as well as to display power, wealth, and lack of self-interest .[138] In sum, they make destruction into a way of life.

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[136] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 428-429.

[137] Marshall Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society," in *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago and New York: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 1-39.

[138] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1966), 20-21.

1.7.0   *To be harnessed to a cart as if one of the four-footed beasts foretells slavery and toil and disease, even if someone who is very illustrious and who lives a luxurious life should observe the dream.*

—Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 3.18

1.7.1   The knife of culture cuts even deeper—instead of mutilating bodies to put them to work, nonsedentary peoples tend to forge social bonds through collective cruelty. The prevalence of tattoos, scarification, and other permanent markings of the body are not the result of flights of fancy, as they are today. As display, they do not mark individuality but its opposite: membership. "Worked skin, scarified earth—and this is one and the same mark," with inscription binding the cosmos to the body.[139] The ritual of violence is its most dramatic in the original initiation ceremony, but as seen in archaistic orders like the Italian Mafia *Cosa Nostra*, once in, there is no getting out. That is not to say they are always feared: as the privileged sign of belonging, marking ceremonies are excitedly anticipated. The mark stands for a permanent bond that is irreversible but also must forever be repaid in blood. Even when membership is rigid, the function of the system of cruelty is not for the group to turn in on itself but to provoke connections with others through circulation and exchange.[140] The body acquires a "second skin" that serves as the physical evidence of an injunction that restrains members of a social group from immediately consuming everything they come to possess, which in turn drives them to forge relations with others.[141] Such coding bans direct appropriation of the means of life that one helped secure, forcing that old game of alliances whereby other lines of filiation are consummated through trade, marriage, and other means—the practice behind the phrase "things create bonds between souls."[142]

This social technology does not reside exclusively within non-state society, however, for the state recognizes the power of this terrible alphabet and thus appropriates coding to transform circulation into a mode of production. It extends the torturous marking to slaves, who bear marks from whipping as well as branding, only to spare the rod for those workers (whose bodies are mutilated enough by drudgery) better motivated by howling commands from above, the marks of which are left as psychic wounds inside the body.[143] It is this terrifying call that Althusser uses in the model of state power he calls "interpellation," the Voice of an infinitely powerful other whose demanding hail compels thought and action.[144]

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[139] Pierre Clastres, *Chronique des indiens Guayaki* (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1972), 144.

[140] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[141] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1998), 105-106; 147-148; 195; 226-227.

[142] Mauss, *The Gift*, 17.

[143] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 202-217; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 425-426.

[144] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capital: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London and New York: Verso, 2014); Judith Butler, "'Conscience Doth Make

It is more than mere coincidence that 'the subject' of recent curiosity was cast in the mold of the subject of bondage, whose very subjectivity exists as an effect of subordination to a sovereign.

1.8.0   As Dumézil notes, the predicates for sovereigns and their actions are not normative judgments about their likability but expressions of a particular mode of sovereignty. Authoritarian sovereigns are thus 'terrible,' 'horrible,' 'merciless' destroyers while juridically minded sovereigns are 'kind,' 'benevolent,' 'loving' creators. An editorial tone is therefore unavoidable when describing aspects of predatory states as 'terrible' and 'cruel' or pacific states as 'just' and 'forgiving,' but the underlying intention is to single out particular modes of violence rather than indicating preference.

State production therefore changes the function of code from a direct code branded into the flesh of the body to the written decree, which broadcasts the voice of the despot far and wide. Regarding writing, Lévi-Strauss writes that "the one phenomenon which has invariably accompanied it is the formation of cities and empires: the integration into a political system, that is to say, of a large number of individuals into a hierarchy of castes and classes."[145] This evidence leads him to think that writing favors the exploitation rather than enlightenment of humanity. If writing did emerge in the service of science or the arts, it did so only secondarily, more often than not as a way of reinforcing, justifying, or concealing its primary function as a means of exploitation.[146]

1.8.1   Writing eliminates the group ritual of inscription in which the whole community would establish the gaze of authority by festively watching a tattooing. The written word instead marshals a legion of bureaucrats who interpret the absent voice of the despot under the threat of death. These are the same words that initiate spectacles of punishment, with the sovereign voice returning through public speech to make common the whipping, stoning, mutilation, or burning consequence of legal judgment. The publicity of these acts is necessary for large empires, which impose their own web of social obligations on top of a wide variety of customary laws (the monetary equivalent of the Code of Ur-Nammu, the *lex talionis* of the Hammurabi Code, Roman *dura lex sed lex*, or the social equivalence of Sharia). Such overcoding is not the simple process of replacing old taboos with new sovereign decrees, then, but a two-step operation: first, seizure—the capturing of groups that operate according to differing codes; and second, superimposition—the introduction of a single unified common

Subjects of Us All': Althusser's Subjection," in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 106-131.

[145] Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 292.

[146] Ibid, 292. Deleuze and Guattari attempt to provide a "universal history" of writing, which acknowledges the contributions of figures like Jacques Derrida (or Lacan), while also limiting their theories to the so-called "despotic" social formation. By contrast, they also demote Lévi-Strauss's exchangism to a secondary operation, arguing that the mark is primary. For a more through comparative account of these questions, consult James Martell, "Derrida and Deleuze as Tattooed Savages," in J. Martell and E. Larsen, eds. *Tattooed Bodies*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 329-350.

denominator on top of divergent lines of filiation and affiliation, reorienting varied group obligations upward in infinite debt to the sovereign. This is why linguistic imperialism is such a common feature in colonizing projects.

Royal tongues serve a completely different status than the codes with which they come in contact, engaging in a form of conquest through documentation, formalization, and ingestion. If ethnographic codes operate much like biological codes and chemical signals, the use of written language commands them from a higher layer, prying free their content and substance for redeployment in service to the crown.[147] Pages and pages of government documents then quickly eclipse all other forms of writing, and with them, legions of bureaucrats flourish to manage them. The bureaucrat relates to the graphic *(gráphō, γράφω)* of writing and arithmetic as tools of the state, but also references that place where the archive (of the arkhḗ) is kept; not as a collection of documents but as a systemization of governance and a way of interaction. That is to say: a method for the state to reproduce itself through the word. Historian of science Peter Galison estimates that the number of classified documents generated by the United States government is at least five to ten times larger than everything that ends up in the nation's libraries.[148]

1.8.2   To truly understand overcoding is to realize that the written word stands on the ground created by non-state peoples rather than liquidating their whole way of life. Moreover, it is not even a foreign occupying force that can be kicked out, returning things to how they were—that is precisely the damning predicament of post-colonialism crystallized in Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. The many codes not eliminated by overcoding are deterritorialized and mostly recaptured to constitute the intermediary milieu that is the state. Described diagrammatically: the state is a grand irrigation system built by transecting separate codes that had previously been held apart.

Fortunately, the process of overcoding is never total and thus gives way to escape. The emperor does not directly appropriate flows but captures them at a distance. Due to this spatial separation, the primitive capture exercised by the predatory state frees a large quantity of flows that can be turned back against it. Deleuze and Guattari describe this process:

> *the overcoding of the archaic state itself makes possible and gives rise to new flows that escape from it.* The state does not create large-scale works without a flow of independent labor escaping its bureaucracy (notably in the mines and in metallurgy). It does not create the monetary form of the tax without flows of money escaping, and nourishing or bringing into being other powers (notably in commerce and banking). And above all, it does not create a system of public property without a flow of private appropriation growing up beside it, then beginning to pass beyond its grasp; this private property does not itself issue from the archaic system but is constituted on the margins, all the more necessary and inevitably, slipping through the net of overcoding.[149]

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[147] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 62.

[148] Peter Galison, "Removing Knowledge," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (fall 2001), 229-230.

[149] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 449; translation modified.

1.8.3   While the 'trinity formula' of labor, capital, and land—or really, profit, tax, and rent—constitutes a three-headed apparatus of capture for the state, it cannot account for all of the escaping flows. A whole array of flows leak from overcoding: some evade capture, like independent labor, escaped money, and private appropriation; others are mutant flows of free activity, alternative exchange, and strange territories; while the most overwhelming lines of escape have nothing to do with work, money, or land at all.

1.9   Myths attest to a state commanded by a conjurer with the magical *proboletic* ability to compel others to fight from a distance. The state need not wage war itself.

1.10   The great binder god captures warriors, agonized subjects with an uneasy relationship to the state, who then fight on its behalf. The warriors' wounds are inflicted by the state before the battle even begins. That is because their original injury is an *arkhéic* mutilation that pays the price of their incorporation.

1.9.0   Spinoza famously asks, "why do some people fight for their servitude as if it were their salvation?"

1.9.1   In Greece, some skilled slaves were allowed to live on their own, which gave some a chance for manumission in the form of commercial transactions whereby one could buy one's freedom for a sum.[150] Agricultural slaves and miners, by contrast, were simply worked to death.[151]

Offering a Roman point of view, Seneca suggests in his *Epistles* that slavery should be treated with *humanitas.*[152] One should not mistake this for empathy, but rather, an attempt to secure the slave's docility by defusing tension between master and slave.[153] The Romans often entrusted slaves with "a piece of land, livestock, a rental building, a shop, a workshop, a warehouse, slaves, or money," which they would manage for the prosperity of their master.[154] As a motivational scheme for labor, many slaves worked diligently in the hopes that they would be both manumitted and granted a portion of that business. In a paraphrase of Cicero, historians note how Romans themselves knew that "conferring freedom was above all a means to sustain and maintain slavery as a system, one result being the benefit to the slave-owner of the future services of a grateful freedman."[155] The master, of course, could exploit this motivation, but only until the time of manumission. Whereas the slave's work produced wealth for another, what they received in turn was in the form of a gift from their master.

1.9.2   Georges Dumézil outlines the characteristics of the sovereign magician-king, a great enchanter who rules at a distance.[156] (Indo-European mythology provides a clear entry point for considering the role of magic in sovereign conquest. Romulus, for example, twice risks defeat after founding Rome. To ensure success, Romulus invokes Jupiter, and after each victory, he founds a cult and erects a temple in thanks to Jupiter.[157] Romulus does not invoke Mars, as would a true warrior chief. Rather, by invoking Jupiter, the god of the state, Romulus is brought victory in two aspects: Jupiter as divine protector of regnum by arms, and Jupiter the great magician who performs "a sovereign conjuring trick" of breaking the morale of the enemy.[158] Combining these two specifications of Jupiter, we know that magically equipped states capture by arms and by magic.

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[150] Kyrtatas, "Slave and Economy," 107-108.

[151] Ibid, 108.

[152] 47.1-17 of Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, Volume 1-3, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Sen.+Ep.+47&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0080.

[153] Keith Bradley, "Seneca and Slavery," in John G. Fitch, ed., *Seneca*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 339-342.

[154] Andreau and Descat, *The Slave in Greece and Rome*, 90-91.

[155] Keith Bradley, "The Bitter Chain of Slavery," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 41 (2015), 161.

[156] Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*, 146.

[157] Ibid, 53-54.

[158] Ibid, 55.

1.10.0 War does not have be undertaken directly by the state. This why the magician-king's greatest illusion is war, as it is the result of his most masterful conjuring trick. For in the world beyond states, war often operates as an anti-state force for dissolving a king's great stockpiles as well as fragmenting sovereign power through dispersion.[159] And even when war is appropriated by the state, it is used to shatter the power of its enemy. The original warrior is an outsider whose knows nothing about ruling the state, only how to destroy it. War can even be a secondary effect of a way of life built around dispersing power, which makes autonomy not conflict the crucial component of the resulting centrifugal logic.[160]

1.10.1 As much as war may be a supplementary dimension of non-state peoples' existence, it always looms on the horizon as war becomes necessary when they encounter a state or the city.[161] Understood most radically—and contrary to Dumézil's conservative assertion that warriors are a key feature of sovereign states—warriors embody a way of life that is income-mensurate to sovereignty in its final instance. The consequence is that states always have a tenuous relationship with the military, as warriors must be thoroughly institution-alized, and even then, they can always act as one of the primary forces of revolution. This is one reason why officers so quickly retreat from the front lines, as they undertake the categorically separate tasks of command and control: shorthand for directing others to kill from a "safe" distance.[162]

1.10.2 Another name for Varuṇa and other magician-kings who seize their enemy from the outside is "The Binder." It is this binding that specifies the connection between their use of arms and magic. War may be chaotic, but sovereign wars of conquest are not without rules; and the specific set of obligations that the sovereign levies in war is the *nexum* of debt-bondage.[163] In contrast to pacts, which are made between equal-and-willing parties, the bond is a knot tied with force. The power of bonds then comes from both arms and magic, and the substance of those bonds is a shifting economy of repayment for hostility, the cost of a life, or any other means to bind and subjugate.[164] The bond is cast by dazzling sovereigns—for instance, the one-eyed gods who raise their spears, not to fight, but to paralyze the enemy with fright.[165] The resulting stupor continues far past the battle as these sovereigns use their terrifying magic to convert the loser's fright into a bond that divides the victorious from the conquered, the predator from the prey.[166] It is through the sting of defeat that magician-kings

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[159] Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010), 274-277.

[160] Ibid, 274.

[161] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 417.

[162] Ibid, 417-418.

[163] Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*, 98.

[164] Ibid, 98; 99.

[165] Ibid, 129; 139-149; 143.

[166] Ibid, 155.

marshal their forces by capturing the vanquished, appropriating their power from afar, and commanding them with terrifying magic.

1.10.3   Sovereignty is defined by its mutilation of outsiders, ridding them of any memory of life beyond the state.[167] It would be easy to assume that such mutilation comes from war. But the mutilations of state violence originate from the price people must pay to work. Even before it sends these appropriated subjects off to war, the state first inflicts them with a wound that never heals but continues to afflict them until they learn to relish its hot pain as a warm reminder of the suffering, sacrifice, and loss that it took to live "meaningful life":

> the mutilated individual is removed from the common mass of humanity by a rite of separation (this is the idea behind cutting, piercing, etc.) which automatically incorporates him into a defined group; since the operation leaves ineradicable traces, the incorporation is permanent.[168]

The violence of the archaic state therefore takes on a unique significance; it appears as "the magic of birth"; a miracle, the pre-accomplished, necessary, and justified separation from everything that came before it.[169] "This is why theses on the origin of the state are always tautological," as the state's existence is premised on the denial and non-recognition of life outside it.[170]

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[167] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 424-425.

[168] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 72.

[169] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 424-426.

[170] Ibid, 426.

Nicolas Beatrizet (after Michelangelo), *The Fall of Phaeton*, c. 1545. Cleveland Museum of Art.

1.11   The terrifying power of the magician-king is strong but blunt, which allows many codes to escape his command.

1.11.0   Two types of flows escape the state while it is freeing codes to overcode them. First, there are the scraps of decoded flows that do not fit and are thus left behind. These relatively decoded leftovers are the cracks and fissures that constitute the gaps between the abstract categories of the state, such as the separation between the general rules of law and the singularity of the concrete case.

1.11.1   Consider a spatial example found in the vague terrain between two overlapping archaic states.

Mandala spaces of overlapping dual sovereignty in Southeast Asia encouraged contestation and thus subjected those who resided there to multiple tributary exactions or raids to punish disloyalty. And while this can sometimes advantage the state, these ambiguities usually work against it. Many of the peoples living at the periphery of two states use this relative autonomy to "strategically manipulate the situation" by playing the two states against each other, such as people in Cambodia, tributary to Siam and Vietnam in the nineteenth century.[171] As this example illustrates, the area at arm's length from the state is then less a space of lawlessness than a zone of indistinction where loosened codes are only partially overcoded but also multiplied. Such ambiguity diffuses state conquest by spreading the state's thick overdetermined power out into a thin underdetermined application of codes. But even as strategies of confusion are multiplied within this zone of indistinction, the Archaic state makes up for the infrequency of power by amplifying its capriciousness and brutality.

The second flow to escape overcoding is a line of flight. These flows escape by virtue of their speed, as they are too swift for the state to snatch immediately after decoding. In contrast to the indistinct scraps mentioned above, these flows are not accidental or supplemental. Rather, this escape is the exodus of heretics who pervert the magic of the archaic state for their own purposes, leading to millennial revolts that are as regular to the feudal world as strikes are to industrial capitalism.[172] The seeds of these uprisings are usually planted in secret, hidden from public view. Yet the principles and prophecies behind these movements are hardly difficult to find; the only necessity is to hide them from the jealous eyes of the magician-king. So, after circulating promiscuously, a prophet eventually appears, giving these furtive myths enough consistency to transform conspiracy into public revolt.

1.11.2   The Burmese monk Sayan San, for example, underwent a transformation while serving on a colonial committee surveying peasant living conditions. Through powerful images of the Hindu bird Galon, Sayan promised a utopia that would break the bond of the British and their taxes. His followers bore the image of Galon as part of their divine mission, believing their tattoos and amulets would protect them from British bullets.[173]

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[171] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 60-61.

[172] Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 17.

[173] Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010).

1.11.3 *To imagine flying—if one ascends a small amount above the earth <and> is in an upright position—is good for the observer. For however far one ascends above the earth, to this degree will he be higher than those who walk about below. And we always call those who are more fortunate 'loftier'. And it is good not to experience this dream while in one's own fatherland, since it signifies a migration due to one's not walking upon the earth. For in a certain way the dream indicates that the fatherland will be inaccessible to the observer. To fly while having wings is good for all in common. For slaves, following this dream, will be freed, since in fact all birds that fly are also (159) without a master and have no leader. And poor men will earn much money. For just as money elevates men, so too do wings elevate birds.*

But, for the rich and those with great power, it creates a public office. For just as those who fly are above those who creep upon the earth, so too are those in government above private people.

—Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 2.68

1.11.4 On the occasion that the magician-king casts his gaze beyond the court, his first reaction is disgust, for all he sees are the barbarian virtues of those who speak a different tongue and act with unpalatable violence. If threatened, the archaic state responds with its primary function, conquest, to recapture the lost codes and make them once again subservient. Yet that disgust sometimes provokes something else altogether: a prayer, where a stranger falls in supplication before the magician-king. Such a transformation is completely alien to the archaic mode of conquest, as it would require extending tolerance and civility, which are foreign to a sovereign who knows indifference but not respect.

Ultimately, we can say that the horrifying sovereign of the state does not sit on a throne of death but resides over the flesh of the living. His tools of governance are cruelty and magic; one he steals from the system of anti-production and the other is of his own invention. Together, he deploys these forces to reverse the centripetal power of the circulatory system of pain to concentrate its cruelty in a unified mode of production built on the backs of slaves. Furthermore, the magician-king boasts about the effects of his trickery, taking immense pride in the forces he accumulates in his own name, neglecting to admit that his only talent is capturing the power of others. Though other state-forms appear more restrained, all share in this thirst for conquest. And while playing down its cruelty, the modern state and the social do not hide this authoritarian force but simply channel it into the police and biopower.