

Stone Age Religion at Goebekli Tepe, Chapters 10-12

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Preface for Posting

Orienting ourselves along the widely used ASPRO Chronology, the New Stone Age (Neolithic Period) is defined by improvements in human stone technology. The count begins still at a Pre-Pottery stage, about 10,200 BCE in the Near East and somewhat later in other parts of the world. It has ended between 4,500 and 2,000 BCE when human technology, ever so gradually, turned to using bronze. We thereby narrate human history by way of adding a Bronze Age that follows the Stone Age. The architectural “awakening” at Goebekli Tepe matches approximately the postulated beginnings of the Neolithic Period. In actual human life, obviously, new technology has helped in the quest for survival. But probably at no point in time were the changes so sudden that they could have been recognized as the dawn of a new era.

In the New Stone-Age, improvements in stone technology initially helped the activity of hunting, but in turn, an increase in the human population gradually erased the life-style of full-scale hunting. Hunters needed to domesticate and become owners of plants and animals. Toward the end of Neolithic times, and into a Period defined by the gradual utilization of bronze, the domestication of plants and animals was increased further when a stratum of successful humans took control not merely of plants and animals, but also applied methods of economic and military means toward the mass enslavement of humankind. The combination of organized militias and the accumulation of cities is now commonly rationalized as "civilization." Impressive architecture and

organized cities are being regarded in well-educated Western circles as civilization—to the extent that Goebekli Tepe, a ten-plus millennia old arrangement of massive stone “pillars,” quickly has led Western excavators and historians to recognize there the beginnings of “civilization.” But my book was written from the perspective of a historian of religions, and with the admission of “religious behavior” data I also needed to lay bare the hype that in our days has elevated “civilization” within the world order to nearly divine levels, and therewith has sought to justify various styles of imperialism.

My earlier book, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire*, 1991, was written still in awe of ancient Egyptian civilization. I saw primarily their fascination for light. However, my recent veering off, five or six thousand years deeper into the past, driven by archaeological hindsight, explains better the dynamics of hunting, killing and stratified styles of domestication, both for Neolithic and for later “civilized” humankind.

In the year 1965, in a Chicago library, I first became aware of megalithic culture strata in European and Near Eastern prehistory. This also was the year when G. S. Hawkins and J. B. White informed us in their new book, *Stonehenge Decoded*, that this ancient site had been an astronomical observatory. From the outset I suspected, back then, the possibility that their “decoding” of this megalithic site could have had more to do with British national self-perception than with a realistic chance of Stonehenge having surpassed the astronomical curiosity of ancient people in the Near East. Since the days of Hawkins and White, similar archaeological interpretations, on behalf of advanced ancient astronomies, have been proposed for ancient Olmec and Mayan sites, in Middle America. Goebekli Tepe, with its mysterious circles of pillars, reminded scholars quickly of what already had been concluded about the “pillars” of Stonehenge. Inflated notions about Stonehenge could then, for Goebekli Tepe, be generously projected back in time five to six

millennia—to keep the story of civilization’s evolution on track and to have it move straight toward the science of Isaac Newton and modern astronomy. It is high time that we ask ourselves the more basic question about what kind of labors and religious behavior the builders of Goebekli Tepe could have cultivated for their survival and balance.

While keeping in mind the broader path of the evolution of culture and religion, of “civilization,” and also to better focus on the intensification of schemes of “over-domestication,” I will for a wider audience attach here the texts of chapters 10 through 12 of my 2013 book. These chapters may serve to help arrange a broader rational approach to the study of the history of religions. They were written for a wider audience than the still small group of people that happens to be fascinated by the archaeology of Goebekli Tepe. The inclusion of Chapters 10-12, at this point in time and at this website, enables me to escape the need of repeating here my Introduction of the 1991 book, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire*, which I held up as my published methodology until 2013.

Part Two

Stone Age Religion at Goebekli Tepe

The Evolution of Culture and Religion

What is Culture? What is Religion?

Culture is the sum of human ego-assertions—is what humankind think they are imposing on ordinary nature.

Religion is the response to apparent greater-than-human configurations of reality—is the awareness of what such configurations are imposing on humankind.

The difference between “history of culture” and “history of religion” is dalliance between the two—is change of culture in light of religion, and of religion in light of culture.

The difference between “history” and “evolution” is the length of time of changes under consideration. Had this book been written only for historians of religions, Chapter Ten could have been offered as introduction. But most readers with an interest in Göbekli Tepe have evolutionary and archaeological questions up front.

This chapter summarizes the author’s theoretical bridge over which he walked toward Göbekli Tepe—to understand its religion.

10. WHAT IS CULTURE? WHAT IS RELIGION?

Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Religions

Since the days when some of my professors—not all—insisted that questions concerning “the origin and the evolution of religion” do not belong in the history of religions field (*Religionswissenschaft*), almost half a century has gone hiding in soft lobes of human memory. “All questions about origins should be left to metaphysics,” these men advised their students. They recommended steering clear of the “origin” questions, as well as of the “evolution” of anything religious. All previously attempted evolutionary approaches to the subject matter were judged as failures by these mentors. Their views were probably in agreement with the majority of historians of religions at that time, and perhaps at some schools today they still would be.

—With this bundle of cautions, so it seemed to me already back then, the boundaries of our academic discipline were being drawn unnecessarily tight. What harm could be done if the connotation of “historical change” were also to be considered under the larger rubrics of general “development” or “evolution?” And what would remain of the study of ordinary history if ordinary evolutionary processes of change were to be discounted? But then, different words mean different things to different people.¹ I read the literature of teachers who informed my professors, as well as the writings of those who concocted the theories of religious evolution that became problematic over time.

—It need not surprise anyone that early theories of cultural and religious evolution turned out to be unstable. Their authors were chasing abstract subject matter through fuzzy evolutionary sequences. The problem was this: If one started with qualitative definitions of

¹Already back then, in the recesses of this writer’s mind, it seemed as though the entire debate about “evolution” was a tempest in an English teapot. Whenever he switched to reasoning about these matters in German, the problem seemed to disappear. Yet, obstinately he stuck to working in English.

religious subject matter, such as with theisms defined essentially by the number of deities involved, or with concepts such as spirit, anima, mana, or the holy, it was not easy to link up with empirically anchored data. Attempting to project such concepts back to prehistoric eras—to early culture strata which themselves had been defined qualitatively as “savagery” or “barbarism”—resulted in additional vagaries. Such efforts have allowed us to pay only perfunctory attention to the physical data that paleontologists, archaeologists, anthropologists or zoologists were accumulating in the field. Such theoretical initiatives cast doubts on the “evolution of religion” models that had been proposed. Evolutionary approaches that were based on qualitative and abstract foci could not produce conclusions that were any sharper.

—My “experience-response spectrum,” Figure 32, was designed to bring empirical data and general knowledge concerning religious behavior into closer proximity.² But my answer to the challenge of my teachers was not formulated until about five years later, during the fall of 1969. It was not widely published until 1991.

—A common misconception about “religion in evolution” has all along been that among successive stretches of time, as in a progression, each level has been supplanted by a next higher level of refinement. So for instance, the trailblazing anthropology of Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) identified a hunter-gatherer stage and called it “savagery.”³ He progressed to domestication, agriculture, and metalworking and called them “barbarism.” Finally he recognized the art of writing as being the hallmark of “civilization.” Morgan’s continuum of linear evolutionary progress provided Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels with their sequential structure and with sufficient gaps into which they could insert the “class struggles” of their own theory. Upon their general model of dialectics, of progress within a historical material process, these founders of Communism built a world model that required and deserved a Proletarian revolution.

—The pioneer of American cultural anthropology, Lewis Henry Morgan, was no fool; but his sketches about the functioning of ancient society never quite rose to the level of a workable field theory.

²See the Section below, “The Teeter-totter of Experiences and Responses,” with Figure 31.

³Lewis Henry Morgan. *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization.* 1877.

I will not reject evolutionary hypotheses as failed attempts outright—especially not those of pioneers. Instead, I will again publish here my five successive levels of cultural adaptation, almost exactly as in 1991. All levels of human cultural adaptation, in their heydays, needed to be associated and balanced with matching religious responses—in context of thought as well as in physical behavior.⁴

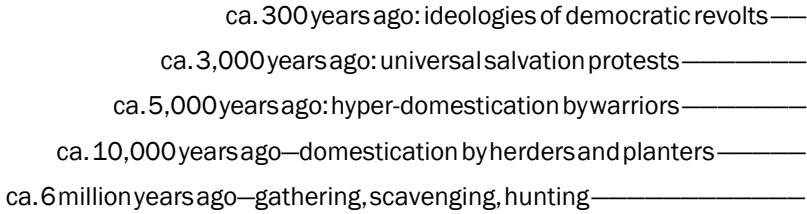


Fig. 31. The Accumulation of Five Levels of Culture

—It should be emphasized that the five levels of culture, and of adaptation, are “successive” only with regard to their beginnings in time. They do not displace anything. All five adaptive levels of cultural complexity and of concomitant religion that I am proposing, still exist today. I personally have been active at all five levels. None of them has been superseded. This means that Morgan’s idea of a linear “progress” has no place in my teaching vocabulary. Relapses to simpler levels of adaptation may become necessary, or desirable, as more complex lifestyles run into their natural limitations.

—As a matter of fact, many exceptionally successful modern people, in the free time that they have earned as rewards for modern work and skills, are reverting periodically to earlier or simpler levels of human adaptation—such as hunting, fishing, gathering, gardening, handicrafts, and walking—and they call these returns into prehistory their personal “recreation.” Both “rebirth” and “recreation” are concepts of the mythological and religious kind.

—As Morgan, Marx, Engels and many social scientists or historians have done, I am classifying types of human culture according to the material adaptations by which people sustain themselves. The link between culture and religion appears obvious. Types of culture

⁴My “five levels of adaptation,” as evolutionary accumulations, were published in the “Introduction” to *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire*. Karl W. Luckert. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991, pp. 21-27.

define a people's mode of aggression; they also set up those same people to experience corresponding modes of guilt and to respond, accordingly, with matching types of retreat behavior. Their types of guilt do modulate their religious experiences and affect their overall behavior. I will therefore attempt to link my "evolution and history of religions" model to existential, intellectual, as well as material human involvements.

The Teeter Totter of Experiences and Responses

Though I was largely aware of my personal presuppositions to learning, my approach to teaching about religions has been significantly affected by so-called scientific materialism. This confession will come as a surprise to some of my friends.⁵ Indeed, teachers who wish to communicate with their students do, inevitably, end up using words that those students will understand most easily. I have also noticed how the applied sciences and technologies of the English Industrial Revolution have honed the English language to a point where it actually favors empiricism and scientific materialism. This is not to say that Marx and Engels influenced the English language, but rather, that both men prospered nicely within the verbal thickets of English empiricism. They struggled to crawl away from the entwining boughs—*dem Schlingen Gewächs*—of their native German tongue. Marx and Engels responded positively to English empirical categories. Marx wrote his most important works while he was surrounded by the noises of London. In stark contrast, his native German language never surrendered to experimental science its categories of *Geist* or *Geisteswissenschaften*, which have no precise equivalents in English.⁶

—After an interval of hesitation and astonishment, I felt obliged to acknowledge, regarding the formation of my personal theory of

⁵The references to Marx and scientific materialism, in this section, are an accommodation to the fact that Part Two and Three of this book were first written upon request from scholars in the People's Republic of China. On second thought, this coincidence may contribute fresh defining lines also to a Western dialogue.

⁶English is the perfect language for manufacturing scientific categories. Not even Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, in *Das Ich und das Es* (1923) sounded really scientific until "es" was mistranslated into English and objectified as "id." Thenceforth the "Es-Bezogenheit" could be studied scientifically as a specific, respectable something.

religion, indebtedness to the current English vocabulary of scientific empiricism and materialism. When in 1968 I gave my first college-level introductory lecture to the history of religions field, after some slowdowns in communication, I noticed that my students had been taught to think along the lines of raw English pluralism and Marxist materialism. So, with chalk in hand, at the blackboard, I adapted and transposed my explanations of religious experience to raw quantifiable and measureable categories. I did not notice at the time that I was also resolving a systematic problem for atheistic psychology as well as for Marxist materialism. Beyond this, the Teeter Totter scale can be used as a theoretical bridge between theism and atheism.

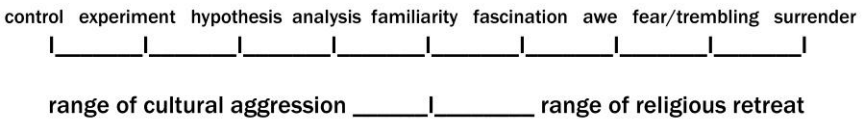


Fig. 32. The Teeter Totter of Experience and Responses

—Of course, qualitative words that define characteristics such as “holy” or “sacred,” remain real and meaningful as well. There exist optional versions of linguistic “software.” If communication requires, one can talk about qualities by using quantitative scales—thus talk about qualities which contain more of this or less of that trait. All one needs to do is to extend the experiential intensity scale (the Teeter Totter scale, Figure 32) from scientific experimentation toward the dimension of religion, and thereby bridge the culture side of the scale to the religion portion on the right. Together, both dimensions represent a continuum that is able to accommodate degrees of human experience. To distinguish religion from science, one does not really need to refer to “spirit” or “matter.” All one needs to do is become aware that human awareness is limited.

—As long as we acknowledge the fact that all through life we are surrounded, we can encounter and experience (1) reality configurations that are less than we, (2) reality configurations that are greater than we and (3) reality configurations that are our potential equals. The latter category, at the middle of the scale, turns out to be quite narrow in scope. It comes into focus only at the fulcrum where aggression and retreat are balanced by egalitarian communication and harmonic coexistence.

—Religion is the human response to so-conceived and so-experienced greater-than-human situations or configurations of reality. The range of religious experiences extends (1) from the egalitarian midpoint of “familiarity” along the right side of the experiential intensity scale. (2) The mildest form of religious experience may so be designated as “fascination.” (3) The midpoint of the religious portion, of the right half of the total experiential scale, may be indicated by “awe.” For example, the kind of experience attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, upon seeing the angel: it is said that he froze in awe so that “he could move neither forward nor backward.”⁷ (4) The next intense religious experiential degree can then be marked as “fear and trembling.” And (5) the ultimate religious degree of intensity amounts to full “surrender” of the self.

—At the midpoint of the scale, at the point of egalitarian “familiarity,” the experiential Teeter Totter of any rational individual must balance. Potential equals communicate at this point and share. There they propagate and thrive. All species provide nurture and survive at this averaged center.

—The scale that is offered here is also suitable to illustrate the teachings of the Buddha—by subdividing the four segments along the right half of the scale into halves—thereby indicating the eight progressive steps along the Eightfold Path. A more common example would be the case of a human family. After a child is born, parents naturally assume de facto “divine authority” over the child, for a limited time. Beyond human examples our definition of religion is expandable to fit other species. One only needs to plot the average balanced behavior of another species at the midpoint of its own total scale. And thereby, for example, a dog becomes eligible to have revelations regarding its religious relationship of dependence vis-à-vis some greater-than-canine human master.

—A human person is too small to be “Nature.” He or she cannot pretend to know where the “supernatural” dimension begins. Moreover, we face even greater difficulties when we try to distinguish the “natural” from anything else. Thus, our Teeter Totter scale does not

⁷Ibn Ishak (?-768 CE), as quoted in Thor Andrae, *Mohammed, the Man and His Faith*. New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1960, p. 44. “Awe” is also illustrated by St. Peter the disciple, as quoted in St. Matthew’s “Transfiguration” account: “Lord, it is pleasant to be here; let us build three huts....” There was no need either to move higher or to return to the valley.

distinguish a supernatural dimension from reality. As one of Lévy-Brühl's "primitives," this author knows himself only as a human being that knows some of its limits.⁸ He knows the line where the greater-than-human, the super-human, dimension begins for him.

—Every human mind thinks scientifically as well as religiously or theologically. Whenever we contemplate subject matter as greater-than-human realities we theologize. When we examine subject matter as less-than-human things, so as to consider them for analysis, experimentation, or control, we proceed scientifically. During some rare moments our thoughts may be balanced in "humanistic" fashion, among potential equals—at the midpoint of the scale. The experiential scale can be applied regardless of whether matter is greater than mind, or mind is considered more important than matter, and regardless of whether Hegel or Marx are accepted or rejected. To communicate rationally, we may orient ourselves along that intensity scale among facts that are measurable. Accordingly, Marx and Engels would predict that "religion" someday will wither away. But they forgot to consider the greater-than-human boundary that all humans are destined to bump up against. The greater-than-human dimension will never go away unless humans themselves become almighty—and then, obviously, it would be impossible to be religious anymore.

—Of course, people are great enough to target a word like "religion" and swear that they will never use it again, and afterward pretend that "religion" and the greater-than-human dimension have disappeared altogether. So, for Marx and Engels this seemed an easy prediction to make. In the evolution of languages, all words eventually wither away. But this withering process only changes words for superficial identification and communication. For every word-symbol that becomes politically inconvenient, several replacement words are invented. It is then only a matter of time before a favorite is selected by conventional usage. Indeed, a particularly scary word may become dominant during a period of civil commotion. Then, for a while, historians can build careers and become prominent by writing books about "revolution," about "war and peace," or about "terror."

⁸Cf. Lucien Lévy-Brühl. *How Natives Think* (1910). Lévy-Brühl distinguished two basic mindsets, "Primitive" and "Western." He describes the mental activity of primitives as "mystical participation." See also Footnote 19, page 170.

—Greater-than-human realities may be, or may not be, truly what we perceive them to be. In similar fashion, those arguing from the popular scientific side do not really know whether experimental scientific objects, the less-than-human units of reality, are really what they understand them to be. It only means that for the time being we think we can get away with manipulating them. I call attention to the fact that scientists today are as frightened as anyone else, because during the twentieth century their colleagues figured out how to split the Uranium atom into smaller units. Their fears are of an existential nature—which is, they are religious responses to inconspicuous, but nevertheless fear-inspiring and therefore “greater-than-human” subatomic fragments, “enriched” perhaps by ignorant administrative policies. In the course of human evolution, the gods have revealed themselves in various numbers and sizes. With a little bit of luck and effort, even a tiny virus can scare or defeat a mighty human hero—or an army. All the virus needs to do is enjoy multiplying among potential equals.

—While proceeding along the experiential dimension toward the right end on the scale, the need for precise definitions decreases. To share or not to share our experiences, or “how” to share them, is the central question for those who try to balance their lives near the midpoint of the scale—to share in the company of potential equals.

Religion as Process and Quest for Balance

Since my first day of teaching about the experiential scale I have envisioned it as the beam of a Teeter Totter. The metaphor served me well for all introductory lessons to the history of religions. Seeing this theoretical model as a children’s playground fixture does suggest its expanded validity for all developmental stages in human life. Ascribing to the scale a pivot at the middle illustrates our need for balance. The principle of a pivoted Teeter Totter scale, and the need for balance, are never outgrown when children become adults. But as children prosper and succeed in the adult world, they are continually obliged to create fresh imbalances, for power and profit. Nevertheless, to the extent that humanity wishes to survive, it must dedicate its energies also to the quest for co-operational balance.

—The point to which all life on earth moves, with a great variety of religious and scientific responses, is ultimate surrender in death. In the course of every organism’s life, death is prefigured by cycles of

fatigue and rest, of falling asleep. We inhale and eat, but we must surrender our intake sooner or later. Ritualized paths recommend to their devotees “submission or surrender of the ego,” to be achieved ritually already during lifetime—as something to be practiced and perfected. Nevertheless, all the religious paths of humankind, in one form or other, distinguish degrees of gradual surrender, of learning, or among shades of knowing. They carefully distinguish temporary and less intense surrenders—thus, changeable states of awareness that differ from the finality of surrendering one’s ego unreservedly at the moment of death.

—The larger a society, the greater are the imbalances it creates—and the more organized must therefore be the religious efforts of harmonizing such imbalances. And then again, if religions fail to provide the goals which they set, certain perplexed pilgrims may despair and blame religion for their own cultural failures. Rational “retreats” from irrational battles may be identified as causes for having lost the war. In human struggles, those who interfere as peacemakers can easily get blamed for the embarrassing predicaments that combatants have gotten themselves into—which is, embarrassments that were exposed by the interference of a peacemaker.

—Alert reformers can try to resuscitate a weak religious tradition; they can also abandon a particular path as a hopeless venue. In this manner, some religions are being reformed with valorized theologies and with refocused concepts of salvation, while others are being trashed by reactionary atheists or by fanatic fresh theists. But then, inasmuch as no human mind has ever been able to reinvent itself from scratch, any fresh start must begin with paraphrasing older problems on hand of available solutions. In real life, new problems and solutions are the offspring of antecedents, of older problems and solutions. Older solutions must always first be understood in terms of the older problems which they resolved in bygone times.

—Persons who find themselves entangled in modern chaotic situations may evaluate inherited “Old Time religion” as being truer, simpler and purer. To the extent that older solutions are being preserved and ritually enacted, faithful followers of a Path may turn nostalgic. They may try to restore obsolete levels of early culture, in hope of making older religious solutions relevant. They reintroduce the old problems that initially made revelatory solutions necessary. But some

older religious answers no longer can resolve all present human problems effectively. Still, older fragments of culture and religion will always be important to obtain rational historical perspectives.

—All problems and solutions, approached by human intellect at various levels of culture, tend to be made more complex over time. Those flint arrow heads, at Göbekli Tepe, possibly besmeared with serpentine venom, have meanwhile gotten enlarged to the magnitude of nuclear missiles and canisters of poison gas. New technologies and materials have gotten uploaded onto our personal experiential Teeter Totter planks. Religious retreats, of trying to escape back to earlier and to simpler days, may promise less ballast on our existential scales, but they cannot remedy all modern imbalances.

—Scientific experiments allow for only one category of human experience—just as eating a meal engages only one extremity of our total alimentary equipment—namely, the portion that is most suitable for aggressive behavior. Scientific experiments pertain to the left side of our scale, and they involve (1) the task of familiarizing oneself with facts, (2) analyzing these facts by reducing them conceptually to safe and manageable portions, (3) proposing a hypothesis that can reach beyond the known facts, (4) undertaking controlled experimentation that yields measurable similarities and differences, and finally (5) exploitation of newly obtained knowledge, for additional control, to determine starting points for future rounds of experimentation. Thus, from the center of our experiential scale, the scientific portion of the scale extends left from familiarity to analysis, hypothetical rearrangement, experimentation, and the entire realm of conquest and control.

—The entire pursuit of scientific experimentation is suited only for studying and for understanding reality configurations that are of less-than-human scope. This is so because the scope of experimental science is limited to understanding realities that are judged *a priori* to be inferior to man, and therefore controllable by experimentation. Any experimental confrontation with potential equals will naturally lead to interpersonal struggles on one hand, or to accommodation, compromise, and a possible measure of egalitarian interplay at the other. In either instance, the key objectives of science will be eclipsed. Then, any confrontation with greater-than-human realities may lead to fascination and poetic depth, to shudders, trembling and holy fear, and eventually to an ego's surrender.

—Metaphorically speaking, on the right side of the scale the scientifically inclined human manipulator becomes himself or herself an object of experimentation—an “object” at the disposal of greater-than-human reality—that is, if greater reality were indeed inclined to stoop to our style of scientific tinkering. Scientific control at one end of the scale is existentially negated at the other end where all activities fade in religious surrender. The starting point of scientific experimentation—as of religious experience—lies at the “familiarity” midpoint along the scale. It is the only point along the scale where the human mind is free to pursue neutral, unprejudiced observation.

—Also at this midpoint, labeled “familiarity,” any would-be equals engage in egalitarian sharing in accordance with the Golden Rule—with the universal rule of ethics that governs egalitarian relations. If the Golden Rule were applied to dealings with scientific objects, one would be raising their status to a point of equality, and this would prohibit experimentation and transform science either into play or conquest. Of course, it is possible for an “aspect” or part of a human person temporarily to be considered a lesser subject matter, available for scientific research or medical treatment. But this step is ethically feasible only after that smaller portion of a person has been analytically and contractually differentiated from the remainder of the person that contains and retains ego awareness. The essential ego portion—the integrity of a person—neither can nor should be subjected to scientific experimentation.

—Egalitarian “experiments” at the midpoint of the scale may be no more than playfulness. By the same token, the relationship of potential partners, from that midpoint onward, can indeed be overwhelmed by stress if one partner utilizes the other scientifically as an experimental object, or simply as something less than equal. From the same midpoint of playfulness, moving to the right on the scale, it is also possible to idolize potential equals.

—In any case, the graduated steps of sensing religious intensities or weaknesses—are fascination, awe, fear and trembling, and surrender. Along the total length of the experiential scale, all the way from conquest to surrender, the language of scientific materialism is suited only to comment on the left half of the scale. Relations with greater-than-human realities require a different vocabulary and attitude. Scientific materialism cannot explain more than half the scope which disciples or comrades, as human fellows, are apt to experience

from the day they are born until the day they die. A worldview that is fifty percent in tune, and fifty percent out of focus, will only be able to understand half the range of possible human experiences. Proponents of such an orientation have a chance of understanding other people perhaps slightly more than half of the time.

Types of “Religion” and “Religions”

In the universal/singular case, “religion” is a noun that refers to a pattern of behavior which tends to counter-balance culture-generated aggression. If religious retreats, i.e. attempts at balancing aggressions, appear faint or failing, or if battles are lost, then organized religion often gets blamed for conditions that it tried to prevent in the first place. Inasmuch as religion *reacts* to culture’s ways, it earns blame for whatever its interferences help or fail to produce. Strictly speaking, there are no such things as religious victories. At best there are peaceful religious retreats, defeats, or avoided victories. In the history of religions some efforts at balancing human behavior have indeed been able to limit conflict and to postpone violence. Periods of calm have indeed been achieved. But insofar as calm must be sustained with mythological assurances of “justification,” any kind of religious doctrine of justification may, in the end, be held liable if a religiously comforted culture mobilizes for rounds of revenge, thus perverting its religious justification into fresh liabilities.

—Any kind of creature that attacks anything or anyone, and that intermittently retreats, acts religiously. Living beings that are involved in a quest for food, and that capture, harvest, bite, swallow or absorb, also “retreat” for periods of rest—and thereby their religiosity is made manifest. If it is animals that do the retreating or balancing, we may categorize their behavior as “animal religion.” However, to understand the point of this chapter, a reader need not go so far as to acknowledge the existence of animal religion. Let us consider here, simply, the religions of humankind. If large numbers of common folk manage to retreat to a behavioral equilibrium, we may call that “folk religion.” If their levels of culture appear simple and primitive, we may recognize “primitive religion.” Every religious solution, generally, is adjusted to the “primitiveness level” of its host culture. Every answer must respond, more or less, to the level of complexity of the questions that is being raised. On the other hand, every answer must establish its relevance to a culture’s current degree of “complexity.”

A religious innovation, in order to become relevant, must carry the proper amount of rational weight—not too little and not too much. Where rituals are being staged by shamans, we talk of “shamanism.” If a single person finds his or her balance of retreat behavior in a personal style, we speak of “personal religion.” Then, inasmuch as for millions of years, males and females have labored for separate goals at various intensities, it is also reasonable—though not always advisable—to distinguish between male and female types of religiosity.

—People that live in small tribal societies may have their religions classified as “tribal” or as “small-scale” religions. However we choose to name them, we are not really characterizing religiosity as such; rather, we associate religiousness with social or cultural features that are more easily nameable. Levels of cultural complexity, and sizes of populations, do indeed determine the type of imbalances that religious responses eventually are expected to solve. Among larger populations we find class strata, competition among nations, as well as entire clusters of civilization that have become visible in history. Accordingly, we may think about “national religions” or about major “world religions.”

—Atheism does not necessarily render a person irreligious. The blessed Buddha taught an atheistic doctrine, concerning a path to enlightenment, and thereby he became the founder of one of the great world religions. Greater-than-human reality—because it exceeds the human ego all around—can actually be envisioned along both dimensions along the scale, and can be scored in both “positive” and “negative” numbers. Inexplicable “positive visions” (e.g. Heaven) and inexplicable “negative light” (e.g. Nirvana) can overwhelm a human mind with approximately equal intensity. Inexplicability by itself is sufficient to indicate whether or not we are approaching the greater-than-human dimension.

—Marx and Engels, in spite of what they said or wrote, submitted to the greater material Process of History. And as if to endorse the religious significance of these two men, somewhere in China one can find a temple built in honor of a more recent prince among atheists, Chairman Mao Tse Dong. Surely against his will, he has become recognized as a god. This fate, in China, has caught up even with a theist who recognized no God but Allah. Hu Dahai, a Muslim general who served the first Ming emperor, lies buried in Nanjing. He

also sits enthroned as god in a boundary temple in Gansu, from which he benevolently faces in the direction of a population of Tibetans. I have visited both his tomb and his temple, thrice. Three decades after the Cultural Revolution, Tibetan “Buddhists” donated lumber to help rebuild this Han boundary temple.

—If a reader disagrees with the schema implied in the graduated experiential ontology of the Teeter Totter scale, I accept the fact that I am failing in my attempt at communication here. But there exists absolutely no doubt that someday will bring agreement, when the person endorses my scale at his point of final surrender in death. Of course, I will not then insist that he take time out and respond to the argument of this book—not at his most holy and private moment. If he happens to be a theist, let us say a practicing Muslim, he will have no trouble understanding the experiential scale. His prayer gestures anticipate his point of final surrender five times each day. If, on the other hand, he is committed to scientific materialism instead, his personal surrender can be cushioned by the fact that all along he has practiced thinking of himself as a material entity. This mental discipline, of seeing his ego diffused in matter, is a preparatory atheistic variety of religious surrender. Not much of his essence will need to change for him when he simply is being converted into a more authentic clump of it.

11. FROM HUNTING TO DOMESTICATION

The evolutionary transition from hunting to domestication has widely been named “Neolithic Revolution.” Before considering religious responses for this transition, one must be aware of a variety of material and strategic implications. The dialogue of this chapter prepares for its continuation in Chapter Twelve, which will consider an alternate route of transition, from hunting directly into the exaggerated phase of “hyper-domestication.”

The Fate of Roamers and Settlers

The hunter and miner religion at Göbekli Tepe (Abdomen Hill), as far as can be surmised at this point in its excavations, was for the most part a retrenchment for salvaging hunter-gatherer culture—more so than a confident step forward into an agricultural or biological revolution. But then, people who during ceremonial rounds enact rites of atonement are assuming a posture of religious retreat. They are repenting, and culturally they linger mostly at the defensive or submissive level. These huntsmen, as weapon makers, hesitated along the frontier of their Hunting and Flintstone culture. While wavering there they sought and found refuge in Limestone religion. But, having said this much about the boundary of progress along which men in sanctuaries at Abdomen Hill were having their second thoughts, one should also bear in mind that a predatory mind, that took millions of years to evolve, could be converted only very slowly. Alongside taking physical steps, mental reorientation needed to happen with many incremental intellectual discoveries. These needed to be planted in human minds, and be cultivated there, as many small axiomatic seed ideas.

—Excavations at the Southwest Hill of Göbekli Tepe, at the slopes of Level Two and on the Northwest Hill, have now brought to light fresh indications of change which point in the direction of domestication. One must assume that orthodox totemic hunter folk, who participated in the larger atonement and religious awakening trend, did so still mostly in order to balance their hunter existence. Eventually and probably, most of these people moved away from the area still as hunters, and many migrated northward through the mountains. They went on to populate Europe and Asia. Those who drifted east across Asia may have helped push Ice Age populations and advance migrations over the land bridge into the Americas, ahead of themselves, while following others. A group that drifted into Southeast Asia may have mingled with people who later carried megalithic habits into the Indonesian and Pacific realms.

—All this does not mean that people who participated at Göbekli Tepe's two millennia of growth and evening glow actually migrated to all those distant places themselves. But it is possible that traces of Neolithic cult places, of which modifications appeared subsequently in Celtic Europe and in the Americas, still await discovery across Asia. We can expect them to be found in association with limestone plateaus and flint mines.

—In any case, at some time between four and five thousand years ago, the megalithic vogue seems to have reached Middle America. There the roaming populations, whirling and eddying, proceeded to block the isthmus which was the natural geographical funnel for movements from North into South America. On that narrow strip of land, drifting and compacting populations could not survive by hunting and gathering. They needed to become sedentary planters, and so they were forced to coalesce defensively into political concentrations and systems of hyper-domestication. The most important American domesticated plants were maize in Mexico and potatoes in Peru. Both cultivars seem to have come into use there as early as ten to seven millennia ago.

—From Middle America the mound builders with their planter culture, propelled by population pressures, eddied back northward into the Greater Southwest and also further east into the Mississippi and Missouri basins. Generally in North America, Middle American influences of mound builders reverberated as far north as maize and potatoes were planted in pre-Columbian times.

—Ten thousand years ago, there also were populations that continued living along the Fertile Crescent and in Anatolia, and these people pioneered a variety of domestication enterprises. The general consensus among pre-historians still appears to be that goats, sheep, pigs, and cattle were first domesticated along the upper arc of the Fertile Crescent. For exploring the next larger picture in that area we are advised to keep an open eye on what is being excavated a little farther west of Göbekli Tepe, at Çatalhöyük. India and Africa are now also being mentioned as separate places for the domestication of cattle. The practice of herding and animal husbandry may have spread from the Upper Fertile Crescent southward along the rivers of Mesopotamia. However, most of the early domesticator settlements there may have gotten buried under alluvial sands, over time.

—Domestication practices were brought from the Fertile Crescent into Europe by 7,000 years ago. The first Neolithic settlements in China began about that same time with the Yangshao culture, along the Yellow River. The Dawenko people in the Shandong region were roughly contemporary. The Longshan, 4,500 years ago, were beginning to populate the area where the Shang dynasty eventually took hold.⁹

—City-based “civilization,” an indication of hyper-domestication, began in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and in the Indus valley almost concurrently, some centuries prior to 5,000 years ago. Organized hyper-domestication was under way in China at least by 3,600 years ago under the Shang Dynasty. Bronze metallurgy, wheeled carriages, as well as the art of writing, were added at Anyang three centuries later.

—If one does postulate the quest for a steady supply of food to be the primary factor in the human struggle, then, at the outset, the introduction of “domestication” must have seemed like a step backward from “the good old days” when hunting and gathering were sufficient. But for the most part it was not human planning; it was geography, the climate, and unforeseen quick increases in regional human populations that caused problems of the magnitude that in turn would cause migrations.

—As a matter of course, hunter bands, wherever they went were inclined to respond to their first food shortages by uniting

⁹For general introductory readings see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, compiler. [Http://depts.washington.edu/chinaiv/index.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/chinaiv/index.htm).

into teams and hordes. They undertook larger hunting campaigns and invented methods to drive the animals into makeshift enclosures. Because meat shortages in those days were quite likely caused by a general decline among wild animal populations, under pressure from increases in human hunter populations, the technological improvement of weapons and the general intensification of hunting were, in the longer run, all self-defeating.

—Throughout the era of hunting, migrations of people have followed the availability of prey animals. Wherever wild animals moved about, there the hunters were obliged to follow. And the hunters' migrations were energized with fresh optimism when, in small steps, their weapons technology could be improved. This was the dimension in the evolutionary process for which Göbekli Tepe was able to shine for two thousand years.

—In the human quest for food, the domestication of plants and animals eventually were unavoidable measures all around the globe. Adjustments needed to be made wherever herds of wild animals were reduced or decimated, and where wild grains, vegetables, and fruits failed to fill shortages in the food supply. Domestic herds were assembled from among the most docile specimen and from the easiest species of prey animals that could be found. Goats and sheep topped the list of the earliest preferred species. Cattle were added when the supply of wild bovines was thinning out.

Predisposition: *The principle of slaughtering the “wild” and breeding the docile is common sense. As a young boy, this writer himself was the cause of such selective breeding. His father wanted docile cows that a seven-year-old boy could lead, on a rope in his right hand, with a stick in his left, while he himself was guiding the iron plow. The on-hand cow had to be gentle, and the one off-hand needed to have a steady gait and be a little taller to walk in the previous furrow. I had a favorite all-red (rust colored) cow for leading on-hand. Altogether we had five cows in the stall. By the time my all-red favorite was sold to the butcher, eight years after she had been bought as a heifer, three of her daughters had taken her place.*

—Gardens were planted with the most vigorous and most edible cultivars. These emergency measures became a style of survival that compelled groups of people into sedentary living. At some point in time, chasing rare animals was simply no longer practical. But men could not just become domesticators of animals or plants—not without first recovering their own archaic temperaments as less aggressive “gatherers.” The *Homo sapiens* species, which during the era of

large-animal hunting had split, culturally along its gender boundary, needed to find ways of living together again, to settle down and to invent their new livelihood together.

—The evolving interdependence between human groups and domesticated herd animals proved to be severe enough to affect human character profiles. As humans became sedentary, they established their own societies after the manner in which they already had entrenched and secured certain domestic herd animals. The herds they owned could at daytime be seen mingling amongst human guardians and owners. Together they all became easy targets for remnant hunters who insisted on pursuing animals in accordance with their old-fashioned ways. The most stalwart hunters continued roaming and scouting, and they were not accustomed to distinguishing between wild and owned animals.

—The clans that moved away from Göbekli Tepe, to continue hunting elsewhere, kept their options open longer for settling at other places at some time in the future. They aligned themselves with other adventurous hunters whose hopes and habits matched their own. Eventually these groups of mobile hunters coalesced to form bands and hordes of warriors. With combined strength, such people then extended and imposed their wills on territories that had been populated earlier—some of which had earlier grown too weak to keep moving. Human settlers were getting included in the target lists of those who persisted on hunting. Any trick that mobile hunters knew how to use against wild animals could be inflicted more effectively on domestic animals, and just as easily on human owners.

—Poorly armed herdsmen and farmers, equipped with tools not designed for combat, toiled among their possessions, scattered in small groups. As weak individuals they often were the only obstacles that stood in the way of gangs of robbers that happened to be craving meat the old-fashioned way. Large numbers of cultivators and nomadic herders were needed, therefore, to cooperate for mutual defense. This fear-induced necessity, even more than the sheer economic factor of an increase in food production, has been the dynamic that was responsible for the growth of human populations and settlements. If, as a male domesticator, you felt incapable of protecting your family, clan, and possessions; if you thought you were too weak, then you needed to raise more boys, more fighters, who eventually could help defend you and other settlers.

—When in the course of time some wandering bands of hunters coalesced to become warrior hordes, those who had settled earlier became vulnerable to ever increasing threats. Eventually it was necessary for sedentary folk to unite for their own security and defense, to withdraw and to corral themselves into walled villages and cities. But then, as people sought refuge behind adobe, wood, and stone, the stationary cities themselves became cherished targets. Organized warriors could conquer and control these cities and, in turn, they knew how to prevail against their own competitors in the name of defense and pre-emptive aggression. Having once fallen into the hands of warlords, villages and cities became fortresses from which victorious conquerors could launch their campaigns of aggression. Peaceful defensive settlements of domesticators were in this manner placed into the service of warlords.

Personal Changes wrought by Domestication

Agriculture, the domestication of plants and animals, implied an economy that entrapped and entangled its originators. Being sedentary enabled them to raise more children, and larger populations instantly made mobility and honest hunting more difficult. Sedentary people kept their nostalgia for hunting alive, of course, and surely some of them occasionally managed to return to the more exciting life of the chase. But by and large, sedentary farmers were stuck in their own progress. The more they prospered as domesticators, the fewer animals could be found in the wild.

—During the period of transition from hunting to domestication, some things that were essential to the self-esteem of hunters appear to have been lost to settlers. A systematic comparison of hunting with subsequent domestic nurture and butchering practices might expose what these ingredients of the hunters' self-esteem could have been. We will therefore compare "hunting" with its subsequent counterpart of "nurture and domestic butchering." We will focus on the general efforts that were required for each. To that end we will weigh these activities in terms of motivation, preparations, pursuit, confrontation, killing, butchering and transportation. We also will consider these efforts in relation to religious rationalizations that were maintained for achieving societal legitimization—required for existential poise and balance.

Motivation: The fact that archaic hunters were motivated by their need for food is obvious. This fact is vouched for by regularly and naturally recurring sensations of hunger. For above-average hunters, winning extra status could be an additional motivation; it could be earned by showing extraordinary valor and skill on the hunting range. By contrast, planters and herders acted with long-range anticipations of future needs. Because domestication labors do require long-range strategies and inventiveness, for storing foods, the momentary physical sensations of hunger are less decisive for initiating daily labors. Instead, strategies, work routines, and methodical sequences were brought into play to streamline the flow of activities. Momentary gratification was subordinated to planning, method, and work routines.

Preparation: Hunters needed to keep their tool kit simple and portable. Provisions also needed to be kept dry and light. Domesticators, in stark contrast, could accumulate larger quantities of equipment and provisions. They even could develop elaborate procedures for manufacture and could establish routines for regular maintenance. Defined somewhat whimsically, culture and civilization began with the accumulation of surplus goods, that is, wherever accumulated goods became too much to carry. Hoarders needed to become sedentary—as if waiting for robbers to lighten their loads before it would make sense for them to move on.

Pursuit: Hunters put most of their efforts into tracking, chasing, waiting in ambush and setting traps. By contrast, domesticators reduced hot pursuit to a minimum. They pre-arranged their quest for food as permanent trap-and-friendship strategies. They modified animal behavior through breeding, confinement, nurture, taming, and friendship. Their vigilance was instead directed against fellow predators—that is, exactly against those competitors whom their ancestral hunters once respected and imitated as totemic divine models. The excitement that hunters experienced while they engaged in hot pursuit was gradually replaced with methodical and ritualized activities—and eventually with grandiose sacrificial feasts to reduce boredom. Depending on the status of the human or divine guests that were invited, or on the amount of ceremonial status that could be earned, plain boring butchering events at group settlements could be magnified to immense feasts of slaughter and potlaches.

Confrontation and Killing: Hunters often enacted their killings as climaxes at the end of exhaustive pursuits. They experienced their “moments of truth” as moments of excitement and as transitions to well-earned rest. By contrast, domesticators prepared their confrontations methodically. Without the jubilant crutches or heroic enhancements, and in sharp contrast to the hunters’ genuine joy of victory, domesticators could experience killing and butchering as disappointing acts of cowardice. Such emotions, obviously, lingered in stark contrast to the aforementioned opportunities for staging sacrificial feasts or potlatches.

Butchering and Transport: Hunters faced the arduous task of having to carry home their butchered meat. In cases where it was easier to move families to the killing site, considerable efforts had to be invested on camp reconstruction. In slaughters staged by domesticators, the animals and the celebrants were already in place. More energy could be devoted to formal meals and to intricate rituals that included communal feasting.

Normalization: Ritual procedures for the hunters’ self-justification aim at alleviating the guilt of killing, and at justifying slaughters by communal eating. Hunting, pursued as divinely modeled ordained trickery was perpetrated against divinely provided and humanly targeted victims. By contrast, in domestic butchering the weight of ceremonial justification has shifted to claims of divinely guaranteed ownership of living animals, and of property in general. The guilt of killing and eating, among domesticators, became a problem of cult and culture-defined economics which, in turn, was based on divinely granted status and property rights.

Sacrifice and the Economy: Ownership of possessions could be demonstrated among domesticators by offering advance share sacrifices to the gods and contracting divine-human covenants for acquisition. For the legitimate acquisition of entire herds, in some early herder cultures, whole individual share-animals needed to be paid to an original divine owner. The price that had to be paid to the gods was often higher than what poorer people could afford. Thus, religiously justified status, demonstrated in the presence of some deity, might then justify and stabilize a lopsided social order. Full share payments legitimized owning the original breeding stock, not so

much because a deity really needed food shares, but to stabilize ownership rights among humankind in a somewhat orderly manner. Theologically, the situation can be understood as the gods having played along in the rituals of humankind, by their grace, to enable human economies, trade, and exchange to begin.

—The modern academic disparagement over ancient sacrificial practices, therefore, is not so much an indication of superior civilized understanding, but rather an indication of ignorance regarding the practical reasons required for balancing a society of early domesticators and first-time owners. To arrive at a better understanding of the original problems, one need only imagine large populations in posthunting cultures, where every man is still a trained hunter and a butcher, but most are failed hunters with little else to do that would not be demeaning to male egos. One might also imagine people trying to run an economy that had no conventions according to which one could own animals or sell meat!

—The ceremonial elaborations that surrounded the killing of sacrificial victims, as they came to be practiced by domesticators, must first of all be understood as pragmatic social innovations—as the kind of things that belong into the philosophy basket of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*. Socially, a sacrificial feast functioned as a substitute for the adventure and excitement that used to come naturally for men who were out hunting. Gathering and hunting are ways of living which, once upon a time, added up to a lifestyle probably more pleasant than subsequent domestication chores could be. On average, hunting seemed more dignified than shoveling manure or hoeing weeds. Hunting was more “aristocratic,” first because it defined the lifestyle of hunters, who later became aristocrats. But it also was more edifying than constantly serving tamed animals—creatures that never even made an effort to control their bowels.

Domestication as Humiliation: Seen from a slightly different angle, after *Homo sapiens* has progressed for some millions of years in the art of premeditating murder technologically, his ego slowly got worn to where he began to see himself as a penitent victim—doomed perhaps, to perform domestication labors for atonement. Foolish animals, with their demanding needs, appeared to have become the masters of those men who succumbed to the need of serving them. Having once committed oneself to be a farmer, even to own as much

as a single cow, for milking, required steady attention and labor—without hope for a day’s vacation. Aristocrats, and even public officials in many places today, will still downgrade the status of a farmer who voluntarily, or by his status of birth, seems predestined to shovel manure, to remain forever unqualified for any higher calling.

—When large wild animals and huge loads of venison became a rarity for men on the open range, their families had to compensate by scrounging about in the vicinity of their camps for whatever they could find. Accidental spillage of gathered seeds, at the camp site, and discarded plant waste that sprouted, may have led to the invention of seeding and planting. And such elementary planting may have led to pioneering horticultural experiments—undertaken primarily by gatherer women. Such an evolution and sequence of events probably was the scenario at well-watered places.

—During the phase of cultural realignment known as “domestication,” heroically exuberant artificial predators needed to relearn the lowly roles of docile gatherers, and then learn to be planters as if they were akin to squirrels. Within just a few generations, some of them needed to switch from predation to gathering. And on top of that they needed to learn how to tame animals that would have been so much easier to kill. This means they needed to replace their extermination impulses with maternal strategies that led to their own enslavement. Humankind may be the most adaptive species on the planet, but the speed of mental repentance and strategic conversion, from the heights of confident divine predation, back down to chores of the most primitive modes of gathering, was strenuous beyond anything else imaginable. Proud men needed to learn again the simple gathering skills in which any basket-carrying woman could outperform them.

—The combined economics conundrum, of navigating the transition from overhunting to domestication, sounds straight forward. But in reality it was more problematic than any modern mind can now imagine by hindsight. The masculine hominid hunter ego had evolved over six million years and was then challenged to radically reconstitute itself. It was trained and bred to endure dangers of every possible kind, during encounters with greater-than-human (divine) beasts as competitors. Hunters were able to sacrifice their own lives if necessary, to defend and to save their comrades and families. They were, however, unable to adjust in a timely manner to the environmental imbalances that they themselves were causing by

weapons-engineering, overhunting, and overpopulation. The need to evolve rationally—to be *Homo sapiens*—to balance and to justify their actions, has been far more strenuous than any superficial pragmatism which can be ascribed to humanoids nowadays.

—If I were to think of only one fate that could have been worse for a proud Neolithic hunter than failing to bring home enough meat, it would be the fate of being born a male lion who, in lowered savannah grasses, found himself too visible and therefore easily surpassed by the hunting skills of the smaller lionesses. Is the male lion a “dependent” baby killer because savannah grasses now grow shorter? Do human males experience their occasional urges to go warring because long ago they learned how to knap better flints, because their women had more babies, and because there were less prey animals to hunt? Are human females really proud to have their men die as heroes in wars, embattled by machines? There seems to be no beautiful summation to this story.

—We must continue to dwell on the self-evident evolutionary travails of humankind. After some millions of years, humanoid artificial male predators, and maternal gatherers, needed to learn together how to become different kinds of marriage partners, different fathers who were less effectively roaming and all around less important human beings.¹⁰ Today, ten thousand years later, the entire planet still suffers from the aftermaths of this male transitional crisis. This identity crisis, it turns out, has been the most enduring scar that the great Neolithic Revolution has left.

Sacrifices to Feed the Gods

Can anyone be sure that our earliest hunter ancestors actually gave food offerings to greater-than-hominid predator deities? Of course we can be sure. They did. And so did all their ape predecessors millions of years earlier. They could not have survived without occasionally surrendering to some superior and hungry competitor the carcass of a victim which they were unable to defend. After meat had been cut up into chunks, they would try to escape with portions. And if they failed to rescue portions, they counted themselves lucky

¹⁰Compare Kroeber, Clifton, Bernard L. Fontana. *Massacre at the Gila*. Tucson, 1986. Also Luckert, Karl W. “The Geographization of Death in Melanesia,” in *Numen—International Review for the History of Religions* 18. Leiden, 1971.

to escape with their hearts still pounding. Under such circumstances, the probabilities were high that lives were lost. The gods could claim hominid victims on their own volition. To rethink such events as “sacrifices” was a face-saving ploy of humankind. The act of sacrificing one’s self was therefore ordinarily not a voluntary option. Hominid hunters usually died when they ran out of saving strategies, tricks, luck—and of course, divine indifference or “amazing grace.”

***Predisposition:** These are the raw facts of predator life to which this writer will personally attest. Early, during the primitive years of his childhood, and growing up in a rural village, it became occasionally necessary for him to surrender his school lunch to a roaming dog—actually a pedigreed wolf, that was fed in a human dwelling but, apparently, was not subjected to any additional domestication disciplines. The budding intelligence of a weak boy has re-discovered—for the trillionth time on this planet—salvation short of existential surrender, by a method of sacrificial giving. Surrendering a school lunch was a humbling experience. It remained a secret about which the boy’s parents were never informed. With the country on a war footing, tempers among villagers needed to be kept calm. Enlisting the help of a father usually made most situations worse. Children understood this fact of life.*

—Surely, our hominid ancestors were obliged to learn such tricks of survival early on in their careers as foragers and scavengers. They themselves robbed from those inferiors that succumbed to them. They also stole from mightier predators whose alertness they suspected to be less than what met the eye. Experimentally they were testing and challenging the superior status of all their divine competitors. This type of experimental competition is something for which ape aptitudes happen to be most suited. Indeed, we have proof that competition must have happened in that way, because some species of ancient predator deities have actually gone extinct, and others that survived have been dethroned. Even the royal lions and tigers are being forced, nowadays, to accept the indignity of semi-domesticated status in animal parks, under the protection and discipline of human wardens with rifles.

—In 1959 J. Häckel published a pace-setting summary concerning hunting rites. He mentioned deposits of skulls, bones, skins, bladders, and figurines in relation to a general belief in the reincarnation of hunted animals. He also referred, before he introduced the word “sacrifice,” to the fact that animals were dispatched and sent home to their divine Master, presumably to deliver messages of goodwill.

Häckel introduced then, correctly it seems, sacrificial categories as he referred to certain deposits as “offerings”—as gifts that hunters presented to their divine superiors. Hunters have been observed to give “offerings of firsts” (*Primitälopfers*).¹¹

—Before the meat of a victim was released to the hunters for eating, a small portion was put aside and burnt—frequently some vital organ. Häckel also mentioned the Samoyed practice of depositing reindeer skulls and long bones. He suggested that this custom may reflect a “similar” way of thinking. Häckel’s glissando, from sacrificial “offerings of firsts” to bone deposits, and to “similar” presentations, is not altogether convincing.

—The archaic hunters’ practice of giving offerings of first portions to superior hunter totems did indeed recognize divine sponsors of the hunt.¹² Presenting such share offerings must have had its beginnings far back at the animal level, rooted in scavenging and in social sharing.

—If we bemoan the fact that our human ancestors were losing too much of their prey to mightier predators, then by applying the Golden Rule, we may consider for a moment the next lower species of predators that fell under the sway of our antecedents. Surely, the first hunting wolves and dogs, canines who in our early evolutionary days still ranked above humankind by virtue of their better natural hunting skills—and who later functioned as divine justifiers in ceremonies—would have had more reasons to complain. As part of the measly human grace for coexistence, when humans became their lords, wolves accepted far more humiliation. They won the privilege of eating the worst leftovers of what they hunted, and of what they surrendered to their human masters.

—Hunting under the sponsorship of a divine tutelary was a theological solution, resorted to for resolving the problem of acquired guilt among increasingly self-conscious killers. To be a “toolmaking predator” was the profession by which our hunter ancestors apprenticed to become *homines sapientes*. Their deeds of weapon-making were difficult to justify ethically, and even more difficult to deny. A prefabricated bloodied tool, carried in a toolmaker’s hand, testified

¹¹See J. Häckel, “Herr der Tiere,” *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. III, Tübingen, 1959, 511-513.

¹²Häckel shows no awareness of a need for the human hunters’ justification.

against its bearer and in his own eyes his weapon convicted him of his crime. A hunter's crime was "premeditated murder."

—A variety of clever excuses, justifications, ruses, and sacrificial variations were used by primitive hunters to shift their guilt away. Among those methods, making share payments was religiously, perhaps, the most honest one. Futuristically speaking, these sacrificial improvisations have become foundational habits for actual human economies. Sacrifices established the values of livestock and properties. All the while, it was unavoidable that some presenters of sacrifices learned more quickly than others how to extract maximum advantages from the divinities with whom they dealt and covenanted.

—Share offerings of the type that I like to call "alpha-omega offerings" consist of lopped-off extremities taken from conquered animals. These could include snout, tail, horns, eyes, anus, or portions of the skin, frequently from opposite ends on whole animals—hence the "alpha-omega" designation. While a divine sponsor agreed to accept his animal in its essential outline, the human hunters walked off with the less essential "filler" portions of meat—and so they ate and grew strong as *homines sapientes*.¹³

—Share offerings can be presented to a tutelary sponsor that happens to be near, or they can be sent to one who may live far away. When dealing in the realm of gods, geographical distances are of little concern. And to the extent that a deity does indeed accept the penitent gestures offered by a human killer, the responsibility for the victim's death is assumed by the deity who accepts the offering. By logical extension, in ordinary hunting, the deity who accepts a share offering does, in effect, partake of the hunter's communal meal and of his guilt—which are both factual results of co-hunting. The divine-human bond of atonement extends to other guests at this meal who by eating become guilty of the victim's death. Their atonement at such a meal is certified by the participation of a divine sponsor, who by his presence assumes responsibility to redeem all guilt. All celebrants become atoned blood-brothers of the contract-hunter. The most effective bonding rites in the human repertoire are experiencing near-death together, as fellow victims or as fellow killers, jointly bleeding, accepting either guilt or clemency together.

¹³A short but useful account of pygmies in Zaire, including the successful hunt of an elephant, can be seen in an educational movie. Kevin Duffy, *Children of the Forest* (28 minutes). Pyramid Film & Video, 800-421-2304.

—In order to lighten the weight on his conscience a hunter could, if superficial gestures failed, surrender existentially to a greater-than-human totemic predator and explicitly become the divinity's share-hunter, to be owned by him.¹⁴ It can easily be seen how this theological solution could have been ritualized and modified to reduce the size of share sacrifices. Payments in kind initially were offered as a religious solution for killer consciences. They were expanded, as in biblical tradition by herd-owner interests, to include first-born whole animal sacrifices. Giving share sacrifices in payment for herds has gradually evolved into our modern system of economics, according to which the first titles of ownership could be purchased in exchange for value-added sacrificial share payments. In order to own herds and harvests, our ancestors needed to purchase their first livestock and seeds from legitimate divine owners, from gods who created and therefore initially owned them. Those things could then be traded among humankind as commodities—they could be purchased in exchange for “sacrificial share equivalents.”



Fig. 33. Stick figurine—replacement sacrifice for a fellow predator

—Beneath the range of bargain share sacrifices, still cheaper offerings were possible. A traditional Navajo (*Diné*) hunter has showed me how this can be done. He made a hand-sized stick figurine to replace and to pay for an injured or dead animal (Figure 33). Stick figurines were appropriate, for instance, when a man killed a divine predator, such as a mountain lion, in self-defense.¹⁵

¹⁴Luckert. *The Navajo Hunter Tradition*, 1975, pp. 17ff.

¹⁵Description in Luckert, *A Navajo Bringing-Home Ceremony*. 1978, pp. 193-195.

—This *Diné* hunter would never have dared to cut up such a deity as food—that is, someone who could function as a divine tutelary for the hunt. This meant that he also could not reasonably have considered cutting off some kind of preliminary alpha-omega segments. How could he offer these portions as if they were appetizer shares from a communal meal? Such an act could have been understood as a cannibalistic insult toward a divine “hunter colleague” or toward a potential totemic sponsor of the hunt. The hunter’s debt, for an animal killed in self-defense, was forgiven when such a substitution figurine was accepted by divine grace.

—Share and substitution offerings can be enhanced with songs, with rhythms and dance steps of devotion and joy, with praises and speeches of appreciation. The basic notion of alleviating the guilt of killing—of killing for sustenance by submitting oneself to a totemic deity as “natural” share hunter—had far-reaching consequences later when hunters became domesticators. It set the pattern for human submission to slavery—for the ways in which inferior people were expected to submit to qualitatively superior hyper-domesticators.

—The accusation of being some kind of guilty killer or butcher could be leveled against any timid hunter or domesticator. Even in the aftermath of the hunter era, the chance of encountering a “shamanic” accuser—someone who knew himself to be ceremonially atoned—was always a possibility. Such an accuser would know how to obtain super-human forgiveness, for himself first. He also would know that you are keeping yourself foolishly in guilt. Then, if you accepted the forgiveness formula he offered, he became your *de facto* moral guardian—conjoined with you by the memory of your former guilt. This distinction between atoned hunters and guilty inferiors gave the world its qualitatively “better” aristocratic upper class.

—Driven by self-reflective intelligence and by a desire to make more effective weapons, the possibility of becoming ever guiltier increased; the need to find more suitable paths of atonement and of religious justification increased as well. Just as there were no limits to inventing more effective tricks of cultural aggression, so also were there no limits to potential paths of religious atonement.

—Killing and butchering an animal that showed pain, that showed anatomical similarities and red blood, and that exhibited a degree of intelligence during its last struggle for survival—all these responses a rational hunter was obliged to respect, because they also formed the building blocks for his own ego. A degree of learned fairness can be

assumed in the case of any species of animals of which the young grow up playing and wrestling each other. From an amalgam of such snippets of learning, from the human ability to imitate, to experiment and to innovate, have also evolved the characteristics that define the souls of our species. Whatever amount of intelligence that is being mobilized for cultural aggression is, for the sake of balance, also required to be mobilized for religious retreats.

—In the service of culture and aggression, intellect is aimed outward. It reflects back inward in the shape of “*con*-science”—in a literal sense “against” or “*con*-trary” to the direction of experimental “science”—the latter of which, viewed broadly, represents the intellectualized mode of outward aggression. Hunting is trickery; good hunting is trickery well done. Greater-than-humanoid predators, who were both feared and admired by our ancestors, since times unremembered, have revealed themselves also as greater tricksters. To our ancestors they became models and totemic sponsors. Their existence justified human hunting. They accepted credit and blame.

—Just because some of those hunter gods in our repertoire of legends are now being degraded to the status of tricksters or buffoons—such as Coyote in America is sometimes demoted to the status of a bungler or a witch—does not mean that a higher status was not accorded them in earlier days of evolution.¹⁶ It simply means that humankind now feels strong enough to laugh about some of their earliest gods. To tell a joke at the expense of a deity is a way of demoting him or her. It is less dangerous than a curse. A curse acknowledges that the object might still have power and may, therefore, need to be frightened away. Herein, in Diné discourse, lies the difference between a disrespectful laugh and a scornful curse—between Coyote the deity, the witch, and the bungler.

—Seen through the windows of domesticator culture, during the past ten millennia, ancient hunters and totemic gods could no

¹⁶During my fieldwork on *Coyoteway, a Navajo Holyway Healing Ceremonial*, University of Arizona and Museum of Northern Arizona presses (Tucson and Flagstaff, 1979), I discovered that in the context of this chantway, Coyote, the American prairie wolf, was still functioning as a positive totemic deity. However, in general Navajo folk belief the status of both Coyote and Wolf has suffered. The first of these is mocked as bungler and trickster, and both are frequently feared as witches. It would appear that “Renard the Fox” legends represent a similar degradation of totemic Fox mythology. Göbekli Tepe could have been the evolutionary breaking point for the Fox totem.

longer be trusted. Anyone could steal an animal and give an alpha-omega offering to a hunter deity. The archaic hunters' method of religious justification could no longer protect domesticators. Early tutelary sponsors of huntsmen were frequently rediscovered and redefined by domesticators as demons or devils.¹⁷

—Have a look at the appearance of the typical “Devil” in medieval European Christendom! He looks like a collage of odds and ends from the world of predators—fresh out of prehuman flux mythological conditions—including the artificial man-made three-pronged spear. Committed domesticators had no choice but to search for a greater-than-human Creator deity from whom they could legitimately acquire herd animals, plants, fields and other private property. The transition from hunting to domestication could not have happened without communal religious reform.

Resurrection versus Reincarnation

So-called “deposits of skulls and bones,” as were left by ancient hunters, cannot be interpreted categorically as “offerings.” And likewise, the process of “reincarnation” does not necessarily entail devotion to some Master of Animals, nor do reincarnation processes require sacrificial giving. For a hunter faced with the question of how much weight he should try to carry home, depositing the inedible remains of a carcass at the hunting site was a practical necessity. Sheer deposits of animal skeletons should, therefore, be distinguished from obvious sacrificial giving. Hopes of resurrection might have been cultivated and expressed in relation to both human and animal bones—but not necessarily.

—Bone deposits at *Diné* Indian hunting sites seem to indicate resurrection hopes, rather than what Häckel calls “reincarnation.” I was told about such rites in 1971, as they were part of the *Diné* hunter tradition. The prime motive of Navajo hunters, in their farewell speeches to the bones, was alleviation of their guilt for having killed. The hunters were trying to minimize the gravity of their deed. With

¹⁷The denigration of ancient totemic deities, or dynastic crests, has also become necessary as a matter of course in recent secular political revolutions. Soldiers who fought against dynasties represented by totemic crests were, for the most part, unaware that they were still finishing off the remains of ancient totemic hunter religion. Ancient religion and politics never have been completely separated.

the essential soul left unhurt, in the form of bones, a hunter's victim thereby remained alive in futuristic terms—to be hunted again. The bones are expected to resurrect, and thereby the hunter's crime of killing is rendered null and void. There is no hint here of a faith in "reincarnation" in the sense that a spirit-soul is waiting somewhere to enter a new body. The bones *are* the soul, and new flesh and sinews will regenerate on them. The dead animal will rise and be seen running again. This is the classic distinction between reincarnation of souls and the resurrection of bodies. Resurrection was expected to happen with recycled bones.¹⁸

—A significant amount of confusion has crept into Western anthropological thinking in response to Sir Edward B. Tylor's theory of "animism." Predisposed by ancient Greek dualism, many Western readers have leapt all too quickly to explaining life and death in terms of bodies being occupied and abandoned by spirits. Instead of asking "what is it that leaves at the point of death?", one can neutralize this question and ask less prejudicially, "what has changed?" Wherever the hunters' prehuman flux mythology resonates in the background, there the concepts of "transformation" and "resurrection" usually are closer to the intended meaning than the Indo-European dualism that is implied in the concept of "embodiment" or "reincarnation."

—The subject matter of "resurrection" and "life after death" does deserve an afterthought. From general historical considerations it now appears that both "resurrection" and "life after death" could first have been conceptualized by hunters in relationship to their victims. Faith in life after death may have had more to do with alleviating the hunters' guiltiness of killing than with the hope of improving one's own destiny in the face of death. I came to this conclusion during field researches four decades ago. The discovery was a complete surprise, but it makes evolutionary sense. A *Homo sapiens* hunter who lives by causing death cannot complain too much if some greater power then also terminates his own life, in the end. Death seems to be the fair cost of temporary survival by eating.

¹⁸See Luckert. *The Navajo Hunter Tradition*, 1975, pp. 36, 206f. The ancient association of bones with the probability of resurrection is echoed in biblical traditions in the case of Ezekiel's vision of a "valley of dry bones" (Ezekiel 37) as well as in association with the crucifixion account of Jesus of Nazareth (John 19.32). The bones were not broken, according to the story, apparently in order to make subsequent resurrection appear more likely.

High Gods and Masters of Animals

In academic circles where primitive religions are being discussed, the anxiety over being classified as an “evolutionist” still feels somewhat stifling today. But Andrew Lang, in 1898, and Wilhelm Schmidt from 1912 to 1954, both courageously pursued the prospect of finding a more primitive stratum of belief in a single supreme deity among a variety of cultures worldwide. While answering these men, the problem concerning the evolution of religion could not be completely avoided. Perhaps to introduce some relativity into the enormous efforts for or against the theory of “primeval monotheism,” or to shed some doubt on the universality of the High God concept, a host of scholars began to focus more closely on Master of Animals types in hunter religions. Could faith in a Master of Animals among hunter-gatherers, cited in support of a theory of primeval monotheism, be traced to any historical circumstances? Or, how important for understanding today’s religions still were the roles of Animal Masters in the course of their evolution?

—High God and Master of Animals types from all kinds of primitive culture strata were brought together for comparison, as if the spatial elevation attributed to “high up” deities, and the earliest traceable notions of such among the most primitive peoples, could together prove or disprove something about the greater-than-human dimension. How much of romantic Golden Age mythology has interfered with or stimulated this academic search? Other scholars tried to get to the root of primitive religion psychologically. They postulated a special type of primitive mentality that, supposedly, made religious thinking easier or necessary.¹⁹

—It seems as though below the surface the “primeval monotheism” debate was not so much about religion as it was about the

¹⁹See Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. *How Natives Think* (1910). Lévy-Bruhl distinguished two basic mindsets: “primitive” and “Western.” Primitives do not distinguish the supernatural from reality. He described their mental activity as “mystical participation.” By Lévy-Bruhl’s categories, the author of this book would certainly be a primitive. His teeter-totter scale (Chapter 10) does not distinguish “nature” from “super-nature.” Instead, he assumes the presence of analytic aggressive human minds, owned and operated by artificial predators. This author, a finite human being, knows that “greater-than-human” begins along the same boundary line where his own influence ends. But he does not know the outer limit of “nature,” and hence he cannot know what “supernatural” means.

beginnings of metaphysical arithmetic and counting. Does a child, or do primitive people, learn to conceptualize “One” before they distinguish “One” from “Two” or from “Many?”

—What was overlooked in the discussion of primitive hunter religiosity, by Western research agendas, was the core subject of hunting as such. This writer happens to be convinced that the blood spilled while hunting and butchering was the foremost reason for primitive hunters having tried to behave religiously when they were hunting.

Predisposition: *Before I am suspected of using the term “primitive” in a derogatory sense, let me put my clarification in writing here. I do consider the farming culture in which I was raised to have been quite primitive. In my home culture we all talked to our farm animals. They were more easily persuaded to work that way—and talking to them also put us children at ease, knowing and assuming that the animals, whom we had to guide with sticks, were able to empathize with us and understood our filial dilemmas. The circumstances which, in the history of religions field, obstructed our ability to understand true situations, was the fact that students were either hoping for historical proof that would establish a theory of primeval monotheism, or else were trying to escape from all theisms while looking back over their shoulders, agonizing for their secular souls while seeing the religion of their fathers still in hot pursuit, trying to save them. But then, gods from any pre-monarchic era cannot be meaningfully classified by how high up they sat enthroned. I never met, or saw, or heard of a hunter deity sitting on a throne. They were all roaming or riding as I was—unless, of course, one of these gods happened to enjoy standing still as a tree or sitting still as a mountain. But even at that, a non-roaming hunter deity never sat enthroned as High God.*

—Someone can, nevertheless, draw an experience/response spectrum—as in Chapter Ten above—which accommodates those who do encounter realities that seem greater-than-human. For the historian of religions, gods are more than names or adjectives. Gods are what they have done and continue to do alongside humans. And in order to establish what gods are doing, their deeds must be distinguished from what human protégés think that they themselves are doing. Primitive religions cannot be elucidated with a compilation of synonyms or adjectives. They require names, and above all verbs.

—Try this same method of investigation on the streets of New York, and ask people about the Christian Trinity. Nay, you may even go to any church of your choosing and ask for an explanation about the triune God of Christendom. The chances are slim that, at your first try, you will stumble onto a world-wise theologian who can make historical sense out of this doctrine for you. People with integrated

theological and historical knowledge must be searched for and approached with an open mind and open questions.

—Meanwhile, I have sought my own ethnological delineations between monotheism and polytheism. I never really trusted questions regarding the number of gods and therefore, as a rule, I did not ask them. In 1971 and in the years that followed I resisted asking such questions of Claus Chee Sonny—who was my teacher of the Diné Deer Huntingway. I knew that the man was intelligent and that he would have been capable of concocting a “Great Spirit” theology on the spot—had I only mentioned as much as “Great Spirit.” On his own, Claus Chee Sonny never mentioned such a deity.

—However, at a moment of initiation into the general mysteries of the Talking-god it became obvious that this “Grandfather of the gods” could have revealed universal monotheistic status at a moment’s notice. But there never was a need for doing this. Doing so would have precipitated all sorts of incredulities among academicians as well as among the *Diné* people themselves. In Western terms such a universal deity would be difficult to explain in relation to the masked impersonations that appear in some of the *yeei* ceremonies. Thus, where the gods retain their lowest possible profiles, vis-à-vis humankind, there human devotees, too, will be more easily to understand, to approach, and to endure.

—Working with a *Diné* traditional hunter-shaman, and traveling on multiple occasions with him through his hunting range, I not only concluded that his religious vocabulary did not include a “Great Spirit”—and not even a “spirit” or “soul”—but also that his hunting range never was a “Happy Hunting Ground.” The activity of hunting invariably loaded him with guilt and with the risks of divine reprisals. For every procedural mistake that he made while hunting and butchering, he needed to have a ritualized reconciliation procedure on hand to restore his relationship with divine animal-persons to a state of normalcy and balance. He considered such ceremonial first-aid—such atonements—to be more important than any physical skills needed to track, to kill, or to butcher.²⁰

²⁰I do not know for sure—and I would consider it a waste of time to research this question—but if pushed, I would look for a “Happy Hunting Grounds” eschatology not among Native American traditional hunters, but in James F. Cooper’s 1826 work of fiction, *The Last of the Mohicans*. And incidentally, in actual history there has also not yet been a “last Mohican.”

—The Navajo Coyoteway ceremonial that I recorded in 1974 was, as are all *Diné* “holyway” ceremonials, oriented toward reconciling humankind with the Holy People—that is, with the gods. During the performance and recording of this healing ceremonial I avoided asking any questions regarding its polytheism. After the ceremonial had been finished and recorded, Johnny Cooke and I returned to the shamanic practitioner for multiple rounds of supplementary questions, mostly to hear again the words and segments that we might have misunderstood. Only at the end of our very last session, when we were sure we had everything that we needed, did I risk asking a question concerning religious arithmetic. Very cautiously I probed:

—“During this nine-night ceremonial we have spoken prayers and brought offerings to sixteen Coyote-gods, and to the Talking-god and to the Calling-god. Is it possible that these many gods are only one god?” Without pondering, the Coyoteway Master answered with “Could be.” The unspoken portion of his answer was obvious. In that case, one god has received all the prayers, songs and offerings at different places. It does not change anything regarding the content of the Coyoteway ceremonial.

Predisposition: *It is with no small degree of embarrassment that I remember my second day at Luke Cook’s Diné homestead. I helped him and two of his sons fetch their young heifers to have marker clamps snapped onto their ears. As a farmer’s son from Germany, with some exposure to farm-work in Kansas, I was handling those animals with more determination than my Navajo friends were trying to accomplish this task. I laid the animals on the ground, on their sides. While trying not to look too weak toward those cattle, it took me a while to notice that these heifers registered a few degrees closer to being full “persons” to my Navajo friends.*

The Problem of Sin and Guilt

Among the research questions that anthropologists typically ask about primitive hunter religion, problems related to the spilling of blood, resultant guiltiness, and the reconciliation with gods and fellow animal people have been conspicuously omitted. The scholars all seem to have been busy trying to find ideal primitive hunter societies who, somehow either were, or still are, in harmony with Nature—that is, trying to find situations where guilt feelings are still absent.

—It goes without saying that questions pertaining to sin, guilt, forgiveness, or justification cannot be asked directly—and the reason is, that guilt in all cultures is habitually denied and that reasons for such denial, or even reasons that justify general aggressiveness, arise

long before the question of guilt can be admitted into full consciousness. A present awareness of sin or guilt will only be shared spontaneously, embedded in a trustworthy larger context, among people who can trust and feel secure.

—No! The American Natives were not living in a Western-style Romantic utopia of Nature under a “pure-spirit” deity. And yes, these hunters knew that they were killing “fellow animal people” whom they recognized as “persons.” And many of these animal people were deemed divine and had totemic relatives in human clans and tribes, in men’s associations with many initiates. The latter are being educated and are immersed into the presence of surrounding divine beings, still today during their world-renowned “vision quests.” Tribal men’s associations cultivate these traditions.

—Modern skilled academicians have been taught how to rationalize their own culture’s mores with regard to killing—in terms of jurisprudence, politics, biochemistry, and sports. Our Western cult of hunting and fishing, as sport, supports the habit of seeing wild fauna as “game animals.”²¹ It refers to commercial hunting and fishing with domesticator vocabulary, as “harvesting.” All these modern notions have nurtured our misconceptions about “primitive” hunters. In addition, the Hellenic distinction between human bodies and spiritual souls, and the expedient postulate, about animals being living bodies devoid of genuine souls, has remained a factor in our industrial treatment and exploitation of animal species.

—Indeed, one may wonder whether our life-sciences and our food-chemistry—whether our ways of defining food compounds—might not have been inspired essentially by the felt need to justify our culture’s aggression against exploited forms of life. Sometimes I wonder what a “pro-life” science would really look like. Ethical issues of self-justification, and appeals to greater-than-human realities or norms, are always religious concerns. By the same token, modern secular minds are accustomed—for the sake of appearing scientific and rational—to hide their older religious justifications (and their newer secular “rationalizations”) from public view.

²¹Father Berard Haile, the most successful Navajo ethno-linguist, utilized the English word “game animals.” But for traditional Navajo hunters, their hunting never was a game. I struggled all the way from writing “game animals” to “prey animals” and “preyed-upon animals.”

—My first laboratory session in a biology course at university had nothing to do with “life.” We were asked to dissect a dead animal. Meanwhile, many names of ancient “gods,” and even “icons,” have been pirated by computer engineers. The Greek term *bios*, life, has been re-assigned to control programs for computer operations—thus, relegated to the rear ends of machines. To cover the tracks, our computer-steered English Thesaurus for *Word*, no longer recognizes the meaning of “life” in the “bios” root. By not acknowledging the word that gave us “biology,” devotees to computer science help diminish biological issues, life and its sanctity, issues of guilt and ethics, and they help facilitate our sliding down the slope of mechanized materialism.

—All the while, I confess that an awareness of guilt, as it pertains to the Navajo hunter tradition, has not come into view for me “scientifically.” It came by personal communication, as a fieldwork surprise. The question about a people’s “justification for killing” will never appear on the radar screen of a scientific hypothesis.

Human and Canine Domestication

If you are born a humanoid, clumsier than a chimp when it comes to climbing trees, and if you have half the chimp’s tooth sizes lined up along shortened jawbones, what can you do? The answer is, you work with what you have—which includes a stiffer back, suitable for walking more proudly upright than a chimp needs to, an opposable thumb that you keep away from the chimp’s stronger hand, and which instead you train to do precision work on inert sticks, bones, and stones. Above all, you use the gray matter between your ears.

—If you are born a primate with an acquired appetite for meat, and you are out hunted by a wolf—and are able to run only half the speed of that canine, what must you do? You must invent weapons and “false teeth” that you can toss at target animals from a distance, to wound them, and then invite a wolf to be your friend, and let him or her help finish the tracking and killing. Of course, you must utilize the gray matter between your ears consistently. You must compose an impressive ritual of flattery for the canine, which enables you to take possession of captured carcasses. After all, with your knives you are better at butchering than a wolf will ever be. And if you act your role magnanimously, as a wise master over life and death, then the wolf will be your religious devotee, your hunting slave, your dog, for as long as he or she and you might live.

—And then, when you are seventy-eight years old, you will have outlived the dogs of your younger years. A Black Labrador Retriever will correctly analyze your weakness. Her name is Skeena. She knows that you cannot run anymore and that you cannot throw anything very far—and still, this black dog loves to embarrass you by bringing you her sticks to throw. It is then that you must use what you have left between your ears to defend the honor of your species. You must summon your grandson Travis and pass Skeena's stick on to him. She has already trained the boy well, to throw her sticks great distances—spectacular dares for retrieval. The grandson gets his exercise and Skeena earns her self-esteem—as the Labrador Retriever—a status that far surpasses the level of old humanoid stick throwers. And I? I have won another while of peace without having to die for it.

Predisposition: *Some years back, in Missouri, I owned a plot of land on which I planted experimental pecan trees. Every time when I walked to fetch my tractor, the neighbor's two dogs threatened me. One was a Husky and the other a Coyote-mongrel. The latter always bared his huge canines, but held back behind the Husky, cowardly. I did not derive much pleasure from these daily threats of getting bitten. Therefore, one day I picked up four egg-sized stone pebbles and carried them—one in my right hand and three in the left. When the dogs attacked, I opened my hands to show those stones to the Husky who had come within two hand-widths of my legs. Both dogs retreated immediately without an extra bark. In the afternoon on that same day the Husky snuck up on me as I was hoeing weeds around a tree. I felt him touch my left leg and I quickly raised my hoe in self-defense. But the Husky had not come to attack. He wanted to submit. With my right hand I reached for his neck and pushed his head to the ground. I held him down some ten seconds and said "OK." He responded with a painful whimper and crept away. From that day on neither of these two dogs attacked me again. And even though I knew they were in the vicinity, I never saw them again. The Husky had accepted me as his distant master—as a deus otiosus of sorts (a homo otiosus, more precisely, if he had studied at the place where I taught). Apparently, the Coyote-mongrel concurred.*

—The action of pushing down a dog by its neck, in play, comes almost naturally to bi-pedal humanoids. By contrast, in an intra-species match among puppies, this act of wrestling a sibling to the ground by its neck, to establish rank, would have required significant more strength and talent—a delicate balance of power and friendship. In an inter-species playful contest with a puppy, however, even the arm of a fumbling human child, pushing from above, has the divine advantage.

—It is likely that the domestication of *Canis lupus* began long before fifteen thousand years ago in Asia and in Africa, at hunting sites where, in natural “chow circles,” some packs of wolf-dogs invented manners of behavior that rendered them acceptable to human hunters. These encounters between two species may have begun when human hunters, while butchering with knives, cut off second-rate portions of meat and tossed them to packs of wolf-dogs that mastered the art of surrounding humans peacefully. In turn, the humans loved to watch the dogs scramble among themselves for the pieces that they tossed. The hunters may initially have fed them only to keep them from coming too close. They “sacrificed” playfully to inferiors who, had they been better organized as a pack, could have become greater-than-humanoid. At that stage it was probably the advantage of having a spoken language that enabled our species to communicate strategy and to fake greater-than-canine status.

—During successive hunts, the dogs learned ways to please their human benefactors by helping them locate and track the prey. They might even have found ways to distract dangerous larger predators that could have harmed their otherwise resourceful two-legged overlords. The dogs discovered the value of rational “religious” servitude. So it is possible that *Canis lupus* enslaved itself into the service of *Homo sapiens* by its own playful and religious sophistication. In strategic alliances with human hunters, these animals improved their chances of having better lives—better than they could have achieved by insisting on competitive and hostile encounters.

—The first softening of relationships could have taken place in a variety of ways. Whereas approaches by adult animals are thinkable, it may have been the case that the first domestic dog was a puppy that was adopted and weaned as a pet. Then again, wolves do habitually encircle the herds of grazing animals. With human hunters also present, trying to imitate their strategy of encircling and “herding” ungulates, it may have dawned on some of those wolves that it could be advantageous to allow humankind to participate in their roundups. And so the wolves used two-legged ones as their “hunting men,” just as humans thought they were using the four-legged ones as “hunting dogs.” The wolves may have realized that their unilateral victories could all too easily have been annulled by human hunters who had the ability to bite them fatally from considerable distances.

—Most probably, they learned this basic lesson the hard way. With rational cunning, canines opted to help humankind upfront and beg for rewards after the hunt. In the case that they should fail to be sufficiently rewarded for their daytime services, they could venture out and go hunting for themselves at night when humans rested. The primary benefit of this strategy was that they no longer needed to compete, or fear being hit by poisoned arrows.

12. HUNTING TO HYPER-DOMESTICATION DIRECT

Three questions dominate the background for this chapter:

- (1) What happened to hunters who wandered away from Göbekli Tepe to hunt elsewhere?
- (2) Who were the warriors that filled the ranks of armies five thousand years later when city states and empires were forming in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India?
- (3) What drove the construction of cities in regions populated by domesticators? Each of these questions helps answer the others, but all answers remain hypothetical.

Göbekli Tepe Dispersions

Neolithic *hominines sapientes*, the industrialized heirs of predatory Primate dreams, twelve thousand years ago at Göbekli Tepe, began fulfilling the ambitions of their ancestors to establish themselves as the best-skilled flint weapon makers and nuisances on Planet Earth. Wild prey animals could not keep up with their numbers, and not in the hunting drives they staged. When the miner's sense of guilt and enthusiasm for their religion of atonement reached its peak, possibly around eleven thousand years ago, there apparently followed a period during which many hunter clans gradually started drifting away from the area.

—Hunters and gatherers, on average, have left light footprints in archaeology; on that account the Göbekli Tepe *menhir* weights appear all the more remarkable. At the end of the Ice Age the climate along the Fertile Crescent was getting warmer. And, while glaciers along mountain ranges in the north were melting, all living beings beneath the slopes were prospering. Each species and variety was bent on filling the land with its own kind. The industrialized and partly sedentary human hunters also thrived and populated the land. Their own growth in numbers generated the dynamic that drove them apart.

—For brief cold spells perhaps, at irregular intervals, the glacial runoff slowed to a trickle. As a result, living conditions fluctuated and deteriorated not only for hunters but also for sedentary domesticators. Not enough settlements in the area have been excavated for us to know for sure exactly what happened. But we can assume that two millennia of climate transition, and periodic glacier thaws, could not have occurred in peaceful regularity and tranquility. Once a sizeable population of settled domesticators was hit with an erratic drought, with two seasons of crop failures in a row, food shortages would send them adrift. Our historical climatology studies are not sufficiently refined to date such brief disasters.

—One can assume that over the span of one or two thousand years of human increase, while glaciers melted, animals were overhunted. When the mountain passes opened up, prey animals and their hunters began to slip away. And with the hunter clans went their representative industrial craftsmen who used to work as miners and weapon-makers at Göbekli Tepe. As they travelled toward Europe and into Asia, these men would have kept their eyes open for limestone escarpments and flint nodules.

—As they moved into new regions, in small troops and waves, they found prey animals and edible plants to sustain themselves. It also seems reasonable to assume that, along their paths into Europe and Asia, they chanced upon groups of people who had scattered there previously, and also some who later ended up in the Americas. They met hunters whose ancestors had generations of Ice Age experience and survival skills to boast—hunters of mega-fauna who knew where to find wild oxen and where in the cold lands still to find mammoth. These continents were not empty places. *Homines sapientes* entered Europe and Asia, the Indonesian archipelagoes, and probably scattered all the way to Australia by following others who went there perhaps thirty thousand years earlier.

—One can assume that wherever hunters from the Göbekli Tepe region moved, they carried with them a growing body of knowledge about alternate lifestyles. They knew the fates of kindred who quit hunting and stopped traveling—they knew the challenges that those who continued wandering tried to avoid. And they understood the hazards of travelling in an environment where human populations were on the increase; they knew some things about inter-clan hostilities. In some areas, where the abundance of wildlife seemed too good to be true, it probably was that. Wild animals were more

numerous in areas where tribes of human hunters fought each other for territory. If they ever decided to become sedentary, they sensed the dangers and understood many of their options.

—There were specific emergency steps of downscaling—of hoarding seeds and nuts, and of drying fruits, beets, tubers, or fishes. Such steps needed to be taken when the lifestyle of mixed hunting and gathering deteriorated beyond endurance. Practically every group went through rounds of downscaling before they surrendered to the meager alternatives of settling permanently. When the fauna was thinning out it became necessary to look for places with lush vegetation, with streams inhabited by clams and fishes. As key family members got older, and were reduced to gathering labors, such sedentary opportunities needed to be pursued, even if only temporarily. Larger river valleys would support larger populations who had similar expectations and needs. Larger numbers of people could band together and make better arrangements for security. Marriages and totemic clan alliances were contracted. Old bonds loosened when people moved away. New bonds were established as people mingled and joined.

—For every major group that travelled away from an ancient center, small numbers of nostalgia-laden loners drifted back on pilgrimages from afar, seeking the legendary homelands of parents and grandparents. On average, they probably found those ancestral lands less attractive than their nostalgic elders had remembered them. Lost clans could be found and reconfirmed at far-away places, generations later, while totem stories were being shared, repaired and amended.

—If you were a leading elder, responsible for divining the path ahead—which often meant guessing—you probably needed to tell “a story which you heard your grandfather tell, long ago.” This could be a convenient and a polite ruse by which to nudge your group to move in a direction of your liking. If the geography of your story turned out to be mistaken, and if the people ended up suffering, you could not really be blamed for the fact that your grandfather had been wrongly informed so very long ago. Life in those early days was already a quest for knowledge—a competition of storytellers. In a sense, for *Homo sapiens* it still is that today.

—Reasoning backward in time, *Inuit* (Eskimo) clansmen seem to have reached Alaskan shores still a few millennia after Göbekli Tepe. Their relatives today are still found at both sides of the Bering

Strait. Before them, perhaps during or shortly after the Göbekli Tepe boom years, arrived Haida and Athabascan speakers in the American Northwest.²² Some of those who hunted large sea animals at the American side might have returned to visit relatives back at the Asian side. They probably helped feed a network of rumors between Asian and North American populations. Many an orphaned totem pole along America's Northwest Coast (if there were any wooden totem poles that long ago) could so have gotten re-associated with long-lost relatives—or with new relatives who miraculously appeared out of nowhere and who spoke some recognizable words or who learnt new words quickly—who could make themselves understood as relatives from faraway places.

—Lone adventurers, when they fear for their lives, can learn a foreign language with remarkable speed—especially in storyteller traditions like the Athabascan, where the primary subject matter to be communicated is frequently huge chunks of silence. Comfortable silence will reveal two people's compatibility faster than any words. Having the proper demeanor—such as pointing with your lips rather than with fingers—could be more important than mastering the content of a story that was under contemplation. Wanderers appearing out of nowhere, who just happened to be roaming about—just “coyote-ing around”—are no rare sights even to this day. Some *Diné* whom I have known had a habit of disappearing and roaming for days without telling anyone in the family. Such habits, in fact, have honed the alertness of the remaining family members and made them good at guessing—and thereby also made them compassionate toward people who occasionally guessed wrong.

—It was possible to guess and to decipher the story of a totem pole, as we ourselves have tried to demonstrate in Chapter 5, above. One simply “remembered” what this other one, far away, signified and used to look like. Hosts generally were curious and willing to negotiate the differences.

²²Of Athabascan-related languages in Asia, along the Yenisei River, only fifty-five fluent Ket speakers can still be found in the far north. All are now more than fifty-five years old. See Edward J. Vajda, “The Dene–Yeniseian Connection,” in *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska*, June 2010. The Haida, who may have been the first totem-pole carvers along the Northwest Coast, have not yet been linked linguistically.

—To communicate enthusiasm for a carver's family could be easy, especially if the host was proud of his work and when the new-arrival was a likeable fellow, who enjoyed remembering stories of long ago, and who did not mind being rediscovered as the Raven, as the Killer-whale, or the Wolf whom he resembled—or if the host was desperately looking for a trustworthy kin, a replacement son, or a good son-in-law.

The Road to Hyper-domestication

Hyper-domestication means that something extra has been added to domestication—some kind of over-plus. To simplify this discussion we begin summarizing again at the level of gathering and hunting.

—Hunters and gatherers interfered in the existence of minerals by destroying, reshaping and modifying them. In the existence of plants and animals they interfered to terminate lives. Then those who became domesticators also assumed ownership and control over the nurture of cultivars and livestock. They interfered in entire life cycles—in breeding, birth, and nurture. Planters staked out gardens and fields for cultivation, while herders piled up boughs in the form of round corrals for camps of concentration. Thus cultivars could be systematically harvested and animals could be herded, kept, and held for slaughter.

—The “prehuman flux” genre of mythology of earlier hunters tended to accept all living beings as “persons.” Notwithstanding this high valuation, domesticators eventually needed to find ways of reducing them conceptually to the status of impersonal consumables. While animals were being domesticated they became eligible for any kind of nurture and empathy that a human family was able to provide. But all the same, before any tame animal could be butchered it needed to be mentally reclassified, in present and in future tense, as some kind of owned property and food substance. “Flesh” needed to be mythically transformed into meat. During this process of religious reclassification, human balance and justification were being defined.

—Beyond the efforts of pure domestication, some hunters and part-time owners reasoned how to surpass the basic limitations of just owning animals and things. They became grand-domesticators, that is, “hyper-domesticators.” They claimed ownership and permanent control over fellow humankind. At the onset of the Neolithic Revolution there were no traditional constraints, yet, that would obligate

converts from hunter status to limit themselves to the pure domestication of plants and animals. It was ethically easy to surpass levels of domestication of minerals, plants, and animals—to cross a barely noticeable boundary in order to meddle in the lives of other humans—regarding matters of propagation, birth, or nurture. Parents in all epochs have been doing so temporarily with their offspring, anyhow. It was not too hard to impose bondage on humans who surrendered good-naturedly in play. It was not impossible to inflict death on men who at initiations were already trained to “expect death.”

—Hyper-domesticators inflicted on humankind many of the same tricks that hunters and herders had invented for the management of animals. But hyper-domesticators also would magnify their controls to horrible extremes. They would poke and whip, chase and yoke, scalp, castrate, slaughter and roast. And by inflicting extraordinary constraints, they would not only ignore natural bonds amongst their own species, but even disregard boundaries that used to exist between humans and their greater-than-human totemic superiors. After learning how to manipulate and “domesticate” hunter totems, they proceeded to rustle rank-and-file human protégés that used to answer to those deities. Collectively we classify all these exaggerations as hyper-domestication.

—Based on their traditional reasoning, persistent and arrogant hunters did not need to be bothered by conscience about their hyper-domestication style of daring. Most issues could be resolved within the comforts of ancient religious tradition. Hyper-domesticators could take comfort in the fact that it was neither they nor their sacred tradition that has worsened. They could view themselves as the true kind of orthodox heroic hunters of the kind that the very best among their ancestors had always been. By contrast, those many poor and extra drop-out hunters for whom there were no longer enough wild animals to hunt—who had sunk to the level of being livestock nannies—these were the ones that really have changed. They have abandoned the old-time culture and religion of successful ancestral hunters. It was these incompetents who have dropped away from their totemic calling and destiny. Multitudes of failed hunters sank to the level of being burrowing moles and cultivators. After the manner in which destitute grazing animals scratched the earth with their hooves, human planters scratched with hoes and sticks. Proud orthodox hunters knew why they would rather be heroes and aristocrats.

—In hindsight, it appears that the earliest domesticators, everywhere, adapted and took to peaceful planting and herding too soon for their own good. It is easy to see how cliques of hunters, or clans that remained armed and mobile longest in the interest of hunting and conquest, ended up claiming the lion's share of lands, usually in the form of larger hunting ranges. They ended up controlling most of the land and more than early domesticators ever could use or would have thought to claim for themselves. Aristocratic marauding hunter-folk would insist on capturing and robbing the earliest settlements. As booty they would take the fruits of sweat and labor that settlers had invested—and they took the settlers too.

—Still in the aftermath of recent antimonarchic revolutions, what continues to distinguish remnant aristocracies and royalties from common sedentary folk is the fact that, like their ancestors, they claim extensive hunting rights on huge tracks of land. Such lands would be deemed necessary and proper for aristocratic hunting. Their strategic wavering over time, between conquest and assuming responsibility for the defense of chosen groups of weak domesticators, was the manner in which they used both ends of their spears, while grabbing the middle. They secured rights to every stretch of land that subordinates would hunt upon, including spaces held by the settlers whom they conquered.

—Of course, with the “game animals” that lived in forests came the trees that grew there, naturally, to shield and to cover the wild fauna. By special elongated “planter logic,” aristocratic hunters would assert ultimate ownership of the animals, land and trees combined. The only things they left to domesticators to own—when they spoke among themselves, joking aloud, was the peoples pride in their labor. This concession was profitable. Warriors, aristocrats, and royals persisted in hunting the orthodox way. They would become quite annoyed when presumptuous commoners followed their own nostalgia to also hunt a wild animal now and then. Back in the Stone Age, before there were commoners and elites, all human ancestors claimed the right to do so. Once upon a time all our fathers were hunters and all our mothers gatherers, and none owned any land.

—This hunters’ “paradise” was quickly lost when the first *Homo sapiens* pair adopted, tamed, and claimed a prey animal and when they planted seeds in a patch of ground which they then claimed to be

their property. Tamed and adopted animals needed to be protected against hunters who disregarded adoption rights. Planted gardens needed to be shielded against gatherers who honored neither property rights nor boundaries. When hyper-domesticators added their spin to the turmoil, the human species itself fell under the domestication spell of elitists. Aristocratic hunters counted vulnerable humankind among their legitimate possessions.

The Great Roundup: From hunting roundups to domestication and hyper-domestication roundups there is direct continuity. The hunters' strategy of rounding up prey animals is older than humankind. Humanoid hunters learnt this skill by way of imitating and interacting with wolves and by observing some of the larger felines. Those predators had been rounding up prey long before our human ancestors became interested in capturing meat fresh off the hoof. Imitation was the skill that enabled our ape-ancestors to become *Homo sapiens*—to mimic what lions, wolves, and tigers already knew how to do well. Skills of hunting by ambush were older still. Our ancestors learned those skills while observing reptiles.

—Keeping hooped herd animals corralled was an activity that humans experimented with as soon as those animals were becoming somewhat scarce. The first intuition toward building a corral probably dawned on hunter minds when they were still hunting on the open range. It may be assumed that, quite early on, groups piled up brush circles in which to spend their nights in safety. After that, group hunting could be pursued by taking advantage of topographical features, such as canyons, rivers, and cliffs. Natural pits could be augmented with brush barriers, with V-shaped funnel routes into which animals could be driven while scaring them with torches of fire. Nets and other entanglements were probably added later. The method of domesticators, stacking sticks and boughs to build circular corrals, was probably first anticipated when they learned how to encircle animals at the open range. With their corrals, domesticators invented the idea of a “concentration camp” for taming and containment. In the era of hyper-domestication, the domesticator's corrals were converted into walled cities, fortresses, prisons, and selectively more solid concentration camps for keeping humankind confined.

—Sheep dogs, nowadays, perform their ancient roundup chores in the service of human shepherds. They perform the same labors which ancestors of their present human overlords, superior in the art of aping, have learned by observing the tactics of the wolf-ancestors of these very sheep dogs. Human owners appreciate the intelligence of their sheep dogs, of course, thinking as they do that servile wolf off-spring at some point were taught rational strategy by humans.²³

—In the same style by which women of hunter-gatherers invented basket-weaving, to enhance their grasp for gathering, so the male hunters became herdsmen when they rounded up tameable animals into corrals—to be kept there as if in larger baskets.

—The act of organizing huntsmen, and of contriving their coherence as “hordes” of warriors, is to some extent an outgrowth of plain hunting and gathering. The traditional cohesion of hunter bands, of hereditary and voluntary totemic hunter associations, came under stress early on—at least in the days of Göbekli Tepe. Elementary notions regarding the roundup of people, enhanced persuasion, coercion and pain, were anticipated quite early during hunters’ initiation rites. Subsequent domestication and hyper-domestication tricks, such as castration and torture, were direct elaborations on the butchering skills of hunters. What was done to wounded prey could also be inflicted on human slaves, experimentally—on all those whom hyper-domesticators claimed as their own.

—Later hordes of warriors, as they began to round up humankind, behaved like wolves encircling their prey—or like sheep dogs encircling tamed sheep. Warriors were intellectually quite capable of ranking anything they rounded up—including human herdsmen—at the level of prey animals in the wild. Under conditions of war, domesticators could simply be perceived as lingering there like lead animals, waiting to be hunted and rounded up as part of the throng.

—When totemic hunter associations were transformed into warrior hordes, shamanic leaders of hunting associations became commanders of men. When these commanders waged war, they appreciated their warriors as if they were still fellow comrades with

²³Circular control became an archetype in Navajo Indian thinking. For example, it is considered rude for visitors to drive around someone’s hogan, even where a path exists. While it might be easier to drive around than to back off, the archaic and aggressive meaning of “encircling” still lingers.

whom nostalgically they used to hunt animals on the open range. But over time, while planning wars, those same commanders fell into thinking about their men as their own horde of predators, theirs for combat and destined for slaughter. The supreme status of the ancient totems, their supremacy over human hunters, was thereby preempted and usurped by the first aspiring shamanic commander who went beyond pure hunting expeditions and became a warlord.

—We can contemplate parallels by scrutinizing a modern military situation from the inside. Soldiers invariably notice a qualitative difference between exercising on training grounds near barracks and camping in the field. In the open field a commander depends on his men as comrades, for his own wellbeing. Near the barracks he has a hyper-command structure to back him up—that is, a structure that enables him to treat soldiers as subjects, or even as objects toward whom he can express hyper-authority and scorn, quite freely.

—Civilization, or as we call it here, “hyper-domestication,” at its beginning implied taking control of humankind. Civilized conditions, as far as their origins can now be traced, have arrived on this planet neither by peaceful design nor with organizational plans drawn by wise economists, not even by the advice of the best skilled domesticators. Civilized groups in antiquity were far more likely to have been rounded up by gangs of warriors—that is, by hordes still led by the obsessions of obsolescent archaic hunters, whose subjects were habitually redefined as prey animals. And of course, the commanders of warrior hordes borrowed a few basic tricks from the very herdsmen whom they raided. They viewed their “roundups” of human domestics in the manner of rounding up animals—from a hunter’s point of view such humans were animals of prey.

—Measured along the value scale of hyper-domestication, the most ideal domesticates from among terrestrial animals turned out to be the human species itself, those very same creatures that reinvented themselves as domesticators and owners of plants and animals. Once subdued by warriors, their ability to communicate by way of language proved to be a rather dubious asset. For people taken to be sedentary captives, elementary language turned out to be an additional fetter for their enslavement. Humans could be subjugated with threats and be enticed with lies, flattery, and poetry to come into enclosures. On that account they were easier to be reasoned with, to be enslaved and turned into domestics, than a herd of wild goats.

—In contrast to goats and cattle, humanoids were in the habit of building their own corrals and barns. As soon as their creative energies and sweat were kneaded together with clay, and their hands left signature imprints in the mud that daubed their wattle walls, they were mystically bonded with their dwellings. They planted themselves emotionally to stay rooted in place. If hyper-domesticators were not overly reckless, their domestic humanoids would remain in place even without placing guards (herders) of the warrior variety. But, of course, not all hyper-domesticators in history were intelligent enough to recognize this possibility. Those without rational sensibility coerced their people to build fortresses, and prisons, instead.

—What sort of people were these hyper-domesticators, and who are they today? From the records of history we know them as warlords, monarchs, emperors, and dictators—all still driven by a hunter mentality with deeply felt inclinations to kill. Their genes survive in all of us—a little fiercer in some. They are people of aristocratic demeanor and of the highly praised “leadership ability.” Many of them have remained passionate hunters by temperament and poise. Under more democratic circumstances, some of these people still continue to manage governments, parliaments, and industrial corporations. And some continue to “hunt” by newer technological means and strategies. With cybernetic technology they are now able to entangle their victims in *net*-works and circuitry. Flightless bi-pedal creatures no longer need to be captured in nets of hemp. Cybernetic “virtual nets” also serve this function. These nets will, of course, eventually entangle the net-makers themselves.

—Short-sighted greed will drive most hyper-domesticators to overreach themselves. Their greed regenerates ancient quarrels and revolutions with promises of fake freedom. How can freedom ever be won by a species of compulsive tinkerers—i.e. compulsive net weavers who, having achieved material prowess, continue to weave greater entanglements in badly understood empty space?

Militarism: As a category in actual life, militarism highlights the most violent skills of which human ingenuity is capable. In an organized manner it cultivates skills of murderous tricks and strategies that were imagined long ago at the hunter level of evolution. Those skills were boosted dramatically by inventions of flint weapons during the

Neolithic period. Hunting is strategic trickery that human males developed and mastered first vis-à-vis the animals. It called for, and inspired, basic improvements in weapon technology.

—But unbeknownst to the Neolithic weapon makers, their hunter technology is equally well suited for establishing hyper-domestication systems that a little later would enslave the very children of those master flint-knappers. Neolithic hunters had several million years training to become professional killers of animals, of prey ranging from mammoth and hippo, down to wild bovine, buffalo, moose, and deer, including dagger-to-claw combat with bears, lions, and tigers. Following the Göbekli Tepe industrial bubble, some hunters from that region roamed five to six millennia as bands of hungry wanderers. They evolved into hordes of robbers and warriors. At last they assembled and trained armies of warriors that whipped our planet's first imperial "civilizations" into shape.

—A little over five millennia ago, a point of critical mass was reached when sedentary domesticators, in fear of roaming hordes of warriors, no longer could avoid entering into defensive alliances with those whom they feared most. Their treaties usually were made in desperation. With a worldwide increase in domesticator populations, warrior groups that haunted and preyed on them prospered in proportion. Domesticators who lived in settlements proceeded to build and to organize mutual defenses in alliance with some of those who otherwise would conquer them. In other words, to save life and limb, domesticators needed to negotiate surrenders wisely. Together with their new overlords, they stood up against hordes that still roamed in the hills looking for more vulnerable settlements to raid.

—The lowest common denominator in hyper-domestication was residual hunting at the level of sports. The highest amount of force was exerted in fierce competition among hordes of warriors. The continuity of killer vocabulary remains intact and fluid among modern languages of sports and warfare. Our perpetual international wars and armed conflicts are not recent accidents. They are amalgamations of aspiring egos, still caught up in the mentality of decrepit Stone Age huntsmen who evolved into pillaging bandits and who scouted to devise the most lucrative schemes of "protecting" docile settlers in exchange for servitude and booty.

—Throughout the millennia after Göbekli Tepe, the ability to hunt fauna with bow-propelled flint arrows boomeranged on humankind. At some point, our ancestors needed to fear the very weapons that they invented to advance their quest for food. Defensively, they herded themselves into corrals which, originally, they had made of mud, wood, and stone for the control of animals. These were self-made fortresses which, when overwhelmed as defenses, defaulted to their original function as corrals and prisons. Once the first cities were surrounded with walls to keep hostile people out, the self-defeating process of voluntary self-incarceration proved to be unstoppable. There always were more people to be kept out by those who tried to save themselves and their properties within.

—With great interest, and a measure of anxiety, we anticipate the full excavation of all the Lions lodges at Göbekli Tepe. A very early act in the drama of human hyper-domestication has probably been memorialized there. And the overall drama they played there, in all likelihood, was a prototype of modern tragedy. Ten thousand years ago, only those gods that were many sizes greater could have appreciated these aristocratic behaviors as comedy. The social configurations that hyper-domestication produced are now obvious. Totemic deities served as pillars for aristocratic pride, power, and status. Persistent hunters despised those who quit the ways of hunting early on. The more they despised, the easier it was for their warrior descendants to rob and to subjugate those “loser settlers” later.

Ownership and Slavery: Ancient overlords never acknowledged with much precision the distinctions between farmers, herdsmen, and beasts of burden. A hyper-domesticator arrogantly assumed that he was entitled, or even called upon by deity, to own and to manage all naturally and artificially constituted herds and hordes.

—Entire nations have so been enslaved. And this includes groups of warriors that organized under ancestral totems, as well as some totem-inspired warrior-herders who themselves have moved beyond enslaving animals and included among their subjects weaker indebted herdsmen and farmers. Ownership and slavery, over time, have come to be defined in terms of whichever people could be subjected or be branded “inferior.” An intelligent predator that has vanquished his

own totemic gods with impunity, had no lingering ontological, theological, or ethical scruples—about also subduing human underlings that once upon a time were devotees of those totemic sponsors—later deprived of their mandates.

—Religious counter-movements against the styles of warrior empires have occasionally protested under the aegis of martyrdom and victimization. Some of their saviors posed as sacrificial lambs, as martyrs, beggars, humble hermits, prophets or humanistic reformers. Any concept in human language can become a symbolic candidate for opposition and contrast, and some of these contrasts may indeed have succeeded, for a while, in shaming the hyper-domesticators. But still, there has appeared nothing new under the sun. Already back in hunting days there were hunters, disguised in totemic deerskin for camouflage. In organized hyper-domestication systems there would be “wolves dressed in sheepskin,” “foxes that managed chicken coups,” or sheep who tried to pose as mighty liberator-wolves. According to a somewhat milder version, “apparent sheep” might later flaunt their piety as being “atoned,” and thereupon as having become mandated hyper-domesticators—“by the Grace of God.”

Human Sacrifice: In early hyper-domestication cultures a custom has spread that was a direct derivative from the hunters’ share sacrifices. Sacrificial shares needed to be paid, especially for large possessions, to greater-than-human powers—such as to some aristocrat’s ancestors or special totemic gods. In Part Three of this book we will feature several examples of such “conspicuous consumption” among seemingly hungry gods and totemic ancestors. At our present level of understanding a coherent worldwide evolutionary outline on human sacrifice is not yet possible, but some examples can be identified to serve as benchmarks along the general path of human evolution. A more detailed outline for this subject matter must wait for a time when more data will have been gathered—a time when interested historians are able to focus on the theme of hyper-domestication earlier in life than this writer was able to do.

—Archaic hunters have evolved strict rules of atonement for basic killing and butchering; for various reasons (for divine assistance in killing as well as for justification) they accepted the supervision of totemic deities. Then, during the eras of domestication

and hyper-domestication, an increase in ceremonial “sacrificing” has elevated ordinary butchering to the vanity status of high-priests and representatives of supreme gods. High-priests functioned as exalted butchers (i.e. as pious orthodox hunters) in the “kitchen-sanctuaries” of later domesticator high-gods. Hyper-domestication cults were complex accumulations of many simple tricks and moments of atonement that ordinary hunters and butchers have managed to intuit and to compile in the course of their evolution.

—Eventually, full-fledged hyper-domesticators enlarged their festivities with adding human sacrificial victims, to frighten and to own increasingly more human groups. Nothing culturally new has been introduced into the legitimization process for justifying human sacrifice—other than an improved tool kit and the valorization of ordinary killing and butchering. Elaborate killing feasts, potlatches, and excessive victory celebrations—all these are derivatives of simpler archaic hunters’ acts of killing, butchering, and ensuing celebrations. Pompous celebrations after successful communal hunts, flattery of heroic organizers and their aggrandizement, could all be hyped by way of adding human victims. Spectacles of terror are the grandest tools of hyper-domestication. They are suited to impress and to manipulate human populations. With sacrifices the hyper-domesticators celebrated the evolution of their species as artificial killers and butchers. At the fulcrum of these festivities stood the archetypal supreme *Homo sapiens*, as totemic hunter and sacerdotal butcher.

—Hyper-domesticators assume, in principle, that it is proper for them to own humankind after the manner in which domesticators claim to own animals. As proof of their ownership of humankind they offer nothing but the hunter’s archaic point that they “can” kill any prey they choose. Their logic is still stuck on paying some share offering to an ancient predator deity—“in kind.” Wars in some regions, such as in pre-Columbian Middle America and in Shang China, have been waged to capture prisoners for sacrifice. In modern warfare such struggles have become more secular and more extravagant. All those killed at either side of World War battle lines could be counted as victims and sanctimoniously be laid to rest into the hands of some almighty totemic sponsor—some eagle-, bear-, lion- or dragon-faced Fatherland or Motherland—for eternal legitimization of conquest, peace, and the victim’s well-earned rest.

—In spite of such sanctimonious hype and hysterics, people are executed and sacrificed mostly for the sake of emphasis—to maintain an environment that, supposedly, is pacified and thereby balanced successfully, by terror and blood. The difference between “sacrifice” and “execution” lies, essentially, in the nomenclature by which hyper-domestication mandates define the victims either as rightful “possessions” or as subjects handed to administrators by greater and purer predator authority, in trust.

The Growth of Populations: On the total scope of our planet’s size and evolution, seven billion grazing animals and foragers would not seem to be a dangerously large number. But seven billion primates, experimentally inclined omnivores, whose ancestors over the course of six million years have learned to “ape” exemplary wolf, lion, and eagle totems—that is, carnivores—and whose deadly technological skills have grown to outwit every creature on earth with only a few species of bacilli and viruses remaining undefeated. Well! Such creatures can create problems even unto themselves. If they were any species other than ourselves, we would long have recognized the predicament with apprehension and fear. In the eyes of a hypothetical other intelligent species we surely would have been identified as a plague to ourselves—a perilous and suicidal infestation of the planet.

—An increase in human numbers has been the ultimate blessing and reward that the gods of all eras have bestowed on humankind—among gatherers and hunters, domesticators, and hyper-domesticators. The generosity of that blessing appears to have increased over time. Unprecedented growth of the human population, in the Göbekli Tepe area, was likely stimulated by the booming flint industry during its final two millennia of fulltime gathering and hunting. It produced an imbalance of numbers between human hunters and the fauna. Improvements in flint weapon technology definitely helped increase the yields of communal hunting drives.

—But the technologically exaggerated blessings of human numbers were actually extorted from the gods at weapon-point. The gods were either unable or unwilling to replace all the prey animals that were being killed by flint-tipped arrows and spears. Larger human numbers provided an apparent sense of security. Over-hunting increased the food supply at least temporarily, as it also increased human numbers. When then, with hyper-domestication

emphases the hunting drives were being enlarged to the size of military campaigns, human victims took the place of prey animals.

—More human babies were born and raised. Half of all offspring were males and potential hunters. And by so generating its own population bubble, the flint-based industry at Göbekli Tepe drove hunter culture in the direction of over-population and sporadic prey shortages. Dissatisfied hunters hoped for a more settled and better life. But with a shortage of prey animals their crises were accelerated and reasons for more people to go wandering were multiplied. Food substitutions needed to be increased by way of gathering, planting, and herding, and be made regular.

—Even though humankind was periodically threatened with starvation, the option of intentionally limiting the number of human births would have entered into few people's minds. Traveling was the ultimate solution to all problems that would arise in archaic hunter and gatherer societies, and before hunters tried to become sedentary, the hardships of travel themselves limited the number of children whom one could carry along. All the while at Göbekli Tepe's transitional cult, the entire thrust of a new life-oriented consciousness, and religiosity, was intended to encourage more procreation, more hatching and birthing. All sacred enclosures and menhirs, and most bas-reliefs at Göbekli Tepe, illustrate this message.

—Millennia later, in hyper-domesticated environments, population growth still remained a crucial factor. One never knew when the army of another warlord might arrive, break down one's defenses, kill lots of people, loot the resources and lead the able-bodied people away as captives, to turn them into slaves or sacrificial victims. Still, even while human lives were being wasted and hyper-domestication systems collided, human populations fluctuated and, on average, their numbers increased. The driving force for their increase in numbers was fear.

—Every conquered society and every warlord and occupier hoped and called for larger numbers of men. All threatened people prayed for the same. Men were needed for defense as well as for preemptive strikes and general schemes of conquest. This means that at any step of military activity, in any conflict, both sides of combatants hoped for short term victories on the basis of having superior numbers, provided as blessings from a God superior to other gods.

They mistook the larger intrinsic absurdity, of victorious competition among hyper-domestication systems and numbers, as constituting divine blessings. Much blind faith was needed to believe in the ways of human progress. There were no alternatives. Armies hurtling people into walled cities to keep them out of harm's way presented themselves as the best solution in emergencies. If a family felt weak and insecure, if a king estimated that he was short a thousand men, there was no better long-range plan than to encourage an increase in numbers. In addition, one might also pray that the ruling dynasty would forever be able to protect its people. In some modern lands, the encouragement for mothers to raise more sons is not subtle at all.

—Within the larger evolutionary process, the necessity of military defense entailed an increase in general controls. What started as simple domestication of plants and animals was amplified to a “hyper” stage, to establish greater controls with an increasing number of yokes and chains, put on animals first, and then also on people. For greater efficiency, human beings were assessed as property and resources. They were owned even while they themselves were still trying to own plants, animals, wives, children, servants, and even slaves—all in the name of inborn dignities and entitlement. To own and to be owned became an implied necessity, driven by the fear of losing security and life itself.

—Let us for a moment reflect a little more intimately: where is there a teacher today in democratic lands, and in open competition, who at one time or other has not been given the friendly advice to sell himself or herself a little more enthusiastically. Wherever the commercial valuation of people is being applied in earnest, in competition, there opens up the road that leads from pride of acquisition straight to self-enslavement. At that point the next round of hyper-domestication has already begun.

—Religion, consisting of submissive responses toward greater-than-human reality, can sometimes be counted on to dampen hasty changes. With the words “be fruitful and multiply,” the supreme deity of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam has been blessing its people—as has Shang-Di and the supreme ancestors of China been blessing their offspring. These they blessed with population numbers that grew by hundreds of millions, reaching billions. So, how can a deity that once upon a time has blessed humanity with numbers amend its

eternal promises? For an “eternal” deity to be permitted to update ancient promises seems unthinkable. An updated revelation, however, might specify a little more precisely the point at which an exploited blessing translates into a curse. Not only blessing-loaded religions lack such precision, modern promise-loaded political ideologies also do. And then, can selfish human rationality really be trusted with an updated divine revelation? Or can it be trusted to distribute secular political benefits any better?

Monotheism: Much has been made of “Hymns to Aton” whereby the Pharaoh Akhenaton addressed his Sun deity, Aton, as the Only One. Based on a few of his chiseled lines, this eccentric ruler has been credited with having been the world’s first monotheist. Indeed, if the wisdom of the entire world were limited to this one man’s own royal inscriptions, he would have been that first. But if we let the Sun-deity Aton shine a little brighter onto Akhenaton’s inscriptions we discover that his hymns attest to a monotheistic relationship only between the jaded pharaoh himself and his personalized Sole God Aton, who loved only Akhenaton the pharaoh—and his spouse as an add-on. This was the religion of one person who aspired to absolute rule and to supreme divine honors, something that, lucky for Egypt, eluded him during his career as a Horus-Falcon on the throne of Egypt.²⁴

—If a comparison were to be attempted, then Akhenaton’s religion shows very little in common with the reactionary monotheism for which Abraham and Moses, along with priests and prophets of Yahweh/Elohim, under the administration of King David, have been credited. Their religion—though it was sponsored by a royal dynasty as well—was not promulgated for the advantage of a sole ruler, but at least for a confederation of tribes. Some prophetic checks and balances were present in the latter type of monotheism.

—Akhenaton’s theocratic dream stood in a direct line with the ambitions of earlier Egyptian pharaohs. About the hyper-domestication habits of First Dynasty pharaohs more will emerge below, in

²⁴The theological dimension of hyper-domestication (over-domestication) has been dealt with extensively in Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire: Theological and Philosophical Roots of Christendom...*, SUNY Press, 1991.

Chapter Seventeen. The direction and pace of evolution for Western civilization and monotheistic religion were set in ancient Egypt. A comparison with ancient China, in Chapter Nineteen, will assist by having these two civilizations illuminate each other.

—It turns out that monotheism as such never quite was the cure-all for imbalances that beset human cultures, economies, or organized religions. The mathematical possibilities in everyday living are too numerous to be reduced to a single monad. Beyond the consoling vision of living under a sole divine authority, monotheism continually tempts human arithmetic with the next larger number—a dualism. By trying to bundle “salvation” all into one, monotheists easily end up in the hands of an apparent “Opposite.” The world can then conveniently be explained as a warring dualism.

—Within a postulated dualism of “Good and Evil” (God and Devil), the evil portion usually turns out to be scientifically more demonstrable than the “Good” side—the latter of which sits enthroned, imagined as a unified and inexplicable someone, self-contained. Logically it cannot be otherwise. Analytic human minds are easily duped by their own smoke and mirrors. Scientific experimentation requires prior analysis, which means “breakdown into a multiplicity of aspects or parts.” Accordingly, scientism is far more efficient and generous toward the fragments that it produces, by analysis and for experimental control. Analysis, breakdown, control, conquest and destruction will therefore always be easier to achieve along the road of science than will be synthesis, growth, or organic wholeness. And we cannot forget that *homines sapientes* are imitational creatures that evolved while honing their skills of rational analysis, as artificial killers and butchers.

—As far as one can track imperial monotheisms historically, such politicized religions may indeed have taken root a little over five millennia ago, to support the consolidation of imperial powers in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and possibly elsewhere. Also, for a span of time domesticators of cattle rediscovered images of themselves within the circles of their own reasoning. They saw themselves as livestock, similarly so owned. Living under the whip of hyper-domesticators, some ancients were taught that they themselves were livestock, owned by the gods and managed by royals on behalf of the gods. Of course, those who wished to liberate themselves from the fetters

of hyper-domestication needed, for that reason, to first learn transcend the myths and ideologies that defined them as livestock and property to begin with.²⁵

—Whatever ideology is used by hyper-domesticators to justify a people’s enslavement, a rational critique of that same worldview, good or bad, is also required in the victims’ struggle for liberation, as a starting point for “un-installment.” The ancient version must be upended and modified, to forge a stream of counter-weights that are suitable for rebalancing. Rebels who start reasoning entirely from scratch, who ignore the former gods that used to underwrite the worldview that lost utility, or who prefer to rationalize on the basis of a modern atheistic ontology, are in danger of ending up with still older predatory primitivisms—such as, for example, some predatory heroic and totemistic nationalisms. Moreover, on the sheer basis of modern axioms which ascribe “impersonal matter,” “energy,” or “blind force” to the nature of the universe, it is difficult to argue in support of human rights, dignity, or the legitimacy of any life at all. The history of religions, therefore, remains an important intellectual tool of reorientation in the ongoing human quest for dignity and life.

—In Chapter Seventeen we will see how the first pharaohs of Egypt—the god-kings of the First Dynasty—ran their courts. As deified hunters, mutated hunter/herders, they operated them like barnyards stocked with humankind. Ministers and servants were sacrificed to patch the ruptures that got torn in the dynastic fabric when immortal pharaohs accidentally died and were temporarily transformed into Osiris, the god of death. At a god-king’s funeral, human victims were added to the royal burial for shock effect, to strengthen the dynasty by way of terrorizing all would-be rebels. Even pet lions, as progeny of archaic totems, were obliged to accompany the divine-human Osiris during his moments of transition—while he was becoming his own successor. Peeping through the curtains, and reading a little between the lines, I suspect that the sacrificial deaths of those victims had little to do with the pharaoh’s

²⁵The idea is blatantly stated in the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*. It is reflected more gently in the hymnody of the Hebrew Psalms (e.g. Psalm 23). In the latter texts people are sheep, chosen by a divine Good Shepherd to graze on his watered green pastures. In a modern setting, where the deity no longer insists on having anything butchered and roasted for him, such poetry has become suitable to be read even at funeral ceremonies, for comfort.

wellbeing in a hereafter. It appears to have had everything to do with empowering the imperial dynasty, that is, with enabling god-kings to rule Egypt more effectively. These generational funerary sacrifices added weight and an air of calm—of peace imposed by terror and fear—imposed by the single deity of Egypt who rotated his Falcon manifestation in order to continue the dynastic royal spectacle from one generation to the next.