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Chapter 3: City-states and agricultural empires - The origins of urban civilization: Mesopotamia, Egypt and China (4100 BC - 600 BC)

In the previous chapter ...

We saw how the first societies of antiquity were foragers and developed, by necessity, an extremely egalitarian culture, without hierarchies, based on mutual support. We also know that from 15,000-12,000 years ago they managed large communal spaces, in radii of up to 200km, where hundreds or thousands of people collaborated in the construction of temples and maintenance of communal food stores.

When, 10,000 years ago, possibly due to the need to adapt to climate change, some societies increased the usage of agriculture until they became sedentary, they maintained horizontal social structures, relational identity, harmony with nature, and an economy based on communal properties and mutual support. Women were the protagonists of these matriarchal societies and men had a secondary role.

The emergence of domination and civilization

During most of history, humanity was unaware of hierarchy and domination (as a normalized and stable phenomenon beyond occasional exceptions). It is only about 6,000 - 7,000 years ago that hierarchical and unequal societies with mechanisms of domination began to appear. The best documented ones appear in the Mesopotamian area and rapidly evolve into city-states and later empires.

In the period between 4,000 BC and 1,500 BC the foundations of the mechanisms of domination, which have survived until today, were developed. This stage also coincided with the invention of a large part of the fundamental technologies of civilization: from irrigation to writing through urbanism.

These mechanisms of domination have continued and have evolved to this day. In order to overcome the oppression of people and nature, it is very useful to understand its origins. We obtain a perspective that makes it easier for us to integrate knowledge in a deeper way. On the other hand, if we limit ourselves to studying the recent mechanisms that emerged during capitalist modernity, they might appear to us as decontextualized arbitrary phenomena. To neutralize them, it is more effective to go to their roots.

Mesopotamia Timeline: Sumer

6500 BC - 4100 BC - Sumer: Ubaid period

The advent of urbanization This period bridges the gap between egalitarian rural societies and highly hierarchical urban societies.

The Ubaid culture is characterized by non-walled settlements made up of mud brick houses with multiple rooms. Also for a refined ceramic.

A process of urbanization begins between 5000 and 4000 BCE and leads to the emergence of the first cities, and the first irrigation systems, on which cities depend. These cities were surrounded by smaller towns. Each of these sets of cities and towns are independent of each other. We also find specialized artisans such as potters (ceramists), weavers and metal workers, although the bulk of the population are still peasants.

Each of these groups of towns articulated around a city share a single temple located in the city, which also acts as a warehouse for surplus food and is in charge of managing its redistribution in situations of need. Unlike the temples and villages of foraging tribes, where communal spaces seem to be of seasonal use, in these temples, and in the cities, people are always there, **they live sedentary lives for the first time in history**. Furthermore, we can also see the appearance of permanently **specialized labor who do not participate in food production**. Those people are priests, administrative personnel, artisans, etc. and constitute the city's population.

Voluntary inequality To feed the city dwellers it was necessary to mobilize a workforce to be in charge of cultivating and maintaining irrigation systems.

It is unknown (since writing had not yet been developed) how this workforce was mobilized. History usually evolves in tiny steps that are unnoticeable to the people who live them, so tiny that are experienced as constant lifestyles. Therefore the most plausible scenario is that such workforce mobilization mechanisms were giving continuity to the communal foraging traditions of construction and maintenance of structures and communal food warehouses, although the sources consulted do not address this possibility. Even more mysterious is why the rituals of mutual support between communities were replaced, or complemented by the intermediation of the temple. We will return to this question later, in the section "What made domination desirable?"

Even though story-telling writing had not been invented yet, token-based accounting methods had been developed since 10,000 BC. Clay figures represented both counting objects, such as goats, as well as numerals. They had been developed by peasants to manage crops. We therefore find accounting records without corresponding written records, which leaves them open to interpretation.

Despite these uncertainties, **it is widely accepted that there was a decrease in egalitarianism** in society and also that during the Ubaid period **the Sumerian culture spread peacefully**, by virtue of being a culture with superior technology which brought benefits to the population.

It is interesting to note that **these events contradict the version of history that we are usually told.** On the one hand, **we are used to the narrative that urban civilization brings more freedom and equality among the population, however we see that the opposite happened.** These facts are so remote that efforts have rarely been made to conceal them, and they can easily be found in both scientific and popular literature. Later we will see similar patterns, especially in the Middle Ages, and after that, liberal revolutions, which are more difficult to discern since, although in the scientific literature the facts are quite clear, in most popular literature the narrative is the opposite from the facts, and claims that the more urbanization, more freedoms and more equality.

Let us reflect on **two more facts that contradict**, perhaps more subtly, the usual view of history, adding up to three dissonant facts in this historical period. The second is that the **hierarchy of society was voluntarily accepted by the population.** We are used to narratives that imply that hierarchies can only be imposed by force and we look for "villains" and their "victims": dictators who impose themselves on the population, men who impose themselves on women, etc.

Finally, the third, also is not true that **language and culture are necessarily identity elements of the population that will violently defend them.** It is more accurate to see them **simply as technologies that are adopted when a better one appears**, in the same fashion as one upgrades their mobile phone. Like the first, these last two can be clearly found in sources referring

to antiquity, and they become more difficult to discern as the pattern repeats itself in events closer in time. This, by the way, doesn't mean that the tendency of cultural uniformization is desirable. The loss of cultural diversity is a real concern. What it means is that if we want to prevent such loss we need to look beyond villains and tackle inherent systemic cultural tendencies as well.

4100 BC - 2900 BC - Sumer: Uruk period

Theocracy invents money, wage labor and consumerism The cities grow and become more centralized around **the temple which evolves into a ziggurat**: a pyramidal structure with the upper level dedicated to the gods, the lower level to the artisans, and the intermediate level to the priests / managers. The power is concentrated in the high priest or priestess, assisted by a council of old men and women. Multiple cities exceed 10,000 inhabitants, and the largest, Uruk, exceeds 50,000, located near the mouth of the Euphrates River.

Money and wage labor appear. These become the main tools for managing the work of the temple, displacing whatever (unknown) methods that were used in the previous stage.

Graeber observes that money is an invention of the temple bureaucrats to manage resources, and not a commercial invention as is commonly assumed. It is simply the tabulation of the value of all the elements that the temple manages with respect to a reference weight in silver. The basic monetary unit was the silver shekel, which corresponded to 60 mines. One mine was the price of a ration of barley: Temple workers received 2 rations of barley per day, for a total of 60 per month. In other words, a shekel was a monthly salary for an official. From this time they survive, in addition to money, the dozen and the division of the day into 24 hours. Up to this point societies were communal. There was no private property or market concepts, so money was not needed. The few commercial exchanges that existed were of merchandise between communities (barter), although most exchanges between communities continued to be based on gift rituals (the north-american potlatch would be a more recent example).

Harari makes a very interesting reflection on the nature of money. Since the dawn of humankind, fictions have been invented to facilitate cooperation between large numbers of individuals (spirits, goddesses, etc ...). Up to this point, for such fictions to work their coordination magic, they required people to believe in them. Yet **money is a fiction of a different nature. It does not require that one believes in money for it to be effective: it is enough that one believes that the people around them believe in money!**

For the first time in history, commercial transactions are part of the daily life of some people. Importantly, **the economy was credit-based.** The coin had not been invented (it does not appear until the next historical epoch, the Axial Age). The shekel and mines were abstract units of weight. The coins were not necessary, each temple worker had an account that registered the salary that they had earned and what was being spent, buying goods and

services from other people who also worked for the temple. Even when a market economy emerges around the temple, people do not need to use coins, simply each business (for example the cantine where the workers go to have a few beers) keeps their tabs with the clients, and they settle them from time to time. These accounts could have been settled in species such as barley, or perhaps with silver bullion, or by making a transfer in the accounts at the temple, or perhaps with bullae (explained below). In some cases the temple keeps centralized accounts for transactions between citizens who don't work for the temple.

It is also important to note, as Graeber does, that **there was never barter between individuals in ancient societies. Societies shifted directly from the communal economy of mutual support to a market economy based on credit.** This is considered a non-controversial fact among scholars since ancient Sumerian texts began to be deciphered in the early 20th century.

It bears repeating because the implications are enormous: **barter is the founding myth of capitalism:** in the beginning of time people exchanged stuff among themselves, this was very inconvenient, which is why currency was invented. Credit cards were later invented to make transactions even more convenient. This linear description of history easily creates the feeling of inevitable progress. However, as we have known for a century, it undoubtedly happened in reverse: first credit was invented, then currency, and recently barter. **The invention of money was not a natural evolution of the needs of the people, it was an invention of bureaucrats to facilitate the management of a population in a hierarchical structure. Egalitarian societies have no need for the invention of money.** Barter is a very recent behavioral adaptation to situations where people are living in hierarchical conditions but they don't have access to either cash or credit, such as in failed states or prisons.

Slavery, compound interest and usury **Slaves are used for the first time.** We find a less peaceful society than the previous stage in which a small part of the workforce is forced. There is still no evidence of organized warfare, no professional soldiers, and cities are generally still without walls.

It is interesting to highlight **another falsehood of the liberal narrative:** it claims that **the bigger the role of market in society, the more equality and freedom.** However, we observe that not only does the market appear when the first inequalities appear, but slavery immediately appears as well!

Compound interest and usury appear. Compound interest appears before writing and it is unclear how it appeared. Graeber bets that it was also an invention of the bureaucrats, who loaned money to merchants for their expeditions, and demanded a fixed amount in return. His argument is based on the fact that interest indicates a lack of mutual trust, which would be the case between people from two different social classes, bureaucrats and merchants. On the other hand, in loans between merchants there would be sufficient trust that they were set up as investments, not loans with interest, and the profit was shared between

investors and adventurers.

Regardless of how compound interest was invented, by the time writing appears, usury is already a common practice. Professional moneylenders profit by giving credit to farmers in times of bad harvests. Eventually these **lenders manage to legalize the use of family members requesting the loan as collateral** to guarantee the payment of the debt. This required to appoint a head of the family who would be responsible for paying off the debt, even if that meant selling or renting family members. Even though historically women had been at the center of society and families, the law appointed men for that role. One obvious motivation could have been that women had much more market value than men, and therefore the state-market would have favored laws that prioritized the enslavement of women. We will expand on this point later.

Technically though, the purchase and sale of people in a family was illegal, immoral, and unprecedented until that moment. This meant that, if due to the compound interest some poor families could not pay back their loan, they would lose first their cattle, then the land, the house, daughters, wife, until finally the men heading the families would themselves ended up as slaves. How lenders got people's freedom accepted as collateral for a loan is a mystery. How did they manage to go from a "socialist" redistributive model through a temple (which in turn had replaced communal solidarity) to a "capitalist" model where people in need would resort to the financial market? We will return to this topic later.

Even though the consulted literature makes it clear that usury was already prevalent when writing appeared, it doesn't clarify when this arrangement started, of appointing a male as head of family finances who would have to sell the rest of the family to pay off the debt. During the Uruk period women were still well represented in all aspects of society, it is not until later, starting at 2.500 BC that they start disappearing from public life. This chronology needs further research.

What is clear is that it was the state who created the market. We find **another contradiction between liberal/conservative/progressives discourse and historical facts.** It is very interesting to bear this in mind because a large part of contemporary political debates are based on this fallacy, and they revolve around the convenience of giving more power to one or the other. Liberals and conservatives generally want the state to mostly go away, to only enforce private property, and leave the rest to the free market. Progressives generally want the state to take a more active role and regulate/tame the market.

However, both market and State are two sides of the same coin. The most painful effects of the market (forcing people away from their homes, from the lands that feed them, and depriving them of their liberty) clearly cannot occur without a state that manages the police (armed civil servants) to use force for the benefit of lenders. Even the apparently innocuous effects, such as people going to the bar for a beer and paying with money, would not have happened without the effort of the State to create and maintain money for their transactions (fees and

taxes), and, as we will see, they tend to disappear when states disappear. People tend to revert to a gift economy.

As we have seen in the earlier books of this series **the State-market-competition system has dynamics on its own. It is questionable to what extent a society embedded in a State-market-competition system is able to influence its dynamics, in a stable and durable way.** The popular discourse of market vs State obscures this systemic dynamics. Having this historical perspective, that the State created the market and the market cannot persist without the State, helps us expand the discourse, adding the option of dispensing of the State-market-competition system altogether and comparing the cost and feasibility of taming the system compared to creating a different system. Such conversation is not even possible in the mainstream discourse since it seems obvious that the State and the market are separate entities and the governments have the choice to set the balance. And implementing that choice seems non problematic.

Writing: the curtain goes up Writing appears between 3500 - 3000 BC, therefore from that moment on we have a much more detailed view of history, although still with important gaps. Writing was a very complex technology, which only professional scribes knew how to use. It required long training and correspondingly high salaries, therefore the writings of the time reflected only the vision of the elites. Understanding what happened requires interpretation of both what was written and what was omitted.

Before the advent of full-fledged writing, proto-writing appeared in the form of commercial contractual instruments: the bullae. These were spheres of clay which contained tokens that represented the items to be exchanged. The outer surface of the spheres were marked with the same elements to be exchanged and with symbols that identified both parties to the contract. In case of suspicion that the outer text had been tampered with, the sphere could be broken and the content validated. Some authors think that the most likely initial use of bullae was the equivalent of the modern bill of lading: They were given to the carrier of goods so that the receiver could validate that they had received the shipping in full. The symbols in the bullae evolved in complexity and eventually were written on flat tablets. By around the year 3000 they had already evolved into a fully developed cuneiform script.

At least this seems to be the consensus of the archeological and anthropological sources. But none of the sources consulted noted that, with respect to forgery, **flat tablets were an inferior technology than the bullae. They weren't as tamper-proof!** The only way to understand such "technological evolution" seems to be to include the ascent of the State into the equation. Once transactions were centralized in the temples, in the Ziggurat, there was no need to have tamper protection in each one of the transaction documents. The authenticity of the ledgers in the temple came from the authority of the Gods themselves.

The same pattern has repeated elsewhere later in history. Graeber points to several technologies that accomplished the same taper-proofing than the bullae, like writing accounting notes on a stick and then breaking it into two parts. Only the person who has the other matching stick can claim to be the other party in the contract. All those were eventually replaced by centralized authorities and notarized documents. It's true that the need to embed authentication instruments in documents never completely went away, seals of various technologies have existed throughout history. However the shift from the bullae to flat tables was of enormous significance since bullae were used for centuries in a huge extension of territory. It was a very successful standardized technology and its disappearance is indicative of major social changes.

Despotic-communal redistributive colonial regimes **Society increases in complexity** and so does urban planning. Three levels of settlements appear: the main cities, the secondary cities and the towns around them [source: Historicity]. Communal lifestyles coexist in towns with hierarchical and commercial ones. Oppenheim posits that each of the **communal towns paid taxes as a whole, and not as individual families**, to the city, since the social ties were communal and not family. Alla Semenova calls it a "**despotic-communal redistributive regime.**" The methods by which the elites of the temples managed to collect taxes from the villagers remain unclear, since in principle those were not tributes, as villagers were free citizens. Possibly it was a combination of ritual donations to the gods of the temple and payment for the management of security. Both food security with the redistribution of food, and protection against external aggressions.

Öcalan highlights the **colonial character** of Uruk and the great cities that followed. Some of the towns and cities that depended on it were a long way from the valley of the mouth of the Euphrates, far in the mountains. This colonial character greatly enriched Sumerian society culturally by putting cities in contact with people from distant lands.

How can we solve the mystery of finding market-based societies at the time of the advent of writing? How were they able to evolve from communal tribes? The most plausible explanation would be a gradual evolution of the communal system of temple maintenance. Periodic rituals to work on communal infrastructure seem a very common occurrence in pre-state societies, and survived until recently even in Europe in the rural corners where the State didn't yet have a strong reach. In the Basque language for example the memory of such rituals persist in the word Auzolan which means "neighborhood work".

Therefore it seems very plausible to assume that people from the different communities would voluntarily go to work in public works such as irrigation and to the temples, which would give them some bullae as "counter-gifts." These volunteers would deliver the bullae to their community and accumulate them until some religious festival (there are signs that they were destroyed once a

year, after the harvest). This accumulation of bullae would initially be a playful competition between the communities to see which one is the most generous, which would be a continuation of the potlatch-type celebrations that we find in various parts of the world in egalitarian tribes that come together to share surpluses in ritual festivities.

Over time the gifts of the communities to the communal temple would be quantified, expectations formalized, and would become more of a tax than a gift. In parallel the bullae would circulate like money. We know that bullae contained tokens that represented days or weeks of work and also that the bullae circulated as money, a kind of "bearer check". This circulation would have created markets, and the workers would have been able to keep a part of their "counter-gift" for their own expenses in the market. Eventually the "counter-gift" would evolve into a salary, volunteers would become urbanites, and rural communities would also seek more commercial ways to raise money to pay their taxes. Alla Semenova makes the hypothesis that the temples paid their workers in bullae, and also that the communities paid taxes as a group, however, she does not make the connection that initially the bullae were not a payment, but a counter-gift to the community, which would be a possible answer to the mystery (the counter-gift is a novel hypothesis presented here).

Emergence of socially constructed artificial material scarcity It is quite remarkable how humans evolved in an environment of abundance and managed to socially construct an environment of scarcity. We live in scarcity of food, with more than 20.000 people dying **every day** due to food insecurity, despite that we are producing enough food to feed the whole earth population almost twice, and we have resources to produce much more. We have a scarcity of energy even though every year we produce more energy per capita than ever before. We have homeless people while we have many more empty apartments, and we routinely tear down entire buildings to prevent the prices of the houses from falling too low.

In the western societies we can trace back the emergence of material scarcity to the Uruk period in Sumer. Scarcity was not an invention of the religious elites like the market or compound interest. Rather, it was an **emerging property of the hierarchical market-based society** invented by the theocracy. When society is organized in a hierarchical way those on top can regulate how much wealth they extract from the ones at the bottom. Even if there is abundance of food and housing they can choose to extract enough wealth from the ones at the bottom to make them live in scarcity. Obviously the ones on top are often tempted to do that but if the extraction of wealth is done directly through taxation, and taxation is supposed to provide services to everybody, then it becomes too obvious and people resist. **With the invention of the market, interest, and compound interest, the dynamic of extracting wealth from the bottom of society and moving it upwards becomes more subtle, and much less likely to be resisted.**

This is how the construction of artificial material scarcity emerged and how it has been preserved until now: we live in a world where most wealth produced by workers is taken away through the market, using inflated prices for housing, food, energy, etc. which leaves most workers living in scarcity despite the abundance of wealth they themselves produce.

2900 BC - 1940 BC - Sumer: dynastic period

War, military dynasties and imperialism Progressively **war** takes more prominence and the cities are beginning to be **walled**.

Power transfers to the hands of a **dynasty of "strong men"**. The wise men and women, priests and priestess, who previously ruled now take a secondary role as advisers and continue with their function of legitimizing power. However, they no longer have the monopoly to create gods: kings proclaim themselves gods as well.

We don't know what was the relative power of the bourgeois, relative to the priestly elites and the dynastic nobility . It's hard to tell in part because bullae were still used for trade even centuries after the invention of writing. Sumerian writing is a very complex technology and its knowledge is reserved for scribal elites. To be a scribe one would have to go to an expensive specialized school that only royal families and wealthy merchants could afford to send their daughters or sons to. Even when there have been cases of slave scribes, they have enjoyed privileges such as the right to trade and own private property. Buying such a fancy slave must have been much more expensive than buying a random girl to clean pots. On the other hand bullae was a technology available to the illiterate masses. Perhaps they were used by lower-ranking officials within the administration, perhaps by merchants who wanted to save the notarial cost of scribes, or perhaps both.

Around 2,500 BC the first empire appeared, when the city of Lagash succeeded in conquering and submitting to paying tribute to the majority of Sumerian cities. This dynasty used terror as one of its preferred management tools. During the following centuries, different dynasties succeeded each other until the fall of Sumer in 1940 BC.

Debt crises and amnesties By around 2400 BC, usury has assumed such proportions that a large number of the population has been or is at risk of being enslaved. To avoid revolts and mass desertions in his empire the King / Emperor Enmetena of Lagash decrees a **collective cancellation of the debt**. **The word freedom appears for the first time in history: amargi, which literally means "return to the mother"**, indicating that the daughters and sons subjected to slavery for the debts of their parents could return home. That it refers to the mother may also be an indication that, although the political / military elite was already structuring itself on the basis of patri-linear families, the common people were still organized in families around the mothers. Obviously

that wasn't the last "debt crisis" in the empire. Indeed, the dynamics created by usury and compound interest cause repeated "debt crises", and the rulers find themselves periodically decreeing amnesties.

These amnesties are always for private debts and exclude commercial ones, which indicates that since the very beginning, **debt had two very different uses. For the common folk it was a brutal instrument of domination, while for the merchant class it was a valuable business instrument.** It is easy to understand why. Debt for a peasant means the last resort to avoid dying of starvation, at which point they are in no position to negotiate favorable terms on the loan. For a merchant instead it means an opportunity to make one more investment. Commercial investments can be made collectively, and can be diversified (parallelized), so even if some of them fail, on average the merchant wins. Unlike the peasant who serializes their debts. Even if three times in a row the peasant manages to repay the debt, if the fourth time they don't manage, because of two bad harvests in a row, they end up in slavery.

Urban Patriarchy emerged during military rule Urban patriarchy appeared, got institutionalized and consolidated between 2500 BC and 1500 BC. Here's how Graeber sums it up:

In the very earliest Sumerian texts, particularly those from roughly 3000 to 2500 bc, **women are everywhere.** Early histories not only record the names of numerous female rulers, but make clear that women were well represented among the ranks of doctors, merchants, scribes, and public officials, and generally free to take part in all aspects of public life. One cannot speak of full gender equality: men still outnumbered women in all these areas. Still, one gets the sense of a society not so different than that which prevails in much of the developed world today.

Over the course of the next thousand years or so, all this changes. The place of women in civic life erodes; gradually, the more familiar patriarchal pattern takes shape, with its emphasis on chastity and premarital virginity, **a weakening and eventually wholesale disappearance of women's role in government and the liberal professions, and the loss of women's independent legal status**, which renders them wards of their husbands. By the end of the Bronze Age, around 1200 bc, we begin to see large numbers of women sequestered away in harems and (in some places, at least), subjected to obligatory veiling.

There are disagreements in the cited references about how patriarchy emerged in Mesopotamia. According to Öcalan, patrilineal dynastic culture first appears in pastoral Semitic societies between 9,000 BC and 6,000 BC. He attributes this turn in the social order to the alliance between the elderly (experience), the "strong man" (military force), and the shamans (the power of meaning).

According to this theory it was later, around 5000 BC, when it was introduced into peasant Aryan and Sumerian societies (Ubaid), possibly through Semitic elite settlements in peasant societies. As we have seen in Sumerian society the strength of this tripartite alliance was concentrated first on shamans and elders (male and female) and later (Uruk) in the military establishment (male). This theory fits in the broader cultural dynamics description from Öcalan, who claims that semitic peoples had superior cultural technology (language, social organization,...) which was adopted voluntarily by other ethnicities. However, it doesn't match the other sources which claim that patrilineality appeared later, in the sedentary societies, made possible by the emergence of land private property. Is not clear how patrilineality would appear first in nomadic pastoral societies, before the advent of private property, when nomadic societies were, in general, organized by women. Therefore in this text we will present instead an argument based on the more popular point of view that patrilineality emerged in sedentarian societies thousands of years after they adopted private property. In particular we present Graber's account on how patriarchy emerged which is the most compelling of all the sources examined.

One clear emerging property of competitive market societies which contradicts the progressive narrative is that **the more the market evolves the worse the conditions are for women**. The correlation is unimpeachable. The causal mechanisms are harder to pinpoint. Before the advent of the market women were at the center of society. As soon as the market gets introduced women's position in society starts to erode. Female gods get replaced by male warrior gods. Females get removed from the public spheres and are relegated to private spheres. Increasing numbers of women are enslaved to work as domestic servants, or sequestered in harems. Young woman who are not formally enslaved are forced to do sexual work to avoid falling into debt and being enslaved. Even nowadays in western societies women on average earn less than men. Despite many efforts to revert the situation, reality persists. The official numbers that pretend to show that the situation is improving are misleading: they hide that the exploitation of women has moved outside of the formal accounting, to undocumented women living in the west performing domestic services and to women working in factories far away. They also hide the number of females in the west who have felt compelled to give up their aspirations of having children and instead focus on their career. Basically they hide that in order to achieve economic parity females are being pushed to live like men.

In reality this seems to reflect a much broader pattern on a global scale. **It has always been scandalous for those who want to see in the progress of science and technology, the accumulation of knowledge, economic growth ("human progress", as we like to call it) something that has to lead to a greater degree of human freedom , that for women the case is exactly the opposite**. Or, at least, it has been until very recent times. A similar gradual decline in women's freedoms can be observed in India and China. **The question, obviously, is why?**

How the State created urban patriarchy in Sumer

It is worth looking in more detail at this question because patriarchy is still one of the pillars of contemporary societies. Why has progress resulted in oppression for women throughout history and all over the world? The correlation is so clear that it seems obvious that patriarchy, like the market, is an emerging property of hierarchical societies. The real question is, what are the causal mechanisms?

Both Öcalan and Fernández and González see patriarchy as a logical evolution of private property, fatherhood, and the loss of relational identity of some “strong men”. These men would have the need to control women’s sexuality, physical and emotional labor, and care work, in order to manage their offspring. However, it seems difficult to explain how the needs of these elite men became accepted by the majority of the population, including women, who would be responsible for perpetuating it through educating the next generations. While it is true that during the Dynastic Period society was led by patrilineal military families, we need a more nuanced explanation for how patriarchal memes became universal.

Even though we see how elite women disappear from public life during the militaristic dynastic period, **one key move that sealed women’s fate was institutionalized in the previous period. When the Theocratic State mandated, during the Uruk period, that for the commoners each household would have a man in charge of their finances**, and that he would be required to rent the services of the other members of the household, or sell them as slaves, in order to pay their debts, the State essentially mandated patriarchy for the poor. Even though technically the patriarch could rent or sell both male and female children, in practice boys would be favored to stay working in the field, because they are stronger, and young girls were preferred in the market for sexual services, and older women for household labor.

Often societies go through great length to construct elaborate narratives to hide what is really going on. Sometimes in History we discover a little fact, a jewel, that gives the whole game away. One such jewel in Sumer is the polysemy of the **Sumerian word “ur”: interest; surplus value; benefit ; slave woman**. With this giveaway it is hard to deny that the whole point of the Sumerian economy was the domination of poor women by the elites. And in many respects, it is still the case thousands of years later.

Surely when the elite invented patriarchy for the poor they didn’t foresee that it would eventually impact them as well. Remember that at that time there were almost as many women in powerful positions as men. Those women must have participated in the ideation of patriarchy for the poor, not expecting that it would come back to their own great-granddaughters. Let’s look at how the propertied class expected their women to retain the same privileges as men, at the same time that they were mandating poor women to be treated as merchandise.

Moral double standards for rich and poor

One of the topics we find in the city is the emergence of the typical **moral double standards as they apply to rich people versus poor people**. One area where the contrast is stark is in marriage customs. **Marriage is an invention of the rich** that serves two purposes. Financially it can be used as something equivalent to a modern **corporate merger**, when the heir of a prominent family marries the elder daughter of another prominent family and they agree to combine the bulk of their wealth. It also serves as an instrument to **regulate women's sexuality** in order to ensure that the wife would **produce a male descendant**, a scion, fathered by the heir. Each rich family could participate in only one such "corporate merger". For the rest of sons and daughters a wedding was still an important institution that allowed the family to allocate enough resources to guarantee them a good life and put them on a path towards further social upward mobility.

The institution of marriage therefore doesn't make any sense to the common people. They don't really have any wealth, they are more likely to be in debt than to sit on significant savings, therefore they don't have any need to arrange family mergers for their heirs and regulate their women's sexuality for the production of scions. In fact, it is quite common for poor women to be sex workers instead of concerning themselves with premarital virginity. This creates **a fantasy where it seems that both the propertied class and the dispossessed are using the same institution of marriage, because they describe it with the same words, when in fact those words mean the opposite for different classes**.

Marriage is not the only word that creates confusion. Let's look at the word bridewealth for example: in poor families the parents of the groom paid an amount of money to the parents of the bride as bridewealth. In contrast, for the rich, both families contributed to the wedding expenses and gifts. Often the bride kept part of the money for herself, not for his father, and used it as savings or business investments independently of her husband.

Keep in mind that this happened in a society that had already invented slavery, where people from conquered lands were traded as commodities in the market and also local girls and boys could be sold as slaves by their parents. Therefore parents had two choices for their daughters: they could marry them and obtain bridewealth from the marriage, or they could rent them for a while and then sell them as slaves. What impact did that have in the marriage market? The net result was, not surprisingly, that poor **women became commoditized, their worth was equivalent to the price of a slave, and that became the expected value of bridewealth**.

Some of this must have been an effect of slavery: while actual slaves were rarely numerous, the very existence of a class of people with no kin, who were simply commodities, did make a difference. In Nuzi, for instance, "the **brideprice** was paid in domestic animals

and silver amounting to a total value of 40 shekels of silver” —to which the author drily adds, “**there is some evidence that it was equal to the price of a slave girl.**” **This must have been making things uncomfortably obvious.** It’s in Nuzi, too, where we happen to have unusually detailed records, that we find examples of rich men paying cut-rate “brideprice” to impoverished families to acquire a daughter who they would then adopt, but who would in fact be either kept as a concubine or nursemaid, or married to one of their slaves.

Still, the really critical factor here was debt. [...] paying bridewealth is not the same as buying a wife. After all [...] if a man were really buying a woman, wouldn’t he also be able to sell her? [...] husbands were not able to sell their wives to some third party. At most, they could send them home and demand back their bridewealth. **A Mesopotamian husband couldn’t sell his wife [...]. Or, normally he couldn’t. Still, everything changed the moment he took out a loan.** Since if he did, it was perfectly legal—as we’ve seen—to use his wife and children as surety, and if he was unable to pay, they could then be taken away as debt pawns in exactly the same way that he could lose his slaves, sheep, and goats. What this also meant was that **honor and credit became, effectively, the same thing:** at least **for a poor man, one’s creditworthiness was precisely one’s command over one’s household,** and (the flip side, as it were) relations of domestic authority, relations that in principle meant ones of care and protection, became property rights that could indeed be bought and sold. Again, **for the poor, this meant that family members became commodities that could be rented or sold.** Not only could one dispose of daughters as “brides” to work in rich men’s households, tablets in Nuzi show that one could now hire out family members simply by taking out a loan [...]

One more ritual that was supposed to be the same for rich and poor was veiling women to protect their chastity. As we will see in the following sections though, in practice veiling was used to signal wealthy women as such, and it was forbidden to poor women, thus signaling them as prostitutes.

Finally, one key economic tool that worked differently for rich and poor was credit. Among rich people loans were given as favors, without interest, and often as gifts, without expectation to recover the money. However, between rich and poor loans carried compound interest and strict repayment schedules.

[...] members of the aristocracy, who might have fought endlessly over love, land, honor, and religion, but nonetheless still cooperated remarkably well with one another when it really mattered (most of all, when their position as aristocrats was threatened); just as the merchants and bankers, much as they competed with one another,

managed to close ranks when it really mattered. This is what I refer to as the **“communism of the rich,” and it is a powerful force in human history**

Later in this chapter, in the conclusions section, we will expand on how this double standard, this “communism of the rich” against the poor, has helped shape history. For now let’s just say that, from the perspective of the origins of patriarchy, there is plenty of evidence to assume that elite women who participated in the development and implementation of patriarchy for the poor would be convinced that it would never have any impact on women in their social class. After all, women like them would never be sold as slaves nor would have to resort to sexual or menial labor to make a living.

Construction of men’s honor to encourage domination over the household

This last passage from Graber, the association between men’s honor and creditworthiness, hints to another topic that deserves further explanation. Why would men participate in the patriarchy schema? **Popular narratives take it for granted that all men would enjoy becoming the masters of their little dominion, the kings of their household. Such an assumption is ridiculous.**

Being the patriarch of a household means being the manager of a small productive enterprise that is at the verge of bankruptcy and has all odds stacked against it. Is a very stressful proposition. It might sound attractive in bourgeois circles, where the culture is that every man owns his little shop, workshop, or some other trade, and incorporating their family members into the business means free labor. Outside that narrow culture though, most men aren’t that keen on having that kind of responsibility.

Indeed throughout history bourgeois leaders have observed with dismay many men’s tendency to "laziness", describing how, left on their own devices, they work as little as possible to barely survive plus have a little extra for booze and whores. And throughout history bourgeois leaders have been conspiring to coerce lazy drunk men to be "responsible", to take charge of an “irrational” and “defenseless” woman who obviously cannot take care of herself, and to give her children (which will enlarge the bourgeois’ armies). Analyses of patriarchy often identify that it depicts women as irrational and weak but they often fail to notice that it tends to depict men in similarly degrading terms, as irresponsible lazy drunkards: in the same way that women need a "good" man to protect and guide them, men also need a "good" woman to “settle down” and the State to protect and guide them.

Indeed one of the factors that makes it more difficult to analyze patriarchy is that its name implies that it is a system that benefits men. In reality though, patriarchy has typically assigned different roles to poor men and women, to distribute the role of being exploited for the benefit of the elites. Men have been

assigned more dangerous tasks such as war and mining, and as a result have had shorter lives with more health and addiction issues than women. Conversely, women have been assigned to more fulfilling domestic tasks, but have had less autonomy, or none at all, in the social sphere.

Graeber suggests the **social construction of honor as a key element to keep both women and men compliant with the patriarchal roles devised by the elites**. A woman's honor depended on her chastity before marriage and monogamy afterwards, and a man's honor depended on his successful command of the family's business, which given the harsh economic conditions imposed by the elites, required to make his family work like slaves. Which they were, if we set apart legal technicalities. The surviving documents from the time clearly show that in practice he could sell them when the business was not doing well, the same way he could invest in buying a slave to help out when business was thriving.

It is probably not a coincidence that the memes of domestic honor developed during a military regime. Typically honor is a very important concept for warriors. It means to be faithful to one leader, to not switch allegiances during a conflict, to be disciplined in the battlefield, to obey the orders of the commander even if they lead to death, to fight until the last breath, to not run away from battle, to put the collective above one's life. Patriarchy extended the concept of military honor to the household. Patriarchs had the role of commander in chief and every other member of the family was expected to obey them. Women were expected to be sexually faithful to their husbands in the same way soldiers are expected to be military faithful to their commanders.

As we saw at the beginning of this book series, socially constructed memes are a very useful tool to understand social dynamics. They work much better than simplistic explanations like "all men are evil", or convoluted ones that assign individual responsibility "a few men are evil, those are the rulers and their acolytes who are keeping the rest of men, good people, under leash to do their bidding". Socially constructed memes instead lead to an understanding of diffused responsibility, as all society participates in echoing and amplifying the oppressive memes, even if they are often created by the elites. Ironically, women are even more likely to amplify such oppressive memes than men, since they traditionally had better communication skills and infrastructure than men. Gossip for example, is usually seen as a predominantly female technology. They also were in charge of educating younger generations.

Probably the drivers for making the memes of honor stick among the poor were a combination of the desire to imitate the powerful and the legal imposition that men be the patriarch of the household. Probably the peasants looked up to the wealthy military and bourgeois families and wanted to emulate their lifestyle, their marriages, their honorable behavior, with the hope of attaining upward social mobility. They didn't have the consciousness, the understanding, that the rituals of marriage and honor turned out very different for those who didn't have wealth, and that rather to help them move upward socially they were much

more likely to push them into debt and end up enslaved as debt peons.

With the innovation of honor men and women eventually incorporated this concept both in their individual identities as well as their collective gender identities and collective identity as parents of a family. That must have made men feel compelled to marry, as that was expected from their gender, and both men and women to feel compelled to regulate the sexuality of their young daughters. Wealthy families only needed to worry about preventing the daughters to engage in sexual exploration. Poor families on top of that had to stress about keeping their finances healthy, to avoid being forced to put their daughters on the sex market. In case of desperation they would try to "marry" their daughters, even if at a discount bridewealth, to avoid selling them as slaves and thus save the family's honor.

Sex: from abundant and divine to scarce and stigmatized

Another significant contribution to the downfall of women was the stigmatization of sex. An interesting phenomena observed when different aspects of people's relationships become commoditized is that what used to be abundant, freely available and honorable to provide becomes scarce, costly, and providers are stigmatized.

Think for example of food and child care. In foraging societies everybody participates in collecting and preparing food on a voluntary basis and when they do they receive gratitude from their peers. In egalitarian agrarian villages kids are used to walking in at random to any house and villagers are expected to care for them and give them food.

Contrast that with what happens nowadays after food and childcare have become commoditized for decades. Those who work at serving tables, or cooking, unless they are doing a temporary job to pay for their university studies, or are chefs at high end restaurants, tend to be stigmatized as poor and uneducated. Similarly child care jobs are often done by women who can't access higher paying and higher status jobs because of either lack of education or lack of legal status where they reside.

The situation with sex work is similar and at the same time more extreme. Like food, sex was a device for socialization. It was abundant because most people tend to want to promote good relationships with others in the community, and therefore they would often indulge their peers who needed sexual relief. And, as with food or music, it could incorporate elements of refinement. In particular sex was associated with spirituality and spiritually with Goddesses. Priestesses held the highest social status and would perform ritual sex with temple sponsors. According to Graber there is no margin of doubt in this regard:

One thing the early texts do make clear is that all such women were considered extraordinarily important. In a very real sense, they were the ultimate embodiments of civilization. After

all, the entire machinery of the Sumerian economy ostensibly existed to support the temples, which were considered the households of the gods. As such, they represented the ultimate possible refinement in everything from music and dance to art, cuisine, and graciousness of living. Temple priestesses and spouses of the gods were the highest human incarnations of this perfect life.

It's also important to emphasize that **Sumerian men do not appear, at least in this earliest period, to have seen anything troubling about the idea of their sisters having sex for money. To the contrary**, insofar as prostitution did occur (and remember, it could not have been nearly so impersonal, cold-cash a relation in a credit economy), Sumerian religious texts identify it as among the fundamental features of human civilization, a gift given by the gods at the dawn of time. Procreative sex was considered natural (after all, animals did it). Non-procreative sex, sex for pleasure, was divine.

As consumer markets started developing, people who participated in them must have seen themselves less as part of a community and more as individuals. **Market trains people to think about their needs and interests as competing with others.** That must have helped erode the communal ethos of society. As that processes unfolded it helped to **change the perception of sex, from a collective resource to bind society together to a consumption good.**

At the same time elites started emphasizing virginity of unmarried women. The working classes often try to imitate the elites and seems very likely that as elites got obsessed with female virginity, poor women lost interest in participating in communal sex. As a result sex became scarce, and men started resorting to sexual workers, either slaves, freelancers or even temple workers. With the ascension of male gods, and the corresponding demotion of female gods, together with the popularization of a new concept of female honor tied to virginity, even the once prestigious female temple workers eventually came to be seen as lowly prostitutes. Most sex workers were poor women from indebted families who were forced into the trade to avoid being evicted. **Falling into debt was associated with guilt for having failed to honor a loan contract. A failure of being honorable. This contributed to the familiar association of sex with guilt and degradation.**

Remember this happened in a context where, technically, husbands were not legally allowed to sell their wives but, practically, it became a necessity to either sell them or employ them as sex workers. Gerda Lerner (as quoted by Graeber) explains the origins of prostitution like this:

Another source for commercial prostitution was the pauperization of farmers and their increasing dependence on loans in order to survive periods of famine, which led to debt slavery. Children of both sexes were given up for debt pledges or sold for "adoption." Out of such

practices, the prostitution of female family members for the benefit of the head of the family could readily develop. Women might end up as prostitutes because their parents had to sell them into slavery or because their impoverished husbands might so use them. Or they might become self-employed as a last alternative to enslavement. With luck, they might in this profession be upwardly mobile through becoming concubines.

By the middle of the second millennium B.C., prostitution was well established as a likely occupation for the daughters of the poor. As the sexual regulation of women of the propertied class became more firmly entrenched, the virginity of respectable daughters became a financial asset for the family. **Thus, commercial prostitution came to be seen as a social necessity for meeting the sexual needs of men.** What remained problematic was how to distinguish clearly and permanently between respectable and non-respectable women.

To the modern reader, Lerner's assumption that men need sexual relief, and the omission about the same need for women, might seem obvious. We are inhabiting the memes of patriarchy so deeply than even when we try to explain patriarchy itself we might forget that women tend to have even more sexual needs than men, as explained in the previous chapter. Therefore **it is not obvious that prostitution would evolve as likely occupation for women but not for men. What made this unnatural meme selection happen was the asymmetric construction of honor, which emphasized only female virginity and monogamy, but not men's. It is quite remarkable that society managed to believe that women didn't need as much sexual relief than men, despite all the evidence to the contrary.**

We have already seen how material scarcity of food and housing already appeared during the Uruk theocracy. **The first scarcity of a non-material asset, sex, appears later during the militaristic dynastic period.** This virtual scarcity is even more striking and possibly is the most impactful socially constructed scarcity. We are literally surrounded by people who could provide each other with sexual relief. There isn't any physical barrier like the empty housings that are locked or the abundant food sequestered by security guards at the supermarket, it is just purely, social behavior. The psychological impact of this construction deserves further research. The mental health cost is probably enormous. The irritability that creates in both women and men might be an important, or the most important, driver of wars and destruction of the ecosystem.

Patriarchal State to the rescue: legal protection of veiled women

Finally, let's look at one more key element of State Urban patriarchy: the legal protection of veiled women. **It is often a puzzle why some women seem to defend the Patriarchal State even more than men,** which as we have

just seen tend to need a bit of coercing to assume the responsibilities that patriarchy reserves for them. Veiling legislation will help us understand how **women perceived patriarchy, and the State, as a tool for their own protection**, and therefore embraced and promoted them.

During debt crises prostitution must have become so common that people would assume that any women wandering in the streets was a prostitute looking for sex. This must have been very inconvenient for women of higher status, doctors, merchants, scribes, and public officials, who were roaming around the cities in pursuit of very different business.

Graeber again:

As I have emphasized, historically, war, states, and markets all tend to feed on one another. Conquest leads to taxes. Taxes tend to be ways to create markets, which are convenient for soldiers and administrators. In the specific case of Mesopotamia, all of this took on a complicated relation to an explosion of debt that threatened to turn all human relations—and by extension, women's bodies—into potential commodities. At the same time, **it created a horrified reaction on the part of the (male) winners of the economic game, who over time felt forced to go to greater and greater lengths to make clear that *their* women could in no sense be bought or sold.** (emphasis added)

Note that while Graeber focuses on the role of debt, in the analysis presented here the root cause of the situation is considered to be the market. When simple markets evolve they tend to create markets for everything, including markets for money. The price of money is interest and that generates debt. Graeber goes to great lengths to describe markets without debt, but those don't seem stable. Also note what seems to be an oversight in this particular passage, of assimilating the winners of the patriarchal game with men. Elsewhere in the same book Graeber correctly identifies the winners as the privileged classes, where both men and women are governed by different social customs than those expected from the poor.

Going back to the point of veiling, we can see why when "the sexual regulation of women of the propertied class became more firmly entrenched" it led to the commoditization of the dispossessed women's bodies which "created a horrified reaction" on the part of the propertied class "who over time felt forced to go to greater and greater lengths to make clear that their women could in no sense be bought or sold" and therefore "what remained problematic was how to distinguish clearly and permanently between respectable and non-respectable women. In other worlds, rich people needed to figure out a way that when their "respectable" women walked down the streets they wouldn't be confused with normal women, available for sex in exchange for money. They wanted to avoid putting them in uncomfortable situations and to enable the social enforcement of their sexual regulation, to discourage them to seek non-commercial sexual encounters.

The solution to the problem was veiling respectable women and leaving unrespectable women exposed so that prospective customers could assess the merchandise.

This is how Graber, building on Lerner, explains it in terms of spheres of life, as anthropologists often like to do.

This last point is crucial. The most dramatic known attempt to solve the problem, Lerner observes, can be found in a Middle Assyrian law code dating from somewhere between 1400 and 1100bc, which is also the first known reference to veiling in the history of the Middle East —and also, Lerner emphasizes, **first to make the policing of social boundaries the responsibility of the state**. It is not surprising that this takes place under the authority of perhaps the most notoriously militaristic state in the entire ancient Middle East.

The code carefully distinguishes among five classes of women. Respectable women (either married ladies or concubines), widows, and daughters of free Assyrian men —“must veil themselves” when they go out on the street. Prostitutes and slaves (and prostitutes are now considered to include unmarried temple servants as well as simple harlots) are not allowed to wear veils. **The remarkable thing about the laws is that the punishments specified in the code are not directed at respectable women who do not wear veils, but against prostitutes and slaves who do**. The prostitute was to be publicly beaten fifty times with staves and have pitch poured on her head; the slave girl was to have her ears cut off. Free men proven to have knowingly abetted an impostor would also be thrashed and put to a month’s forced labor.

Presumably in the case of respectable women, the law was assumed to be self-enforcing: as what respectable woman would wish to go out on the street in the guise of a prostitute?

When we refer to “respectable” women, then, we are referring to those whose bodies could not, under any conditions, be bought or sold. Their physical persons were hidden away and permanently relegated to some man’s domestic sphere; when they appeared in public veiled, they were effectively still ostentatiously walking around, even in public, inside such a sphere. **Women who could be exchanged for money, on the other hand, must be instantly recognizable as such.**

The Assyrian law code is one isolated instance; veils certainly did not become obligatory everywhere after 1300 bc. But it provides a window on developments that were happening, however unevenly, even spasmodically, across the region, propelled by the intersection of commerce, class, defiant assertions of male honor, and the constant

threat of the defection of the poor. **States seem to have played a complex dual role, simultaneously fostering commoditization and intervening to ameliorate its effects: enforcing the laws of debt and rights of fathers, and offering periodic amnesties.** But the dynamic also led, over the course of millennia, to a systematic demotion of sexuality itself from a divine gift and embodiment of civilized refinement to one of its more familiar associations: with degradation, corruption, and guilt.

The complex role that the State played means that the objectification of most women was not achieved via direct command but instead through emerging properties of a socio-economic system. Women enslaved through conquest were reduced to objects by sheer force: a superior army conquered their land, killed the men and enslaved the women. The chain of causality is clear. Most of those women accepted it as a fact of life that they were slaves because they were inferior, as proven by the fact that they had been conquered. Still, they constituted a minority of the population: it would seem unwise to have a population where the majority of people are slaves, it would be too risky, they could change their mind about being inferior and revolt.

Codification and enforcement of veiling rules became a key part of the socio-economic system that resulted in the commodification of women. **Theoretically veiling was offered to women of all the socioeconomic classes,** not only to the propertied classes. Just like marriage, which was theoretically an institution for all social classes, it had opposite effects depending on the family's wealth. **It is easy to imagine how in good times peasant women would defend the institution of veiling, their right of covering themselves, and the power of the State to enforce the prohibition of veiling among prostitutes. Logically, they would want to enjoy the same privileges as the rich women,** to be able to wander around the streets without being confused with prostitutes. We can also imagine that in bad times they were forced to resort to prostituting themselves and would lose the right of veiling, but by then they would have already embodied the institution of veiling and the values of chastity. As a result instead of revolting against the patriarchal State they would more likely be consumed by guilt and shame.

This dynamic has its limits though. Market economies create a feedback loop that results in rich people becoming richer and poor people becoming poorer. Left on its own the market tends to make all peasants into slaves. This is problematic because **people need to grow up believing that they are free in order to embody the values and institutions that will make them slaves once they fall into debt.** This is why the state intervened periodically issuing amnesties, to try to prevent the peasants from revolting.

Since the very beginning we can see this disconnect with what the law states and what the data shows. **The law said that all honorable women were entitled** to the privilege of veiling and the corresponding protection of the State. **But the data shows** that virtually only the ones from the propertied classes

enjoyed those privileges. **We can see the same disconnect nowadays. Many movements and organizations that work on social or environmental issues have a certain fetishism for the written law and a corresponding disdain for data-driven results.** They insist that is very important to pass laws that state that gender discrimination is illegal, that housing is a right, or that renewable energies are favored over fossil fuels. And yet, even when those laws are passed, the dynamics of exploitation of women, evictions of vulnerable families and climate change keep ongoing. The State of Law has a tendency of benefiting those who can pay good lawyers and harm those who can't. This obsession for passing laws and tendency to ignore how ineffective those laws are no doubt contribute to the growing disaffection for the western "democratic" institutions.

Another pattern that persists to our days is the tendency of **governments to present themselves as the solution of the problems they created, and then making people dependent on their solutions,** because they forget that the same governments are actually the ones creating the problem. During the Dynastic period in Sumer people became dependent on the State's enforcement of veiling rules to protect honorable women from being treated like prostitutes. But people had forgotten that prostitution was created by the State with the institutionalization of a consumer economy and the enforcement of debt payments through debt peonage. Nowadays people are dependent on the State to protect them from patriarchy through restraining orders against potential aggressors, to protect them against the housing market with social housing or subsidies, etc. and they forget that patriarchy and housing scarcity are created by the market that is promoted by the same State!

How the State failed at protecting even wealthy women

We have seen how women played a very active role in the upper classes when those invented patriarchy. We have also seen how it was designed to be deployed to the poor and spare the rich: peasants were forced to organize around patriarchs who would be legally obliged to prostitute the same women who they were morally expected to protect, while rich women were entitled to have private property and conduct businesses independently of their husbands. We have even seen that when the schema became so successful that prostitution became a likely occupation for the poor, the government stepped in to protect wealthy women with the enforcement of veiling privileges, so that they wouldn't be confused with unhonorable sex workers.

Given all this effort devoted to protecting the autonomy of the women in the propertied classes one would expect the schema to succeed. **The logical outcome would seem a society in which the poor are segregated in their occupations by gender, but the wealthy are not. And yet, that didn't happen: the wealthy also got segregated by gender,** and in the span of just about a thousand years, women disappeared from the public spheres.

How could that happen? We don't have detailed contemporary accounts, but we can make some educated hypotheses, about influencing factors:

1. **Patriarchal pressure from the top military commanders:** during the > dynastic period the rulers shifted from religious leaders to > military leaders who were almost exclusively men. Their dynasties > were patrilineal. Their new gods were male and were rewriting the > myths of the female gods as less powerful, and submissive to the > new male gods [Öcalan] Their families and myths must have > contributed to the construction of gender roles in the propertied > classes.
2. **Patriarchal pressure from below:** as the patriarchy that the > elites themselves had devised for the commoners became more > established, their gender social constructions must have permeated > upwards as well. Even though social constructions usually travel > better from top to bottom than the other way around, the commoners > were the immense majority, and some of their memes must have > permeated. Also a few must have got lucky and moved upwards > socially, and they might have brought with them their gender > constructions.
3. **Submission into sexual regulation.** Wealthy parents must have > thought that the sexual regulation of their daughters wouldn't > have any impact on their future finances since legally rich women > didn't have restrictions in that area. However, as gender > scholars point out, when young girls are socially conditioned to > avoid risks, to be submissive and obedient instead of explorers, > as adults they have less tendency for cultivating an > entrepreneurial mindset and starting their own businesses. The > sexual regulation of young girls forbid them from sexual > exploration, and no doubt, by extension, conditioned them to avoid > exploration and adventures in general, including commercial ones. > It is not surprising therefore that would grow up being submissive > to men not only in the sexual sphere but also in the public > economic and political spheres as well.

It is worth noting though that just because women disappeared from the public economic and political spheres doesn't mean that they stopped participating in the economy and politics. Both business and politics are, above all, about social relationships, about making deals with other families which are in a similar socioeconomic status and that trust each other. Many women chose to play a role in the social sphere, acting as matchmakers for family unions and commercial enterprises alike. **Even though their roles haven been written in history, women's contributions must have been crucial in determining the fate of wealthy families and by extension the fate of whole nations.**

Pastoral patriarchy against the cosmopolitan market

One final point to address about the origins of patriarchy is how it impacted even the most remote, rural, pastoralist communities, living at the fringes of the

empire, which were constituted by rebels who had escaped from the metropolis.

We have seen how the culture in the city, and surrounding farmlands, evolved during centuries **until two conflicting social constructions promoted by the propertied classes had become established among the peasants**: on one hand, men were expected to lead a household and treat the women in that household as financial assets to be sold or rented for sexual services and domestic work; on the other hand, honorable women were supposed to adhere to a strict sexual code of pre-marital virginity and marital monogamy, and honorable men were supposed to assure the honorability of women in their household. When things got out of balance and so many people fell into debt peonage that there weren't enough free men able to pay the rent, kings and emperors would step in, declare a debt amnesty, restore slaves to their families, and reboot the whole process.

This two conflicting constructions probably seemed to work beautifully for the propertied classes: it kept a good balance for them of people paying their rent and enough women falling into debt peonage or similarly working at subsistence wages as sex workers or household service. At the same time it reinforced their authority: it was just **the natural order of things that those who are honorable would rule over those who are not**. For all practical matters they had achieved to turn women from poor families to objects at the service of the rich families. As highlighted before this was nakedly exposed in the Sumerian word “ur” which meant benefit and slave woman at the same time.

However, they might have missed the point that the **peasants also had feelings, and being treated simultaneously as equals and as inferior deeply outraged them**. The premise of trade is that transactions are done freely between consenting equals. The inevitable outcome, by the magic of compound interest, is that the propertied classes take everything and the peasants lose everything. Also feeling forced to enter into a predatory deal with a loan shark must have made it obvious to many peasants that their consent was a farce.

When the ancients thought about money [...] what was likely to come to mind was [...], above all, **the tension between the need for money to create families, to acquire a bride so as to have children, and use of that same money to destroy families—to create debts that lead to the same wife and children being taken away**. “Some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them.”

One can only imagine what those words meant, emotionally, to a father in a patriarchal society in which a man's ability to protect the honor of his family was everything. Yet this is what money meant to the majority of people for most of human history: the terrifying prospect of one's sons and daughters being carried out to the homes of repulsive strangers to clean their pots and provide the occasional sexual services, to be subject to every conceivable

form of violence and abuse, possibly for years, conceivably forever, as their parents waited, helpless, avoiding eye contact with their neighbors, who knew exactly what was happening to those they were supposed to have been able to protect. Clearly this was the worst thing that could happen to anyone [...]. **And that's just from the perspective of the father. One can only imagine how it might have felt to be the daughter.** Yet, over the course of human history, untold millions of daughters have known (and in fact many still know) exactly what it's like.

One might object that this was just assumed to be in the nature of things: like the imposition of tribute on conquered populations, it might have been resented, but it wasn't considered a moral issue, a matter of right and wrong. Some things just happen. This has been the most common attitude of peasants to such phenomena throughout human history. What's striking about the historical record is that in the case of debt crises, **this was not how many reacted. Many actually did become indignant. So many, in fact, that most of our contemporary language of social justice,** our way of speaking of human bondage and emancipation, **continues to echo ancient arguments about debt.**

It's particularly striking because so many other things do seem to have been accepted as simply in the nature of things. **One does not see a similar outcry against caste systems, for example, or for that matter, the institution of slavery.** Surely slaves and untouchables often experienced at least equal horrors. No doubt many protested their condition. Why was it that the debtors' protests seemed to carry such greater moral weight? Why were debtors so much more effective in winning the ear of priests, prophets, officials, and social reformers? Why was it that officials like Nehemiah were willing to give such sympathetic consideration to their complaints, to inveigh, to summon great assemblies?

Some have suggested practical reasons: debt crises destroyed the free peasantry, and it was free peasants who were drafted into ancient armies to fight in wars. No doubt this was a factor; clearly it wasn't the only one. There is no reason to believe that Nehemiah, for instance, in his anger at the usurers, was primarily concerned with his ability to levy troops for the Persian king. It is something more fundamental. **What makes debt different is that it is premised on an assumption of equality. To be a slave, or lower-caste, is to be intrinsically inferior.** We are dealing with relations of unadulterated hierarchy. In the case of debt, we are dealing with two individuals who begin as equal parties to a contract. Legally, at least as far as the contract is

concerned, they are the same.

We can add that, in the ancient world, when people who actually were more or less social equals loaned money to one another, the terms appear to have normally been quite generous. Often no interest was charged, or if it was, it was very low. “And don’t charge me interest,” wrote one wealthy Canaanite to another, in a tablet dated around 1200 bc, “after all, we are both gentlemen.” **Between close kin, many “loans” were probably, then as now, just gifts that no one seriously expected to recover. Loans between rich and poor were something else again. The problem was that, unlike status distinctions like caste or slavery, the line between rich and poor was never precisely drawn.**

One can imagine the reaction of a farmer who went up to the house of a wealthy cousin, on the assumption that “humans help each other,” and ended up, a year or two later, watching his vineyard seized and his sons and daughters led away. Such behavior could be justified, in legal terms, by insisting that the loan was not a form of mutual aid but a commercial relationship—a contract is a contract. (It also required a certain reliable access to superior force.) But it could only have **felt like a terrible betrayal**. What’s more, **framing it as a breach of contract meant stating that this was, in fact, a moral issue: these two parties ought to be equals, but one had failed to honor the bargain**. Psychologically, **this can only have made the indignity of the debtor’s condition all the more painful, since it made it possible to say that it was his own turpitude that sealed his daughter’s fate**. But that just made the motive all the more compelling to throw back the moral aspersions: “Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children.” We are all the same people. We have a responsibility to take account of one another’s needs and interests. How then could my brother do this to me?

In the Old Testament case, debtors were able to marshal a particularly powerful moral argument—as the authors of Deuteronomy constantly reminded their readers, were not the Jews all slaves in Egypt, and had they not all been redeemed by God? Was it right, when they had all been given this promised land to share, for some to take that land away from others? Was it right for a population of liberated slaves to go about enslaving one another’s children? But analogous arguments were being made in similar situations almost everywhere in the ancient world: in Athens, in Rome, and for that matter, in China—where legend had it that coinage itself was first invented by an ancient emperor to redeem the children of families who had been forced to sell them after a series of devastating floods.

Through most of history, when overt political conflict between classes

did appear, it took the form of pleas for debt cancellation— the freeing of those in bondage, and usually, a more just reallocation of the land. What we see, in the Bible and other religious traditions, are traces of the moral arguments by which such claims were justified, usually subject to all sorts of imaginative twists and turns, **but inevitably, to some degree, incorporating the language of the marketplace itself.**

On top of that, remember that in the city it was common that the family of the groom would pay bridewealth to the family of the bride in an amount that was equivalent to the price of a slave girl. So, even in situations where families didn't have to formally rent or sell their daughters into slavery, they must have been conscious that they were participating in a charade that was trying, not very successfully, to hide that women in the city were legally objects to be traded. That must have made everybody indignant as well.

That outrage produced a tradition of pastoralist exodus to the steppes at the fringes of the Empire. **What is surprising is that the exodus didn't take a feminist twist**, or a renewed embracement of the foraging cultures where women had been at the center of society. On the contrary, the rebels seemed to be even more patriarchal than the cities.

Graeber presents the surprising hypothesis that **pastoral patriarchy arose as a social mechanism to protect (poor) women from the market**, i.e. from wealthy families who wanted them to clean their pots and provide sexual services to men in the household and their guests. **It might sound controversial, even ridiculous or outrageous to list patriarchy as a tool for women's liberation.** Remember though, **a failed tool** for liberation. All historical attempts at liberation have not only failed but also tend to make things worse.

“Patriarchy” originated, first and foremost, in a rejection of the great urban civilizations in the name of a kind of purity, a reassertion of paternal control against great cities like Uruk, Lagash, and Babylon, seen as places of bureaucrats, traders, and whores. The pastoral fringes, the deserts and steppes away from the river valleys, were the places to which displaced, indebted farmers fled. Resistance, in the ancient Middle East, was always less a politics of rebellion than a politics of exodus, of melting away with one's flocks and families —often before both were taken away.

There were always tribal peoples living on the fringes. During good times, they began to take to the cities; in hard times, their numbers swelled with refugees —farmers who effectively became Enkidu once again. Then, periodically, they would create their own alliances and sweep back into the cities once again as conquerors. It's difficult to say precisely how they imagined their situation, because it's only in the Old

Testament, written on the other side of the Fertile Crescent, that one has any record of the pastoral rebels' points of view. But nothing there mitigates against the suggestion that the extraordinary emphasis we find there on **the absolute authority of fathers, and the jealous protection of their fickle womenfolk, were made possible by, but at the same time a protest against, this very commoditization of people in the cities that they fled.**

The world's Holy Books—the Old and New Testaments, the Koran, religious literature from the Middle Ages to this day—echo this voice of rebellion, **combining contempt for the corrupt urban life, suspicion of the merchant, and often, intense misogyny.** One need only think of the image of Babylon itself, which has become permanently lodged in the collective imagination as not only the cradle of civilization, but also the Place of Whores. Herodotus echoed popular Greek fantasies when he claimed that every Babylonian maiden was obliged to prostitute herself at the temple, so as to raise the money for her dowry.

[...] Patriarchy as we know it seems to have taken shape in a seesawing battle between the newfound elites and newly dispossessed.

The modern reader might think that the concept of maidens at the cradle of civilization prostituting themselves at the temple to raise money for their own dowry is just a literary instrument, a Greek device to express their contempt for competing Babilon. Later in this chapter we discuss how anthropologist Jean-Claude Galey encountered a similar practice in the Himalayas. If that was common and accepted as a fact of life in the 1970s, it doesn't seem so far-fetched that the Greek description of Babylon might have been quite literal.

In summary: **we have historical sources that indicate that pastoral patriarchy was an instrument that families, led by men, used to protect their womenfolk from the market.** Such stories cannot be dismissed as just men wanting to dominate women and then making up an excuse to justify it, because men tend to have strong bonds with women and women tend to have the most influential role in transmitting culture, and therefore, it is almost certain that for an idea to flourish it needs women's buy-in. Women must also have thought that patriarchy was the best way to protect their families from the degradation of the city.

Two questions arise from this theory: **how could a rebel society devoted to protecting women from being objectified be patriarchal, and how, on top of that, could it be misogynous?** This is a topic that deserves further research. Meanwhile, let's look at plausible explanations.

The combination of accepting the premises of the wealthy people and becoming indignant at their consequences must have led to the rural patriarchy and misogyny in pastoralist communities. The power of social constructions is so

strong that it is very difficult for people inhabiting them to see them as such, to realize that those are just ideas, and that could be changed. After centuries of inhabiting them it must have felt obvious and natural that men were leaders and women followers, that men were responsible for the honor of the family, and that the family's honor was predicated on the premarital virginity and marital monogamy of their daughters.

Therefore they conceived their struggle to protect their womenfolk from the market, from the degradation of the city, from a patriarchal framework. They probably tried to emulate the leaders of their society. They saw that wealthy men managed to protect the honor of their families and the virginity of their daughters. They wanted to protect their own families in the same way and they knew that they had no chance to do that in the city, because eventually the State would come to kidnap their daughters and put them into sexual slavery. Because the social framework built on heterosexual couples led by men seemed to work well for the wealthy, the poor thought it should also work well for them, if they could just get away from the city. They didn't notice that that framework was a charade which was built upon the availability of cheap slave domestic and sexual labor from poor women.

We can find a clue from the origins of misogyny in pastoral societies at "Sex at Dawn". As we have seen in the previous chapter, women evolved to be free and promiscuous, not to be obedient, celibate or monogamous. This discrepancy between human nature and social construction must have been an important factor in the emergence of misogyny. For parents, when their boys got into trouble, they had a fight at the pub, and somebody got hurt or killed, that must have been inconvenient to deal with. However, boys are boys, and that's something to be expected. For boys there wasn't a big discrepancy between social construction and natural behavior. On the other hand **it must have been really frustrating for parents to see that their daughters refused to just be girls, and preoccupy themselves with female modesty.** The daughters tendency to speak out and have sexual encounters with men other than the one the family had arranged must have been exasperating for parents. Surely grandmothers shared tips with mothers on how to keep their young daughters out of trouble for the family. **To this day many parents subject their daughters to curfews and other restrictions that don't apply to their brothers.**

Cities make it very difficult for families to police their daughters' honor. There are too many anonymous people that might tempt and conspire with them. And also there are rents to be paid that inevitably end up with having to put daughters into sex work. This must have been obvious to many people, and those who could, escaped from the city and became rebels at the fringes. Living in a smaller nomadic community without rents to pay made it easier to maintain the family's honor.

Ryan and Jethá mention that for some apes scarcity of sex makes males stressed and irritable, which can lead to violence. Also that human societies where

women have greater influence tend to develop cultures where men have access to abundance of sex, and also tend to be more peaceful. Clearly the elite's effort to impose monogamy and chastity led to a situation of scarcity of sex for men as well. What used to be abundant and offered freely became a commodity to be paid for. Things that need paying become scarce and inaccessible to the poor. Therefore it might have happened that poor men, frustrated, not only by the new scarcity of sex, but also at their arduous and exhausting lives, failed to direct their anger to the elites who created the scarcity, poverty and toil, and instead they misguidedly directed them at the very same women who they were keeping away from other men (or at the women that other men were keeping away from them). This would explain why misogyny seems to be more of a feature of the pastoralist societies than of the cosmopolitan ones. The pastoralists actually managed to protect their women from sexual exploitation, and therefore men suffered scarcity of sex as well. In the cities, on the other hand, there was an abundance of cheap sex and probably even not so wealthy men could afford some. It could be argued that this trend is still alive which would help explain the relatively high instances of "masclit violence". Specially among the "uneducated", compared with the elites, who tend to enjoy abundance of commercial sex and other indulgences.

We have some records of the voices of the patriarchs in those nomadic communities. We read about their obsession with protecting their womenfolk and their contempt for the city. Those text are often interpreted as them being more "conserveative" than people in the city who were more "cosmopolitan" and as men having absolute control over women. In fact, those patriarchal values came from the city and contaminated the pastoralists, not the other way around! Their voices were expressed by the patriarchs because that was part of their role, to be the public voice of the family, or the clan. But the human mind is a collective phenomena, it is not possible that what they expressed was their own singular opinion. The desire for a patriarchal community must have been something shared by the majority, men and women. If there was any dissent it was more likely generational than gender-based. It has been reflected in the fictional literature countless times, stories of mischievous young women and men who bend or break the rules. Often to grow up to responsible adults who will enforce those same rules.

In summary, the State created and institutionalized urban patriarchy to submit the peasants to the propertied class. Poor men were forced to treat the women in their families as objects and rent or trade them for sex and housework. At the same time the government protected the women of the propertied class. It gave them the privilege to wear veils, which symbolized that they were humans, not objects. As humans they were allowed to own property, trade it, and have their own businesses. Peasant women were treated by the State as objects and as such didn't enjoy any of those rights.

With the passage of centuries rural communities rebelled against the objectification of women. They fled to the margins of the empire where they could live

non-commercial lives. They jealousy guarded their young daughters to prevent them to go to the cities where they knew they would become sexual merchandise. And married them to more equitable marriages, where both families could contribute to the couple's wealth and ensure that the bride and their daughters would not be traded as slaves. From a contemporary perspective **it might seem that restricting the mobility of young women and arranging marriages for them is a horrible patriarchal thing to do. However we must understand that they were doing their best, and were actually accomplishing, protecting young women from a worst fate** they would surely face in the cities.

Note though, that understanding their reasoning and admitting that they actually successfully achieved their goals doesn't mean that their strategy was correct. Of course it would have been better if they had realized that not only the market, but also the patriarchal structure, was problematic. That restricting women's autonomy led to generalized frustration for both women and men, and the emergence of misogyny which made their relationships less fulfilling. We can see that now with the benefit of hindsight but it would be an anachronism to judge them from an insight that they didn't have.

Timeline of Mesopotamia after Sumer (1940 BC - 800 BC)

After the fall of Sumer, other cultures take center stage in Mesopotamia. Mainly Babylon and Assyria. They signify a continuity without much novelties with respect to the Sumerian civilization: commodification of human relations, stateification of society, slavery, usury, periodic debt crises with corresponding amnesties, etc.

Babylon was a city of Semitic origin located a little higher up the Euphrates than the great Sumerian cities Uruk, Eridu, Ur and Lagash. Öcalan considers it the apogee of Sumerian civilization, the "Paris of the Middle East" where for the first time citizens enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Graeber highlights that it has been etched in the collective imagination as a symbol of urban corruption and depravity, which is how it is portrayed in the Bible.

Assyria reached even higher rates of violence and terror. It was one of the few isolated cases of ancient **proto-nationalism, invented the forced displacement of entire cultures and the genocide.**

Pioneering civilizations in Africa, Asia and America

Egypt (2650 BC - 716 BC)

Egypt appeared later than the Sumerian civilization. Although it was an isolated and self-contained civilization, its resemblance to the Sumerian civilization suggests that it was, in some way, inspired by it.

The two most prominent differences are the absence of interest and a higher

centralization. **Egypt is the closest thing in antiquity to Socialism or "state communism"**. As there was no interest, there were no debt crises and society was more stable. The government established complex mechanisms for taxation and redistribution of wealth, and currency also emerged as an accounting tool, initially the reference was grain, and later copper and silver. The market developed much less.

Another difference with Sumer is that the dynastic rulers appeared first, in the ancient empire, from 3000-2500 BC, the time of the pyramids. Later, the Middle Kingdom, stands out for the construction of temples, and therefore, for the strength of the priests. Beginning in the 1800s, the New Kingdom, power shifts back to the military dynasties, priests take a back seat, and commerce expands.

There was also forced labor in Egypt. Slavery existed, most famously we know about the Jewish population being captive. However, consistent with the redistributive, socialist, nature of the Egyptian state, it seems that slavery was less prominent than in Sumer, and mandatory labor in public works was favored instead. At the periods when farmers didn't have much work, the time between sowing and harvesting, many men were drafted to work in public constructions. The famous pyramids might have been built like that, as well as many temples, irrigation and grain storage facilities. Since the market was so little developed it makes sense that the State taxed its citizens directly with their labor, which for the poor was their main asset. It seems that citizens might have even been paid to participate in those mandatory works.

Some enduring memes that emerged in ancient Egypt are the concept that salvation is in another world and the hell-paradise duality.

It is only in the last few centuries that interest rates appear, the market develops more and debt crises begin to appear.

China (2200 BC - 771 BC)

We know very little of Early China, and the little we do know is from secondary sources, interpretations of later texts.

It seems that, as in Mesopotamia, credit instruments were developed before writing. Instead of clay figures and balls, rows of knots in ropes were used, and later notched strips of wood or bamboo.

It also appears that to mitigate the effects of poor harvests the rulers instituted the custom of keeping 30 percent of the harvest in public granaries. That is, the same accounting practices that in Mesopotamia led to the creation of (virtual) money.

However, it appears that governance was much less bureaucratic and not centralized, as there were no equivalents to Sumerian temples or palaces with officials managing the warehouses, and a unified accounting system was not developed.

There is evidence of loans with interest and a debt crisis, but it is uncertain when these practices began.

India

We know practically nothing about India as its texts are still undeciphered. Öcalan considers that the Indian civilization, like the European one, was an export of the Aryan (peasant) culture that originated in Mesopotamia. He claims that historians have misinterpreted the migration flows of the indo-european culture, that this cultural cluster, and the aryan ethnicity, didn't originate in India, but in the middle east instead.

America

Until recently there was not much known about the great American empires of antiquity. The Aztecs, Maya and Incas. Luckily it seems that recently new archeological information is surfacing. It would be interesting if somebody would analyze the new data from the perspective of the emergence of the market-state system and compare with what we know from Mesopotamia, European and Asian civilizations.

What made domination possible?

Memes of domination of nature, ownership, and energy surplus

Here we conclude the chronology of ancient civilizations. Now **let's look deeper at the central theme of interest from this period: the emergence and consolidation of domination mechanisms**. Let's start with the foundations. What could have made domination possible, after tens of thousands of years of Sapiens building social constructions aimed, more or less explicitly, at ensuring horizontality and equity?

Peter Gray points to cognitive factors: the practices of control and domination of nature, the cultivation of plants, the training of animals ... made it possible to think that these methods could also be applied to people. In fact, we often refer to childcare with agricultural and livestock metaphors such as raising and educating children (just as we do with animals). In religion these types of metaphors are also used, referring to people as a flock and a god as a shepherd.

Domination over nature made it possible to think about land as private property, which wouldn't have made sense in previous cultures, with holistic identities where humans saw themselves as just one tiny part of the greater schema of nature and the universe. Furthermore a sedentary lifestyle made land ownership practical and this allowed those who did not have property to depend on those who did.

The fact that agriculture was more efficient, in terms of the amount of energy extracted in the form of food for people and animals per unit of land, meant that

there was much more **surplus of resources that could be used to maintain an apparatus of domination** (bureaucrats, military, priests, politicians, etc.). Fernández and González quantify this increase in available energy. While foraging societies had up to 180W per person (100 humans + 50-80 contributed by fire), agricultural societies had about 300 W. That is, approximately 50% surplus compared to the previous stage, which as we saw , already enjoyed opulence.

This quantitative data helps us empathize with the **temptation of a sedentary lifestyle: adopt a technology that allows you to cut your work in half!** Although, as we saw in the previous stage, **the result was exactly the opposite:** more work to compensate for pests, looting, and the emergence of urbanites who didn't participate in food production. Poor quality of life due to animal-borne diseases, poorer diet, and harder jobs.

We can also use the same quantitative data as a baseline for thinking about the possible roles of ecovillages in a transition strategy. More on that later.

Men's individual identity

Going back to what enabled domination to appear, the same authors point out as a key factor the appearance of individual identity in men. The following fragment by Fernández and González refers to the period of about 4,000 years after the consolidation of agriculture when, organized still in communal societies, there were people in charge of specialized individual tasks such as trading between communities.

[...] a series of circumstances that made possible the emergence of an individual identity in men, which would later be the basis for relationships of domination.

On the one hand, trade increased and, with it, male mobility. We have already pointed out that in the foraging stage and the first agriculture, men, in general, took on tasks that implied more mobility and risk. The greater the mobility of a person, the more his universe expands and the more decision-making capacity he has to develop to adapt to it. These factors were generating in some men a feeling of less dependence on the collective, while building an image of the self independent from the "us". Furthermore, as society became more complex, more specialized, more men had more specific jobs that gave them a sense of control. And this was joined by a distancing from nature. Thus, some men gradually developed an individual identity [...]. This identity was replacing the relational one. They went from "interdependent egos" to "independent egos." [...]

Why is an individual identity necessary to transition to societies based on domination? i) Conceiving greater individuality implies being able to understand the others as potential enemies: just as a person knows that he saved for himself emotions and strategies,

he also conceives that others do the same. ii) A reduced connection with nature also increases the feeling of insecurity, which can be answered by controlling it. iii) An emotional distance from what is mastered is needed, a decrease in compassion (shared passion), in order to lock in a relationship of domination 3. iv) Control over the others also requires knowing what your desires and needs are and placing them above others' (egotism). Power over nature was associated with power over people from the beginning and probably the conception of one fed back the other.

Domination as a Service: What made domination desirable?

It's quite common to encounter simplistic narratives that consider domination as an absolute universal evil and autonomy as the ultimate good. Often liberal, anarchist and feminist sources alike focus on "fighting" domination, with the assumed self-evident truth that people will welcome the overthrow of their rules and embrace freedom with joy.

However, in reality, it seems like most people desire being dominated to some degree.

Or, in economics parlance, most people find utility in domination, and therefore they are willing to voluntarily pay taxes for it. Even if their stated preferences are that they want freedom, their revealed preferences indicate otherwise: when despotic regimes are overthrown, people tend to gravitate towards, seek and welcome equally despotic ones. Looking at the period when domination first appeared, **when people had viable choices between domination and autonomy, and choose the former, helps us understand what is the perceived value that the "service" of domination provides to the people that choose it.**

At later times it is more difficult to identify because of the effects of inertia, and also, because once domination is established it tends to use violence to reinforce itself. Opponents are often brutally eliminated. However, **in the beginning, domination was implemented without violence towards the citizens that adopted, voluntarily, the hierarchical structures.** Violence was reserved for "the others" that would be conquered, submitted to tribute, or enslaved.

Agricultural surplus societies existed for 4,000 years before the first mechanisms of domination appeared. To sustain structures of domination it is necessary that a significant part of the population supports them.

Fernández and González point to the 1000-year drought that began in 3,800 BC as a trigger for crises that could have led some populations to delegate leadership to men with individual identities who opted for new solutions such as looting and confrontations, instead of the traditional ones, cooperation and migration.

However, in Mesopotamia, the place where we have more information about

the origins of a civilization, it seems that it appeared in a more egalitarian and peaceful environment. Öcalan offers a compelling hypothesis. He notes that the population in the north, near the Tell Halaf area, progressively migrated southward, increasingly finding a climate with less rainfall which made irrigation systems necessary to make agriculture viable. **It was the need for coordination of these irrigation systems that allowed the appearance of the temple / ziggurat, the seed of the Sumerian civilization.**

What normalized and reinforced domination?

Confounding representation power with coordination and delegation

In summary, different authors hypothesize that **the value that the service of domination provides is delegation of coordination**, either for fighting and stealing from others or organizing productive enterprises. **There is a subtle line between delegation and representation, one that anarchists are keen to paint thick and red.** In a delegation system decisions about goals and strategies are taken by individuals and the delegates are in charge of the implementation and only take technical decisions. In contrast, in a representation system representatives take mission and strategic decisions themselves on behalf of their constituency. Those decisions are not always popular among those who are supposedly “represented”, indeed, they tend to benefit the “representatives” to the detriment of the “represented”. That’s why, to this day, many “representative” “democracies” are so opaque about their actions.

If those hypotheses are true, in a historical context lacking the collective consciousness of that subtle line, then it seems quite feasible that with the passage of time some of that temporary delegation would become permanent representation, and that established customs would become entitlements passed from generation to generation. Such generational entitlement would make leaders proclaim themselves kings and gods to reinforce the arrangement. In other words, **it is quite easy to imagine how voluntary hierarchical organization mutates into more permanent coercive domination.**

Once that happens it is easy to forget that **“delegation as a service” can provide the same value as “domination as a service” at much cheaper cost.** Voluntary delegation doesn’t require the maintenance of luxurious palaces, extravagant mausoleums, and massive police forces and armies with state-of-the-art weaponry. **It is easy to assume that the only viable option to acquire coordination is through domination and embrace that paradigm.**

While the overhead from the rulers’ lavish lifestyles, policing and other coercion instruments should be self-evident, the overhead of armies might not seem so. After all, don’t we need to invest in protection from other groups even if the governance is non-coercive? Not necessarily. Heavy investment in the military might signal to others that we are a threat and prompt them to increase their own military spending, which can trigger a feedback loop that doesn’t benefit any group. Conversely, investing in improving the population’s lifestyle is likely

to attract people from neighboring communities to ours, therefore depleting their ruler's resources for military buildup, as well as increasing social ties which makes collaboration easier and war more difficult.

Harari observes that **a pattern which is repeated throughout History is the lack of ability to foresee the collateral effects of collective decisions.** In this way, decisions are made that in the short term seem favorable but in the long run worsen the quality of life of the population. In the previous stage we saw the case of the agrarian revolution. In this historical period we see that of the hierarchy and the state. **Surely it seemed like a good idea to give the bureaucrats part of the harvest to be in charge of managing common resources and defense. Instead this led to an apparatus of domination that for more than five thousand years has been appropriating all surplus production. In fact, it has been appropriating much more than the surplus which has caused massive artificial scarcity, poverty, malnutrition disease and death.**

The false dichotomy of progress versus equality

Harari doesn't put it in this terms though. He doesn't blame a particular style of cooperation, the market-state system, he describes it as if suffering was an intrinsic side effect of collaboration. He merely observes how mass cooperation mechanisms correlate with oppression and worsen the quality of life, not only for sapiens, but for symbiotic animal species as well. To the point that today the most successful animal species, in genetic quantitative terms, or global population numbers, are those with the most miserable lives: chickens, pigs and cows. Followed by the median sapiens.

From the point of view of the "selfish gene", to use Dawkins' famous expression, success means to make more copies of oneself. From such a perspective chickens, pigs and cows have been extremely successful because their genes have been able to adapt to a new environment where being valuable to humans is key to succeed as a species, and the contrary risks extinction. The same can be said for rice and wheat, although as far as we know they are not sentient species, which avoids the ethical implications that we see with animals. The fact that most such animals have miserable lives, that possibly most of them would rather not live if they had the consciousness to make such decisions, is irrelevant to the selfish gene. Successful mutations that adapt to the environment generate more offspring regardless of the happiness or suffering that awaits such offspring.

Their hyper-adaptation to sapiens also makes them vulnerable to changes in human societies. The rise and fall of the horse is a case in point. Cities were full of horses until the advent of the automobile. Similar fate might soon fall on chickens, pigs and cattle if any of the many companies that are working on synthetic meat replacements. Although, if you were to consult horses, they would probably prefer living in small numbers as pets that are cared for lovingly rather than in large numbers as animals used for strenuous work.

For sapiens the situation is similar with respect to "the selfish meme". Our genes haven't changed much at all since our foraging ancestors. However the memes that we inhabit have drastically changed from cooperation to competition. This has been a boost for our genes, with orders of magnitude more humans alive now than before domination was standardized. The cost of this genetic success has been widespread suffering. The claim we are making here is that, as soon as large-scale cooperation mechanisms evolved (money, religion, nations...), believing in cooperation reduced the chances of success of the genes of the individuals that carry those memes compared to believing in aggression. **Aggressive collectives have more chances to pass on their genes, and therefore their memes,** because of their tendency to kill peaceful collectives. They are also more likely to have more offspring because they see their strength in numbers. Similarly nowadays memes that promote ignorance and religious fundamentalism are more successful at spreading because people who pursue lay education and professional careers tend to have fewer offspring than those who don't.

Often people have used the dispassionate tone of scientific discourse to justify atrocities. Maybe that's why many compassionate people reject science and embrace religion instead. Is not necessary to recall here the atrocities that Nazis committed under the name of science which are very well known and compete strongly with atrocities committed by other groups in the name of religion. While Israeli author Harari luckily doesn't remind of Nazi propaganda, his writing however does have an undertone reminiscent of Mathus.

In the 18th century Mathus claimed to have proven mathematically that poverty is inevitable. He supposedly calculated that the population tends to grow geometrically (2,4,8,16,32,...) while cultivated land tends to only grow arithmetically (2,4,6,8,10,12,...). He concluded that it was therefore useless to try to help the poor: they will just multiply themselves again to starvation. His ideas were very popular among the wealthy.

Even though Harari doesn't explicitly offer any similar conclusion, his description in *Sapiens* of the human tendency to reduce wellbeing and increase suffering as cooperation grows in scale, without contemplating alternative paths, can too easily be read like an inevitable fact. And from there **is just a small step to claim that mass suffering is a necessary condition for progress, and label anybody who shows concern for poor people's wellbeing as being anti-progress and being on the wrong side of history.** This claim **has been a strong force to move history forward in the wrong direction.** Often leaders have claimed, implicitly or explicitly, that in order for society to advance is necessary that somebody suffers, that in order to have advanced technology and consumer markets millions of people need to suffer working as slaves in mines and factories far away. We are told that we are actually doing them a favor: the wealth created by progress will eventually trickle down to them and bring prosperity to them as well. And voters mostly go along with this absurdity.

Another classical contemporary example are the memes that point out that

all the cool technologies that civilians enjoy nowadays were developed by the military. Velcro and zippers were developed thanks to the Space Wars. Telecommunications, computers, and ultimately the cellphones that we all carry in our pockets were developed thanks to the cold war. Therefore, by induction, we should keep investing in the military so that we can enjoy even more fabulous civilian technologies in the future like space travel. That reasoning is obviously fallacious since investing directly on civilian technologies would achieve better results faster, but good luck finding any voice that points that out in the mainstream media!

In order to neutralize the idea that progress necessarily implies mass inequity and mass suffering in these pages we specifically point out to memes of individualism and competition, which are symbiotic with the State-market framework, as the root cause for mass suffering. At the same time we observe that there have been other forms of collaboration, horizontal and voluntary instead of hierarchical and coercive that haven't been problematic. **Only if we are able to contemplate the possibility of some sort of massive-scale collaboration mechanism that doesn't have embedded in it the destruction of nature and suffering of the masses will we be able to escape the false dichotomy of either progress and technology or going back to the trees.**

Conservatism's slippery slope towards authoritarianism

Conservatism is often associated with authoritarian leadership. Using that definition here would be a tautology: we are listing the elements that normalize and reinforce domination and of course a desire for authoritarianism does that. Instead, we want to point out something more subtle. **We are defining conservatism as the dangerous desire to go back in time.** Often such desire points to a few decades ago, and sometimes, even more dangerously, points to a romanticized version of society a few generations ago.

This desire does not come from an analytical calculation of what would be the optimal social arrangement for society, and determining that coincidentally it was what we had at time X in the past. It comes from the uncritical feeling that "I don't like the way things are now, I prefer the way things were at time X".

To start with, logically, this reasoning could at best lead to an unstable society: if we go back three decades ago then we will be, again, three decades away from a situation we don't like! The core criticism to conservatism is not the preference for authoritarianism, that is a consequence of a more fundamental trait, which is what we object to: it being **a gut reaction, without proper analysis, to a situation that people don't like.**

This tendency towards conservatism is a key factor on how these **historical mistakes** that we have been discussing, **instead of tending to be corrected, tend to spread and become more popular.**

Once new social paradigms and structures are consolidated they often expand

due to a combination of inertia and their own intrinsic needs, the need for economic growth in order to maintain social order, for example. Such changes typically happen at such a slow pace that they are completely unnoticeable for the people living through them. People have the illusion of living in continuity, and they don't preserve the historical memory. Eventually though, the systemic dynamics that we have been discussing, end up harming a large amount of the population, typically burdening them with debt that they cannot pay. Even if there seems to be an external factor, such a drought, the actual cause is the social structure that has been using the production surplus to build up the military, rather than saving food for bad times and investing in irrigation. Or even promoting activities that cause climate change, which increase the chances of bad harvests.

Because people don't perceive the systemic dynamics, they perceive a change in the output and don't perceive any change in the inputs, they are tempted to blame the problem on some random, esoteric, often unrelated, factor: Immigration, non hetero-normative people, etc.

That desire for things not to change, combined with ignorance of the true causes and superstition towards fake causes, that is the impulse towards conservatism, towards the familiar, which is ironically, and subtly, one of the greatest forces for change. When facing disruption people are willing to accept changes in governance that they would normally resist. It doesn't necessarily have to be appointing a dictator outright. It's often progressively **giving away more power to a few leaders, in exchange for flimsy promises that they will make things go back to normal.** Such vague empty promises make successful campaign slogans like "Make America Great Again". After a few quick iterations those leaders may actually become dictators.

If awareness of the situation is ever reached, by then the changes are so profound that they seem irreversible. **The most prominent of these changes that seem eternal and irreversible was the replacement of mutual support with competition.** Nowadays most people, even if they are aware of the harms created by the State-market-competition system, are unable to imagine a world without it. In this sense, almost everybody is conservative.

The perspective presented here is that progression towards more oppressive collaboration systems is not necessarily an evolutionary imperative, as one could interpret from Harari's correlation observations. The fact that until now we've generally taken quite bad choices historically doesn't mean that we can't change. We should be able to add some consciousness to our historical choices and change direction towards non-violent forms of collaboration. It's true that when both paradigms have competed historically the violent coercive ones have won. **The hypothesis defended here is that being aware of the choice, and the competing paradigms, should help change the course of history.** Although, as we discuss in the proposed strategy, it's not a sufficient condition, it is also necessary to build viable alternatives.

Replacing mutual support with competition

Regardless of what situations led to the emergence of patterns of domination in different parts of the world, **the main factor that normalized, reinforced, and expanded them was the fact that mutually supportive relationships between people were replaced by competitive commercial relationships.**

In Sumer, at the time writing appears, this is already a consolidated fact in the city. Regardless of how it got to that point, what is clear is that earning a wage that meets one's vital needs in the marketplace is a key factor in creating an individual identity in the urban population. The salary reinforces the idea that each one is responsible for her own life, and that if someone runs out of money it is their fault, their problem, and it is normal for them to be left homeless, without food, and end up selling themselves into slavery.

There is also the factor of huge increases in population size. Money, wage labor and consumerism appeared during the Uruk period, at the same time that multiple cities exceeded 10,000 inhabitants, and Uruk, the city after which the period is named, reached 50,000 inhabitants. For humans it is possible to feel emotionally connected to a few dozen people, and to track their relationship with a few hundred. But when people are embedded in populations that reach thousands, tens of thousands, or more, it is very easy to feel disconnected to most of them, to see them as distant others.

This combination of fulfilling life's necessities through impersonal market transactions and actually not having emotional relationships with most of the neighbors makes people **lose the sense of security and autonomy that they enjoyed in mutual support societies, making them dependent on organized power.** The State controls the market, therefore it is the elites who set the price of goods and services, and therefore they are the ones who decide what the "free" populations will dedicate their productive efforts to, and they will do so in a way that reinforces their power.

Unconscious coercion to give up love, and support for precarity

Let's unpack the idea that the State uses the market to orchestrate what poor people work on : as modern economists tirelessly point out, people's behavior is very susceptible to incentives. For example, if people are paid ten times more for making weapons than for healing people, it's quite likely that there will be an abundance of weaponry and a scarcity of health. Back then, the farce of the "free market" through the laws of supply and demand hadn't been developed yet. The government was openly setting prices of goods and services with their conversion tables to a standard currency unit, a weight of metal or cereal, which they would use to collect tribute to conquered people. Obviously they would tend to value highly the things that would help them reinforce their power such as providing weapons and food to the troops.

Nowadays governments are a bit more subtle, to protect the illusion of a free

market. They use massive tenders to buy weapons, tax breaks to incentivize military manufacturers, taxes for whatever doesn't help their power, etc. but the net effect is the same: to provide strong incentives to the population so that they devote their time, creativity and energy to support those in power rather than to help each other out. Besides that, most governments still have a very direct role in setting the salaries for professions that they actually help people, such as teaching and healing, since typically most educators and health professionals work directly for the government. Since teachers typically have lower salaries than other occupations that require a similar amount of education it is to be expected that a significant percentage of the most talented people will choose other professional paths.

In a non-market economy without coercion, where people are free to choose what they devote their effort towards, they are much more likely to invest it in activities that are appreciated by the collective. Either helping out someone in need or contributing to some collective productive effort. Those people feel that they are free to do what they wish and that their lives are useful. As a result the collective is likely to enjoy abundance of the products and services that are valued most. In contrast, some polls indicate that nowadays in certain western regions less than 50% of workers feel that their job contributes to the society. In general, **if someone is being paid to do something that they wouldn't do for free is a good indication that they are doing something useless, or even possibly harmless, to the collective or the environment.** As a result, the collective is likely to suffer scarcity of the products and services they value most. Think about it, how many more marketing teams do we need to produce advertisements for the new detergent which is even better than the previous one that was already more than perfect? And why doesn't that marketing budget go to provide education, healthcare, companionship to the elders, and planting trees? Graeber has a technical name for this phenomenon: "bullshit jobs".

Here we can see yet another inconsistency of the liberal discourse, namely the moral virtues of the market. Liberals have always been very keen on insisting that social relationships mediated by markets are moral. They don't want to be seen as promoting an immoral degenerate society. Liberals claim that even when everybody acts as selfish as they can, paradoxically, things still turn out good for everybody. Their reasoning is that since everybody is free to participate in the market as equals, the market is the most effective, efficient and fair mechanism to distribute resources. Everybody will work just as much as they desire to buy the things that they want, and they will only pay for goods and services that they perceive as fair, or advantageous to them. If something costs more than the utility they get from it, they will instead spend their money on something else more favorable. If somebody notices that the price of something is too high they will change jobs and switch to produce that something, thereby increasing its supply and lowering its price, to the benefit of everybody.

This is, in essence, the proposition of Enlightenment liberals, like Adam Smith,

who claimed that the market is moral through a mix of mathematical reasoning and mystical allusions to the infamous “invisible hand”.

Since market societies didn’t turn out to be the panacea that enlightenment liberals promised, modern economists instead decouple the morality from the market and assign it to the State. Nowadays economists only concern themselves with measuring people’s preferences without judging if those are moral or immoral. They point out that markets exist in a context of legal frameworks that allow or prohibit certain behaviors, and also realize that the government does the job of market design, by setting up incentives so that market players are encouraged to do what’s good for society. They take it as granted that democratic governments will work for the general interest of the population. **Unfortunately, both historical and contemporary data shows exactly the opposite, that governments tend to do what benefits the elites rather than the general population, which leaves without moral justification the state-market arrangement.**

Earlier we saw the factors that made possible the emergence of individual identity in some men, who became "enterprising priests." However, what determined that they accumulated real power was the development of an individual identity in the bulk of the urban population, men and women, and unconsciously accepting the idea that every individual must make a living in the labor market, and thinking that’s a way of helping each other, not realizing that is a way of creating scarcity, and taking precarity as a fact of life.

The substitution of relations of mutual support for commercial relations is the central theme of this series of books, the main cause of all forms of novel suffering that have been inflicting societies for the last few thousand years. The rest of elements, the state, the market, slavery, wars, famine, patriarchy, environmental destruction, etc. are symbiotic with selfish relationships. They are both enablers and consequences of it. Therefore, strategically, for maximum efficacy, the focus should be on reverting human relationships back to mutual support, on a voluntary basis, free from coercion.

Confounding of morality with accounting debt begets violence

Graeber explores the factor of the commodification of human relationships in a very detailed and compelling way. He does it from a moral perspective. He observes that debt, in the abstract, is an element of social cohesion in pre-market societies: everyone in the community owes favors to each one of the other members of the community. This informal interdependence highlights generosity and gratitude, and binds society together. At the same time it encourages the kind of prosocial behaviors that help humans feel happy and accomplished. However, with the advent of the market, this debt is quantified and violent mechanisms are established to force debtors to pay. Market transforms debt obligations into a factor of social destabilization:

Here we come to the central question of this book: What, precisely, does it mean to say that our sense of morality and justice is reduced to the language of a business deal? What does it mean when we reduce moral obligations to debts? What changes when the one turns into the other? And how do we speak about them when our language has been so shaped by the market?

On one level the difference between an obligation and a debt is simple and obvious. A debt is the obligation to pay a certain sum of money. As a result, a debt, unlike any other form of obligation, can be precisely quantified. This allows debts to become simple, cold, and impersonal—which, in turn, allows them to be transferable. If one owes a favor, or one's life, to another human being—it is owed to that person specifically. But if one owes forty thousand dollars at 12-percent interest, it doesn't really matter who the creditor is; neither does either of the two parties have to think much about what the other party needs, wants, is capable of doing—as they certainly would if what was owed was a favor, or respect, or gratitude.

One does not need to calculate the human effects; one need only calculate principal, balances, penalties, and rates of interest. **If you end up having to abandon your home and wander in other provinces, if your daughter ends up in a mining camp working as a prostitute, well, that's unfortunate, but incidental to the creditor. Money is money, and a deal's a deal.**

It is interesting to notice how **a contemporary anthropologist can look at the empirical results of applying a theory and arrive at pretty much the opposite conclusions than the enlightenment liberal philosophers who designed that theory envisioned.** For liberal theorists **what Graeber describes as a problem is actually a feature.** Moral obligations are a mess and are to be avoided precisely because they are not quantifiable. If I help the neighbor babysitting her kids and she helps me to fix the roof in my house, are our debts settled? Are they equivalent? Or one of us still owes something to the other? How can we tell? **Seems that we are inevitably thrown into a state of uncertainty.**

Psychologically uncertainty is rather exhausting. Liberalism offers us a clean way out of this conundrum: the neighbor pays for a babysitter and I pay for a handyworker to help with the roof. Easy peasy. Not only will both of us save the angst created by the uncertainty of owing each other favors but on top of that, thanks to the efficiency created by division of labor, we'll both gain time! A specialized person can help get the roof fixed much faster than any random neighbor. Similarly, a specialized babysitter can sit a few kids at a time, dividing the cost among several parents. Great! Now that we both have more time that if we had helped each other we can use that time to work a bit more on whatever our specializations are. As a result we will earn even more

money which we will be able to use to spend on whatever it is that we consider valuable, something that likely the neighbor wouldn't have been able to produce for us, like a cell phone.

What about the unanticipated effects? What about the person who cannot pay the interest on the loan whose daughter ends up working as a (likely underage) prostitute in a mining camp? **This looks like one of those many cases in human history that something that seemed like a good idea ended up producing the opposite effect.** Like when farming ended up taking more time and providing less nutrition than foraging. Isn't it? Well, depends who you ask. A Conservative person is likely to assume some moral wrongdoing on the parents. Surely they were lazy, they didn't work hard enough and then they splurged, they spent money they didn't have.

On the other hand, a contemporary liberal economist, specially those cutting edge ones who are starting to use empirical data and cross-domain tools like behavioral economics, might be able to understand that such a situation can happen due to no fault of the individuals involved. Maybe they were farmers and had two bad harvests in a row, or they were any other kind of businesspeople and there was a market crash, a crisis or some similar disruption. However a contemporary liberal economist is quite unlikely to conclude that there is something wrong with liberalism, and more likely to conclude "market failure", meaning that those people lived in a time and place where market wasn't sufficiently developed and didn't offer mechanisms, such as insurance, or options to diversify the business operations, in a way that provided enough robustness to the parents.

For a liberal economist **often the solution to a market problem is more market!** Here is another resemblance with market and violence that even Graber seems to have missed. In the same way that somebody who trades in violence, like a General or a gang leader, upon facing a defeat are likely to conclude that they need more violence to solve the problem, liberals are likely to conclude they need more market to solve any problem (even when everybody else can see that those problems are actually created by markets in the first place).

Clearly though our hypothetical liberal economist would be wrong because such phenomena happen even in western democracies that have been liberalizing for centuries and therefore their markets are very well developed. Still in many such countries about a third of the population lives in poverty and another third are barely holding on, at the brink of falling through the cracks. As many often do. Just look at the eviction numbers of any western city if you need convincing. True, only a few of the evictions result in homeless families, but also, only a few of the evicted ever completely recover.

Why does this happen? Why doesn't every worker in these advanced economies get complete insurance, especially when they sign a mortgage? Why isn't it standard to get a "livelihood insurance" instead of a life insurance? An insurance that would protect in case of economic crisis or major market disruptions on the area of expertise of the insured person, in a way that it would cover live

expenses and retraining costs to a different industry or expertise area? Why don't those insurances even exist?

A significant factor is that, **even though a liberal economic system manages to decouple economic activity from social ties, at the same time couples very heavily economic activity with governance.** And, even if you think that it would be inconvenient that access to baby-sitting or roof-fixing would be tied to your social relationships, **coupling the economy with governance is much worse.** Economy is coupled with governance because the only way such insurance could exist and be prevalent would be for the government to mandate it. Otherwise, those who take the risk of not getting the insurance will be much more competitive because they will save the cost of insurance, and they will drive everybody else out of the market. Some governments pretend to do something about helping workers when they lose their jobs and get in financial trouble but the data generally shows that they do a terrible job at retraining workers and preventing their bankruptcies. A recent well-known example is how the transfer of jobs from the USA to Asia driven by globalization movement of the 1990s lead to mass unemployment in industrial areas of the USA. Indeed new jobs were created but went to younger folks because the specialized workers that lost the manufacturing jobs weren't retrained. It seems that the resentment from those lost jobs was a key factor in Trump getting elected. The government in Germany is probably the lonely shining exception, the retraining programs that they offer seem to be quite successful. In general, as we've noted in the earlier books of this series, the coupling of economy and governance means that those agents who have the most money are the ones who dictate policy. And those agents tend to not care much about "you loosing your house and ending up wandering in the provinces while your daughter ends up as a prostitute in a mining camp".

Let's return to Graeber. His reflection on the market coupling with morality and violence is pure gold:

From this perspective, the crucial factor, and a topic that will be explored at length in these pages, is **money's capacity to turn morality into a matter of impersonal arithmetic—and by doing so, to justify things that would otherwise seem outrageous or obscene.** The factor of violence, which I have been emphasizing up until now, may appear secondary. The difference between a "debt" and a mere moral obligation is not the presence or absence of men with weapons who can enforce that obligation by seizing the debtor's possessions or threatening to break his legs. It is simply that a creditor has the means to specify, numerically, exactly how much the debtor owes.

However, **when one looks a little closer, one discovers that these two elements—the violence and the quantification—are intimately linked. In fact it's almost impossible to find one without the other.**

[...] The way violence, or the threat of violence, turns human relations into mathematics will crop up again and again over the course of this book. It is **the ultimate source of the moral confusion** that seems to float around everything surrounding the topic of debt. The resulting dilemmas appear to be as old as civilization itself. We can observe the process in the very earliest records from ancient Mesopotamia; it finds its first philosophical expression in the Vedas, reappears in endless forms throughout recorded history, and **still lies underneath the essential fabric of our institutions today—state and market, our most basic conceptions of the nature of freedom, morality, sociality—all of which have been shaped by a history of war, conquest, and slavery in ways we're no longer capable of even perceiving because we can no longer imagine things any other way.**

Usury tied to violence? Shocking! What a market failure, isn't it? But how could it be any other way? Except in a world where there aren't poor people, there will always be plenty of people who will, even if occasionally, be pushed to resort to high interest loans. That doesn't mean that those loans are bad per se, given the context. There are studies in the USA that claim that "payday loans" are actually beneficial to most of their users. Payday loans are typically very high interest, very short term, automatically paid on the next paycheck, which means at most two weeks later. They are beneficial because they usually help someone get out of an unexpected situation, like a car breaking down and needing urgent repair, who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to work anymore.

However, many of those people who take such loans are likely to be already in quite stressed situations, or have friends and family who would very much benefit from a little bit of extra money. Paying for that interest might mean delaying some medical treatment or compromising on their diet. That they make the decision, when they get the next paycheck, to return the money and the interest, rather than use it to help somebody in need, is something hard to explain without the threat of violence. Even more dramatically, people who can't pay the rent or mortgage rarely just walk out of their home to become voluntary homeless. Force needs to be deployed to coerce them to do so.

The reality of our society that "we're no longer capable of even perceiving because we can no longer imagine things any other way" is the fact that our society is based on violent coercion. Going to work. Going shopping. Paying the rent or the mortgage to a bank wealthier than we can't possibly imagine when instead we'd rather use that money to help out our friends or family. Or to have fun. Our entire life is orchestrated by the threat of violence.

It is really hard to argue that all those evictions, poverty and the stress of lives at the edge of falling through the cracks are worth the alleged benefits (are there any?) of a market society. That's why people usually don't argue about such

trade-offs and instead deny the situation. All the poor are lazy! Market failures aren't supposed to happen!, in a proper free market everybody would be getting wealthier and wealthier by the day! Therefore, a market society only makes sense when everybody is rich. At which point, why would we need a market economy anyway? We could just indulge helping each other out.

And **when you push people really hard for an answer, what you get is that "ours is the least bad system we have invented yet"**. The purpose of this book, the fourth and last in the series, is precisely to point out **how a nasty lie that is**.

Urban Civilization

As we have seen agriculture made possible the emergence of structures of domination. However, **it is only the appearance of the city, sustained by the surpluses of agriculture, that materializes this possibility of domination**. Agricultural rural societies managed to remain horizontal for a few millennia. It is therefore inaccurate to associate the emergence of domination with the advent of agriculture. Is more accurate to associate it with the emergence of urban civilization.

Cities are the physical embodiment of civilization: the culture of domination that emerges when mutually supportive relationships are replaced by competitive trade relationships. They are on the one hand the catalyst, and on the other the result.

Öcalan analyzes the ziggurat, the temple-palace center of power in ancient Sumer that we have described in the Uruk period as a proto-city and at the same time a proto-state. The three floors of the ziggurat (production, administration, religion) are later expanded into three urban zones. Ziggurats become the temples that perform the legitimizing function of power, surrounded by a residential area for the elite and a larger one for the common people.

Urbanization is always presented as a great development by mainstream History accounts, but like agricultural sedentarism that claim is very questionable. It is quite telling that when European explorers met with nomadic cultures they generally showed no interest at all in farming. What's the point, they would ask, of so much effort, when there is abundant food in the wild? Similarly, it is very rare to find people in towns who would like to voluntarily move to the cities. People who do, often feel forced by economic pressures. Why would town dwellers want to move to a polluted place, where they have to pay for everything, where people live crammed in tiny apartments with little or no sunshine? Why would they abandon their spacious dwellings and the ability to grab food for free from their fields or veggie gardens, free fresh water from the springs, and free mushrooms, berries, nuts and herbs from the forest?

Think about it, **if people generally considered that cities are such great**

deals, wouldn't people in towns get organized to build one? Never in history have, for example, ten free towns come together voluntarily and decided to join their population and merge into a city. However, there were individuals who did make this decision for themselves. In Mesopotamia it was the ziggurat, the proto-city, which acted as a catalyst, attracting the faithful, blinded by the gods, and duped by the promise of a stable salary (food).

We often think of dominance as exercised by one person, or a small group of very powerful people, against the bulk of the population. However, super-villains only exist in superhero comics. In reality, most affected people freely choose to participate in these structures. This voluntary choice is easier to discern looking at the historical moment when dominance arose. Only a small portion of the population were slaves, physically chained to their workplaces. The rest could choose to live in a free town, far from power in the city, or return to nomadism. However, there were some social constructions (stories, memes, such as religion, debt, honor,...) that prevented them from making this decision collectively. Individually making this decision is not feasible because in order to survive you need the support of a community. It is also interesting to reflect on the collective responsibility of the communities of the towns that created the conditions so that some of their members left the communities and went to live in the city, and did not have the vision of creating the mechanisms so that these people, or their descendants, could return when they felt oppressed.

During this historical period **the city grows and becomes a State. It institutionalizes and commodifies all parts of human life. Parenting becomes education, spirituality becomes religion, ethics becomes law, etc.**

Property and paternity

The majority of scientific sources agree that paternity is a recent historical phenomena which appeared along with private property. This historical fact lends itself very easily to interpretations that sapiens evolved in egalitarian groups, where both female and male members had a multitude of sexual partners, and women had a high social status. Such interpretation clashes with hegemonic narratives of the naturalness of patriarchy and monogamy and therefore it has been widely attacked.

According to Öcalan, in clan matriarchal societies, neither the concept of paternity nor that of husband existed. These were replaced by the priestly societies first, and the dynastic ones later, which developed the concept of private property, and that of inheritance. The property of the dynasty, led by the "strong man", was inherited, so the concept of paternity had to be developed, and with it the concept of husband and wife appeared.

Fernández and González also point to this relationship between private property and fatherhood.

Fatherhood led to the sexual regulation of the females in order to submit them to monogamy. The work that more thoroughly examines the modernity of monogamous arrangements is “Sex at Dawn” by Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jethá. They point out at biological evidence that sex in sapiens, as well as other apes closely related to sapiens, evolved mostly as a mechanism for social connection. They point out the fact that, in such species of apes, females have the vagina towards the front which enables couples to mate while gazing at each other’s eyes and kissing each other’s mouth. They also point out that the more sexual activity there is in the group and with neighboring groups the less confrontations there are.

In addition Ryan and Jethá document many human cultures where the question of paternity is a non-issue, as all the men of the community, or a subset like the brothers of the mothers, take fatherly responsibilities over the kids. They also find many cultures where, even though the concept of a main primary male partner for a female exists, those male partners tend to encourage their “wives” to take at least one more male lover, and often two or three. Those lovers are expected to take paternity responsibilities for the kids, and the “husband” sees them as an insurance in case he would die. Researchers have reported higher chances of better life outcomes to those kids with more than one father. In most societies where females have one primary partner, he doesn’t seem to be concerned about the biological paternity of her children. Such societies tend to have features that indicate that in most cases there is no such biological link, like customary casual sexual encounters, ritual celebrations when people are forbidden to copulate with their usual partners for several days, or rituals where “wives” are expected to have sex with 20 unrelated men at once.

Interestingly Ryan and Jethá also address some prominent voices that claim that humans are “naturally” monogamous. On top of pointing out the obvious question of why would governments and religious authorities use so much coercion and violence to enforce monogamy if it’s so natural for sapiens, they also analyze some of the works that promote the idea. They find a lot of vagueness, inconsistency, and rhetorical convolutions to be able to make that claim.

The concept of paternity and dynasty which leads to the cultural obsession with females’ virginity only makes sense, of course, to those who have the means of owning something. For the completely destitute it doesn’t have to be a concern, even though often the morals of the elite trickle down to the poorest members of society. Sometimes they don’t though. Graeber explains an example from the Himalayas where the low ranking castes were expected to pay for weddings by placing their prospective wives into prostitution:

One extreme possibility might be the situation the French anthropologist Jean-Claude Galey encountered in a region of the eastern Himalayas, where as recently as the 1970s, the low-ranking castes—they were referred to as “the vanquished ones,” since they were thought to be descended from a population once conquered by the current landlord caste, many centuries before—lived in a situation

of permanent debt dependency. Landless and penniless, they were obliged to solicit loans from the landlords simply to find a way to eat—not for the money, since the sums were paltry, but because poor debtors were expected to pay back the interest in the form of work, which meant they were at least provided with food and shelter while they cleaned out their creditors’ outhouses and reroofed their sheds.

For the “vanquished”—as for most people in the world, actually—the most significant life expenses were weddings and funerals. These required a good deal of money, which always had to be borrowed. In such cases it was common practice, Galey explains, for high-caste moneylenders to demand one of the borrower’s daughters as security. Often, when a poor man had to borrow money for his daughter’s marriage, the security would be the bride herself. She would be expected to report to the lender’s household after her wedding night, spend a few months there as his concubine, and then, once he grew bored, be sent off to some nearby timber camp, where she would have to spend the next year or two as a prostitute working off her father’s debt. Once it was paid off, she’d return to her husband and begin her married life.

This seems shocking, outrageous even, but Galey does not report any widespread feeling of injustice. Everyone seemed to feel that this was just the way things worked. Neither was there much concern voiced among the local Brahmins, who were the ultimate arbiters in matters of morality—though this is hardly surprising, since the most prominent moneylenders were often Brahmins themselves.

Parenting, employment, religion, law and domination of nature

Peter Gray looks at the vast differences in parenting, production, and spirituality between horizontal foraging and hierarchical farming societies, and how farming makes them possible.

In hierarchical agricultural societies, we find specialization and paid (coerced) work. Conversely, for foragers, work was fun, a game, which was played with friends when they felt like it. There was no concept of exchange, barter, or trade. When these concepts appear, monotonous, tedious jobs appear as well, which are done out of obligation. The autonomy of participating in a self-sufficient group where everyone has great knowledge and participates in all the tasks is lost. Livelihoods become dependent on a market that buys the work in which each one has specialized.

To survive in a foraging culture, one needed to be both social and independent, so parenting was based on fostering the generous nature of children, which started at the early age of 12 months. Later on, after the age of 4, parenting focused on giving them freedom and confidence to explore the world and learn on their own. Like other researchers whom he quotes, Gray believes that ancient foragers

behaved very much like the ones that were studied recently:

"Hunter-gatherers do not give orders to their children; for example, no adult announces bedtime. At night, children remain around adults until they feel tired and fall asleep. ... Parakana adults do not interfere with their children's lives. They never beat, scold, or behave aggressively with them, physically or verbally, nor do they offer praise or keep track of their development." (Yumi Gosso et al., "Play in Hunter-Gatherer Societies," in A. D. Pellegrini & P. K. Smith (Eds.), *The Nature of Play: Great Apes and Humans*, 2005, p 218.)

In contrast survival in urban societies was contingent on being submissive. Gray sums it up this way:

It is reasonable to suppose that parents in early agricultural and industrial societies who attempted to beat their children into submission were acting for their children's own good. To survive in conditions where survival requires obedience, you really do need to suppress your own will and learn to do, unquestioningly, what you are told. **But such parenting was never fully successful. By nature, all people are willful, creative, and playful.** The hunter-gatherer way is the natural human way. It is impossible to beat that completely out of anyone. That is why there were always rebellions and uprisings, even at the risk of death. **People cannot be trained to be ants.**

Farmers want to control nature and as a result their gods become controlling. Stories about lords and servants appear in religions. Those are meant to, on one hand, to give meaning to a life of servitude, and on the other, to legitimize the power of the rulers. They also contribute to the perception of nature as something inert at the service of the gods. **By losing the comic and playful elements from nomadic mystical traditions, religion becomes dangerous:** God is no longer a playmate, he is the source of punishment and someone to be feared. **People begin to confuse the imaginary religious world with the real world.**

Both Öcalan as well as Fernández and González express themselves in similar lines and also add the component of legitimation of the new commercial culture against the traditional communal one. Specifically, the appearance of male gods confronting the mother-goddesses. **The new male gods are the rulers of cities, priests, sages, and warriors, while the old mother-goddesses represent communal societies and nature.**

In the State, **the law replaces Ethics** [Öcalan] and in addition the **law attributes individual responsibility to the actions** [Fernández and González]. Previously ethics had been based on a holistic conception, we are all one, people and nature. In other words, the community loses a tool for social and ecological cohesion and for the construction of relational identity, and the state gains a tool that reinforces individual identity.

Fernández and González also observe the correlation between the domination of nature and the domination of people. Cities facilitate the alienation of people from nature, which helps them see nature as a resource and have an extractivist relationship with it.

Commercial and military technology

Commercial and military technology

Foraging societies tended to create technologies that supported community cohesion. Urban societies instead developed technologies that foster individuality.

Fernández and González highlight horses, carts and better metal weapons: “In the Eurasian steppes, in 4200-4000 B.C. horse riding began. Parallel to this increase in mobility, collective burials were replaced by individual ones, in which, in addition, numerous weapons appeared”

Liberation mechanisms

Rural cultural resistance

During the first thousands of years of civilization most people accepted domination voluntarily, in small increments, and the number of slaves from conquest was relatively small. Most people migrated voluntarily from the rural areas to the cities.

However, as urban civilizations grow in population, they need to grow the area of urbanized land as well as the amount of cultivated land around them. This creates a dynamic where the cities and metropolis engulf nearby lands for building new districts, and appropriate adjacent fertile lands or at least want to impose markets on the rural communities living there. Eventually tensions appear between the two societies. Öcalan explains how these tensions have been reflected in myths and legends, and that they survive to this day in tribal songs. In them, the goddesses representing the communal matriarchal societies confront male gods representing the male elites of the cities.

Fernández and González agree in emphasizing that rural societies resisted the dominating ideology, and were, for example, less patriarchal than urban ones.

These **tensions between the hierarchical and patriarchal values of cities and the more egalitarian ways of life of peasant communities** have been repeated throughout history, until very recently. With some exceptions like the Mesopotamian pastoralists discussed earlier, women and men have shared more equitable roles in rural communities than in urban ones.

Nowadays there seems to be an inversion, with cosmopolitans tending to being less patriarchal than rural communities. This contemporary inversion is often anachronistically projected to the past, usually to serve a racist liberal agenda that wants to portray rural people as inferior to city dwellers.

Revolts by peasants and pastoralists

With the passage of time peasant communities surrounding the metropolis would either endorse the benefits of the State-market-domination system or migrate further away from the city. But even those who endorsed the new paradigm, eventually realized that they had given away more power than they were comfortable with, and that the bargain they had signed for didn't pay out to them as promised. They had been told that in exchange for giving up their power they would participate in a wealth distribution system and instead they saw that they were being exploited for the benefit of a small elite. That was even more obvious during the debt crises that Graeber describes.

He also notes that this resistance often took the form of revolts, and he points out at the outrageous moral framework that enabled them:

For most of human history—at least, the history of states and empires—most human beings have been told that they are debtors. Historians, and particularly historians of ideas, have been oddly reluctant to consider the human consequences; especially since this situation—more than any other—has caused continual outrage and resentment. **Tell people they are inferior, they are unlikely to be pleased, but this surprisingly rarely leads to armed revolt. Tell people that they are potential equals who have failed, and that therefore, even what they do have they do not deserve, that it isn't rightly theirs, and you are much more likely to inspire rage.**

Certainly this is what history would seem to teach us. **For thousands of years, the struggle between rich and poor has largely taken the form of conflicts between creditors and debtors**—of arguments about the rights and wrongs of interest payments, debt peonage, amnesty, repossession, restitution, the sequestering of sheep, the seizing of vineyards, and the selling of debtors' children into slavery.

By the same token, for the last five thousand years, with remarkable regularity, popular insurrections have begun the same way: with the ritual destruction of the debt records—tablets, papyri, ledgers, whatever form they might have taken in any particular time and place. (After that, rebels usually go after the records of landholding and tax assessments.) As the great classicist Moses Finley often liked to say, in the ancient world, **all revolutionary movements had a single program: "Cancel the debts and redistribute the land."**

Our tendency to overlook this is all the more peculiar when you consider how much of our contemporary moral and religious language originally emerged directly from these very conflicts. Terms like

“reckoning” or “redemption” are only the most obvious, since they’re taken directly from the language of ancient finance. In a larger sense, the same can be said of “guilt,” “freedom,” “forgiveness,” and even “sin.”

Arguments about who really owes what to whom have played a central role in shaping our basic vocabulary of right and wrong. The fact that so much of this language did take shape in arguments about debt has left the concept strangely incoherent.

After all, to argue with the king, one has to use the king’s language, whether or not the initial premises make sense. If one looks at the history of debt, then, what one discovers first of all is **profound moral confusion. Its most obvious manifestation is that most everywhere, one finds that the majority of human beings hold simultaneously that (1) paying back money one has borrowed is a simple matter of morality, and (2) anyone in the habit of lending money is evil.**

Exodus

An easier option, and probably even more popular and frequent than revolts was, simply, exodus: Just run away with your family before the State comes to evict you and repossesses all your belongings. Take a few goats with you if you can, sell the rest, and join any of the nomadic pastoralist tribes or any of the forager bands.

This might seem a complicated proposition because farmers tended to have more children than nomadic bands, and taking all the children with them might not have been feasible or sustainable. Furthermore, coins which allowed for anonymous transactions hadn’t been invented yet, and any sale registered in the temple would likely be embargoed and go towards repaying the debt.

On the other hand, those two obstacles are not insurmountable. It would be quite feasible to trade one’s oxen, pottery, and furniture in exchange for something valuable and portable, like jewelry. Yes, barter! Even though people didn’t use barter on everyday transactions, when money is not available people tend to resort to barter. In this case because the person is on the debtor’s list and can’t use the centralized accounting mechanism. And if time is too pressing, one can imagine giving their possessions to a trusted friend for them to barter, and later pass on the proceeds.

Regarding the kids, the concept that life begins at birth is quite a modern one. Ancient societies used to have ceremonies like baptism to mark when one kid’s life began. Often, specially in nomadic cultures, most kids didn’t reach such a ceremony, the most vigorous were selected to live, and the rest were sacrificed to keep the population size in check [Ryan and Jethá]. The morality regarding sacrificing young children in early agrarian civilizations is not explored in any

of the consulted sources, but it seems feasible that it wouldn't have changed that much yet. It seems quite likely that many young couples, when faced with the prospect of being enslaved along with their children, would rather run away with the older children who were already able to go on their feet, and possibly sacrifice, abandon, or give away some of the youngest.

Pastoral patriarchy

Pastoral patriarchy

Last in this list of ancient experimentation with liberation mechanisms is patriarchy itself. We now see it as part of the mechanisms of oppression but back then, as we described earlier, it must have been seen as a plausible instrument to protect women from being exploited by the city, by the market. Again, to make sense of these contradictions, we need to remember that those processes take place very slowly, across several generations. By the time the peasants became conscious that their women were being routinely taken away as slaves by the State, it had already become accepted as a fact of life that households and societies were led by men. Therefore it is understandable that they envisioned strict patriarchal control as a solution. It is a feedback loop: the state institutionalized male leadership, the peasants used male leadership to protect women, and that in turn strengthened the memes claiming that women need protection from men. As we saw earlier, such strict control became possible away from the city in the rebel pastoralist tribes.

In Graeber's words: "[..] the absolute authority of fathers, and the jealous protection of their fickle womenfolk, **were made possible by, but at the same time a protest against, this very commoditization of people in the cities that they fled**".

Conclusions

Revolts and exodus without awareness is ineffective and even counterproductive

Now we know that patriarchy wasn't a good idea. But what about exodus and rebellion? The reason why it was not seen at the time that patriarchy was a bad idea is that **when rebels fled the cities they took with them, without realizing, the oppressive memes about hierarchy**. They already took the key elements of patriarchy for granted. **The same thing is likely to happen with revolts**. Revolutionaries usually carry with them the very oppressive memes that are causing the situation they are revolting against. They usually identify the rulers as the root cause of their problems, only to find out that when those leaders are removed, the problems come back. When the rebels, and the whole population, carry with them the memes of individuality, competition, hierarchy, market and so on. . . then replacing the figureheads in the government is unlikely to make much of a difference.

Nowadays these patterns of rebellions and exodus continue producing the same ineffective results. We can even look at **elections as rebellions**, as they accomplish the same (lack of) results: replacing those who are nominally in power by some others, who make a big deal on tiny ideological differences, but that overall, carry the same memes as their predecessors.

We can also look at **eco-villages as a kind of modern exodus**: people leave the cities, the market, in hopes of building communities of mutual support, that they will act as a seed for a wider social transformation. Unfortunately, they tend to carry with them the very same memes they are running away from. They try to build alternative, fair and environmentally friendly economies, but they resort to the same tools: private property, money, markets, etc. Instead of becoming the seed of a new society, they just feed capitalism with more consumption choices.

Similarly, we can find entire poor countries trying to get out of poverty by embracing capitalism. It is the same pattern as ancient rebels trying to protect women embracing patriarchy. They saw that patriarchy was working for rich people to protect their women and thought that if they would do it well enough patriarchy would help their women as well. Poor countries see that capitalism works for rich countries and think that if they do capitalism better it will work for them as well. They don't realize that capitalism wouldn't work for rich countries if they weren't exploiting poor ones, and that they are unlikely to stop doing that.

Another contemporary example of the same pattern of **unconscious rebellions are most social justice movements, feminisms or labor movements**. They often are at least partially successful achieving their short term goals like reducing the pay gap between men and other genders, or increasing the minimum wages. The same way ancient patriarchs were successful in their short-term goal of protecting women from slavery. We can be grateful at the achievements of those movements and at the same time criticize them for not going to the root of the problem, to the fact that our society is based on the premises of competitive markets, and point out that as long those premises don't change, whatever successes the movements achieve are likely to be limited, short-lived, and only applicable to a small set of the global population, typically living in rich countries.

Let's be more precise about the commonalities between the way patriarchy appeared and evolved, and more recent examples of unconscious rebellions which don't turn out as the rebels had hoped for:

- **Starts late**, when the social changes that provoke the rebellion > are already well entrenched, **attacks the symptoms and lacks > systemic perspective** that would enable discerning the root cause > of the problem. Changes take generations and by the time people > reacted to the oppression of women the market was already taken > for granted. And with it, most of its natural consequences: > private property, paternity, inheritance

and lineage. Once the > market is taken for granted, then is very easy to conclude that > there is something wrong with women, because men don't have the > same tendency of ending up cleaning other family's toilets and > working as prostitutes in the streets. Therefore women have to be > protected, monitored, and reprimanded when they stray, which they > do often, reinforcing the idea that there is something wrong with > them. Of course men would stray just as often if they were the > ones being monitored but since that is not the case the > counter-factual is never observed. Similarly contemporary > environmentalist movements arrived very late, when a lot of the > mechanisms that cause environmental destruction were already > entrenched. Instead of aiming at the systemic source of > environmental catastrophe, the movement generally focuses at the > symptoms and tries to mitigate them, using systemic approaches.

- **Mememes divide and conquer** - the rebels (peasants) see themselves > as separate from both from those who are better off (the elites), > and those who are worse off (slaves from conquered lands). Elites > also see themselves as separated from the peasants and slaves. > Each one of those collective actors act with the **mentality of > "us vs them"**. From the perspective of the active actor in the > liberation attempt, the pastoralist rebels, they feel one hand > **estrangement from the others who oppress them**: The lack of > systemic perspective prevents them from realizing that all members > of society are just actors in the system doing whatever role > corresponds to their social status. Instead the wealthy ones > (they) are perceived as oppressors and judged to be morally > inferior, for abusing the poor (us). This prevents enrolling them > in the search for a solution. On the other hand they feel > **Indifference to the suffering of conquered slaves**, also > "others". This is analogous to a contemporary middle class who see > themselves struggling at the same time against the economic elites > who are profiteering from their labor and also against immigrants > and offshore labor who they perceive as stealing their jobs. It is > the same indifference felt by the other active actor, the > propertied classes, towards the victims of the State-market > system: the domestic slaves and street prostitutes, who they see > as "others". Their goal is narrowed to protecting *our* women > from the moral depravity of "them". It is accepted that the > world is a tough place and some people will have to suffer as a > result, instead of trying to come up with solutions that help > everybody. Therefore the focus is on preserving their privileges. > So that the "we" don't fall down in the social ladder and > become "them". This mental and emotional separation enabled > privileged women to promote measures such as veiling and the > regulation of their own sexuality. This is analogous to the > privileged contemporary rebels who flee to ecovillages, leaving > behind those less privileged who cannot afford buying a rural > estate.
- **Different actors come up with different partial solutions instead > of cooperating**: the propertied classes embraced the city and > came

up with veiling and the concept of female honor tied to the > sexual regulation of women with focus on premarital virginity and > subsequent monogamy. The poor later came up with their own > solution, which embraced the aspect of sexual regulation of women, > but rebelled against the state-market, and promoted exodus from > the cities to join the nomadic pastoralists.

- **Lack of anticipation of future consequences:** Ironically, with > the passage of centuries, veiling evolved from a privilege and > status symbol to a mandate, and a symbol of oppression. > Conversely, for the non privileged women, being denied the right > of veiling had the effect of normalizing prostitution and sexual > slavery. That devalued human dignity, demoted sexuality and fed > misogyny. Which harmed everybody, in all social classes, but in > particular women. The two separated strategies envisioned by the > upper and lower classes, with centuries combined and evolved to > create a culture that harmed all women, regardless of social > class.
- **Moral and strategic confusion which leads to uncertainty on the > boundaries of what is right and what is wrong, what is effective > and what is counter-productive:** if we accept that private > property and borrowing money are normal, then moral people should > pay their debts, and if they don't, borrowers should be > compensated. But it is also wrong to kick out people from their > homes, leave them starving in the streets or force them into > slavery just because they had two bad harvests in a row... what > would be fair then? What would be too much? Would it be ok to take > away their cattle and land but not their house, wife and children? > But if so, how are they supposed to feed themselves, let alone > ever pay back their debt? The same moral confusion that afflicted > the ancients still paralyzes policy nowadays: Should we pass > anti-usury laws to limit the maximum amount of interest that can > be charged? But if we do so, then all the companies that provide > credit to the poor will close down, and we will have a large > portion of "unbanked" society, with no access to credit at all, > which is even worse than high interest credit. What about labor > laws? Should we establish a minimum salary? How do we make sure > it's not so high that leads to companies closing down and jobs > being destroyed, which would harm workers even more than low > salaries do? Should we pass laws to protect the environment? But > how can we balance that with the resulting increase in the cost of > energy which pushes more people towards poverty and more companies > to destroy jobs?

In contrast the strategy outlined in book three, the previous in this series,

- Uses a **systemic perspective:** places the root cause of the > problem in the dynamics created by the state-market-domination > system, and the symbiotic memes that emerge from it, instead of > blaming a visible elite or a secret cabal of powerful > conspirators.

- Is **holistic rather than tribalist** and **doesn't exclude the > "winners"** of the market. It doesn't promote a mentality of > "us", the victims, against "them", the rich, the exploiters. > On the contrary, it focuses on the upper-middle class to get > started and it's open to contributions from the richest as well, > recognizing that most human beings, once their immediate needs are > secured, they tend to want to help others, specially those who are > in most need. The working hypothesis is that they just lack an > effective vehicle to channel their desire to help others. The > first steps of the strategy are about building that vehicle, an > organization that will help the privileged donate time and money > in an effective way.
- **Doesn't exclude the victims** of the market either. Too many > rebel communities end up being exclusive for those who can afford > an alternative lifestyle. Instead the proposed strategy is focused > on generating an increasing amount of resources to help the less > fortunate join the ranks of the privileged, and hopefully, enlist > them to be part of the change.
- **Proposes a paradigm shift rather than a reform:** nowadays, even > with the hindsight of History, many people shy away from social > paradigm shifts, claiming that they are too difficult or would > take too long, and they instead propose reforms of the existing > system, sometimes in the form of new rights given by the system to > some of its victims. However reforms, like the case of giving > honorable women the right of veiling, have a nasty tendency of > having a life of their own and eventually backfiring. 5000 years > of reformism haven't got us that far. Maybe it's time to try a > paradigm shift and see how fast we advance. This doesn't mean > neglecting short term goals, we can devote, tactically, some > resources to reforms like universal basic income and environmental > laws, as long as we keep the focus and the bulk of the resources > for the long term revolutionary strategic goal.
- **Effective moral and strategic clarity:** State-market-domination > systems are just a bad idea that easily lends itself to all sorts > of horrible outcomes. Communal living and sharing works much > better, and is much less prone to catastrophic failure. The > fastest strategy to get there is investing in coordination, which > is often seriously lacking in transformative organizations, and > use it to gather as much economic and political power as possible, > to build a global network of communities of choice that > collectively own the land and resources that they use. Start with > the most resourceful among the convinced and use the shared > resources to help those less fortunate. Having this moral and > strategic clarity allows us to focus on actions that are most > effective, and at the same time acknowledge that there are tens of > thousands of people dying every single day, unnecessarily, from > malnutrition, preventable diseases, and other consequences of > exploitation. Accepting that we can't help all of them at once > helps us avoid spreading our resources too thin which wouldn't > accomplish anything.

Are humans violent or peaceful by nature?

Is human's true nature the cooperative egalitarian ethos of our foraging ancestors? Or were foragers peaceful and kind to each other only because they were forced to, due to the harsh life conditions that come with nomadic life? Were they truly free to choose their lifestyle and values, or were they coerced by a hostile natural environment?

As soon as our ancestors built permanent settlements that liberated them from the need to cooperate with each other, and with each other tribe, in order to survive in the wilderness, in just a few millennia, they were competing with each other, fighting with their neighbors and collectively at war with other groups. Does this prove that we are hopelessly prone to violence?

Answering this question is key to deciding what kind of society we want to build. If we are hopelessly prone to violence we need to build a system that protects the individuals from each other. On the other hand, if we are naturally inclined towards peace, we don't need to devote resources in policing and incarcerating each other, we can just let our nature unfold and enjoy each other's company.

However, as natural and important this question sounds, it's actually not a well-formed question. On the contrary, it is precisely the kind of wrong question that gives essentialism a bad name. **Clearly humans are capable of both, as it has been empirically proven** that civilizations, even sedentary ones, can last for millenia on either paradigm.

The actual interesting question is **which model is a better choice?** From everything that we now know about human nature it is clear that cooperation is far superior to competition. An environment that promotes mutual support, equality, peace, generosity and gratitude helps people feel safe, relaxed, happy and accomplished. Our foraging ancestors didn't feel forced to be nice to each other, they actually *enjoyed* it. In contrast, a culture that promotes competition, war, violence and domination becomes very stressful to most in the collective, and stress is very damaging for health.

Studying history helps us understand why our ancestors made the wrong choices, how we got stuck with them, and what we could do to get unstuck.

It is worth noting that choosing peace over violence is not our only choice. We could instead, for example, genetically engineer ourselves to not suffer stress from being in constant competition with each other. As Harari hints in *Sapiens*, if we've been able to engineer cows that don't get stressed in the horrible conditions we keep them, we might as well engineer humans that don't get stressed living under slavery conditions, and always at the brink of losing their jobs, their livelihoods, being evicted and ending up wondering in the streets without healthcare.

In the end, **our choice of strategy to move humanity forward lays on a philosophical, or even aesthetic question. Who do we want to become**

as a species? What legacy do we want to leave in this universe? Our current interdependent species is composed of individuals who biologically need each other to survive, whose mind is collective, whose emotions and energy budgets are regulated by other individuals with whom they have built secure bonds. This is who we are now, the result of millions of years of evolution in foraging bands. Is this the legacy that we want to leave in the universe? Or do we see our biology as flawed and we prefer to leave as a legacy a “new and improved” species made of independent individuals, each one of them psychopath in nature, who cares only for their own interest, and who collaborates with each other only on the rational calculation that we need specialization in order to live in a complex world, that we need tens of thousands of people to collaborate in order to have advanced computing devices and spaceships?

State-market-competition is one inseparable system and the root of all trouble: scarcity, violence, etc.

It is an empirical fact that money, taxes, wages, slavery, usury, the State, the market, war hierarchy and patriarchy appear at the same time. It's a pattern that repeats throughout history in different places. They are the same social construction. Parts of a whole. Symbiotic memes. The system. The establishment. The Man.

Liberals who see all the problems coming from the State and it's tendency to interfere in people's freedoms, restricting not only their trade with price regulations and import customs, but also their movements, reproductive and medical choices, gender identities, sexual choices, etc. and dream of "free competitive markets", freed from the shackles of the State, are as foolish as Marxist Socialists who see all the problems coming from the market and dream of a State that rules over the competitive market via a dictatorship of the proletariat and shares it's benefits equitably among all.

Markets need the State to enforce private property, to use violence to evict people from their homes when they can't pay for it. When the state collapses there is no market. Without the market people just revert, not to barter or competitive barbarism, but to just helping each other and sharing everything. A State that dreams of imposing itself on the competitive market by regulating prices is just creating a thriving environment for black markets and the mafias that operate on them.

Markets, even when they are regulated by the State, promote a sense of scarcity which leads to a competitive ethos among the population. If prices are regulated then it creates a situation where there are more people who can afford products than products available, which leads to empty shelves in the shops, which further promotes the sense of competition among neighbors. Similarly the labor market fosters the sense of competition among neighbors, with some jobs being more well paid than others. Inevitably some end up jobless which makes them feel the scarcity even more acutely. When people are not allowed to compete legally

there is even much more money to be made, and therefore much more incentives, to compete illegally, smuggling or otherwise participating in the black market or crime.

Furthermore Social Democrats who think that a balance can be struck between the market and the State seems equally delusional. The State-market-competition is a system in itself, there is no balance to be struck, it has its own dynamics as a whole. The dynamics of the system generate concentration of power and wealth. Inherently the State-market-competition favors centralization, uniformization, winner-takes-all dynamics that tend to make the wealthy wealthier, the poor poorer, and in the process destroy all cultural and environmental diversity. The process generally involves harvesting the productive and sexual services of women for the benefit of the elites and the military services of men to expand markets. Few resources are allocated to the benefit of the common classes.

This much is clear both theoretically and empirically looking at the last few thousand years of history. Still many people insist that it is possible to tame the system and make it work for everybody instead of a small elite. Perhaps, but if so, the burden of proof is on their side given the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Most rational people, upon looking at the evidence, if they can manage to ignore the social conditioning that takes the State-market-competition system for granted, would arrive at the opposite conclusion: why bother? Why should we try to fix, against all odds, a system that is inherently exploitative and unstable if we can instead leverage millennia of knowledge for building systems that are inherently equitable and stable?

Defenders of the State-market-competition system tend to point to "success stories" and claim that it is possible to expand those globally. When we look closely at those claims we see they are completely ridiculous. "Success stories" are just a few decades after WW2 of economic improvement for the working white classes in some regions in rich countries, who were enriching themselves by promoting dictatorships and exploiting South America, Africa and Asia. How is that supposed to be a success story unless you define success as planning a World War every 30 years and letting the winners pillage the rest of the world? The only success has been to promote a narrative about freedom and progress that doesn't match reality. Still there is prevalence of slavery in the poor countries that produce goods for the rich ones, millions of people are suffering hunger and malnutrition, and even in the rich countries the middle class is collapsing.

Let's remember and summarize the direct consequences that we can observe as soon as the State-market-scarcity emerges:

- **Scarcity of physical assets:** food, housing, arable land, etc. > which happen by design, because they are enclosed for the benefit > of the propertied classes, not because of arithmetic scarcity (on > average, there is enough for everybody, even abundance)
- **Scarcity of intangible assets:** physical security (risk of > conquest, crime, rape), health, child care, sex, knowledge, > . . . those are consequence

of policies that favor competition over > cooperation, also not due to an arithmetic scarcity.

- All of those insecurities lead to **psychological insecurity**. > Contrary to the myth that the market empowers individuals, > actually, emotionally, makes them feel insecure. Most people live > paycheck-to-paycheck and are afraid that a little setback, > illness, accident, repairs, will push them down. Market only feels > secure to the wealthy, that they have the confidence that they can > buy whatever they need. Most people instead would feel much more > secure in an interdependent relationship with their neighbors, > where they depend on each other as equals, than on an asymmetric > dependency on their employer who owes obedience to their > investors.
- And, as a direct consequence, **overwork, stress, famine, disease > and death**.
- Also, as a consequence, even though it is not a direct one, but an > indirect, a result of systemic emerging patterns, we find: > **patriarchy, misogyny, disappearance of women from public life, > objectification of women** and loss of legal status of women as > citizens. Even when women are allowed to participate in the social > life we find gaps in salaries and wealth, with poverty impacting > women disproportionately.
- **Concentration of wealth, which leads to concentration of power**. > The more social relationships are replaced with market > relationships, the more inequity there is in the society, even > though, theoretically, commercial relationships are consensual > relationships among equals.

Falsification of history: money, barter and commoditization of life

We are used to hearing that money appeared naturally as an evolution of barter to facilitate exchanges. However, we have seen instead that it appeared as an invention from government officials. It was not an invention to improve trade either. Instead it was meant to improve both people management and resource management.

It is true that before governments invented money there had been for millenia some degree of trade which has left a clear mark in the archeological record as a multitude of detailed contractual obligations in the form of bullae. However those must have been sporadic, they didn't replace human relationships with trade.

The key factor with money-based markets is that they commoditize life: they turn people, their labor, their bodies, their relationships, etc. into merchandise. **People no longer cooperate with each other because they care about each other, but because they care about each other's money**. It is only this radically new mindset that enables periodic massive debt crises that evict people from their homes and turn them into slaves.

This false narrative has made people accept that human nature is to "trade with each other". That is clearly false. People's instinct is, first and foremost, to support each other. That's the environment that enables people to feel happy, safe, accomplished and relaxed, which is what most people strive for. Yes, we are capable as well to create environments where most of us feel alone, poor, stressed and insecure, and that is conducive to trading with each other, but **claiming that our nature is to trade with each other is akin to claiming that our nature is to feel miserable.**

Falsification of history: progress = more freedom and quality of life

We understand by progress of civilization the *institutionalization* of science, citizenship, commerce, theology, political and military organization, and the pre-eminence of law over ethics. All this articulated around a centralized State managed from the strongest city.

According to the liberal and progressive narratives, urban civilization is the best that ever happened to sapiens. Civilization is supposed to bring improvements in people's freedom and quality of life. Also is supposed to bring more peace since civilized people are supposedly less prone to violence than uncivilized brutish barbarians. The two main reasons being that they have superior morals and also can appreciate the calculation that trading is more beneficial than fighting. Especially women are supposed to benefit the most, to gain more independence since the State provides a stronger force that keeps in check men's tendency to dominate them. For their part men lose indiscriminate access to women, whom are no longer allowed to rape at will, but instead get to live longer since they don't have to worry anymore about their neighbors killing them to steal their possessions or out of jealousy. The more cities and the more civilization the better for everybody!

However, we see that since the origins of urban civilization the exact opposite is happening. Violence between groups increases, war appears, gets more sophisticated and a larger portion of resources are devoted to it. Intra-group violence increases as well with forced labor, forced evictions and women sequestered in harems, in their own homes or hidden behind veils. Women clearly lose with the advance of civilization. They lose their autonomy, their legal status, they become subordinate to their fathers, husbands or brothers, and their sexuality is brutally regulated. Non hetero-normative sex becomes similarly brutally regulated. Men lose quite a bit as well, they become stressed, de-facto slaves of market forces, always at the border of bankruptcy and formal slavery. They are routinely constricted and sent to war where they are likely to die or be maimed. Both men and women become undernourished and overworked, since the demand for food and work from the military-industrial complex is insatiable. They also become uneducated since their simplistic jobs involve just a fraction of the vast knowledge enjoyed by foragers who harvest, hunt, and process an enormous variety of food. Both their health deteriorates due to poor and insufficient diet, harsh work conditions, and living in densely populated areas, together with

animals, in unsanitary conditions.

Those who point out at a few decades of progress and advancement of quality of life for a large part of the population, including women, in a small part of the world, and conclude that it is the result of civilization and progress, are choosing a very biased sample of data: **looking at the larger dataset it is clear that those improvements happened in spite of civilization and progress, and not thanks to it.**

Patriarchy *is not* about men dominating women

The popular narratives about patriarchy tend to explain it as a form of domination of men over women. Men are physically stronger than women and therefore it is logic that they seek to rule them. While the simplicity of such an argument makes it very attractive, it doesn't make any sense at all! Sapiens haven't become the dominant species on earth by evolving strength. On the contrary, sapiens are physically much weaker than other primates, even those of smaller stature. They have done so by becoming the best collaborators. If there had been conflicts between men and women, surely women would prevail since they are much better than men at communication and collaboration! Furthermore, the premise of human societies splitting between men and women is in itself pure nonsense. Humans are highly social animals that need to forge strong bonds between themselves, and such bonds don't separate men and women into two groups! On the contrary, most men tend to establish strong bonds with and care deeply for some women, such as mothers, aunts, sisters, lovers, daughters, nieces, ...

On top of that, historically, societies tended to have a higher regard for females than males until the advent of private property. Therefore clearly patriarchy is not something "natural" to sapiens. While the correlation between private property and patriarchy is striking, the causal mechanisms are harder to pinpoint. We discussed extensively the most promising causal hypothesis in earlier this same chapter.

Thinking about patriarchy in terms of men dominating women puts us in an unresourceful state of mind which leads to questions that are useless to advance in overcoming patriarchy. Such as what's wrong with men that they need to dominate women? Why can't they just grow up and learn how to cook and how to regulate their own emotions? Or, what's wrong with women that they need to be dominated by men? Why can't they just be adults and take command of their own lifes journeys' ?

Instead, it is much more useful to think about patriarchy as a structural need of the State-market-competition system. A need of a society which is based on war and therefore needs to train its men to feel in charge and responsible so that they perform well when sent to war. This leads to questions that are prone to more insightful answers, such as: what impact does a society that is based on war and competition have on intimate, romantic partnership relationships?

Do the competition market dynamics necessarily translate to a concentration of wealth? Does concentration of wealth in a context of a competitive democracy necessarily translate to the wealthy owning the government and ruling against the masses? Is there a way to avoid devoting large amounts of society's resources to the military and war?

The market economy *is* about dominating women

As we've seen, market economies were developed, allegedly, to help the State distribute common resources, initially food, for all the citizens, and to hedge against bad harvests with storage facilities. However, since the very beginning, data doesn't match that theory, and it shows instead that market economy was used to advance the interest of the ruling classes against those of the peasants.

We have also seen that the market economy manages to mobilize the common people of all genders for the benefit of the elites. Also that, since the very beginning, there is a very clear gender split on how people are mobilized. The core of the economy has always been war, and men were trained to be soldiers while women were in charge of feeding the armies and making children that would become the next generation of soldiers.

It is very important that soldiers have the *illusion of freedom*. That they don't see themselves as mercenaries, but instead they fight for a cause. People who choose to fight for a cause have been consistently shown to outperform mercenaries, who tend to run away when they perceive too high of a risk of dying. In modernity this is achieved with Nationalism, but generalized nation-building was a rarity in the ancient world. Only the Jews and the Armenians developed something comparable to modern nationalism. Still, we can assume that even without nationalism, men who went to war were motivated by knowing that in case of defeat their loved ones would be massacred or enslaved by the enemy's army.

Because of this, shall we call it, market failure, of producing first-class mercenaries, rulers were compelled to give men the illusion of free agency. That's why their job as soldiers was framed as a conscription, as a moral obligation to fight for the collective, not as a paid job. Also, that's why they were assigned to lead the household, a role in which they could practice their supposed agency by buying and selling goods and services in the market to keep their family business running.

Women on the other hand were assigned to menial work, plowing, harvesting, preparing food, cleaning pots,... the kind of job where performance can be incentivized with the threat of violence. Therefore, there was no need to give women even the illusion of free agency.

This is one fundamental reason why women have been the primary workforce of the economies since antiquity, not only sexual workers, but all kind of productive work, either as (poorly) paid labor or as slaves.

In a market economy wealth is created by work. **Since historically work**

has been performed mostly by women, economic power, which means the ability to mobilize the workforce, has been synonymous to the ability to mobilize women who didn't have any free agency. Economic power has been, in a very real sense, the ability to dominate women, to enslave them. The economy has been, in a very real sense, about the domination of women. Money has been, in essence, not as an abstraction or an hyperbole, women.

This pattern appears everywhere in antiquity and persists throughout millenia. Obviously, rulers usually don't write it down so explicitly. However in Sumer, we do find indeed a written record that gives the whole game away: the **Sumerian word "ur" meant interest; surplus value; benefit ; slave woman**. Indeed, slave women were money in Sumer. And we will find similar giveaways later on, even in Medieval Europe. When slave women are money, and any women can be sold as a slave by their guardians, all women become, in effect, money.

Inability to anticipate future consequences of present decisions (II)

Like in the previous chapter, we see again that societies often fail to anticipate the future consequences of their collective decisions. In part, this failure must be because those decisions aren't usually consciously taken as they seem to us with hindsight. They usually happen incrementally, very slowly, so much that people who live through those changes perceive them as continuity rather than as change.

In the previous chapter we saw the failure to anticipate the consequences for health and overwork from the decision of switching from a nomadic foraging lifestyle to a sedentary peasant one. In this historical period we have seen several new ones:

- The decision to delegate management of collective resources to a few > leaders, such as safety grain stores to hedge against draughts, > ended up with a self-appointed elite of representatives. Those > **representatives ended up hoarding the resources they were > appointed to manage** and would end up dominating the peasants to > extract even more wealth from them to finance their lavish > lifestyle and war games, to the point of causing famine among > peasants. This pattern persists until today, even among those > "representatives" that are supposedly elected "democratically".
- The decision to adopt private property lead to the invention of > paternity, patri-linear families and the sexual regulation of > women. In turn this led to the demotion of femininity and > sexuality, and societies inhabited by repressed and aggressive > women and men. This belief system has reinforced itself over > millennia to the point that nowadays almost everybody believes > that people, or at least women, are naturally monogamous, and that > it is normal for kids to have one and only one father and mother.

- The decision to use the market for coordinating collective work led to the invention of credit and compound interest, which periodically turned most of the population into debt-slaves. It also destroyed the sense of community and mutual support which further aggravated the situation. This has resulted in a perplexing system of beliefs where people are convinced that they need to have a job in order to “make a living”. The belief is so strong that political parties from all across the spectrum are promoting the holy grail of creating employment, instead of creating more leisure, more time for people to enjoy their own lives and each other’s company. It is mind-boggling that after millennia of being exposed to these memes people now have become their own oppressors and vote for more work instead of debt amnesty and redistribution of wealth.
- The decision by the elites to offer veiling protection to their women led to the reinforcement of the idea that women don’t belong to the public sphere of life, and the disappearance of even rich women from civil governance, religion leadership, trade and medicine.

Most people prefer pragmatic submission to heroic resistance

Despite the abundance of stories about rebels heroically resisting power, and of tyrants brutally repressing them, in reality, most people are pragmatic. Given the choice most people would prefer to voluntarily submit to a powerful tyrannic regime rather than opposing it and risking punishment.

We know that because we have seen how people adopted hierarchical and unequal social systems completely voluntarily, even without any threat of violence. The most effective argument that despotic regimes use to attract followers is to convince them of the benefits they offer: order, organization, safety, etc. The ones who need the threat of violence to switch sides are a small minority. And even a much smaller minority will stay indifferent when threatened.

Often activists spend a great deal of effort advertising how brutally oppressive a regime is thinking that they are advertising in favor of the rebellion. In reality, to most people, they are instead advertising to be submissive and comply with the regime’s demands.

If we want the immense majority of the population to defect from the current State-market-competition capitalist system telling them how bad it is won’t help much. What will actually help more is building an alternative that is ostensibly much better for the participants, and offer guarantees that they won’t be punished for their defection.

Social constructions and memes are more powerful than empirical reality when backed by force

Physical reality didn’t change between the period described in the previous chapter and the one described in this one. Sapiens’ genetic makeup didn’t

change in just a few thousand years. And yet, a culture, a collection of symbiotic memes and social structures that feedback positively with them, emerged. A culture that encompasses a series of beliefs that are completely opposed to physical reality. The belief in money, markets and private property that are purely imaginary concepts. The belief that men are natural leaders contrasts with the data about pre-civilized societies which indicates that women were more likely to be in charge. The belief that women are submissive, monogamous and almost asexual, when all data available points to the contrary. The result is that virtually everybody who is exposed to those memes acts like that was the reality, and even if they encounter empirical evidence that negates those beliefs on a daily basis, they manage to brush them aside.

Myth: rural conservatives are uneducated, irrational and anti-women

Not surprisingly, given the dismal record of urban civilizations, rural populations have historically been conservative and opposed to progress. Since “progress” has clearly hurt the common people, rural populations have actively rebelled against it, attempting to preserve (conserve) the status-quo.

Unsurprisingly as well, since promoters of progress have been blinded about their own shortcomings, they have attacked the rebels with smear campaigns that portray them as uneducated, stupid, irrational people, who are a danger to themselves for not wanting to join the right side of history.

In particular, recently, conservatives’ attitudes towards women have been misunderstood and misreported. Conservatives appreciate women and reserve for them important roles in society related to parenting, education, and nourishing. Women are offered the possibility to be family-makers and families are the center of conservatives’ social structures. This situation has been caricatured as limiting for women. Ironically, historically, many rural communities have been much less restrictive to the roles considered honorable for women than liberals, who have traditionally seen women as sub-human or infantile and banned them from public life altogether.

Even when rural conservative societies have been limiting for women, that situation has to be read in context. Until very recently atheist conservatives denied women from citizenship and voting rights while religious conservatives never denied women a soul and a place in heaven. The urban alternative for women was becoming housemades and sexual workers. Relatively speaking, for all practical purposes, rural conservatism has been a safer bet for women than progressive urbanization. That helps understand why there have been so many women at the front of rural conservative movements.

The recent mediatic shift in liberal discourse towards inclusivity for women and non-binaries in parallel to the conservative’s shift towards religious fanaticism against reproductive rights obscures the historical trends that created this ideological opposition. And even with the current level of religious fanaticism one might argue that on average women without access to planned parenthood

that have the support of extended families and their faith communities for rising their children might have better prospects at a relaxed life than individuals with access to reproductive rights who choose to become single parents in highly individualized urban environments.

One angle that might help understanding modern liberal vs conservative debates is to look at liberals as fanatical theoreticians and conservatives as short-sighted empiricists. Liberals believe with fanaticism in their social models based on individualistic competitive people and deduce that their proposals offer the best possible arrangement to promote everybody's wealth according to their effort and merits. They also believe that such competition will create wealth that will trickle down akin to a tide that will lift all boats. These beliefs tend to make it difficult for them to empathize with poor people, as they assume being poor is their own choice, since the market is providing plentiful opportunities.

On the contrary conservatives tend to be fixated with the actual consequences of liberal governance. Accumulation of wealth by the rich, wages being driven down by immigrants, women forced into sexual exploitation for survival, environmental restrictions that increase the cost of energy, fertilizers, food and in general make life harder for the common people, etc. as a result they myopically react to everything that the liberals cherish: feminism, reproductive rights, gender and sexual self-determination, free market, globalization of finance and labor, environmentalism, science

In order to build a world that is actually better we need both a useful, scientific, theoretical framework and empirical awareness to provide corrective feedback to it.

Differences between rich and poor in law and social norms: patriarchy, debt forgiveness

The reader is probably familiar with the notion that in case of conflict the legal system tends to favor the rich. Not only the laws tend to be written to favor the propertied classes, but also wealthier people can afford better lawyers. Here we want to bring attention to a more subtle concept. The idea that **even in the absence of conflict between individuals of different classes, the way the law is setup, and the way that it generates customs, ends up creating social norms for how people relate among the same social class which are different among different classes, and those differences as well benefit those of wealthier classes.**

We have already discussed, in the section about the emergence of patriarchy, the cases regarding marriage and debt in ancient Mesopotamia. Let's now revisit these two examples and reflect on its impact in History, beyond the issue of patriarchy.

In ancient Mesopotamia, and generally afterwards, women in rich families have enjoyed a large degree of autonomy, including owning property and investing

their money as they see fit. Marriages in rich families have been comparable to contemporary corporate mergers: a vehicle to access wider social networks, markets and exploit commercial synergies.

In contrast, poor women in ancient Mesopotamia were robbed of their autonomy and possessions, and they themselves became commodities. **This pattern is very effective at obscuring what's going on.** People might look at the social status of wealthy women, see that they enjoy a certain degree of freedom, which people in poor families don't have, and since the laws in principle seem to be the same for everybody, they may look elsewhere for explanations for patriarchy. They might blame the pastoral tribes, or the poor, when in fact patriarchy was legislated in the cities by the wealthy families.

The key to understanding what's going on is to realize that what on the surface might look like the same rituals, marriages where payments between families are exchanged, in practice have completely different meanings. For the rich, the dowries are savings for the bride, whereas for the poor they become a simple purchase of a woman from her father. And that is not because the poor are more patriarchal and misogynistic than the rich, it's a result of an economic necessity that comes from the rules created by the elite. Graeber explains the asymmetry of the situation:

It is common anthropological wisdom that bridewealth tends to be typical of situations where population is relatively thin, land not a particularly scarce resource, and therefore, politics are all about controlling labor. Where population is dense and land at a premium, one tends to instead find dowry: adding a woman to the household is adding another mouth to feed, and rather than being paid off, a bride's father is expected to contribute something (land, wealth, money . . .) to help support his daughter in her new home.

In Sumerian times, for instance, the main payment at marriage was a huge gift of food paid by the groom's father to the bride's, destined to provide a sumptuous feast for the wedding. Before long, however, this seems to have split into two payments, one for the wedding, another to the woman's father, calculated—and often paid—in silver. Wealthy women sometimes appear to have ended up with the money: at least, many appear to have worn silver arm and leg rings of identical denominations.

However as time went on, this payment, called the *terhatum*, often began to take on the qualities of a simple purchase. It was referred to as “the price of a virgin”—not a mere metaphor, since the **illegal deflowering of a virgin was considered a property crime against her father**. Marriage was referred to as “taking possession” of a woman, the same word one would use for the seizure of goods. In principle, a wife, once possessed, owed her husbands strict obedience, and often could not seek a divorce even in cases of physical abuse.

For women with wealthy or powerful parents, all this remained largely a matter of principle, modified considerably in practice. Merchants' daughters, for example, typically received **substantial cash dowries**, with which they could go into business in their own right, or act as partners to their husbands. However, for the poor— that is, most people— marriage came more and more to resemble a simple cash transaction.

The commoditization of any aspect of life, land access, child care, education, health, labor in general, . . . means, obviously, the ensuing uneven distribution of whatever becomes commoditized. The wealthy have easy access to it and the poor struggle to have it. The commoditization of women has the same effect. Women easily become household labor for the rich, with the occasional provision of sexual services, concubines, or prostitutes. And later, they become labor in factories as well.

Another aspect that is telling of the different treatment between rich and poor is the use of debt. Recall that the periodic debt amnesties excluded commercial debts, i.e. they were directed to relieve the people and not business. That seems very odd, since usually government actions are dictated by the powerful in order to help themselves. Contemporary bailouts are always directed to banks, not to the victims of inflated mortgages! What was going on in Sumer? The debt amnesties were a last resort to prevent social unrest and the collapse of society. They restituted the houses and land to the victims of usury so that society could continue functioning. The rich didn't need amnesty because they weren't victims of usury. The same term "loan" meant something completely different for rich and poor. For the rich it was a commercial partnership. Presumably among people in the same social class, merchants, it was done in a way that profits, or losses, were shared. Even when they were done with fixed interest, likely between classes, they would be unlikely to end with the enslavement of the borrower. The borrower would likely be able to repay from diversified investments, or from the solidarity of their upper class friends. Loans between wealthy people are a way to help each other get richer. Loans to the poor are instead a tool of oppression that eventually ends up with the enslavement of the borrower.

Therefore, the proper way to read the ancient government's interest in helping out poor people who had fallen into debt, is not to think that the government cared about them. What they cared about is in maintaining a system for exploiting them! They didn't want to let that system become too unbalanced and collapse. In the same way we can look at socialist measures adopted by contemporary governments such as paid unemployment and parenting leaves, or subsidized education and health, with the same perspective: those measures won't set the working class free, they will help preserve a system of exploitation based on labor.

The limits of reformism

When reflecting on how ancient history can help us devise strategies for building a better world we might want to keep in mind what we have seen in this chapter about the impact of reforms in the laws.

We just commented on how the introduction of laws for debt amnesty was meant to protect the system rather than the poor. We also saw earlier that the laws to protect honorable women by giving them the right of veiling were mostly directed to help rich women, and how they failed to even keep them active in civic life.

Therefore, when we think about using reformist strategies to make life better, we should expect that reforms will be heavily opposed by the powerful unless they realize that in fact, at least in the long run, it will benefit them. Which means that realistically there is very little margin to pass meaningful and durable reforms.

Even so, in some specific moments, it might be desirable to support a reform in the law that is gaining momentum, has a high chance to pass, and will have some positive social or environmental impact. We should look at those opportunities as tactical moves to give society more oxygen to pivot to an alternative system, not as a strategic goal in itself. And therefore, devote only a minimum amount of resources to it.

Remember that the **desire for reforms often comes from accepting the premises of the system and at the same time being indignant to the consequences of those premises, oblivious to the connection between the premises and the outcome.** People take it for granted that they should pay rent, or mortgage, for housing, but become indignant when they are evicted because others who make more money than them move in the neighborhood and increase the prices. People take it for granted that companies should maximize their profit but they become indignant when they lay off large numbers of employees or destroy entire ecosystems. They want to have their cake and eat it.

Therefore we should keep in mind that those reforms are just patches to mitigate problems that the State-market-competition system created in the first place, and use our communications in support of the reforms as an opportunity to highlight the ultimate causes of the problems we are trying to address with the reform. Use the same communications to impeach the State-market-system and their values altogether. Not doing that would create the false expectations that the reforms will actually solve the problem, rather than mitigate if for a while, and damage our credibility when the impact doesn't match the expectations.

Technology does not necessarily condition social changes (II)

In the previous chapter we saw that agriculture and pastoralism were practiced sporadically for millennia before they were adopted as central elements of society. People had a choice of staying nomadic and they did for many generations.

Similarly, In this chapter we have seen that the adoption of sedentarism, which is a set of technological innovations and a new lifestyle, doesn't imply the adoption of domination. Sedentary agricultural societies existed for 4,000 years before domination appeared. Many sedentary societies were able to use sedentary agricultural technology in ways that did not compromise their collective relational identity. Others chose instead to use it in ways that reinforced individual identities and that choice eventually led to domination.

Sedentary technology made domination possible, but it is a combination of external factors and social factors that determine if changes occur and in what direction. That is, **there is a factor of collective free will that is observed when different societies respond in different ways to similar situations.**

It is curious how some authors insist that humans have always been at war with each other, despite ample evidence to the contrary, and even the ones that notice that foragers were overwhelmingly peaceful and cooperative, they tend to claim that sedentarism led to immediate violence and domination. 4000 years of agricultural sedentary peaceful middle-eastern story are suspiciously omitted. **Seems that most authors have a very strong urge to conclude that peace and cooperation is impossible in complex and densely populated societies, and must ignore all evidence to the contrary.**

Strategic considerations for ecovillages

Earlier we discussed that nomadic cultures lived a life of abundance and that the invention of agriculture put at their disposal twice as much the previous amount of energy per capita. Therefore, one would expect that neolithic nomadic cultures would have had an even more opulent lifestyle, and would have worked half of the time of their nomadic predecessors. Alas, that didn't happen because of unanticipated factors such as plagues, infectious diseases, and malnutrition due to monocultures.

That might sound discouraging for people wanting to transition to ecovillages, but it doesn't have to be. Nowadays we have much more knowledge about nutrition, medicine and agriculture. Therefore it would be theoretically possible to live with Neolithic technology without falling into the pitfalls of poor nutrition, pests and diseases. Neolithic monocultures could be replaced with contemporary permaculture practices, for example. This is, in essence, what many "back to the roots" eco-villages are trying to accomplish.

How much work would that require? According to the data presented, if nomads worked between 2-6 hours per day, and transitioning to sedentarism doubled the productivity, that would be somewhere around 1-3h of work per day. That would be assuming that the overhead of feeding animals is negligible, because they graze in the wilderness and also mostly eat the parts of the plants that humans can't eat (the humans eat the grain and the animals the hay). Or even a negative overhead, since humans can eat some of those animals, their eggs and milk, in essence converting waste into nutrition. These calculations however

assume tropical weather, in more challenging climates the effort would be higher.

Now imagine that instead of using Neolithic technology one would use contemporary technology: machinery for processing grains, electric water pumps, drip irrigation, solar panels, electric ovens, mixers, etc. **the amount of work required to keep humans fed, clothed and sheltered should be negligible.** This is in essence what the Open Source Ecology movement is trying to achieve with their Global Village Construction Set, a modern civilization starter kit. **We can use this perspective as a measure of how successful an ecovillage is. If their members are devoting more than a negligible amount of hours to procuring their life's necessities, then it's clear that something is not going well.**

One major impediment to starting modern autonomous villages / civilizations is access to land. Unfortunately, what used to be an abundance of commons land, has become proprietary land all over the world. Therefore it is usually needed to purchase the land on which a collective wants to build a community. Mortgaging the land and expecting to pay it from the village's organic agricultural produce doesn't seem very viable since agriculture typically has low margins. On top of purchasing the land, setting up an ecovillage will need a considerable upfront investment in construction materials and tools, even if the members build it themselves. Therefore it is worth considering more complex strategies that combine early-stage high-profit activities to be able to pay for the land and infrastructure quickly and low-effort self-sufficiency activities for the long run.

One factor missing in this calculation is safety. Contemporary ecovillages externalize their safety to the State which employs the military and the police to keep their collective property safe. Once the community, or a network of communities, manage to be mostly self-sufficient, when they provide for themselves on a basis of volunteer work rather than trading, those activities are no longer taxed by the State. This means that those outside of the community pay for the safety of the community members. One key element to be able to scale up the pattern of self-sustainable eco-villages, as a replacement for the State, is to be able to resolve the issue of safety without falling into the pitfall that has been decimating humanity for millenia: Building up armies to protect one's food supplies from foreign thieves which then leads to the rulers falling into the temptation to use those same armies to dominate and exploit the population and the neighbors.

How to achieve safety without resorting to the use of violence and domination is one of the central themes of this book series, and one of the goals of the strategy and society model that has been presented in the books one to three of the series.

In the next chapter...

We will analyze the Axial Age, the most violent time in history with the advent of the Greek and Roman civilizations. In Greece we will have the luxury of

seeing the commoditization of human relationships recorded as it was unfolding, since it appeared when writing was already established. This will allow us to see in more detail the same patterns that we have seen in Mesopotamia and appreciate more subtleties. The Roman civilization perfected the techniques of domination approaching it even more to that of modern States. We will witness the appearance of currency as a military technology, we will delve into the meaning of slavery and we will see the awakening of consciousness of liberation in the form of universal religions.

References

Main

David Graeber -

Main source for how the market was created by the State and how violence and coercion emerged with it, and have persisted.

Book: "Debt: The first 5000 years"

Graeber's ideas presented in this chapter and the extensive quotes come mostly from:

Chapter 7 - Honor and Degradation, or, On the foundations of Contemporary Civilization - appearance of patriarchy in Mesopotamia and its evolution

Chapter 8 - Credit vs. Bullion, And the Cycles of History - emergence of virtual currency in early ancient civilizations

Also interesting to read are:

Chapters 1-6 : which provide context for chapters 7 and 8

Abdullah Öcalan

Most sources ignore the discoveries made since the late 1990s at Göbleki Tepe and other recent excavations that uncovered the existence of large-scale nomadic monumental architecture. This is reflected in their viewing Sumerian temples as a novelty, a consequence of urbanization, rather than a continuation of communal foraging societies. Öcalan is a notable exception.

He also covers how women invented agriculture and their invention and leadership was stolen. The temple / ziggurat as proto-city, how the struggle of male domination was played out in the sphere of mythology and eventually the male Gods displaced female divinity.

Book: "Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization", Volume I, Civilization, the Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings. Section 3: Urban Civilized Society

Yuval Noah Harari

On the inability to foresee the collateral effects of collective actions. How mechanisms of massive cooperation tend to generate oppression and worsen the

quality of life of sapiens and symbiotic animal species. And an appeal to reflect on what we want to become as species.

Book: "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind"

Complementary

Peter Gray

The following articles published on Psychology Today contrast various aspects of foraging cultures with hierarchical sedentary agricultural cultures. It is an illuminating dichotomy, although the nuances of the intermediate cultures, the pastoral nomads and the egalitarian agricultural sedentaries, are lost.

Play Makes Us Human V: Why Hunter-Gatherers' Work is Play

Play Makes Us Human VI: Hunter-Gatherers' Playful Parenting

The Human Nature of Teaching II: What Can We Learn from Hunter-Gatherers?

Trustful Parenting: Its Downfall and Potential Renaissance: Can we complete a historical circle by reviving trustful parenting?

Ramon Fernandez Duran and Luis Gonzalez Reyes

Quantitative approach to surplus available to different societies by measuring the energy consumed and assuming that, as first approximation, the surplus would be proportional to the energy consumption.

Qualitative interpretation of the relationship with technology (horse riding) and the development of individualized consciousness.

Book in Castilian language: *En la espiral de la energía* - First volume, Chapter 3 "Ciudades Estados e imperios agrarios en un mar de ruralidad aestatal"

History of Sumer

- Wikipedia entry on > Sumer.
- Ubaid period
 - Wikipedia entry explaining “increasingly polarised social > stratification and decreasing > egalitarianism”
 - Historicity describes urban planning, ritual public > architecture, and the religious authority of > elites
- Uruk Period
 - In Historicity, the beginning of civilization is described in > contrast to egalitarian societies, and the increase in > social and urban > complexity
 - 2007 PhD paper by Alla Semenova “The Origin of Money Enhancing > the Chartalist > Perspective”, > in which she cites Oppenheim A. L.

1956. “A Bird’s Eye View of > Mesopotamian Economic History”, in turn cited by Polanyi in > “Trade and Markets in the Early Empires”
- Youtube video - Denise Schmandt-Bessersat (the anthropologist > who discovered the evolution of Sumerian writing from > bullae) - “On the origins of > writing”